



Renewal according to the mind of Christ as trigger for prophetic action in dealing with human waste

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One of the distinct effects of how we as humans deal with our waste seems to manifest in the growing chasm between those 'privileged' by the dominant, waste-generating system and those marginalised by the same system. Those privileged by the system are isolated in a safe world where waste is seemingly managed in an effective way: being sanitised, black-bagged and removed from sight as soon as it is produced. In contrast, those marginalised by the system have to deal with the very real and lasting relationship between waste, disease and death – not only with reference to their own waste but by also having to deal with the excessive waste of others dumped in their immediate environment. The purpose of this contribution is to reflect theologically on the possible role that Pauline perspectives on renewal according to *the mind of Christ* can play in the tension field created by how humanity deals with its waste: What prophetic action can possibly be triggered when those privileged by the system as well as those marginalised by it can be brought to a point where they look at each other through the eyes of Christ and with his mind-set informing their perspective? This problem-field is investigated from a practical-theological vantage point by (1) describing and interpreting the contrast between how privileged and marginalised seem to deal with human waste and its effects (especially as it manifests in the South African society), (2) reflecting on the normative value that an investigation of the Pauline concept *mind of Christ* can have for a humane way of dealing with our waste and (3) visualising a prophetic praxis in which the privileged and marginalised can, through the mind-set of Christ, be empowered to enact a kind of communal life in which we are not estranged from our humanity in the process of dealing with our waste.

Introduction

One of the most significant challenges faced by prophetic action in contemporary civil society is the chasm between those who are protected by the dominant system¹ and those who are marginalised by it.

The tension fields created by this separation clearly manifest in the way human beings are trying to deal with their waste. From the shocking face of the *India-Bharath dichotomy*² as it manifests in the life of some of the richest people in the world enjoying their luxurious Mumbai mansions right on the doorstep of the largest, garbage-overflowing slum in Asia (Choondal 2010:38), to the inhumane livelihood of those having to pick through the environmentally hazardous dumps fed by the wastes of the South African rich and industry (Hallows & Munnik 2008:17), to the disturbing image of African-American women and children having to use their bodies in order to block trucks filled with Polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB)-laced garbage destined for a landfill near their communities in North Carolina³ (Dalton & Simmons 2010:59), a global picture emerges of a disintegrated humanity. On the one hand, there are the privileged who live with the illusion that they can keep their consumerist habits in place due to a seemingly effective system of management, disposal and sanitation; a system that causes waste seemingly to disappear as soon as it is produced. On the other hand, and barred from the sanitised environment of the privileged, is the reality of those marginalised by the system they have to face. Factors like lacking service management and infrastructure make it hard for them to deal with the potentially hazardous effects of human waste. They are confronted by the very real relationship between waste, disease and death. They frequently find themselves in spaces where the waste of affluent society is dumped in their immediate vicinity, overburdening their ability to deal with its hazardous effects and burdening their human dignity in the process.

1.Brueggemann (2012:4) describes the dominant narrative in American society as characterised by 'therapeutic, technological, consumerist militarism. It is committed to the notion of self-invention in the pursuit of self-sufficiency. Between [the] beginning in self-invention and [the] culmination in self-sufficiency, the narrative enjoins to competitive productivity, motivated by pervasive anxiety about having enough, or being enough, or being in control' (cf. Campbell 2002:83, 84; Woods & Patton 2010:4).

2.Joshi (2003) defines the great India-Bharat divide as follows: "'India' is a notional entity, largely Anglicised and relatively better-off, that had obtained the succession of colonial exploitation from the British; while 'Bharat' is largely rural, agricultural, poor and backward that was being subjected to colonial-like exploitation even after the end of the Raj.'

3.With reference to an incident that took place in Warren County, North Carolina in 1982 and that was widely interpreted as a landmark illustration of environmental racism (Dalton & Simmons 2010:59).



The purpose of this contribution is to reflect theologically on the possible role that the concept of *renewal according to the mind of Christ* can play in the tension field created by how humanity deals with its waste. This tension field does not only involve the impact that feelings of anger and loss of dignity will have on the mind-set of those overburdened by these conditions. It – in the case of those privileged by the system – also involves the need to be confronted with the dominant mind-set that is kept in place by this system, a mind-set that is bent on alienating people from an authentic relationship with their own waste and its effects.

