

Role of active citizenship amid increasing societal challenges in South Africa

A theological reflection on the looting of businesses in South Africa

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Abstract

Many of the citizens in South Africa are religious, with the majority of them affiliating with the Christian religion. The struggle against the apartheid regime was a struggle for full citizenship. The South African active citizenship index score is 68%, reflecting that more than half of South African citizens are active in their society. However, participation in the protest by South African citizens displays either positive active citizenship or negative active citizenship, characterised by violence and transgression of human rights. This negative or positive active citizenship is evident from the peaceful or violent protests in many South African places. Considering the above, the two objectives of the article are the following: The first is to analyse citizens' missional role in society from a Christian perspective. The second one is to give a theological reflection on the impact that the looting of businesses in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng in July 2021 had on the citizenship of South Africans. The research question of this article is: What kind of impact does the looting of businesses that occurred in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng in July 2021 have on the active citizenship of South African society? In response to the above research question and objectives, this article will use a literature study, the Practical Theological interpretation model by Osmer (2008), guided by a hermeneutical theoretical approach.

Keywords: Active Citizenship; Looting of Businesses; Societal Challenges

1. Introduction

Koopman (2015:425) argues that the struggle against the apartheid regime was a struggle for full citizenship because the Black people were bereft of their citizenship with all the rights and responsibilities that this entails. The racism and class prejudice practised during the apartheid era condemned non-Whites to second-class citizenship, whilst Whites were accorded first-class citizenship. Many of the non-White communities (Blacks, Coloureds and Indians) who lived under the apartheid regime lived with a notion that they had no legal status of their citizenship in Apartheid South Africa (SA) because they were denied their human rights and treated with human

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indignity. Now, in democratic SA, both White and non-White communities are faced with the challenge of sharing and practising responsible, active citizenship (Ramphole 2008:126). This challenge can be observed from many service delivery protests, looting of businesses in July 2021, and violent crime in many parts of SA. This article discusses active citizenship amid the South African challenges, with special reference to the looting of businesses in July 2021 within the Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal.

The main research question in this article is: What kind of impact did the looting of businesses in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng in July 2021 have on the active citizenship of South African society? This article has two objectives: The first is to analyse citizens' missional role in society from a Christian perspective. The second one is to give a theological reflection on the impact that the looting of businesses in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng in July 2021 had on the citizenship of South Africans. To achieve the above objectives, one will use the Practical Theological Interpretation model by Osmer (2008), which uses four tasks and their related questions to analyse the situation that led to the looting of business in SA.

This study uses a literature study research method. The literature that will be used will be reports of the commissions, relevant websites, scholarly books, the Bible, journal articles, and other sources that may provide relevant information. Furthermore, this study will use a hermeneutical theory to construct the meaning of lived religion and experience through conversation with other human beings and traditions that model our lives (Ganzevoort 2009:5). To develop an appropriate and relevant hermeneutical understanding of the role of the Christian citizens who discern God's will to engage in a given situation the following factors are essential: the text, context, community and action (Van Gelder 2007:105). The text in this study refers to the Bible as it is a sacred document because this study is done from a Christian perspective. Context is more of SA, including the influence of Africa and the global world. Community refers to primarily Christian communities; second is those outside the Christian religion. Lastly, action refers to everyday activities, whether good or bad, done primarily by Christians and those outside Christian religions.

The following discussion will be a theoretical discussion on the meaning of active citizenship. A literature review on theological reflection on active citizenship concerning the looting of businesses in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal will follow it. The literature review will be done according to the four questions of the model and their related tasks from the Practical Theological Interpretation model by Osmer (2008). The conclusion will summarise the main ideas and findings.

2. Towards active citizenship in Africa

Pedersen (2006:9) and Von Sinner (2015:440) state that citizenship is a legal status accorded to human beings of a nation-state or, to a lesser degree, a resident

foreigner. Human beings are the ones who are accorded citizenship and deserve to be treated with dignity because they are created in the image of God. As the legal citizens of a nation-state, human beings have a responsibility to respect human rights, do their obligations, practice civic virtues and moral responsibility towards the status, and honour their relationship to the state and others (Von Sinner 2015:447). Furthermore, acquiring this legal status of citizenship involves active practice by which people are involved in decisions that affect their lives and become actors concerning their affairs and the affairs of the broader society (Pedersen 2006:9).

Citizenship is when human beings have the legal status of a nation-state. Active citizenship is when citizens participate in the shaping of policies that impact their lives and demand accountability from entities authorised to protect and serve the public good (Pedersen 2006:9). In addition, active citizenship is when human beings as individuals or a collective negotiate the terms of their access to mandated public goods and services in ways that are publicly sanctioned and protected. In short, according to Hingels *et al.* (2009:4), active citizenship incorporates widespread participatory activities containing political action, participatory democracy and civil society, and community support.

