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## Public Practical Theology and Public Pastoral Care Intersection with Christian Ethics Within the Context of *Ubuntu* and Hospitality to Migrants

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# Public Practical Theology and Public Pastoral Care Intersection with Christian Ethics Within the Context of *Ubuntu* and Hospitality to Migrants

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is not an attempt at analysing the nuances underlying the differences in perspectives on practical theology but to focus on the state of practical theology in shaping public policy in South Africa. Therefore, being conscious of the limitations, the article will address one of the tasks of a public theology that tends to reflect on the role of religion in the public sphere in modern or modernising societies such as in South Africa in challenging public theologians to reflect on, among other things, the issues in the public sphere by different religious claims (Dreyer & Pieterse, 2010:2). Thus, the emphasis will centre on xenophobia as it pertains to public practical theology and public pastoral care intersection with Christian public ethics within the context of *Ubuntu* and hospitality to migrants in South Africa.

Theology operating in the public domain will be transformational by considering the ethos of *Ubuntu* in

South Africa. This entails ongoing learning from contexts and reflecting on them to discern 'what God is saying', in particular to xenophobic instances, by bridging the three epistemological spheres by exploring: theological, historical Western approaches and African wisdom and tradition, and being able to engage with issues on an ongoing basis (Magezi, 2018:8). Public theology concerns itself with theological engagement with the public and making sense out of these interactions, especially focusing on issues in the public sphere outside of the confines of the church and placing them on the church's agenda. By applying the public practical theological approach, theology engages in meaningful conversations that foster unity, coexistence, mutual trust, peaceful and compassionate existence (Magezi, 2018:6). Thus, meaningful conversations lead the pastoral care practitioner to develop a theological language that is devoid of a binary approach of 'them' and 'us, victim and perpetrator, and migrant and native (Magezi, *ibid.*).

The pastoral task is to facilitate Christian living in the contemporary world by relating actions and behaviours to the deeper underlying meanings, analysing concrete events, their contexts and causes, their significance and desirable outcomes (Gerkin, 1997: 118). Gerkin (1997:132) asserts that "the role of theology is determined by its ability to transform the world through its epistemological status by which sources are validated". This transformation in Christian life should be borne out through hospitality as through it some have unknowingly entertained angels (Hebrews 13:2), as being hospitable is not intended for some, but for all, especially local churches in South Africa in the face of xenophobia and hostility towards migrants. There is a need to emphasise the caring side, revisiting our *Ubuntu* heritage, and the Christian value of hospitality to foster a culture of *Philoxenia*.

## II. PUBLIC PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AND INTERCONNECTION WITH CHRISTIAN ETHICS

The paradigmatic shift to the 'public' needs to be sensitive to the contexts, such as cultural, economic, social, political, racial, religious, ethnic, etc., therefore, there needs to be sensitivity to the plurality of the

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situations depending on the plurality of world views in each geographical space (Meylahn, 2017:1). Meylahn further asserts that the paradigm needs to be radically hermeneutical according to his understanding of Caputo's (1987:1) interpretation of the notion of radical hermeneutics as non-betrayal of the original difficulty of life with metaphysics. This entails that there should be an awareness that all that there is are texts/interpretations or stories and there should not be a single interpretation or a single story (Meylahn, *ibid*). Therefore, cognisance should be taken of the role of language in a world where the inability to escape language closing the door to the underlying universal structures or essential truths exists. The paradigm needs to be open to and be aware of the multiple ways of interpreting knowledge and texts (Meylahn, 2017:2).

It is important to note that the focus of public practical theology is not limited to inter-human or intra-human behaviour but is particularly concerned with the religious dimensions of lived life viewed according to the prevalent dynamics and of its involvement in particular situations (de Wet, 2017:83). The importance of the pastoral hermeneutic cycle, as developed by Holland and Henriot, and adapted for South African contexts by Cochrane, De Gruchy and Peterson (1991:13-25) cannot be discounted, as it offers an analysis of the context to give meaning to cause-effect reasoning.

Public pastoral care involves "the shift from the "public" of the church and academy to the "public" of contemporary society informed by public theology in that it develops for public debate and political interpretation such things as acts directed towards the healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciling and nurturing of persons whose troubles and concerns arise in the context of daily interactions and ultimate means and concerns (Tracy, 1981:5; Graham, 2000:12).

To achieve the task of moving to the public sphere, pastoral care should move away from care that is only care of the human soul (*cura animarum*) to also include care of the human web. This could be achieved by contributing to a humane society, fostering values such as unconditional love and service to those in need, preservation of the earth and safeguarding it against violent exploitation and for telecommunication to foster equality to counter threats of domination (Louw, 2002: 347-348). Therefore, the shift to the public arena involves a mind shift on the part of the Christian pastoral caregiver in that they should be mindful of the tensions in the pastoral mandate of whether to "love God by loving the stranger as a neighbour (Luke 10:27) or making the disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18-20).

