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A public practical-theological response and proposal to decolonisation discourse in South Africa: From #YourStatueMustFall and #MyStatueShouldBeErected to #BothOurStatuesShouldBeErected

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The years 2015 and 2016 were marked by violent protests at South African universities. While the focus of many of the protests was on access to university education, an equally major theme was the decolonisation of universities. University statues, such as that of Cecil John Rhodes at the University of Cape Town and many others, were pulled down or defaced. Within the discourse on decolonisation of curriculum, statues were viewed as symbols of maintaining and preserving the colonial hegemony that is being sustained by a Western or Eurocentric curriculum taught at universities. These developments led to a national discourse, which, among others, highlighted universities as spaces of exclusion because of residual colonial features. These protests became represented by hashtags such as #RhodesMustFall. These protests indicated a conflict and contest to eradicate the remnants of colonialism, as represented by statues (#YourStatueMustFall), which some protesters argued should be replaced by symbols of black liberation and anti-apartheid iconic symbols (#MyStatueShouldBeErectedInstead). For an integrated South Africa, with its constitutional ideals of a rainbow nation, a discourse of coexistence is required (#BothOurStatuesShouldBeErected). In this situation, a contextually engaged reformatory public practical theology is required to contribute to a constructive discourse and coexistence.

Introduction, background and premise

Transformation at South African institutions related to higher education has generally been slow. Dreyer (2017:1) observes that although the issue of transformation has always been on the agenda of higher education since the transition to a democratic government in 1994, it is only since the student protests in 2015 and 2016 that it has attracted much attention. Heleta (2016:1) adds that 'while all universities have had new policies and frameworks that speak about equality, equity, transformation and change, institutional cultures and epistemological traditions have not considerably changed'. The movement that made the call for higher education transformation prominent and placed it on top of national discourse, the #RhodesMustFall campaign, started at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in March 2015 when a student, Chumani Maxwele, smeared faeces on the statue of Cecil John Rhodes. Matebeni (2017:15), who was convener of the #RhodesMustFall movement, writes: '… originally directed against a statue that commemorates the colonial icon Cecil John Rhodes, the campaign marked the beginning of the largest wave of student protests in democratic South Africa'. This event gave rise to national awareness on higher education realities and evolved into a countrywide student movement calling for the decolonisation of higher education in South Africa (Booysen 2016; Naicker 2016; Naidoo 2016; Pillay 2016). However, the movement became nuanced and took different discussions such as the decolonisation of universities, free education and the eradication of Western or Eurocentric hegemonic control in higher education. Buttelli and Le Bruyns (2017:1) indicate that confusion and nuanced developments are not uncommon in social movements, as they can be contradictory and ambiguous. Louw (2017) acknowledges this apparent confusion and chaos as normal in such movements:

> One should indeed acknowledge that a rational solution (positivistic approach) to the complexity of destructive forms of activism is not possible. Activism, and in the case of the #MustFall campaigns, is embedded in paradox and modes of disorder. According to the theory of *chaosmos in complexity thinking*, the bipolarity of an order–chaos complexity forms a paradoxical dynamic network within processes of creative thinking. (p. 2)

Note: This article was initially presented at the Association of Practical Theology Biennial Conference, 13–15 April 2018, Yale Divinity School, US.

South Africa as a country became busy in trying to understand this student movement, which was predominantly called 'Fees Must Fall' (also known by the trending Twitter topic #FeesMustFall or #FMF) (Heleta 2016:1; Kamanzi 2016:1; Kgatle 2018:1–2). The #RhodesMustFall movement gave considerable similar energy around the world. 'The #RhodesMustFall movement galvanised an electric energy around the world that could no longer be ignored' (Matebeni 2017:16). Grove (2016) gives an insightful synoptic overview of similar currency of pulling down statues of people whose morals clash with modern values in the US, UK, Australia and some parts of Europe:

> The bronze statue of Jefferson Davis, the slave-owning Confederate president during the American Civil War, was removed from a prominent position at the University of Texas, Austin; in December 2015, students at the University of Missouri and at William and Mary in Virginia covered statues of Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the US, with yellow sticky notes labelling him 'racist' and 'rapist' on account of his relationship with one of his own slaves; early in 2016 Amherst College in Massachusetts dumped its mascot, Lord Jeff, based on the 18th-century military commander Lord Jeffrey Amherst, whose troops handed out blankets deliberately laced with smallpox to Native Americans; in March 2016, Harvard Law School agreed to retire an official shield based on the family crest of Isaac Royall, a brutal slave owner who endowed the university's first law professorship; in the UK, two memorials commemorating visits by King Leopold II of Belgium were quietly removed by Queen Mary University of London in June 2016 after a student campaign; and in Australia at the University of Melbourne, similar developments are happening. (p. 2)