This tension field is investigated from a practical-theological vantage point by reflecting on the prophetic action⁴ that can be triggered in the lives of those (both the privileged and the marginalised) whose minds are in the process of being renewed according to the mind of Christ. What will be triggered when the way in which we deal with our waste and the inhumane conditions created by it are prophetically seen through the eyes of Christ? What will be triggered when the human mind is enabled to move beyond conventional dominant reason, and the act of dealing with waste is increasingly imagined from the perspective of the mind of Christ? How will the privileged view the marginalised and the marginalised view the privileged when they begin to encounter each other in the mind of Christ?

These research questions are investigated from a practical-theological vantage point⁵ by (1) *describing and interpreting* the contrast between how privileged and marginalised people seem to deal with human waste and its effects (especially as it manifests in the South African society), (2) *reflecting on the normative value* that an investigation of the Pauline concept 'mind of Christ' can have for a humane way of dealing with our waste and (3) *visualising a prophetic praxis* in which the privileged and marginalised can – through growing participation in the mind-set of Christ – be empowered to enact a life of community, a kind of relationship-sensitive life in which we are not estranged from our own humanity and fellow human beings in the process of dealing with our waste.

The theological position that informs the rationality of this practical-theological investigation does not proceed from a spiritualising viewpoint as if the ecological implications of dealing with human waste is not of specific Christian concern or as if the apocalyptic vision of transition to a new and better world implies that we do not have to involve ourselves in the conservation of a world that is passing away in any case (cf. Dalton & Simmons 2010:54). The author rather works with a point of departure that views the regeneration of humanity to be integrally linked to renewal of relationships as it is already beginning to manifest in the current form the

4. Prophetic action, as Wogaman (1998:4) reasons, is aimed at opening up a window into the reality of God and at showing how the reality of God can shape and direct our existence.

5. See Osmer (2008:4–12) for a discussion on the interrelationship between the descriptive, interpretative, normative and strategic tasks of practical theology.

world finds itself in. It will be in the very DNA of a prophet⁶ to minister the regenerating grace of God in contemporary contexts that are hampered by distorted relationships, thereby anticipating the consummation of a new heaven and earth.

When our dealing with waste causes us to lose touch with our humaneness

There is a distinct difference in the mind-sets that are likely to come into play when marginalised people, on the one hand, and their privileged neighbours, on the other hand, are confronted with human waste and its effects.

The impact of environmental discrimination on the mind of a human being

In its Environmental Outlook Report of 2006, South Africa's Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism pointed out that, at that stage, more than 21% of the population found themselves without sanitation and almost 50% of the population did not receive regular waste collection. These figures include many poorer communities. Assessments showed the growing inability on the part of municipalities to deliver efficient waste services. The report also pointed out the growing health risk that comes from settlements that are increasingly located in unhealthy and hazardous areas such as in buffer zones of industrial areas, on floodplains or next to waste sites, mine dumps and numerous illegal communal dumping sites (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism 2006:34, 35).

In a groundWork⁷ (n.d.) report, a growing concern over poorly maintained sewage systems is mentioned. The report estimated that, of the 1000 municipal sewage works in South Africa, 70% were close to collapse, and it drew a link between poorly maintained sewage systems and the contamination of drinking water. The report points out an incident in April 2008, where 78 children died from diarrhoea in the Ukhahlamba district of the Eastern Cape because the water was contaminated by sewage. When the provincial government cited poverty as one of the causes, amongst other factors like poor service delivery, the sub-text (according to the writers of the report) seemed to be that poor people's lives are less valuable and part of the excuse for not giving them prioritised attention (Hallows & Munnik 2008:16).

The abovementioned groundWork report also discusses instances where the lives of poor people seem to become associated with worthlessness of the garbage through which

6. This contribution forms part of an ongoing project, *The DNA of prophetic speech*, in which the author investigates the regenerative impact of divine grace in Christ as it lovingly and non-coercively realigns and weaves together the very strands of a new humanity, enabling the one that willingly embraces this grace to speak and act with graceful, integrative prophetic power in this broken world (cf. De Wet 2014).

