

## **Renewal, Renaissance, Reformation, or Revolution? Guiding concepts for social transformation in South Africa in the light of 16<sup>th</sup> century ecclesial reform and deform movements in Europe**

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### **Abstract**

This contribution is based on what may be called a pedagogical experiment in a postgraduate course on the 16<sup>th</sup> century European Reformations that was offered at the University of the Western Cape in the first semester of 2017. On the basis of a close reading of selected literature on the reformation, this contribution highlights the legacy of 16<sup>th</sup> century ecclesial movements for Southern Africa. The point of departure is located in the context of a discussion on a range of guiding concepts for social transformation in the contemporary (South) African context. It is argued that the deepest diagnosis of current (South) African discourse may well point to a view that none of the options for a category that may be regarded as more ultimate than justice (as a ‘remedy’) is attractive enough to muster sufficient moral energy without endless further contestations. Without necessarily suggesting what that ultimate maybe, it is suggested that a lack of an appealing notion of what is truly ultimate can undermine any attempts to address inequality (as our diagnosis) in current discourse. This necessarily calls attention to the relationship between the penultimate and the ultimate, and indeed between justification and justice.

### **Key words**

*Diagnosics; inequality; justice; justification; penultimate; Reformation; sin; social transformation; ultimate*

## 1. Introduction

In the first semester of 2017 we offered a postgraduate module at the University of the Western Cape entitled ‘The Impact of 16<sup>th</sup> century European Reformations in South Africa’ (Theological Studies 736). We read a limited and necessarily arbitrary selection of texts on 16<sup>th</sup> century ecclesial reform (and deform) movements in Europe. The students in the class (and indeed the lecturers) were tasked to reflect on the significance of these texts within the contemporary (South) African context.<sup>1</sup>

Given current debates on decolonising university curricula, this is no innocent question. Indeed, should we in (South) Africa be engaging in reflection on 16<sup>th</sup> century European ecclesial movements together with Europeans who celebrate/commemorate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Martin Luther’s act of pinning 95 statements to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg in 1517? Why and to what purpose should this be done, if at all? The answer to this question is fairly obvious, namely that such ecclesial movements continue to have an impact on us in South Africa, through waves of Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, British and German imperial and colonial conquest, through missionary movements from such countries and indirectly through the impact of modernity. It is certainly better to understand such impact than to ignore it. European (church) history shapes discourse on social transformation in South Africa directly or indirectly, consciously or sub-consciously, for the better and for the worse, whether we like it or not. It is easy enough to point to the destructive impact of the legacy of colonialism, but how would one describe any perceived positive impact?<sup>2</sup> That this is highly contested is evident from an uproar over an

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1 Our gratitude to Shipley Jacobs, Msizi Msibi and Jerome Simmery for participating in this experiment and for reading these texts with remarkable sensitivities emerging from within the South African context. The texts that were read together are those by Lindberg (2014), Lull & Nelson (2015), Naphy (1994) and Oberman (2003). Many others could be recommended, including the texts on the Genevan reformation by Biéler (1964) and De Gruchy (2009).

2 It is therefore necessary to maintain some hermeneutics of suspicion regarding the famous comment from Peter Blois (d. 1212): ‘We are like dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants; thanks to them, we see further than they. Busying ourselves with the treatises written by the ancients, we take their choice thoughts, buried by age and human neglect, and we raise them, as it were from death to renewed life’ (quoted in Lindberg 2010:1). A hermeneutics of retrieval of the legacy of 16<sup>th</sup> century ecclesial reformations is not illegitimate but will require considerable circumspection. This

infamous tweet from Helen Zille, the former leader of the Democratic Alliance, in which she said:

Would we have had a transition into specialised health care and medication without colonial influence? Just be honest, please. ...  
For those claiming [that the] legacy of colonialism was *only* negative, think of our independent judiciary, transport infrastructure, piped water etc.

The course that we offered suggested a particular route to explore the question about the legacy of 16<sup>th</sup> century European reformations, namely with reference to the notion of ‘guiding concepts’ for social transformation. This notion will be discussed in the next section. In short, we suggested a threefold question that participants in the pedagogical experiment had to explore: What is an appropriate guiding concept for social transformation in the (South) African context, over the next decade or so? What can theological discourse contribute to such reflection? And, more specifically, what perils and insights can one learn from 16<sup>th</sup> century ecclesial movements in this regard?

This set of questions is based on the preliminary observation that several of the proposed guiding concepts for social transformation in (South Africa), including renewal, renaissance, reformation, revolution, regeneration and reconstruction, are also found in 16<sup>th</sup> century debates. Consider here South African debates on ‘reconstruction and development’ (RDP), on ‘national reconciliation’ (TRC) or ‘social cohesion’, on ‘moral regeneration’ (Mandela’s notion of an ‘RDP of the soul’), on an African renaissance (Mbeki), on economic growth (NEPAD), on sustainable development (NDP), on the second phase of the revolution (the #Fees must fall movement) and on the conquest of land (Black First Land First).

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is because, at least in the (South) African context, such legacy cannot be separated from the impact of colonialism. Can anything good emerge from colonialism? As the text above suggests, this is highly contested. At the risk of being overly provocative, one may comment that forms of domination in the name of difference (e.g. given the concentration of power in empires) can be exercised with some creativity – which need not be discarded in a theological and ethical critique of such domination but can be inverted for the common good. Playing soccer may serve as one example, the cross of Jesus Christ as another.

Of course, such terms are often employed rather loosely and contextual differences would need to be taken into account. However, it would seem that one may indeed explore comparisons between the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Europe and contemporary South African discourse, even if there are obvious methodological caveats regarding anachronistic terminology. Each participant in this pedagogical experiment had to select one such guiding concept, compare that with the notion of ‘reformation’, and then address this set of questions on the basis of the prescribed literature (only).

## 2. Guiding concepts for social transformation

The Department of Religion and Theology hosted a series of workshops and conference between 2012 and 2015 on the relationship between ‘ecclesiology’ and ‘ethics’. The outcomes of these workshops have been published elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> For a discussion on ‘ethics’ the first two of these workshops introduced the term ‘guiding concepts for social transformation’. The assumption was that the term social transformation is best used in the context of societies in transition but, by itself, only indicates that some change in ‘form’ is required without specifying the direction of such change.