While the effects of the #RhodesMustFall movement can be noticed across the country and other parts of the world, in this article we will restrict ourselves largely to the UCT events in our analysis. The student-led #RhodesMustFall movement at UCT and other parts of the country demanded the removal of statues, along with firm commitments to address worker rights, curriculum and several other issues. The students' resentment of Rhodes' statue at UCT was about its being a symbol of perpetuating the spirit of Western imperialism. Heleta (2016:2) and Zeleza (2009:114) report that, in South Africa, the colonial universities were founded by settlers, who saw them as both symbols and disseminators of European civilisation in the colonies. Hence, such symbols and their positioning in public institutions (such as where Rhodes' statue was positioned) may suggest approval of the symbol and the possible meanings that it may represent. Notably, the removal of statues or the call for their removal started at the onset of South African democracy in 1994 and there have been sporadic events of such movements around the country (Wilkerson 1994):

> Already back in 1994, the statue of apartheid architect Hendrik Verwoerd was removed from parliament in Cape Town. Seventeen years later, in a somewhat theatrical event in Midvaal, south of Johannesburg, another bust of Verwoerd was taken down. (Matebeni 2017:16)

However, the current movement was intense as it was engineered by energetic students.

The events at UCT sparked a national debate on the transformation of universities, the positioning of statutes and how to manage the statues going forward. The national consultation discussions reached a decision to remove the statues. So, what started as one antistatue demonstration spread throughout the country and led to national debate. The offshoots of #RhodesMustFall included intense discussion on curriculum decolonisation and the rate of university transformation, among other things. In view of this situation, the following questions arise: how may the situation be understood, that is, understanding (hermeneutics) meaning beyond the statue symbol discussion? What could be the negative effects of a binary discussion (i.e. competition for space occupation)? What possible options and principles could be explored from theology to foster a dialogue of coexistence and space sharing within a polarised discussion on the public space? This paper argues that not understanding the underlying meaning behind the discussion of pulling down of statues (#YourStatueMustFall) and encouragement of other symbols (#MyStatueShouldBeErected) potentially entrenches animosity; hence, a discourse of coexistence (#BothOurStatuesShouldBeErected) should be encouraged. To that end, practical theology could make a significant contribution by adopting a public practical-theological stance, where it contributes to public discourse and coexistence through drawing from theology tradition and resources. This will assist in developing a language and categories that foster coexistence and mutual trust.

Meaning behind and beyond the #RhodesMustFall movement

The question that has been asked by some is, *why should we focus on a statue, which is just a symbol or artefact that can neither talk nor do anything?* Grove (2016), in his essay 'Must Rhodes Fall?', aptly poses this question. He asks whether buildings and statues dedicated to people whose views clash with modern values, which cause difficulties to embrace in our time, must be torn down. Some argue that statues should be kept while others say they should not be kept. Matebeni (2017:15) notes that '[s]ome believe that colonialism and apartheid are part of the history of South Africa and that these memorial representations are appropriate'. Grove (2016) cites Stephen Trachtenberg, president emeritus at George Washington University, who argued that removing symbols of morally tainted people is not good. They should be allowed to stay but be viewed as truly human, with their weaknesses and failures. Trachtenberg stated:

> It is not to downplay the evil that happened in the 19th and 20th century, but we need to retain a certain modesty about how we would have acted in those circumstances. We should not turn [*honoured figures*] into magical figures either, but we need to recognise them fully as human beings, some of whom were better and some of whom were worse than us. (Grove 2016:6)

To get some insight on the dilemma of symbols, Carlyle (1831), cited by Fraser (1834), commenting on a piece of art, states:

> It is in and through symbols that man, consciously or unconsciously, lives, works, and has his being: those ages,

moreover, are accounted the noblest which can the best recognise symbolical worth, and prize it highest. (p. 669)

Louw (2017:9) explains that the Emperor Mystique approach is one theory explaining Christian iconography that is accepted by art historians. In this approach, the images of Christ in early Christian imagery were derived from images of the Roman emperor (Louw 2014:129–133). Mathews (1993) explains further that:

both the shape and the power of the images, according to this theory, come from reliance on imagery formerly used to present the emperor. I call this approach the 'Emperor Mystique'. It is a 'mystique' in so far as it involves a reverence bordering on cult for everything belonging to the emperor. (p. 12)

Carlyle (1831) and Mathews (1993) suggest that a symbol is not just an empty emblem but a kind of celebration, a reverence and a mystique of some sort. Could the statue of Rhodes mean something more than just remembering and honouring him?

