

**A THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE
IMPACT OF UNEMPLOYMENT ON THE
YOUTH IN PIETERMARITZBURG, WITH
PARTICULAR FOCUS ON YOUNG CHRISTIAN
WORKERS (YCW)**

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**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
WITH THE ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF
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KWAZULU-NATAL**

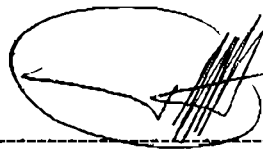
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**PIETERMARITZBURG
MARCH 2007**


DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Theology, in the School of Religion and Theology, in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal. It has not been submitted before for any degree of examination in any other University.



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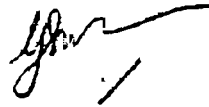
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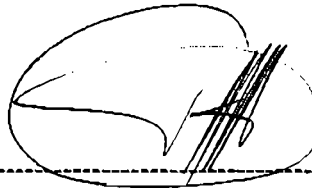
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CERTIFICATION

We the undersigned declare that we have abided by the University of KwaZulu-Natal's policy on language editing. We also declare that earlier forms of the thesis have been retained should they be required.



GARY STUART DAVID LEONARD
13 March 2007



SIBUSISO DUNCAN GWALA
13 March 2007

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ABSTRACT

Unemployment is a massive and rapidly growing problem in the world as a whole and in South Africa in particular. Its consequences have assumed proportions comparable to those of disasters caused by tornados and hurricanes. Social commentators believe it should be treated the same way as HIV/AIDS in the South African context. Yet policy makers and decision makers have not given enough attention to the problem of unemployment in relation to its devastation effects. Economics and its theories seem unable to provide coherent understanding as to the mechanism leading to unemployment on such a massive scale.

The response of the Church to this problem have been indifference; either due to ignorance or to a spiritualised faith and emphasis has been on personal virtues and vices such as industriousness and initiative over and against laziness and lethargy.

This thesis aims to give an indication of the extent and urgency of the problem of unemployment, investigate the impact of the phenomenon on the youth in Pietermaritzburg, and the role befitting the Church in helping people deal with the problem.

This study attempts to present to the public the contribution of theology, especially Industrial Mission, to the understanding of unemployment. Most research in the field of unemployment has been done by economists and the availability to an audience outside the community of economists is extremely limited. Economists generate their ideas and research results in technical journals where emphasis is on the methodology used and established scientific terminology. This vast technical literature fails to reach the wider public debate about work.

This study tries to avoid both jargon and oversimplification in the belief that the research effort must become widely known amongst the employed and unemployed alike.

Key Terms: Church; Communalism; HIV/AIDS; Industrial Chaplaincy; Industrial Mission; Pastors; Poor; See-Judge-Act; Unemployment; Work; Work Ethic; Workers; Young Christian Workers.

GLOSSARY

| | |
|----------------|--|
| AIDS | Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| BCEA | Basic Condition of Employment Act |
| BIG | Basic Income Grant |
| CBO | Community Based Organisation |
| COSATU | Congress of South African Trade Union |
| EEA | Employment Equity Act |
| ESCOM | Electricity Supply Commission |
| ESSET | Ecumenical Service for Socio Economic Transformation |
| GEAR | Growth, Employment and Redistribution |
| ISB-W/M | Institute for the Study of the Bible and Worker Ministry |
| ILO | International Labour Organisation |
| ISCOR | Iron and Steel Corporation |
| LRA | Labour Relations Act |
| NCA | Norwegian Church Aid |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PACSA | Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness |
| RDP | Reconstruction and Development Programme |
| SACBC | Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference |
| SACC | South African Council of Churches |
| SDA | Skilled Development Act |
| WARC | World Alliance of Reformed Churches |
| WTO | World Trade Organization |
| YCW | Young Christian Workers |

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**A THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT
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PIETERMARITZBURG, WITH PARTICULAR
FOCUS ON YOUNG CHRISTIAN WORKERS (YCW)**

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

I, the unemployed

I'm here

Living under a

Black cloud

Here, living in thinning light

Here

Freedom is nailed to a tree

To die

Here I am living in a matchbox.

I am here dying of hunger

And my country is also dying

My children are dying too

Look at them:

How dull their eyes

How slow their walks and the twining of their heads

Nothing for them to eat

Can you hear?

They are crying.

These are the first two stanzas of a poem by Nise Malange recited during the Workers Day celebration on May 1, 1985 in Curries Fountain Stadium, Durban. This poem paints a picture that every unemployed person has to face, and makes the study of the impact of unemployment on the youth even more necessary for churches to understand and take the necessary action. The poet expresses her frustrations at the state of hopelessness that the life of being unemployed presents to her. The cost of being poor is expressed in metaphors of death and dying. As a result of unemployment, parents cannot afford the basic necessities for their children, who then have to die of diseases, malnutrition, unhealthy living conditions and hunger. It is as if one can still hear the cries of the poor reverberating through the cities and valleys of our time.

This chapter will deal largely with issues and methodology pertaining to the study of the impact of unemployment on the youth. It will also examine the definition of “unemployment” and “youth” for the purpose of this study.

1.1. Background and Motivation for the Research

In 1994, South Africa replaced an apartheid government with a state multiparty democracy and South Africans have voted twice already in National elections which have brought completion to the transition to democracy.

In 2004, celebrations were held all over the country where South Africans together with the international community celebrated the decade of democracy. These celebrations were shadowed by key problems facing South Africa: unemployment, poverty, inequality, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which continues unabated.

In a report prepared by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) for South Africa and presented to the then State President Nelson Mandela, the ILO stated that while unemployment remains serious in South Africa, it was only one dimension of the labour problem facing South Africa. Poverty and inequality are also problems that have to be addressed with at least as much force as unemployment (ILO/96/31).

In line with international economic prescription, South Africa adopted the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) as a macro-economic strategy in 1996. While GEAR has been praised for turning the economy around in terms of growth with a record of more than 3% over the past ten years, a deeper problem has been growth without jobs, commonly referred to as "jobless growth." More than one million jobs were lost in 2001 and by 2002 about seven million South Africans were unemployed.

Unemployment in South Africa is the highest in the world. Even countries notorious for their high unemployment cannot beat South Africa's record (Schlemmer and Hewitz 1998:2). We are however cautioned about international comparisons because it is known that many countries are known to rework their statistics before submitting them to the ILO in order to project a desired national image. According to Statistics South Africa, in 2002 unemployment hit hardest amongst African youth and rural people. Young people under thirty years of age had an unemployment rate of 47% in 2001 and constituted 70% of all unemployed people (Stats SA 2002:40).

Fundamental changes are occurring in the nature and the world of work. Some of these changes lead to job losses and increased unemployment. A survey of the changing world of work and unemployment is necessary in order to obtain data on the financial and employment constraints upon and opportunities for people between the ages of 16 and 35, those considered being youth and economically active. The majority of these people in and outside of our churches face long-term unemployment. The study seeks to determine the impact this has on the youth, how the youth survive economically and the impact upon the quality of their lives.

This study will determine if the church, the community of redemption, has any role to play in dealing with the impact. The study will seek to determine the socio-political, economic and pastoral roles that the church can play in a society beset with the problem of unemployment. The study seeks to help in the analysis of the problem of unemployment and offer practical ways to help churches deal with the problem.

Unemployment creates an underclass, a caste of people who are excluded by the very ethos they grow up in, from taking their place in society, whatever potentiality they may have had. If the people in the situation of this underclass have adapted to survival in the underclass or have become relatively content with their contribution within it, we have a community which does not participate in the sense of universal human progress. In the linear-time, goal-oriented faith reality of the Western context, this is referred to as a culture of unemployment.

The study recognises the role the church could play in helping society deal with the problem. The study assumes the church has the necessary tools and knowledge to assist both the unemployed and the decision-makers to deal with the problem of unemployment, which is likely to produce disastrous consequences if left unattended.

Rough contemporary figures for South Africa indicate that more than 40% of the potential labour force is not employed and who therefore cannot say "this is what I do, this is who I am."

From the information available from Statistics S.A., it is clear that the problem of youth unemployment is chronic in this country. The pattern of youth unemployment has moved from a 26% unemployment rate ten years ago to 40% at the present (Stats SA 2002:47).

The study is of personal interest to the researcher because the researcher is a Chaplain to the Young Christian Workers (YCW), an ecumenical organisation

working with unemployed youth from the working class communities. As Chaplain, the researcher deals with unemployment and the impact of unemployment on the lives of young people. This has been a strong motivation for this study to be undertaken.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The outcome of this research will be made available as a resource to assist the church in its understanding of unemployment, thereby enabling it to formulate meaningful responses to the situation of unemployment among the youth.

Broadly speaking, this research has three central aims:

- i. Obtaining data on the financial and unemployment constraints and opportunities of people between the ages 16 and 35;
- ii. Creating an overall picture of how the changing world of work affects peoples' lives, especially the youth;
- iii. Empowerment of church bodies with information to do advocacy work around problems associated with the economic realities of unemployed people.

1.3. Preliminary Literature Review and the Location of the Study within the Existing Literature

There is abundant literature dealing with the issue of unemployment and its impact thereof available worldwide. Unfortunately, scholarly research on African chronic unemployment and the impact of this phenomenon on society and the church is very limited. Major studies on unemployment have been conducted in the United States of America, Britain and some countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Many recent publications on unemployment have tended to ignore the individual. They have focussed on the broader social, economic and political issues and have tended to refer to the individual as if s/he were merely an anonymous statistic (Hayes and Nuttman 1981:1).

There is a serious lack of literature on the impact of unemployment on the youth in South Africa. An incredible amount of literature on youth unemployment has been produced in America and Britain. Considering that these countries are developed nations and their social security net is different from ours in South Africa, the impact of unemployment would in many respects not be similar and therefore the results cannot be extrapolated for South Africa, as they generally are.

G. Kingdon and J. Knight have conducted an excellent study in their work, *Race and the Incidence of Unemployment in South Africa* (2003), and while this work provides an analysis of the problem of unemployment there is no serious analysis on the impact of unemployment on the youth. Marie Jahoda (1982) has made an outstanding contribution in this field, the limitation of her work being that she has focussed on social psychological analysis of the phenomenon in the United Kingdom. Her results cannot be extrapolated simplistically to Africa and specifically to South Africa. Considering that there has been no serious academic work done in relation to the impact of unemployment amongst the youth in South Africa, especially in Pietermaritzburg, this study makes an important contribution.

In his book, *A History of Inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002* (2002), Sampie Terreblanche deals specifically with the extent of unemployment post-1994. He produces a study which is mainly concerned with structural unemployment (i.e., the total inability of an economy to provide employment for the total workforce even at the peak of its business cycle). I concur with Terreblanche, that the core problem of unemployment in South Africa is indeed structural, except that he does not specifically refer to the problem of unemployment among the youth.

Theologians in South Africa have produced exciting works around the issues of work and the world of work. The book, *The Three-Fold Cord: Theology, Work and Labour* (1991), edited by Jim Cochrane and Gerald West, offers valuable resources, lessons and insights on the world of work. The article by Jonathan Draper offers insights on Christ as a worker, and Albert Nolan's article on worker theology offers a sharp analysis of the theology of work.

The Bulletin for Contextual Theology dedicated its September 1999 issue to questions of Theology, Work and Labour. This study will draw on insights that these two resources offer to the churches and make a contribution to this reflection.

1.4. The Research Problem

The study seeks to deal with the basic problem of the impact of unemployment on the youth, a biblical theology of work arising out of this phenomenon and the role churches can play in ministering to the unemployed. The large and perhaps growing number of unemployed youth is one of the most daunting problems faced by developed and developing countries alike. In KwaZulu-Natal, especially in Pietermaritzburg, and other major urban areas, the problem is chronic. For every unemployed adult, three young persons find themselves without a job.

It is disappointing to observe in many regions and particularly in Pietermaritzburg that the unprecedented expansion of investment in youth education is not being matched by higher employment levels for this population groups. The rate of youth unemployment is estimated at 40% according to the expanded definition (the expanded definition includes unemployed people who are discouraged from searching for a job) in South Africa and this is the recorded average for KwaZulu-Natal.

This study then seeks to understand what the impact of unemployment is on the lives of young people. What role can the church as agents of redemptive

communities play in this regard? This question is born out of a belief that the nature and mission of the church urges her to address this situation (Vorster 1983). Theologians have spoken and still speak of the “right to work,” although for them this means meaningful participation in a process which is more than “income related labour,” as employment is used here. The bible offers a valuable resource for us to generate social, political, economical, theological and pastoral views with respect to the question of unemployment. The book of Genesis in the Hebrew Bible presents an ideal picture of what work should be. God is described as a worker, a builder who manufactures the world in six days and has the same attitude to the product of His *[sic]* creation like the rest of us. God is pleased with what God has created. From this idea of God, a Great Worker, human beings began to say that God makes humans in God’s image and likeness. What they are fundamentally talking about here is that God makes human beings to be workers like God-self. When the unemployed read Matthew 20:1-16 contextually, they begin to see in the Christian Testament, the intervention of Jesus in the situation of unemployment (Bible Enquiry, Machibisa 2001).

This causes us to begin to ask theological and practical questions as to what the church can do in the situation of long-term unemployment. Unemployment is unwelcome because of the special role and meaning work has in our society. Hayes and Nutman trace this importance of work back to the teaching of John Calvin. Calvin taught that it was proper for human beings to seek to progress through the occupational hierarchy. It was one’s duty to extract the greatest possible gain from work, not to enjoy the fruits of labour, but to re-invest and create yet more work as a means towards establishing the Kingdom of God on earth. Calvin preached that work must not be casual, but must be methodical, disciplined, and rational. He encouraged human beings to seek that work at which they were best (1981:3). Max Weber (1930) has been very critical of Calvin’s views on work as being among those that gave rise to industrial capitalism. There may or may not be a link between Protestantism and capitalism, and it is not the purpose of this study to prove that, though there is no doubt that Protestantism attributed to a very high regard of work. This theological heritage then explains

why unemployment is so unwelcome in our society and why it is so important to reflect theologically on unemployment.

1.5. Research Design and Research Methodology

The approach to be used in the study will be both narrative and hermeneutic. The reason for the choice of a narrative research paradigm is primarily because narrative is the primary vehicle through which persons make sense of their history (Collin and Young 1992).

A narrative approach allows insight into circumstances and experiences that might otherwise have remained foreign to those that have experienced different circumstances such as prolonged unemployment (Gergen and Gergen 1985).

Secondly, the approach will be hermeneutic because it will then interpret the stories that the people tell. Our access to any human activity for hermeneutical study is through its expression in narrative. Maxwell (1998) describes particular research purposes for which qualitative studies are especially useful. Three of these purposes centre on understanding the meaning of life experiences, understanding the particular interests within which people act, and understanding the process by which events or actions take place. All three of these purposes are central to this study. According to Mouthner and Doucet (1998), the relational nature of qualitative research enables the interviewer to probe the interviewee to explore in detail the broader social structural and cultural influences on their narratives.

1.5.1. Fieldwork

The researcher has a structural relationship with the Young Christian Workers, which will enable the researcher to do participatory research in the study. According to Graham Philpot (1993:21-23), participatory research is a process whereby the community participates in the analysis of their own reality in order to

promote a social transformation to the benefit of the oppressed participants. The researcher works closely with the Young Christian Workers as Chaplain for the base groups in Pietermaritzburg. The Young Christian Workers work with small groups of between five to ten people who meet once a week to review their lives and actions. The Chaplain is often an older person with theological or biblical resources to offer these groups in their faith analysis. The researcher chose to work with the Young Christian Workers because of the organisation's commitment to the base of communities and the researcher's belief that transformation of society will happen if the base communities are strengthened.

1.5.2. Population

A survey of at least 1800 individuals was planned. The sample was structured so as to represent the gender and urban / rural profile of the population in Pietermaritzburg. The Pietermaritzburg (Msunduzi) municipality and surrounding areas was the area of study. The following categories were represented:

- i. Townships;
- ii. Squatter communities;
- iii. Rural areas;
- iv. Other working class communities within urban areas.

1.5.3. Data Collection

The narratives were captured from unemployed people of the age group 16-35, 50% of who were women. People from whom narratives were captured had experienced one of the following categories.

1.5.3.1. Long-term Unemployed

This was a group of people who had been unemployed for periods longer than two years. They were people who met the criteria set for unemployed people as per our definition of unemployment for the purposes of our study (see below).

1.5.3.2. Recently Unemployed

Recent unemployment referred to those who had a job and lost it within a period of less than two years. It also referred to those who had graduated either from high school or university and were looking for a job.

A questionnaire was developed to obtain data (see Appendix A). The design of the questionnaire was guided by the voice-centred-relational method developed by Brown and Gillian (1991) and adapted by Mouthner and Doucet (1998). This method is described as “relational” because it explores the interviewees’ narratives in terms of their relationship with other people. It also takes into account the socio-cultural influences in which the interviewee exists. This method is regarded as “voice-centred” as it focuses on the speaking subject, that is, how the individuals speak of their world.

Moller (2002:56) points out that the questionnaire permits a wide coverage at minimum expense and effort. It not only affords wider geographical coverage, but it also reaches persons who are difficult to contact. The questionnaire also allows for greater uniformity in the way the questions are asked and therefore ensures greater comparability in the responses.

1.5.4. Selection Criteria for Interviewers

Each interviewer was selected on the basis of being an unemployed person of between 15 and 35 years of age and a member of the organisation called the

Young Christian Workers and were asked to interview thirty interviewees. Interviewers were asked to attend a three-day training session to prepare for conducting the survey. Part of this training involved interviewers conducting a mock survey which familiarised them with the instrument. The selection of communities and respondents was planned during the training session using the criteria explained above. The people who had received training started conducting the interviews.

In analysing the data available, the researcher attempted to be aware of the fact that interpretation is a relational activity and that suggests that both the interpreter and text share authority and responsibility for shaping the measuring of a given text. Tappan and Brown (1992) highlight the need for self-reflection on the part of the interpreter during the analysis. In addition, they highlight the responsibility of the researcher to be aware of the powerful position s/he has in analysing the narrative and caution the interpreter to be aware of the temptation to violate the symmetry of that relationship and to assume ultimate power to interpret another person's story. As a result, during the interpretation process, the researcher was constantly aware of how his position as a Black, South African, ordained, employed male could influence his interpretation.

When the analysis of data was completed, the researcher made the findings available to the focus group. The focus group was drawn from the pool of interviewers who did the reflections on the data and tested the perceptions of the researcher. The respondents were allowed to do theological reflections as the interview had asked them to construct their own understanding of the world as they see it.

1.6. Limitations of the Research

This study was conducted in Pietermaritzburg, which is one of the many urban areas affected by unemployment. The study therefore cannot claim to be representative of all the different dynamics affecting other young unemployed

people in South Africa although insights from this study can be drawn and used by church people and other policy makers in the rest of the country.

The aim of this research was not to conduct research only, but also to involve people from participating communities in issues of economic justice and economic literacy training. This was achieved by the training of the interviewers and interviewers training volunteers in their communities. In spite of the fact that it was made clear to the respondents that taking part in the survey would not lead to them getting jobs, it was expected that a sizeable number of them would expect to get jobs after the interview, especially for those in most need. This might have influenced the way many of those respondents answered questions. This is a particular problem in participatory studies like these.

1.7. Ethical Considerations

This research represents an intrusion in peoples' lives. It required people to reveal personal information about themselves. People were not forced to participate and as such participation was voluntary with participants giving informed consent. Respondents were not promised any possibility of a job should they participate in the survey. The research ensured that no harm was brought to people under the study. Indeed, as indicated, it was intended that the training given would enhance the skills of participants. The survey was conducted under strict conditions of anonymity and confidentiality.

1.8. Definition of Terms

1.8.1. Unemployment

Unemployment is an extremely difficult term to define because many people and institutions have an interest in defining it.

