



The Role of the South African Pentecostal and Charismatic Church in Sustainable Development: Focusing on Safety and Security

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Abstract

South Africa has one of the highest crime rates in the world, rated at number 4 globally and number 1 in the continent of Africa. Recently, the minister of Police in South Africa, Bheki Cele, revealed that violent crimes are extremely high with reported rape cases standing at an alarming 9516 between April-June 2022 while murders stand at 6424 in the same period. The question is what causes such a growth in crime but more importantly what role is played by Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in alleviating crime which negatively affects development in the country? A literary analysis of the nexus of crime and religion, buttressed by the case study of 2 megachurches who are part of South African Pentecostal and Charismatic churches (SAPCC), located in areas that are considered as hotspots of violent crimes, is used in this paper. The main objective of the article is to investigate the role of SAPCC in crime prevention and to position them as strategic role players in the realisation of Sustainable Development Goals with a focus on safety and security. This study proposes a decolonial theoretical framework based on the African proverb: 'It takes a village to raise a child', as a model for the prevention of crime caused by dysfunctional families, juxtaposed with the African practice of the 'Palaver', which brings all the community stakeholders in dialogue, to find a permanent solution to crime. Although the study is on SAPCC, the recommendations can be applicable to other church groups who are interested in applying a decolonial perspective to combating crime.

Keywords: Crime, Pentecostal and Charismatic, decolonial, dysfunctional families, palaver.

Introduction

Crime in South Africa is placed at number 4 in the world and number 1 in all of Africa. The last three quarters (April-December 2022) revealed that all contact crime has risen by 11,6% compared with the same time in the previous year. Violent crime which in most cases result in murder is the focus of this paper because it points to the degenerated moral fibre of society which is an area that can be addressed by the church as the custodians of morality in our society.

This paper focuses on how the South African Pentecostal and Charismatic church (SAPCC) contributes to the prevention of crime, especially in those communities that are crime ridden. It is for this reason that this paper inquires on the contribution that Pentecostals can play in preventing crime, since Pentecostals in general are classified as the fastest growing sector of the church in the global South (Zurlo et al., 2020). The context of the article is pursuant of Sustainable Development Goals focusing on goal #16 of Peace, Justice and strong institutions. Without peace



and justice in our communities, we can never be able to build strong sustainable institutions. Crime is a great impediment to sustainable development and must be addressed by all sectors of society including the SAPCC.

The question that this article probes is what is it that causes such a growth in crime in South Africa and more importantly what role is played by SAPCC in alleviating crime which negatively affects development in the country? A literary analysis of the nexus of crime and religion, buttressed by the case study of 2 megachurches who are part of South African Pentecostal and Charismatic churches (SAPCC), located in areas that are considered as hotspots of violent crimes, will be used in this paper. The main objective of the article is to investigate the role of SAPCC in crime prevention and to position them as strategic role players in the realisation of Sustainable Development Goals with a focus on safety and security. This study proposes a decolonial theoretical framework based on the African proverb: 'It takes a village to raise a child' (Achebe, 1958), as a model for the prevention of crime caused by dysfunctional families, juxtaposed with the African practice of the 'Palaver', which brings all the community stakeholders in dialogue, to find a permanent solution to crime.

The Minister of Police, Bheki Cele, released a report that covers 3 quarters of 2022 where in the first quarter (April -June) 6424 murder cases were reported, in the second quarter (July - September) 7004 murder cases were reported and in the third quarter (October- December) 7555 murder cases were reported giving a total of 20 983 murders. Given this trajectory it is most likely that the number of murders in the fourth and final quarter of the year (January- March), will be no different from the rest. Majority of the murder cases are committed by firearms with the latter quarter counted at 3144 people murdered with firearms and 2498 killed with other weapons including knives and other sharp or blunt objects and many cases with bare hands. This reveals a level of anger in our nation that needs to be attended to by all parties concerned including religious bodies.