According to Mejai (2010:480,481), active citizenship in traditional African society implied active involvement and participation of all citizens in the community's spiritual, social, political, economic, cultural, and educational aspects. Passivity and ignorance of one's duties and responsibility as a citizen in traditional African society were shamed. Participation in spiritual aspects of traditional African society empowered one to reckon the metaphysical world of deities and divinities that were servants of the Supreme being. It helped an individual's everyday life to be directed and influenced by the spiritual world, and some of the duties of the citizens were to carry out the dictates of the ancestors and perform rituals necessary for the protection of self and community (Avoseh 2010:480).

Participation in social aspects conscientized members of the traditional African society that the Creator created them, had a common origin, and related to each other through kinship. Through the influence of *ubuntu*, they maintained quality relationships with the departed beings regarded as ancestors and the living beings whom their ancestors and the Creator guarded. Therefore, to harm or ill-treat the other human being was to provoke the wrath and call upon the punishment of the ancestors and the Creator. Hence, living in harmony with other human beings and the creation of God was fundamental in the everyday life of many individuals within those traditional African societies.

Participation in political aspects of the traditional African society compelled one to put the interests of the community (nation) before self (Mejai 2010:481). This kind of participation in the political aspect was realised by encouraging involve-

ment in the democratic process of making communal decisions, electing and removing a leader, balancing individual rights and obligations to the community, and promoting the corporate existence of the community.

Participation in economic aspects required citizens to be hardworking to develop skills that would enable them to produce enough for themselves and their extended family members (Mejai 2010:481). Cultural participation in traditional African society called for the citizens to observe and attend cultural festivities to celebrate one's identity and culture and build social cohesion. According to Pacho (2014:293, 295), participation in educational aspects equipped members of the traditional African society with knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes both for the transformation of the inner life (moral and character formation) and for social living (to prepare persons to earn their livelihood). Furthermore, Pacho emphasises that traditional African education was rooted in unique African history and reflected African experiences of flourishing and suffering. It promoted self-reliance and independence rather than dependency and passivity.

2.1 What enhances active citizenship?

Peter and Arnab (2011:1, 2, 27) relate that participation in civic associations has great potential to contribute to active citizenship. Democratic South African citizens who become members of the associations are empowered to be active through participation in public politics, holding state officials to account, claiming public services, and thereby improving the quality of democracy. The long-term benefit of the citizens participating in civic associations is that it offers the opportunity to reduce the gap of active citizenship between the poor and uneducated and the rich and educated citizens. Through many civil organisations, the Citizens of SA display a character of independent civil society that strives for human rights and dignity through advocacy, research, protest, policy development, and many other things (Bolton 2020). Civil society, as a non-government organisation or institution with diverse cultural, religious, and special interests of the citizens of a specific nation-state, must shape active citizenship through democratic, active, participatory citizenship. However, Von Sinner (2015:447) warns civil societies that in their effort to mould active citizenship, the practice of citizenship has to reflect good actions that contribute to the common good of the public and should be accompanied by constructive discourse that engages the ideas to build the community. Hingels *et al.* (2009:4) state that action alone is not active citizenship, but action must have democratic or beneficial consequences. The beneficial consequences of the actions of an active citizen must be incorporated with democratic values, mutual respect, and human rights, contribute to social cohesion, and embrace the community's interest.

Furthermore, the growing economy and multireligious context enhance active citizenship. Hingels *et al.* (2009:1, 2) state that active citizenship is higher in countries with a higher GDP level, equal income distribution, and a more heterogeneous religious climate. The higher GDP of a country's economy implies an opportunity for economic growth and an increase in employment rate and income. The more the citizens of a country are open and embrace other religions, the more the citizens will learn from each other and collaborate on matters that concern human well-being.

Moreover, the strongest determinant of active citizenship is education as civic education and participation in lifelong learning activities. According to Pacho (2014:295, 296), citizens do need civic education to help them make responsible choices and to partake fully in the life of the nation by adhering to the rule of law, promoting human freedom, rights, and dignity and empowering the people, eliminating corruption, and protecting the environment. Civic education empowers citizens towards nation-building through the communal view of life. The communal view of life and the lifelong learning process implies that the community members (parents, extended family members, and siblings) foster lifelong learning. The life-long learning process of learning implies that learning does not end but starts as early as the infant stage until one passes on to another life. The life-long process of learning is holistic as it encompasses all aspects of life and integrates knowledge of the spiritual world to build morals and respect for the Creator and ancestors. It fosters knowledge of the physical world by promoting the care of the creation of God, immediate and extended family members, and being prepared to sacrifice one's life for the protection of the community. Education as a lifelong learning process in traditional African society empowered citizens to learn about their rights and obligations and teach them to others (Mejai 2010:485).

Fear of punishment and honour of the Creator and ancestors enhanced the practice of active citizenship (Mejai 2010:480). This fear and honour of the Creator and ancestors in African traditional society helped in some way to concentrate the individual's mind on the path of virtue, and it created a sense of obligation in nation-building. A communal view of life also contributed to active citizenship. A communal view of life in traditional African society strived to eliminate egocentrism, but not the privileges of an individual (Mejai 2010:480). A communal view of life compels citizens to be aware of the existence and interests of others. Therefore, their rights and obligations must not interfere with the rights and obligations of others. Thus, a communal view of life compels a citizen to observe interpersonal relationships, which sensitises citizens to values such as the sacredness of human life, mutual help, generosity, co-operation, respect for older people, harmony, and preservation of the sacred. In traditional African society, the communal view of life made active

citizenship an all-involving life process with the family and the larger community as the focus (Mejai 2010:482). It made active citizenship a lifelong learning process that ensured social recognition of those who excelled and could be honoured to become a great ancestor or even a deity after death (Mejai 2010:482).