7. groundWork (n.d.) describes itself as a non-profit, environmental, justice, service and developmental organisation working primarily in South Africa, but increasingly in southern Africa. It says that it seeks to improve the quality of life of vulnerable and previously disadvantaged people who are most affected by environmental injustices.



they are picking. The report mentions, amongst others, an incident at Sasolburg where people who pick waste from the local dump wanted to know why the council did not consult with them when it handed out a recycling contract to a private company. The waste pickers allegedly received the following answer from the local council: 'They say you are just people from the dumpsite. You are just scrap' (Hallows & Munnik 2008:17).

What impact does an environment of unprocessed and hazardous waste have on those who have to live in such conditions day in and day out? What will happen to the mind-set of people who are constantly and rudely made aware of the fact that their lives are viewed to be no more valuable than the waste heaps and ineffective, smelly sewage systems with which they are associated? The liberation theologian Leonardo Boff (1997:108) reminds us that the understanding of the poor should never be restricted to a single focus on them as poor. The poor are not simply beings made up of needs, but they are also beings of desire for unrestricted communication, beings hungering for beauty. What beauty can there be for people who constantly have to face an overabundance of decaying, putrid and discarded material? In such an environment, it seems as if death and decay has the overwhelming and the final say. What communicative quality can there be in relationships with fellow human beings when you know that they regard you as a piece of worthless junk?

It can be anticipated that the mind-set of such persons will be vulnerable to feelings of worthlessness, despondency and hopelessness, thereby losing touch with the dignity of their humanness. In the marginalised landscape in which they find themselves, their point of view, however, seems to give them front-row seats for an authentic vision of the ugly truth of what humanity is doing to itself and to this world. Where the death bones of humanity's consumerist abuse of our world are superficially covered elsewhere, here – in these people's living conditions- they are exposed in their grim reality.

A mind-set informed and controlled by consumerism

On the other side of the South African landscape, we find the people whose mind-set is informed and controlled to a large degree by consumerist culture. Capitalism, as Hallows and Munnik (2008:79) point out, is not only a gigantic accumulation machine, it is also a gigantic waste-creation machine. Its logic is to turn more and more raw materials and energy into sellable commodities, commodities into accumulated profit and profit into investments that then expand the system as a whole. Its restless need for never-ending accumulation and expansion means that it must keep on consuming resources and creating an ever-growing pile of waste.

The consumerist system has developed sophisticated measures to hide the effects of overabundant resource

spending from its beneficiaries. Hawkins (2006:46) illustrates how waste-disposal technology can create an illusionary distance between consumers, on the one hand, and the unsanitary effects of the waste produced by them, on the other. Our intimate waste, the waste that has been closest to our bodies or that is organic, is secreted away in drains and enclosed bins. Whilst a blocked toilet may be the ultimate domestic nightmare, spilled trash cans can generate a similar sense of horror. Contact with the slimy, putrefying reality of our waste has the capacity to disturb the body's boundaries and sense of stability. Therefore, in an attempt to hide its threatening and unsanitary reality from us, our waste has to be rendered out of sight as quickly as possible, thereby freeing us from the burden of staying in a relationship with it and the need to deal with its consequences. Kennedy (2007:162) distinguishes between the conceptualisation that lies behind *waste*, on the one hand, and *trash*, on the other hand. Waste is seen to be something that is obvious and is allowed to be offensive. In contrast, the concept of trash has the intrinsic tendency to conceal our waste and deceive us. When we view waste as something that can be disposed of without consequences and without staying in a relationship with it, we allow it to become trash and to dissemble the truth of its being. We allow it to present itself as an immaterial, innocuous substance divorced from the relations to physicality that weave all beings into the interdependent context of the manifest world.

Consumerist culture works with a carefully constructed worldview that coaches its beneficiaries into viewing their patterns of consumption as 'natural' and 'universal'. It permits those who hold it to go about their daily lives as if things are as they are and not significantly changeable. It works for those who hold it. Questions such as the following are not allowed to make a pattern-breaking impact: Who is benefiting from this worldview? How long can this upward line of progress continue? What are the consequences for the planet? (cf. McFague 2001:43). Even disenchantment stories, as they are for instance deployed by environmental activism, do not seem to be able to disrupt our social imaginaries and are not able to shock us into a new mind-set. Hawkins (2006) paints a picture of the typical way our social imaginaries tend to influence us in the formation of our subjective understandings of waste and the environment:

When we hear stories of dying rivers and see images of mountains made of garbage, nature is framed as dead or definitely on its last legs, and it's difficult not to feel a sense of despair or grief. While the political intention of these stories might be to shock us into action, their impact is often overwhelming and immobilising. They can perpetuate the very relation to nature they seek to challenge: alienated distance and disinterest. When the exploitative force of economic power and human destruction is so overcoded why bother contesting it? You might as well just keep on shopping. (p. 9)

The deeply-rooted embeddedness of our mind-set in consumerist culture seems to alienate us from a sense of our place and purpose in this world. It seems to de-humanise us in a certain sense. It seems to make us insensitive towards



introspection and the need for change at the deepest level of our humanity.