In preparation for a discussion on the National Development Plan (2011) at the first of these workshops Ernst Conradie and Christo Lombard offered the following explanation for such guiding concepts (see Conradie 2013a:9–11, with some added comments):

1) *Guiding concepts* to describe a vision for social transformation are operational concepts (tacitly) employed by groups in positions of political/military and economic power (for example at a national level) to guide a process of social transformation over longer periods of time. They do not only describe penultimate aims but also indicate what is needed to get there. In that sense they are indeed operational concepts. They can typically be captured in single words or crisp phrases.

2) These guiding concepts respond to (perceived) *needs and problems* in the current social order on the basis of social analysis and diagnosis. This

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3 See the volumes edited Conradie (2013a, 2013b), Conradie & Klaasen (2014) and Conradie & Pillay (2015).

indicates the need for social transformation (used here in a generic and neutral sense allowing for progression but also retrogression).

3) These guiding concepts recognise some *obstacles or threats* that hinder or undermine the possibility for rapid social transformation. This is why they have to be operational concepts to guide the process of overcoming such obstacles. The hindrances may be captured under generic (often religious) categories such as hubris, domination (oppression), greed (selfishness, entitlement), sloth and alienation or in structural terms such as threats to survival, military disadvantages, capitalist exploitation, consumerism, moral failure and the disintegration of the social fabric of society.

4) All these guiding concepts (have to) respond to a number of *penultimate aims/goals/values* such as human dignity (ubuntu), the basic human rights that follow from that, equality, justice, peace, liberty, progress, democracy (a participatory society), sustainability, civilisation, being educated, enlightenment, humanism, skills development towards employment, reaching maturity and so forth (in no particular order). These operational concepts may be described as *guiding* concepts because they guide current processes of social transformation towards these penultimate goals by indicating certain priorities. For that reason the phrases employed require unpacking in relation to a range of other concepts. One can explore the legacy of 16<sup>th</sup> century reformations for the (South) African context with reference to any of these penultimate goals but this is not our main concern here.<sup>4</sup>

5) At least in theological discourse these guiding concepts also respond to *ultimate goals* that are typically articulated in religious or quasi-religious categories including a rich array of metaphors and symbols such as the reign of God, the vision of shalom, a final judgement, and a new earth. Note that much-treasured concepts such as justice, democracy, education or sustainability can hardly be regarded as aims in themselves. The question soon becomes: what is it that needs to be sustained, why is (university) education important, how does democracy serve good governance, and how does one respond to the recognition that full justice can never be done?

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4 There is a wealth of literature here, from divergent confessional traditions and theological schools. One reference may suffice here, namely John de Gruchy's study on John Calvin as a Christian humanist (2009).

6) These guiding concepts employed to describe a vision for social transformation are always contested precisely because they indicate certain priorities amidst several penultimate goals and because it is based on a contestable social analysis of current needs and obstacles/threats. As a result there are in every epoch *alternative proposals* to capture a vision for social transformation. These may be articulated by emerging power blocks that are dominant in their sphere of influence but not (yet) at a national level. They may also be articulated by those on the margins of political and economic power who nevertheless exercise some influence in public debate.

7) The *National Development Plan: Vision for 2030* published by the South African government's National Planning Commission's articulated a particular vision for social transformation. This vision focuses on the concept of development, based on sustained economic growth and qualified by a number of indicators such as 'social', 'sustainable'. This is discussed at some length in the *Diagnostic Report* and the *National Development Plan* itself.

8) This vision for social transformation may be understood against the background of other guiding concepts that were used in previous epochs in the Southern African context. This may be illustrated by the following rather provocative list of guiding concepts from previous dispensations:

200 000–12 000 years ago	Survival
12 000–3 000 years ago	Settlement
3 000 years ago – 1652	Civilisation (in the stone age and the iron age)
1652–1867	Colonial conquest and occupation
1867–1910	Economic growth based on industrialisation
1910–1948	Consolidation of political and economic power
1948–1976	Separation/separate development
1976–1989	Entrenchment of political and economic power
1912–1989	Political Liberation/Revolution
1990–1994	Nation building based on constitutional reform
1990–1998	National reconciliation
1994–1999	Reconstruction and (social) Development
1999–2007	Economic Growth based on globalisation
2002–	Sustainable development
2012–	Consolidation of political (and economic) power
2012–2030	Social development based on economic growth

9) A response to this vision for social transformation may also entail the articulation of alternative guiding concepts. In current theological discourse one may identify a number of alternative guiding concepts for a vision of social transformation. These may be captured in a series of terms with a ‘re-’ prefix. Consider the following possibilities:

reanimation, rebuilding, recapitulation, recollection, reconciliation, reconstruction, recovering, redemption, reflection, reformation, refreshment, regeneration, rehabilitation, reinvigoration, remembering, remuneration, renaissance, renewal, reorientation, reparation, replacement, representation, reproduction, respect, restitution, restoration, resurrection, revitalisation, revival, and revolution.

Alternatively, one may also explore words with a ‘trans-’ prefix such as ‘transfiguration’, ‘transformation’, ‘translation’ or ‘transmutation’. The problem here is that some change is indicated in terms of transition without specifying the direction of such change. A change in form may suggest some continuity, but this does not clarify in what the discontinuity may be found. This does not resolve the underlying problem.

In the next section we will explore a number of these guiding concepts insofar as they are described in the prescribed literature for the said module on 16<sup>th</sup> century European ecclesial movements. The limitation here is important since anything more than that would soon require a comprehensive history of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3. Conceptual options

It is thought-provoking to consider the conceptual options available in the 16<sup>th</sup> century for social transformation. Here is a brief survey of the available options:

The term ‘Renaissance’ (literally rebirth) had a peculiar meaning in the context of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century humanism, namely that of a return to the sources (*ad fontes*), i.e. the classic texts and art of the Greco-Roman period, but also to the biblical texts in their Hebrew and Greek versions rather than in the Latin translation of the Vulgate, and also the writings of the church fathers. The humanists regarded the ‘Middle ages’ as an intermediate period

between what they glorified as the ideal classical period and their own time that they deemed ‘modern’. They reacted against what they regarded as the ‘superstitious and narrow-minded orthodoxy and authoritarianism of the church of their day’ (Lindberg 2010:5–6). Older is therefore better!

This is clearly not how an African renaissance is understood, even though there is also a tendency to glorify a pre-colonial African dispensation. The discourse on African renaissance certainly begs crucial questions around an ‘African’ identity and what Leonard Praeg has described as ‘politics of return’. The latter is even more challenging if by renaissance one assumes a ‘re-birth’, a ‘resurrection’ of the African continent and for that matter ‘a passion for the revival of lost or even marginalised’ culture, spirituality and philosophy (cf. More 2002). Praeg (2000:65) highlights underlying tensions to do with a politics of return namely between return and remembrance, and between narratives that offer a ‘re-representation of an already invented Africa and narratives that seek to re-present Africa or re-construct Africa.’ As Mabogo More (2002:66–75) illustrates, the consequences of a politics of return are highly contested.