Further to the above, the question 'why focus on art' can be answered largely by Barret's (1994) *Principles for Interpreting Art*. Barret's (1994) guide provides principles that include the following: (1) works of art are always about something, (2) to interpret a work of art is to understand it in language, (3) feelings are guides to interpretation, (4) the critical activities of describing, analysing, interpreting, judging and theorising about works of art are interrelated and interdependent, (5) artwork attracts multiple interpretations and it is not the goal of interpretation to arrive at single, grand, unified, composite interpretations, (6) all art is in part about the world in which it emerged, (7) good interpretations have coherence, correspondence and inclusiveness and (8) interpreting art is an endeavour that is both individual and communal.

Barret's (1994) principles clearly apply to the #RhodesMustFall movement, as could be drawn from the statue of Rhodes, and the concomitant emotions that arose and spread throughout the country. The claim of the students in the movement was that the statue of Rhodes, its posture and position say something about Rhodes himself. His statue imposes command and propagates the spirit of his conquest ideals of conquering Africa from Cape to Cairo:

Rhodes' statue towered prominently over the campus and the city of Cape Town at large. It was almost as if Rhodes was gazing on his conquest, wondering how far and for how long into time his colonising powers could reach in taking over the land. (Matebeni 2017:15–16)

Similar sentiments towards a statue appearing to be looking at people, resulting in invoking emotions, were expressed by Malebo in 1994, as reported in *New York Times*, when Mr Verwoerd's statue was pulled down. Malebo remarked, '… he's been standing there watching us for years. You do not know the suffering this single man has brought us' (Wilkerson 1994). This feeling resonates among the students of this era. The students found words to make meaning and interpreted

the statute in their context of marginalisation and a sense of alienation from a white-dominated university and its alienating culture. The students' analysis, judgment and theoretical explanations were intermixed with emotions based on their experiences. Placing Rhodes at a prestigious public university in Africa symbolised approval of the ideas and ideals that the imperialist stood for. And if that is the case, then the university's position was open to be questioned.

These interpretations did not take a single form. Buttelli and Le Bruyns (2017:1), citing Booysen (2016) Naicker (2016) and Pillay (2016), observe that:

[t]he movement started at UCT in March 2015 when a student, Chumani Maxwele, threw faeces on the statue of Cecil John Rhodes, an English coloniser and businessman who is notably known for his defence of scientific racism and then became a countrywide students' movement calling for decolonisation of higher education in South Africa. (Buttelli & Le Bruyns 2017:1)

The conversations in the movement evolved and became nuanced to include aspects such as decolonisation, access to higher education, free higher education, black pain–white gain, zero fees and transformation. 'Across the country, students called for the decolonisation of universities and free higher education, among other things' (Matebeni 2017:15). Certainly, the interpretation was not single, grand or unified, but varied. Nonetheless, it hinged on one grand narrative of colonial residual effects and their manifestations in higher education in South Africa, but at this focal point of UCT in our case. The feelings of students resonated with the other communities of black academics and workers, indicating that the students' concerns were communally shared. With English as the main medium of instruction and a general feeling of pressure to conform to whiteness, the black staff and students felt this to be choking and regarded it as something that was forced on them. This made black students and staff to feel that they did not belong. These feelings ignited and gave impetus to the demands for decolonisation of universities, curricula and the overall institutional culture:

It is really about the everyday psychic manipulation that enforces one's complicity in glorifying and celebrating statues of colonial conquerors and perpetrators as heroes. Many black students and staff expressed disgust at the assumption and expectation to assimilate to white standards and white values of excellence. This perpetuated how black students were made not to belong at the university. (Matebeni 2017:16–17)