This is a very concerning picture and one that the minister of police recognizes and is making a call for South Africans to engage in "a broader conversation ...about what is at the heart of violent crime in the country...at the core of the matter is human behaviour" (Cele, 2023). In the first quarter the provinces with the highest multiple murder cases, where more than 2 people were killed at a time were KwaZulu Natal (KZN), Gauteng and Eastern Cape; In the second quarter KZN, Gauteng and Western Cape and in the third quarter KZN, Gauteng and Eastern Cape where there were reported incidences of mass shootings in all three provinces.

Police intervention

The report on the third quarter (October – December 2023), crime statistics presented on the 17 February 2023, by the National Minister of Police, Bheki Cele, also indicates that the police have been hard at work in their duty to combat crime and have seen some level of success. During the festive season they were able to arrest about 52711 for various crimes which include murder, sexual assaults, carjackings and other serious crimes.

The solution that the police ministry is implementing is to have more police on the ground that are visible to the public. The police have recruited 10 000 police personnel who have joined the police force in 2022 and will also recruit another 10 000 new police officers in 2023 who will be trained and join the police service by the end of 2023. The issue of crime, however, cannot be solved by the police alone but the whole community needs to join hands with the police in combating crime. A community centered approach is required in which civil society, community structures, religious bodies, business and law enforcers must join forces together to combat crime. The latter is the sentiment that was expressed by the Minister of Police in his third quarter report on crime.



Literary analysis was done on crime prevention among SAPCC, focusing on two mega-churches which were purposively chosen because of their involvement in crime prevention within their neighbourhoods. The literature also reveals that crime can never be solved by the police alone but the efforts of the community are also required.

On the 03 October 2023 the television station ENCA reported a case of a German national tourist family that were targeted by criminals with an intention to rob them. Unfortunately, the husband was shot and killed but the wife and other passengers survived. This adversely affects the tourism industry which contributes 3.7% to the country's GDP. Crime therefore directly affects development.

The aim of this paper was to show how African Charismatic Pentecostals contribute to crime prevention within their localities by using 'the palaver' as a decolonial approach to crime.

Methodological approach

Empirical research on 4 Pentecostal -Charismatic churches within the township where these crimes are prevalent were purposely selected and interviews were conducted so that a possible solution can be measured comparatively. The interviews held were telephonic, open ended and semi-structured for the purpose of a systematic flow but not restricting the flow of the discussion. There were times where follow up questions were pursued which were not part of the prepared questions. All ethical considerations were considered.

Literature on crime and religion

The nexus of religion and crime has been an area of interest for scholars since 1969 when Hirschi and Stark published their classical work titled '*Hellfire and Delinquency*' where they conducted empirical research on 4000 youth in California. Their initial findings were that religion does not necessarily change behaviour among youth. Their findings received much engagement and critique from scholars who conducted their own empirical research (Albrecht, Chadwick & Alcorn, 1977), until in 1982 and 1996 when Stark reconceptualized his position and indicated that religion does affect behaviour within a context of those who subscribe to its values. Subsequently, scholars have for over 40 years engaged in this nexus to determine in what way does religion affect behaviour in society (Sumter et al., 2018; Adamczyk et al., 2017; Sturgis & Baller, 2012; Finke & Adamczyk, 2008; Regnerus, 2003; Welch, Tittle & Petee, 1991).

Most of these scholars are sociologists and criminologists whose interest is social behaviour and not necessarily religion, and their findings differ depending on the context of the religion under study. Research reveals that religion helps society in self-control and therefore, social control, especially when there is a greater participation from individuals in that community in religious aspects which foster positive social behaviour (Sumter et al., 2018). Some findings that focus on religion and terrorism show that non-religious prisoners who convert to religion in prison can decrease their chances of recidivism whereas others may even be more radicalized depending on the emphasis made within the peculiarity of that religion (Hamm, 2009). It is therefore clear that religion does have an impact on individual behaviour whether that impact is positive or negative depending on the nuances of the faith, and more studies tend to indicate that religion decreases the inclination towards criminal behaviour (Sumter et al., 2018). Sociologists who study religion and crime have discovered that religion instill values, beliefs and ideologies that assist individuals to exercise self-control on all forms of criminal behaviour, no matter how tempting the offers (Sumter et al., 2018). These set of values once incorporated at an early age by parents who have internalized them and pass them on to their children, it becomes difficult for children to depart from the socialization of resisting crime until they are adults (Akers & Sellers, 2013). When the whole community of religious individuals who have internalized these anti-crime