According to Pacho (2014:292), to enhance citizenship that contributes to nation-building, the citizens must be empowered at family, regional, national, and international levels. More importantly, empowerment must target those people who are marginalised and vulnerable, such as the poor people from rural areas, refugees and internally displaced persons, homeless and older people, the sick, the uneducated, and the unemployed. The focus of empowerment must be on learning about community involvement and participation (Mejai 2010:485). This empowerment must bring about deep change that contributes to holistic human growth so that African people can eventually become active and responsible citizens. The change must be from passive and dependent citizens into more independent, active, responsible, and participating citizens. The empowerment must help Africans realise they have the potential and power to shape their future. Empowering Africans as active citizens must provide relevant knowledge, necessary skills, and appropriate morals to help Africans determine their destiny. Lastly, the empowerment must provide relevant information that will enable Africans to be confident and participate in decision-making processes that concern their lives and those of others, hence becoming agents of change. According to Pacho (2014:293), empowerment must help African people recuperate from the distorted image of blackness based on their disfigured history and race and thus enable them to rise above racial mediocrity and focus on development and responsibility.

2.2 What hinders active citizenship?

Pedersen (2006:11) discussed some barriers to active citizenship in-depth; only the relevant ones will be mentioned and discussed in this study. The first one is the need for more information about mechanisms available to citizens to exercise human rights. For example, many African citizens in modern Africa are unaware of their rights and obligations towards nation-building because of the colonial legacy and poverty (Pacho 2014:292). The second is access to non-biased news spread through electronic media. For example, social media in SA was often used to spread false information that misled people concerning the COVID-19 vaccination or instigate people against the state during the looting of businesses in July 2021 (Letšosa 2021:6; Report of the Expert Panel 2021:116). The third is the lack of interaction between pro-poor and more influential groups. For example, collaboration between the UNDP, IMF and WB is minimal to help address inequalities, human indignity, and unemployment challenges in many countries of Africa (Pedersen 2006).

Fourth and lastly is a lack of access to decision-making bodies and institutions providing public services and legal protection. This implies that what may hinder active citizens can be service-providing institutions when they are far or unavailable from the rural areas, the poor, and marginalised.

In the modern era, advanced technological development may hinder active citizenship and nation-building. This can be when social media spreads false information about specific societal issues. The other hindrance to active citizenship is a widening digital divide, low income, lack of education in digital technology, and slow industrialisation faced by the African continent (Van Rensburg, Strydom, Viviers, Kühn, Parry 2021:40, 44). Due to poverty, lack of digital education, and lack of responsible use of social media and technology, women, youths, the poor, and the marginalised are easily vulnerable to exclusion, manipulation, and abuse through social media technology. In short, regarding the use of social media for active citizenship and nation-building, there is potential to create digital divides and exclusion of some groups that do not have access to digital tools. Despite the lack of digital tools, Lin and Kant (2021:2) argue that the use of social media can be misused for the polarisation of the citizens of the nation-state to spread false information, infringe on the privacy of others, and eventually disrupt social cohesion in the society.

3. Practical Theological Interpretation model

The Practical Theological Interpretation model by Osmer (2008) interprets situations within congregations and beyond. The following discussion is about a literature review on theological reflection on active citizenship concerning the looting of businesses in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, and it will be done according to the four questions of the model and their related tasks from the Practical Theological Interpretation model by Osmer's (2008). The significance of this Practical Theological Interpretation model by Osmer (2008) for this article is that it helps to integrate theory and practice, empirical knowledge, and theological knowledge and the context. What is going on regarding active citizenship in SA?

According to Osmer (2008:31-78), the first question is, what is going on? This question relates to the first task, the descriptive empirical task. To achieve this task and respond appropriately to the question in the context of this article, the spirituality of presence, priestly listening and continuum of attending were applied. Spirituality of presence was engaged through visiting and observing the aftermath of the damage done to properties. Priestly listening was practised when the researcher listened to the stories of the victims and perpetrators of the looting to share the pain and frustrations of the narrators. Lastly, secondary empirical research data from various sources are used to contribute to the continuum of attending.

According to South African people (2011\2012:10), 80% of SA citizens adhere to the Christian religion, with the rest (20%) belonging to A.T.R., Islam, Hindu, and other religions. Census SG presentation (2022:16-25) indicates that the South African population is 62,027 503, and Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal are regarded as the most populated provinces. In terms of gender, SA female citizens are 51,1% as compared to 48.9% of male citizens. Black people make up 81,4% of the SA population compared to 8,2% Coloured, Whites (7,3%), Indians\Asians (2,7%), and others (0,2%). Lastly, SA citizens under 35 years make up 61,2% of the SA population.