The need for a radical shift in mind-set cannot be doubted. However, the question is: How can we be brought to a point where we really begin to think and act radically different with respect to our waste and the way in which we tend to deal with it as disposable trash. Kennedy (2007) calls for change at an ontological level:

When we can look into the mirror of trash and see not simply our own selfishness and failure, but also an opportunity for edification and transformation, only then can we turn away from the phenomenon and step towards a world of beings more commensurate with and true to our mortal existence. We then can give up the ill-fitting mantle of a lord and god; we can resume our natural place of service. By this return we do not at all demean ourselves. We simply quit the cosmic masquerade in which we have made our human selves a ridiculous sight. (p. 185)

Kennedy's call for change challenges us to embrace a radical different mind-set regarding our view on waste. It challenges us to see the undeniable presence of our waste and its effects as an opportunity to be confronted at the deepest level of existence with our own insensitive rejection of our limitations and to find our natural place in this world as humble servants. This proposed mind-set does not open up only a sense of the unacceptability of our selfishness but also an opportunity for edification.

In the next section, we explore the possible contribution that a normative reflection on the Pauline concept *mind of Christ* can make in beginning to define this adequate mind-set for dealing with our human waste. The results of this normative reflection will be utilised in the last section of the article to imagine the prophetic praxis that can flow from a mind-set bent on consciously anchoring our view on life in the mind of Christ. I shall attempt to illustrate how this mind-set can trigger prophetic opportunities for the 'marginalised' as well as the 'privileged' in humbly helping each other to see human waste's true impact on our lives. These are prophetic opportunities that will enable us to disclose our true relationship with human waste and to proleptically deal with it in a way that reflects the Lord Jesus Christ's victory over dehumanising powers.

The normative value of the Pauline concept *mind of Christ* as a conceptual framework for dealing with our waste

Several Pauline passages link the need for a unified framework (which serves as a mind-set and compass for distinct Christian life) with thinking and being renewed according to the *mind of Christ* (*nous Christou*).

In 1 Corinthians 2:16, Paul concludes his discussion on the contrast between those who accept God's wisdom (as it is revealed in the Gospel of Christ crucified) and those who

reject this wisdom (by making use of human standards) with the profound statement: 'But we have the mind of Christ (*nous Christou*)'. God alone knows his own mind through the Spirit, and he has revealed this, his hidden wisdom, to Paul through the same Spirit. Paul, through the Spirit, has the mind of Christ. The mind of Christ enables Paul to discern the wisdom and power that is manifested in the self-emptying that the Son of God accepted on the cross (Barnett 2011:50; Conzelmann 1975:69; Perkins 2012:63; Phlp 2:5–8).

In Romans 12:2, believers are called upon not to conform any longer to the pattern of this world but to be transformed through *renewing their minds*. Through a process of metamorphosis, the Spirit of Christ changes us and enables us to offer ourselves completely to God as living and holy sacrifices. This takes place by means of a lifelong process of re-programming the mind. It is a process in which the mind is taken from conformation to this world and its ideals and more and more made to have in mind the things that are acceptable and pleasing to God (Jonker 1983:166; Osborne 2004:321; cf. Mk 8:33).

In Philippians 2:5, believers are encouraged to continue *setting their mind* (imperative form of *phronein*) on that which is also in Christ Jesus. They are called to base their communal pattern for thinking, acting and feeling on what they see in Christ Jesus. The pattern for their communal life of humble service and counting others more significant than themselves is activated by the mind-set that led the Son of God to empty himself, take on the form of a servant and become obedient to the point of death on a cross (Cousar 2009:52; Fowl 2005:90; cf. Witherington 2011:138; Wolford 2011:8).

