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A Challenge to Christian Unity and Witnessing in the Context of the Government of National Unity

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Abstract

Although 85.3% of South Africans claim affiliation to the Christian religion, they are not united on how to live out the moral values central to the teachings of Christ. There are in society manifestations of corruption, high levels of crime, and other social ills. This social condition influenced the outcome of the 2024 national election, leading to the formation of a government of national unity (GNU). This article endeavours to answer the question: how does the GNU expose the weakness of Christian faith formation towards a moral conscience and witnessing of gospel values? Data was collected by observing South African citizens' actions in their everyday lives, and from scholarly writings and journals relevant to this study. The data was analysed using a systematic literature review. The findings reveal that politics and Christianity divided the family unit and adversely affected the mindset of Africans. The study recommends a rethinking of the holistic faith-formation framework and the values of Christian unity in witnessing that identify Christians as followers of Christ.

Introduction and Background

'The people of South Africa have spoken.' These words are a summary of the national election's outcome that forced the African National Congress (ANC) to rethink governance in South Africa.

(<https://stateofthenation.gov.za/assets/downloads/gnu-summary.pdf>). The failure of the ANC to achieve a majority vote, therefore, required formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU). This affirmed that South Africans'

votes determined that power-sharing among political parties was necessary to address the country's challenges. Political parties had to set aside their political ideologies and policies, compromise their interests, and agree to unite to tackle the challenges facing the country (Ofusori 2024:135).

Governments of national unity are coalitions of political parties that address a political crisis, war, or transition. The aim is to defuse political violence, restore peace, gain majority support, foster national unity, exercise collective responsibility, govern effectively, and take ownership of the country (Thusi 2024:687). In South Africa, the first GNU was for transition from the apartheid regime to democracy from 1994 to 1997. In 2024, a second GNU was established to tackle the country's challenges, including corruption, crime, and economic stagnation, which led to a high level of unemployment.

According to Thwala and Vilakazi (2024:4) the multiparty coalition, formed after the 2024 South African national election, is a vehicle to achieve national unity, where different groups that are divided by culture, political ideology, economic status, and region are committed to national unity based on the constitution and national interest. This unity focuses more on the interests of the country than on party interests (Hairsine 2024:3). Ragolane and Khoza (2024:15) identify this form of governance as citizen-centred governance, based not on power ambition but on power consolidation.

The 1994–1997 GNU in South Africa was the result of a coalition government formed by the majority party to include other parties in the cabinet (Thwala 2023:41). The ANC won a majority of votes in 1994, with the right to rule the country on its own. Nonetheless, the ANC opted to invite other parties to form a GNU with the aims of promoting national unity, having a smooth transition, formulating the new constitution, and seeing to its implementation (Ofusori 2024:165–167). Ethnic groups were to abandon the homeland independence system of apartheid, unite to form a rainbow nation, and develop a new culture based on trust and brotherhood.

Since 1997, the ANC has ruled the country single-handedly with opposition parties too weak to challenge it (Moosa 2020:7). According to Thusi (2024:690), this led to a lack of accountability and openness, a weak service delivery, a high level of corruption within the party, crime, and the collapse of

the economic system. This situation led to the outcome of the 2024 national elections that collapsed the ANC and led to the formation of a GNU.

The formation of the 2024 GNU devised three objectives different from those of the 1994 GNU. These objectives include, first, to drive inclusive growth and create jobs, second, to reduce poverty and tackle the high cost of living, and third, to build a capable, ethical, and developmental state. According to Levinson (2025:1), the 2024 GNU is a sign that democracy is fully embedded in South Africa, with the ANC and the Democratic Alliance (DA) forgetting their differences and agreeing on a coalition in respect of the constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the rule of law. However, Terblanche (2024) argues that differences in political policies, historical backgrounds, and outlooks, and a lack of common purpose, complicate the issues for the 2024 GNU to achieve positive results.

South Africa is not the only country in Africa to experience a GNU. In 2007–2013, Kenya established a GNU to curb the violence that occurred after disputed presidential elections. The aim was to stabilise the country and initiate constitutional reform (Thusi 2024:689). In Zimbabwe (2009–2013), a GNU was formed after the collapse of its economy and the disputed 2008 elections. Its main objectives were to stabilise the power struggle, increase cooperation between parties, and institute genuine reform (Thusi 2024:688). Lesotho had six GNUs between 2012 and 2022 due to a lack of trust, lack of equal distribution of power, and non-adherence to partnership arrangements (Thusi 2024:689; Thwala and Vilakazi 2024:9–10). In Libya, a GNU was established to resolve conflict between guerrilla groups and to establish peace and national unity (Thwala and Vilakazi 2024:10–11).