The Protestant reformation was by no means the only reform movement within the Roman Catholic church of the early and mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. It is certainly not a badge of honour to which only Luther (1483–1546) is entitled (see Oberman 2003:62). ‘In fact’, as Oberman (2003:63) observes, ‘Luther so clearly rejected the emerging late-medieval program of reform that despite the power of entrenched tradition his Protestant movement might be better termed a Counter Reformation’!<sup>5</sup>

The reform movements associated with John Wycliffe (1330–1384) and John Hus (1369–1415) in England and Bohemia respectively are best understood as forms of *moral renewal*. Amidst deepening moral laxity in the church and an ebbing papal prestige and authority, Wycliffe alleged that there was no scriptural warrant to papal claims to temporal authority and advocated that they be stripped of their power and property. The Avignonese papacy

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5 Oberman (2003:21–43) explains Luther’s reformation in terms of the medieval debate between the *via antiqua* (Thomism) and the *via moderna* (nominalism). He contends that this debate not only provides the context for gaining a firm grasp of Luther’s own redefinition of the range and role of philosophy but that it is also essential for seeing him in perspective.

(1309–1377) and the papal schism (1378–1417) were symbolic of the lost moral reputation of the papacy thus fostering the sharp criticism of Wycliff and later Hus. John Hus condemned clerical corruption and did not so much dwell on doctrinal questions. Nevertheless, he rejected the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church and called for a ‘democratic’ ecclesiology. Therefore, that Wycliffe and Hus would later be seen as forerunners of the Reformation is not unjustified.<sup>6</sup>

‘Reformation’ was understood by Luther primarily in doctrinal terms, namely as a return to the Pauline and Augustinian notion of justification – instead of the promise of salvation to be earned by good works. By contrast, reformers such as Andreas Karlstadt and arguably also Huldrych Zwingli focused on the need for *regeneration*. Karlstadt emphasised ‘inner renewal in contrast to outer acceptance, regeneration over justification, obedience to the Christ in us’ (Lindberg 2010:91). The focus is therefore on the formation of virtue, on the inner witness of the movement of the Spirit. Likewise, Erasmus’ emphasis on the freedom of the will prompted a certain moralism, while Luther emphasised the bondage of the will in his recognition of Christian freedom (Lindberg 2010:128). By contrast, reformation is based on the proclamation of God’s promise and therefore cannot be reduced to exhortation for the moral regeneration of society (Lindberg 2010:127).

There is no shortage of exhortations to moral regeneration in the South African context. During the Mandela-government several ‘moral summits’ were held in order to discuss the ‘moral fabric’ of society (see Richardson 2003) and the formation of a human rights culture (see Sporre & Botman 2003). Such calls express legitimate concerns over lawlessness and anarchy but often remain deeply conservative in calling for a restoration of moral authority – whether in traditional leaders, church leaders or patriarchal authority. More recently, such moral regeneration (even moral rearmament) is associated with ‘Mighty men’ conferences addressed by Angus Buchan.

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6 Although some scholars caution against drawing a strong connection between these and later reformation movements, it is plausible to affirm with Oberman (2002:4) that ‘a careful reading of the sources not only indicates a historical justification for the idea of the Forerunner of the Reformation, but suggests, further, that a definite and geographically extensive continuity exists between the Middle Ages and the sixteenth-century Reformation...’

The term ‘reformation’ has a long and complex history. Carter Lindberg (2010:8–9) notes that the term was technically used in relation to the re-establishing of universities in their original condition. The medieval use of *reformatio* focused on ethical renewal but then in such a way that ‘older is better’: reformation required the restoration of the original purity of the early church. The fourteenth century conciliar movement used the phrase ‘reformation of the church in head and members’ to refer to ethical appeals for self-reform. Lindberg also observes that Luther seldom used the term reformation apart from his successful curriculum reform, instituted at the University of Wittenberg to replace scholastic theology with biblical studies. Luther understood the term reformation primarily in a doctrinal rather than an ethical sense: ‘The crux of genuine reform ... is the proclamation of the gospel of grace alone. This requires the reform of theology and preaching but is ultimately the work of God alone’ (Lindberg 2010:9). Reformation is thus best understood as divine intervention amidst the ‘last days’: ‘Here human agency no longer sufficed – no pope, no cardinals, no council – God alone had to bring it about’ (Oberman 2003:76).

The term ‘ecclesial reform movements’ may therefore be misleading as the emphasis was not on the renewal of the church,<sup>7</sup> but on the recognition that the gospel (Scripture alone) may be used to judge ecclesial authorities. In short, a person cannot be ‘reformed’ in the sense of being restored to some earlier condition; a sinner can only be forgiven (Lindberg 2010:9). Lindberg captures the significance of this notion of reformation:

So Luther turned the medieval piety of achievement on its head. We do not do good works in order to become acceptable to God; rather, because God accepts us we do good works. Justification by grace alone through faith alone thus is a metatheological proclamation. That is, it changes the language of theology from an ‘if ... then’ structure to a ‘because ... therefore’ structure; from a language of conditions to be fulfilled in order to receive whatever is promised, to a language of unconditional promise. ... This is a paradigmatic shift almost without parallel in the history of

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7 Oberman (2003:161) does observe that Calvin understood *reformatio* as a return to the true catholicity of the church.

Christendom (Lindberg 2010:66–67, with reference to various other sources).<sup>8</sup>

Once a reform movement is underway, it requires theological explanation. It also prompts the perennial question whether the reform should be gradual or radical (see Lindberg 2010:106). How can it be controlled? Who will guide it? It is therefore not surprising that the term ‘revolution’ may also be used to describe some 16<sup>th</sup> century reform movements.

In his *The Protestant Revolution* for instance, William Naphy adopts Diarmaid MacCulloch’s phrase ‘accidental revolutionary’ to describe the impact of aspects of the reformations led by Luther and Calvin respectively. He portrays Luther’s ‘accidental revolution’ as having become ‘a very real and potent revolution’ (Naphy 2011:89). In Luther’s case, this is best understood in terms of what would later be known as ‘the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers’, first defined in his treatise ‘To the Christian Nobility’. Such a teaching was clearly an attack on medieval cosmology. This is necessarily related to what Alister McGrath (2007:2) describes as a dangerous idea of the Protestant reformation, namely that all Christians have the right to read and interpret the bible for themselves. This new approach to biblical interpretation was dangerous because it was, ‘ultimately uncontrollable’. Arguably, by 1650, much of Europe was convulsed by the wars of religion partly as a consequence of Luther’s ‘accidental revolution’.

