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The Narrative of Elijah: A Prophetic, Radical and Hopeful Voice for Disillusioned Democratic South Africa

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Abstract

This article highlights the realities of disillusionment in democratic South Africa. Since 1994, the nation plunged into a sense of insecurity and disillusionment, whereby hopes for a better life were broken through corruption and failing political leadership. Through literature studies, the historical evolution from Mandela to Ramaphosa is sketched to see how the nation has been experiencing disillusionment. The Elijah-Ahab narrative is undertaken to demonstrate the situation and the need for a prophetic voice. Three recommendations have been made to address this disillusionment, which should be initiated and led by the ecclesial community in South Africa. The first is the Prophetic Theology that emanates from the grassroots level where the church exists and experiences what the nation is going through. Then, the Radical Theology which speaks fearlessly in the face of injustices meted upon the poor by the political powers, Thirdly, the Theology of Hope, which is the resilience in the face of negative forces that affect the quality of life. This article suggests the three recommendations for disillusioned South Africa.

Keywords: Prophetic, Politics, Voice, Disillusion, Theology.

Introduction

According to World Happiness Report 2025, the happiness level in South Africa is a concern, ranking 95th out of 147 countries. This unhappiness is associated with economic instability, high unemployment, social inequality, governance concerns, and a high corruption score which negatively affects trust in public institutions, especially the government.[1] Lately, University of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Center (2026) ranked South Africa 101st out of 147 countries.[2] This is indicative of the fact that indeed, South Africa is a disillusioned nation.
Disillusionment is a feeling of disappointment due to the failure of something that is expected to bring some positive results. It is a sense of sadness after discovering the truth about something or someone liked or respected. In the context of this discussion, South Africa, as a nation, had high hopes about the new dawn, democracy where human dignity was to be restored after centuries of colonial and apartheid devastations. Instead, another picture surfaced that was not

[1] https://worldscorecard.com/scorecards/south-african-scorecard/world-happiness-report/ (Viewed 18 May 2026).
[2] https://statbase.org/data/zaf-happiness-index/ (Viewed 18 May 2026).

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expected. Quality of life continues to decline due to misunderstanding or interpretation of basic human rights in democratic South Africa. The ailing economy, faltering infrastructure such as roads, inner city, or town decays, escalating poverty resulting in homelessness, lack of water, erratic electricity supply, intermittent communication networks, and a sense of insecurity due to passive policing systems are all contributory factors to national disillusionment. The basic cause of this is corruption, which is a systemic culture that leaves many poor. Chikane (2013:219) says, 'When corruption happens in government or the public sphere, it affects the poor even more'. This is further attested by Resane (2024a:1) that 'Persistent corruption damages the economic well-being of society and affects the nation's long-term development at the expense of personal gain.' It is like systems that leak, the money leaks to benefit those endowed first before the poor. The democratic era had opened South Africa to a grand future of economic prosperity and political certainty, and unfortunately, the population rejected God, by removing religion from public spaces such as schools and institutions of the government, therefore became enamored with a new life of secularism.

Post-apartheid democratic South Africa has many positive impacts on liberation, political and economic freedom, social and political associations, and expression. However, in the areas of security, hopeful future, and emotional sensibilities, South Africa is a disillusioned nation. Since the secular state of democracy unsettled religion from public affairs, especially in education systems, religion has been marginalized to the peripheries of peoples' lives. Resane (2024b:76) cries out that 'South African constitutionalism unsettled the moral fabric of society by dislodging God from civil affairs.'

Elijah was a Hebrew prophet during the reigns of Kings Ahab and Ahaziah in the northern kingdom of Israel (9th Century BC). His ministry is set against the backdrop of political and religious turmoil, including the influence of Queen Jezebel and the Phoenician cults. The narrative reflects both historical events and theological interpretation, emphasizing Elijah's role as a prophet and moral exemplar. He stood against the syncretic religion of positioning monotheism (YAHWEH) and Baalism (nature worship) on the same religious platform.