85.3% of South Africa's population claims affiliation with the Christian religion in its rainbow expressions (Forster 2024:1). This majority affiliation of South African citizens to Christian faith ought to work as a vehicle towards unity in witnessing Christian values, and ought to influence the GNU in its function of tackling the challenges facing the country. Due to the history of South Africa, the affiliation of the majority of its citizens to the Christian religion does not necessarily mean upholding the same sentiments in living and practising those values.

The 2024 GNU in South Africa poses a challenge to Christian denominations to work towards unity in witnessing to Christ (John 17:20–23). Unity can be demonstrated by having a new ecumenical body to devise strategies to help fulfil the church’s mandate and mission in society. The main strategy would be to empower members to be the church on every level of society. By living out Christian values, members of the GNU could solve the political challenges faced by the country in the spirit of Christ. The responsibility to confront the ills of society should not be left to ecumenical bodies and church leadership. On the contrary, the mission of the lay faithful is to fulfil their calling as salt of the earth and light of the world (Matthew 5:13–16) in their own context. With the vast majority of South Africans claiming affiliation with the Christian religion, there should not be a difference between Christian living and social life.

Scripture challenges Christians to live out gospel values to establish kingdom perspectives, to fight for peace, reconciliation, and justice for all, and to transform society (Micah 6:8, Ephesians 4:1–5:17, James 1:22–27, 2:8–17) (Kumalo 2009:248). With corruption and a high level of crime, scriptural values are not visible in society. Personal freedom and political affiliation dominate individuals’ behaviours and choices. Unity among Christians could play a major part in building a bridge for unity in witnessing moral values in the GNU and in society (Forster and Oostenbrink 2015:1). The Christian religion ought to play its part in people’s lives. But, from observation, initial faith formation tends to prepare converts for membership, not for missionary discipleship. Denominations ought to rethink faith-formation frameworks and assess whether they empower faith in action and instil unity among Christians, whether they form moral consciousness and spiritual discernment as a way of life for the body of Christ.

Due to historical political developments and Christian denominational diversity, South African Christians are divided in their understanding of their calling and mission in society. Each denomination, concerned with its own doctrine and internal ministries, fails in outreach and the transformation of society (Kumalo 2009:250). The Christian calling demands unity among followers of Christ to witness to Jesus as the one sent by God (John 17:21–23), unity in mission (Matthew 18:15, Ephesians 5:1–2), and a commitment to work for justice and peace (Isaiah 1:17, Micah 6:8, Luke 18:1–8). Unity is not an

option. It is a mark of belonging to Jesus and fulfils the requirements of missionary discipleship.

Christianity is a religion to be lived as individuals and as a community of believers. Faith in Christ ought to be fed at the breast (Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference 2000), from the domestic church, the family. Faith needs to become the culture that distinguishes Christians from those of other religions. Christianity cannot be reduced to Sunday worship (Forster and Oostenbrink 2015). The Christian calling demands that all become missionary disciples on every level of society, and that no one be left out (Paul VI 1965:2).

The mission of Christians in the South African context, therefore, is to live out gospel values on every level of society. Many of the members of the political parties that form the GNU are members of churches. This challenges churches' leadership to assess their context, to read the signs of the time, and to train and form all the baptised to carry out their mission within their respective political parties. Members who do not live out their calling as Christians are to be held accountable. There ought to be a re-evangelisation of those who have lapsed and ongoing formation for those who attend church. From observation, Sunday preaching is not enough to build a firm expression of faith. Christians must be reminded of their calling and mission to establish kingdom perspectives in a political system that has sidelined God and has put personal freedom above obedience to him.

Research Question, Theory, and Methodology

The research question of this study is: how does the GNU expose the weakness of Christian faith formation towards a moral conscience and witnessing of the gospel values? To answer this question, the study is divided into five sections. The first section deals with the mission of Christ and the gospel values. The second section discusses the political influence on Christianity and the formation of mindset. The third section presents the role of Christian unity and witnessing. The fourth section considers the faith-formation framework. The fifth section is the conclusion.

This study uses a hermeneutical theory that values the biblical text, the local South African context, the global context, and church traditions and history.