The collective feelings and experiences of the students and black staff guided their interpretation of the statue. They strongly felt that this symbol emerged from glorification of colonialism, and displaying it at a public university was a representation of a perpetuation of those ideals. The location of Rhodes' statue close to the hall where graduations are held compounded the emotions, as this seemed to suggest that the university propagated and approved the colonial ideas propagated by Rhodes:

The tragic irony of its positioning, backed by the hall named after colonial politician Leander Starr Jameson, where prestigious events and graduations are conferred, symbolically attests to the

relationship that these two iconic figures had to the land they occupied. (Matebeni 2017:17)

Interestingly, the pulling down of Rhodes' statue was not the end. One student painted on the shadow of the statue to indicate that the structures and systems of oppression were not just in the symbol but embedded in the institution. 'The shadow, drawn immediately after the removal of the statue by an unknown person, insidiously alludes to this' (Matebeni 2017:17). Thus the interpretation was inconclusive.

The concerns and pains vented through the movement indicated that 'existential and ontological pain of humiliation among black people has not been dealt with properly' (Louw 2017:1). Ramphele (2012) refers to the failure of postcolonial Africa to rise above its painful past. She states that 'failure to acknowledge and undertake the healing process to address social pain is at the heart of our failure to make the journey from subjects to citizens' (Ramphele 2012:174). Certainly these outbursts are an indication of expressed pain that has been fermenting for long.

So how should we understand all this? The statue removal gained so much prominence and motivated many other uprisings. It seems the event at UCT was a tipping point of fermenting concerns. This also became an opportunistic moment for political groupings to rally on a trendy theme within the country. The then-ANC Secretary General accused the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) of being opportunistic. Whether the EFF was opportunistic or not, the student-ignited movement gained currency and energy that was built around the theme of addressing colonial symbols and the remnants of colonialism that they really represented. These colonial remnants are the persisting hegemonic forces of colonial tendencies and practices, which are termed 'coloniality'. Coloniality and decoloniality refer to the logic, metaphysics, ontology and matrix of power created by the massive processes of colonisation and decolonisation (Dreyer 2017; Mignolo 2011). Certainly, the presence of statues is a reminder of the former colonial forces. They arguably symbolise the presence of colonial rule and its continuous domination.

The current experiences of pain and limitations were vented on Rhodes' statue, as its presence doubtlessly resuscitated memories of a painful past. It forced people to relive the pain of apartheid. Maxwele justified his action by saying he 'simply found it unbearably humiliating to walk every day past a statue glorifying an undeniable racist' (Harding 2015). Thus, whether Maxwele's and other subsequent reactions were hypes for media attention or not, the Rhodes symbol conjured up feelings of oppression, disrespect of black people, insecurity and fear. A meaning that the university was not aware of was constructed by the students. These constructed meanings evoked emotions and pressure to act. The emotions intensified and were fuelled by poor service delivery in poor communities. It is telling that the student who sparked this movement brought faeces from the township where he lives and resolved to exert and vent his emotions by throwing a bucket of the excreta on the statue.

However, is the position expressed by the students a common national position?

The dilemma of difference and divergence – So what?

There are divergent views on whether the symbols of colonialism should be removed or preserved. One argument is that these symbols should be kept as a memorial. This memorial can be good, bad, joyful or tearful, but it remains a history that we are caught up in. This memory should inform us about both the good and the bad that could be in people as we move forward. However, the question is: *How prepared and how patient are the people to embrace the notion of a history of good and bad coexisting?* The outrage and related actions seem to suggest intolerance of coexistence of good and bad history symbols. The bad symbols should be destroyed. The removal of the statues is an attempt to erase previous pain and the persisting constraints imposed on black people. The contention is that, if the dawn of democracy was to eradicate apartheid, why should the symbols that represent it continue to exist and appear to be celebrated and positioned in key public institutions like universities. Those who support the preservation of these icons argue that they are part of South African history. Indeed, they are part of South African history, but what kind of history (Coombes 2003)? Good history or bad history? The question then is, should we embrace only good history and display it, or do so to both bad and good? The response is likely that both histories should be displayed. However, the history that does not resonate with democratic ideas should be placed in private museums rather than being publicly displayed.