Elijah's ministry is relevant for the current South Africa because for him, morality is central to worship, and the nation should enjoy right choices when coming to religious, economic and political experiences in order to attain happiness (1 Kings 18:21). The history of ninth-century Israel is supposed to be an object lesson, as Clements (1978:173) points out: 'The immense upheavals that took place in Israel's history, involving the almost total collapse of its major religious and political institutions, reveal how deeply a sense of authority was embedded in the religion.'

Method

The biblical narrative concerned is applied to interpret the current political and religious disillusioned South Africa. Context principle hermeneutics whereby biblical texts and literature are used to interpret the current situation (Conner and Malmin, 1983:51). Texts are interpreted, leaning on Snyman's (2011) hermeneutics of vulnerability, whereby people in power make decisions, without any consideration of those decisions on the vulnerable people. This is demonstrated by Ahab and Jezebel who disregarded the laws of God that protect the individual's rights to the land like in the case of Naboth (1 Kings 21). They spoke from the political platform to marginalise the worship of God. Elijah's prophetic voice in this context represents the church in South Africa, whilst Ahab and Jezebel represent the corrupt political praxis that plunged the nation into disillusionment.

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Disillusionment in South Africa

The post-apartheid democratic South Africa is a disillusioned nation. It was a state of emerging hope. Currently, there are many improvements regarding the quality of life. Racial discrimination is no more legislated. There is equality regarding race, gender, access to basic amenities such as health, education, economy etc. The church's role in the new dispensation is viewed differently by researchers. Some consider the prophetic role muted, while some see it more active than ever. According to Sampson (1999:314-315), 'Mandela's presidency ascended the corridors of power after the long-noted struggle of the church in South Africa, , because the church in South Africa has always contended with politics of moral flaws such as racism. Nelson Mandela's presidency was a tenure full of hope, with expectation of reconstruction, reconciliation, and the restoration of human dignity and quality of life. The nation, sitting on the edge, was rejuvenated with the spirit of expectancy and renewal. The first five years of democracy were meant to be the years of seeing greener pastures looming on the other side of the fence coming out of horizon.

The Thabo Mbeki era was the beginning of turbulence, as some expected hopes were dashed, especially due to the global economic meltdown of 2008-2009. While the economy succumbed to a descending spiral, the nation was devastated by the rigorous AIDS/HIV pandemic. The president made himself unpopular by denying the scientific facts that this HIV virus is deadly and poses a great danger to human quality of life. In the meantime, the president appointed by the African Union to be the peace negotiator in the ailing economic disaster of Zimbabwe opted for quiet diplomacy, where he publicly declared that there were no problems in Zimbabwe. Twelve years later, he seemed to uphold when in December 2019 he visited President Emmerson Mnangagwa of Zimbabwe and commented positively on the direction Mnangagwa was taking Zimbabwe through.[3] His centralist tendencies distanced him from his political party, the African National Congress, which finally decided to recall him from his position in 2008, barely six months before his second term ended.

Kgalema Motlanthe replaced Mbeki and his presidency was a transitional arrangement until national elections scheduled six months later. Major decisions on national issues were not undertaken, as national elections were around the corner. National happiness has decreased. Opportunists have discovered fertile grounds to entrench themselves. Resane (2020:9) captures the era when the politics of factionalism, careerism, and patronage were gaining ground. At its core, the civil service was a brooding machine for corruption. This is attested in his special lecture organized by the Center for Africana Studies, University of Pennsylvania, USA entitled, '30 Years of Freedom and Democracy in South Africa.' that 'the corruption that took holds the governing party and the public service also set us back a great deal. The national religious conscience was dampened, and at its lowest ebb. Resane (2020:9) points out that 'Theo-political dialogue was demobilized and paralyzed regardless of the presidential efforts to awaken the national conscience.'