With respect to Calvin (1509–1568), one may argue that his reform of Geneva amidst a deep seated factionalism may legitimately be regarded as a revolution (see Kingdon 1975:219). However, as Lindberg (2010:12) suggests, one needs to note the nuances in the use of revolution with respect to the 16<sup>th</sup> century reformations namely whether one stresses a view of reformation as an ‘early bourgeois revolution’ or as ‘the reformation of the common people’ when perceived as an ‘anticlerical revolution’ (Kingdon 1975:207). If one puts emphasis on the earlier, then it may be observed with respect to Luther that he was more concerned about his

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8 Lindberg (2010:103, 105) adds that Luther on this basis rejected the use of force or government to support religious reforms. Luther insisted that ‘to enforce the gospel by law is to change the gospel into law and thereby pervert the Reformation. What is free cannot be compelled ... forced reform changes the good news into bad news; that is, gospel into law.’

reform programme than for the lives of the oppressed (peasants). Arguably, Luther provided theological legitimation of the status quo in this regard. Quite to the contrary, Thomas Müntzer perceived revelation as the source for a revolutionary transformation of society (see Boesak 1995:119–120). Although much literature portrays Müntzer as the forerunner of the French and other revolutions given his role in Peasants' Revolt of 1525, Lindberg (2010:149) argues that his goals were not identical to those of the peasants. Oberman suggests that the Peasant revolt may be best described as a 'premature revolution' where valid protest exploded into anarchy and chaos. He adds the rather telling comment that 'if Luther had sided with the Wittenberg radicals in 1522 or with the leaders of the Peasant's Revolt three years later, the Lutheran Reformation would not merely have lost much of its vitality, it would have been dislodged in Electoral Saxony and elsewhere in the Empire aborted altogether' (Oberman 2003:110).

The term 'reconstruction' as found in post-1994 South African discourse or in African theologies of reconstruction can only be used anachronistically for the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The closest analogue may be the rather more reactionary Counter-reformation that did involve a reorientation and institutional restructuring within the Roman Catholic Church. The three pillars of the Counter Reformation, namely the Inquisition, the Jesuit order and the Council of Trent are open to historical reinterpretation but illuminate South African debates only in terms of the contrast. For our purposes Oberman's verdict may suffice when he emphasises that the Counter Reformation was a 'program of the conservative Rome-led coalition which early Calvinism had to confront and with which it competed for hegemony in post medieval Europe' (2003:104).

In the final section we will return to the question what can be learned from such literature for contemporary discussion on an appropriate guiding concept for the (South) African context.

#### **4. What diagnosis, which remedy?**

Another avenue to explore the possible significance of the 16<sup>th</sup> century for current South African debates on social transformation is to consider the underlying diagnosis that is assumed. In our pedagogical experiment this was precisely prompted by reflection on guiding concepts for social

transformation. One may assume that the remedy offered will correlate roughly with an implied diagnosis. Or to shift from medical terminology to policy discourse: the vision and mission statement, the policies and implementation strategies that are proposed, assume a certain social analysis. Any diagnosis is never simple and needs to distinguish between the surface level manifestations and a deeper, underlying systemic problem. For example, poverty unemployment and inequality in South Africa are surface level manifestations of deeper, structural economic issues and injustices. The same applies to crime, corruption and gangsterism. Climate change is the result of patterns of production and consumption that have to be uncovered in order to identify the deepest moral and indeed spiritual roots of the problem. Typically, there is no single root of the problem but a connected network of mutually reinforcing distortions.

This is also true of theological discourse: any understanding of salvation may be correlated with an assumed understanding of the nature and gravity of sin. In the South African context this is well recognised: If one focuses on the plight of ‘poor white Afrikaners’ and fears that they will be ‘pulled down’ by a ‘sea of barbarism’, one may well equate salvation with separation, i.e. apartheid, for the sake of protecting European forms of ‘civilisation’ and to light the ‘candle’ of the Christian gospel amidst ‘deep dark Africa’ (see Coetzee & Conradie 2010). Another rather different diagnosis is found in the Kairos document with its critique of ‘state theology’ and ‘church theology’ and its call for ‘prophetic theology’ in order to promote liberation from psychological, social, economic and political oppression in the struggle against apartheid.

Given such considerations, how can one reconstruct Martin Luther’s diagnosis of the problem? Of course Luther stated this as the need for a God of grace, but why was this needed then? In his *Resilient Reformer* Timothy Lull (with Derek Nelson, 2015) captures four themes that are core to the response that Luther offered to the issues that he confronted, namely justification through faith alone, a theology of the cross, the church as a community (instead of a papal hierarchy) and Christian freedom. If these may be regarded as the prescribed ‘remedy’, what is the diagnosis?

This question is of course rather hard to answer. The many reformation movements of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century each responded to what Heiko

Oberman (2003:20) terms *Europa afflicta* – with reference to the impact of the black death, the rise and decline of conciliarism, ongoing military conflicts and the clash between late medieval pursuit of holiness and the pursuit of profit (2003:14, 16). One may observe that Luther’s diagnosis is primarily of a spiritual nature so that the focus is not on poverty, feudal oppression, ongoing wars or the political balance of powers in the Holy Roman Empire of the time. His diagnosis is certainly also ecclesial as is best expressed in his tract on *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. Luther’s diagnosis was that the devil in the form of the Antichrist has penetrated into the centre of God’s household, namely the papacy (Oberman 2003:74).<sup>9</sup> He therefore sensed that he lived in the ‘last days’ which makes it essential to assess the devil’s work correctly, namely as permitted by God, even though this threatens the Catholic church at its very centre (Oberman 2003:92). This is also why reformation has to be God’s work that far transcends human attempts at ecclesial renewal and amelioration. If we rely on our own powers, we are finished (Oberman 2003:92)!

Nevertheless, as Lull & Nelson (2015:202) suggest, religious and social problems were so closely connected at the time of the reformation led by Luther that it was impossible to address the changes needed in the church without stumbling into the widespread desire to address long-standing social discontents.<sup>10</sup> One therefore needs to pay sufficient attention to the late medieval world in which context the reformations grew and rebelled (see Cameron 2012:7).