values come together, they hold each other accountable in upholding these values which gives them a sense of belonging. Adherence to the values guarantees a sense of belonging in the group, conversely a lack of adherence may result in one being ostracized from the group. The latter demonstrates how self-control can lead into social control if members of that community subscribe to a particular religious code. "Participation in religious activities serves as a form of social control as well. This is particularly true when these activities are engaged in a group setting" (Sumter et al., 2008:7).

There seem to be no specific focus on Pentecostalism in relation to crime in literature especially in the context of South Africa, except a few works (Kgatlle, 2021, 2020; Resane, 2020, Sebake, 2020) which deal with sexual crimes, financial crimes and a mention of violent crimes. Most of this literature is based on emergence of New Prophetic Pentecostal churches in South Africa some of whom are involved in financial crime including money laundering, fraud and a contravention of money exchange processes (Sowetanlive, 2019). There is a gap on how the church in general is a contributor towards crime prevention in South Africa and how the Pentecostals contributes towards it.

Causes of Crime

There are various reasons why crime especially violent crime is prevalent, among others, the common causes are: poverty, unemployment, economic inequalities between the rich and poor, lack of education, population density (Henrico et al., 2022; Mathuthu, 2019; Bower Du Toit, 2014; Hull, 2000). Unemployment in (SA 32,7%) has been confirmed through empirical research, by Tshabalala, where the findings revealed that most of the people who commit crime are not only unemployed but are married, which indicates that their crimes are motivated by a pressure to provide for their families (Tshabalala, 2014).

The report by the Minister of Police agrees with the literature above on the reasons for the commission of crime, especially violent crime, among others, it is the high levels of poverty caused by unemployment and economic inequalities (Cele, 2023).

Other factors which are covertly contributing to violent crimes are a violent political past that South Africa has gone through during the struggle against apartheid. The legacy of the armed struggle against apartheid has left communities still facing violence despite the coming of democracy in 1994. The violence that came through 'necklacing' (an act of putting a tyre around a neck of one who was suspected to be collaborating with the apartheid regime and setting it alight until the victim burns to death) and other such violent actions are still embedded in the psychology of the society (Mathuthu, 2019). During the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission), acts of violence were confessed and exposed as a beginning of a healing process but the commission lasted only for a short period before the wounds could properly heal. Some of the political activists who were active in the armed struggle against apartheid were not integrated into the normal state security system after democracy but have gone back to normal society and most have no employment and live informal settlements, therefore, can easily become involved in various forms of crime including being hired to be mercenaries or assassins also known as "Inkabi" in the local language, due to their combat experience (Mashike & Mokalobe, 2003).

The high rate of unemployed youth (43,4% ; 15-34yrs.) has contributed to the youth, in some neighbourhoods, joining gangsterism just to fend for themselves and their families. Bower Du Toit (2014) researching on gangsterism in the Cape Flats, discusses how the gangster become mentors and role models for the young people by demonstrating economic success through criminality amidst a poverty-stricken environment. The gangsters target young people who come from poor dysfunctional families within the neighbourhoods where there are no proper organized structures to service the poor which creates an environment of the 'survival of the fittest' where



gangsters shine like a beacon of hope due to their criminal success (Wood & Allayne, 2010; Daniels & Adams, 2010).