With new exuberance due to the incoming populist era of Jacob Zuma's presidency, the nation's disillusionment barometer reading went to the lowest, hence intensification of cadre deployment (Adanlawo and Chaka, 2024:266). Unemployment increased, state capture repositioned itself to loot the government treasury. Civil organisations took public podiums to express dissatisfactions with state machineries. Populism came to the surface. Zuma mentioned in one interview in the early part of his tenure that it was his concern for 'the masses and the poor' that prompted his political enemies to try to deny him ANC leadership and the presidency' (Pauw, 2017:74). The

[3] https://issafrica.org/iss-today/thabo-mbekis-mediation-role-in-zimbabwe-remains-unclear (Viewed 22 August 2025).

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polygamous president opened the gates of corruption and the painful entrenchment of state capture. According to Resane (2020:9), Zuma's presidency was attained during the critical moment of factionalism in the ruling party, civil service was immersed in corruption, organs of state faltering, State-Owned Entities (SOE) such as Eskom, South African Airways, Transnet and many others were jeopardized.

Zuma reshuffled the cabinet eleven times and did it randomly and haphazardly, leading to irreversible economic damage, especially the midnight reshuffle of 31st March 2017 when he removed the Minister of Finance, Pravin Gordhan and his deputy, Mcebisi Jonas. Zuma incurred that the national treasury must implement political decisions unquestionably (Maseko, 2021). The justice system faced subjugation and suppression, as Basson and Du Toit (2017:79) point: 'By chopping and changing and hiring and firing bosses in the criminal justice institutions, Zuma remained firmly in control of who was investigated, prosecuted and jailed.' Between the 8th of April and 6th October 2016, the civil society organizations such as Save South Africa[4] and religious organisations such as the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and the National Religious Leaders Council (NRLC)[5] aggressively and vehemently called for the President to resign. National disillusionment escalated to national hopelessness, until the pressure was heavy on the ruling party that to relieve the national crisis was to recall the President.

Hope crescendoed when Cyril Ramaphosa ascended presidency, not realizing that the incumbent is of passive and cold leadership towards critical issues. His presidency was greeted by threatening listeriosis, in which some food products were mixed with a deadly poison that was dangerous for human consumption. There were approximately 1000 confirmed cases of listeriosis from January 1, 2017, to July 17, 2018 (Tchatchouang & De Santi et al, 2020:11). Ramaphosa turned attention to this deadly disease and this stalled his *Thuma Mina* (Send Me) clarion call of expediting good governance based on the Constitution. Health hazards were immediately arrested and abated. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic left the nation in despair and atrophy. National leadership integrity was put into a litmus test while the nation sank into a painful life of deaths, writhing health conditions, emotional strains and physical workloads (Ukah, 2020:432) The infection rate escalated, people lost their lives, and vaccines came with a great open door of suspicion as some people died of it or were left with a permanent disability condition. This was confirmed by Sunday Tribune (30 Jan 2023) newspaper report that:

> Some medical experts, scientists, and rights groups have sounded warnings to the government to halt the Covid-19 vaccination campaign immediately, citing devastating side effects among patients. In court documents, they accused the government of disregarding the wellbeing of millions of South Africans by driving Covid-19 vaccination programmes, despite not properly investigating the efficacy and safety of administered vaccines.[6]

Some vaccines were later destroyed since they expired, as the population became reserved for taking them, and were suspicious of their reported life-giving qualities (Shoko in Mbaya,

[4] https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2016-10-06-new-civil-society-coalition-calls-for-zuma-to-resign/ (Viewed 16 August 2025)

[5] https://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/church-leaders-ask-anc-to-help-zuma-quit-2007070 (Viewed 16 August 2025)

[6] https://www.iol.co.za/sunday-tribune/news/medical-experts-call-for-investigations-into-the-serious-suspicions-about-the-covid-19-vaccine (Viewed 6 January 2025)

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2024:110). While the nation was recovering from COVID-19 devastations and life returning to normality, the socio-political culture was caught off guard by the President's Phala-Phala farm scandal of *assumed* theft of some foreign currencies on his farm. The currency is suspected to be money laundering or foreign currency regulation transgression, as it was never declared to any authority structure. Since the Phala-Phala political saga, the nation has been spiraling into lower and deeper disillusionment. People go to bed without knowing what the political news headlines will be on the next day.