There is controversy around the real level of unemployment in South Africa. This is due to the unsatisfactory data that is available concerning unemployment. Statistics South Africa recently revised its definition of the official unemployment rate, bringing South Africa's definition in line with the main International Labour Organization (ILO) definition. This definition is used by more than 80% of both "developed and developing" countries among 114 countries, including South Africa's major trading partners (Stats S.A. 1998:1).

The official or strict definition defines the unemployed as a person who did not work during the seven days prior the interview; who wish to work and are available to begin work within a week of the interview; and who have taken active steps to look for work or to start some form of self-employment in the four weeks prior to the interview (Stats S.A. 1998:11).

This definition has been criticised because the criterion of "having taken steps to seek work in the four weeks prior the interview" is considered by many to be an unfair expectation on the part of the unemployed, many of whom are already experiencing financial burdens. Many people may not have taken steps to seek employment because they have already lost hope of ever finding a job, may not have the taxi fares to go to places where jobs could be offered or there may simply be the non-existence of jobs where they live.

In the case of South Africa, quite clearly, the official definition does understate the rate of unemployment. It is however commendable that Statistics South Africa publishes both the statistics for the so-called official definition and the expanded definition which includes those considered discouraged.

Slattery (1986:126) correctly points out that even the official statistics on unemployment depend on whether the state uses a strict or broad definition. In countries where there are unemployment benefits, definitions of unemployment are even stricter because the governments want to ensure fewer people can claim

benefits. Many writers agree that unemployment refers to those people male or female who are actively looking for a job, able to work and willing to work.

Deem (1988:10) defines the unemployed as those without formal employment of any kind. It must be added here though that not everyone without formal employment is regarded or regards themselves as unemployed. What makes unemployment difficult to define is the fact sometimes unemployed people are encouraged to enter into some form of training, which may not result in them getting money, then they would never get included in the statistics about the number of unemployed people because during the time of census, these unemployed people were undergoing training, they are then classified as students even if the training they are engaged in would be over at the same time as the census and they would be back to their former position, namely, unemployment.

We cannot rely on official figures either for a picture of who are the unemployed nor for the working definition, although we have to make use of such statistics if we are to say anything in general terms about the unemployed.

There are many different and divergent understandings of unemployment, including self employment, underemployment, unemployable, pseudo-employment, mal-employment (Nürnberger 1990:40-49). Kahn 1976, Beveridge et al. 1944 and Creedy 1982 distinguish between four types of unemployment:

- i. Hard core of unemployment
- ii. Seasonal unemployment
- iii. Fractional unemployment
- iv. Structural unemployment.

For the purposes of this study, the unemployed are economically active youth without a regular job, temporarily self-employed and first-time work seekers who had a desire and were available for paid or self-employment. It also includes all those that indicated they did not wish to join the labour force in the near future,

full-time housewives, students, women on maternity leave, the retired and medically unfit people who classified themselves as permanent members of the informal labour force.

1.9. Youth

The 1996 National Youth Act defines youth to be persons between the 15-36 age cohort. Youth unemployment, which Freedman calls “the under utilisation of young people,” becomes even more serious in South Africa because of the particularly rapid growth of the already young population. Jobs are clearly not being created fast enough to meet the needs of the growing youth population with an estimated 50, 000 new persons entering the labour market each year (Stats S.A. 2001).

1.10. Chapter Outline

This study will be presented in six chapters.

Chapter 1 will deal with issues of methodology and techniques of data collection, sampling and definition of terms.

Chapter 2 will examine the context in which unemployment occurs in South Africa, the theories of unemployment and the extent to which these theories can be applied to the South African situation. This chapter also examines other possible causes not covered under dominant theories.

Chapter 3 will present an analysis of the data collected from the survey of 1800 unemployed people.

Chapter 4 will take an in-depth look at the themes that emerge from the data in terms of the effects or impact of unemployment on the youth.

Chapter 5 will develop a Theology of Work as constructed by the unemployed.

Chapter 6 will consider various models of doing Industrial Mission with the youth, dealing extensively with the method of “See-Judge-Act” as has been developed by the Young Christian Workers.

1.11. Summary

From the discussion above, it is clear that South Africa suffers from a serious unemployment problem. It is for this reason that civil society formations are calling for the classification of unemployment as a virus of the same proportions as the HIV. Proponents of this view are arguing therefore for responses similar to those of government, business and civil society to HIV/AIDS. As with all social ills, unemployment finds its concentration among the disadvantaged groups, mainly, Africans, females, the poor, the uneducated and the unskilled. Among these sectors is the sector which forms the focus of this study, the youth.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONTEXT OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

2. Introduction

Considering the nature and the extent of the phenomenon of unemployment in South Africa makes it necessary to take a closer look at what causes unemployment. Economists, Church people, Government, and Civil Society do not agree on what causes unemployment, as each has an interest in the phenomenon and approaches the problem differently depending on the interest they have. This chapter examines in some detail the various arguments that have been advanced by various people and thinkers over the years.

It must be remembered, however, that the nature of the causes advanced has depended on the political and economical climate prevailing at any given time in history as well. An explanation on the causes of unemployment depends largely on the paradigm from which the explanation comes.

Unemployment in South Africa has reached catastrophic proportions. This is due largely to more than three centuries of plunder, wars and systemic exploitation that has been going on in South Africa. From the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in the Cape colony to the present, there has been systemic exclusion of one group by another. Not only was land taken away from its owners, who were moved to unproductive sections of the country, indigenous people have been used as a source of free and cheap labour for the benefits of the capitalists and colonial powers. This study will draw heavily on Terreblanche (2002) as it introduces the problem of unemployment in South Africa.

Terreblanche has done an outstanding analysis of the South African situation dating back 350 years. He argues correctly that there is a connection between power, land and labour. He states that colonial powers created political and economic power structures that put them in a privileged and entrenched position vis-à-vis the indigenous population groups. They also deprived the indigenous people of land, surface water and cattle, and lastly, reduced slaves and indigenous people to different forms of un-free and exploitable labour (2002:6).

Many researchers and academics have produced a large body of knowledge on the causes of unemployment in South Africa. Terreblanche has contributed to the debate and the researcher uses this contribution as the researcher is in agreement with the arguments Terreblanche advances. Firstly, Terreblanche classifies the history of South Africa into six systemic periods of exclusion, exploitation and plunder. The first period is the mercantilist and feudal system by the Dutch East India Company between 1652 and 1795. The second systemic period is the period of British colonialism circa 1800-1890 followed by the systemic period of the two Boer republics. The next period was the systemic period of British imperialism and the political and economic hegemony of the English establishment circa 1890-1948. This period was followed by the systemic period of the political hegemony of the Afrikaner establishment, 1948-1994. This period overlaps with the period 1990 to the present where we witness a transition from the politico-economic system of white political domination and racial capitalism to a new system of democratic capitalism (Terreblanche 2002:14-15).

Let us examine briefly the first period, the period of Dutch colonialism from 1652 to 1800. It was during this period that the Dutch created a semi-independent feudal system with its power and labour relations. In order to fulfil the needs of the Dutch India Company and to supply the refreshment stations with fresh meat and other requisites, the governors launched the official military offensives against the Khoikhoi and it was during the governorship of Simon van der Stel that the socio-economic and political structures of the Khoikhoi were violently destroyed during the wars. The company wanted cattle and the free burghers wanted land, cattle and labour (Terreblanche 2002:164).

The governorship of Willem Adriaan van der Stel, 1699-1701 was even more aggressive towards the Khoikhoi. He issued free grazing permits which were abused by the free burghers who trespassed on the land occupied by the Khoikhoi. There were disputes that developed over the ownership of cattle and the groups of organised men were used to conduct punitive expeditions against the Khoikhoi. The Khoikhoi started retreating to the east and the north of Cape colony and were deprived of more and more land. Gradually, they were converted from farmers to workers in their farms (Terreblanche 2002:164-166).

The next two systems were those of British colonialism circa 1800-1890 and the systemic period of the two Boer republics 1850-1900. Terreblanche argues that the period of British colonialism was more vigorous when large numbers of the Xhosa were proletarianised and turned into un-free labour. The agricultural capitalism established in the Cape colony was based on a repressive labour system. When slavery was abolished, the white land-owning class succeeded, in close corporation with the colonial state, in designing new forms of labour repression to which former slaves and serfs and large numbers of Xhosa people were subjected (2002:181-182).

The population of the Cape colony was restructured into a white master and land-owning class and a black wage-earning proletariat. This was decisive, not only for the labour patterns of the next 150 years but also for the racist political, social, and economic systems that prevailed in South Africa until the end of the twentieth century (Terreblanche 2002:182). It was during this period of systemic exclusion that Governor Sir Harry Smith restructured the Xhosa society as thoroughly as possible. He destroyed the power of the Chiefs and subjected them to the control of and discipline of the colonial authorities, annexed the land between Fish and Keiskama rivers and placed white magistrates (Terreblanche 2002:197).

The period above overlapped with the systemic period of the two Boer republics. It was during this system that the Ndebele and the Zulu, once two powerful kingdoms in the Transvaal and Natal respectively were attacked and destroyed. The Ndebele were driven into present-day Zimbabwe and the Zulu were defeated by the Voortrekkers. The Voortrekkers deprived Africans of large parts of their land, and forced them to

pay tribute to them. It was however still possible for Africans to maintain their traditional independence (Terreblanche 2002:219-2223).

The next systemic period was the period of British imperialism and the political and economic hegemony of the English establishment circa 1890-1948). According to Terreblanche this period saw the bringing together of various political units controlled by the British, Afrikaners, and independent African tribes into the Union of South Africa under the effective political control of whites. It was also during the same period that the mining revolution was taking place in the Northern provinces. The racially based system of agricultural capitalism established in the Cape was extended to these provinces as well. A fully fledged system of racial capitalism was implemented in all sectors of the South African economy. This period saw intensive state-building, during which white political domination was consolidated. The state then, on behalf of foreign-owned mining corporations, built the institutional and physical infrastructure of white supremacy. It was during this period that a racially based socio-economic and labour structure aimed at supplying foreign corporations and white farmers with cheap and docile labour force. As a consequence, a symbiotic relationship developed between white political domination and racial capitalism that endured until the 1990s (2002:239).

Terreblanche continues to argue and correctly so that this new power constellation was based on a close alliance between the British and local English corporations that controlled the South African economy, and the English-speaking electorate which, in collaboration with the Afrikaner agricultural elite, controlled South Africa politically almost uninterruptedly until 1948 (this except for the nine years of the Pact government from 1924-1933). The two pillars on which the edifice of the new state was built were white political power and racial segregation. Both the gold mining industry and the maize farmers had a vested interest in a strong state and segregation as a method of controlling blacks. A close relationship was built with obedient and often corrupt African Chiefs who were prepared to act as clients of the white political authorities. An institution built on an unequal distribution of power and status between whites and blacks was consolidated (2002:247).

The next period was that of political hegemony of the Afrikaner establishment 1948-1994.

This period marked the rise of an aggressive and religiously oriented Afrikaner Christian Nationalism and the hardening of racist ideology during the National Party's implementation of apartheid after 1948 (2002:297). The National Party coined the term "apartheid" during the 1948 election campaign in order to distinguish its "native" policy from the segregationist policy of the United Party. Apartheid was not new; rather it built scrupulously on the foundation laid by the English establishment's segregationist regimes of the previous fifty years. What apartheid did was the intensification of both the repressive and discriminatory character of segregation. Long-standing state controls over the African labour market were restructured and intensified, and made partially applicable to Coloureds and Indians as well. In 1948 the National Party began to entrench racial discrimination in a far more comprehensive and systemic way at a time when thinking in the western world about the advancement of human rights and the elimination of racial discrimination was changing fundamentally (Terreblanche 2002:313 and 333-334).

The final systemic period is that of democratic capitalism, controlled by an African elite. This systemic period since 1996 manifests itself in the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy which will be discussed in the next section.

There are essentially two schools of thought that have tried to explain the cause of unemployment. The two most influential ones, the "Keynesian" and the "Neo-classical" have shaped the thinking around the causes for a very long time. Keynesians concentrate on the demand side of the economy for their analysis. They look at the level of expenditure in the economy and see whether that is sufficient to create a level of production that gives everyone a job (Beharrel 1992:39).

Neo-classicals, on the other hand, look first to the behaviour of the labour market itself. They want to see whether there are imperfections in the workings of the market

that are stopping the demand for jobs matching the supply of jobs and therefore causing unemployment.

It would seem that in South Africa we have to look at both the Keynesians and the Neo-classical views to be able to determine what exactly causes unemployment. We will refer to these theories when we look at the causes of unemployment in South Africa.

This study believes that it will be irresponsible of the Christian community to be silent on issues of the economy simply because they either cannot make sense of the theories or believe this is not their sphere of influence. It shall be remembered that much of the message of biblical prophets had to do with how economic realities of the day affected the lives of the people and the nations. In our time, faith has something to say about such matters. This does not mean pretending to be economists when we are not. It means knowing enough about the way our economic system functions to be able to identify the moral issues at stake within it and enter responsibly into the public debate about economic choices that lie before us.

The researcher believes that economics is not a science to be trusted by Christians, they need to engage with it in order to understand it and if they do understand something about it, they need to critique and transform some of its theories and principles. The jokes that people tell about economist reflect something about them and their theories for real life, "If all economists were laid end to end, they would never reach the conclusion."

Another variant, "If all economists were laid end to end, it would probably be a good thing." This joke stresses their ultimate uselessness. This humour does spill over into real life and betrays a deep suspicion of practitioners of the art (or science) of economics. President Reagan showed contempt for the profession by making a stockbroker not an economist Secretary of the Treasury and by leaving unfilled for over two years the post of Chair of the Council of Economic Advisory (Owensby 1988: xiv).

Despite the frequent bad humour, bad press and bad treatment meted out to economists, few doubt the importance of the economics in the order of things. If it is true that, “economics is the study of the principles by which society organises itself to use scarce resources for the production and distribution of goods and services” (Owensby 1988:44), then economics deals with life, food and shelter, as well as the comforts and conveniences that lie beyond need and make life pleasant, and has to be taken seriously.

2.1. An Examination of Unemployment in South Africa

According to Statistics South Africa, of the 40.6 million people living in South Africa in October 1996, just over 16.1 million were young people. This means South Africa’s population is youthful, which is a feature of the population of many developing countries. Nearly four in every five of the youth in South Africa were Africans, less than one tenth coloured, one tenth white and the remaining 3% were Indians. About 21% of all youth in South Africa live in KwaZulu-Natal, followed by Gauteng, 20%, and Eastern Cape 14%. Only 2% of the country’s youth live in the Northern Cape.

Census 1996 placed the overall unemployment rate for youth in South Africa at 40.8% with females at 49.6% and males at 32%.

The above statistics are used in this research, notwithstanding the problem that arises in the definitions of unemployment by the state and other agencies discussed in Chapter 1.

Labour force participation is not increasing and fewer people are being absorbed by the labour markets. South Africa is experiencing the problem of a labour force that increases by thousands every year yet is unable to absorb that labour force.

The table below summarises labour force participation rate percentage by population

| Population Group | Labour Force Participation Rate | Labour Absorption Rate | Unemployment Rate |
|-------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| African | 48.9 | 24.3 | 50.2 |
| Coloured | 66.5 | 49.5 | 25.1 |
| Indians | 59.6 | 50.7 | 14.9 |
| White | 66.5 | 62.7 | 5.7 |
| South Africa | 52.4 | 31.0 | 41.6 |

Table 2.1. Labour Force Participation Rate by Percentage Population

Source: Samson 2000:3.

Table 2.1. above shows the rate at which the market absorbs the labour force. There is no doubt that the African labour is the least absorbed. This is largely due to the lack of skills among the African population. This will be dealt with in the following section.

2.2. Some Possible Factors Responsible for Unemployment in South Africa

There are many related factors that affect the employment balance. In this section each of these sectors are briefly examined together with the available empirical evidence.

2.2.1. Macro-economic Policy

The South African government released its macro-economic policy called GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution) Policy in 1996, which was a replacement for the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). This research argues that GEAR is responsible for the massive growth of unemployment.

This research does not intend analysing each policy found in the document but will, with the aid of evidence available, provide reasonable arguments against GEAR as a

cause of unemployment. It shall be remembered that GEAR was the economic policy framework that replaced the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). GEAR did not only introduce an economic strategy that was different from the RDP, but it also promised different targets and these targets are clearly spelt out in the objectives.

2.2.1.1. Objectives of GEAR

Broadly speaking, the objectives of GEAR can be summarised as follows:

- a) A Competitive Economy: South Africa should produce high quality goods and services at prices, which are cheaper than those of other countries;
- b) A Fast-Growing Economy with approximately 6% growth rate by the year 2000;
- c) Job Creation: The economy must create 409, 000 jobs per year by the year 2000;
- d) Service Provision: South Africa must make education, health and other services available to all;
- e) Safety and Security: South Africa must provide an environment in which homes are secure and places of work are productive (GEAR 1996:9).

GEAR made certain projections and promises, and on the basis of those the leadership in government declared that the fundamentals of GEAR would turn the economy around and as a result were non-negotiable. The most damning criticism of GEAR has been its failure to deliver on its promises. Although the 1996 actual growth rate of 4.2% was higher than the projected growth rate of 3.5%, from 1997 to 2000 the actual growth rate was much lower than the projected growth rate (See Table 2 below).

| | 1996 | | 1997 | | 1998 | | 1999 | | 2000 | | Average | |
|--|----------------|--------|----------------|--------|----------------|--------|----------------|--------|----------------|--------|----------------|--------|
| | Pro- jected | actual | Pro- jected | actual | Pro- jected | actual | Pro- jected | actual | Pro- jected | actual | Pro- jected | actual |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Budget deficit % of GDP | 5.1 | 4.6 | 4 | 3.8 | 3.5 | 2.3 | 3 | 2.4 | 3 | 2.6 | 3.7 | 3.1 |
| Real interest Rate | 7 | 12.6 | 5 | 10.4 | 4 | 15.85 | 3 | 10 | 3 | N/A | 4.4 | 12.3 |
| Average real wage growth, private sector | -0.5 | 1.7 | 1 | 2.3 | 1 | 8.7 | 1 | 2.3 | 1 | N/A | 0.8 | 2.1 |
| Average real wage growth, govt sector | 4.4 | 0.9 | 0.7 | 3.5 | 0.4 | 2.7 | 0.8 | -2.1 | 0.4 | N/A | 1.3 | 1.25 |
| Real govt investment growth | 3.4 | 5.3 | 2.7 | 4.4 | 5.4 | 2.6 | 7.5 | -5.4 | 16.7 | N/A | 11.7 | 1.2 |
| Real private sector investment | 9.3 | 7.4 | 9.1 | 4.7 | 9.3 | -2.9 | 13.9 | -4.4 | 17 | N/A | 11.7 | 1.2 |
| GDP Growth | 3.4 | 4.2 | 2.9 | 2.5 | 3.8 | 0.6 | 4.9 | 1 | 6.1 | 3.5 | 4.2 | 2.4 |
| Inflation (CPI) | 8 | 7.4 | 9.7 | 8.6 | 8.1 | 6.9 | 7.7 | 5.2 | 7.6 | 5 | 8.2 | 6.6 |

Table 2.2. Analyzing the Promises of GEAR Source: ILRIG 2001:115

Table 2.2. above makes an analysis of how the targets and predictions promised by GEAR have been realised. It is disconcerting that one of the few targets that the government met is a reduction in the deficit. In this case the government went well below its deficit target from 6.1% to 3.5% in year 2000. Such a budgetary priority has meant that money that could have been used for social expenditure has instead been directed towards sharply reducing Apartheid debt despite opposition from Congress of South African Trade Union (COSATU) and Jubilee 2000.

In keeping with its belt-tightening approach, the government as an employer has ensured that the average wage increase of public sector workers stayed within its projected target. The average actual wage (after inflation was taken into account) increase for the period 1996-2000 was a low 1.25%, very close to the projected target of 1.3%.