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9 Luther expressed this dreadful diagnosis to George Spalatin on 24 February 1520: ‘I am in terrible anguish because I have almost no more doubts that the Pope is truly the Antichrist popular opinion is universally expecting’ (quoted in Oberman 2003:92). That Luther believed he was living in the ‘last days’ coupled with his identification of the pope with the antichrist has led some scholars to infer a historical solidarity between Luther and Hus precisely on these matters. Obermann (1999:166) for instance portrays both Luther and Hus as forerunners of the Radical reformation namely ‘the reformation of doctrine and life in church and society’ (see Oberman 1999:166). Hus’ function of forerunner to Luther is understood within the context of Luther’s realist eschatology.

10 Here, we are mindful of the legion of interpretations of the reformations of the sixteenth century. Lindberg (2010:13–22) offers a useful panorama of some such interpretations. Those who stress social history seek to understand the reformation in terms of social, economic and political changes of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe. In our discussion above we also sense the need to recognise the theological content of such reformations.

We suggest that one gets closer to heart of the problem when considering the late medieval experience of death and dying – as a result of infant mortality, childbirth, ongoing wars, and a lack of health care, capital punishment, heresy trials and especially epidemics like the Black Death. This vulnerability associated with omnipresent death naturally prompts immense anxiety for the one who is dying, relatives and friends. Moreover, death often comes with some unfinished business in healing distorted relationships and therefore with a sense of guilt and remorse following the deaths of loved ones. What angered Luther was the way in which such vulnerabilities were abused by the ecclesial authorities of his time in order to extract funds for grandiose building projects by exerting emotional pressure on ordinary people through the invention of the notion of purgatory and the selling of indulgences. The response from ecclesial authorities, namely ‘try harder’, only intensified prevailing anxieties (see Lindberg 2010:60–67). Moreover, ecclesial authorities used the sacraments not as *media salutis* in order to provide much needed consolation in life and death, but as instruments for gatekeeping in order to entrench hierarchical structures. This was defended in the name of reinstating papal authority after the disastrous period of a divided papacy.

Furthermore, such papal authority was exercised far away from the city of Rome, also in northern Saxony. Luther found political allegiances amongst German princes who recognised the political and economic need for relative independence from ecclesial Rome, although not from the Holy Roman Empire itself. The tract ‘To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate’ demonstrates Luther’s weaving together his critique of the papacy with a call for the reform of the church and appealed to the nobility of Germany. In view of the latter, one may argue that the ‘reformation of the princes’ provided the incubating conditions in which the Lutheran reformation could come to fruition (Oberman 2003:108). Luther also defended the authority of the princes amidst the peasant uprising that aligned itself with some Anabaptist groups. In one of his most shocking publications, *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants*, Luther appealed to the rulers to use force in dealing with the uprising. His harsh reaction to the uprising was partly indicative of revulsion to resorting to violence as well as his distaste of the theology of Thomas Müntzer who played a leading role in

the Peasants' War in Thuringia (see Lull & Nelson 2015:235). Ironically, Luther's theological ideas around Christian freedom would soon be appropriated by some involved in the crisis of 1520 to question authority and thus no longer limited to the spiritual realm as Luther envisaged.

Luther appears to have employed a distinct application of the notions of obedience and authority in relation to politics and the church. A comparison of Luther's views on obedience and authority between the princes and the church accentuates our view of Luther's reform programme as primarily spiritual in nature. Theologically, Luther's response to this dispensation cuts through to the core of the cancerous growth that pervaded the church with some surgical precision and considerable courage. He recognised that the legitimacy of papal authority is based upon its biblical legitimation and its self-assigned task of interpreting Scripture for the masses through the creedal decisions of ecclesial councils and *ex cathedra* papal pronouncements. In response, he used the newly available editions of the biblical texts (aided by the printing press) to go back to the sources (*ad fontes*), to invite curriculum reform on that basis and to challenge with the notion of *sola Scriptura* more than a thousand years of theological thinking. The critique of papal authority is balanced by his constructive reading of justification by God's grace alone and his emphasis on the priesthood of all believers – perhaps his most radical innovation (Oberman 2003:108).

It is far from easy to capture the core of Calvin's theological rhetoric. One may point to his emphasis on the sovereignty of God and the accompanying themes of election and predestination. One may equally emphasise his notion of union in Christ's death and resurrection. Calvin is also regarded as 'the theologian of the Holy Spirit' – and rightly so for his emphasis on sanctification, the ministries of the church and the movement of God's spirit in every sphere of society. Alternatively, as Oberman (2003:129–134) suggests, one may look for some tell-tale expressions in Calvin's oeuvre such as God's arcane work, God's guidance and providence and the role of prayer. It is therefore equally hard to recognise his diagnosis of what is wrong in the world in general and in Geneva in particular.<sup>11</sup> In fact, Calvin's diagnosis has become a bone of scholarly contention.

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11 Oberman (2003:101) warns that Geneva was never Calvin's foremost concern. The local Genevan archives therefore do not hold the clue to understanding the Genevan

T. H. Parker (2006 [1975]:125, 126), drawing on Calvin's extensive correspondence, believed that Calvin's opponents were a 'dissolute group ready for any mischief' and that they were correctly called 'Libertines' because 'they could not endure the yoke of a discipline that was exercised consistently and without favour to riches or rank'. In short, the Genevans tried to defend immoral behaviour. For Calvin, his opponents were 'arrogant men who tolerated sin and delighted in wickedness' (Naphy 1994:188). In response, Calvin brought together a carefully selected company of educated pastors to help establish a godly society in Geneva, based on sound doctrine, a separation of ecclesial and political power, the rule of law and proper civil administration for issues of education, health, sanitation and the economy. Accordingly, this was a clash between the forces of godliness and the stubborn unwillingness of the Genevans to exchange their sinful lives and customs for true godliness. Calvin regularly complained of the lack of magisterial support in stamping out immorality (see Naphy 1994:106, almost verbatim).

Naphy (1994) convincingly shows that this reading cannot do justice to factionalism in Geneva, to the Genevan archival records or to Genevan responses to the refugee problem. There were undoubtedly some anti-French sentiments but this should not merely be understood as xenophobia. Geneva had an unprecedented influx of refugees – some desperately poor, others rather affluent. The poor refugees placed heavy demands on the city's capacity to care for them,<sup>12</sup> while the affluent refugees alleviated the cash flow and stimulated business. However, there were also fears that they would become too influential in local politics and business. As Naphy (1994:95) puts it: 'Geneva, which had escaped from the foreign rule of Savoy and barely avoided domination by France and Berne, was in danger

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reformation (contra Naphy 1994). Calvin was there reluctantly although Geneva was a convenient location to serve as model elsewhere and especially to introduce the Reformation in his beloved homeland. Oberman (2003:101) concludes: 'In brief, Calvin the city reformer is not sufficiently understood without giving due place to Calvin the territorial reformer who exploited the Genevan connection for his Reformation of the Refugees in France and in Europe at large.'