The purpose of this hermeneutical theory is to develop a relevant church that discerns God's will and can engage its mission of peace, reconciliation, and justice in its given context. This study uses a qualitative literature research approach. Data was collected through observations of South African citizens' actions in their everyday lives. Furthermore, data was collected from literature such as church documents, scripture, articles, and books. The collected data from the literature research and the observations was analysed using a systemic review. Scholarly books and journals relevant to this study were collected, organised, and reviewed. The aim of the study is to challenge Christian denominations to consider unity a priority in carrying out the mission of Christ.

The Mission of Christ and the Gospel Values

The mission of Jesus is based on the mission of the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God loved the world so much that he sent his son on the mission of the redemption of the world (John 3:16).

The birth of Jesus inaugurated the mission of God, which was manifest in his life and actualised in his suffering, death, and resurrection. At the baptism of Jesus, the Father revealed who Jesus was: the beloved Son (Luke 3:21–22). At the transfiguration, the Father reiterated who Jesus was and commanded that he be listened to (Matthew 17:5). The mission of Jesus is, therefore, intertwined with the mission of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus fulfilled this mission and, in turn, entrusted it to his disciples (Matthew 10:1–42, 28:19–20, John 20:21–23), who were strengthened by the sending of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son (Acts 1:5–8). All those who are baptised in the name of the triune God are incorporated into the life of Christ to bear witness to him, by walking in his footsteps according to their state of life, context, and gifts bestowed on each of them (Acts 11:19–26, Ephesians 4:11–16) (Obiorah 2020:2; Paul VI 1964:31, 33). The living out of gospel values is a duty and responsibility for Christians to challenge social perceptions and to bring transformation (Amos 5:24; Romans 12:2; Galatians 3:28; 1 Peter 2:12).

According to Pillay (2017:1), the church always had the concept of transformation in its mission and ministry. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Paul VI 1965:2) and Formicola (2012:106) view this concept of transformation as having two notions: a spiritual notion and a social notion. The spiritual side of transformation, however, is often emphasised above the social aspect without any linking of the two. Nonetheless, a truly spiritual person will realise the evils in society and address them (Micah 6:8, 1 Peter 2:11–12, James 1:22–27).

Christian mission in South Africa is determined by the context and challenges that require transformation in the country. How, then, ought the churches' leadership respond to the inconsistency of members who do not live what they confess? Church leadership ought to offer a balanced faith formation that informs and forms the spirituality of its members and their concern and involvement in societal transformation. This is the mission of the lay faithful. During the era of apartheid, Christians were united to fight the apartheid system with all its evil laws of racism and oppression. To fight the present evils such as autocracy, corruption, selfishness, economic oppression, lack of service delivery, high levels of crime, and social ills that degrade human dignity in a democratic dispensation, churches need to unite and rethink the faith-formation framework that empowers for faith in action (James 2:14–26).

Christians need to know their identity and understand the demands of their calling (1 Peter 2:9–12, James 2:8–17). Christian identity influences Christian action for the glory of God. Schoeman (2015:106) identified three aspects of the religious identity of congregational membership: believe, belong, and engage. These concepts are affected by changes in the context and leadership (Schoeman 2015:120). Ruben (2011:228) asserts that 'national or civic identities are usually not sufficient for enhancing social cohesive relationships'. He states that 'reliance on religious values can provide a possible pathway for creating new and shared identities' in society.

The great challenge is that although the church played a significant part during apartheid and the transition to democracy, the government sidelined the church, declaring the country a neutral-religious state (Kumalo 2009:149). Christians need to intensify their prayer lives, understand their calling, and witness to Christ in the secularised country in words and deeds to restore the country under God's control (James 4:8, 10).

The South African Council of Churches (SACC) is one amongst many ecumenical organisations that represent the unity and collaboration of churches from different denominational backgrounds. Regrettably, there are many ecumenical Christian organisations in the country. This proliferation of ecumenical organisations is a hindrance to the unity of the church to speak with one voice and to engage with social challenges. Pillay (2017:2) stresses that, under democracy, the SACC lacked a clear vision, cooperate identity, and theological rationale, and, thus, the ecumenical vision has dwindled. This was the outcome of mainline churches retreating to ‘denominational enclaves’ and internal ministries (Kumalo 2009:250).