#### a) *Christian public ethics*

The Christian public ethic towards migrants can be aptly captured in two main messages in the New Testament or specifically the teachings of Jesus Christ. The first message is captured in Matthew 7:12, "Do to

others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the law and the prophets", which one would consider as the 'golden rule'. It is this scriptural passage that prohibits us subjecting others to the brutality, violence and mistreatment that migrants are subjected to (Koenane, 2018:1-7). The second biblical text "The second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 22:39), which is the second commandment of Christ, hence, a moral imperative that suggests it is morally binding. It therefore compels the Christian to express his love to strangers instead of mistreating or oppressing them, as everybody desires to be treated with courtesy, compassion and kindness. Gula (1989:179) observes that in the scriptures the Greek word *agape* means love. According to him (Gula), it seems to be more appropriate to translate the word *agape* as 'hospitality' in contemporary terms as the Greek concept does not work for many these days, since within the Christian framework nowadays, love is expressed more profoundly as 'hospitality'. This is reinforced by the beatitudes, (Matthew 25:35-36), with Jesus suggesting that the way a person was treated as a stranger would be the measure that will decide a person's fate, (Koenane, 2018:6).

To advance the narrative further, it will be useful to quote briefly the views held by Vorster (2012) in his insightful article on 'Christian ethics in the face on secularism'. Vorster's understanding of secularism was shaped by the views of Laeyendecker (2005:903) and Martin (2011:105). He asserts that it is a sociological concept that describes the marginalisation of religion in society and the declining influence of the Christian religion in certain parts of the world (Vorster, 2012:1). The decline in the influence of Christianity can be ascribed to the surge of rationalism, pluralism and relativism in the modern secular thought and action. Vorster (2012:1) poses the question: what exactly is Christian ethics? Christian ethics can be defined from the perspective of a Roman Catholic approach that is characterised by the insistence on mediation, acceptance of natural law and the role of the church; or, from the perspective of Protestant Christian ethics which is moulded around the emphasis on freedom, the importance of scripture and the theological nature of the discipline (Gale, 2015:265).

Vorster (2012:2) argues that Christian ethics has a future as an important role player in the morality of secularised society if the discipline is based on a well-defined and plausible meta-theoretical foundation. Vorster asserts that the meta-theoretical foundation is based upon John 1:1 as the three manifestations of the revelation of God, namely, (1) the creational word (the book of nature), (2) the written word (the Bible), and (3) the incarnate Word (Jesus Christ), and these being necessary for a Christian ethical epistemology for contemporary secularised society (Vorster, 2012:5).

Vorster is of the view that God bestowed on every human being a sense of morality in His revelation in the book of nature, which was called natural law in the early Reformation period, as embodied in the Catholic Tradition. He prefers to call them creational gifts as they were given by God to all humanity, not to bring about their own salvation, but to preserve law and order in human society through good moral norms (Vorster, 2012:5). However, the concept of natural law has fierce critics, especially among Protestants, who otherwise have very little in common except their vehement opposition to natural-law thinking, with the opposition not only limited to revisionist thinkers but also embraced by those who are confessed to be orthodox. Therefore, across the spectrum of Protestantism there is broader consensus on the rejection of natural law as a metaphysical notion of morality, namely, a law that God communicates to all people without the need for special revelation (such as the Bible), and that therefore it applies to all people at all times and in all places (Charles, 2015).

The recognition of natural law safeguards Christian ethics from its exclusive claim of moral authority and Biblicism (the literal and a-historical reading of the Biblical text), however, it fulfils one condition. Therefore, such morality should not distrust the other sources of Christian moral thinking being the written, and the Incarnate Word. The importance of the scripture in the classic Reformed view, is seen as the book containing a continuous message unfolding in various underlying themes, such as God's election of his people through to transience and resurrection, with the main theme being the kingship of God and His entering into a personal relationship with mankind (Vorster, 2012:6). The justification of scripture as the divine authority is presented as an argument based on acceptance of its 'scope of the whole' in agreement with the 'consent of all parts' as espoused in Acts 10:43 (*ibid*). The Incarnate Word is Jesus Christ himself (John 1:1) from whom many exemplary Christian moral theories flow from His teachings and conduct (self-sacrifice, humility, servanthood, forgiveness, obedience to God, etc.), that require Christians to follow in his footsteps by promoting peace and bringing hope to their fellow mankind. The morals of the Incarnate Word instil in Christians the need to be the custodians of justice for the poor, oppressed and marginalised of society and the powers of the day (Vorster, 2012:7). According to Vorster it is imperative that Christian ethics is practised in accordance with the book of nature, the written word and the Incarnate Word.