Disillusioned South Africa and Northern Kingdom of Israel during Elijah's era

The Northern Kingdom of the ninth century was concerned with King Ahab and his Phoenician princess wife Jezebel. It was 'the period of the divided kingdom *which* was another dark time in the history of God's people' (VanGemeren, 1988:220) both religiously and politically. Ahab succeeded his father Omri, a strong ruler. Omri restored the nation's sense of security as he established a capital city, Samaria (1 King 16:24), delivered the nation from the military subjection by the Moabites (2 King 3:4), and strengthened diplomatic alliance with Phoenicia by marriage of his son, Ahab, to King Ethbaal's daughter, Jezebel.

King Ahab was a capable ruler who continued where his father, Omri, left by building new cities. He was militarily effective (1 King 20:1-34), backslidden from the God of Israel due to his wife's influence in enhancing Phoenician Baal-Melqart worship into Israel. Jezebel's religious zeal was demonstrated by the vicious slaughter of Yahweh's prophets (1 King 18:4). By the time Ahab ascended the throne (1 King 16:30), the nation was already syncretic. Queen Jezebel became a powerful instrument for both political and religious decision making. The nation was multi-religious, attempting to unseat the God of Israel from the center of national life. The nation felt secure due to Ahab's military capability and his close association with the prophets of all religions. Interfaith was the spiritual barometer of national conscience. Jezebel, being a foreigner, influenced the decisions of the king, as seen in Naboth's vineyard story (1 Kings 21) – the embodiment of one of the factors that causes disillusionment in South Africa; what is known in our South African political landscape as state capture.

> Everything we know about Jezebel shows her having been a woman born to rule. She has a strong and dominant character, a fountain of energy and determination, and stops at nothing to affect her ends. This ambitious and self-willed queen clamoured for her god, Baal, to have at least equal rights to Yahweh, the God of Israel (Stark and Van Deventer, 2009:1).

The prophetic voice of Elijah

The three role players of the narrative are Ahab, Jezebel, and Elijah. Wood (1970:313) is correct that 'Without the extensive record of this man's activities, far less would be known about Ahab and Jezebel.' Elijah was a Gileadite (Tishbite) from the region of the Jordan River, and he dressed simply in hair clothing (2 Kings 1:8). He was Jezebel's critic, as he rebuked her for introducing Baal Melqart's worship in Israel. He was always running from the atrocities of Jezebel and religious lukewarmness or slit allegiance of Ahab, which caused him discomfort. He was a prophetic voice during national disillusionment. He called for *shalom* that embraces completeness, righteousness, cordial relationships, and harmonious life under the sovereign rule of the YAHWEH. Fortunately, his voice emerged at the time when Israel's life 'was largely guided and encouraged by the work of particular prophets' (Clements, 1978:173), but his voice became 'prominent above others. ' He was a peripheral prophet standing outside of the mainstream and indeed criticises it (Van Rooy, 2023:46) His voice sets him apart from the usual and conventional

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voice. He called for restoration where *shalom* was broken, appealing to the throne to play an influential role in returning to God to restore justice. Elijah demonstrates faith and boldness in the face of religious apathy. His narrative demonstrates the power of the prophetic voice amid despair. It is a demonstration of confidence and faith in the sender (God).