Table 2.2. also shows the projected and real percentages of real private sector investment in relation to the Gross Domestic Product. The government had projected 11.7% of private sector investment through tax incentives and a reduction of corporate tax; the average actual private sector investment was 1.2%, well below the projected rate. This means that the period 1996-2000 saw an extensive capital flight and disinvestments.

From Table 2.2. we can conclude that GEAR central tenets have not been realised. It is therefore not surprising that the combination of disinvestments, privatisation, retrenchments and low economic growth have resulted in massive job losses for the period 1996-2000. With respect to 400, 000 jobs per year, by year 2000, it must be noted that evidence available points to negative employment created (ILRIG 2001:116)

Table 2.3 below shows a negative employment rate each year and not the sharp job growth as promised by GEAR. For example, instead of the job growth of 246, 000 projected for 1998, a staggering 194, 000 jobs were lost in formal non-agricultural

employment. These job losses contribute to the already high unemployment rate in South Africa.

| | 1996 | | 1997 | | 1998 | |
|--|-----------|---------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| | Projected | Actual | Projected | Actual | Projected | Actual |
| % Employment growth non-agricultural formal jobs | 1.3 | -1.1 | 3 | -2 | 2.7 | -3.8 |
| Number of new jobs per year | 126 000 | -58 000 | 252 000 | -103 000 | 246 000 | -194 000 |
| % Real export growth, manufacturing | 10.3 | 59.7 | 12.2 | 6.3 | 8.3 | 0.0 |

| | 1999 | | 2000 | | Average | |
|--|-----------|----------|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|
| | Projected | Actual | Projected | Actual | Projected | Actual |
| % Employment growth non – agricultural formal jobs | 3.5 | -2.1 | 4.3 | N/A | 2.9 | -2.25 |
| Number of new jobs per year | 320 000 | -105 000 | 409 000 | N/A | 270 000 | -1150 |
| % Real export growth, manufacturing | 10.5 | 6.7 | 12.8 | N/A | 10.8 | 18.2 |

Table 2.3. Negative Employment Rate by Year

Source: ILRIG 2001:117

2.2.1.2. Trade Liberalisation

Trade Liberalisation refers to removing protectionist tariffs and how they were imposed on South Africa's goods in order to help them compete with foreign goods. Since the early 1900s, South Africa had pursued a protectionist approach to manufacturing industries in South Africa. In 1925 the Pact government (the Pact government was based on the electoral union formed by the National Party led by Hertzog and the Labour Party led by Creswell) wanted South Africa to become

economically independent by adopting a policy of import-substituting industrialisation. This was implemented by means of control and the establishments of parastatals in key industries. The Electricity Supply Commission (ESCOM) in 1922 had been established and in 1928 the Iron and Steel Corporation (ISCOR) was established. Rapid industrial growth and diversification resulted. The problem of narrow middle and upper income groups that demanded these imports substitute constrained the growth (Innes 1999:12)

As a result of the Sharpeville riots in 1960, there was a sudden and a sharp capital out flow leading to the introduction of foreign exchange control and the decisions to leave the Commonwealth of Nations by the Nationalist Party. Import controls and tariffs barriers were extended with the aim of establishing a protected environment in which South Africa's industries could grow (Barker 1999:80).

The birth of democracy in South Africa in 1994 opened the door for South Africa to be a player in the international arena of sports, culture, politics, and economics and so on. It is in this environment that South Africa had to follow international trends and initiate programmes of liberalisation. The programme was started in 1994 after an agreement with the World Trade Organization (WTO) had been signed. This agreement involved, among other things, reducing the general level of tariffs protection from a weighted average of 30-15% over a five-year period, rationalising the tariff structure and replacing import quotas with tariff measures in respect of agricultural imports (Calitz 2000:5).

There have been divergent views as to whether trade liberalisation brings with it advantages or disadvantages. Workers who have lost their jobs in the textile / shoe industries since the introduction of trade liberalization policies will tell you these have brought only misery and unemployment. Those unemployed people with no prospect of ever finding a job after being retrenched with the closing down of Mooitex in Mooi River will blame it on trade liberalisation. They were told by their bosses that South African textiles could not compete with the world because cheaper textiles were brought into the country from countries where there is no respect for labour laws and child labour is the norm.

Studies by Borat (1999) and Edwards (2000) reveal that a fall in employment occurred amongst the unskilled and they attribute this to tariff liberalisation and technology change. Trade liberalisation has led to South African companies having to compete with international companies causing South African companies to rationalise in order to survive.

These kinds of arguments do not sit well with the Minister of Trade and Industry who always argues that the expansion of exports will create more jobs than jobs that will be lost through greater import penetration (Nattrass 1998:79). Many jobs requiring skilled workforce have been created but the Minister has failed to recognise that the decreasing demand for unskilled labour results in massive unemployment. Borat has correctly observed that domestic firms respond to trade liberalisation by the increasing the capital labour ratios in a bid to remain competitive through higher productivity and more efficient methods of production. He draws a conclusion that the structure of labour demand in firms today is characterised by a rising demand for skilled and semi-skilled workers and rationalization of workers at the bottom end of the occupational ladder (1998:79). Clearly, the fall in demand for unskilled labour means the economy will not provide jobs for unskilled and unemployment will grow. This will adversely affect unskilled young people with no experience to sell to the labour market.

Economists have argued that these negative effects on employment caused by trade liberalisation are short-term, and that the long-term benefits of free trade will contribute to a growth in employment creation. This has remained theory for now; reality has shown high unemployment growth. Ordinary unskilled labour has lost faith in the economists. History will tell and in the short term, there is increasing misery, unemployment and poverty.

2.2.1.3. Gear's Fiscal Policy

GEAR's fiscal policy aims at achieving three overall goals, namely, to reduce budget deficit and government dis-saving, increase government expenditure on infrastructure like roads, and avoid tax increases (GEAR 1996:10).

GEAR's aim is that the amount by which government expenditure exceeds its income should not be more than 3% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2000. In 1996 the budget was 4.5% of GDP. GEAR also aims at ensuring that overall expenditure does not increase by more than the rate of inflation. In taking this approach, GEAR is committed to fiscal control or fiscal discipline.

GEAR has two objectives in reducing the budget deficit. The first is to reduce money spent or debt servicing. Due to past and present borrowing the government owes billions of Rands to banks and other institutions, both locally and overseas. Reducing the budget deficit would mean that the government would be borrowing less and less money, which in the long term would reduce the budget for debt servicing each year.

The second is to reduce the effect of "crowding out." "Crowding out" means that government competes with the private sector for loans from banks. According to the thinking of GEAR, when government borrows a lot of money, the interest rate goes up. This is because both the banks and the government are competing for loans and the banks respond to the high demand for money by raising the interest. GEAR wants "crowding out" reduced so that the loans will be cheaper for the private sector (GEAR 1996:35). The thinking is that if loans are cheaper, the private sector will borrow more money, make more investments and thereby employ more workers.

The question is how will GEAR reduce the deficit? GEAR proposes to reduce the deficit by using three strategies. The first one will be to reduce the number of workers in the public service. Many of the workers will be offered severance packages as a form enticing them to accept retrenchments. Secondly, by cutting government expenditure so that the government stops providing these services altogether, and

thirdly, by not increasing public service wages by more than the rate of inflation plus 2% and maintaining expenditure in social services like education, health and welfare at the same level and distribute the existing money in favour of the poor (S.A. Labour Bulletin 1993:17).

An example of how government might change expenditure on social services is the child support grants. Under the previous government grants of more than R400.00 per child were payable to white children. The new government proposed that the same amount be redistributed to all needy children, with the result the amount given to each child came to R75.00. This amount has increased from R75.00 to R180.00 per child over the period of five years (Africa Info 2005:4). This kind of redistribution is clearly in keeping with the idea of keeping expenditure at the same level and redistributing in favour of the poor.

Has fiscal policy succeeded? In terms of the GEAR target, fiscal policy has been successful in reducing the share of government current expenditure as a percentage of GDP. The budget deficit has been at a consistently lower percentage of GDP since 1994 and the debt ratio has started to flatten out since 1996. The public sector borrowing requirement as a percentage of GDP has declined markedly since 1998 (ILRIG 2001:119). Unfortunately, government has been unsuccessful in revising its dis-saving pattern and has been unable to meet GEAR target on government saving. Fiscal policy has also been unsuccessful in achieving the GEAR target in terms of privatisation.

Tighter fiscal policy is good but in a country like South Africa with so much inequality from the past, it is impossible to deliver effectively by cutting government expenditure. While the government has emphasised the need for an educated population to address historical inequalities and the need for a skilled workforce, from 1998-2000 there has been a decline in the educational budget (Samson 2000:3), as indicated in Table 2.4. below.

Table 2.4. below shows the per capita expenditure in education in the nine provinces in South Africa for the period 1998-2003. Each province, except for the Free State, indicates a real decline in expenditure. It is worrying that those provinces like the Northern Province which had the lowest matric pass rate in 1999 (38%) also suffer the per capita reduction in education of about 11% from 1998 to 2002/3 (*The Natal Witness*, in January 2000).

| | 1998/99 | 1999/00 | 2000/01 | 2002/03 |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | R million | R million | R million | R million |
| Eastern Cape | 1.118 | 1.080 | 1.048 | .541 |
| Free State | 1.061 | 1.079 | 1.123 | .415 |
| Gauteng | .877 | .850 | .844 | .318 |
| KwaZulu-Natal | .904 | .860 | .901 | .419 |
| Mpumalanga | .993 | .984 | .935 | .375 |
| Northern Cape | 1.128 | 1.077 | 1.070 | .659 |
| Northern Province | 1.238 | 1.154 | 1.121 | .417 |
| North West | 1.016 | 1.006 | .908 | .376 |
| Western Cape | 1.035 | .967 | .937 | .489 |

Table 2.4. Per Capita Expenditure in Education by Province

Source: Samson 2000:3

Even though apartheid was characterised by a public health sector which hardly catered for the needs of the African people, the government has cut down on public health expenditure for the period 1998–2002. KwaZulu-Natal, with the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, has had a decline in budget allocations of R618m in 1998/1999 to R602m in 1999/2000.

With these cuts in government expenditure came retrenchments in many department, with the departments of education being affected the most. In keeping with the reduction of government expenditure, numbers of public sector employees especially in education have been retrenched (ILRIG 2001:121).

2.2.1.4. Labour Market Flexibility

In keeping with the promise to create greater labour market flexibility, the Department of Labour amended labour laws during 1995. Legislative reforms in the Labour Relations Act (LRA) 1995, the Basic Condition of Employment Act (BCEA) 1996, the Employment Equity Act (EEA) 1998, and the Skilled Development Act (SDA) 1998 were passed by Parliament (Barker 1999:13).

COSATU (1996:36) argues that the Basic Condition of Employment Act, which provides a floor of rights for all workers on issues relating to working time, leave, termination of employment and employer obligation, was a good piece of legislation. When the Act was amended in 1997, it allowed for downward variation of minimum standards by agreements between workers and employers and by ministerial decree. This means that the rights that had been part of the gains by employees can be altered by means of agreements between workers and employers. Employers will always aim at reducing the gains made by workers in order to derive substantial profit for themselves.

Attorneys at Werkmans Attorneys have argued, and correctly so, that much as the Act was drawn up in line with the standards laid down by ILO and offers protection to employees, employees choose not to complain about infringements of their rights. They continue to say that it is one of the most complicated pieces of labour legislations we have. The Act makes “broad brushstroke statements” that often create more confusion than clarity. A resulting problem is that many people assume certain interpretations. It is commonly thought employees can “lose” annual leave if it is not taken in a specific time period, but no where in the Act is it stated that employees will forfeit annual leave that has not been taken (*Business Times*, October 17, 2004). The widespread increase of sub-contracting, part time work, labour brokers, temporary and casual labour means that a substantial number of workers do not enjoy fulltime employment, yet they would be defined as employed in the national statistics.

COSATU continues to agree that flexible labour is part of international trend of the fragmentations of the work force into a core grouping of well paid and secure labour force surrounded by a large layer of lowly paid and insecure workforce who do not enjoy the protection of labour law or trade unions (1996:36).

What is flexible labour? Heinz and Jardine define it as:

A situation in which the condition of employment associated with the job have eroded substantially due to the mechanism of modern capitalists economics. Underemployment does not just mean accepting part time work when full time work is desirable. It would also refer to all forms of casual, atypical and contingent labour moreover, if we include the failure to pay a living wage as an aspect of underemployment, the scope of discussing the diffraction of employment expand further (1998:24).

The increase in flexible labour does not only discourage people from going to work it also creates the working poor as many of them have been saying:

I earn R200 per week that is R800 per month. My rent is R400 per month with taxi fare at R237 per month I am only left with less than R200 for food. I have to work so hard and still not earn enough to live on I would rather go back to my people and live with them, waiting to die (Interview 2004).

These unorganised workers are vulnerable and suffer the effects of deregulation. Women workers are even more vulnerable often regarded as cheapest labour that is employed as last resort according to the demand of labour market (Ryman 1997:7).

In 1996, the ILO study revealed that the South African labour market was reasonably flexible. The Department of Labour has however continued to accede to criticism from employers that labour market is too rigid. In consequence, the department of labour introduced a bill in 2000 proposing far reaching changes to the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and the Labour Relations Act (ILRIG 2002:17).

Key amendments to the BECA included the removal of exemption for child labour and double pay for Sunday work. An amendment of the LRA was that disciplinary procedures cannot be applied to workers employed for less than six months. This

particular amendment eroded job security and allowed employers to hire and fire workers at six months intervals to escape the relevant provision of the LRA.

This research would argue for more protection of workers from employers whose main aim is to derive more and more profit at the expense of the workers. The Department of Labour cannot continue revising legislation in order to remove sections that were meant to protect workers.

2.2.1.5. Privatisation

The term privatisation means a number of things. The Oxford Dictionary defines it as sale of states assets to the private sector. Privatisation became a common theme for the governments during the 1980s when political leaders praised the efficiency of the markets over the waste of the public sector. As early as the 1940s, however, the United State President Woodrow Wilson commented “there has been very little serious effort even yet in the direction of making the government of the United States as efficient as a successful business organisation would be” (Goye 2001:10; Vorhies 1990:23). The rational for privatisation is that the introduction of profit incentives and competition will bring about a better quality service at a lower cost. This reasoning is based on the market theory that the market system maximises the efficient use of resources (Goye 2001:10).

Privatisation has been advocated by business people as a solution to all the world problems today, because it is argued that privatisation will raise revenue by collecting the proceeds from the sale of the state owned assets, by turning losing government firms into a profit-making private firms and then remove government subsidies and also generate revenue by taxing the privatised firm. (Vorhies 1990:23). Vorhies continues to say privatisation promotes economic growth and development. This will benefit the consumers because prices will be low and services to consumers will improve (1990:25).

McPherson summarises the development benefits of privatisation as follows:

Many countries have found that many state owned enterprises have failed to generate high rate of growth that is critical to development. Privatisation increases the quality of goods and services available in the market while keeping it responsive to consumer needs and demand. Through the market allocation of resources privatisation over the long term creates more jobs and opportunities for all. Privatisation leads to open competitive economies that produce high incomes and more permanent jobs. In short privatisation can be the right step at the right time to liberate the economies from the slow growth and stagnation that has plagued so many of them for so long (1997:18).

From the above, an argument could be made that South Africa might benefit from the liberating effects of privatisation. If one takes the argument forward, because the industry would become more efficient, South Africa will experience economic growth which in turn will lead to job creation. Numerous economists and economic commentators like Leach and Vorhies (1990), Barley (1981), Baumol and Blinder (1982), Thompson and Kay (1986), have reached consensus that privatisation will lead to economic growth which then translates to more jobs being made available.

Why then does this study consider privatisation a possible cause of unemployment when in South Africa today privatisation is being advocated as a universal panacea, an all-embracing solution to the multifaceted problem of the efficiency, fiscal, monetary, unemployment and growth crisis confronting our developing country?

The first argument would be that it is incorrect to simply define privatisation as the transfer of ownership and control from the public to the private sector. For workers, privatisation is identified with denationalisation. Peacock and Shaw (1971:56) defined it as the transfer of government owned industry to the private sector implying that the predominant share in ownership of assets on transfer lies with private shareholders. Bishop and Kay argued that:

In addition to the sale of publicly owned enterprises with which is normally associated with privatisation has included policies of deregulation, liberalisation and franchising (1989:632).

It is for that reason that many people have argued there is a lot that goes into the definition of terms. Quite clearly it is insufficient to simply say "transfer of state enterprise to private hands" because the kind of state interventions to be replaced must be specified as well as the non-state institutions to replace it.

Bishop and Kay correctly pointed out that the need to conceptually separate the concepts of privatisation (defined as an act of transfer) from other aspects of more market related activities should be obvious. One can have greater liberalisation in economic policy without privatising. Alternatively, privatisation could lead to new dictatorship in the unfettered interaction of market forces, this requiring the state to get involved in greater levels of regulations and control (Bishop and Kay 1989:645).

The second argument would be warned against a too idealised image of private sector efficiency which denies the possibility of efficiently run and profitable state enterprise. The overstatement of arguments in favour of efficiency and profits fails to recognise that many state enterprises were not formed to make profit but to fulfil a variety of socio-economic objectives.

The South African experience of privatisation has been that of job losses. Many state-owned companies have been privatised in South Africa and immediately thereafter thousands of jobs are lost. Terms like rationalization, right-sizing are used instead of retrenchments. As a result of privatisation, Telkom has retrenched 24, 700 people since 1997 (*Mail & Guardian*, November 12, 2004:3).

2.2.2. Population Explosion

Social commentators and economists have blamed population explosion as one of the causes of unemployment in South Africa. They argue that South Africa suffers from the third world phenomenon of population explosion. The result is that the annual number of people ready to join the labour force stands at about 334, 000 people of which only a fraction can be accommodated (ILRIG 2002:4). Beharrel, however, rejects the argument of population explosion as a cause of unemployment. He argues that apart from the fact that it is a popular argument, it gives us a nice scapegoat. We should be blaming our own poor economic performance instead of blaming promiscuity and the high birth rate of the third world. If this argument were true there would be no unemployment in the so-called developed world because birth rates are extremely low. He continues to say that blaming the third world for population explosion assumes that output is fixed, so then the people joining the labour force

would have nothing to do. However, the people joining the labour force are an addition to the economy's resources; the potential level of output that can be produced is therefore greater. For as long as this extra potential is actually produced there should be no unemployment resulting from the increased labour supply (Beharrel 1992:54).

This argument seems to carry more weight for me than just to blame to an extra number of people for unemployment. I do believe however that the high growth rate of the African population has contributed to African unemployment. While the Asian and white population growth rates have declined, the African population growth rate has increased, which means that the supply of African labour increased to 70% in 1995. Sadie (1989:3-6) makes projections that the supply of African labour will increase to 76% of the total in 2020. The large numbers of Africans that will enter the labour market during the next sixteen years will contribute considerably to African unemployment. When the generation that is presently younger than fourteen years reaches working age the African labour force will increase dramatically and worsen the already high unemployment in their ranks. There is a high percentage of Africans presently younger than fourteen years who will probably never have a formal job in their life time.

2.2.3. Wage Inflexibility

Wage flexibility means that wages should be responsive to the market and economic conditions of the country, the economic sector or in the individual enterprise. Wage adjustment is one of the primary mechanisms through which individuals and jobs are matched (OECD 1994:25). The wage-setting process is affected by labour market pressures, social perceptions, legislation and the industrial relations system. The levels of collective bargaining and the extent to which provision is made at such levels for flexibility arrangements will directly influence flexibility (OECD 1994:22).

The South African industrial relations system has been identified as one of the factors preventing wage rates falling to market clearing levels, at least in the highly unionised

larger corporate sectors (Schlemmer and Levitz 1998:58). Furthermore, the promotion of industry- level bargaining in South Africa contradicts the global trend of decentralisation in wage determination (Standing et. al., 1996; Baskin 1998; Hayter 1998 cited in Sellars 2000:500).