There are many differing perspectives concerning the approaches to issues pertaining to Christians in contemporary society, such as: the elimination of xenophobia in South African society, synergies from public practical theology, public pastoral theology, and public Christian ethics. *Ubuntu* and

hospitality are essential to achieve this end, as both rely on the context of the situation. As Williams (2011:2) puts it, Christian communities are duty-bound to inculcate civic virtues that create social flourishing and endeavour to exercise those tasks of decision-making within the social milieu for maintaining and sustaining a humane environment. This is attested by Mnyadu (1997:81), who posits that "from an *Ubuntu* perspective it is the very human essence itself, which finds expression in daily living by acts of love and efforts to create harmonious relationships in the community and the world beyond". Koenane (2018), thus argues that "from the *Ubuntu* and Christian perspectives, in which the community is a foundational basis for the principles of becoming are established, it is unsurprising that collective guilt is not far-fetched". This he interprets from the "socio-moralist point of view in that Christian morality and *Ubuntu* go against the current response from the South African public towards nationalist prejudices and xenophobia in its Afrophobic form". It is in this context that both Christian values and *Ubuntu* principles can foster a culture of *Philoxenia*, "the principle of loving, caring and showing compassion to strangers as set out in the Bible" (Koenane, 2018:2).

### III. PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AS A CONCEPTUAL AND FUNCTIONAL UNDERSTANDING WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF XENOPHOBIA – A SHIFT IN EMPHASIS TO PUBLIC PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Christian communities are called to act against all kinds of dehumanisation, which entails not opting out of public and social issues either current or existing but providing a different vision and identity in the lived world. Hence, every person has inherently good character, even though humans suppress the goodness and demonstrate bad behaviour, (Gyekye, 1991:324). This involves moving from the church existing within its own walls; including a clerical paradigm and its own praxis in the world, to examining the church's strategy for creating and influencing the structures of care in the wider secular society (Browning, 1996:57). This is reinforced by the view espoused by Gathogo (2007:119) that theological practitioners in Africa have to pursue an agenda that is pastorally holistic in society, in that it strives for relevance and engages with pressing public challenges for African Christianity and social development, while disentangling itself from Western theological approaches. It is therefore useful to be cognisant of the fact that, taken together and independently, both *Ubuntu* and Christian values prevail on human beings to act and treat vulnerable migrants or strangers with respect and kindness, and with compassion as was extended to the stranger in the parable of the Good Samaritan.



The theological studies undertaken by clergy are basically theory-laden, so practical theology attempts to demystify the underlying theory. The actions, as such, of the dominant theory are laid bare by the practical theological studies that are involved with the actions of the church as the guardian of moral values. According to Browning (1996:55-56), to understand and practise practical theology one must ask or undertake the four fundamental questions/tasks, that is:

- 'how do we understand this concrete situation in which we must act?' – this relies on of the interplay of institutional systems and how they converge on the situation.
- 'what should be our praxis in this concrete situation?' – the bringing together of symbolic and actional norms into an intimate relationship with the particularities of the situation.
- 'how do we critically defend the norms of our praxis in this concrete situation?' – the defence of these norms is what distinguishes the revised correlational approach to practical theology, and,
- 'what means, strategies, and rhetoric should we use in this concrete situation?' – this poses the issue of where people are in the process of transformation.

Osmer (2008:4) maintains that the task of practical theology entails answering the following questions: first, what is going on, what is the situation and contextual analysis? second, why is this going on? This is an interpretation and understanding of the situation. Third, what ought to be going on? This entails developing a perspective and understanding from the normative texts. Fourth, what are the specific, concrete steps that should be taken to respond to the situation? As by its very nature, practical theology should result in strategic actions.

Muller (2004:300) postulates that practical theology consists of seven movements which are informed by:

a specific context and interpreted experience; in-context experiences are listened to and described; interpretations of experiences are made, described and developed; a description of experiences as they are continually informed by traditions of interpretation; a reflection on God's presence, as it is understood and experienced in a specific situation; a description of experience, and augmented through interdisciplinary investigation and the development of alternative interpretations that point beyond the local community.

Miller-McLemore (2012:26) rightly stated that practical theology has disrupted the space occupied by academic theology by pushing for a fresh theology that is not abstracted from life. It is about taking theology out to the streets and using what is learned from the streets to assess the adequacy of biblical, historical and doctrinal claims.

Miller-McLemore (2012:20) usefully describes practical theology as referring to four distinct enterprises with different audiences or objectives. She (Miller-McLemore 2012: 20) stated that practical theology is:

{a} discipline among scholars and an activity of faith among believers. And it has two other common uses; it is a method for studying theology in practice and it is a curricular area of sub-disciplines in the seminary. Practical theology refers to an activity of believers seeking to sustain a life of reflective faith in the everyday life, a method or way of analysing theology in practice used by religious leaders and by teachers and students across the theological curriculum, a curricular area in theological education focused on ministerial practice and sub-specialities, and, finally, an academic discipline pursued by a smaller subset of scholars to support and sustain these first three enterprises.