Smith-Höhu and Petersen (2015:3) state that the South African active citizenship index score is 68%. This implies that South Africans participate in their communities to be involved in decisions and processes that involve them, have a fair amount of knowledge of their contexts and challenge policies, actions, and existing structures for inclusivity, equality, and social justice. If more than half of South Africans partake in active citizenship, what kind of participation is it, or what is its impact?

Some factors that hinder the development of active citizenship in South Africa. According to the National Development Plan 2030 (NDP 2011:1), SA must urgently deal with the 'triple challenge' of poverty, inequality, and unemployment. This is because when people are poor and have no income or no hope for the next meal, their dignity becomes vulnerable; therefore, some will do anything and, often, inhumane things to get food or something to sustain life. Poverty is a hindrance to active citizenship because poor people need more resources or skills and are dependent on others to help them provide information and services that the state is unable to deliver.

According to OPISA (2018:6), poverty in SA is persistent, and almost half of the South African community is chronically poor despite statistics indicating that poverty was gradually decreasing after 1994. Furthermore, poor households are concentrated in rural areas (OPISA 2018:6). In the urban areas, they are commonly concentrated in the township or informal settlements, mainly designated areas dominated by formerly disadvantaged ethnic groups. GHS (2019:1) indicates that 23.4% of South African households consist of a single person. Often, this single person is a female person who has no skill or education to partake fully in the economy (OPISA 2018:6). In contrast, KwaZulu-Natal (18.9%) and Mpumalanga (18.3%) are indicated to have households with more than six members. The consequence of households with more children or larger size of the household is that they are the ones that end up with higher incidents of poverty (OPISA 2018:15). The consequence of the above is that if women, who are a majority of the South African population (Census SG Presentation 2022:20) are poor, lacking skills, and education that would adversely affect their participation in active citizenship. However, the present policies of the South African government across the board support the

empowerment of women; hence, SA is gradually experiencing growth in the number of women fighting for women's rights in the economy, education, and politics.

Hingels *et al.* (2009:3, 23) state that young people participate less as active citizens than middle-aged people. SA has a good percentage of its youths attending primary and high school. There is an increase in number of young people completing Grade 12. However, there is still a concern for a relatively low number of young people attending post-school education (GHS 2019:1). Since the arrival of the South African democratic era, young people have often been ignorant to partake in decision-making in matters that concern them. This is blamed on inadequate civic education from schools that do not adequately inform and empower young people about their rights and responsibilities (Arendse & Smith 2019:2). The consequence is that young people beyond school withhold their participation in political elections, lack adequate information about their rights and obligations and lack relevant skills to partake in the economy. Consequently, this increased inequality gap disempowers young people to shape their destinies and be active citizens in their context.

Inequality is one of the factors that hinders active citizenship. Ramphela (2008:23) argues that inequality is a tension dilemma between those who have and those who do not. The previous apartheid regime ensured that inequality was spread across all sectors of the society, that is, education, politics, economy, and social relations, and most importantly, it implanted the ideology of inequality within the mindset of both Whites and Blacks. The consequence is that amongst most Whites, inequality has generated an attitude of superiority complex where they view themselves, their culture, and religion as superior to others. Hence, many of these naïve White community members are entangled in racism and fear of Black empowerment and resist any involvement to contribute to the transformation of the previously disadvantaged communities. Inequality has grievous consequences for most of the Black community members. Many of them suffer from dependency syndrome reflected in the form of dependency on the state for grants and White people for employment. In contrast, some of the Black community members are trapped in low self-esteem and victim mentality syndrome even though they are faced with opportunities that need hard work, wisdom, and creativity.

Unemployment contributes to poor participation in active citizenship. Unemployed people often lack the resources to build a fair society and address social issues that perpetuate inequality and unemployment. Consequently, they end up being poor and hopeless. The economic recession in 2018, the COVID-19 pandemic that started in 2020, corruption, and the recent looting of businesses in July 2021 are the local factors that exacerbated the high unemployment rate in South Africa. Lack of employment has now turned South African government into a welfare state

where more than half of its households receive one of more than one grant (GHS 2019:2). As a result, many of the citizens in SA are dependent on the state grants for their income; hence grants are now determined to be a second source of income to salaries in SA (GHS 2019:2). Since grants are not enough for citizens to improve the quality of their lives in South Africa, approximately 18%-39% of South Africans are living under conditions where they do not have access to a formal dwelling, access to water, electricity, sanitation, and solid waste removal (GHS 2019:1-2). However, if empowered, unemployed people could provide community support by volunteering, participating in associations, generating social capital that fights for the rights of the marginalised, and holding accountable those who should serve society.

3.1.1 Looting of business in South Africa within the provinces of Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal

It was on 8th July 2021 when former President Jacob Zuma was about to be imprisoned, and there was severe tension in the country about the aftermath of such a decision. Social media and various news platforms analysed what may or may not happen. Eventually, when former President Jacob Zuma was incarcerated, The Report of the Expert Panel (2021:119-120) stated that some politically motivated individuals used social media to mobilise citizens towards looting, destruction, and disruption of South African economic activity. The report further states that some notorious hostel dwellers in Gauteng province, bystanders from the adjacent informal settlements, organised criminals, and disgruntled and undisciplined security force elements participated in the looting, destruction, and disruption of the economy in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal.