Minimum wages appear to be a major cause of unemployment among the groups they attempt to protect namely the young and the unskilled. Barker correctly argues that the minimum wages in South Africa set by the previous Wage Board were conservative and would have had little effect on labour market flexibility (1996:36). In the new BCEA minimum wages can be determined by bargaining councils or sectoral determinations, both institutions “act to narrow the wage distribution by protecting unskilled wages” (Natrass 1998:87).

Many employers who would have employed young people and paid them less than minimum wages cannot do that for fear of reprisals. In domestic sector for example, when government set the minimum wage payable to domestic workers at R800.00, many employers had to retrench because they could not afford to keep them at that wage. Many families who had employed people as nannies had to find alternative arrangements of looking after their babies while at work instead of them meeting the minimum wage requirement. Privately owned crèches were established and fewer women who had worked as domestic workers could be absorbed into this industry. Many jobs were subsequently lost.

In sectors where proper collective bargaining does not occur, the Employment Conditions Commission which has replaced the Wage Board may be requested by the Minister to investigate the industry and make recommendations in terms of wages and other conditions of employment. Although the making of sectoral determinations for a particular sector and area could introduce a degree of flexibility, they are more likely to bring about more demanding or additional provision than greater flexibility (Barker 1996:34). The new BLEA allows the Minister more discretion in relation to powers of the Employment Conditions Commission than was the case of the Wage Board. The Minister has the authority to change the commission’s recommendation whereas under the Wage Board he or she would only accept or reject the recommendations

(Barker 1999:34). The scope of sectoral determination is also much wider than wage determinations under the previous Act. This may introduce greater rigidity in the labour market and thereby reduce employment creation among lower-skilled and younger workers especially because South African wages are relatively high in international terms.

It is indeed true that the South African workers are highly organised. They negotiate for higher wages on a yearly basis and once these wages are set employers cannot pay anything less than the minimum wage agreed upon between employer organisations and workers' unions. Many investors would prefer to invest in countries where workers rights are not protected because they would make use of child labour and employ a cheap workforce thus making substantial savings and profit.

While some economists blame trade unions as a source of inflexibility because they simply fight for higher wages rather than reduce their flexibility, others, including the researcher, argue inflexibility comes from institutional sources. A job is usually a long-term commitment for both the employer and the employee and so wages tend to be determined over the longer term and do not easily adjust to short-term influences. There are also costs associated with bargaining and increasingly wage increase deals are negotiated over a long time. This renders wages more inflexible.

The researcher would argue that while minimum wages are important for a country like South Africa which for a long time thrived on cheap black labour, these must be set in line with the prevailing market and economic conditions. Wage flexibility can be implemented in South Africa because there are strong labour organisations. These can be used to campaign for improvement of wages as market and economic conditions change. This leads us to the trade unions.

2.2.4. Trade Unions

The role of trade unions is to protect its members' interests. One of their members' interests is their income. This creates a dilemma for the unions. They know that to

force real wages too high risks losing members' jobs. They are usually forced to make judgments between protecting their members' jobs and their level of wages. Many unions have tried to do both with spectacular failure.

Have the unions caused unemployment? The main consideration is the extent to which the unions act as a distortion to market mechanisms. We have already noted that if unions want higher wages, they need to limit the supply of labour in the market and that will unavoidably cause unemployment. Employment is usually affected as employers try to find relatively cheaper capital for the more expensive labour and its inherent problems.

The researcher believes the trade unions are needed to protect worker interest against employers whose aim is to generate more and more profit from exploiting the workers. It is not true that if wages were low in South Africa, employers would employ more people. They would still employ fewer workers and make them work twice as much.

2.3. Summary

We have examined the possible causes of unemployment in South Africa. We have observed that many economists argue that unemployment comes as a result of combination of factors like low economic growth, disinvestments, privatisation, the role of trade unions and so on. The researcher believes that if the government would put in place an economic framework in favour of the poor, unemployment could be contained to acceptable levels. The government must spend considerably more on public works and infrastructural development, especially in impoverished rural and urban areas. These projects should be as labour intensive as possible so as allow for many people to be absorbed. An agenda for socio-economic transformation must include a policy for redistribution of income, property and opportunities from the rich middle and upper classes to the impoverished working classes. GEAR strategy requires revision because seven years after the introduction of GEAR it is evident that it has failed to deliver the promised targets. Poverty has increased since 1994. The report by Statistics South Africa shows that the majority of South Africans are living

in poverty (Stats SA Report on Measuring Poverty, 2000). While the statistics are based on data extrapolated from the 1995 October Household Survey and the 1996 Population Census, it is indisputable that poverty has worsened since then. The loss of nearly 100, 000 formal sector jobs and over 500, 000 jobs in agriculture since 1994 has no doubt contributed to an increase in poverty. These are largely a result of the decisions taken by those in political leadership. There could be numerous other reasons why there is growing unemployment but this thesis dealt with those that are considered peculiar to the South African context.

CHAPTER 3

DATA ANALYSIS

3. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the data collected from the 1800 questionnaires that were filled in by unemployed people in the city of Pietermaritzburg.

This survey did not aspire to be a national representative study of the impact of unemployment on the youth in South Africa, but rather to represent an in-depth insight in the unemployment situation in Pietermaritzburg.

The findings may be extrapolated to communities with similar demographic profiles, and it is likely that this research presents a representative picture of life in such communities. It is however impossible to estimate to which degree these findings can be extrapolated beyond the survey respondents, since no explicit sampling method was followed. As indicated in Chapter 1, 1800 questionnaires were administered to unemployed youth in Pietermaritzburg. The researcher is a Chaplain to unemployed youth who are members of an organisation called the Young Christian Workers (YCW). This organisation deals with a number of campaigns like the Basic Income Grant, the Worker Sunday Campaign, Campaigns against unemployment, and many others. This research is an Ujamaa initiative. The Ujamaa Centre is a research unit of the School of Religion and Theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

This research was conducted primarily because the researcher wanted to allow the unemployed to add their own voices on issues of unemployment. The researcher

had discovered that most of the things said by government, Community Based Organisations (CBOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and Business about the impact of unemployment is not based on the voices of the unemployed themselves. It is mainly expressed on their behalf and in many instances based on assumptions. The Young Christian Workers and its networks became a vehicle through which the survey was carried out.

A structured interview containing closed and open ended questions was administered by both the researcher and the trained interviewers. A team of interviewers was properly trained for the task and evaluation of their competence was done through role-plays. The interviews were conducted in Zulu and English and the responses were recorded verbatim in the field. The records were content-analysed and quantified where appropriate. The coded data records were processed on an SPSS programme.

3.1. Data

3.1.1. Demographics

3.1.1.1. Areas

| Province | City | Rural Areas | Formal Settlement | Informal Settlement | Township | Suburb | Total |
|---------------|------|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------|--------|-------|
| KwaZulu-Natal | 8% | 3% | 1% | 13% | 67% | 8% | 100% |

Table 3.1. Distribution by Area in Pietermaritzburg

In Table 3.1 above, the research aimed at determining the areas in which the majority of unemployed people lived. The majority of the unemployed lived in the townships around Pietermaritzburg with only 8% living in the city and 8% in the suburbs

3.1.1.2. Residence

| | |
|-------|------|
| Urban | 97% |
| Rural | 3% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 3.2. Distribution by Residence

Table 3.1. above shows the distribution by area. Only 3% live in the rural areas and 97% live in the urban areas. City, formal settlement, informal settlement, township and suburb form part of the urban residential area. Pietermaritzburg is largely an urban area and so the sample is fairly representative of the city area; in addition this focus meant that interviewers had easy access to people from the urban areas. Many people from townships arrive in Pietermaritzburg every morning because this is where they do their business transactions and work.

3.1.1.3. Race

| | |
|-----------|------|
| Africans | 90% |
| Coloureds | 5% |
| Indians | 5% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 3.3. Distribution by Race

Table 3.3. above shows that 90% of the respondents were Africans simply because it was easier to approach them and request for an interview than other races. It was simply not easy to speak to unemployed whites because those approached were either employed or simply did not want to be interviewed.

3.1.1.4. Age

| | |
|-------------------|------|
| Ages 16-20 | 13% |
| Ages 21-25 | 60% |
| Ages 26-30 | 20% |
| Ages 31 and above | 7% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 3.4. Distribution by Age

Table 3.4. above shows that the vast majority of respondents were between the ages of 16 and 35. This is an age cohort defined as Youth in the National Youth Act of 1996. The bulk of the unemployed were a 21-25 age groups.

3.1.1.5. Gender

| | |
|--------|------|
| Female | 50% |
| Male | 50% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 3.5. Distribution by Gender

Table 3.5. above reveals that 50% of the respondents were female and 50% male. This was deliberate in order to achieve equal representation of gender.

3.1.1.6. Home Language(s)

| | |
|---------|------|
| Zulu | 90% |
| English | 10% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 3.6. Distribution by Language

Table 3.6. above shows the languages spoken by respondents. 90% of the respondents were Zulu speakers, while only 10% were English speakers, most of who were Coloured and Indian respondents.

3.1.1.7. Education Status

| | |
|------------------------------|------|
| No Formal Schooling | 13% |
| Primary Education | 6% |
| Secondary Education | 11% |
| Matriculation | 48% |
| Post-matriculation Education | 22% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 3.7. Distribution by Level of Education

Table 3.7. above shows the level of education of the survey respondents. The majority of the participants were relatively well-educated, with three quarters having at least some level of education. 48% had matriculation or a post matriculation qualification as their highest level of educational achievement. Because of the high urban bias of the study, educational levels are probably higher than average. Younger people were significantly more educated than the older ones. This is an indication that younger people have had greater access to education.

3.1.1.8. Post-matriculation Qualification

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Technikon /College | 33% |
| Technical Training | 37% |
| University | 10% |
| On-the-Job Training | 20% |

Table 3.8 Post-matriculation qualification

Table 3.8 above reveals those survey respondents who that had post-matriculation qualifications, and had attended a Technikon, College or University. Unfortunately, many of those that had matriculation had either been prevented from furthering their education because of lack of resources, and these (12%) who had enrolled at a university could not complete because of lack of funds and their studies had to be terminated without obtaining a formal qualification. They do however owe the respective tertiary institutions in fees and these balances are accruing interest.

The majority of respondents recognized the importance of furthering their education, but also pointed out obstacles they had to face.

During the days of the department of education and training, there were many night schools, which could help us further our, now the new department of education complains of budget restrictions. There are no night schools at all where we live.

Some, however, do not appreciate receiving education, arguing that it is useless to their needs.

I don't think it helps having a degree because there are many unemployed people with degrees. There are four teachers who are my neighbours who have been unemployed for more than four years.

From the data available, it is clear that a modest number of young people interviewed had attained post matriculation qualification. 80% of these had

received formal training at institutions of higher learning, namely Technikons and universities. 11% had received on the job training in their previous employment.

3.1.1.9. Present Study

| | |
|-------|------|
| Yes | 12% |
| No | 88% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 3.9. Presently Studying

Table 3.9. above shows the percentages of those presently engaged in further study. It is a very small number, only 12% against 88% that is unable to further their education. Many respondents believed if they were given the opportunity they would further their studies. They have been unemployed long enough to accept that unless their educational qualifications improved, they would never get a job.

3.1.1.10. Employment Status

| | |
|---------------|------|
| Unemployed | 99% |
| Self-Employed | 1% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 3.10. Employment Status

Table 3.10 above shows the employment status of the respondents. The survey was aimed at the unemployed. The research wanted to discover the impact of unemployment on the youth. Targeting unemployed youth was a deliberate effort. The self-employed respondents were discovered during the process of interviews. The nature of their employment and income made the researcher to include them in the survey. Many earned less than R50.00 a day because they sold commodities like sweets, cigarettes and other odd items on the streets of Pietermaritzburg. They

then perceive themselves as unemployed because they were doing this on an ad hoc basis. It did not bring any income to them to live on.

3.1.1.11. How Did The Previous Employment End?

| | |
|--------------|------|
| Retrenchment | 49% |
| Resignation | 4% |
| Dismissal | 14% |
| Studies | 0% |
| Other | 33% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 3.11. End of Employment

Table 3.11 above shows when respondents were asked how their previous employment had ended, 49% were retrenched due to closure of firms, (especially in the Pietermaritzburg textile and leather industries). 14% was dismissed for various offences ranging from failure to be punctual to that of theft. There were those respondents who were dismissed and did not know what offences had been committed. This was largely because many of them were not familiar with their contracts which they had signed on appointment. They may have contravened a certain clause but were not even aware. For many dismissals, no procedure was followed. Many people were familiar with the words: "Don't come back tomorrow" and that meant they were fired. The other 33% represents those who have never worked. It was shocking to discover that such a huge number of young people who were available for work and were energetic had never worked. Many were discouraged and felt possibilities of finding work in this life were zero.

3.1.1.12. Length of Unemployment

| | |
|--------------------|------|
| Less Than One Year | 0% |
| 1-2 Years | 3% |
| 2-3 Years | 12% |
| 3-4 Years | 10% |
| 4-5 Years | 20% |
| More Than 5 Years | 55% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 3.12. Length of Unemployment

Table 3.12 above shows that while a small number of respondents has been unemployed for less than a year and therefore fall under the short-term unemployed, more than half had been unemployed for more than five years. This number of long-term unemployed is of particular concern because of the gradual loss of skill level and the loss of hope these people gradually experience.

I have lost hope that I will ever going to get a job again. I was retrenched from a supermarket 6 years ago and have never had a job ever since. I have searched for a job in newspapers particularly everyday without success. This is no life. I cannot even secure a job as a casual in departmental stores. They have their regulars.

3.1.1.13. Any Income?

| | |
|-------|------|
| Yes | 16% |
| No | 84% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 3.13. Access to Income

Table 3.13 above shows how many unemployed people have access to income. Only 16% had access through government grants, 1% disability grant and 15% received child support grants.

3.1.1.14. Sources of Help (Financial Assistance)

| | |
|--------------------------|------|
| Family Members | 70% |
| Government Social Grants | 4% |
| Pension Fund | 0% |
| Odd Jobs | 8% |
| Support From Friends | 16% |
| Support From Charity | 1% |
| Support From Church | 1% |
| Other | 0% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 3.14. Access to Financial Assistance

Table 3.14 above shows that the majority of the unemployed came from families where the main breadwinner was dependent on a grant from the government, mainly on old age pension.

Unemployed women also benefit from the child support grant of R120.00 from the government in support of their children younger than the age of seven (7). 8% of the unemployed depended on jobs that occur on a very occasional basis, like helping someone for a day. This is worse than casual employment.

The majority of the unemployed could not afford food and other basic necessities without support from family and friends. Friends include boyfriends, which has its own implications in the lives of young women. These will be discussed later.

One young person was quoted as saying:

I depend on my boyfriend for support. I would not manage without him because I come from a family of eight and we are all unemployed and depend on our grandmother for support. This is too much, she cannot afford to support all of us. We have to fend for ourselves. In a situation like this we can only get support from boyfriends.

When asked if she loved the man who supported her, she stated:

Of course I do love him. Sometimes he is abusive towards me but what can I do. I have to be patient until things get better. Sometimes I am not sure if I still love him other than that he supports me financially. But maybe I love him.

When asked how their previous employment ended, most unemployed people stated they had been retrenched. The majority of unemployed have never had a job at all.

3.2. The Wider Effects of Unemployment

Unemployed people are affected by unemployment at various levels. Firstly, at a more personal level as members of the family, and secondly, in relationships with others, especially personal relationships and also at community level.

When asked how unemployment has affected them in their families, about 18% of young people responded that they receive support from families. Many responded that they face hostility in their families. They are not regarded as human beings. In fact even children do not regard them as adults.

My parents fight with me all the time especially over food. Every time I open the fridge, I am told never to eat the children's food for lunchboxes the next day. I have stopped opening the fridge at home, even when I want cold water.

One young man reported:

My parents do not treat me like I am a member of the family. Sometimes I see two goats at home on Thursday. When I ask what these goats are for, I am told there will be a party on Saturday. I am the last person to be told even the neighbours have been invited and they know. Am I a person anymore? No I don't think so. I tell you that it is painful. Sometimes when the children are fighting at home and you remain with them they never report to you because to them you are just like them. you are not an adult because you stay with them all the time.

Another young woman reported:

I get accused of being lazy, underachiever and get compared to other people of your age who are successful and made to feel real loser.

When asked how unemployment has affected them in the community, many responded that communities simply do not trust unemployed people. As crime is on the increase, each time something is stolen unemployed people become the main suspect for theft.

The members of the community always look at us with great suspicion. They only trust me when the geyser or stove breaks down, then they remember you are a qualified electrician. Otherwise when they see you dirty clothes, they see you as *tsotsi*. They do not respect you at all.

In response to the question on relationships with girls, young man pointed out that they do not gain acceptance from women because of their social position as unemployed. The unemployed man receives recognition from women as a result of what job he does in the society.

I hate the question, "what do you do for a living" because every time I approach a woman it begins to echo in my ears even before she asks it. Women always want to know what I do for a living. To always have to answer "nothing" is as if to say I am not a human being. The kind of work you do makes you the person people take seriously, especially women who are unemployed. one woman said to me "what will I do with an unemployed man." It was like a hammer on my head. I felt useless.

These words above capture the sentiments expressed by many unemployed men in their relationships with women. Some feel extremely humiliated from the fact that they have to receive support from their girlfriends. They believe their manhood was being compromised, especially because the traditional view of manhood was the ability to provide for your partner and dependants. Those unable to fulfil this important function feel extremely emasculated.

Unemployed women had a different view. Much as they do not feel adequate for being unemployed, their relationships to men were not worse than men's relationships to women. This is because men are expected to provide for their

women, unemployed or not. These young unemployed women do not normally get intimidated for being unemployed. They do however make a deliberate choice to fall in love or date someone employed. Because of their situation they never date somebody unemployed. Many stated this dependence on their lover, partners creates a feeling of powerlessness in a relationship. Men sometimes become abusive towards their partners, especially when they knew these women were trapped in the relationship.

A man will never respect you he knows you depend on him even for basic stuff like underwear, perfumes and stuff like that. He treats you like a dog. Sometimes he plans things like you do not exist. Professionals get more respect from their partners than us. You feel pretty useless. What can you do? I guess nothing.

3.3. Causes of Unemployment

Young people gave so many different responses that it would be impossible to present the data in a tabular form. While some were clear and knew exactly how they thought about these issues, and were able to articulate how they felt, others were not sure and gave various reasons in an incoherent way. In response to the question on the causes of unemployment, the majority of young people blamed the poor economy as the main cause. They believe there were bad economic decisions made by the government as being responsible for unemployment. The majority blamed the present government for their unemployment. They believe the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy is responsible.

Some people blamed sanctions and disinvestments that had been applied against South Africa during the apartheid years as major causes of unemployment. They also blamed the apartheid legislation of discrimination against black workers. They believe that though this legislation may have been removed, this was not in the minds of the employers. Many in this category also blamed globalisation as the major cause.

Population growth was also blamed as the cause. A substantial number believes there were too few jobs available compared to the population. They also blamed

foreigners who have taken their jobs in South Africa. A very strong feeling of xenophobia was discernible during the interviews.

The majority also blamed each of skills, education and experience as being the secondary cause. They also believe they have acquired a “useless” education which does not help them get employment. Those who do have post matriculation qualifications believe they chose the wrong courses at tertiary institutions. One person who had done electrical engineering remarked that since there is no major public works, like building huge structures, there were no opportunities for people in his trade to get jobs. Many people also stated that there were generally no jobs available.

Many young people were also aware of the existence of heavy machines in mining, agriculture and manufacturing industries that perform far more efficiently and cheaply, so they blamed unemployment on technology. They argue that when one machine performs the work of 20-30 people, they are rendered redundant. They believe computers and other machinery take away their jobs. Young people understood that one tractor does the work for 100 men. They believe that computer technology is also responsible.