The Elijah-Ahab encounter narrative was always hostile, where the prophetic voice was deemed enmity. Brueggemann's (2000) commentary discusses how Elijah functions as a prophetic challenger to royal authority and how Ahab perceives him as a threat to the political and religious establishment, particularly in passages such as 1 Kings 18:17 ("Is that you, you troubler of Israel?") and 1 Kings 21. Elijah's prophetic voice is accompanied by resistance, opposition, threats, and running away to save his life. He was vociferous in the disillusioned nation under the clutches of state capture, where greed ruled supreme and religion abused for the sake of self-enrichment. The politics of the time were corrupt, and the nation was engulfed by religious supersessionism. The Elijah–Ahab encounters are consistently portrayed as antagonistic, with Elijah's prophetic ministry being interpreted by Ahab as a source of political and social disruption rather than divine correction (Brueggemann, 2000; Cogan, 2001).

South Africa, like Israel needs a prophetic voice South Africans' glitter of hope that the new democracy promised continues to decline as national pain and suffering due to the lack of basic service delivery is turning into national awareness. These acts are often glossed over and sanitized behind labels, such as consumerism, xenophobia, racism, sexism, ethnicism, homophobia, bribery (brown envelope syndrome), civil strife, and catastrophic environmental degradation. This creates a platform for restoring hope through prophetic theology, radical theology, and theology of hope. These three are the voices that carry the capacity to reconstruct and revive disillusioned people in this culture, where corruption has taken deep roots and hopelessness in political leadership is entrenched.

1. Prophetic theology

Prophetic theology is a participative theology, a theology that critically retrieves biblical prophecies 'in order to enable prophetic witness in changing historical contexts (De Gruchy, 2016:2). The famous South African Kairos Document realizes that its methodology is a critical theological and biblical reflection informed by social analysis and ecclesial praxis, or 'seeing, judging, and acting' (Kairos Document, 1986:17). Prophetic theology emerges from participation in the struggle for justice; therefore, it cannot be constructive but responsive to grassroots needs. It always emerges during the *kairos* moment when God is expected or invoked to intervene in eco-human misery. Historically, South Africa was captured by State Theology, which promoted ideas that the church should endorse the government and its policies.

Another theology that captured South African politics was the Church Theology, which endorsed the separation of the State and the Church. Kairos Document challenged these theologies and appealed for Prophetic Theology 'to be active, albeit in thoughtful way, in the struggle against apartheid' (Suderman, 2017:98). When conventional methods fail, divine intervention is required. According to Miller (1987:23), this was a norm in Israel that when divine help or advice was needed, a more typical response was to call upon a prophet or seer (1 Sam 9:6-11). This is demonstrated by King Ahab by asking Elijah to pray for him after prophetic pronouncement of severe divine judgement on his lineage for murdering Naboth and the prevailing idolatry (1 Kings 21:27-28).

Prophetic Theology is a need in democratic South Africa to address the decaying socio-political landscape, to avert the quality of life descending into hopelessness and distress. The nation is engulfed by the tentacles of corruption, deceit, and criminality. While the nation is disillusioned,

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Prophetic Theology challenges the forces of darkness that seek to destroy the quality of life in all eco-human spheres. Prophetic Theology is vocal despite threats from political platforms. *Ecclesia* as a prophetic voice stands and confronts injustices in the land.

These injustices include corrupt tender systems that rob the population of basic service deliveries such as water and sanitation, deteriorating road infrastructure marked with potholes, erratic electricity supply, intermittent internet services, long waiting lists for one to receive civil service assistance such as social grants, Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses, Identity Documents, safety, and security by the police. The poor service delivery of these needs leaves the nation disillusioned, and Prophetic Theology should aggressively address these issues. The message of Prophetic Theology is to both the victims and perpetrators. For victims, this is the message of encouragement and intervention in any form of advocacy. To perpetrators, it is a rebuke and call for reform and alignment towards righteousness.