Kumalo (2009:250–256) further discusses the factors that inhibit the participation of the church in the political life of the country. First, there is a parliamentary democracy that is centralised around the presidency and bars other groups from liaising with him. Second, there is no socio-ecclesial analysis of society that informs the church of the social context. Therefore, the church has no voice to criticise the government. Third, there is a lack of contextual theology to prepare Christians to involve themselves in the political sphere. Fourth, the spirit of camaraderie shared by church leadership and politicians prevents critical involvement of the church. Fifth, there is no education for critical thinking that might establish a new approach to church-state relations. The state needs to view the church as ‘an important critical and honest friend of the democratic state’ (Kumalo 2009:255). And sixth is the lack of a multi-faith approach to church-state relations. The church needs to cooperate with faith-based and multi-religious organisations to approach the state with one voice (Kumalo 2009:256).

Although these factors are valid, they reduce the church to an institution. This study advocates for the church as all the baptised to live what they profess by running the government according to Christian values. This is the challenge for church denominations to unite and form their members to integrate, make Christian values their culture, and to not compartmentalise their lives. The people of God, as the church in every structure of society, ought to carry out their duties and responsibilities as active Christian citizens (Pali 2024b:4). All Christians are called to bring about the reign of God and peace, and to establish a kingdom perspective in society. What is lacking in churches is the inclusion of the lay faithful in the mission of Christ by offering them proper faith

formation that prepares and empowers them to protect their rights and the rights of others (Kumalo 2009:248). Historical church-state relations influenced the present situation of Christianity in South Africa, as the following section explains.

Political Influence on Christianity and the African Mindset

According to Pali (2024a:3), from 1652 to 1994, South Africa suffered slavery, colonialism, and apartheid. These atrocities manifested themselves through macroeconomic policies, colonial laws, and the superiority of white culture through religion and education. The consequences of these affected the relationships between family members who belonged to different denominations and religions, relations between blacks and whites, and adversely formed the mindset of South African society. This is the context of South African society today.

South Africa under Colonialism

The Christianity that came to South Africa was already divided into denominations. Members of African families accepted Christianity from different denominations to pursue educational benefits. According to Bate (1999:20), Africans regarded Western education as an opportunity to participate in the emerging new culture, but not without paying the price of suppressing their own culture and religion. This dismantled the fabric and core of the African family that no longer shared the same sentiments and value system that had glued the family together under traditional religion. The nuclear family, the clan, and the tribe were divided, and the same value system was no longer possible. Parents lost their duty and responsibility to form their children's moral conscience. The colonialists' use of Christianity and Western education as vehicles for indoctrination changed the mindset of Africans (Pali 2024a:3). The common African worldview was destroyed and replaced by a multifaceted worldview that lacked a common understanding of social and spiritual life (Luzbetak 1988:284).

Pali (2024a:4) further states that the African mindset was conquered through teaching, training, and the distribution of literature from colonial states. This form of imperialism confused the understanding of Christianity and its mission in South Africa. These choices clouded the Christian calling: the mission of all

the baptised, the church. Zwane (1982:120) and Bate (1999:21) attest that the use of education for evangelisation within the Roman Catholic Church was not an effective means for human transformation. Evangelisation through education did not build a sense of truly belonging to the church and taking responsibility for its mission. For these reasons, the vast majority of African Christians never accepted Christianity as their culture, except for Nehemiah Tile (Millard 2025:1–2), Mokone Mangena (South African History Online 2019:1–2), and a few others who accepted the Christian religion and spearheaded the founding of their own churches. Bate (1999:21) attests that Africans were made followers rather than active leaders in the Roman Catholic Church headed by white missionaries.

During the era of apartheid, Christianity was used to support the apartheid system, but other churches were on the side of liberation fighters, confusing the mission of the church (Kumalo 2009:252). The same religion was used to support both oppression and the liberation movement. African traditional religion and culture were suppressed, but not destroyed, in this process. For these reasons, Africans mimicked Christianity in the marketplace and continued to practise their African religion in safe spaces (Forster and Oostenbrink 2015:3). This introduced the concept of the compartmentalisation of life, separating Sunday worship from daily living.

The vast majority of Africans were ‘the object of the process’ of colonisation and were prevented from being owners of the Christian faith (Bate 1999:21; see also Kumalo 2009:248). In this study, owning the Christian faith means accepting it as one’s culture, being influenced by it to observe all that Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:20). The impact of observing all that Jesus commanded needs to be displayed in every stage and on every level of society, including basing the constitution on Christian values. This means not only putting them on paper, but also living them out in everyday life. Secularisation is the result of not making Christianity one’s culture.