On the dysfunctionality of the family Bower Du Toit (2014) argues that this dysfunctionality was caused by the apartheid regime policies of the Group Areas Act of 1950, where people of colour were forcefully removed from their residence in the city center and plunged into a neighbourhood where they became overpopulated, and it became a breeding ground for criminality. Violence begets violence. When people were violated emotionally and economically, they project the same violence on others. Furthermore, the absence of fathers due to the historical migrant labour where many men left their families went to work in the mines owned by white mining magnates who used them for cheap labour, created a vacuum and a negative impact in the upbringing of children by their fathers, especially as role models for their sons (South African History Online [SAHO], 2022). Kamaruddin (2011) posits that a rise in violent crime is equally perpendicular to a rise in dysfunctional families (p.76). She discusses the impact of dysfunctional families in crime, stating that families that are dysfunctional suffer from a lack of inculcating good values that will help them to live in harmony with others around them (p.75).

Furthermore, she argues that values when internalized, form one's character and behaviour, unlike laws which only focus on an external compliance without necessarily changing the internal formation of an individual and society (p.76). She defines dysfunctional families as those who take abuse, conflict and misbehaviour as a norm, whether they are perpetrators or victims (p.76). Couples in dysfunctional relationships are codependent in abusive relationships which include substance abuse, untreated mental illness, some even emulating or over-correcting their dysfunctional parents (p.76).

Youth criminal behaviour can be traced back to a lack of parental love and affection which produces hostility to others. Sexual abuse in children can produce adults who are sexual predators. When these dysfunctional conditions are not addressed early in the life of young people, they grow to be adults who produce the same families and it becomes a vicious cycle from generation to generation.

The issue of absent fathers who abandoned their children is also seen as a contributor to a dysfunctional delinquent youth who may grow up with anger issues and project them on other people through violence.

The model that Kamaruddin proposes using her Muslim background proposes how the upbringing of a family member in a healthy family background is raised from the nucleus of the family where the child is taught positive values of the family. Education therefore becomes a very important means of passing on the positive values to a member of the family who then goes out to represent the family in the public sphere as a well-groomed member of the family. This is a very important principle also in the African culture although it starts with the bigger community then goes back to the nucleus family. The positive societal values espoused in the concept of 'Ubuntu', impact the nucleus family which in turn ensures that the individual grows within the code of ethics espoused by the community. The issues of neglect of a child in the family is not found in the African concept of raising a family this is related in the African Proverb that 'it takes a village to raise a child'(Achebe,1958). The African community under normal circumstances should not have dysfunctional families because the entire community gets involved in the raising of that child. Sadly, the reality within our communities reflects a different picture, thanks to colonialism which in many ways has influenced Africans to adopt Western ways of running families- hence family dysfunctionality.



Case Studies

1st Case: Grace Bible Church

This then leads us to our data collection methodology which are case studies of 3 megachurches within the charismatic Pentecostal tradition, located in neighbourhoods that have a high crime rate, called 'townships'- where mostly black South Africans reside. These 'townships' were created by the apartheid government to separate the people of colour from the white people through the Group Areas Act of 1950(SAHO, 2021). The case studies were collected through being an observer and by also using official documents of the churches.

The first church is Grace Bible Church [GBC] led by Bishop Mosa Sono and his wife Gege Sono. This is a charismatic- Pentecostal mega-church located in Soweto. They have five pillars which they consider to be their mission and that is Discipleship, Restoration, Evangelism, Articulation, Missions and Social Relevance (GBC website). It is the latter that has drawn my attention to Grace Bible Church. Among many other social activities that they do as a church, they are also involved in a crime prevention program called the Spiritual Crime Prevention Program. This program was initiated by the national police commissioner, General Fannie Masemola who approached various faith-based organizations in 2019, including Grace Bible Church. The objective of this program is to strengthen family structures, to encourage FBOs to have a crime prevention ministry in the church, to encourage FBOs to be involved in youth development, to advance the agenda for Moral Regeneration in the nation and to be involved in prison ministry to re-integrate offenders back to society. Grace Bible church as a strategic partner strives to meet these objectives.

The work that Grace Bible church is that of advocacy within its membership also within the community where it is situated in all its branches. This advocacy is made mostly from the pulpit as much as it is also spoken in the various outreach programs that the church has towards youth in schools, and the community in general. The message of advocacy usually carries the message that says: do not do crime, do not buy stolen goods, do not be involved in a bribe.