Prophetic Theology, as a participative theology, does not speak from a distance or from outside the context. People's experiences are the *locus theologicus*. After all, *we drink from our own wells* (Gutierrez, 2011), meaning we theologise from our own context. Prophetic Theology emerges from within the nation, which is disillusioned and endeavors to speak into the situation. Where human dignity is compromised, the prophetic voice echoes order out of chaos. Theology is expected to be prophetic by making clear that 'there is no compromise when it comes to issues of whatever evils of the time exist' (Mabuza, 2024:108). Prophetic Theology, as demonstrated by Elijah, is not afraid of being vocal in matters of social and natural justice, especially when socio-political structures promote injustice.

2. Radical Theology

Radical theology is inseparable from political engagement as it critically engages with issues of power, participation, order, and structure. Radical Theology is a critical reflection and thinking within and against what is taken to be normative in a tradition, hermeneutic, and culture. Its aim is to express 'a radical critique not only of the institutional expressions of religions, but also of the society where those institutions often held sway' (Grimshaw, 2015:2).

Radical Theology is never a private matter, but a public display of boldness that confronts any godless tradition, biased hermeneutics, or corrupting culture (Caputo, 2023:17). It is a theology embodied by Moses, who chose to suffer affliction with the oppressed than to be counted with the royalty. He opted for poverty rather than wealth that he had access to because of the eschatological hope of total liberation (Hebrews 11:25-26) of his oppressed people.

This theology was demonstrated by bold people like Beyers Naude and Nico Smith, who risked their ethno-religious identity and association by bursting out of the *laager* (Resane, 2017:130). These and others became prophets without honor in their own Afrikaner community at the height of apartheid from the 1960s (Randall, 1981:11-17) to the 1980s. Bishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu was a radical theologian who walked at the front of the Defiance Campaign marches of the 1980s and asked the police to shoot him rather than shooting people demonstrating peacefully against injustice and racial oppression (Allen, 1994:174-184).

Allan Boesak is a radical theologian who speaks truth without fear when injustice is applied or implemented to marginalized communities. He argued that true reconciliation cannot occur without confrontation (1984:32). Boesak states that Christians should always be a disturbance to the social order, because as radical prophets, Christians 'explicitly unmask the injustices of the society in which they live, for they take the word of God seriously and act upon its demands' (Boesak, 1982:14). Boesak reflects Elijah's encounter with Ahab: *Is that you, you troubler of*

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Israel? (1 King 18:17). To be theologically radical is to be socio-politically confrontational, causing trouble for the *status quo*, even nationally.

Disillusioned South Africa needs a radical prophetic voice like that of Elijah, a voice that can speak fearlessly against human rights violations. A clear voice when land rights are violated: *Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?* (1 King 21:19), as in the case of Naboth. The voice that disturbs a corrupt politician who hears the prophetic voice can declare: *So you have found me, my enemy!* (1 Kings 22:20). This voice of Elijah is politically perceived as the disturber of the *status quo* and troubler as it exposes and rebukes corruption in and by the state.

The nation, including ecclesiastical formations such as South African Council of Churches (SACC), Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC),The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA) etc. need the voice which is 'The ability of the prophet to speak as the mouthpiece of God himself, and so to declare directly the divine will, *which is* of great significance' (Clements, 1978:173). Let the church arise and become a prophetic voice in the character of Elijah, for 'the church is as a whole a prophesying community… the church is a single communal prophet' (Jenson, 1999:199). The church's radical voice should be boldly prophetic in the spirit of Elijah, pointing out injustices in the government structures that lead or form disillusioned nation.