The dynamics of how our mind should be connected to the mind of Christ (as these dynamics are defined in the abovementioned passages and their context) are now explored by asking the following questions:

- What is meant by *nous* in the context of linking the mind of believers to the mind of Christ?
- What are the *characteristics of the mind of Christ*, and how do they relate to the characteristics that should be displayed in the life of believers?
- What is the *relationship between divine action and human action* in the realisation of the mind of Christ in the life of believers?

What is meant by *nous* in the context of linking the mind of believers to the mind of Christ?

It is clear from the way in which Paul deploys the concept *nous* that he does not associate it with something that merely describes the rational, intellectual faculty. The inadequacy of 'reason' as the equivalent of *nous* is apparent in such passages as 1 Corinthians 1:10 (where 'attitude' or 'viewpoint' is the meaning), Romans 7:23, 25 (where 'mind' is virtually synonymous with 'the inner man') and Romans 14:5 (where the best translation is probably 'opinion'). *Nous* is associated with the ideas and principles in the inner man that serve as the springs of action. The Christian *nous* is primarily determined



by the acknowledgement of the Lordship of Christ crucified, from which comes acceptance of the cross as a way of life (Stroessel 1963:161, 166).

With our atomised, Western minds, we are prone to narrow down the activity of thinking according to the mind of Christ to the brain-activity of one isolated intellect copying another intellect. However, the Greek word for the thinking activity (*phrones*) would seem to suggest a wider, less intellectual orientation of ourselves towards the work and mission of Christ (Scott 2007:64).

It seems that this wider, less intellectual orientation has to do with the expression of a communal identity. In the light of Christ's example and teaching, the person is not alone but incorporated into God and intimately linked through Christ with all humanity. Consequently, in Paul's terms, to have the same mind as Christ Jesus is to be aware of both a divine and human axis and both a solitary and communal identity. We see ourselves 'in Christ' not only as single isolated individuals but also as part of a whole human family, past and present (Scott 2007:64).

What are the characteristics of the mind of Christ, and how do they relate to the characteristics that should be displayed in the lives of believers?

In the Pauline passages under discussion, two characteristics of the mind of Christ are clearly related to the patterns that can be expected to emerge in the lives of those who are in the process of making the mind of Christ their own:

- Christ's *single-minded devotion* to do the will of his heavenly Father, thereby doing what is pleasing to the Father
- Christ's *humble frame of mind* in taking on the form of a servant.

Single-minded devotion to the will of the Father was one of the most distinct characteristics displayed in the earthly life of Christ Jesus. Through his single-minded devotion, his obedience until the end, he conquered the disintegrative and divisive forces that drew humanity away from one-minded and full-hearted devotion to the one God and threw us into the turmoil of constant disunity amongst each other (Rm 5:18; Col 3:11; Eph 2:14; Murphy-O'Connor 1989:127). When Paul makes an appeal to be 'perfected together in the same mind ...' (1 Cor 1:10), it is not a call for artificial uniformity of opinion but a call to form a communal outlook and single-minded focus moulded by the conquering Lordship of Christ crucified (Stroessel 1963:166).

A second distinct characteristic that framed the mind of Christ throughout his life is his lowliness. If we were to write a script for how the Son of God would appear, we would not have cast him as a carpenter. He chose to associate himself with fishermen, tax collectors, outcasts and sinners. He submitted to a criminal's death (Hunt 1995:11). He humbled himself in the deepest way possible, conquering

the heart of humanity's problem, namely the deceit and destruction caused by self-exultation. He opened a new path for the true expression of our being, the glorification of God (Phlp 2:5–11). For those that live in him, the tyrannical mind-set of self-exultation accompanied by looking down on others is broken down and replaced by humble servanthood (cf. Stagg 1980:343). Partaking in Christ's mind-set of servanthood opens an authentic window on our true presence in this world as people who are dependent on God and glorifies him as the Giver and Sustainer of our lives and as people who are enabled to see the preciousness of life in even the most humble fellow-creatures and will nurture and cherish this life with their whole being.

Communion with the *nous* of Christ Jesus introduces believers to a frame of mind in which the humble act of counting others more significant than yourself does not seem to be a foolish idea that opens the gate for others to trample on you. On the contrary, it is seen to be an act that expresses the wisdom of God and that leads to an abundance of life for all (Motley 2010:1, 2; Phlp 2:1–5).