It was clear from the data that many young people had some understanding of what caused unemployment but no real clarity.

3.4. What will happen if the Situation is left to continue?

When asked what will happen if the situation is left to continue for twenty years, the majority of the respondents, 93%, stated they would be dead in twenty years. They could only guess things would be extremely bad by then. The majority of these thought they would have committed suicide.

A few thought they would have qualified for old age pension. One person aptly put it as follows:

In twenty years I will be 54 years and that would mean 6 years before "retirement." But because I have never worked, that would be 6 years before old age pension. If I have lived that long, I will hold on until I receive my old age grant. For the first time in my life I shall be paid something.

Another stated that:

The way things are I shall be close to sixty. If I am lucky to live that long I shall get a pension. My only worry is maybe the government of the day would have done away with the old age pension claiming there is no money. I cannot trust any government any more. These people we elect can do as they like. In fact, I do not want to believe in twenty years if the situation does not change. What for? To live like this for another twenty years. Things have been hard enough in the last five years as an unemployed person, give me twenty years I shall kill myself.

It becomes clear that the majority of the respondent could not think beyond a very limited time span. They could not imagine the world in twenty years. Their situation caused them to think only of death as a possibility. The majority had tendencies to be suicidal, and see suicide as the only solution.

There was a small number that expressed optimism in the future economic situation. This small group believed there would be enough jobs for every one searching for a job. They also argued that things would be turned around and globalisation which causes unemployment will be defeated.

3.5. Solution

When asked what they thought would be the solution, the respondents believe that the government should intervene in the situation of unemployed. The majority blamed the business people for being committed to profit to the detriment of millions of people. Many believe that if businesses would share the profit they have accumulated, they would be willing to employ more people and stop casualisation, outsourcing and all the practices they have embarked on in order to increase profit

Many argued that the government should also increase business tax and use that money to build more parastatals that would be committed to employ more people. It was clear that the unemployed people saw the government as being responsible for the creation of jobs.

In responding to the question about causes and solutions, many unemployed people demonstrated dislike if not hatred of business people, many of whom referred to them as “Capitalist.” Some of the words used to describe business people could not be translated but would be used to describe “Capitalist” with negative connotations. Zulu words such as, *ongxiwankulu* and *amadlagusha* are negative words expressing anger against someone who wants everything for himself/herself.

3.5.1. Basic Income Grant (BIG)

| | |
|-------|------|
| Yes | 77% |
| No | 23% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 3.15. Basic Income Grant

Table 3.15. above shows that when the survey respondents were asked if they heard about the Basic Income Grant (BIG), 23% of the respondents have never heard about the campaign for the Basic Income Grant. They did not know what that was. 77% of the respondents had been informed. The bulk of the respondents who knew about the Basic Income Grant were people in the city and in townships. The reason for this was campaigns for the Basic Income Grant were stronger in the urban areas than in the rural area. Protest marches are organised in the cities and townships because this is where authorities are based and information about the Basic Income Grant is spread. Training workshops for young people also deal with issues around the grant.

3.6. Will an Unemployment Grant Help You?

| | |
|-------|------|
| Yes | 100% |
| No | 0% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 3.16. Will the Basic Income Grant help?

Table 3.16. above shows that the majority of respondents (including those who did not know about the Basic Income Grant) stated that the unemployment income grant would help them a great deal if it were to be implemented. They began imagining things like starting a small business. Many agreed that R100 was too little, but it would be better than nothing.

I can even afford to make copies of my CVs and send them to different companies. Do you know that making copies is expensive, 50c sometimes R1.00. A form of salary per month would be very useful for me.

Another stated that:

There are six of us at home and all of us are unemployed. Only our mother works as a domestic worker in town, earning R400.00. It is just difficult to pull through. If we were to get R100.00 each, I tell you, we would combine that and buy groceries, just to help my mother. For now we run out of food very early in the month. Unemployed people eat a lot. This money would help us.

3.7. Is it the Will of God that you are Unemployed?

| | |
|-------|------|
| Yes | 21% |
| No | 79% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 3.17 Is it God's Will?

Table 3.17. above shows that when asked if it was God's will that they were unemployed, the majority of respondents declared it was not. 79% understood that

their unemployed situation was related and linked to the economic decision made in South Africa and elsewhere in the world. Many respondents believed that God was on their side and expects them to struggle and act against the decisions that have been taken to cause them so much suffering.

The 21% that said yes, God was responsible for their situation, finally believed that God was punishing them for some wrongs they had done in the past. Some even believed they had probably inherited the curse from their past generation, the so-called generation curse. Generational curse is believed by many to be punishment meted out by God to many generations in a family if the ancestors had committed offences against God. Not only is that generation punished but also the next generations up to the third generation. These respondents extended their theory even to other problems like diseases, violence, poverty and so on. They believe God is in charge of our daily situations; everything that happens to their lives is as a result of God's will and intentions.

3.8. The View of God by the Unemployed

The majority of the respondents view God as an important part of their lives. Many of them understood that they were created in God's image. They understood they have to take part in God's creation plan. They view God as a kind, loving, caring father who protects them in spite of their situation. They even declared that if it were not for God, they would be long dead.

The minority of the respondents about 16% did not think God had anything to do with their lives. They claimed they were not particularly religious people.

Many young people shared the belief that they were like the people of Israel in Egypt. This kind of enslavement will one day disappear and a New Jerusalem and a new earth will be realised. Many expressed a negative view of Church, saying that they thought Churches made their finding of God too complicated. It was as if

barriers were created to make the idea of God only attainable to those with high intelligence quotients.

3.9. The View of Christ / Holy Spirit by the Unemployed

For many unemployed people, Christ is the same thing as God and so is the Holy Spirit. They did not think these were different. Those that viewed God as being on their side, viewed Christ and the Holy Spirit as being on their side. The majority viewed Christ as being on the side of the poor and those on the margin of the society. They were looking forward to Christ's return and the establishment of a new society, a society where all people would be equal, loving, sharing and experiencing everlasting peace.

For many young people the whole question of the trinity was complicated and because many of them did not go to Church every Sunday, they had not received the kind of instruction that could help them differentiate these phenomena. This is understandable because some attended Churches where instruction on these matters was not of primary concern for the Church leadership.

3.10. Do You Feel Part of The Church?

In response to this question, the respondents were split into two halves. 50% stated they felt very much part of the Church and that their Churches accepted them as they are. One respondent stated:

In my church, the Pastor does not always expect the unemployed to pay or contribute money. The Pastor always encourages us to do something for the church using the gifts from God. So if we can't give to God in cash, we give to him in kind. I love my Church. I go to clean the yard with other unemployed people, at least once a month. We take care of the buildings and we get recognized for that.

The 50% that felt part of Church as unemployed people stated that they have even received financial support from their Churches. This financial support was of course for emergencies and the Church could not just sit and watch.

When my grandfather died, the only breadwinner in our family of eight people, we did not know how to bury him because we had no money. The Pastor and the mother's union collected money and gave it to our family for our grandfather's funeral. We even had food to last us for a month. I will never forget that experience. I learnt to help those who are less fortunate than I am.

Equally true is the fact that 50% of the respondent did not speak very well of the Church as an institution. They felt rejected by the rich in their Churches and generally saw the Church as an institution that is not welcoming of the unemployed. They believe leadership positions and recognition are given to the employed and the unemployed must just keep quiet and listen to the rich. One respondent clearly remembered an incident in her Church when a Pastor refused to conduct a funeral service of her grandmother because in spite of being a loyal church member all her life because she owed a three months ticket contribution. Not only did the Pastor refuse to conduct the funeral service but the grandmother was not even allowed in Church.

We had to hire a marquee for my grandmother's funeral just for three months ticket areas. Can you compare that? We spent close to a thousand rand hiring a tent, instead of a Pastor accepting what my grandmother owed in ticket contribution, R90.00 to be precise.

One respondent was not happy with her Church's stand on socio-economic issues like unemployment, AIDS, poverty and so on.

It is always a curse, a curse and curse. We are always told God is punishing us for something. The Pastor always shouts at us. Repent and you will get the job. Repent and you will be cured of AIDS. Repent, repent, and repent.

There are too many negative practices that were mentioned to record here. Generally the Church is perceived as an uncaring and unwelcoming, as the only institution that leaves its wounded in the battlefield.

Some respondents mentioned the moment of Sunday collection as one moment of humiliation. People go in front to pay their dues row by row. If you don't have money to contribute you sit down and people on the other side of you go in front and contribute. Everyone looks at those who do not contribute as failures, outcasts.

You feel tempted to cheat in church to go and pretend you have put something inside the bucket. Just to be welcomed and receive Pastor's blessings, which are exclusive to those who paid something. It is like pay and you will be paid for. Church is just about money and nothing else. You go in empty and come out even emptier.

These and many others are the sentiments expressed by the young people about Church and their relationship to it.

When asked how Churches should respond to unemployment, many unemployed people felt the Church would do well by using its muscles to engage the government on economic policy issues. They felt the Church should be better organized because she had so much potential to bring about change. The Church must lobby the business sector to grant credit to the poor so as to enable them to start businesses. Some respondents even felt that the Church itself has the money to help kick-start the small business, which would in turn help the unemployed. The Church was being accused of keeping all its money in the bank and investing it unwisely.

3.11. Aspirations for the Future

When asked about aspirations for the future, many young people still wanted to be something. Those with formal qualifications wanted to get a job and start climbing the ladder of success. Despite the fact that unemployed people understood that the government was cutting on spending in education, health, safety and security, which meant less and less people would be employed in public sector, they still wanted to become teachers, nurses, and policewoman and so on.

They still wanted to get married and start their own families. The older people though, especially those in their thirties, are beginning to lose hope of ever starting a family, saying it was getting late for them to settle down as they were not even involved in meaningful relationships. They have to get jobs now or they will lose all the possibilities of family or any stability in their lives.

3.12. Summary

It was interesting to note that unemployed respondents blamed their situation more on the current economic climate than lack of skills or experience. More than half of the respondents had been unemployed for more than five years, and this means that young unemployed people suffer from long-term unemployment. Less than a third had had a job in the last five years and the majority of those who had been employed have mainly been on temporal, casual basis. The majority of the unemployed had no income at all and depended on families for financial support. Generally, unemployed people do not feel part of their Churches. Instead of receiving support from their Churches, they receive complete rejection.

CHAPTER 4

THEMES EMERGING FROM THE DATA

4. Introduction

Unemployment raises hosts of problems of various kinds. These problems are inherent in the basic condition of being unemployed. This is so because human beings, by the very nature of being created in the image of God, need a sense of purpose and structure to their lives. The majority of the people derive this purpose and structure substantially from their work.

To be unemployed for many people is deeply disturbing, distressing and debilitating. This chapter seeks to examine themes that emerge from the data that has been analysed in chapter three and to determine the extent to which unemployed young people are impacted by their condition. It is important for the purpose of this study to examine the extent to which the individual views him or herself as an unemployed person. In fact, for this study the economic perspectives of unemployment are less important than the impact of unemployment on the individuals. It is even less important how the others view them than how they view themselves. One of the people interviewed stated: "I have began to think that others think that I am lazy"; this view that others might judge them or the concern with the way others see them is also reflected in the secrecy some unemployed people adopt in order to deal with how others view them, as one person said:

In fact, I do not always tell my neighbours that I am unemployed. I wake up in the morning like all the rest of them to go and search for work. If I am tired or do not have money, I pretend I am on leave. Luckily my mother gives me money to buy clothes, I look like I am working.

Hayes has correctly observed that the notion of “managing” how others view us is a central feature of a symbolic interaction perspective in which a person’s self or self-image, “a set of attitudes, beliefs and opinions held by a person about him or herself”, is actually embedded in a set of social relationships that give it stability and continuity (1981:84). Hayes continues to say a symbolic interactionist view itself contains the notion that not only do individuals have an image of themselves, but that this image is evaluated in terms of social categories, definitions and positions (1981:84). Jahode articulates this even better when she says:

Employment provides some definitions of one’s position in society, status and identity. Of course people may resent the particular job and try to change it. But this is different from having no defined position. The unemployed suffer not only from the absence of status but even more from an undermining of their sense of personal identity (1973:313).

It is clear from the above that being unemployed is not just a loss of status, it is also the absence of a status through which they become aware of themselves coupled with the imposed status of being dependent. The unemployed youth is impacted in various ways and these ways emerged during the interviews. The essence of the impact of unemployment on the youth will be defined in terms of two basic questions.

- i. How does unemployment affect the way in which the unemployed individual sees himself or herself;
- ii. How does his or her unemployment affect the way he thinks others perceive him or her?

Dividing these questions has been done for analytical purposes; in real life it seems that the answers to the question are closely connected.

Many people, in their attempts to understand what the purpose of understanding the impact of unemployment on the youth is, asked: “what is the point of examining the impact of unemployment on the youth?” This study believes that

there is an academic case for the study of the impact of unemployment. It is believed that this research will contribute substantially in understanding what impact unemployment has on the youth in this country. Given the undisputed hardship of many people, especially young people, research on the impact of the unemployment on them is meant to be of help to the unemployed. The desire to help is understandable because it is the belief of this study that the Churches have a lot they can do to help the unemployed. Research on the impact of unemployment is therefore of use to the unemployed because the findings of research will be used in workshops of unemployed youth. The unemployed will gain insight and this might help them understand they are not alone. This could prevent various negative decisions that young people take.

This has been seen in the groups of HIV+ people, who were diagnosed and left to fend for themselves. The Solidarity Project for the People Living with HIV/ AIDS within the Ujamaa Centre intervened in such a situation, formed these people into support groups and the results speak for themselves (Ujamaa Centre Report, June 2003). The people face life differently after joining the support group than when they had just heard they were positive.

4.1. The Self Perception of the Unemployed Individual

The themes that emerge here shall be limited strictly to the manner in which the unemployed people see themselves in general. It would be difficult to deal with individual cases of self-observation given the limits of space and time.

4.1.1. Self-Esteem

It is often argued in the literature that the unemployed suffer a loss of confidence in themselves and their ability to cope. In extreme cases, loss of self-esteem can lead to withdrawal from society and prevent re-integration into the world of work and the wider community (Moller 2002:57).

The unemployed, in the case of this study, were not asked about their self-esteem. But from the data available after the interviews and their stories, it is clear that the majority, approximately ninety seven per cent, suffer from very low self-esteem. Their level of self-esteem is so low that some do not want to undergo job interviews anymore because they know they will fail. As they fail the job interviews, they blame themselves for it. One unemployed person state:

Every time I have to go for an interview, I always wish someone could do it for me.

So Moller is correct in her observation that unemployed people suffer a loss of confidence. If a person is not confident even to go to the interview, it will be impossible to reintegrate such a person in the world of work.

Moller continues to say, and correctly so, that the loss of self-esteem among the unemployed is a reflection of society as well as the individual. The individual's definition of his or her role in community and society is all-important if unemployed people feel stigmatised (as it has been pointed out above) by negative stereotypes; their feelings of self-worth are at risk. They feel rejected and outcast for as long as they are out of work. They may then adapt by assuming the characteristics expected of them. By doing so, they reduce their chances of moving out the ranks of the unemployed.

Many unemployed people who have lost confidence in themselves, who do not take pride in their achievements, who feel no better about who they are, who think others are disrespectful towards them, will find it extremely difficult to move out of unemployment.

The Church has a role to play here in rebuilding self-esteem for the unemployed and ensuring they are reintegrated into the world of work. This will be dealt with in Chapter 6.

4.1.2. Suicide

As a result of low self-esteem, many young people are increasingly feeling suicidal. There is no data to substantiate this except that many respondents in focus group discussion assumed it could be the cause. The drastic increase in the number of suicides by young people who are unemployed and who do not leave a suicide note could corroborate this. There are too many cases where young unemployed mothers either throw their babes away or kill their babies and kill themselves because they cannot afford to support themselves and their children. *The Sunday Sun*, October 3, 10, 10, 17 and 31, 2004 carried stories of young mothers who had killed their children and themselves or attempted to kill themselves. *The Sowetan*, October 19, 2004 carried an article of an unemployed mother of three babies, who strangled her babies and threw them into a dam and then killed herself. She left a suicide note: "me Christine and my three kids Rector, Dedan and Evans can be found in the dam."

The only information the reporters could gather was that the woman was unemployed and that she was continually blamed by her parents for her situation of unemployment and failing to look after her children.

Suicide may not necessarily be the consequence of unemployment. It could be argued that it is the consequence of poverty. Jahoda does indicate, however, that the consequences of unemployment are intricately interwoven with the consequences of poverty (1982:22).

4.1.3 Holidays

Those who have had jobs before are shocked when they hear they will lose a job. They always believe they will find another one and almost jokingly refer to their situation as being on "holidays." Most of them did not find a job again after the so called "holiday", and as the funds they had had dried up and when their social life

was reduced drastically, the idea of holidays is soon abandoned. One of the respondents echoes what many said very well.

When I lost my job, I thought well, I will always find another one, any I was not choosy. I told myself I deserve a break and a little holiday would be good. I have always thought of the guys without a job as lazy but then it happens to me. You know I didn't think it was serious. I kept on telling people I was on leave, you know. This leave lasted forever.

4.1.4. Rejection

Gradually, these people begin to think of themselves as "killing time" because there is not much to do. Many of them write application letters to various companies buy the newspapers every day and wait for responses from companies. Many people expressed statements like these:

I have written hundreds of letters and the replies have always been regret, regret, regret, we are sorry there is no vacancy for you.

4.1.5. Frustration

They then become bored and frustrated because they believe they have become problems for their families.

I think no body likes me anymore. I have not been allowed access to food without permission; it is like I have gone back to becoming a child again. Even children in my home are treated with more respect than me.

4.1.6. Alienation

Many of them feel they are different from other people, confined to a small space and deprived of social life. They become increasingly irritable. Many of them have resorted to television and even watch repeat programmes twice.

I watch "The Bold and the Beautiful" everyday and I get very angry if someone expects me to run an errand for free. At night and watch the same thing, again in the morning. This is the cheap thing because nobody complains about it.

Apart from how the unemployed see themselves emotionally, they also assume different observations of themselves physically. Many believe unemployment causes them to lose weight because of being frustrated and having to think about their situation everyday. As they lose their weight they cannot wear the clothes they used to, but also cannot afford to buy new ones. They have to tailor make their clothes to the right size. This affects their perceptions about their appearance. They are shy to socialise because they think they do not belong and then withdraw from social activities that would require them to dress smartly.

From the interviews, it was clear that the change in weight could be ascribed to two major factors. First, it would be drastic reduction in the quantity and quality of food taken by the unemployed, and secondly, it would be the loss of appetite because of the emotional and psychological stress. In this weight conscious society, there are serious consequences to the unemployed for being increasingly aware of his or her weight related problems.

The unemployed person is not simply aware of being different from others; she or he becomes different by being aware of her or himself.

4.1.7. Luck

Another self-perception of the unemployed is how much unemployed people believe in luck. They ascribe their state of being unemployed to lack of luck or to the existence of bad luck, as they prefer to call it. Many believe they will be lucky some day and find a job. There is also a theological dimension to this. In our analysis of the data it appeared that unemployed people believed that apart from being unlucky, they also were being punished by God for their sins and that is why they were unemployed.

In the minds of unemployed youth, employment is more like the lotto where you scratch numbers and win. Some take the issue of luck so seriously that they have consulted diviners and *Sangomas* to “remove bad luck.” Some people have had to slaughter a sacrificial animal to help them with luck.

4.2. Perception of How Others Perceive Them

The following perceptions are perceptions of unemployed about how others see them. It is hard to establish exactly which of these perceptions are true given the fact that this study does not examine other people’s perceptions other than those of the unemployed. This will be presented in terms of their relationship to family, friends, employers and the general public.