While for some pulling down a statue is a politically symbolic show of commitment, others would rather stick to their history, no matter the pain it may cause. A statue is not just a mere piece of art, but it is a symbol that is pregnant with meaning. It is contended that the keeping of Rhodes' statue at an African university is about preserving the imperial history of Britain. David Priestland, a professor of modern history at Oxford, cited by Grove (2016), noted that a survey among British people showed that they have a rather rosy view of their imperial history. He added that imperial nostalgia was an important part of the Brexit campaign. Oxford University justified keeping Rhodes' statue, saying it would 'seek to provide a clear historical context to explain why [*the statue*] is there'. This would, according to the Oxford University official stance, '… help draw attention to this history, do justice to the complexity of the debate, and be true to our educational mission' (Grove 2016). However, as Grove (2016) notes, some people argued that Oxford University bowed to donor pressure. The donors had threatened to withdraw support. The events at Oxford seem to sustain the argument that symbols give power to those who have resources to erect them and write histories from their

perspectives, while histories of the marginalised people are ignored. For instance, for black people who are exploited and dispossessed, their histories are either ignored or misrepresented.

The question then is, what should we do where there are such divided views? To some, Rhodes is a generous person who should be recognised and honoured for his contribution to Cape Town, where he donated the land on which the university was built (Nkosi 2015). However, the students argued that Rhodes amassed his wealth by taking the wealth of black people. The students rhetorically asked: what should he be celebrated for? Donating what was ours in the first place? The student who started the movement at UCT by smearing human faeces on the statue argued that it was unbearable and humiliating to have this colonial symbol at the centre of the university. He asked: where are the black icons? One wonders whether he wanted colonial symbols and the icons of people who fought for democracy to be erected so that they could coexist side by side or the latter to be erected instead and pull down Rhodes'. The tone and context of the events seem to suggest the latter option.

So should the future path for the country entail removing some historical symbols and replacing them with others? If symbols represent history and the collective memory of people, does this mean that some historical symbols should be removed and replaced by the ones that represent the current values? Is this an elimination and substitution scenario? Is there a way in which such discourses, engagements and actions could be conducted to foster inclusiveness and coexistence of all South Africans? Can the symbol of Hendrik Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid, and that of the father of the nation, Nelson Mandela, be erected side by side as an illustration of human possibility, conquest and the triumph of good? It seems the events at the removal of Rhodes' statue further exhibited that removing a statue was not the end. One student spray-painted the shadow of the statue, indicating that even though the statue was gone, its underlying effects and residual colonial elements continued to exist. This indicates that, certainly, the issue at hand is not physical statues but institutional structures and systems.

Now that Rhodes' statue has been removed, the underlying question is; what will occupy the space? The response to this does not seem explicitly clear to students. They argue that the university, or the country, is full of histories and movements that would easily replace Rhodes' history, along with its colonial shackles. Thus they argue that, on the one hand, the space will never run out of stories to replace the removed one of Rhodes. On the other hand, the concrete and cement where the statue was tightly fixed and secured indicates that symbolically these establishments are based on things that do not easily change. 'There may be aesthetic changes, but the core remains intact' (Matebeni 2017:17). So how should we proceed?

Public practical theology in response to #RhodesMustFall

If it is indeed an imperative that the colonised must rise above his or her being, as evidenced by the pulling down of statues, what about theologising and exploring the connection to imperialism of a powerful, colonised Kingdom-of-God Deity? (Louw 2017:2). Further to Louw's (2017) question, this study asks, in view of the anticipated ideals of a rainbow nation, unity, coexistence and reconciliation, what practical-theological theory can be formulated? Lartey (2013:129) suggests that African practical theology must pursue and engage in the activities of postcolonialising God. Louw (2017:3) argues that postcolonialising God puts on the table of practical-theological thinking the following theological questions: Does the transformation of colonial thinking include the transformation of conceptualisations of God as well? What about a 'postcolonial, post-imperialistic God'? Besides a liberating God, what other theological options should be explored in order to move into the 'what beyond' question in practical theology?