12 Geneva, a city of some 12 000 people, had to support 600 local poor persons on a regular basis and an additional 10 657 poor strangers who passed by in one year (from October 1538 to October 1539) in the city hospital (Naphy 1994:122). Naphy suggests that animosity towards such refugees resulted from an inability to meet their needs rather than a dislike or fear of strangers.

of being overrun by the French.’ He argues that the refugee crisis prompted personal disputes between prominent Genevan citizens and the company of pastors – given perceptions that the pastors (who by 1546 were mostly of French origin) sided with the refugees. For the Genevan citizens, the core problem was the perceived arrogance and intrusiveness of the ministers who did not shy away from humiliating respected citizens in public over matters of private morality. Naphy (1994:197) captures the two contrasting diagnoses of the Genevan situation by 1555 in this way:

The Calvinists saw the Perrinists as sinners, lovers of wickedness, enemies of God; they were themselves God’s champions, upholders of a godly society. The Perrinists considered themselves to be Geneva’s truest, most faithful citizens; their opponents were the tools of Geneva’s subversion to French domination.

Following Heiko Oberman’s notion of the ‘reformation of the refugees’ (see Oberman 2003:111–115), one may venture another suggestion, namely that Calvin was disturbed by the way that the healing influence of the Christian gospel is obstructed through political powers. His ongoing struggles with the Genevan authorities, his letter to King France and his extensive correspondence with pastors in their ministries under persecution comes to mind here. Calvin himself was a refugee who obtained citizenship in Geneva only towards the end of his life. He was a minister to refugees, those who had been rejected and ostracised in their own country. His most radical message was that those who were rejected are elected by God (see Conradie 2016). Such affirmation was the ultimate form of pastoral consolation that one could give in a situation where one may well have to die at the stake for one’s beliefs. As Oberman (2003:157) observes, ‘For those who had no permanent place of residence, not even a fixed stone on which to lay their heads, neither valid passport nor a residence permit, predestination became their identity card.’ What else, would one dare to say in such a situation?

There is yet another possibility, namely that Calvin distrusted the ulterior motives involved in the Genevan support for the reformation that he was asked to lead. Accordingly, the Genevans opted for the reformation mainly for political reasons, namely to undergird its independence from Savoy but also from France. As a city state located on the crossroads of trade routes it had to guard such independence in an era dominated by powerful

role players (the Emperor, the pope, the Ottoman Empire, the king of France). It also had to guard against domination by other Swiss cantons, including Berne and Basel. In short, independence was good for business and Protestantism was deemed to be a necessary requirement to defend such independence. Arguably, this was the ‘reformation of the cities’, to be contrasted with the ‘reformation of the monasteries’ and the ‘reformation of the refugees’ (Oberman 2003:146). The so-called ‘libertines’ were the party of urban freedoms who may well have seen in Calvin the reincarnation of the medieval bishop from whom they liberated themselves (Oberman 2003:144). They were not opposed to the repressive moral ordinances but to the role of the consistory rather than the city council in enforcing such ordinances.<sup>13</sup>

Calvin, on the other hand, was a refugee who fled from France as a result of his beliefs. He was serving as a minister in Geneva not merely for the sake of the well-being of the city but for the sake of the Reformation. Actually, as he argued in his commentary on Titus,<sup>14</sup> one should serve God without any ulterior motive, just as God’s act of salvation in Jesus Christ was motivated by no ulterior motive, by nothing else than this one motive, the generosity and mercy of this God alone.<sup>15</sup> Godliness, Calvin maintained, requires that we serve God without any ulterior motive – and not for the sake of gaining eternal life. For Calvin, soberliness, righteousness and godliness (according to Titus 2:11) give a comprehensive summary of Christian living, wherein godliness is exercised in relation to God and righteousness is exercised towards other human beings.<sup>16</sup> In short, ‘believers are therefore also called to practise such unconditional loving-kindness, without ulterior motive’ (Smit 2007:142). This focus on worshipping God alone, with a clear vision of the life to come, is paradoxically also the clue to Calvin’s sense of

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13 Oberman (2003:145) acknowledges the shadow side of Calvin’s legacy on this point, especially wherever Calvinism has gained political power: ‘Where the demands of faith and civil obligation are no longer distinguished, biblical law turn into tyranny.’

14 This is available online at <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/cal/titus-3.html> (accessed 16 May 2017).

15 See Titus 3:4–7: ‘<sup>4</sup>But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, ... <sup>7</sup> so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life (NRSV).

16 For these formulations and a discussion of the significance of Calvin’s emphasis on ‘no ulterior motive’ for doing public theology, see Smit (2007:139–156).

vocation to transform society because it enables believers to see the world in a new light.

As a French refugee in Geneva Calvin had an eye to detect the ulterior motives of the Genevans, although he may have had a blind spot for his own French interests and, according to his critics, an irritating sense of French superiority. One may even argue that Calvin resisted what would in the 20<sup>th</sup> century be called a form of civil religion (or popular religion), namely a group of well-established Genevan families who saw the need for the Reformation in an instrumental way as necessary to defend Genevan independence. They were not keen to trade Catholic clerical tyranny for a new Protestant yoke (Kingdon 1975:214). Arguably, Calvin introduced a ‘civil religion’<sup>17</sup> of a different order, namely one based on his rather authoritarian understanding of what a godly society entails – one which requires a strong sense of ecclesial discipline, exercised independently of magisterial authority. The term civil religion is of course applied anachronistically to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but this does open up some room to reflect on various forms of civil religion in South Africa<sup>18</sup> and, one may add, in Zambia.<sup>19</sup> Admittedly, it would not be possible to discern any historical influence of the 16<sup>th</sup> century on southern Africa in this regard.

## **5. The need for a depth diagnosis in South Africa**

Given the argument of the previous section, it would not do to understand the legacy of the 16<sup>th</sup> century reformations in Europe merely in terms of the theological insights that were offered in such a time. To repeat their insights in a different context and socio-economic dispensation would

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17 A number of historians argue that later followers of Calvin left fingerprints in – for instance – the creation of civil religion in America and to some extent on Afrikaner identity. In an essay on ‘Calvin’s Theological Heritage in South Africa’, Robert Vosloo (2013) succinctly highlights the problematic of highlighting the ‘Calvinist paradigm’ by pointing to a complex interplay of many forces.