According to the Report of the Expert (2021:34), the cost of such magnitude of damage was estimated to be more than fifty billion. The Report of the Parliament of RSA (2021:3, 57) mentions that state departments like the Departments of Home Affairs, Social Development, SASSA, SAPO and Small Businesses lost valuable office items like computers, microwaves, fridges, printers, and fax machines. Service delivery to thousands of South African citizens was adversely affected. Private businesses, such as more than 200 malls and 1,000 stores were looted, 100 businesses burnt, and more than 50,000 formal and informal traders were adversely affected, with more than 150,000 jobs at risk. Moreover, even national routes in both Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal were affected, where trucks were burnt or roads closed.

The Report of the Expert (2021:36, 48) indicated that the unrest and the looting of the businesses in the provinces of Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal were triggered by the arrest and incarceration of former President Jacob Zuma. Other factors like the failure of the state to deal with corruption, high unemployment rate, poverty, and inequality led to a situation where the have-nots looted and destroyed the businesses

of the haves. The adverse consequences of this looting were that the economy was severely affected. It amplified vulnerability, and food insecurity increased (Report of the Parliament of the RSA 2021:13). Furthermore, 350 people were declared dead, an image of SA and social cohesion was marred because the looter and victim of the looting had to live together, trust was destroyed between citizens, and the state as citizens felt abandoned by their state when in need of security.

What role did the citizens play in the whole regretful looting of businesses? In summary, SA citizens played a mixed role in this regretful incident. One can say that citizens who participated in this regrettable incident demonstrated repulsive, unpalatable, delinquent, and desperate behaviour of some South African citizens. Poverty, inequality, and unemployment are indeed rife in SA, but they turned some South African citizens into people who disregard the rights and dignity of others. Those who fall into this category are instigators of this violence, organised criminals, bystanders, and those undisciplined security elements. These kinds of citizens revealed their real character, who they are under pressure. They exposed their hidden agenda as insurrectionists and criminals who exploited the desperation of the poor (The Report of the Experts 2021:48).

Some citizens played a heroic role in condemning this regrettable incident; they protected and assisted the victims of this looting, collaborated with the security forces to calm the violent looting, and filled in the gap by helping those in need. These citizens are the ones that the country must rejoice and reward because they are role models, active citizens, and custodians of our constitution. They refused the temptation to partake in an act of inciting violence and harming others. However, they opted to abide by the law by protecting others and enhancing the state's capacity. These citizens allowed tense and violent situations to elicit their best potential to serve themselves and prove to be trusted in more considerable future challenges. The citizens who belong to this category are the volunteers who vowed to protect their environment against looting, and these volunteers may be ordinary citizens, taxi drivers, FBOs, journalists, and others. Even though some of the instigators used social media to mobilise citizens to loot businesses, it is also motivating to say that some responsible and active citizens also used the same social media to mobilise South African citizens not to loot and not to partake in the violent destruction of our country and economy. In this context, we see social media used both for constructive, active citizenship, and for inciting the destructive participation of citizens in their society.

3.2 Why is this destructive practice of citizenship going on in South African society?

Before responding to the question "Why is this going on?", it must be noted that this is the second question from Osmer's model (2008:79-128). The question is related

to the second task of Osmer's (2008:79) interpretive task. Osmer (2008:82) states that the interpretive task requires the application of sage wisdom. This sage wisdom requires the interplay of three key characteristics. Firstly, thoughtfulness implies quality reflection about life's questions at a deeply committed leader, especially when experiences are not enough for an in-depth understanding of the situation. This article's thoughtfulness is about critically reflecting on why the looting was done in both Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. Secondly, theoretical interpretation denotes the ability to draw on theories of art and sciences to understand and respond to particular episodes. Third and last, is wise judgement, the capacity to interpret episodes, situations, and contexts that are mainly related to the context of African society and its churches. In this article, I will also give my authentic judgement on the impact of the history and legacy of White imperialism in the context of the looting of businesses in South Africa.

Most South African citizens are Christians, and South Africa, as part of the global south of the world, is one of the countries where the Christian religion is showing numerical growth. The critical question that could be asked is, is this growth quantitative or qualitative? The answer is not simple, but due to many societal challenges in South African communities, one is tempted to agree that quantitative growth is dominant compared to qualitative growth. Quantitative growth means numerical or wider growth of the Christian faith, whilst qualitative growth means in-depth, experiential, and contextual growth. Christian faith in SA faces many challenges that make it ineffective and vulnerable to much criticism, even from adherents to this faith. In my observation, the challenge is not Christian faith, but adherents to Christian faith, thus referring to White and Black Christians. The Christian faith's gospel and mission aim to transform humanity and social structures. Both gospel and mission are expected to bring about the spiritual transformation of human beings who aspire to love, justice, and shalom and embody these in an encounter with social structures. However, the opposite happened, why?