Miller-McLemore (2012:20) noted that each of the aspects of practical theology points to different locations, that is: from daily life to the library, and fieldwork to classroom, congregation to community, academic guild and global context. She (Miller-McLemore 2012:26) remarked that practical theology is about returning theology to the people. She added that, as an academic discipline, practical theology is secondary to the work and practice of most Christians and scholars. It is also primarily a way of doing in daily life what is fundamental to Christian faith. This is emphasised by Grab (2005:196) that practical theology needs to explore the symbolic strength of Christianity in the face of today's complex socio-cultural conditions, for making sense of life and successfully coping with its needs.

Poling (2011:161-168) addresses his definitions of practical theology by acknowledging that reflection in practical theology begins with the recognition of the presence of difference and otherness in experiences. This reflection then leads to the awareness of tensions within the self and the tension between oppression and liberation in the institutions and ideologies of community. He further posits that, the reflection leads to one's ultimate horizon, one's understanding of truth or God and whether these truths, which are part of our inherited and constructed religious vision, are abusive or redemptive. This reflection reaches a critical point when, he observes, God calls the researcher into practices of transformation and uncovers the resistance thereof.

The relevancy of these methods and definitions of practical theology in this work are crucial and important, as they will act as a guide alongside the research context without being pedantic to any of them, as Van Huyssteen (2000:428) is of the opinion that all theology should start from the context. Thus, public practical theology directed and in collaboration with *Ubuntu* and hospitality towards migrants in a multicultural context could only emerge from the

moment of praxis, bearing in mind that *Ubuntu* itself has been used in diverse contexts by different people for various purposes (Buqa, 2016:21)

#### IV. PUBLIC PRACTICAL THEOLOGY WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF XENOPHOBIA

In recent years, practical theology has evolved from being primarily concerned with the practice of the church and clergy to include public issues such as poverty and the plight of migrants. Dreyer (2004:919-920) argues that practical theology should not be solely understood as focusing on the church and clergy. The vision for practical theology should be broadened to include the everyday life of people at local, national and global levels. This position that practical theology should include a public dimension was noted by Dreyer (2004:919). Practical theology should critically reflect on both the Christian tradition as well as social and political issues (Dreyer 2004:919). Magezi (2019:133) in his insightful article 'Practical Theology in Africa – situation, approaches, framework and agenda proposition' rightly observed that "Practical Theology in Africa is faced with a challenge of developing a holistic practical theological framework that includes practical spirituality, social, physical, political and economic issues" (Magezi, 2019:133).

The shift in emphasis of practical theology to public practical theology is a major development that is acknowledged by many practical theologians (Magezi, 2018; Dreyer, 2004, 2011; Dreyer & Pieterse, 2010; Osmer & Schweitzer, 2004). Osmer and Schweitzer (2003: 218) helpfully explain that the task of public practical theology is discerned in three ways: first, it is about ensuring that the public is one of the audiences of practical theology. Second, it is to ensure that practical theology includes everyday concerns and issues in its reflection. Third, practical theology should facilitate a dialogue between theology and contemporary culture. Vanhoozer and Strachan (2015: 16-17) in 'The pastor as public theologian' advised that the pastor should be a theologian by asking 'what is God saying in Christ'. At the same time the pastor should be a public figure which means that they should 'publicly be involved in and for the community'. The focus on public issues in public theology is to ensure that theology engages key social issues such as poverty (Miller-McLemore, 2005:95-106).

Graham (2017:1) argues further that the churches in the face of denominationalism and disunity could advance in a common cause of practical witness to society, and embrace the causes of social reform, justice and human welfare as living expressions of the Gospel. This will entail a move away from a primary objective as training for ordained ministry, towards an investigation into the church as a community of practice (Graham, 2017:3). Stoddart (2014:321-329) in his article 'Public Practical Theology in Scotland: with particular

reference to the independence referendum' submits that practical theologians had to engage themselves with public issues such as spirituality in health care, violence against women, poverty, anti-sectarianism, peace building and cultural identities as well as the independence referendum.

He (Stoddart, 2014:345) observed that 'critical faithfulness' is a slippery objective that bears within it tensions for all practical theologians, as it is not self-evident as to the relative weight that should be ascribed to biblical and theological traditions in relation to people's contemporary experiences. Therefore, the practical theologian should help Christians to discern the tension and feel empowered to articulate their own struggles with the text without feeling that their ambivalence is maverick or 'unfaithful'. The more urgent issue will be how Christians in congregations are helped to draw on the Bible and theological traditions to develop a stance on specific public issues (Stoddart, 2014:345).

Migration has been described by Pope Benedict XVI (Benedictus, 2005) as the 'sign of the times', meaning that it is a feature of our contemporary times that challenges the church to reflection and a new praxis (Field, 2017:2). Therefore, practical theology in the South African context must go public in response to the *kairos* (ie xenophobia) facing the church that affords a time of challenge and opportunity, that requires a response in praxis, ethics and theology (*ibid.*). Thus, practical theology in moving to the public sphere/issues ensures it will be in line with the argument of the *Kairos Document*, that an adequate theological response must be grounded in social analysis that obviates glossing over the *kairos*, hence, offering a proper and adequate response to the *kairos*.