4.2.1 The Family

It is fortunate that all the unemployed we interviewed were youth, for that means they did not have as their immediate family’s husbands, wives, grown up children and so on. Their families consisted of father, mother, grandparents, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts. For many it was single-parent homes consisting of a mother and siblings.

The unemployed people feel that they are regarded as too dependent on their families and unable to fend for themselves. Family relationships are effected as single mothers carry the burden of looking after her unemployed children and the unemployed carry the burden of being shouted at, treated as inadequate and having their status of being unemployed thrown at them every time there is a disagreement.

Every time I open a fridge my mother tells me that the food in there is for kids. I must go and look for job.

Another remarked that he gets asked almost all the time, “Do you know how much the bread costs?” and statements like:

You are so lazy! Who do you expect will feed an old man like you. What did you do with the money I gave you last week? *Hamba uyoshaya isicabha* (‘go find work as a taxi conductor’).

Many feel they are being taken for granted by their families. When important decisions are taken, nobody refers to them. They become “persona non-grata.” This attitude extends to children as well. They no longer see an unemployed brother who is always shut down by their mother or grand-mother as somebody older and important. One person who has experienced this remarked:

One day the kids were fighting and one of them said “I will tell my brother when he comes from work in the afternoon.”

The brother he refers to here is not the unemployed one in spite of the fact he was present and quite capable of bringing about order and stopping the fight. The children did not see him as important enough because of his status as an unemployed person.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the above is that unemployment alienates members of the same family from one another. It does to a very large extent create a perception on the side of the unemployed that he or she is less than a human being. This phenomenon is difficult to accept in an African context where people should be accepted unconditionally and made to feel worthy in spite of their condition.

4.2.2. Friends and Partners

From the data, it was clear that the unemployed found solace from other unemployed friends because they feel rejected by their friends who have found jobs. They feel they no longer have anything in common. It must be stated here that most of these are perceptions, because the friends were not interviewed and

their points of view were never heard. Even if interviews were to be conducted, it is believed that friends would probably be too embarrassed to express their true feelings and attitudes about their unemployed friends. This makes the effects of unemployment on friendship from the position of friends difficult to explore in our society.

Many unemployed people did indicate that they no longer find the attitude of their friends who have been lucky to find a job too welcoming. They have not even been able to establish stable relationship with their partners, especially young men. One young man remarked:

I have been left by two girlfriends for people with jobs. Not that they did not love me, they did, but I could not buy them nice things so they rejected me. When I meet my girlfriend now, she is beautiful and has nice clothes because her boyfriend buys for her. I understand because I could never afford to buy clothes from Truworths. They are expensive, you see.

Another young man stated:

I lost my girlfriend on Valentines Day because I could not buy a present and everybody else did for their girlfriends. I honestly did not have money.

Many unemployed blame their former friends for having withdrawn from a relationship, but it could very well be the unemployed themselves who have withdrawn. They withdraw from all social life.

4.2.3. Employers

Not only is it the treatment from parents and friends that creates frustration and resentment, it is also the treatment the unemployed experience from firms and companies when they go to factory gates to look for work. The security guards, human resource managers and bosses treat them like they are not human beings. Many people had actually had bad experiences from potential employers. One remembers when he was told:

“Go to Mandela and look for work I have no work for you.”

The attitude of security guards at the gates is also extremely bad. Many times they are not even allowed to go through the gates because they are told rudely: “there is no work.” Some guards even tell them to come in two weeks time because the boss will be hiring and when they come it turns out he was lying.

The “NO WORK” signs at factory gates are also equally discouraging to young people.

To be confronted with a sign of “NO WORK” every time I look for work made me stop looking at all. It was discouraging.

He continues to say:

What I find even more disturbing and suckering is the attitude of some places where you get treated like a thief or something. That did not just put me off, it made me wish I were dead. Not only I was hungry, but every where I went I was treated like a thief. Some of the guards do not know I am more qualified than they are. They just have a job. That’s all.

4.2.4. The Labour Departments

Many people working for the Department of Labour are civil servants and it is a known fact that service delivery at government departments, where recipients are people from the working class, has been extremely bad. Of course this is an unfair generalisation, but might hold true when one listens to various complaints from unemployed people who have had to deal with the Department of Labour in particular.

What follows here is not at all based on the systematic attitude survey among the departmental staff members. Unemployed people however complain of being perceived as “things” by the departmental officials and not as human beings. They are referred to as “unemployed” or even worse sometimes as “cases” or “clients”

and so on, depending on the conceptualisation of those working in the Department at that time. One young woman remarked:

When you go to the Department of Labour it's like you are a nonsense [*sic*] because you make them work. They have to look for your file and they do not want to do that. They want to sit and play games on their computers. The common answer that everybody gets is come back next week.

Quite significantly here, the time of the officials, usually young graduates who have gone to expensive schools but never learnt a culture of work, is more important than the time of the unemployed persons. There is simply no concern for the unemployed which is reflected in the attitude of the officials in the government departments.

4.2.5. The General Public

The unemployed believe the general public treats them with suspicion. They think neighbours regard them as thieves, and they receive all sorts of abuse from the immediate and the wider community. One unemployed person remarked:

If there is house breaking and theft in my neighbourhood, the first suspect is the unemployed person. The people you thought you knew and they knew you well, once they have a break in, they think you are the thief and nobody will be suspect other than you, the unemployed. They do not even care how hurt you are when they discover you were not guilty.

Many unemployed believe the public treats them with suspicion. Because they are unemployed, they are not expected to have fancy clothes; if they do, everybody suspects them of shoplifting and other sorts of crime. They do acknowledge that many people involved in criminal activities are unemployed, so it is logical that the public will see them as thieves or potential thieves. They consider this attitude unfair to those who are law-abiding and hard working despite their situation.

Ninety seven per cent of the respondents felt that the attitude of the general public towards them is negative and that are they are treated with suspicion. One respondent stated:

Every time I stand at the street corner in the neighbourhood with a group of friends, my neighbours will keep on looking through the window because they think we are planning to do something evil.

The majority of the respondents corroborated this feeling of being suspected and not welcomed by the wider public. It cannot be proved here whether the unemployed are treated with suspicion, or whether this is how they think they are being treated. It could be that these people are so conscious of their status as unemployed that they become particularly sensitive as to how others perceive them.

Some unemployed indicated that there are people who sympathise with them in the community, who also understand that it is not their fault that they are unemployed. Some also have found their families supportive towards them as they receive financial and emotional support from their parents and siblings.

4.3. Summary

The overall picture that we have painted is one of relative financial deprivation. It appears that boredom, poverty and social stigma are the greatest problems borne by the unemployed. There is a suggestion in the results that the unemployed are coping to some extent with unemployment and have not become completely marginalized. Some people have managed to externalise the blame for unemployment, especially the members of the Young Christian Workers, and retain a sense of self-worth. The Young Christian Workers' understanding of unemployment is different from their contacts because of the intervention done to them by organisations like the Ujamaa Centre and others. Their contacts and other people interviewed who were not linked to the YCW did not have the same understanding as the YCW. These people largely blamed themselves for their state and for them the future did not look hopeful. This is assisted by the fact that they have developed time and money management skills as part of their YCW training. Some do receive social support from families, but some find it hard to cope and feel unacceptable.

The family is an important fact in the life of the unemployed. Some unemployed have experienced acceptance while the majority experience rejection either deliberately or unintentionally. It seems there is an important role to be played by families in supporting their unemployed both spiritually and otherwise. It seems unsupportive families create one of the worst experiences in the lives of the unemployed.

The unemployed then feel marginalized in many ways if they are rejected by their families. Not only do they find family rejection difficult to accept, they also find that communities in which they live ostracise them and that the government does nothing about their situation. They see and smell wealth, but cannot touch it.

What we learn from this is that those with jobs need to provide support, if not financial then emotional, to the unemployed and so to help them overcome their perceived rejection.

The question is what do we learn from the unemployed? What theological resources do they bring with them? How best can we utilise these resources for the benefit of the unemployed people? The next chapter attempts to answer these questions.

CHAPTER 5

THEOLOGY OF WORK: A THEOLOGY FROM BELOW

5. Introduction

The data from Chapter 4 provides rich and important resources for a theology of work, indicating as it does the complexities and effects of unemployment. The focus of this chapter, however, is on parallel work being done by the Ujamaa Centre with unemployed youth. The material from Chapter 4 will need to be integrated into further Contextual Bible Studies, but due to the nature of this research it was not possible to include it in the Contextual Bible Studies conducted during the research period. What this chapter focuses on is the Contextual Bible Study process with unemployed youth that took place in parallel with the survey reported on in Chapter 4. More theological reflection on the data available in chapter 4 still needs to be done beyond the limits of this research.

Biblical and theological resources are the two major resources working class people, especially Christians, have in South Africa to assist them do the analysis of their problems and move towards obtaining solution for those problems. For many unemployed people, most of whom happen to be Christians, the points of departure are the texts on creation in Genesis 1:28 and 2:15. These texts and the biblical faith assume that creativity belongs to the essence of the human being in general and of the believer in particular. The root of this stance is not the absolutization of work in general, for work can be futile, frustrating and dehumanising. The root of this position is that human beings are meant to be in fellowship with God and with each other. In this fellowship human beings are

meant to participate in God's creative authority, God's redemptive love and God's comprehensive vision for a restored universe (Nünberger 1991:31).

Biblical faith proceeds from the notion that creation, not consumption, is the goal of work. This is not to say that adequate consumption is not important. Rather, it is assumed that it is the rightful outcome of work and not the end for Christians. The purpose of work is to create and maintain a certain kind of world, not to lay up treasures on earth.

Work must be in line with God's vision and justice as expressed in Isaiah, where people who have worked must enjoy the fruits of their labour:

They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit: they shall not build and another inhabit, they shall not plant and another eat... and my chosen shall enjoy the work of their hands (Isaiah 65:21-22).

Reflecting on the same theme, liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez wrote:

The work of man, the transformation of nature, continues creation only if it is a human act, that is to say, if it is not alienated by unjust socio-economic structure (1971:173).

This means for many people that work has no absolute value. Its value lies in its being a means for a person to meet his or her needs within the context of a society where work is not deprived of its just rewards by powerful individuals or insensitive systems.

From the biblical faith perspective, work has three primary purposes. First, it is a creative outlet for human beings who are made in the image of the creative God. Human work continues the creation. Secondly, work provides for the consumption needs of individual and families. Genesis 3:19 (RSV) states, "in the sweat of your face you shall eat" and 2 Thessalonians 3:10 (RSV) states, "If any one will not work, let him not eat." Since life is attained by work, not to work is to live by the sweat of somebody else's brow rather than by one's own. That is not acceptable.

Thirdly, work provides for the consumption needs of the community. The passage of Isaiah just quoted captures the degree to which the biblical vision is communal rather than individual (Owensby 1988:52).

The Old Testament narratives have put a limit to the accumulation of goods and wealth. The story of Israel in the desert demonstrates God's bias against unrestricted accumulation. As a practical matter, accumulation would have increased the burden of nomadic existence. When the life of the community was threatened by starvation, God provided Manna for the people to eat (Exod. 16). Part of God's merciful provision was the prohibition against gathering more than one day's ration at a time, except before the Sabbath. Unrestricted accumulation would have had profound theological and social significance. Socially, the amassing of food by some and not by others would bring disequilibrium to an already fragile society by endorsing the concept of the individual above community security.

Reflecting on their situation (because the unemployed are fortunate that apart from being disabled economically, they still can reflect and analyse their situation), the unemployed discover that they have their own understanding of unemployment, work and also different views of how the economy must be organised, different from dominant ideologies.

This chapter seeks to present what is perceived by the unemployed to be a theology of work. For unemployed people, unemployment is the great social evil (sin). This chapter is a product of various Contextual bible Studies conducted with the unemployed people, workers within Churches and Pastors and Church leaders in various workshops organised by the Ujamaa Centre over a period of three years, 2001-2003. The researcher works as co-ordinator for the Economic Justice program within the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research. The researcher has worked as a high school teacher for twelve years, led the teachers' union as Secretary of the South African Democratic Teachers Union in the Midlands Region and considers himself as a theologian. It is this experience with work and theology that prompts the

researcher to conclude that what is presented here is a “genuine theology of work” because it is a worker’s theology.

Nolan points out that a genuine worker’s theology has to be constructed by workers, has to be a reflection of workers upon their experience of work and their experience of struggle. This means that the professional theologian or biblical scholar or pastor will have a subordinate role to play (Nolan 1991:160). The process followed in developing this theology of work has been as Nolan outlines it. Working class people, namely, the unemployed, workers and Church leaders were allowed space to articulate their own understanding of God and work. The question is does it mean that being an academic and theologian not being a worker? Nolan answers this question by saying yes, academics and theologians are also workers but their experience of work is far different from the experience of workers of the working class. Academics and theologians have never been used as a unit of labour, a machine, of being exploited for profit. They have never experienced being alienated from one’s work. They have seldom struggled for better wages, better working conditions, for security, and so on (Nolan 1991:161).

One might ask what contextual bible study is. Gerald West (1993:11-12) deals with this subject extensively in his book *Contextual Bible Study*. The first thing to understand is that contextual bible study is a process and not a fixed formula or a set method to reading the bible. Central to this process are certain commitments by people who participate in contextual bible study groups. West had identified four commitments of the contextual bible study process. The first is a commitment to read the bible from the perspective of the South African context, particularly from the perspective of the poor and oppressed. The second one is a commitment to read the bible in community with others, particularly with those from contexts different from our own. Thirdly, a commitment to read the bible critically and fourthly, a commitment to individual and social transformation through contextual bible study.

The researcher has facilitated a number of bible studies with the unemployed youth both in his capacity as Chaplain for the young Christian Workers and

Coordinator for the Economic Justice Program within the Ujamaa Centre. These bible studies have produced what the researcher refers to as the Theology of Work. The next section presents to us how an unemployed youth understands a Theology of Work.

5.1. The Right to Work

The bible teaches that human beings are made in the image and likeness of God. This understanding also leads to our understanding that God is in some sense the image and likeness of human beings. We cannot understand God in any other way. But what is seldom asked is “which human being?” What actually happens in our minds is that we understand God in the image of some particular type of person. Unfortunately there are contending images of God. God is a worker and God is a king.

In the creation story, God is pictured not as the great king, but as a great worker. God is described as a worker who works for six days manufacturing the world, which is described like building a house. The vault of heaven is the roof of the house, and then God creates the furniture, as it were (the things inside the house), and then God creates the people in it. It is described like a job, a worker’s job. But on the seventh day God has to rest, just like a worker. And he has the same attitude as a worker towards the product he has made. He is pleased with it and God says: “It is good. I think that is quite a good job!”

And it is from this idea of God that the human beings then say that God makes a human being in God’s image and likeness. What the human beings are fundamentally talking about is that God makes a person to be a worker. God makes a person who, like his/her creator-God, will now go and herself/herself and manufacture things, create things. And a human being, in the image and likeness of God, will rest on the seventh day after s/he has made them and take pleasure in what he/she has made.

So being made in the image and likeness of God is being made a worker-person rather than a leisure-person or a middle-class person or an aristocratic-person. Also important here is that the building that is going on is not just building houses, but the whole idea of creation in the bible is applicable to creating the nation, building the nation, building the society. And the workingperson who is created in the image and the likeness of God does not only go out to manufacture things, but goes out to manufacture society. Also s/he goes out to do like God the creator of the society. And it is because of this that God becomes the God of workers, the God of slaves, the God of poor, and the God of the oppressed.

It is from this belief about God that our understanding of Worker Theology develops which quite often is different from the more traditional theologies or interpretations of the bible by academics and theologians who have never had the experience of the kind of work people from the working classes have. Albert Nolan captures this very well when he says:

If we ourselves do not have experience of work that we are reflecting upon in a theology of work, then no matter how well we know the bible and Christian tradition, we will simply never be able to see in God's word what workers see in God's word (Nolan, 1991:161).

The theology of work as constructed by the unemployed or workers is a theology that has emerged as unemployed people re-read the bible with confidence that they are quite capable of interpreting it. It is when they do that, that they notice something of their own experience in the text.

The unemployed and workers have come to believe that work is a God-given right and any system that produces unemployment violates the right of the people to be co-creators with God. The question is how working class people conceptualise the society they are talking about. What ideology underpins what they believe in?

5.2. The Kingdom of God

It must be pointed out here that the first Christians did not invent communalism nor did the working class people in South Africa. The concept of the kingdom of God is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ and possibly the whole biblical tradition. The task of the unemployed has been to move beyond the book of Acts of the Apostles and base the discussion upon other authentic teachings of Jesus Christ concerning the kingdom of God.

The starting point for the kingdom of God for the working class people is Matthew 13:11, Mark 4:11 and Luke 8:10.

To you have been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, but to them, have not been given.

This is just a sample. Similar texts are abundant in the bible. Scholars agree that Matthew systematically substitutes "Kingdom of heavens" for the original "Kingdom of God" and have agreed on the reason, that of avoiding the use of the name of "God." It was believed that this constituted obedience to the commandment of the Decalogue forbidding taking the name of God in vain (Brown 1971:88).

The question of where the kingdom is to be realized is very clear to the people. They read Matthew 13:24-31, 36-43, which is a parable about the kingdom. Matthew says expressly "the field is the world" (v. 38), and at the end of the story he does not say that the kingdom will be transferred to some other place but that "the son of man will send his angels, who will remove from his kingdom all scandals and all workers of inequity" (v. 41) and v. 43 that "the just will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." This makes the people believe the kingdom is on earth.

For many unemployed people, Psalm 74 seems like the preamble of a political blueprint. Verse 1 of Psalm 74 asks, "O God, why dost thou cast us off forever?"

Again, Verse 21 of the same Psalm begs God, "Let not the downtrodden be put to shame; let the poor and needy praise thy name."

The unemployed youth have been part of the Contextual bible Studies and Gospel Enquiry reflecting on such texts. It is during such processes that they find in various other places texts that refer to their situations and God's response to it. They have found in the Lord's Prayer comfort in knowing that the kingdom should be realised here and now. "Thy kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10; Luke 11:2).

The argument of the workers is that Christ did not teach them to pray "Take us to your kingdom", but that "your kingdom come." They ask where is it to come if not to earth, which is where we are. Jesus himself makes reference to this when he says, "the kingdom of God has come to you" (Luke 11:20; Matt. 12:28). The only possible meaning for the unemployed is that it has come to the earth on which those to whom Jesus says, "has come to you," are standing. Revelation 21:2 completes the argument for many working class people. "And I saw the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down from God" And again in Revelation 21:10, "And I was shown the holy city, Jerusalem, descending from the sky, from God."

The kingdom is made in heaven with its final destination being earth. It is clear that to speak of the kingdom of God in any other world other than earth is not only to found another religion without any relationship with the teaching of Christ, it also asserts the opposite of what Christ teaches, "The kingdom has come to you," and "Your kingdom come."

The fact that tradition has taught for centuries that the kingdom is in the other world only demonstrates that the tradition betrayed Jesus and founded another religion completely different.

The idea of the kingdom is very interesting for many when it comes to private ownership of property. Those who are rich prefer the kingdom of God to be situated in heaven and once there, they are happy to eliminate private property in

the kingdom. Once the kingdom is situated here on earth, they deny even the existence of texts that eliminate private property.

5.3. Communalism

Many unemployed people stated that the right to work would only be realised if the world economy and politics were different from what it is today. Their theology centres around the term communalism.

The Oxford dictionary defines communalism as a principle of communal organisation of society. Communalism is taken from "commune," which refers to the group of people (not all of one family) sharing living accommodation and goods. Envisaged by the unemployed, communalism is then to be practised as a world project where people share space and all the resources of the earth.

From their experiences and vague understanding of communism as an ideology, their fears and concerns about communism, the unemployed and working class people see their vision of an alternative society as communalism instead of communism. For many of them communism is from the Eastern Europe and they understand vaguely that it failed, but communalism is African. They believe Africans are communalistic by nature.