3. Theology of Hope

Katangole (in Wabanhu & Moerschbacher, 2017:199) correctly asserts that 'All theology is a theology of hope' especially in a nation demoralized and immobilized by disillusionment. Katangole calls for the heeding of Peter's exhortation to those disillusioned to *always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have* (1 Peter 3:15). The Theology of Hope was popularized by the twentieth-century theologian Jürgen Moltmann. He popularized it through his notable *Theology of Hope* (1964), a monograph written of his near-fatal experiences during World War II. He elaborates on this hope and points out that 'Hope's statements of promise, however, must stand in contradiction to the reality which can at present be experienced' (1964:18). When national disillusionment paralyzes the nation, hope makes the people become *kurkproppie* – a bottle cork that never sinks or drowns, but always floats. A Theology of Hope is the theology of resilience *(veerkragtigheid),* which carries the connotation of springiness, which when pressed down, bounces back. This theology is the theology of bouncing back, always in contradiction to the realities of life. It keeps people floating, hoping that normalcy returns. It is a theology stirred by perseverance *(hupomeno),* 'a resilience to remain steadfast, tenacious, and refusing to crumble or concede to defeat' (Resane in Mudimeli, 2022:77).

Theology of Hope is when Christians wake up from slumbers and occupy the central stage in social and political structures, with the intention of harmonizing the disjointed natural human life. Moltmann (1977:65) points to this fact that 'The church participates in the uniting of men with one another in the uniting of society with nature, and in the uniting of creation with God.' Theology of Hope calms down the forces of disillusionment so that people may remain united regardless of the negative forces that threaten their lives. Elijah maintained his composure, looked beyond Ahab's threats and maintained some communication with Ahab regardless of general disillusionment in the nation. This does not make the Theology of Hope a force that opiates people from seeking justice, but it equips them with the spirit of *hupomeno* during disillusioned experiences. In agreement with Moltmann, Gianluigi and Nikolaevna (2022:28), highlight the following:

> The Christian faith and the Christian hope do not make a person quiet and patient; the aim of faith and hope does not consist in leading the believer to a conciliation with, an acceptance of and a resignation towards reality.

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Faith in God keeps believers floating while wars against justice rage. Its role is 'participation in the history of God's dealings with the world' (Moltmann, 1977:65), where hope resonates with the expectation of better outcomes that favor humanism rather than the evil that destroys human dignity. Like the radical theology referenced above, 'This hope makes the Christian Church a constant disturbance in human society…' (Moltmann, 1977:22).).

Elijah was perceived as a troublemaker or the enemy of the state by Ahab (1 Kings 18:17; 21:20). Theology of Hope becomes positive in the midst of chaos. This is a type of theology that sees light at the end of the tunnel. 'The prophets were tokens of hope, encouraging the remnant to persevere' (VanGemeren, 1988:259), to hold on *(hupomeno)* until the end.

While some people feel that there is no hope for South Africa, claiming that the country is grinding to the ground, a Theology of Hope stands and says, 'we can still make it.' This theology is loud and clear in restoring courage and promoting resilience in the face of looming devastation. It echoes the certainty of life to die for beyond dogma or creed. Stott (1999:111) captures it well that 'The evangelical faith reaches beyond belief or behavior; it begins with it a multifaceted challenge to live accordingly.' This is the essence of faith, expressed through and in the Theology of Hope. It is a determination to remain resilient and bouncing back when pressed down by any circumstances of life. No disillusionment should unseat believers from their faith.

After all, as per Moltmann (1965:20); 'faith is the foundation upon which hope rests, hope nourishes and sustains faith.' Faith stability should be maintained by resisting public opinion that leads to disillusionment. Though Elijah was always fleeing from atrocities of the state, he remained unwavering to demonstrate that YAHWEH is still the one and true God.

Conclusion

South Africa is a disillusioned state. The positive expectations of 1994 resulted into negative realities. Hopes for better life and quality of life are illusionary imaginations. Democracy keeps evolving from one president to another, yet miseries of the populace mutate exponentially. From Mandela to Ramaphosa presidencies, a sense of security and a positive outlook of life in South Africa were doubtful. Uncertainty about the future escalates daily. There is a need for prophetic affirmations with boldness, similar to that of Elijah. In the face of a national security threat, economic meltdown, political uncertainties, and religious indifference, the theological voice should become prophetic like that of Elijah.