What is the relationship between divine action and human action in the realisation of the mind of Christ in the lives of believers?

The relationship between divine action (grace) and human action (expression of faith) in the renewal of life in this world is always of primary concern to practical theology. From the Pauline passages under investigation, it becomes clear that the impartation of the mind of Christ into the being of believers is by no means to be thought of as a coercive, mechanical process. Believers are not manipulated into thinking like Christ. The infusion of the mind of Christ into the very strands of DNA that determine the heart of our existence and the expressions that proceed from the core of our being does not introduce something alien into our genetic make-up. The mind of Christ resonates at the deepest level of what it truly entails to be a human being (cf. Kavanaugh 1982:92).

According to Osborne (2004:321), there is an element of inherent passiveness in the sense in which the believers are called in Romans 12:2 to be transformed by renewing their minds (cf. Murphy-O'Connor 1989:214). The transforming (metamorphosing) power that triggers this renewing of the mind comes from the Holy Spirit, who penetrates the core of our being and reshapes us into a 'new creation' (2 Cor 5:17). It is only the Spirit who can create in us the core spirituality that opens our inner being to be receptive to the mind of Christ. It is only the Spirit of God that can make our dulled mind sensitive to the beauty of the divine wisdom that is manifested in the mind of Christ.

However, this does not exclude human activity in the process of willingly embracing the mind of Christ and growing into this mind. The mind of Christ is not forced upon us and does not automatically appear in its most refined and ultimate form in the midst of the community of believers. Believers have a responsibility towards willingly embracing the mind



of Christ and leaving behind the things that can draw the attention and focus of their mind-set away from Christ. They need to be reminded consciously to set their mind on the things that are above, avoiding conformation to the things that are on earth (Col 3:2; Rm 12:2a); The community of believers should consciously move away from thought patterns that can divide their unity, by 'thinking the same thing' (Rm 12:16, 15:5; 2 Cor 13:11; Phlp 2:2). They should be mindful lest they are deceived and lead astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ (2 Cor 11:3; cf. Hunt 1995:10).

This responsibility and the intense discipline and focus that accompanies it do not place an unbearable burden on the shoulders of believers. It is a soft yoke and a light burden that can be carried with joy. When the apostle desires his people to 'have the same love, of one accord, thinking the one thing' (Phlp 2:2), the content and power source for this community thinking is a living theology of Christ – from pre-existence to humiliation to exaltation (Phlp 2:5–11). This theology is not an empty creed but a living truth that draws our mind-set into the victorious space of the Lord Christ Jesus's path from servanthood to glorification and fills us with amazement over the beauty that we see.

Visualising a prophetic praxis for dealing with our waste from a mind-set that is in the process of being renewed according the mind of Christ

The nature of prophetic action that flows from the mind of Christ and its manifestation in a context of eco-spirituality

Prophetic action is not simply a matter of speaking words but comprises an enacted communication that flows from the prophet's access to God's way of looking at life in this world (cf. Woods & Patton 2010:24). Johnson (2011:41) reminds us that the biblical tradition of prophecy is not merely a matter of words spoken but a way of being in the world. It brings God's will into human history through the words and also through the deeds and character of the prophet. The essence of biblical prophecy cannot be limited to 'speaking beforehand' as in prediction but finds its full significance in 'speaking for', as in representation. Prophecy is a way of life. It is the acts of a person led by the Spirit of God in speaking God's Word to humans, embodying God's Word, enacting God's vision and bearing witness to God's Word in the face of opposition.

God's vision for this world comprises abundant life for all in creation. Dempsey (2000:20) discusses the important place of relationships in the ethics of biblical prophecy. The ancient biblical people came to understand that covenant was central to life; it sustained life, preserved it and ensured its future. For them, covenant was relationship – God in relationship with creation, creation in relationship with God. When

covenant was preserved, life flourished. When covenant was broken, life suffered. The hallmarks of covenant were *mishpat* [justice], *sedaqah* [righteousness] and *hesed* [loving-kindness, mercy]. These virtues were associated with Torah and became part of the prophets' ethical message with its focus on the restoration of life into its right relationship with God. Kim (2003:184) points out that the work of the Spirit as well as the work of Jesus are deeply linked with establishing and creating the universal fulfilment of God's justice. The Bearer of the Spirit, chosen by God, brings good news to the oppressed and proclaims liberty to the captives. He was single-mindedly set on giving his whole being in service of restoring all beings into a living and liberated relationship with God.