Speckman (2007:xx) argued that religion has been used to keep Africans in a position of dependency for a long time instead of empowering them to be active citizens. The Christian religion was used to propagate the ideology of a better life in heaven at the expense of African development. Christian faith received from the Western missionaries was described as promoting personal holiness at the expense of confronting injustices in one's context. For example, many of the White Afrikaner churches during apartheid had an uncritical and cordial relationship with the apartheid government. During the democratic era, we had many of the churches led by Black leadership that have comrade partnership with the state to such an extent that the prophetic standpoint of the church was obscured and undermined. Furthermore, active involvement in a society of many South African churches is ag-

gregated to a level of addressing immediate needs instead of confronting systemic evil and developing people to be agents of change in their context.

In a country that boasts of more than 80% of its population being Christians, it cannot be that it must be described as violent, unequal, and racially divided. Our identity influences our behaviour. Therefore, Christians should not be complacent with the description of South African society as a violent, racial, and unequal society. Why is South African society described as violent, racially divided, and unequal? Why are Christians in SA struggling to contribute to the transformation the Christian faith desires? In response to the first question, SA suffered three White imperialist forces, that is, slavery, colonialism, and apartheid instigated by the Dutch, English, and Afrikaaners. This is in contrast with many African countries that suffered only two of the above, slavery and colonialism. Again, many of these African countries gained independence more than six decades ago, while SA had democratic freedom more than three decades ago. Therefore, SA is still reeling from the aftermaths of White imperialist forces. The consequences of these White imperialist forces are enormous, but according to Buntu (2013:2), it is *self-negation* manifested in low self-esteem to be creative towards social transformation. This implies that citizens and their leaders prefer to imitate, improvise, or depend on foreign aid for assistance for their development. Self-negation can be displayed as mistrust of the other, self-hatred, or jealousy because of the other person's progress. In the contemporary context, we realise self-negation when citizens mistrust their political leaders and feel neglected. It also became visible when some of the participants looted businesses because they did not have much; they usurped the possessions and property of others.

The other consequence of White imperialist forces is *cultural confusion*, which is visible through ambiguity in understanding one's identity, especially in the context of gospel and culture. White imperialist forces indoctrinated Africans that White culture and religion were superior and civilised, while African culture and religion were regarded as backward and demonic. As a result, Africans were treated as sub-humans and second-class citizens because they were not of equal status with the White man. The consequences of the White imperialist indoctrination were that many Africans lost their cultural and spiritual values like ubuntu, communal view of life, and respect for the sacredness of life and nature. Ramphele (2008:126) says that the dilemma faced by the White community in democratic SA is adapting to a shared citizenship that promotes equality before the law.

Moreover, Mbigi and Maree (1995:57, 58) mention that White people, because of what happened during slavery, colonialism and apartheid, still hold a fear of revenge from Black people, nationalism, and affirmative action. In contrast, towards the White community, Black people have a fear of victimisation, White domina-

tion, and being sold out. These fears were entrenched by apartheid and are still lingering as a legacy of apartheid in post-apartheid South Africa. The third and last consequence of White imperialist forces is the *spiritual confusion* that can be associated with a lack of creativity to respond to the gospel and a lack of discernment to understand the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In this instance, the majority of African Christians are still struggling with understanding their identity in Christ; how to contextualise the Christian faith? Moreover, most importantly, how to implement and engage spiritual transformation as a mandate of the Christian community. In summary, one can say that the Christian religion inherited from the Western missionaries disempowered African Christians from partaking in active citizenship.

Ramphele (2008:132) states that from White imperialism, we have inherited negative activist behaviour in the form of civil disobedience, disrespect of the law, destruction of property, and violence. Furthermore, Ramphele (2008:14) says that from White imperialist forces, we inherited poor quality human capital that suffers from psychological impairment and moral bankruptcy. During and towards the end of the tenure of President Jacob Zuma, SA experienced a high number of service delivery protests from its citizens. These protests overlapped with the era of President M Ramaphosa. Many of these protests were characterised by violence, looting of shops and the death of some of the protesters. The recent looting of businesses after the arrest and incarceration of President Jacob Zuma also led to unprecedented violence and looting of the businesses that nearly collapsed the economy of South Africa. Most of the protestors displayed the above-mentioned character: civil disobedience, disrespect of the law, violence, and destruction of property. The situation could have been avoided had some disgruntled and undisciplined public servants and security force elements done their duties.

The last response is why this destructive practice of citizenship in South African society continues. In addition to the above discussion, there is a lack of knowledge of human rights and obligation to nation-building, over-dependence, and untapped skills (Pacho 2014:292). Most South African citizens seem to struggle to couple human rights with obligations. This is realised more during protests where protesting SA citizens assume the right to protest, but ignore their obligations to observe the rights of others who do not want to participate in the protest. Usually, what we see done to those who do not want to protest, but continue with their everyday duties is that they may be violently treated or denied the opportunity to exercise their constitutional rights. Most unemployed South African citizens have vocational skills that they can use to start their businesses, but lack the courage and creativity to do so; instead, they would rather depend on the government and foreign aid for their livelihood. When foreigners grasp the opportunity to start businesses and provide the required skills, they become victims of xenophobic violence and crime.