Education for Political Segregation

In the political realm, education was used for institutional segregation between blacks and whites. Under the apartheid regime, Africans received Bantu education that did not empower them to participate in either politics or the economy of the country (Pali 2024b:3). Education only prepared them to

become cheap labour for the comfort of the whites. According to Buntu (2013:2), South Africa is still struggling to devise an education system that liberates Africans from dependence on Western ways of learning and thinking about themselves and the world.

The National Party (NP) introduced two sets of apartheid laws. The Population Registration Act (1950) was introduced to register people according to their national and ethnic groups. The Bantu Self-Government Act (1959) created separate homelands or settlements (South African History Online 2017). Vast amounts of land were allocated to whites, while Africans were made foreigners in their own land, beggars in their own country, and enemies to each other, especially in urban areas (Abel 2016:6). According to Vosloo (2023:2), some missionaries and Christian churches advocated for such racial separation and justified it on scriptural and theological grounds.

Employment in the homelands was poor, forcing eligible men and women to leave their families behind and move to urban areas for employment where they provided cheap labour for whites (Abel 2016:6; Pali 2024a:3). These developments resulted in families being broken, children becoming orphans through migrant labour, political persecution and exile, and an increase in single parenting (Abel 2016:7). The bond of children with their parents weakened at an early age when children normally need direction, moral formation, support, and love from their own parents. This caused moral degeneration among African families.

African males were accommodated in male-only hostels and were allowed to go home twice a year (Abel 2016:7). Townships such as Soshanguve, Soweto, and Khayelitsha were developed as labour reserves where new families were formed. Poverty increased as working men and women could not provide material support for families in homelands and at their places of work. This kind of slavery destroyed the African family structure and moral conscience and continued to divide members of the family unit.

The development of homelands strengthened ethnicity. In the homelands, each ethnic group rebuilt its lost culture and regained its dignity and semi-independence. Each ethnic group practised its African traditional religion without fear of the white missionaries. Each ethnic group recalled and revived

its culture and customs and celebrated its former kings. In Qwaqwa homeland, for example, Basotho celebrated Moshoeshe's Day with pride, wearing their different attire, dancing, and singing songs of praise in honour of Moshoeshe, their king. This system intensified cultural diversity and rooted ethnic groups in their own traditional cultures, which Western education and Christianity had partly abandoned or suppressed.

During the apartheid era, the ANC addressed the evils of the apartheid system with the aim of uniting, strengthening, and restoring Africans' pride, dignity, and integrity (Abel 2016:6). Due to retaliation from the NP, men and women left their homes and went into exile where they were united, not by religion but by the political ideology of liberation.

The release of political activists and the return of the exiled in 1990 created another tension within the family and society. Two separate cultures had developed. The exiled were united through the political ideology of liberation, but the majority who had stayed in homelands had intensified their cultural differences. It was not easy for most families to integrate with those coming back from exile. These developments affected and divided the family structure and formed the mindset of Africans. During this time, the relationship of church and state was one of intensive resistance. Faith formation in mainline churches focused on the reception of sacraments, justice, and peace (Kumalo 2009:247). Internal ministries were minimised.

Christianity and apartheid in South Africa divided families, ethnic groups, and blacks and whites. Some denominations under apartheid were united under SACC with a 'strong sense of purpose and direction embedded in an authentic prophetic voice of the oppressed and voiceless' (Pillay 2017:2). With the dawn of democracy, each denomination, however, reverted to its internal ministries and they lost their unity in their external ministry in society (Kumalo 2009:247).

The Role of Christian Unity and Witnessing

Mainline churches came to South Africa already divided. For them to unite could set an example for unity amongst churches in learning two general lessons from the GNU. First, the GNU symbolises maturity on the side of political parties by demonstrating unity in diversity. The GNU incorporates

different political parties to address the challenges facing society. Political parties agree to bend their ideologies under the constitution and compromise their own interests to serve the country. The lesson for mainline churches in South Africa is that they need to mature in their faith and evaluate their purpose and mission in society. They must assess past differences that led to separation, mend what was wrong, and focus on God's mission for the church (John 17:20–26). Mainline churches could then incorporate newly formed congregations that believe in fulfilling the mission of Christ. As one body, members could live a virtuous life in society and fulfil the mission of the church in the South African context. Pali (2024b:5) states that, denominational unity would allow learning from each other, allow collaboration on issues that concern human well-being, and help fight the system that degrades human dignity.

