

The church in the “globalised” South Africa.

Mthembu, Ntokozo (2006)

The church in times of globalisation where is characterised by the continuous division of interests between the rich, who are mostly concern about their wealth and less visible in the places of worship. On other hand the poor populace is concern mostly with their daily survival and highly noticeable in the places of worship. Another characterisation of this epoch is that the church continues to been seen as playing a dual part of which is to create stability through programmes such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission – (TRC). On other hand we need to understand whether church is the unifying agent of the populace or the stabiliser in the society? I’m saying this because it known that the church is divided into denominations according to their rituals. That is why I think it is vital for us to understand what we mean when we speak of the church.

Therefore, this raises a question whether most people know why they attend or become members of the church? I’m saying this because people who are seen to be ‘holy’ as they are church goers are identified with people who are labelled as pagan, as they don’t subscribe in the Book of life (Bible as it is sometimes known). But what is interesting is that the ‘holy’ people ensure that they recruit from the not repented populace, as part of giving assurance in the coming life after death or whatever. Another interesting part is whether church teaches people to ‘behave’ in order to achieve ‘peace’ and stability at the “despite” their continuous suffering. For example, in the case of South African famous TRC, where the dispossessed told their suffering, torturing and how they were forced to silence. What is interesting about this scenario is that the church facilitated the ‘speak out’ programme and after that the sufferers were expected to forget the past (that is characterised by mass land deprivation) and heal their pain. On other hand the evil doers (the colonisers and their beneficiaries) continue celebrating the victory over the surge by the indigenous populace.

We also need to highlight that the definition by the Easton's 1897 Bible Dictionary of which highlights that when we define church notes that church refers to one of the groups of people who have their own beliefs and forms of worship and another or it refers a place for public worship or the body of people who attend or belong to a particular local church. Another important aspect is that the church refers not only to a specific faith or religious grouping but it refers to all those institutions that are meant to serve the human race spiritually and emotionally. In short, the Bible’s New Testament - Acts 19:32, 39, and 41 define it simply translated it as the "assembly" in the ordinary classical sense. These churches are argued to be serving or preaching or fulfilling the word of the Creator that is also known by multi names based on the particular group of populace. But what is very interesting about these churches is whether they fulfil their mission under the tutelage of democracy (the rule of people by people for people) or theocracy (the rule of people by people for the Creator).

These facts challenged me to start scrutinising the church and its relevance in the post apartheid state, as it is known that it has been in existence “during” the colonising period that was and still characterised by the enslavement of certain segments of human race for the “betterment” of other segment of the population. In addition, Edmore Mufeme in his writing the Land: Breaking bonds and

cementing ties highlights that some of the churches participated in the mass stealing of land and other relevant resources of which is also known as the primitive accumulation. Furthermore, religious institutions and the Church acquired vast land holdings and added to a complex dimension to the land question. The Church benefited from the colonial inequalities, and the promotion of differing religious orders went a long way toward the undermining of African traditional cultures and beliefs and local economic system. Another important fact is that some of those same church were seen to be “participating during struggle against” apartheid that eventually lead to what some of the majority of people called it a “miracle” political settlement that the world needed to share and celebrate. Therefore, one can argue that most church institutions in their variety participated in the formation of the current neo-liberal democratic government that has been labelled as the launching pad of western imperialism to North Africa.

Another important aspect is that some of these churches continue to occupy the vast hectares of stolen land and “not” considering in redistribution or forfeiting the stolen property in the name of the church. In addition, some of the churches participated in projects such as TRC that were meant for the dispossessed and extremely exploited Black majority to forgive by telling and crying about their torment those who stole their land and remain quarantined in the labour reserves- townships. Other churches continue in their spree of building up many synagogues or temples as possible in whatever plot in any town or city that they happen to have few followers of which I also view it as part of the overt colonising spree. Whilst on other hand it enable the coloniser (thieves) to “apologise” in public whilst continue enjoying the spoils of colonisation. Most of all the majority of these church institutions happened to be of foreign origin to Africa and tend to perpetuate foreign culture and values to indigenous populace. I don’t know whether these churches continue in the same spirit of ‘civilising’ the ‘pagans’ of Africa – (Ethiopia the true name of African) by destroying indigenous culture and values. Whilst the Ethiopians are expected to forfeit their culture and values because they are told that the culture is not static but all other races continue to innovate theirs (culture and values) through church institutions.

In view of the current church practices I start asking myself whether church is truly is what is purporting to be working or preaching the word of Creator but why then it happened to be adherent of democracy. Despite some churches claim to be pro theocratic order but continue enjoying and enforcing the principles of democracy through participating in all democratic rituals such as parliamentary politics that is characterised by the voting mania. I’m asking myself these questions because the church role in our communities has been confused as it is not clear whether they act the role of the hypnotiser or the silencer of the oppressed to have high hopes of everything will be ok when they die in the next world. For example, the famous TRC that has been used as a perfect example of ‘manipulating’ the disposed and oppressed populace to see no need to reclaim what is rightfully their under the sun. I’m saying this because if one looks at how commission operated as it brought people to speak out about how the ‘Amabhunu’ orchestrated violence against them and in return the oppressed are expected to forgive and forget and continue to stay in the ‘emjondolo’ in the squalid conditions and subjected vicious cycle of poverty as they are forced to sell their labour as the only means of meeting their livelihood.

In closure, is the church real the voice of the Creator that means theocratic order but why it operates like the multinationals that come up with high hopes of promising people to alleviate poverty by selling their labour power on conditions that they are docile as possible. The fundamental issue here is that church continue in dividing the human race according to their cult or rituals and along the way they deny the people of the earth and further perpetuates hatred, racism and violence. Does the church stand for righteousness or wickedness as we see their programmes that keep the elements of thuggery and mafia style be the order of the day? Where does these 'abafundisi' taking the human race to?