In response to the above questions, Louw (2017) usefully takes the dimension of pastoral ministry as an expression of the practical-theological caring dimension of Christian ministry. In doing so, he insightfully adopts a pastoral hermeneutics and God-images dimension and advises that:

> [p]astoral hermeneutics should probe critically into the realm of God-images; specifically, God-images and their connectedness to power categories like the notion of God almighty. Imperialistic theology thinks in terms of *omni*-categories. In order to contribute to a meaningful exploration of *beyond-alternatives* in Christian spirituality, *omni*-categories should be exchanged for *passio*-categories. Practical-theological reflection should thus focus on a pastoral hermeneutics on theopaschitic categories rather than *pantokrator* categories. A praxis approach in pastoral caregiving should explore the option of compassionate being-with, as determined by the *passio Dei*. In this regard, the praxis principle should be the establishment of a compassionate ministry of *hospitable presence* wherein *accusers and accused can meet in mutual trust*. Hospitable presence could contribute to fostering a *space of mutual trust and constructive dialogue* in the attempt to explore options for a beyond-approach in postcolonial discourses. In this regard, the notion of *peaceful and compassionate coexistence* is proposed. (Louw 2017:3)

Ramphele (2012:182) describes such constructive dialogue as a platform in the form of a circle where there is a level playing field that includes and places everybody on the same plane, thus making eye contact possible. Certainly, such a playing field cannot occur where one feels looked down upon, as felt by the students involved in the #RhodesMustFall campaign. Certainly, practical-theological categories that foster unity, coexistence, mutual trust, and peaceful and compassionate existence are critical. However, if such categories are privatised in theological 'cupboards' of theological faculties, theological literature and theological conversational spaces, theology runs the risk of remaining privatised on a critical public debate issue such as #RhodesMustFall. Theology would inbreed and

cultivate little public interest, as people would question its relevance to society. Within the context of South Africa, where theology has a baggage of association with apartheid, it is imperative to explore opportunities and possibilities of explicitly making practical theology assume a public practical-theological approach, and pastoral care assume a public pastoral care role. Theology, through a public practical theology nexus, will enter the public debate and make its contribution.

By adopting a public practical-theological approach, theology will engage in life-giving conversations that foster unity, coexistence, mutual trust, peaceful and compassionate existence. This entails developing theological language that does not focus on a binary approach of them and us, coloniser and colonised, and oppressor and oppressed. This would be of importance to the current conversation, as it will entail a shift in thinking. A shift of society from a language of 'remove your statue and let me erect mine' would be ideal. This means shifting from a discourse of removing colonial symbols such as the statue of Rhodes at UCT and many others and replacing them with those of liberation icons such as Mandela. A public practical-theological approach strives to develop a unifying language and dialogue. It makes an effort to make Hendrik Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid, and Nelson Mandela, the father of the nation, stand side by side as symbols of bad and good. It is a journey towards a collective conscience and awareness. Mandela (1995) paints this picture vividly in his book, *Long Walk to Freedom*. He explains that both oppressor and oppressed need freedom and that a man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred; he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. Thus the oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity.

However, to suggest this does not imply that colonial residues do not exist. It is an attempt to draw from theological language whereby themes such as reconciliation and forgiveness can be invoked. Employing these theological themes in the public square would be an invaluable and unique contribution of theology. However, this should be done with an awareness of the persisting challenges of structural exclusion and oppressive forces as expressed by the #RhodesMustFall movement. The #RhodesMustFall movement was an effort to deal with persisting hegemonic forces of colonialism, which decolonisation theorists call 'coloniality'. Coloniality and decoloniality refer to the logic, metaphysics, ontology and matrix of power created by the massive processes of colonisation and decolonisation (Dreyer 2017; Mignolo 2011). However, the initiative to create dialogue of unity, coexistence, mutual trust, and peaceful and compassionate existence aims to create a healing and reconciliatory conversation.

Louw's (2017:3) proposal of a hospitable presence wherein accusers and accused can meet in mutual trust, have constructive dialogue as well as peaceful and compassionate coexistence, coupled with my proposition of a theology that is not locked in a private cupboard of theologians, suggests a shift to a public practical theology. Public issues such as #RhodesMustFall demand such a theological approach, if theology were to engage in a public space. Dreyer (2004:919–920) argues that the days are long gone when the practices of the church and clergy were the main or the only focus of practical theology. The vision has broadened to include the context of everyday life on a local, national and global level. Osmer and Schweitzer (2003:218) usefully explain that the task of public practical theology is discerned in three ways: firstly, it is about ensuring that the public is one of the audiences of practical theology. Secondly, it is to ensure that practical theology includes everyday concerns and issues in its reflection. Thirdly, practical theology should facilitate a dialogue between theology and contemporary culture. In linking public theology and pastoral care, Koppel (2015) maintains that:

> Practising public theology asks that pastoral care practitioners and theologians take seriously and engage mindfully with issues that concern groups of people and whole populations, rather than individual persons in isolation. Framing pastoral care ministries, education, and institutions through this larger social lens helps theorists and practitioners to refine methods and purposes for our common work. (p. 151)

Thus public theology acts as a larger social lens that, in the process, should lead to framing practical theology and pastoral care ministries (Koppel 2015:151). In practising public pastoral care, the pastor should be 'involved with people in and for the community' (Vanhoozer & Strachan 2015:17). The pastor is a public figure in the community. Bezuidenhout and Naude (2002:8) describe public theology as an attempt to understand the relation between Christian convictions and the broader social and cultural context. It deals with how the public can be described and how to theologically engage with the public. Juma (2015:3) states that public theology is about interpreting and living theological beliefs and values in the public realm. Public theology is about ensuring that theology engages with issues within public spaces and not only within the church. Dreyer (2011:3) and Dreyer and Pieterse (2010:6) contend that because theology in the public space manifests in multifarious ways, it is important to assist it with language. De Gruchy (2007:39) advises that public theology needs to use a common language that is understandable by people outside the Christian tradition. De Villiers (2005:530) calls this 'translation of the Christian vision to a wider society'. Important to this discussion, therefore, is that public theology is beyond just theological reflection as it relates to living out theological beliefs and values. It is about life. It entails Christianity that breaks from the closet to be visibly engaged with the public, which Van Aarde (2008) calls *agora*.

The implication of the two dimensions of public theology, namely theological reflection and practical action on public issues, suggests a need for a proper translation of Christian tasks to the public. Koopman (2012:1), drawing lessons from Etienne de Villiers' theology, maintains that prophetic public theology should include a vision of a redeemed and new

society (habitat) of people, with new habits (habitus), who engage in challenging public issues of their time. However, because of the plurality and contradictions on the public space, theology should strengthen technical discourse (Koopman 2012:16). Technical discourse is about translating the Christian task at the public square level. Technical discourse relates to the notion of translation language that Dreyer (2011) draws from Ricoeur's principles. This implies that Christians should engage in public issues with clear understanding that the public has complex and multiple dimensions.

The question that arises therefore is: what can be a public practical theology offering to the #RhodesMustFall movement to foster a hospitable presence wherein the colonisers and the colonised can meet in mutual trust and have constructive dialogue as well as peaceful and compassionate coexistence? How could this be done in a manner that theology becomes public and does not remain locked in a private cupboard of theologians? With the prevailing context of conflict and contest to eradicate the remnants of colonialism as represented by the statues (#YourStatueMustFall), which protesters argued should be replaced by black liberation and anti-apartheid iconic symbols (#MyStatueShouldBeErectedInstead), how can a discourse of coexistence (#BothOurStatuesShouldBeErected) be fostered? How can a contextually engaged reformatory public practical theology be conducted to contribute to a constructive discourse and coexistence (#BothOurStatuesShouldBeErected)? A response that would appear simplistic but critical is that theological language that enforces coexistence and cohabitation should be encouraged. However, the question is, how can this be done?

Proposed engaged reformatory public practical-theological approach

The word 'reformed' is used in two ways. Firstly, I use it to refer to the 16th century Protestant Reformation movement. Vorster (2017:5) rightly maintains that 'Reformed social thought has always shown a particular interest in the public relevance of theology'. He proposes useful approaches that are found in Reformed social thought that might be useful in fostering a constructive discourse of coexistence. These are (1) the recognition of universal dignity of all people, (2) respect for the symbiotic and associational nature of human existence, (3) the commitment to truth-seeking, and (4) an understanding that continuous social reform is important. Secondly, I use the word 'reformation' to refer to making changes with the intention of setting back on the right path. In this second sense, I draw on integral mission theological perspectives in order to underline obligatory implications and conversations for being a public church.

Reformed social thought, like the other Christian traditions, upholds the principle of universal dignity of all people. Human beings are created in the image of God and they have to be respected, despite their differences. This means the dignity and rights of all human beings should be respected, that is, the coloniser and the colonised. Despite being corrupted by sin, all human beings possess the image of God, and they ought to be respected. This unconditional acceptance of the universal dignity of all human beings is vital at the public discourse level. Regard for the other person challenges one to be considerate and tolerant.