The church has discovered that among offenders are young people. There are those among young people who are serial offenders and find it is difficult for them to be assimilated into the community. The church looked at this and implemented programs that go to schools as a proactive program where bullying and drugs abuse are common in the schools which sometimes lead to murder among the learners. In extreme cases, learners can bring ammunition to school, to defend themselves. This is where the church brings an intervention and mediate between the school, parents, victims and perpetrators of bullying. If there are drugs in the school, the church informs the police, because drug abuse leads to deaths. The church conducts leadership development programs in the school for the learners as a positive re-enforcement strategy. Traumatic experiences in the school are dealt with by the church where it plays an informal chaplaincy role to the school and encourages other like-minded churches to do the same.

The church also gets involved with the police when they do their anti-gun campaigns, where they encourage the community to hand over illegal guns. Other collaborations with the police are campaigns on anti-alcohol abuse especially during the holiday season where there are many deaths prompted by alcohol-abuse. According to the crime statistic released in the 1st quarter of 2022, alcohol was involved in 749 cases of murder, over 4000 cases of assault with gross bodily harm, and 1212 cases of rape. The collaboration with the church is important because the church commands a great influence in the community.

The church intervenes in a lot of Gender Based Violence cases within the church and outside of church through pastoral counseling (Mokhoali, 2020) The church seems not to have the



measuring tools to assess their effectiveness in all these interventions except those few cases that are part of the church membership.

Grace Bible Church is one of those Neo-Pentecostal churches that have embraced the episcopal polity in their church government, as a result, they are also freely involved in the South African Council of Churches (SACC) which is represented by historic churches also known as mainline churches. It is likely that the association of Grace Bible church with SACC has made them open to social justice issues which is a common theme within SACC circles. The hybrid nature of polity in Grace Bible Church is not unique to them but is also noted among other Neo-Pentecostals who even dress up in episcopal clerical garments. The fluidity of church government among Neo-Pentecostals makes it possible for them to choose which church polity suits them and makes it easy for them to advance their mandate as a church (Matshobane & Masango, 2018). Involvement in ecumenical structures has played a major contribution in enabling Grace Bible Church to be socially involved in many projects within the ecumenical discourse. Furthermore, is their direct confrontation with crime several times as a local congregation that has forced them to engage in crime preventing initiatives, because criminals are also targeting church premises.

2nd Case: Hope Restoration Ministries (HRM)

The next case study is on Hope Restoration Ministries [HRM] led by Pastor Chris Mathebula and his wife Phindile Mathebula. In their values, they have a fourth value of 'selfless citizenship', where they use their resources as a church to selflessly serve the community (HRM website). HRM among other social engagement programs they have, their highlight is the book written by Pastor Mathebula called 'Devoted Citizens'. This book espouses the thinking behind the mandate of the church in the community of Thembisa and other communities where the church is currently operating. This book will be the focus of this case study because it reflects the philosophy of ministry within this APCC, a thinking that is becoming a growing ideology within APCCs in general. The book gives pointers of 21 qualities of a devoted citizen in 21 easy to read chapters. The foreword of the book is given by a politician who is a member of the Gauteng Parliament and at the publication of the book was a Member of the Executive Committee (MEC) in the Gauteng province and is currently a Premier of the Gauteng Province. This alone shows you the networks of APCC in the socio-political space. The following themes of 11 chapters among the 21, are the most relevant for the subject of crime prevention and will be the highlight of this study, these are: *chapter 2, Devoted Citizens love their country; Chapter 3, Devoted Citizens Act on the National Vision; Chapter 5, Devoted Citizens know their rights and responsibilities; Chapter 6, Devoted Citizens obey the law; Chapter 7, Devoted Citizens Pay Taxes; Chapter 8, Devoted Citizens vote responsibly; Chapter 10, A good Citizen Protects the environment; Chapter 11, Devoted Citizen has the Spirit of Ubuntu ; Chapter 13, A good Citizen protects the vulnerable ; Chapter 14, A devoted citizen gets along with others and Chapter 15, A devoted Citizen is a peacemaker.*