18 See the perceptive essay on civil religion in Smit (2007:101–124).

19 Amidst recent political jostling in Zambia, the appeal to Christianity by the ruling elite and the rhetoric of Zambia as a Christian nation dating back to former president Jacob Chiluba’s declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1991 may well point towards a form of civil religion (this is contra Cheyeka 2008). This may be the case in as far as this rhetoric lends national identity a religious dimension. The now widespread expression namely ‘bola na lesa’, often made when the Zambia national soccer team plays, is partly illustrative of this claim.

be to underestimate the task that they were faced with. Instead, there is a need to offer an in-depth diagnosis and to search for those theological insights that may address our current predicament. To acknowledge that this is easier said than done is quite an understatement. There is no shortage of diagnoses offered in contemporary (South) African discourse. Often such a diagnosis is offered through running political commentary and all too often this addresses surface level manifestations, e.g. in terms of murder, violence against women, corruption, state capture, gangsterism, drug trafficking, refugees, poverty, unemployment and inequality, and so forth. It is also evident that there is no emerging consensus on an adequate diagnosis. Consider the following five ways in which a diagnosis may be offered, each complete with a proposed remedy. Christian theologians would find it easy enough to detect underlying notions of sin and of salvation in these diagnoses.<sup>20</sup> In each case one finds rather crude but also more sophisticated versions of the analysis.

Firstly, some would suggest that racism, coupled with white supremacy and Eurocentrism, remains endemic within South Africa. This is readily associated with the sin of pride, also where inverse racism and ethnicism is found. What the remedy for racism may be, is hardly clear, and except that some form of human rights discourse or African notions of ubuntu is typically invoked to stress the inherent and inalienable dignity of each human being. Yet, how such invocation would alter racist sentiments remains obscure in the secular sphere. Perhaps some mix between awareness raising, criminal prosecution and cultural assimilation (sport, music, working together) would suffice to tone down overt racism, albeit that this will hardly eradicate such racist sentiments.

Secondly, some would add that the underlying problem remains ‘white monopoly capitalism’. This is understood in terms of the destructive legacy of imperialist conquest and dispossession, colonial occupation and apartheid rule. This is readily associated with sin as violence, as domination in the name of difference. Such differences can be extended to address gender-

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20 This analysis builds upon a discussion of five classic notions of sin in relation to secular discourse on the roots of ecological destruction (see Conradie 2016). For the notion of sin as a form of social diagnostics (at least if viewed from the outside), see Conradie (2017) and for the correlation between notions of sin, salvation and eschatological consummation, see Conradie (2015).

based violence, homophobia and xenophobia. The remedy here would require a mix of liberation, revolution, land redistribution, restitution and ‘radical economic transformation’, rather than ‘reconstruction and development’. This requires access to political power in order to break down the control of the means of production and capital by the elite, including the new elite. One may struggle to find soteriological expositions of such discourse, except where Old Testament notions of the promised conquest of land are employed and theologically legitimised.

Thirdly, a rather different diagnosis would point to the pervasive influence of consumerist greed. This is readily associated with sin as desire, especially the lust for money, power, prestige and socio-economic status, and with vices such as corruption, criminality, nepotism, drinking, gambling, over-indulgence and putting one’s trust in gaining money without working for that (playing the lotto). This critique may be found in diverging spheres of society, including the famous Nelson Mandela-lecture by the then president Thabo Mbeki (2006), by religious figures, judges and by a wide range of media critics eager to point fingers to politicians who serve their own interests. Accordingly, many would suggest that the nation has lost its soul and have sold it to Mammon instead. What might be the remedy for consumerist greed? This is hard to say, but many tacitly hope that those who engage in lavish spending will soon, like Humpty Dumpty (and Grace Mugabe!) have a great fall. The only other remedy may be open confession, self-sacrifice, following the kenotic way of the cross, but there are few such examples available. Some middle-class and poor South Africans do exercise frugality but, economic indicators suggest that this is a nation in debt. Alternatively, there is of course also the prosperity gospel that serves as a theological legitimisation of an upward social mobility, if not of consumerist aspirations.

Fourthly, one may express concerns over the social fabric of society, the breakdown in family and community life, the many dysfunctional schools, domestic violence, the role of gangs, crime and drug trafficking, etc. There is a paucity of institutions in civil society that have good leadership, able secretaries and reliable treasurers so that we have to live from moral fragments (Rasmussen 1993). Some would suggest that churches and mosques provide beacons of hope for trusted, moral leadership but there are all too many counter-examples of abusive charismatic leadership. This

diagnosis is readily associated with sin as the privation of the good, as alienation, as the breakdown in various relationships, including covenant relations with the Triune God. The remedy of reconciliation may be prescribed given this diagnosis. While this is inescapable at an interpersonal and even a community level, few hold high hopes that calls for 'national reconciliation' would solve the underlying problems. For some a weakened form of conflict management and social cohesion would have to do. We do not need to love our enemies or even our neighbours as long as we do not kill them (Pinker 2011:590). An alternative remedy is the re-imposing of patriarchal authority – as is evident in the 'mighty men' and 'worthy women' movements (see Conradie & Pillay 2015). The inclusive message of the Confession of Belhar, with its emphasis on reconciliation in Jesus Christ and its critique of the apartheid assumption of the irreconcilability of people, is hard to find nowadays.

Finally, the perhaps dominant diagnosis is one of collective (moral) failure. What is required, according to the National Development Plan, for example, is better education, efficiency, harder work, economic growth, and development, aided by some reconstruction. This is readily associated with classic notions of sin as sloth, but also as missing the target (*hamartia*). What would be the remedy here? Beyond reiterating calls to do this or that (there is no shortage of such calls), or movements towards moral regeneration (such calls were dominant in the late 1990s – Richardson 2003), it is not clear where the stimulus for such efforts may come from. Some would say that economic growth is dependent upon direct foreign investment, but such investments depends upon credit ratings so that downgrading aspects of the economy to junk status seems to indicate that the problem lies within. We may be assured of the inherent potential do get our act together, to pull our weight, but this seems to be based on liberal assumptions that we have it within ourselves to save ourselves. Luther would have something to say about that!