Closely related to the principle of the universal dignity of all people is the second principle: recognition that human existence is symbiotic and associational by nature (Vorster 2017:5). The coloniser and the colonised need each other to be complete human beings. Complementarity is critical to the achievement of full humanity. Our differences, strengths and weakness make us fully human. There are things that the oppressors need from the oppressed and, in recognition of this reality, human beings have to strive for this ideal.

A third constructive approach to discourse and peaceful coexistence is a shared commitment to truth-seeking (Vorster 2017:5). The reference to truth does not suggest a reification of thoughts but a desire to keep exploring, questing, probing, examining and seeking. Truth-seeking is not about providing simplistic solutions to complex situations. It is about being sober and realistic. If pulling down a statue is not accompanied by a systematic analysis and exploration of solutions to systemic challenges, the truth will continue to be elusive, while frustration and anger persist. Truth-seeking is about the coloniser and colonised joining hands in searching for solutions. It entails an attitude characterised by a genuine commitment to credible, fair, reasonable and honest discourse.

The fourth principle is that human beings have to continuously renew and reform society according to God's original creational purposes. Vorster (2017:8) maintains that social reforms are continuously needed, because societies are always under threat of being penetrated by new forms of injustice. This entails, among other things, maintaining a critical stance of one's tradition as well as being introspective. It is not uncommon that common causes get hijacked. Good intentions can easily turn bad if one becomes uncritical. Those who are beneficiaries of colonial systems should be honest with themselves, while those who are striving to overturn the system should also examine their motives. Honest, transparent and sincere conversation that is openly soul searching and open to scrutiny will result in real change.

Having considered the possible principles from Reformed social thought that foster a constructive discourse of coexistence, we turn to the integral mission proposition as a reformed approach. Integral mission principle is more of a motivation than a principle. The public ministry of the church to pressing challenges such as #RhodesMustFall and the expressed emotions of the students can be located within the public expression of the church. Integral mission with its related terms such as holistic ministry, Christian development, compassionate ministry, transformation

(Chester 2004:63) and many other things is about ensuring that Christianity and theology have social consequences. Integral mission has to do with the integrity of the church. The church has three tasks, namely: (1) addressing the church internally, (2) addressing society as a whole, and (3) creation (Wright 2012:1–19). With churches being critical social structures and faculties of theology having prominence in South African universities, it is imperative for theologians and churches to engage in a discussion of such national relevance.

A language has to be developed and avenues for placing theology at the discussion roundtable should be explored. The church has a substantive message that draws from its Christian theology resources and functional operation and coexistence of humanity (Magezi 2008:261–278). This public theological dimension entails employing Christian language, such as reconciliation, that is relevant to the rest of society. Reconciliation is about coexistence and togetherness of people who were formerly alienated from each other. Such a concept can be employed, extrapolated and applied to divisive issues of colonisation effects. Without developing a language for the public, theology's contribution withers and its relevance to society is questioned. Its contribution to society will be a missed opportunity. As De Gruchy (2007:39) advises, a common language that is understandable by people outside the Christian tradition is needed. This translation of theology to address public issues will attest to care and concern for society, as well as fulfilment of this ministry dimension. This is arguably what De Villiers (2005:530) calls 'translation of the Christian vision to a wider society'.

Conclusion

The #RhodesMustFall movement that spread countrywide in South Africa sparked debate about the remnants and persisting effects of colonisation. The debate, in many ways, was binary in nature, where colonial symbols such as statues were pulled down. The argument, among other things, was that the statues represent colonialism and the pain it caused; hence, they had to be removed. The language was framed in binary terms in terms of us and them, coloniser and colonised, oppressor and oppressed, black and white. Such an approach to discourse arguably entrenches divisions and animosity, as one party vents out in anger while the other feels attacked. The attacked party develops defensive mechanisms. In such a situation there are likely to be emotional casualties and intensification of divisions. One possible response to such a situation is to develop a practical-theological approach that is public in nature. Practical theology is challenged to develop approaches of constructive discourses of coexistence and mutual respect. To that end, Reformed social thought provides a possible approach of fostering a constructive discourse of coexistence through the notions of universal dignity, respect for symbiotic coexistence, commitment to truth-seeking and understanding the need for continuously reforming socially. At a motivation level, integral mission

theology and its threefold task focus on church, society and creation provides an obligatory responsibility to theology and church to engage on topical social issues to ensure church relevance and credibility on its mission.

Acknowledgements

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