The logic in the message of this book in the context of crime prevention is that, if you love your country, you cannot be a killer; the national vision of the country as espoused by the National Development Plan promotes life and prosperity for all and not death and destruction; Respecting other people's right to life is demonstrated by being responsible to protect others and not to murder. Obedience to the law of the land forbids one from killing or taking another's life. Paying taxes helps in ensuring that the national treasury has enough financial resources to invest in policing our crime ridden neighbourhoods. The freedom to vote in a crime free environment enables one to exercise the basic human right to vote without fear of intimidation. The protection of the environment and the people who live in it, encourages sustainable growth and development in the land. Murder goes against the Ubuntu philosophy of selflessness, demonstrated by caring for others first, which is what makes us human. Nicolaides (2022:3) states that "Humanity is thus not entrenched in one's persona solely as an individual but is rather co-substantively conferred



upon the other and oneself and this requires sustaining". People are basically mandated to advance their level of humanity by honouring and sharing a sense of identity and solidarity with others who have dignity by virtue of their characteristic ability to participate in such relationships (Nicolaidis, 2022: 5). The vulnerable are not supposed to be a target for killers but they must be protected by devoted citizens. Being at peace with all people must be the goal devoted citizens must strive for in order to live peacefully and not live in the tension and fear that is created by the high rate of crime. The values intrinsic in Ubuntu are a central part of that value system which is contained in the South African Constitution and speak inter-alia notions of human dignity, equality, the development of human rights and also freedoms (Nicolaidis, 2022:4).

This book demonstrates that APCCs are concerned about the wellbeing of their communities, their environment, adherence to law and being good citizens. The book is a good start for a conversation among APCCs and all other church traditions in taking responsibility as good citizens within the community, protective of the right to life. This book has led to a formation of a movement called the Independent Citizens Movement (ICM) which contested in the local mayoral elections of 2021 for the Ekurhuleni municipality which consisted of mainly APCC pastors and their professional congregants (Dlamini, 2021). APCCs are not only willing to engage in community transformation from behind the pulpit but are also willing to participate in the public space by restoring order and fighting crime in all its manifested forms within the nation and the community.

Theoretical framework

This study proposes the use of an African proverb that 'it takes a village to raise a child', as a philosophy which will help to address the dysfunctionality that occurs in African families, that ultimately breeds criminality among those members of the family who have been victims of dysfunctionality. The concept of a village raising a child safeguards the possibility of a child feeling alone, neglected or rejected by the family because the whole community is involved in the life of that child, shaping the morals and behaviour of the child. The concept of a dysfunctional family is arguably a foreign concept to the African concept of a family which is an integral part of the Ubuntu philosophy of sharing and caring for others, where the extended family take turns in the upbringing of a child. Dysfunctionality in African families is caused by modern Euro-western ways of living, where the socio-economic factors play a deciding role, in which case parents must find jobs and leave children at home, in need of parent's attention and affection, this lack of attention can easily lead to dysfunctionality of the family (Mokomane, 2014). There is a need to regain the lost art of African indigenous ways of rearing children which can reduce dysfunctionality among African children who may end up delinquent because of the absence of parental guidance.

Furthermore, there is a need to harness the wisdom of indigenous ways of addressing conflict in the society including crime. The African practice of the 'Palaver' was one of the ancient ways for African communities to solve the problems of violence, conflict or any other issue that bothers their communities like crime. The word 'Palaver' could be derived from the Portuguese *palavra*, meaning a talk between tribal people or traders, or it could be derived from its French roots *palabre* which refers to a lively debate or a tribunal, both of which refer to a discussion among important stakeholders of the community concerning critical matters of common interests (Oborji, 2020: 227). This practice is still being used where "African traditional communities are able to discuss public affairs, resolve conflicts, and create judicial acts that are efficacious in confronting present and future community problems" (Oborji, 2020:226). Our modern society is more reliant on governments to police communities and prosecute criminal behaviour whenever it is identified in the community. This has proven to be insufficient and in some cases not even effective because of crime that is prevalent within the policing system. A multi-pronged strategy of inviting all stakeholders such as religious organisations, business fraternity and civic society who are directly