A second lesson for the church from the GNU is that the GNU was formed to represent the voice of the voters and to respect it. Denominational leadership ought to accept the place, status, and voice of the lay faithful in the church's mission. The great commission (Matthew 28:19–20) sets the purpose of apostleship (leadership), namely, to make disciples. Church leadership ought to make use of the lay faithful. Their voices, struggles, and aspirations ought to be listened to, heard, and included in decision-making to carry out the mission of the church. The lay faithful live in society. They, together with the leadership, are the church. Together they ought to be disciples within their own context. The lay faithful are called to be salt, light, and leaven within their families and society (Matthew 5:13–16). Their mission is to transform their contexts from within in their different professions, status, mission, and ministry.

In the Roman Catholic Church, much is written about the place of the lay faithful in the church since the Second Vatican Council, for example in *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Paul VI 1965), *Christifideles Laici* (John Paul II 1988), and *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Pontifical Council 2004). These documents stipulate the rights, duties, and responsibilities of every baptised person within the church. All the baptised ought to claim their status as being the church on every level of society (Appiah-Kubi and Bonsu 2020:29). Unfortunately, for many the social doctrine of the church remains a closed book. It does not form part of the formation for ministerial priesthood

in South Africa (Mokone 2022:151). Material for formation is available, but formation and implementation are a challenge. Ministerial priestly formation is viewed by priests as academic and Eurocentric, not addressing the South African context (Mokone 2022:145). With this background, the lay faithful remain passive for lack of proper formation.

The mission and place of the lay faithful must not be only acknowledged and discussed in church documents. The hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church puts the lay faithful at the bottom of the pyramid with no voice in the running of the church. According to *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Paul VI 1965:5) the lay faithful are not there to simply follow detailed instructions from the hierarchy. They are called for a specific apostolate in the church and society. Where faith formation does not prepare and empower the lay faithful for their apostolate, they become followers of instructions from the hierarchy. This process leads to the continued compartmentalisation of Christian life, rather than Christians being active as Christians in society (Kumalo 2009:252; Pali 2024a:4). The voice of the lay faithful needs to not only be heard but be part of discussions and resolutions, and the implementation of their apostolate to help them own the Christian faith to become their culture and for them to become missionary disciples in their own contexts (Paul VI 1965:6, 7).

To rebuild a spirituality of unity among mainline churches, the Christian moral conscience ought to form the centre of ongoing formation in order to attain social cohesion and to witness to Christ (Mark 12:30–31, Galatians 5:14) (Pali 2024a:4). The moral conscience, duties, and responsibilities of the Christian calling need to be adjusted to form active citizens (Mokone 2022:113; Pali 2024b:8).

Factors mentioned by Kumalo (2009:250–256) that inhibit church participation in political issues could be solved by initiating faith formation that empowers the lay faithful to be the church in society. First, the church leadership's role should provide a spirituality of presence, which allows for attending to others with openness, attentiveness, and prayerfulness (Osmer 2008:34). Second, priestly listening calls all members to accommodate each other, pray for each other, forgive each other, and bear each other's burden (Osmer 2008:35). If these were done, there would be no question of where the church is on Monday. The withdrawal of church leadership from the political arena left

political leadership without spiritual guidance to build the country in the spirit of Christ. The democratic South African society lacks the values to spearhead a new culture of a rainbow nation, facilitate reconciliation, and change the mindset of South Africans to embrace each other in brotherhood.

Through baptism, Christians share in the priesthood, prophetic office, and kingship of Christ (Obiorah 2020:2; Paul VI 1965:2). As priests, the first duty for Christians is to pray for political leaders to attain peace and prosperity in the land (1 Timothy 2:1–4). As prophets, Christians are to hold politicians accountable for service delivery, to end corruption, and to live their faith manifesting gospel values. Christians fail to fulfil this responsibility for lack of knowledge, lack of understanding, and exclusion from the mission of the church (Kumalo 2009:248). As kings, Christians ought to advocate for justice for all to protect the dignity of each person created in the image of God. The Christian calling demands that the disciple of Christ further his mission and protect the poor and the vulnerable in society. Christian denominations have a role to play in forming active citizens who incorporate democratic values, mutual respect, human rights, and social cohesion and embrace community interests (Pali 2024b:4). Due to the historical background of Christianity and political structures in South Africa, the transformation of Christian mission and ministry under democracy causes the lay faithful to fail to fulfil their Christian calling and become missionary disciples within their homes and society.