Public theology as described by Kim (2007:1) as a "deliberate use of common language in a commitment to influence public decision-making, and also to learn from substantive public discourse". In the South African context, the approach to public theology cited in Dreyer's article also highlights the separate but similar views taken by De Villiers and De Gruchy. De Villiers (2005:530) states that:

The crucial question with regard to the effective promulgation of the Christian vision of a good South African society is: Should it be promulgated in the broader South African society in its distinctively Christian form, or is some translation of it needed to ensure its wider acceptance.

In his second thesis of the seven theses on the formulation of public theological praxis, he writes:

...good public theological praxis requires the development of language that is accessible to people outside the Christian tradition, and is convincing in its own; but it also needs to address Christian congregations in a language whereby public debates are related to the traditions of faith.

The observations of placing public theology in the public sphere and the subsequent impediments it

may encounter, will be discussed in more detail later as we explore the meaningful contribution of *Ubuntu*, hospitality and Christian ethics in addressing the *kairos* (xenophobia).

Pieterse (2017:140), writing in the context of missiology, asserts that theology today should engage itself in public themes being global in scope, have a holistic depth and reach, and be robust in clarifying Christian truth as public speech. Pienaar and Muller (2012:7) assert that a theology that allows for personal stories, in the present study – xenophobia, and takes them seriously, has the possibility of being authentic and relevant, therefore can be acknowledged as public theology. Magezi (2018:6) asserts that in the South African context, where theology has a baggage of association with apartheid, a concerted effort should be undertaken to explore the opportunities and possibilities of explicitly making practical theology assume a public practical theological approach, and pastoral care assume a public pastoral care role. Therefore, theology will enter the public debate and make its contribution through a public practical theology nexus.

## V. PUBLIC PASTORAL CARE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF XENOPHOBIA

The diverse challenges for the churches in the South African contextual synopsis is to respond to public issues that engulf and directly affect the lives and progress of people, and the need to participate in discourses that tend to address the socio-public issues such as xenophobia, corruption, oppression, et cetera. This necessitates a need to respond to public issues as a concern for theological disciplines such as practical theology, public theology and pastoral care (Magezi, 2018:1). Osmer and Schweitzer (2003) are of the view that practical theology should be a facilitator of a dialogue between theology and contemporary culture. This is emphasised by Koppel (2015:151) in his assertion that practising public theology will require that both the pastoral care practitioner and theologian be cognisant of the issues that concern groups of people (migrants facing xenophobia in South Africa) and the population as a whole (South Africans perpetrating acts of xenophobia), rather than individuals in isolation. This will enable theorists and practitioners to refine their methods and purposes through the broader lens of framing pastoral care ministries.

Lartey and Sharp (2015:134) maintained that public pastoral practice encourages engaging with multiple public conversation partners, negotiating complex tensions in society and being accountable to those where pastoral theology is implicated, to discern thoughtful dialogue. Williams (2011:2-3) contends that this shift to public pastoral care, effectively posits theology to engage with social issues to participate in creating a healthy community in addition to spiritual

issues. Forrester (2005:39) warns that “existing religious debates and reasons from the public sphere takes away an important tool for understanding the current climate that is the post-Christian, post-secular world that needs new practices of theological interpretation”. This new location of accountability poses a dilemma for pastoral theologians as it requires a new language, new rules of engagement, and new conversation partners where it is important to note that there is no such thing as a generic public or society (Leslie, 2008:83). This has been aptly described, by one of the leaders in pastoral care, Miller-McLemore (2018:318) as moving from the exclusive focus upon “living human documents”, to attend also to the “living human web”.

Practical theology at this public intersection is ‘murky’ and unclear (Magezi, 2019:1). Magezi (2019:1) writing in the context of a public pastoral care definition, rightly noted that:

Despite the recognition of the need for pastoral care to address broader social issues, the vexing questions and issues that currently remain somewhat like a black box or lacking clarity are the following: what does public pastoral care look like? How should public pastoral care be conceptualised in practice? How can public pastoral care be done? What does pastoral mean when engaging with social issues?

However, it should be noted that public theology has been practised for centuries as it is about the lived experiences of Christians where a Christian interacts with social, political and practical issues and challenges. Mannion (2009:151) rightly observed that public theology is about public ecclesiology as it is concerned with ecclesiological questions of the church’s relevance to issues affecting people today. Unsurprisingly, public ecclesiology, pastoral care and *diakonia* intersect indicating a clear public pastoral role for the church. Pastoral care needs a “theological theory that enables practical theological reflection of pastoral ministry that can draw insights from the core task of practical theological interpretation” (Osmer, 2008:4):

- as descriptive-empirical practice it will inform the pastoral theologian/practitioner to gather information that is useful to discern patterns and particular contexts, episodes, or situations
- as an interpretive task to draw on theories of the humanities and sciences to better understand and explain why these patterns and dynamics are occurring
- as a normative task it will enable the pastoral theologian/practitioner to draw on the biblical concepts to construct ethical norms to guide and provide responses to the existential questions in order to interpret the situations, episodes, or contexts presented from a hermeneutical perspective
- as a pragmatic task to devise holistic specific, concrete causes of action that will influence

situations in ways that are desirable through emotional-narrative support and cognitive behavioural interventions.