or indirectly affected by crime to a palaver, including those who are suspected as perpetrators of crime, is still a better approach in combating crime within communities. The palaver model has received much criticism from the West, as just a ‘talk-show’ among stakeholders without any practical and tangible strategy to resolve whatever is a problem in the community (Oborji 2020: 227). To Africans, however, the palaver is more than just a talk, but it is a high-profile meeting that is held by a council of elders which consist of respectable people within the community who have experience in community affairs, with chiefs as overseers. The decisions made at the palaver are binding with imprecatory elements because of the recognition that the decisions are done in the presence not only of the living but also of the those who are dead and are perceived to carry powers of protection and prosecution (Parratt, 1995: 129). In other words, the African concept of the palaver is effective to them because of the spiritual authority it carries, and this authority is recognised and understood by all.

In the light of the above, the Christian perspective of the palaver does not base its authority on ancestral presence but on the authority of scripture according to Matthew 18:15-19 on how to deal with conflict in the Christian community. The scripture encourages firstly that the matter of conflict be resolved between the offender and the offended. If there is no breakthrough from that meeting, the matter must be escalated to bringing two or more people who will act as witnesses to the discussions. If the matter is still unresolved, it is further escalated to the entire church in all its hierarchy, where the final intervention will be made, but if there is unwillingness for the offender to repent from their actions, a final verdict is taken to excommunicate that individual from the community. The individual is to be treated as an outcast to a point that one can even be handed over to Satan according to 1 Corinthians 5:5 with an intention that they will be remorseful and repent. The spiritual and judicial authority that is given to the apostles is revealed in Matthew 18:18 where they carry the authority to bind the offender and when deemed so, loose the offender, after they have seen the fruit of repentance. The verdict that the apostles give, have a heavenly back up, which gives the verdict a greater weight than just an opinion from clergy or elders, but the Triune Godhead and the entire heavenly host backs up the verdict.

The African tradition of the palaver when contextualized within the biblical tradition of conflict resolution based on Matthew 18:15-19 can possibly become an effective tool for crime prevention in the community.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to highlight the contribution of SAPCC in sustainable development with a focus on crime prevention. The problem of crime in South Africa was highlighted through the report that was given by the Minister of Police who indicated that the problem of crime cannot be fought by police alone but all stakeholders within the community must be involved including the church. This article is also motivated by that invitation of the minister with a special focus on the South African Pentecostal and Charismatic church because of their fast-growing numbers especially in the townships where most of the crime happens.

The literature on crime and religion was discussed and analyzed, which indicated a great interest within sociology and criminology fields but a much lesser interest within religion or theology in comparison. Two megachurches Grace Bible Church based in Soweto and Hope Restoration Center based in Thembisa who are both part of the Pentecostal and Charismatic tradition were discussed, looking at their efforts and strategy on crime prevention. Their involvement indicates that SAPCC have a role to play in crime prevention especially because of being perceived as being ‘other worldly’ in their theology. Causes of crime were discussed and among others: poverty, unemployment, economic disparity, lack of education, population density including those



that are covert like the violent political past of 'necklacing' which continues to be practiced and dysfunctional families which expose their children to crime at an early age.

A decolonial approach reflected in the African proverb: "It takes a village to raise a child", was proposed as model to address the dysfunctionality of families. Furthermore, the African practice of the palaver as a method of resolving conflict, including crime, was proposed and presented within a Christian perspective of spiritual authority. This authority is managed by the leadership or elders of the church as it is the case in the palaver where community elders are called upon to adjudicate over important matters. What is highlighted in both is the authority that this group of elders carry, such that whatever verdict they give must be obeyed, failure to obey is followed by devastating consequences. A decolonial perspective is proposed in addition to the strategies of crime prevention that SAPCCs have adopted to ensure an effective solution to crime, within the African context.

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