This prophetic voice comes through Prophetic Theology, which is a participative voice from the people. The prophetic theology is reflective. This is confirmed by Mkhize (2024:4), who states that 'the church's theological reflections should be dialogical, ecumenical, and contextual, seeking to foster mutual understanding, respect, and collaboration among different audiences.' This confirms that prophecy through the church should break out of the shell, move out of its comfort zone, and become an active dialogical partner with politicians to assert its prophetic role. The prophetic voice is vocal, audible, and assertive. Unlike the situation of Elijah and Ahab, the prophet and politician should dialogue on issues of justice to humanity. Resane (2023:2) points out that the prophet (pastor, preacher) is, therefore, both a pulpit and political activist. As a pulpit activist, he denounces, edifies, and rebukes vocally from a pulpit. The messages proclaimed are prophetic, because they are declarative. Prophetic Theology is called upon to regard itself as an academy of justice (Schweiker in Stackhouse, Dearborn & Paeth, 2000), whereby the church should not simply exist for itself, but seek to transform the world. Being prophetic is a practical involvement, even if it refers to personal risks or physical harm. Mkhize (2024:6) correctly points out that 'being

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prophetic involves challenging and confronting the structures and systems that perpetuate poverty, inequality, crime, corruption, and mismanagement.'

Radical Theology speaks fearlessly when injustice is meted upon the poor and the marginalized. It is an aggressive engagement calling for respect and integrity for human life. This theology is to denounce, unashamedly, the violation of human rights as this violation decreases the quality of life. Morality is at the center of theology; hence, Radical Theology is an activist's voice that addresses political corruption for the sake of the oppressed masses. Thus, Resane (2023:2) avers:

> As a political activist, the prophet comes to people, doing an incarnational ministry on the cutting edge of society that has been politically compromised and victimized. Political activism by a prophet is when words are translated into actions, theories become practical, and verbal proposals are implemented. It calls for inevitable church and government interaction based on concrete facts of righting the wrongs in political systems and/or processes.

A Radical Theology is persistent, fundamentally skeptical about human ability to speak meaningfully about God. It promotes secular involvement rather than a peripheral religion that is distant from human contextual reality.

> It is a call for the church to be critical and constructive. This involves analysing and evaluating the situation or context in South Africa and actively seeking or proposing ways to enhance or transform it (Mkhize, 20246).

Therefore, it is dialogical and assertive regarding matters of social justice. In disillusioned South Africa, a Radical Theology brings conscientization to both citizens and leaders in all spheres of life that the fundamentals of faith, such as serving God and people, should be embraced and incorporated into human moral fabrics. Theology of Hope embodies the spirit of resilience in the face of despair, disillusionment, and distress. These should be confronted with the expectation that situations will change. Social decay will come to the cul-de-sac, and justice will prevail for the victims of social corruption. Disillusioned South Africa requires some exhorting declarations that, as citizens, there is no need to accept the *status quo.* Citizens should bounce back and reclaim constitutional rights to live as free citizens in corruption-free environments. Hope keeps believers floating and refusing to be pressed down. There should be bouncing back prophetically, radically, and hopefully. 'We need audacity of hope to decide for life' (Moltmann, 2019:91).

This study is limited to South Africa, but the findings are salient in many parts of the world where the church is muted, and the prophetic voice in the spirit of Elijah muzzled by the political elite.

These proposals need to be further explored to see how the prophetic voice of the church can be revived in order to restore hope in the disillusioned nation. Public theology needs to interrogate South African political landscape to lift the morale in public spaces. Church in South Africa is encouraged to promote democratic citizenship by educating members on maintaining spiritual sanity and faith sanctity in the face of corruption and disillusionment. The church's prophetic voice should echo in civil affairs to conscientise citizenry about the fear of God.

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