According to Pali (2024a:4), ‘[c]onquering the mindset usually occurs through the teachings, training, and distribution of literature from the colonial state’ (see also Mokone 2022:145–147). Continuing frameworks, used before democracy, perpetuate the mindset of the colonial system and a lack of involvement in the mission of the church. When faith formation and theological ministerial formation remain Eurocentric (Mokone 2022:145), colonisation of the mind is sustained. For Pali (2024a:3), colonisation of the mind is a stumbling block to the decolonisation of the academy and knowledge and the facilitation of social transformation, political progress, and economic development.

Terreblanche (2015:7) states that poverty and a lack of education left Africans only one choice in life: ‘how to stay alive’. This reality has led Africans to seek solace in religion in order to cope with frustration, pain, and suffering. The vast

majority of Africans are not involved in programmes for societal transformation. This unfortunate situation led to the blossoming of ecclesiology of the prosperity gospel (Palakeel 2022:311). This blossoming of ecclesiology has been identified as a mile wide and an inch deep (Enyinnaya 2020:100). Congregants are promised wealth, health, and success through faith, without learning about God or how to stand for their rights, justice, and the transformation of policies (Barron 2023:326).

The faith-formation framework should ‘transform the lives that will transform the society’ (Enyinnaya 2020:101). Faith formation should empower Christians to fully understand their Christian calling, integrate moral values as part of their culture, and live within society as disciples of Jesus. Participants in the GNU would then advocate for justice, inclusive development, and care for others. Basing the solution to the challenges faced by the country on Christian or religious values would give participants in the GNU a common point of departure, a platform based on love for God and love for one’s neighbour (Mark 12:30–31). They would have a common worldview that would enable them to unite as a rainbow nation, to build a nation focused on societal transformation rather than personal materialism. The next section offers a holistic faith-formation framework that would holistically integrate Christians, transform their lives, decolonise their mindsets, and empower them to witness Christ in the marketplace.

Considering the Ecumenical Faith-Formation Framework

The 1994 South African election and the inauguration of democracy gave hope for justice, economic development, the alleviation of poverty, and equality among South Africans. The withdrawal of the NP from the GNU in 1996 left the ANC-led government struggling to implement the new constitution against the backdrop of a stagnant economy, unemployment, inequality, and poverty (South African History Online 2020). The ANC governed the country with impaired knowledge of the nuances of the country and of how to restructure institutions that they did not institute. A post-apartheid faith-formation framework is necessary to build and anchor South Africans in gospel values. In order to achieve this, faith needs to become a culture by holistically integrating Christian thinking, communication, and actions. Faith should form Christians’

conscience in such a way that their minds are not influenced against their inner self-realisation and Christian identity. Faith formation needs to integrate a person towards wholeness and holiness. An unintegrated person cannot be fully alive and cannot be held responsible for his or her actions. A holistic faith-formation framework ought to integrate a person to be fully alive, to love and accept him- or herself as a creature created for a purpose and mission. Restoration of family life ministry is crucial for moulding a new generation that lives and practises what it believes in private and in public spheres.

Kumalo (2009:250) states that, after the inauguration of the democratic government, prominent church leaders, Bishops Desmond Tutu and Manas Buthelezi, announced their departure from politics to do the real business of the church. This should have given church leadership the opportunity to remodel their faith-formation frameworks to re-evangelise the South African population, to assess the context, to teach scripture to empower the rainbow nation to practise what it believes, and to mould Christians to become missionary disciples in their own country. Thoughtfulness and reading the signs of the times and the new political sphere of democracy (Osmer 2008:82–83) ought to have informed church leadership to make contextual decisions. The formulation of a holistic faith-formation framework is based on informed knowledge of the present situation. A holistic faith formation encompasses four dimensions that address the person as a whole: human, spiritual, intellectual, and skilful (John Paul II 1992:43–56). Each dimension should have both informative and formative objectives to bring about integration. Each of these dimensions will be discussed separately to highlight important elements.

First, the content for the human-formation framework must include the prospects of Genesis 1:26 – a human being created in the image of God for God’s purpose. This should include the concept of sin, brokenness, and humanity’s rebellion against God and his divine will for humanity. This should include mental, emotional, and psychological healing of all South Africans. It should restore the mindset by building a common human identity of the body of Christ, the people of God in the South African rainbow nation. Human formation would build character, moral conscience, and attitudes, and would restore the dignity lost through different political and religious changes that affected relationships in society. A fully integrated person would gain his or her dignity and integrity.