These young people believe that communalism is equivalent to Christianity. Christ has evolved a new order for them. The problems they see today would not be there if this new order is put in place. Their starting point is Acts 2:44-45:

All believers together had everything in common; they sold their possessions and their goods, and distributed among all in accordance with each one's needs.

And again, in Acts 4:32, 34-35:

The heart of the multitude of believers was one and their soul was one, and not a simple one said anything of what he had was his, but all things were common... There

was no poor person among them, since whoever was in need of something...and a distribution was made to each one in accordance with his need.

Quite clearly here Luke's normative intention stands out. There is no question of a special lifestyle that could be considered peculiar to some Christians. If they wanted to be Christians the condition was communalism. For the purpose of this study, we shall call those committed to the project of communalism communalists.

The young people have rejected the notion that communalism of the early Christians failed and argue that since communalism is obligatory for Christians, Christians have to find out why it failed and bring it to realization without committing whatever errors the first Christians committed.

The theology of the people, what others call theology from below, has made it clear that communalism for Christians is not optional. What is optional is Christianity. The unemployed people I have been privileged to work alongside believe that the realization of communalism will take place once the workers, the rural people and the unemployed who form the majority of the population make a decision freely to struggle for that alternative vision. They continue to say either the whole population imposes communalism upon an insignificant minority or a handful of people imposes capitalism on the whole population.

Communalism is used as an opposite to capitalism. They believe they are where they are because of capitalism and the alternative to that would be communalism. For communalism to be realised, political arrangements in the society must be those envisaged by Christ in the Kingdom of God.

5.4. Communalism and Riches

The debate then continues to examine the attitude of Jesus Christ when it comes to riches. Can one belong to the communal state and still accumulate wealth for the individual self? The answer is a clear NO. Not only were the teachings of Christ

against material wealth but also his own example and personal conduct testified against riches. Jesus had a communalistic outlook to life. In John 12:6; 13:29 and Luke 8:1-3, Judas “carried the purse” so they had everything in common and each received according to their needs.

Reading Mark 10:17-31 about a rich young man, it becomes clear that no matter how hard people try to please Jesus, they would not until they fulfil one important condition, to “sell everything and give to the poor.” Because of the difficulty the young man faced, Jesus remarks “how hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God.”

It must be remembered also that the rich and the poor are correlative terms. It is said someone is rich in contrast with the rest of people (population or majority) who are not. It seems to unemployed youth that Jesus is not just against wealth in absolute terms but in a relative systemic sense. When Jesus says: “Happy are the poor” and “Woe to you the rich,” he is talking about a systemic relationship. The people believe that Jesus accepted that some would be rich, as he accepts that Abraham the father of faith was rich, but the problem is when others are poor. It must be noted at this point that we mention that rich will always defend their riches and the acquisition thereof. Poor people know and understand that the only way a rich person can become rich is by the accumulation of profit under the capitalist economic system. The bible does not approve of profit. Communalism insists that the production of goods is for the benefit of society, capitalism argues it is for profit. Goods are produced for the realization of profit.

We now go back to what working class people believe should form part of their lives. If the organisation of society would be along the lives of the kingdom of God, things would be a lot different.

5.5. The Right to a Day of Rest

When we talk about worker rights we are making judgments. The bible contains texts about judgments that have been made by various writers about the rights of workers to a day of rest. Reading the bible about these judgments causes us to make our own judgments. Working class communities identify with the following text:

For six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath for Yahweh your God. You shall do no work that day, neither you nor your son nor your daughter nor your servants, men or women, nor your ox nor your donkey nor any of your animals nor the stranger who lives with you. Thus your servant, man or woman, shall rest as you do. Remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and that Yahweh your God brought you out from there with mighty hand outstretched arm; because of this Yahweh your God has commanded you to keep the Sabbath day (Deut. 5:13-15).

Those opposed to this view tell us in our bible Study processes that this has nothing to do with workers' rights, but is rather has to do with church-going on the Sabbath. But a footnote in the Jerusalem bible tells us that the "biblical texts expressly connect the term "Sabbath" with a root-meaning "to stop work." We read in another place:

For six days you shall do your work, but stop on the seventh day, so that you ox and your donkey may rest and the son of your servant have a breathing space and the stranger too (Exod. 23:12).

No one expected the ox or the donkey or even the stranger to go to church! No, it was for humanitarian reasons, primarily, that the Sabbath was instituted, with religion as a secondary aspect, to thank Yahweh for this day of rest. So we can say that in the bible the first workers' right was this weekly off-day for workers, known as the Sabbath Day.

The Sabbath is presented in the bible as originating in the time of Moses. But these texts that we have been looking at only took their final form nearly 600 years later, i.e., about 300 years after the time of Solomon and his forced labour. So we must say that Worker Rights are not easily established and need to be

continually demanded, generation after generation. We are still doing so today (Falkiner 2003:4).

The next right is the right to get paid. Slavery was common, even in Israel, and the slaves or the people forced to work for the king were not paid. The right to get paid, however, is mentioned many times, especially by the prophets and also by the priests after the time of King Solomon.

For this we move to the time of another king, King Jehoiakim. He too is exploiting his workers. The prophet Jeremiah has this to say about him, about 600 years before Christ:

Doom for the man who founds his palace on anything but integrity... who makes his fellow man work for nothing, without paying him his wages (Jer. 22:13).

Jehoiakim really had no excuse, as he must have known about this text in the book of Deuteronomy, which it is believed he must have read.

You are not to exploit the hired servant who is poor and destitute, whether he is one of your brothers or a stranger who lives in your towns. You must pay him his wages each day, not allowing the sun to set before you do, for he is poor and is anxious for it; otherwise he may appeal to Yahweh against you, and it would be a sin for you (Deut. 24:4-15).

Even the priests by this time were talking about the right of workers to get paid. We find in the book Leviticus:

You must not exploit or rob your neighbour. You must not keep back the labourer's wage until next morning (Lev. 19:13).

Another century or so later the problem still exists. The prophet Malachi finds it necessary to raise this topic, referring to "wage-earners." He says a messianic messenger is coming who will:

Visit you for judgment and who will be a ready witness against those who oppress the wage-earners (Mal. 3:5).

Finally we jump to about 200 years before Christ, where people are still trying to enforce the right to get paid. The statement is very harsh:

A man murders his neighbour if he robs him of his livelihood, sheds blood if he withholds an employee's wages (Eccles. 34:22, 26).

And this strong message is carried into the New Testament:

Labourers mowed your fields, and you cheated them – listen to the wages that you kept back calling out realize that the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts (James 5:4).

These texts are used by the working class people as they search the bible for texts that talk about their situation. In the process of “See-Judge-Act” (see Chapter 6), such texts provide inspiration to the working class people because they reveal God’s concern for the world they live in.

These rights are not just human made laws, or agreements made between workers and employers. The cries of the workers reach the “ears of the Lord of hosts,” in other words, the ears of Yahweh God. These rights are fundamental. Today we call them “Human Rights.” But calling them “Human Rights” means perhaps that the religious dimension of such rights is not generally known. I think it is up to us in the Church and the worker’s movements to make this known. As women in the Feminist movements today undertake research in the bible for references to women and their rights, so too should Christian workers be conducting research into the bible for references to workers and their rights.

5.6. Summary

The theology of work which develops from below is a theology on the move, incessantly. The development of this theology is through small groups of people coming together with the view of searching what the scriptures say about their situation. These people do not need professionals in order to do this. They may have in their presence a trained person with whom they work in their search. They

then follow a simple method of doing contextual bible Study as outlined in West (1993) From this is a theology developed by the workers and shaped by the workers. The workers do not need people from outside to write it for them, they need people who will be with them when they write it. This kind of theology should serve the interests of workers. Nolan raises this question of interests when he asks in whose interests would a theology of work be. Would it serve the interests of the workers, or the managers and owners or the theologians themselves (Nolan, 1991:163)? If we want to be sure that a theology of work in South Africa today serves the interests of the worker, it must be a theology that is constructed by the workers and for workers.

It must be pointed out that this chapter is the first phase of worker's theology and not the final product. This chapter is presenting to us raw material from the process, and the beginnings of a workers' theology. These are elements of a theology from below.

CHAPTER 6

MODELS OF MINISTRY WITH THE UNEMPLOYED: THE YCW

6. Introduction

The church has been accused of not noticing unemployment and rightly so. The researcher has had experiences of prominent church leaders accusing the unemployed of being lazy and not looking for work. In many circles the church leadership opposed vehemently the idea of the Basic Income Grant (BIG) for the unemployed, arguing that it will create high levels of laziness and that the unemployed will not be encouraged to look for work. An exception was recently when the Church Leaders Group in KwaZulu-Natal issued a statement in September 2004 in support of the Basic Income Grant (BIG).

It seems the church believes there is enough work for all and the unemployed are like that because they are lazy. It is this attitude of the church that makes it difficult for it to intervene in situations where it is probably most needed. The church is completely apprehensive and this was expressed accurately by a writer in industrial mission:

The church that largely failed the urban poor in the first industrial Revolution will also fail the now "poor" who will be shaped by equally radical changes unless we seek to understand what actually is going on (Dew 1980:11).

Many people would ask, "Why should the church bother at all?" Clarke (1982) and Nümberger (1990) respond when they say the church's faith prompts it to get involved in matters of work, industry and industrial revolution. They both believe

that the church's search for a role in the new industrial revolution, and especially with the casualties of social change, is justified by the tenets of Christian faith.

Hebrew bible and Christian Testament writings from Genesis to James show the way that work, but not necessarily paid employment, is a part of the natural, God-given order of things. It is a key expression of humankind's creative potential; it is what we are all here to do. In its proper form, work is not toil or exploitation, but a representation of human dignity and worth. Above all, Christian justice proclaims the right of everyone to share fairly in opportunities to work. Consequently, high levels of unemployment, and a widening gap in the distribution of wealth, are morally not defensible. It is therefore morally reprehensible not to demonstrate care for people who are victims of unemployment and unequal distribution.

Unemployment and poverty raise fundamental moral questions for the church. The church is not only expected to be critical and to be seen as a questioner; it must also be an irritant to governments. The church might earn itself the ire of governments, get labelled ultra leftist, be easily dismissed or misunderstood, but it is not just required to be involved in the conversion of non-believers in the work place and teach the converts to obey their masters and God so they will inherit the Kingdom of God. The church has to do far more than that. The words of Jesus in Luke 4:18-20 should serve as an inspiration for the church to do something for the poor, the marginalised, the sick, the homeless, and so on.

The most fundamental response to unemployment falls on the shoulders of local church ministers. It should be the ministers' responsibility to co-ordinate activities, irrespective of the involvement of the church's congregation.

6.1. A Role with the Unemployed

The question that bothers many is what role should the clergy play amongst the unemployed, the poor and different groups living around them. There are

ministers whose hearts are in evangelism and their purpose is to soothe, inspire and fortify from the pulpit. They want to capture souls for the Lord and lead people to the Lord personally. If they are lucky, all the unemployed usually ever get would be a prayer and solace because there is no energy in the congregation for anything else.

Some ministers prefer sweeping unemployment under the carpet. Many ministers especially in the rural areas have asked, "What on earth is the point to industrial Mission" (Falkiner 2002:34). Others would say, "God is not concerned with industry" (2002:34). Even those ministers who are practising industrial ministry reinforce this split when they state:

I am doing industrial mission work because I do not have a parish to care for. I am doing this because I like to live in the real world, not the world the church erects as the real world. The real world is full of people who don't give a damn about Christianity (2002:40).

Statements like these reinforce the idea that one cannot be a local minister of a parish who is involved in industrial ministry and these statements are wrong.

6.2. Spiritual Support

The researcher, who is himself a chaplain to an organisation of the unemployed, believes that when a minister plans her/his priorities for his/her church work, s/he must put as priority offering spiritual support to the unemployed in the same spirit as s/he offers support to the sick, elderly, orphaned and widowed. It must not be seen as an add-on (if there are no other cases to be attended to). The role of support for the unemployed and perhaps those who are the employed through worship and prayer becomes a very important matter for the people who receive it. It is the ministers' role to convince them that they are valued by God and the church and that faith in their religion would help them find faith in themselves. Private prayer with and for the unemployed is necessary for the unemployed to feel welcome and part of the church.

The minister could, for example, create space in his/her schedule for people to come and share their stories of unemployment, the search for work and also the treatment they receive in their workplaces. It is through listening to such stories, where s/he could be the only person interested, that s/he gains insight into the world s/he has never understood. Her/his intervention could be shaped by the peoples experiences and then be more relevant and meaningful.

It was during the Worker Sunday Celebrations that many people expressed happiness at the fact that their church had taken an interest in their situation as workers and unemployed. Worker Sunday is the church's way of giving support to the workers, who during the days of apartheid were exploited and oppressed. Once a year the church celebrated, every Sunday after May Day, what later became known as Worker Sunday. It was on this day that the church promoted justice in the workplace. Emphasis was placed on the biblical message of justice. Posters and pamphlets were distributed to local parishes and congregations to be displayed and handed out to members. Worker Sunday Celebrations are held annually from the beginning of May to the end of the year in memory of St. Joseph, the Worker. (Worker Sunday Campaign Brochure, 2003:1).

It has been the special focus of the researcher to encourage many churches to take part in the celebrations and to talk about issues of the world of work at least once in a year. This was done through the Industrial Mission Network, a group of church related non-governmental organisations working in the area of Economic Justice. Organisations like Ecumenical Service for Socio Economic Transformation (ESSET), the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA), the church and Work office of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC), and the Ujamaa Centre, for which the researcher works, produced material that was used in churches for the purpose of the Worker Sunday celebrations.

Responses from congregants after services reveal that people had really missed prayers and sermons about work and the world of work. They want to see that the church identifies with them and their situation of unemployment. Some

unemployed people remarked after the Worker Sunday Celebrations held in Machibisa in 2004:

For the first time in a long time the church service was about something that touches me.

Someone remarked:

The service today was relevant; I am tired of being preached at about the devil, devil, devil, there is no devil here. The devil is the system that causes unemployment.

From these statements and many others, it has come to be realised by the researcher and many others he works with, that the majority of unemployed, especially a hard core of black youngsters, have no interest in attending church to be “saved,” especially by middle-class priests, pastors and ministers. These people do not necessarily feel valued by being told that God loves them, or that everything will be fine when they come to know the Lord. Simple homiletics is insufficient for them. Much as preaching the Word and administering the Sacrament is our role these alone do not strike a cord with people who need an income and a job.

6.3. Action

It seems to the researcher that there are two ways open to the minister of the local congregation who is confronted by the problem of unemployment. S/he either ignores the problem, buries himself in other business like school work, attending conferences, ministers only to the church-going employed of the parish, deals with births, deaths and ‘spiritual’ bible studies or gets involved and sides with the unemployed.

There are various ways of getting involved with the unemployed, but this study seeks to propose that the Young Christian Worker and their method of “See-Judge-Act” is one of the best ways of intervening in the crises with the

unemployed, be they in or out of church. This chapter does not propose that ministers start groups of Young Christian Workers, but that using the method widely used by the Young Christian Workers would be helpful for ministers who believe economics and politics have everything to do with work and that church and politics are inevitably intertwined.

6.4. What is the YCW Movement?

The Young Christian Workers (YCW) movement was first constituted in 1925, in a working class suburb of Brussels. The leader and founder of the movement was Joseph Cardijn, a Roman Catholic priest (Dumortier 2003 interview). Cardijn was amazed at the appalling working and housing conditions and their devastating effects on boys and girls, many as young as eleven in the factories of Belgium. When he was ordained, he devoted his summer holidays to travelling in Germany, France, England, studying working conditions and worker organisations in these countries. It was for this reason that in 1925 Cardijn launched as his project, the building of an organisation which he stipulated would be a movement of young workers, by young workers, for young workers. It was not going to be one of those educational groupings in which progressive intellectuals came to enlighten and guide the non-educated masses. It was not to be a charitable association where well-off benefactors provide for the basic needs of young workers, but an organisation run from the bottom to the top of the organisation by the young people themselves (Dumortier 2003 interview).

6.4.1. The YCW Method: “See-Judge-Act”

The See-Judge Act method is sometimes called the three truths in the Young Christian Workers (YCW). It is based on faith, bound up in the power of vision, and founded on the fact that God has a plan for the youth. Cardijn believed there were three fundamental truths that dominate and light up the problem of the world’s youth. These truths inspire, explain and direct us towards the solution that the YCW has to give (Cardijn 1974:126).

A truth of faith: This is the eternal and temporal destiny of young people. God has called young people to be collaborators of the Creator and Redeemer. God has provided for the young people all that they need to fulfil the role of being collaborators with him.

A truth of experience or reality: this is the terrible contradiction, which exists between the real state of young people and this eternal and temporal destiny. The conditions of life of many young people are in contradiction with their destiny. If they are abandoned, it is impossible for them to achieve their eternal and temporal destiny.

A truth of pastoral practice or method: this is the necessity of the organisation of young people for the attainment of their temporal and eternal destiny. In order to win the mass of young people, we need an organisation of young people who among themselves, by themselves, for themselves lead one another, help one another and serve one another for the achievement of their destiny (Cardijn 1974:130).

It is the contradiction that exists between the three truths that necessitates the coming together of the young people within the YCW. The YCW leaders have to meet at least once a week to talk about their situation, be it unemployment, school, community, anything that has to do with their lives. These groups are preferably to be kept small with a maximum of eight people. Once the group begins to meet, it needs to elect office bearers, like the chairperson, secretary, treasurer and a publications person. These office bearers facilitate the smooth running of the group. The group at any locality is called a base group. For the activities of these groups to become effective, the young people need an accompaniment from someone with experience to journey with them as they tackle the problems affecting them in their daily life. This is where the role of a local minister comes in, which I will return to later. Let me first look at the method.

6.4.1.1. See

When a group of leaders in the Young Christian Workers movement meet, the first step is to "See," that is, to look with their own eyes at what is happening at home, on the street, at school, at the workplace, in church, on the sports field, and so on. What they examine they experience in their daily lives.

Everybody in the group is allowed space and time to describe what they see and experience on a daily basis. The assumption is that any person, employed or

unemployed, knows what is happening to her/him and also to her/his friends. As a first step, the YCW meeting allows the young people a chance to learn from other young people's experiences and then enlarge their vision and discover through other members the society as they see it. There are no lessons, lectures, seminars, workshops, or conferences. The means and method of reflection starts from the concrete experience of life of the young workers themselves. This is done in exactly the same way as God did with the people of Israel when they were slave in Egypt:

I have seen the suffering of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters: I know their suffering; and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians (Exodus 3:7ff).

This is a key biblical text for Young Christian workers where Yahweh God sees the suffering of the slaves in Egypt and sends Moses to do something about it. This point of seeing suffering is repeated in 1 Samuel 9:16:

I have seen the affliction of my people because of the Philistines.

The YCW members are taught to "see" the suffering taking place around them. This is the starting point in any enquiry. This is what they YCW members call the "Truth of Life, Truth of Reality." It is the reality of what is taking place in our world compared to what should be.

6.4.1.2. Judge

This is sometimes called the "Truth of Faith." When the groups were sharing, other members listen. This part calls for all of them to do a reflection and begin to ask questions. Questions like, why are things like they are? Who benefits from these? How does this affect other young people? Who causes this to happen? What is the church saying? What is the bible saying? What are trade unions? It is through answers and responses to these questions that the young people build their

own understanding of society, unfolding bit by bit their understanding of causes and effects on their lives.

The fundamental question the young people have to ask is, "Does God want us to live under such conditions?" The young people begin reading the bible for answers. It is because of this reading that the young people attempt to find a message where the bible speaks to them and their situation. This is a prophetic activity. The YCW method contains a prophetic element. Many biblical prophets proclaimed what was to come. Jesus was a prophet because he proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom, as we have seen in Luke above.