Therefore, the usefulness of the cycle proposed by Osmer (2008:4) “serves as a development of praxis that functions as a constructive expression of the interplay between tradition (Scripture), context and interpretation” (Smit, 2015:2).

Kim's (2017:61) concluding analysis of current public approaches to public theology promoted two key approaches that are relevant to pastoral care. The first emphasises the interplay between theory and practice, between theology and the church and practical theological disciplines, while the second appraises particular issues in different socio-political contexts to develop methodologies for contextual public theology (Magezi, 2019:4). The two approaches as espoused by Kim (2017:61-62) directly apply to a public pastoral care approach, as it pertains to our discussion on xenophobia in South Africa, taken with the fourth gap in current public theological conceptualisations of supporting minorities, the poor, marginalised and the voiceless, which needs to be given a top priority. Moving pastoral theology and care into the public sphere requires a re-think on the part of the pastoral theologian/practitioner to modify their theological assumptions and mandates (Leslie, 2008:95).

According to Tracy (1981:5), this involves being mindful of the three publics that should be engaged by theology: society, academia and the church. The church must embody and influence the ethical and moral standards expected by society as public theological approaches challenge and refute methodologically the bipolarity and division of secular and sacred, it is interdisciplinary and dialogical. The public theology approach resonates with practical theology and pastoral care as its discipline is embedded into such a dialectic and spiral approach (Magezi, 2019:4).

The love of neighbour and of God and bearing witness to Christ's love is expressed clearly when acted out within a Christian context, despite our differences, as we claim a central connection to God and Christ (Leslie, 2008:95). She (Leslie) further asserts

that when we move pastoral care outside the Christian context of following Christ and bearing witness, complexities arise in loving a stranger as a neighbour, particularly when we have to bear in mind that others who are not Christian are not viewing it from a Christian context (*ibid*).

Leslie (2008:95) warns that “the pastoral care practitioner/theologian must be aware of the theological tensions involved in the shift into the public sphere about the pastoral theological mandate: Is the pastoral mandate to love God by loving the stranger as neighbour” (Luke 10:27) or is it to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20)? Therefore, the salient point in this conundrum is to come to terms with “how to

strike a balance between the Great Commandments and the Great Commission” (Leslie, 2008:95).

Hiltner (1958:17) stated that

the notion of Christians caring for each other's well-being as observed in spontaneous expressions of mutual love and in formal ministry of the church, is a lived Christian experience borne out of their relationship with God and to other people as inseparable and based on the commandment of love presented by Jesus as the ultimate ethical goal, encapsulated in Matthew 22:37-40.

Therefore, as such, ‘pastoral ministry forms an integral part of the theological encyclopaedia’. Hence, pastoral care as *cura animarum* (care of souls) is shifting from an individualised focus to addressing public issues (Louw 1999, 2014; Miller-McLemore 2004, 2005, 2018; Leslie 2008). This, Louw (1999:7) observed, was the challenge to pastoral care as “how should the church in all her expressions listen to people in order to understand and interpret the human existence in terms of God's revelation”. The shift to addressing public issues has been aptly captured by Miller-McLemore (2018:311) by “identifying at least three trends behind this shift as: the interest in congregational studies; the call for new public theology; and most importantly in her (Miller-McLemore) view, the rise of liberation movements”. She (Miller-McLemore, 2018:315) further opines that “the metaphor of the living human web emphasises the need to identify and attend to social inequities and injustices that perpetuate suffering, and therefore have an impact on the shape of health, and illness care”. Therefore, pastoral care should socialise practitioners to have particular understandings of the church and the social ethics of public care because religion has public consequences.

Graham (2000:12) argues that shifting pastoral care into the public domain in order for the efforts of care to bear upon individuals and society, the task of pastoral theology will be to develop public pastoral strategies for healing, sustaining, guiding and liberating individuals, cultures and the natural order. Leslie (2015: 95) notes that

the pastoral care practitioner's task is to meet a person where they are, theologically, emotionally, physically, culturally and communally with his/her best tools of intercultural empathy to help them reflect on how they make meaning in the light of ultimate distress and help them mend their own brokenness.

Pastoral care should transform the lives of people by addressing the three publics of society, academy and the church. Therefore, the practitioners of pastoral care in the public sphere should be equipped to work in the public space by arming themselves with the requisite tools for the fundamental work of reflection and theorising. This, however, entails translation of language to suit the public space. De Gruchy (2007:39) is of the view that public theology should use a common



language that is understandable by people outside the Christian tradition.