## **6. Inequality, justice and justification**

How would a latter-day Luther or Calvin have responded to such South African diagnoses? Although this is a highly speculative question, the need for an adequate diagnosis is obvious, but also elusive. In order to stimulate further debate we therefore offer some observations in this regard:

Arguably, the persistence of gross socio-economic inequalities is one of the dominant features of post-1994 South Africa. This has many dimensions but the inequality in the quality of primary and secondary education is indicative of the underlying problem. By itself some form of inequality forms part of life and cannot be avoided. There will always be differences of age, physical power, intelligence, wealth, music ability, sport skills, etc. Full equality is not necessarily desirable and may amount to a grey homogeneity. However, it is another matter when inequality results from injustices and discrimination. The student protests of the past few years may be regarded as a signal that such inequalities have become so unacceptable that (nearly) everything else must ‘fall’ if these are not addressed. Different groups may disagree on what this ‘everything’ includes but some claims have stopped short of virtually nothing: Rhodes must fall, university management structures must fall, classes must be boycotted, universities must be closed down, the minister of higher education must fall, the President of South Africa must fall, the ANC-government must fall, white monopoly capitalism must fall, the South African constitution (based on a negotiated settlement) must fall, colonial education must fall, if need be democracy and indeed industrialised civilisation must fall since it perpetuates inequalities. Nevertheless, almost everyone would reach a point where they are willing to live with some inequalities and even some injustices, in order to maintain something that is regarded as so valuable that some sacrifices may have to be made for that. What that bottom-line may be is equally contested: the constitution, the liberation movement, democracy, human rights, internet access, air time, soccer, mere survival, etc.

In more technical language one may conclude that justice is a penultimate but not an ultimate concept. Even if the need for justice is rightly regarded as non-negotiable, it needs to be recognised that full justice can never be done since the injustices endured have a temporal duration and such time can never be recovered, even if injustice is followed by restitution, compensation, restoration and reconciliation. If so, justice is best regarded not as an aim in itself, but as a necessary requirement for something else. In theories of justice, justice is itself typically based on something else, e.g. a notion of (law and) order, social contracts, human rights or human dignity.<sup>21</sup>

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21 For an extensive discussion, see Wolterstorff (2008). Demaine Solomons and Ernst Conradie explored Nicholas Wolterstorff’s oeuvre on justice in another postgraduate

What that something else may be is again highly contested. In fact, one may say that this is precisely the deepest diagnosis of the current South African situation, namely that none of the options for a category that may be regarded as more ultimate than justice is attractive enough to muster sufficient moral energy without endless further contestations. Consider the range of options here (in alphabetical order): Afrikaans as language, civilisation, the common good, the constitutional contract, education, ethnic identity, freedom, health, human dignity, human flourishing, human rights, joy, love, money, nation building, peace, pleasure, the rainbow nation, reconciliation, religion, sustainability, ubuntu or wealth. If the belief that money makes the world go round is to be resisted, it is not clear what alternatives are available. A popular spiritual song suggests that it may be love that makes the world go round, but is it indeed?

This way of framing the question, namely to consider what may be more important than justice, has odd theological implications. Some may want to suggest that Christianity or the gospel, or the Christian creed may be regarded as even higher than justice. However, any such a position would be, to put it simply, heretical. If, according to the Christian confession, God is a God of mercy and *therefore* of justice, it would be false to suggest that (allegiance to) God is more important than justice.

Our task is not to prescribe any particular notion of the ultimate but to demonstrate how a lack of an appealing notion of what is truly ultimate can undermine any attempts to address inequality. The most significant reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century were able to articulate that which is truly of ultimate significance. Luther did so through his notion of (alien)

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module offered at UWC in the second semester of 2017 in which students were tasked to write an essay on 'A (South) African Notion of Justice? Nicholas Wolterstorff as Interlocutor' This responds to the observation that, despite an almost overwhelming emphasis on justice in the African context, there is a curious lack of theoretical reflection amongst African scholars on the notion of justice, at least in the fields of philosophy, ethics, religion and theology. It is almost as if there is some hesitation to theorise on justice in case this may create the impression of a distancing, objectivising, cold, all too rational approach, removed from the heat of the contestation. One exception is the book by Willa Boesak (1995) that includes a detailed discussion on a theology of revolution, drawing on Thomas Müntzer (109–140) – whose reformation he describes as an 'alternative reformation' (129).

justification, while Calvin extended this to a concern for justification *and* justice (understood in terms of sanctification).<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps this indicates a sense of direction, namely to explore the interplay between justification and justice and make that relevant for our own (South) African context.<sup>23</sup> Given the New Testament emphasis on *dikaiosisune*, these must be integrally linked, but the rhetoric of justification typically (although not exclusively) emphasises grace for all sinners, while the rhetoric of justice focuses on those who are sinned against. Does the Christian gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ through the Spirit then entail two messages, one for victims and one for perpetrators?<sup>24</sup> How can an emphasis on both justification and justice be maintained?<sup>25</sup> It seems that there remain deep divides in various theological discourses in South Africa on this question, symbolised by the contrast between the Belhar Confession and the Kairos Document. Perhaps this is why it may be helpful to study the legacy of 16<sup>th</sup> century ecclesial reform movements in Europe, namely that this may offer a lens to help us understand theological problems that remain unresolved, also amongst us.

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22 The classic discussion of the distinction between the ultimate and the penultimate remains Bonhoeffer's *Ethics*. Bonhoeffer's plea was for the recognition of what is penultimate and arguably also for that which is mundane. It may be noted that he explained the ultimate primarily in terms of the doctrine of justification, i.e. God's forgiveness of sinners! See Bonhoeffer (2005:146–170).

23 A meeting of Lutheran theologians from Latin America and the United States held in Mexico in 1985 explored the relationship between justification and justice and issued a statement to that effect. Conference papers were published in the 1987 issue of *Word and Word*. Hultgren (1987:3) portrays two ways of construing the relationship between justification and justice; 'One is to say that by means of justification a person is set free from any and all preoccupations with seeking God's favor and is thereby directed to the world to seek justice for all of God's children. Another is to say that justification and justice belong together in the singular action of God to set things right ... and so the gospel of justification without the summons to justice fails to attend to the totality of the biblical witness concerning God's work and will'.

24 For a discussion see Park (2009) and Park & Nelson (2001). Park's book *Triune Atonement* is prescribed for an undergraduate module on the Doctrine of Christ at UWC – another pedagogical experiment in the making!

25 This question was subsequently addressed by Ernst Conradie in three talks offered at a conference for pastors in Pretoria in September 2017 – after the pedagogical experiment described here was concluded. He offered an eightfold typology of attempts to do justice (!) to both justification and justice but concluded that this 'and' remains elusive, to say the least. See Conradie (2018, forthcoming).

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