3.3 What ought to be going on concerning active citizenship in SA?

The third question from Osmer's (2008:129-173) theory is, "What ought to be going on?" This question relates to the third task, Osmer's (2008:129) normative task. The normative task is practised within the context of a prophetic discernment process, which involves making good judgements and applying theological and ethical interpretation to a situation with the aim of engaging in good practice and doing the will of God. Good judgement and correct theological and ethical interpretation may lead to the appropriate direction of congregational ministry and leadership practice.

Christians are in the majority in South Africa, and their effective practice of active citizenship has the potential to transform this country to be what God wants it to be. Service delivery failure, high crime rate, and violence can be a thing of the past if South African citizens commit to active citizenship guided by the mission of God. Mission originates from God; the church does not have its mission except the one it receives from God. The mission of God is to reconcile humanity with Himself; this implies that God, through the death and resurrection of Christ, reconciled Himself with humanity (2 Cor 5:18). According to Barrigar (2023:166, 1667), mission through the lens of reconciliation calls for deep oneness. Reconciliation with God is the primary and foundational location of reconciliation in the Christian faith. Reconciliation with God propels one to reconcile with the creation, whole being, and society (Barrigar 2023:169, 170, 171). Reconciliation with creation implies understanding the original mandate in a godly way as to rule and have dominion over all the creation on earth (Gn 1:26, 28). Reconciliation with the whole being implies that the body, mind, and spirit of human beings conflict with each other (Rm 7:15); therefore, there is a need to reintegrate these divided parts of our being into oneness. Social relational reconciliation implies a need for reconciliation with a society with a broken relationship due to fear, loss of identity, and justice.

A church is a people of God, a community of believers, and a servant of the mission of God (Armstrong 1979:44; Porter 2008:11; Sebahene 2020:381). In short, the church, as people of God, refers to those whom God calls, believe in what God has done for humanity through Christ, and are sanctified with the Holy Spirit. Symbolically, they are called the new Israel, a new nation that is owned and belongs to God. The church as a community of believers is about those who believe in Jesus Christ, who lived in this world, died, and was resurrected by God through the Holy Spirit and now in his physical body is alive and sitting at the right hand of God, and through the Holy Spirit is with us eternally (Rom 10:9). Church as a servant derives its identity from Christ (Phil 2:7; Isa 49:3) and is mandated to serve the mission of God, which is about the reconciliation of humanity with God. Church as servant implies that where there is conflict, the church must be an instrument of reconcili-

ation; where there is injustice, the church must be an agent of reform; where there is suffering, the church must be an agent of compassion (Armstrong 1979:44). Church has a responsibility to proclaim good news about the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and those who believe must be baptised and made disciples of Christ (Mt 28:18-20). Furthermore, besides proclaiming the gospel, the church cares for the poor, orphans, and widows (Ja 1:27).

Church is the agent of the mission of God. Deyoung and Gilbert (2011:19) claim that a mission implies being sent and given a task to fulfil. Church is sent into the world and to every creation (Mk 16:15) and nation (Mt 28:19) to make disciples by proclaiming the gospel of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. According to Lim (2015:35), proclaiming the gospel is part of the evangelistic mission, which proclaims historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, intending to persuade people to come to Him personally and be reconciled to God. The evangelistic mission involves words or *kerugma* to evangelise, teach, train, and disciple people. Jørgensen (2015:17) states that the goal of the proclamation of the gospel should be to lead people to a personal encounter with the living God, inviting them to receive the gift of the forgiveness of sins in baptism and faith and living a life of discipleship. In the context of active citizenship, evangelism calls for virtuous citizenship in a democratic society, obedience to Christ, and incorporation into his church (Lefell 2015:216; Lim 2015:35).

Deyoung and Gilbert (2011:19) further add that the church's mission is to provide a service of social justice and *shalom*. Kirk (1999:32) believes mission involves a calling to service of compassion to those in need (Mt 25:44; Ac 11:29). Social justice, *shalom*, and compassion are part of the diakonial mission of the church. Jørgensen (2015:7, 10, 14) adds that the diakonial mission involves the sharing of faith, joys, and sorrows of life; it is a Christian work for human well-being, a Christian lifestyle in society, God's liberating action for the poor, the marginalised and the oppressed. In short, Jørgensen (2015:10) is of the view that a diakonial mission involves a specific kind of help to any people in need, service, distribution of resources, justice, kindness, and compassion and often the beneficiaries are the widows, orphans, immigrants, and the poor or marginalised.

The church's mission is intrinsically linked with the action of God, which is revealed in the communion and love between the persons of the Trinity. Hence, the mission of the church should be God-centred, not driven by self-centred ideologies. Mission must be understood as the essence of the church, the ministry of the whole people of God, not only the pastor. Most South African citizens are Christians who belong to the people of God and the community of believers; hence, they must be empowered to understand that they have a responsibility to demonstrate a Christian lifestyle, be exemplary, and partner with God in His mission. Christians are repre-

sentatives of the church in their public life. They must be courageous to be visible in the public square to speak against the African continent's darkest problems of bad governance, corruption, and socio-economic injustice (Sebahene 2020:382). Christians are the ones who bridge the church and the world, witness the Word through action, and are called to a life of faith, obedience, service, and worship to God in private and public life.