This view is shared by Koopman (2012:16) in expressing the need for a language for public discourse. Koopman (2012:1) drawing from lessons from Etienne de Villiers' theology, posits that prophetic public theology should include a vision of a redeemed and new society (habitat) of people, with new habits (habitus), who engage in challenging public issues of their time. Dreyer (2011:3) in his informative article 'Public theology and the translation imperative: A Ricoeurian perspective' argues that a communicative approach in the public sphere in a multicultural and multi-religious democratic society (South Africa) requires "a translation of our Christian language in a language that is understood and accessible in the public sphere". It is notable that the need to position pastoral care in the public sphere has been met with confusion concerning the language of public pastoral care. Leslie (2008:96-97) has clarified the somewhat interchangeability at one level of public pastoral care, public practical theology and public theology and she has clarified that public pastoral care is pastoral care practised in a public sphere. Therefore, public pastoral care entails committing and striving to be experts in many areas for pastors to engage in the public space (Magezi, 2019:5).

## VI. PUBLIC PRACTICAL THEOLOGY, PUBLIC PASTORAL CARE AND CHRISTIAN PUBLIC ETHICS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF XENOPHOBIA

In the context of xenophobia, the practices of public practical theology, public pastoral care and Christian public ethics represent the health of the church, an apt metaphor for the church as an "organism" – the "sent" church – that has a public role to play. The church should not be akin to cancerous cells that only reproduce in the body but do nothing for the benefit of the rest of the body. The church rather needs to be what human life would look like under the lordship of Christ. The purpose of the church is to serve the Lord in serving the world filled with people who are reaching out and repairing the society. The task of public practical theology, public pastoral care and Christian public ethics according to Osmer (2008:4), is

to interpret situations or contexts presented from a hermeneutical perspective relying on biblical concepts to construct ethical norms to guide and provide responses to the existential questions and devise holistic strategies of action that will influence situations or public policy in ways that are desirable.

The pastoral hermeneutic cycle adapted for the South African context by Cochrane, De Gruchy and Peterson (1991:13-25) is important in this study for addressing the *kairos* (xenophobia) as it offers an analysis of the context in order to give meaning to

cause-effect reasoning. Essentially the hermeneutic cycle considers the role of scripture, tradition and reason in addressing everyday concerns and issues in its reflection. Grab (2005:196) contends that practical theology needs to explore how the symbolic strength of Christianity in today's complex socio-cultural conditions can make sense of life and for successfully coping with life under the guidance of the church.

Practising pastoral and practical theology in the African context requires that one should be mindful that African society, even South African society in this instance, warns Magezi (2016:3) in his thought-provoking article on the assessment of the conundrum, is not simplistically homogeneous but heterogeneous. Second, in African terms there is a discernible gulf between academic reflection and grassroots congregational ministry. Third, the practise of pastoral care ministry is diverse among denominations with a noticeable difference between traditional missionary started churches and the budding emerging African founded churches with a largely Charismatic and Pentecostal outlook. Fourth, he (Magezi, 2016:3) states that practitioners from different theological persuasions have a significant diversity of pastoral care approaches. Last, Magezi (2016:3) observes that there is a lack of narrowed focus on questions considered in pastoral care. Magezi, however, concedes that this should not be a hindrance in addressing the current challenges in pastoral care in Africa.

One of the leading proponents of pastoral care in Africa, Daniel J. Louw, has stated that public theology must be humanised by dealing and engaging with real life practical issues such as xenophobia and democratised with its focus on ethical questions and public issues as its mainstay (Louw, 2014). Therefore, pastoral care in Africa should adopt an intentional address of real-life practical issues by placing issues on the church agenda to both intentionally reflect on and explore practical solutions. Christian ministry and public theology should intervene, and pastoral care should be used as leverage, when social and community challenges, such as poverty, xenophobia, gender-based violence, and abuse, are experienced. This view of public practical theology is reinforced by Juma's (2015:3) assertion that public theology is about interpreting and living theological beliefs and values in the public sphere. This entails strengthening capacity of churches to think (theological reflection) and exemplify (model) Jesus and His kingdom. This involves a grassroots incarnational Christianity where the church demonstrates what "it means to be truly human by living" and expressing the desired human-human interaction that God desires for humanity (as people created in His image) and in this way the church becomes a mirror of good.

Public Christian ethics should draw from people's life experiences and capacities, which Magezi

(2007) called natural potentials. *Ubuntu* serves as a crucial natural ethic potential that enforces and engenders hospitality, neighbourliness and care for the rest of humanity. *Ubuntu*, like the Christian fellowship, means being bound together and seeking the good of the other. Metz (2007:335-337) rightly observed that *Ubuntu* is summarised by two concepts in Africa: solidarity and identity. One must identify with others and act in solidarity with them. Solidarity and being identified with the other person entails being on the 'same team'. There is no Jew or Greek (Galatians 3:28) from the perspective of God's image.