Those who allow themselves to be renewed according to the mind of Christ will, in accordance with Christ's single-minded devotion to the will of his Father, prophetically live a kind of life that bears witness to the abundance of life that flows from a restored relationship with God. The expression of their being and communal life will be a distinct outcry against all powers that oppress and deceive humanity into thinking it can find life in isolation from God by means of self-realisation (cf. Kavanaugh 1982:99). In a context of the burden placed on the environment by a reckless human presence, Choondal (2010:60) visualises this distinct Christian expression of being as an eco-spirituality that arises fundamentally out of awe, reverence and gratitude for life in its unity, balance, difference and connectedness. It is an eco-spirituality centred on grace, the gift of unconditional love which is compassionate, all inclusive and empowering, drawing on wellsprings of wisdom that are both contemplative and prophetic.

This is a kind of spirituality that is contemplatively anchored in Christ's single-minded devotion to restore all forms of life in a living relationship with God. It is a kind of spirituality that prophetically seeks opportunities to bear the first fruits of God's abundant life, even in a world that seems to be in the process of destroying itself due to its own self-enriching ways and the abundant death (overflowing waste) created by these ways.

Viewing others and the impact of human waste on their lives with an excess of seeing flowing from the mind of Christ

Participation in the mind of Christ creates pathways for a single-minded, humble kind of prophetic action in which the relationship-restoring justice of God is ministered with heavenly wisdom and power. It induces a kind of vision that counts the other's life to be more significant than a mere pre-occupation with the own circumstances and interests. In defining the distinct quality of this vision and the perspective opened up by it, reference can be made to Mikhail Bakhtin's (1990:23) concept of the 'excess of seeing'. By this expression, he basically means that, in human encounters, each person sees what is inaccessible to the other persons. That is, I can see your face, the world behind your back and a whole



series of objects and relations that are not available to you, even as you can see similarly in relation to me. This offers us the opportunity to 'fill in' the other's horizon, by offering our vision to the other as a gift. This means that I can get a perspective on another person that she cannot get on herself, and this has ethical implications because my perspective might well contain information that is vital for her well-being. Proceeding from participation in the humble mind-set of Christ (not bent on preserving own interest), this excess of seeing brings an otherness to the seen, which is imbued with the power to enrich and liberate, rather than to blame, dominate, impoverish and oppress (cf. Doede & Hughes 2004:183).

What will happen in a context of dealing with our waste if those marginalised by the consumerist system as well as those privileged by it begin to encounter each other from the perspective of the mind of Christ and the distinct possibilities that this mind-set creates for excess of seeing?

When they begin to partake in the mind of Christ, those that have been marginalised to life in close proximity to the toxic, waste heaps of the South African landscape do not have to be fixated on feelings of worthlessness, despondency and hopelessness. The poor, as Boff (1997:108) so clearly sees from his vantage point anchored in liberation theology⁸, are generally regarded as passive victims of circumstance. Those who have, so it is said, must help those who do not so as to free them from the inhumanity of poverty. Although this strategy is full of goodwill and well meaning, it is the basis for all paternalism in history. It does not liberate the poor because it keeps them in a situation of dependence. Worse yet, it does not even appreciate the liberating potential of the poor. It does not acknowledge that something significant can be learned from the poor.

When poor and marginalised people begin to partake in the mind of Christ, a unique vision will open up for them regarding the liberating potential that can grow from their situation. This liberating potential does not merely amount to the self-centred communal action of demanding political liberation from a system that oppresses them. When they begin to partake in the mind of Christ (by means of pneumatological faith-interaction with the Gospel of the Crucified and Resurrected Christ), they will humbly begin to express their excess of vision in a unique way. In the marginalised landscape in which they find themselves, their point of view gives them an authentic view on the ugly truth of what humanity is doing to itself and to this world. They will begin to be filled with compassion for those people who think that they are advantaged by the system of consumerism but who are in fact trapped in a situation where they will never be satiated with the 'fullness of life' that the constant flow of 'exciting new products' promises them. From their position, they will begin to see how empty these promises are when this year's exciting new products ends up in a trashed

⁸Liberation theology is convinced that, when tackling the ecological question, it has to start from social ecology, from the systems of exclusion that dominate human relations (De Mey 1998:331).

form on a waste dump after one or two years of use. They will begin to face disease and death (to a large extent caused by the waste and toxic excess of others) with the hopeful prayer that their own fragility will become a witness to humanity of the consequences of its actions, that humanity cannot continue to produce abundant waste as if it is something that can be swept under the carpet and forgotten.