Second, spiritual formation is the core of Christian formation. Using scripture, spiritual formation must centre on kingdom perspectives. It should centre on God who has revealed himself in the person of Jesus (John 17:3). This ought to lead to a personal encounter with the triune God through personal prayer and communion in worship (John 15:15), and encourage living one's faith in Christ in the community of believers (John 10:30). Spiritual formation must lead to repentance from sin (Matthew 4:17, Mark 1:15), conversion of the heart (Luke 15:11–31), and a determination to live out gospel values as a disciple of Jesus Christ (John 14:15). Prayer, meditation, and worship should help Christians learn Christ as a role model and follow in his footsteps (Matthew 4:19) (Moyo and Pali 2023:170). This process requires that church leadership believe what they read, teach what they believe, and practise what they teach (Delillio 2021:1). Catechesis ought to address current issues and lead to repentance and conversion. Preaching should be in the context of the place, and offer ongoing formation to provide all the baptised with skills to live as followers of Christ (Ephesians 4:12). Seminary formation ought to equip the ministerial priesthood for the formation of the lay faithful for discipleship (Mokone 2022:9–10; Nel and Schoeman 2019:2).

Third, intellectual formation should enlighten and integrate human and spiritual formation. Making disciples demands that faith in Christ be practical, be lived in everyday life. Christian concepts must be taught and understood from the African cultural perspective and South African background. The objective of teaching ought to be informative and formative. Central to intellectual formation should be Christian calling, missionary discipleship, and living out gospel values within the context of one's life in society. The life of faith is from the womb to the tomb. Parents and godparents must journey with their children as spiritual guides or mentors and unite them in the domestic church, the family, to witness to Christ. The concept of the trinity ought to replace the ancestral belief system. Christians are to adhere to Christ who brought salvation and reconciliation with God.

Fourth, missionary discipleship formation ought to integrate three dimensions, namely the human, the spiritual, and the intellectual. These formations ought to prepare, empower, and lead to witnessing. Unless what is learned can be practically lived, the knowledge acquired did not address the core of the person's life, culture, and context. A person who cannot practically live what is

taught could be classified as a believer who is not yet ready to follow in the footsteps of Christ as a disciple (Luke 9:23–26, John 14:21–31). The word of God ought to transform those who hear it, and they ought to be prepared to die for it. Missionary discipleship should offer skills that empower Christians to live what they profess at home, in the neighbourhood, and in every structure of society (Acts 11:25–26). Christianity is not a private society; it is a call to holiness and the transformation of social structures.

To achieve what is discussed above, appropriate concepts, strategies, and methods are necessary for a positive outcome. Moulding disciples for the South African context requires that they be skilled at discerning the signs of the times and that they know what to say and do in whatever life presents them. Pali (2024a:8) states that Afrocentric, holistic education strives to build a person spiritually, intellectually, and physically to serve the community in various dimensions. The classroom setting imparts faith at the level of knowledge, but does not necessarily lead to repentance and conversion. It does not necessarily form disciples and instil Christian values by which one is to live. A homely atmosphere conducive to learning and assimilating Christian faith and values would facilitate practising what is professed. Faith ought to be handed over as a lived experience of a relationship with the triune God who is actively involved in a mission. Family ministry would facilitate unity within ecumenical family structures as a vehicle for the unity of denominations.

Sacraments are to be taught and understood as a stepping stone in the journey of faith. United in *missio Dei*, Christians would bring about change in the GNU led by the spirit of God. The Holy Spirit empowers with gifts for the service of others (1 Corinthians 12:4–11), manifested through the fruits of the Spirit of peace, transformation, and the prosperity of society (Galatians 5:22–23). Unity in diversity would allow the lay faithful to join together to carry out their mission of witnessing to the kingdom perspectives and to continue to worship separately in their own denominations.

Conclusion

Christians are to model themselves into the image of Christ as his followers to carry out *missio Dei*. The church and political parties share the same people. Formed in morals and missionary discipleship, they would not separate Sunday

from the rest of the week. The lay faithful would understand their Christian calling and its demand to represent Christ in the marketplace. They would understand that faith and actions are inseparable; they are two sides of the same coin (James 2:14–17).

Considering a new faith formation framework under the GNU would unite Christians in witnessing Christian values and restore the country under the protection of God. The question Jesus asked needs to be taken into consideration: RSV Catholic Edition (1966), ‘when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?’ (Luke 18:8). The success or failure of the GNU rests on Christian unity in their mission in society. This is the second reformation, to get ‘the *mission* into the hands of the laity’, where the first reformation was handing the Bible to the laity (Henrichsen and Garrison 1983:8).

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