3.4 How might we respond to the situation in South Africa?

The above question is related to the fourth task of Osmer's (2008:175-218) pragmatic task. It is hoped that solutions to the challenges faced by South African society will enhance the mission, vision, situational analyses, and strategy for implementing the changes. Leadership is essential in the implementation of changes (Hendriks 2004:197). As a result, this is where guidance by leadership is crucial. For leadership to guide a congregation towards new directions, it will need to discern the contemporary situation of the congregation and its history and have a vision empowered by the power of the Holy Spirit. As an interpretive guide, a leader must help members understand the present situation, their identity, and their task in shaping the new course for the congregations.

Leadership in the Christian context is characterised by servanthood. It needs to serve God and his creation. It needs to understand the mission of God to assist the church in aligning its mission with God's. Leadership must have a vision derived from the scripture and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Leadership must have a mission and strategies to accomplish its ultimate task. Most importantly, leadership that understands its identity finds it easy to perform its leadership and ministry appropriately.

What kind of solutions can be implemented by leadership to promote active citizenship? First, South Africans must be empowered to be active citizens in their context. As active citizens they must identify their societal challenges and become agents of change and co-decision makers in resolving their societal challenges (VPUU 2020:19). Second, for effective and active citizenship South Africans must be encouraged to collaborate with other stakeholders for appropriate, feasible interventions with greater impact (VPUU 2020:19). Third, for the sake of community-owned and stakeholder solution leadership must communicate regularly with the members of the community and allow community members also to voice their concerns (VPUU 2020:20). Fourth and lastly, leadership must inspire South African citizens to practice active citizenship that embodies democratic values like tolerance, equality, solidarity, justice, and non-violence (Pedersen 2006:10).

In this section, I will use the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council (KZNCC) as representatives of churches to ana-

lyse how they mobilised citizens towards practising their responsible and active citizenship. The SACC, in collaboration with other minister fraternal in Gauteng Province, issued a public statement on 15th July 2021 regarding the public looting of businesses both in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal (SACC 2021) and KZNCC on 14th July 2021. SACC is a church-based organisation representing different church denominations in South Africa. Its responsibility is to empower churches and their leaders in matters of ministry and join hands with different denominations to critically engage with the state and societal challenges. KZNCC is an affiliate of SACC, and its role is to help the churches of KwaZulu-Natal develop a united Christian response to the many challenges of the province (Makgabo 2021). In its response to business looting in July 2021, SACC embraced its missional task when it mentioned that “The church is an agent for reconciliation and the restoration and recovery of the positive human spirit, akin to the African concept of Ubuntu-Botho” (SACC 2021). KZNCC expressed its missional role as offering pastoral care, peace monitoring, and peacebuilding (Makgabo 2021). To witness its missional task, KZNCC condemned the racial violence against Black people and the reckless behaviour of those who resorted to public violence, looting businesses, property damage, and intimidating people (Makgabo 2021). It called for leaders from government, faith and business sectors, and civil society to offer their support to those who are victims of this looting and violence (Makgabo 2021). Lastly, they called for the government to reduce the glaring and immoral chasm between the poor and the rich and mobilised for practical intervention from all parties and stakeholders. The SACC (2021) pleaded with the perpetrators to stop looting and lauded community leaders who mobilised against looting, encouraged the protection of community infrastructure, and urged community volunteers to establish mop-up operations. Most important was when the SACC invited leaders from other faiths and various sectors of communities to partake in the reconciliation and restoration of the society. In its closing statement, the SACC recommended infusing public values, social cohesion, mutual respect, and cultural accountability through nation-building. In addition, the state was urged to address the immediate economic impacts of the looting by declaring amnesty for two weeks for those who stole property and goods to return them. The state was advised to establish an economic restoration fund to compensate the bereaved families and those who lost property and businesses. The above discussion is an indication of how churches responded to the societal challenge by being inspired to take leadership in bringing a message of hope, care, and justice, encouraging the practice of law-abiding activities, helping those in need, defending justice, exercising critical conscience, and encouraging a life of forgiveness, reconciliation, nation building, and restoration.

4. Conclusion

South Africa has many resources that it can use to empower its citizens to be responsible and active citizens in their context. Already, the majority of the citizens are vocal and active. However, most of these citizens need to be empowered to shift from negative activism that is destructive to positive activism that is constructive and transforming. This can be done by embracing the South African Constitution. Parliament must enhance its civic education programmes, learners and educators at school must be trained about active citizenship, and pastors must preach about active citizenship in their sermons. This kind of practice will facilitate the internalisation and embodying of the values and ordinances of the constitution about active and responsible citizenship.

The looting of businesses in July 2021 is a regrettable incident that should never be allowed to repeat itself. It contributed to a considerable loss of money and jobs. It reflected the unpalatable and undesirable behaviour of some of our citizens whilst, at the same time, we need to honour and appreciate citizens who assisted, protected, and obeyed the law amid this tension and violence.

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