Within a pluralistic context where human rights are given a privileged position, the only foundational reference point seems to be human rights as outlined in the South African Constitution's Bill of Rights. Xenophobia or migrants' exclusion in African discussions particularly in South Africa has been blamed on 'African-hood' as represented by *Ubuntu* and human rights. However, there has been little critique of the actions from the perspective of Christian theological tradition or concepts. While *Ubuntu* is a very useful integrating concept, its shortcomings should be noted. Collective humanity as denoted by fellowship as spelt out by being one in Christ, is much deeper and broader than *Ubuntu* that focuses on relational bonds. Magezi (2017:116-118) calls for transformation of *Ubuntu* by Biblical principles. Public Christian ethics devoid of Biblically guided principles runs the risk of being a social good that is devoid of Christian telos and motive. Christian telos and motive should be the undergirding principles.

## VII. ALTRUISM: SELFLESS CONCERN FOR THE WELL-BEING OF OTHERS

"Altruism is recognised and practiced as a value present in both traditional African cultures and Christian cultures. Like Christianity, African culture also emphasises altruism" (Kholopa, 2016). Kanungo and Mendonca (2004:143) articulate that "Christianity's command to love God and love others as we love ourselves is the most important obligation in Judeo-Christian ethics". Jesus supports this point with the parable of the Good Samaritan when he says "...which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?... the one who had mercy on him". The story ends with Jesus' request to "go and do likewise" (Luke 10:30-37). African folktales are full of similar stories of generosity and hospitality. Johnson (2001:112) sees the correct understanding of altruism as "an ancient yet contemporary principle and yet new". Thus, there is an invitation and at the same time a challenge in the Good Samaritan's story to do likewise in our communities that are experiencing all kinds of situations of unrest, such as xenophobia, crime and violence.

This is argued by Haught (2001:67) that "evidence suggests that human beings have deeply ingrained tendencies to act in either direction". Foreign nationals were killed, maimed and displaced in South Africa during xenophobic episodes in recent years supposedly because of varied claims labelled against migrants such as stealing their jobs, their women, their housing, they commit crime, and so forth. We now have a great challenge on our hands, as African theologians, to find ways to evoke the better part of human nature. The pluralistic nature of South African society can make it difficult to focus on common values. In the South African context altruism offers significant ethical value and promises to aid in attending to some social ills such as xenophobia, poverty, crime, and so forth. Creating communal altruism will cause the young generation to value and respect human life, their beliefs, traditions and cultures (Kholopa, 2016).

We are called to "love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31). Applying Jesus' plea, the whole community will function more effectively. According to Sider (2012:111), "this is an example of biblical justice that has a corrective, restorative character that enables the weak and needy to return to a state of wholeness, dignity and participation in community". The Good Samaritan could be everyone who recognises humanity in every suffering person and acts on it as willed by the golden rule precept that we "do to others whatever you would have them do to you" (Mark 7:12), which is akin to how *Ubuntu* operates. Boff and Boff (1988:4) remind us "that we begin with love of norms, beliefs and values as love is a praxis, not a theory".

The challenge then for the church and society is how can we make our social and religious communities more humane, based on our fundamental human dignity and our identity as people created in *imago Dei*. *Ubuntu* should inform our Christian understanding of community, therefore; Christianity should be communitarian. Christians without the spirit of *Ubuntu* are not truly Christian because the life of Jesus was characterised by *Ubuntu*. The image of the church should be a community of believers, not just in name but authentic in action.

Paul's letters to the Galatian and Ephesian communities (3:28 & 2:10-20) illustrate Jesus breaking down barriers that divide people and gathering them together into a new community. As a result, these communities expanded and it is our belief that love, especially towards migrants and the marginalised in society, will make South Africa expand and develop into a caring society through *Ubuntu* values and nothing should be allowed to prevent this expansion (Kholopa, 2016).

Thus, when theology operates in the public domain, it will be transformational by considering the ethos espoused by *Ubuntu*. This involves ongoing learning from our contexts and reflecting on it, as at

stake is discerning what God is saying in our situation, the *kairos* (xenophobia).

## VIII. CONCLUSION

This article provided insight and understanding that in view of the differing viewpoints on approaches to issues pertaining to the Christian in contemporary society, such as the elimination of xenophobia within South African society, synergies from public practical theology, public pastoral care and public Christian ethics; to this end *Ubuntu* and hospitality can be achieved, as all rely on the context of the situation. This will entail developing a theological language that does not focus on a binary approach of 'them' and 'us', migrant and native, and sojourner and inhabitant. This is important as it entails a shift in thinking about migrants as people who arrived in the country to steal jobs, housing and so forth. The resulting shift in society from a language of destabiliser to contributor will be the ideal result. To quote Irenaeus "*Gloria enim Dei vivens homo, vita autem hominis visio*" – for the glory of God is the living man, and the life of man is the vision of God. The public practical theologian and the public pastoral theologian therefore must envision the glory of God in their dealings with public issues in the public sphere.

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