When those privileged by the consumerist system begin to open their lives to the mind of Christ, it will become unbearable for them to live with the injustice that their own excess are causing in the lives of those that have to bear the brunt of an overburdened ecosystem. From the humble servant perspective of the mind of Christ and the unique excess of vision produced by this mind-set, they will start to become conscious of the human dignity of the marginalised and their courageous presence at the battlefield of humanity's struggle with itself. The excess of vision that is opening up in their minds will enable them to see that the value of marginalised lives cannot intrinsically be associated with the wastefulness of the trash through which they have to pick for a living. They will begin to see that these people are precious in the eyes of the living God and that their lives are a profound theatre to remind us that humanity can only live through the grace of God and that we can only become conscious of our humaneness by ministering this grace freely and without prejudice to those who are reckoned to be the least in this world (Mt 25:40).

The need for a liturgical space in which our growing renewal according to the mind of Christ and the prophetic life that flows from it can be expressed

Those marginalised by the consumerist system as well as those privileged by it need to realise that they are in need of each other's excess of vision. This excess of vision needs to be communicated to each other and to the world by becoming part of a prophetic community that is single-mindedly set on bearing prophetic witness to the fullness of life that God intends for his people to the glorification of his Name. Humanity will only be able to deal with its waste in profound new ways when the isolating walls of ecological discrimination are broken down and people from all backgrounds are allowed to serve each other, society at large and the earth with the rich perspectives opened up by growing renewal according to the mind of Christ.

How can such prophetic communities be formed? Middle-class Christian communities live in safe spaces, conveniently isolated from the marginalised communities and their hazardous living environment. Christian leaders need to take the responsibility on their shoulders in communicating God's vision for abundant life for a united humanity under the headship of Jesus Christ. They need to create a liturgical space where people from all spectrums of life can come together, can learn to trust each other and can growingly become conscious of the rich perspectives that they could offer each other and this world. They need a liturgical space



where a living and growing relationship can be nurtured and where a kind of communal life can be expressed that bears prophetic witness to abundant, lasting, precious life for all, rather than having to remain caught up in a system that exploits and marginalises life.

The heart of this visualised liturgical space has to do with ministry of the Gospel of the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ. That which awakens shared participation in the mind of Christ and the serving prophetic praxis that proceeds from this growing mind-set is the shared participation in the Easter moment. In a sermon on Luke 22:14–30, Susan Palwick (2004:15–17) considers the liturgical pattern induced by the institution of the Lord's Supper and its implications for our Christian call to be a blessing for the world. The Easter theme develops along the following lines in her sermon: The priest *takes* the bread, *blesses* it, *breaks* it and *gives* it to the congregation. Why would one bless something, only to break it? Why would you give as a gift something that was broken? Most of us do not want broken presents. If something is broken, we throw it away. It becomes garbage.

Easter people, however, know about resurrection, about broken things producing new life. They know that redemption is God's way of saying that nothing has to be garbage, that nothing needs to go to waste, that not a sparrow falls but is counted.

Our work as Christians is to find loving alternatives to the cursing, discarding, despairing way of the world. Our work as Christians is to be co-redeemers with God.

From a unified liturgical space, with the Easter moment at its heart, like-minded Christians from all spectrums of life will prophetically start to bear witness that there is abundant life beyond the discarding, despairing ways by which the world is trying to find this abundance. They will begin to voice an alternative consciousness that confronts the dominant consciousness of consumerism (Woods & Patton 2010:16). They will begin to help each other and this world to work modestly and responsibly with our waste. They will help people not to see it as something that can be trashed without consequences. They will help people carefully to seek ways in which it can be recycled responsibly or given a second life to the benefit of those in need of experiencing the abundant life that God intends for all humanity. They will break and share a kind of bread amongst themselves and with the world that will bear witness to an abundance of God-given life. It is a kind of life that clearly cannot be produced by the wasted efforts of a divided and disillusioned humanity, a humanity that needs to see that it is increasingly caught up in the process of creating death rather than life.

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