An example here could be a dirty toilet at school or work. The starting point for a new group might be filthy toilets at their school or factory, and that this takes away the human dignity of the people who have to use the toilet. Through discussions about what the cause is, they then judge that in the future the toilets should be clean. They then act towards achieving that vision of the future.

For a more experienced group, for example, the reality might be unemployment of millions of people, resulting in starvation, poverty and misery of many. Through discussions about what the cause is, they discover that our economic system is at fault. They then judge if this is not what God wants, the present system must be replaced by the one that God wants. The belief that a contradiction exists between what should be and what is, propels them to start working towards a new economic system.

6.4.1.3. Act

The young people have "Seen" the real life situations in their own lives, have thought about the causes and the effects; they have also found in the scriptures a God who delivers people from injustice, and a Jesus who sides with them, so then what do they do? They have to act. The action taken will be a result of careful

planning by the young people themselves, and is not dictated for them by any other adult person.

The following meeting focuses on report-backs about what each young person did during his/her time, difficulties encountered and how to move forward. At this point again the "See-Judge-Act" process is invoked. Action makes these meetings meaningful, without which the meetings become a waste of time.

6.5. The Nature and Method of the YCW

The Young Christian Workers is founded upon certain fundamental convictions.

6.5.1 Trust in the Youth

Any person, chaplain or adult collaborator who is prepared to work with the youth should have trust in them. We must trust these people in spite of the attitude of the society and specifically the church towards them. Cardijn, the founder, had the following to say about them:

Each and every young worker is worth more than all the gold in the world. all the gold in the world (Cardijn 1974:36).

Additionally:

You are not machines, beasts of burden, slaves... you are human beings, with an eternal destiny, a divine origin... you are sons and daughters of God, partners with God (1974:36).

It is this trust that will assist people working with the youth to believe that young people have a role to play in radically changing society. The pastor is important here because it is here that he or she will make them have faith in themselves, and their capabilities to change their situation. The pastor will motivate them by organising them into groups and inspiring them to do something about their

situation. The pastor does not prescribe what the young people should do, but creates an environment where ideas are generated by young people themselves. The pastor then allows for an analysis to take place and guides them where the analysis becomes shallow and would not lead to fruitful action. For many young people, doing economic analysis requires special knowledge they may not possess at the time. The pastor becomes useful by either doing the analysis with them or getting someone to help them do it.

6.5.2 The Conviction that God Identifies with the Poor

The method of “See-Judge-Act” makes an assumption that God sides with the oppressed and that the kingdom of God belongs to them. The YCW leaders are driven by the word of Jesus Christ in Luke’s Gospel:

The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me poor... to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-20).

The YCW movement is aimed at bringing good news to people at the bottom of society, the poor, all those who are marginalized by social systems. In all actions, the young people show that they identify with those words of Jesus: “good news to the poor.” This does not mean they bring the biblical texts to the poor, but rather changing the world so that the meaning of the text, the message of the text, is lived out in practice in relation to the poor. For the YCW leaders, it is a message of love, justice and peace, things the poor do not often receive from the hands of those they depend on. When this message is implemented in the world it will become “good news” for the poor.

When the United Congregational church in Southern Africa recommended the “See-Judge-Act” method, they saw clear benefits to be derived from the process. They then developed a training manual titled *Transform*. Among other things, this manual states that the method focuses clearly on the bible, which reminds us that we need to begin our engagement – See – with a concern for the world in need of transformation. This keeps the goal of our mission clearly in perspective. It draws

deeply from the Word of God which helps see that the Christian answer to the world is drawn from the bible. We take time to judge the issues in the light of God's Word. It invites us to join in God's work, which means the method draws us on towards a practical response – Act. It is easy to talk about what needs to be done, to have conferences and resolutions. But God wants us to join in his work of transformation in the world. Moreover, this method is for ordinary people, which means it does not need experts to make it work. Once people have grasped the three basic steps, they can get to work with transforming the world around them (UCCSA, Undated:25).

6.6. The Chaplain or Adult Collaborator

The chaplain is usually a priest or a minister of religion who is either full-time practising in a parish or working in a non-governmental organisation (NGO), and then works part-time with the YCW. The adult collaborator does not need to have any theological training, his or her experience as a former YCW leader is enough to qualify the person to help develop leadership of young people.

The chaplain is not expected to lead the organisation, it is an organisation of young people, for young people, but s/he is expected to help facilitate growth and development of young people. S/he attends the groups' meetings at least twice a week and provides two essential services to the movement.

The first service is that of educator. The YCW leader starts from real life experiences and it is through life's experiences that the members grow through their commitment to solving these life's situations. The chaplain then must listen to these stories and try to understand the situations in which the young people are living, share in their feelings and put questions to the young people to help them clarify his understanding of the situations and at times suggest possible ways of taking the matter forward. The chaplain also provides the witness of faith to the young people. The chaplain will carry out her/his duties effectively if s/he has sympathy with the working class and its organisation. He belongs to that group of

clergy that believes there is connection between biblical faith and the word of work, politics and economy.

6.7. The Young Christian Workers Experience of Formation of Faith

It should be remembered that YCW stands for Young “Christian” Workers, and the YCW declaration principles defines the YCW as having a “Christian Characteristic.” This is of course a cause for debate both inside and outside of the YCW. There are those who wonder why Muslims and other non-Christians are welcome as members of the movement and are also welcome to take up leadership positions within the structures. Others expect members of the YCW to be good church-goers, sing in a choir, and be loyal members of the parish or congregation, which is not always the case. What then does the word “Christian” in the movement mean? It simply means the spirituality of the movement. It is the spirituality of the movement that is Christian, whatever religious affiliations of a person; the spirituality is based on the working method of “See-Judge-Act.” This spirituality leads to a formation of faith experience not often found in other contexts.

6.7.1. The YCW Prayer

At the start of any meeting or at the beginning of a new day, the YCW members are encouraged to say the prayer which is like a driving force that will enable them to face yet another day:

Lord Jesus, I offer you this day all my works, my hopes and struggles, joys and sorrows. Grant to me and to all young people the ability to think like you, to work with you and to live in you. Help me to love you with all my heart and to serve you with all my strength. May your kingdom come in our work-places, factories, schools and in our homes. May those of us who are in danger of evil, remain in your favour. And my all those who have died in your service rest in peace. Lord, bless the Young Christian Workers, Lord, sanctify the Young Christian Workers. May your kingdom come through the Young Christian Workers (YCW 1930:4).

The members who do not subscribe to the Christian will for obvious reasons not be forced to recite the prayer, they will refer to their own religious texts for their faith formation. For many YCW members, this is an important expression of their faith. It does not however replace “Our Father” because the Lord’s Prayer has a very deep meaning for the members of the YCW.

The YCW prayer which is recited everyday and which many use at all meetings, includes a sentence, “May you kingdom come through the Young Christian Workers”. Jesus used stories to describe what he meant by the kingdom. For the members of the YCW, some of these stories are purely motivational, for example when Jesus describes the kingdom as a treasure buried in the field. Some of the stories are more concrete. A famous story is that of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-10). They are unemployed workers, looking for part-time jobs. The YCW members see such workers everyday and many of them are such workers who have to sit besides the streets, hoping that someone will turn up and offer them a job. In Jesus’ story someone does arrive and offer them work. What is more important for the young worker is that the owner of the vineyard comes out again during the day and offers the unemployed people a job. They all get work in the vineyard. Jesus’ portrayal of the kingdom goes further than just getting a job. Even those piece-job workers who have gained work for only one hour get a full day’s pay, the same as those who worked the whole day. This is really good news for the poor. In our society, millions of unemployed people seek work daily, for any kind of piece-job, just to buy bread to take home to a starving wife and family. A full day’s pay means that no one will go to bed hungry that night. For a brief moment, the kingdom has arrived. It is this kind of kingdom that the YCW members attempt to assist in building. Economists think this is pie in the sky; the kingdom is unattainable. The YCW members are motivated by their reading of the bible that it is attainable, only if we search for it.

6.7.2. Some Features of Faith Formation in the YCW

Dumortier explains that the faith formation in the YCW is built on the base of positive experience. The YCW members believe that the action to change bad

conditions is always possible. It is in the process of action that eyes are opened and one understands better the causes of exploitation and oppression and therefore can start fighting them and build new relations. New relations are built with fellow workers where solidarity grows, faith and trust in others develops. In relations with management, workers discover that the managers can be challenged, or that authorities can be challenged, that they are human beings and nothing more, and that they can be opposed with success. Most importantly is the relation with oneself, there is discovery of abilities, the removal of fear, growth in self-esteem, and so on (1983:50).

The faith formation of the YCW members relates the gospel to their lives. For many young people in the YCW, the gospel is relevant to their situation. The young people identify easily with Jesus when they relate their lives and their struggles to the gospel. They see themselves as continuing His mission of proclaiming the kingdom of God by their actions, which transform their situation. They believe their struggle and the coming of the kingdom are one and the same thing (1983: 63).

The young people identify with the two major groups of people in Jesus' life. Firstly, they identify with the poor people and the outcasts of society that Jesus met, the blind, the lame and many others. Secondly, they identify with the disciples. They feel like continuing the work of the first disciples, going and recruiting more people to work with them, changing conditions for the establishment of the kingdom. They discover that they are called, like the disciples, and that they have to call others. I believe this period of discovery is important and has many important consequences for the theology of work, because it is not only a discovery that God is on the side of the oppressed, it is also the discovery that to continue to fight is to continue God's work and that God is present in the struggle for freedom.

6.7.3. The Maturity of Faith

The question that follows here is, "Does this faith ever reach maturity?" Lafont expresses this well then he says the faith experience of the YCW members moves through stages to reach maturity. First, there is the stage where Jesus is seen as the model, as the one who pushes the young workers to get out of themselves and to serve. Jesus then functions as a super-star model. Then there is a stage where Jesus is no longer needed. The young people say they have to fight on their own. To them Jesus is seen as a refuge for those who do not want to move. They believe a wrong understanding of Jesus keeps people away from the struggle for change, from the fight for others, for justice, for equality and freedom. The final stage is when the young people experience that the struggle, though necessary, is not the final answer to the thirst of humankind. This is the stage when they discover that even the struggle requires more than just strength and determination; it requires love and self-denial. This is a deeper and a more humble stage and the young people who come to new understanding of the presence of Jesus Christ (Lafont 1991:223). Lafont continues to say a new reading of the gospel emerges, Jesus' own experience of death and resurrection, rejection and loneliness and so on. The young people begin to accept their own limitations, accept others with their limitations, accept the church with her limitations, accept and deal with contradictions and failures and accept the limitations of the struggle itself and ask "Lord, where should we go?" (Lafont 1991:223).

All those who reach this stage regard the struggle to be their vocation. They are committed to the church for they know the church is always tempted to loosen her commitment to the gospel of liberation, the gospel of the poor and the exploited. Such a church needs them and their challenge (Lafont 1991:224).

Let us now return to our earlier point about how the local minister can participate in the base group meeting of the YCW and follow up on the suggestion that s/he can attend at least two meetings a week and journey with the unemployed people in their discoveries. It is in these meetings that a minister will play an important role in helping the unemployed realise their potential and here that they

would be better placed to deal any effects of unemployment as it arises. The minister can also arrange workshop sessions with the unemployed and invite people with knowledge on issues of unemployment and related topics. Unemployed members of the congregation must be shown how social structures affect them and how spiritual strength could be deployed to fight the local causes of their disadvantage.

While working with the unemployed, it is important for the minister to constantly prick the consciences of those who are relatively wealthy and those who are extremely rich to contribute to the programmes in the church if they cannot do anything else. It is important for the minister to be a voice of those whose voices no one wants to know about. This would be giving meaning to the phrase "standing alongside" the unemployed. This is a poetic sentiment that many express, but it can have different meanings. For some people it means private prayer and a general sense of sympathy for the unemployed, for others it is helping them in listening and counselling. For me it also means manning the picket line, leading the marchers for a Basic Income Grant, among other things.

6.8. The Role of the Institutional church

Institutional church refers to the church as a denomination, not as a local parish or congregation where a small group of believers come together for a Sunday service. Churches would be those churches commonly known as mainline churches, the small Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in a locality and the Councils and Associations of churches nationally recognised as church bodies. Examples of these would be The South African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC), South African Council of churches (SACC), World Alliance of Reformed churches (WARC), and many others.

Nürnberger states that the irrelevance of the church in economic and industrial issues is proverbial and this should not be bewailed but accepted as inevitable (1990:40). He argues that the reasons are that the church has no political or

economic power. Also the clergy has no knowledge and experience in this field. The church is also dependent financially on powerful groups like everybody else and so it tends to dance to the tunes of these groups. Church representatives therefore should exercise some humility concerning the impact they could make in this area. The real decisions are taken by the actors in the power play and accept that this is where the responsibility essentially lies (1990:45).

Perhaps the most important role the institutional church can play is in the context of prophetic ministry. She should express solidarity with the weaker partners in the social fabric and insist that those in need should receive first priority. The church can expose the structural evils and the abuse of power; it can demythologise ideological preconceptions, urge the contending parties to the negotiating table and offer ethical guidelines based on Christian anthropology.

However, activist groups within the church must engage in non-violent actions like pickets, marches and demonstrations. The church leadership must not undermine and resist these but actively support them as long as the aim is to achieve equitable society. Nürnberger (1990:45) proposes at least some actions that the institutional church could embark on. But the church can only successfully do that if it stops assuming that the sphere of economics and industrial relations is none of its business or that God does not care about mass poverty and unemployment. Privileged congregations should be conscientised to become suspicious of their own motives if they tend to spiritualise the gospel or uncritically side with management and capital interests. The best ways of overcoming this bias is to be confronted with the representatives from the other side of the social system in a living encounter and for the social tasks of the church to be entrenched in constitutions and synod decisions.

Two particular institutions come to mind when one thinks of this role, namely, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and the Presbyterian Church USA. There could be a number of other churches doing it, but these two have made numerous visits to institutions like the Ujamaa Centre, formerly the Institute for the Study of the Bible and Worker Ministry (ISB-W/M), and also to local communities to discover

for themselves what is going on in grass-root communities and feed the information back to their churches. This information is used to lobby the decision-makers on behalf of the people on the margins of society.

While the church does not assume the job of the state or trade unions, because this is not its task, it must not leave those who have been entrusted with this responsibility without its constructive critique and pastoral guidance. This includes developing a sound theology of work, property and stewardship as crucial factors in the development of communal life. The church will have to move away from popular slogans and simple arguments. These are not only useless, but are counterproductive and will do little to enhance the credibility of the church.

Nürmberger (1990:47) proposes that firstly, the church acts as a facilitator in the struggle to overcome structural injustices by offering premises, administrative facilities and channels of communication to the unemployed, bringing contending parties to the conference table, and acting as go-between on behalf of the unemployed. Secondly, the church must express and enact solidarity with the weaker or disadvantaged partner in a social dispute, without becoming uncritical of the latter's motives, means and goals. God is on the side of the needy and the victim of injustices not because he is partial but because he is impartial. Thirdly, the church must build on the strength that it is a grass-roots organisation. The local congregation can be an important enabling agency as African Independent churches and Latin American base communities have shown. In local communities those involved can analyse the problems together, boost their morale, pool their gifts, enhance their training, organise collective action, face the burden of frustration together, share the joy of success and so on. The church must constantly remind all parties of the long-term implications of their operations. It must help to widen the horizons of all contenders in the social power struggle.

6.8.1. Bandaging-up the Wounds

A contextual reading of the Good Samaritan story is very interesting. Many groups of young people who have read it appreciate the role played by the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29ff). The people see the role of a Good Samaritan as equivalent to those actions that the church should take upon itself to do. Actions like using the churchyard and church buildings for productive employment creation. Various groups undertake to do baking, sewing, gardening, literacy classes, day scholars and so on. These activities are called “bandaging-up the wounds” because they attempt to address, on a short term basis, the problem of food shortage and keep people busy doing something with their hands, contributing to God’s creation. The problem has been in the long term, for these small businesses cannot compete with businesses that give discounts nor compete when people from the local community abandon the locally produced school uniform in favour of those in town. The success rate of these activities is very small, except that one in a hundred becomes successful.

Such initiatives, important though they are, are bandaging the wounds because the Good Samaritan did everything for the wounded man, giving him clean food and money but never asking why is the man wounded. We cannot do this forever; at some point the church must ask why are people poor and demand honest answers.

6.9. Summary

This chapter has reflected on the question of why the church should be concerned about the situation and what practical steps the church should adopt in an attempt to deal with the problem. We saw that, according to the biblical faith, creative action is unavoidable for the church in the situation of unemployment. Because unemployment causes suffering, and the attention given to it by our leaders is inadequate, the church must see her involvement in the situation as urgent. It is on this basis that the church and her leaders must be involved both locally and nationally. The Chapter also shows that the church need not invent new ways of

doing things because there are already resources available for the church to make use of in helping the unemployed. The Young Christian Workers method of doing social enquiry was suggested as an obvious model for working with the unemployed. It must be remembered though that there are various other ways of working with the unemployed without using the YCW methodology. However, this method provides potential for the church to play an important role among the unemployed.

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APPENDIX A
UNEMPLOYMENT SURVEY

Please make a ✓ in the appropriate block.

1. Please indicate the Province you live in

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Eastern Cape | |
| Free State | |
| Gauteng | |
| KwaZulu Natal | |
| Mpumalanga | |
| Northern Cape | |
| Northern Province | |
| North West | |
| Western Cape | |

2. Indicate the area you live in

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| City | |
| Rural area | |
| Small town | |
| Farm | |
| Informal settlement | |
| Township | |
| Suburb | |

3. Sex

| | |
|--------|--|
| Male | |
| Female | |

4. Age group

Date of Birth.....

| | |
|------------|--|
| 16 – 20 | |
| 21 – 25 | |
| 26 – 30 | |
| 31 – above | |

5. Home language(s)

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| English | |
| Afrikaans | |
| Zulu | |
| Tswana | |
| Pedi | |
| Sotho | |
| Xhosa | |
| Other (Specify) | |

6. Population group

| | |
|----------|--|
| Coloured | |
| African | |
| Asian | |
| White | |

7. Highest educational qualification

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| No schooling | |
| Primary school | |
| Secondary school | |
| Matriculation | |
| Post matriculation | |

8. Which year was your last school year?

9. If you received post matriculation where did you study?

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Technikons / college | |
| Technical college | |
| University | |
| On the job training | |

10. Are you presently studying or learning any skills?

| | |
|-----|--|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Specify:

11. Are you receiving any income?

| | |
|-----|--|
| Yes | |
| No | |

12. What sort of employment have you had since leaving school? Give details of each job

13. How did your previous employment end?

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Retrenchment | |
| Resignation | |
| Dismissal | |
| Studies | |
| Other | |

14. For how long have you been unemployed (including those never worked)?

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Less than a year | |
| 1 – 2 years | |
| 2 – 3 years | |
| 4 – 5 years | |
| More than 5 years | |

15. Who is giving you support? How do you get food?

16. How has unemployment affected you?

16.1. In your family

16.2. In your community

16.3. In your relationships (with girls/boys)

17. What do you think is the reason for you being unemployed?

(a) Short term causes:

(b) Long term causes:

18. What will consequences be if you remained unemployed for another year?

19. And if you remain unemployed for the next 20 years?

20. What do you think is the solution?

21. Have you heard about the campaign for Basic Income Grant (BIG)?

| | |
|-----|--|
| Yes | |
| No | |

22. Will an unemployment income grant help you?

| | |
|-----|--|
| Yes | |
| No | |

23. Why / how?

24. Do the present grants help you?

25. Which grants? Specify

26. Is it God's Will that you should be unemployed?

| | |
|-----|--|
| Yes | |
| No | |

27. What is your view of God as an unemployed person?

28. What is your view of Christ as an unemployed person?

29. What is your view of the Holy Spirit as an unemployed person?

30. Do you feel part of the church as an unemployed person?

31. How should the church respond to the situation of unemployment?

32. What are your aspirations for the future?

33. Any further comments as an unemployed person?
