

# Covid-19, Public Violence, Fake News and Vaccines: A Theological Ethical Reflection

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## Abstract

This paper attempts to deal with Covid-19, fake news and vaccines and is the product of a talk the author gave at a contact session of the Northern Theological Seminary of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. This presentation was given a few weeks after South Africans were confronted by the eruption of public violence, “apparently” sparked by the jailing of President Jacob Zuma. The author, although requested to share ideas on Covid-19 and vaccines, felt that there was some political nexus between public violence, the feeling of being left out systematically, the unintended consequences of the lockdown, and the spark—the Constitutional Court’s decision to jail the then president. This article does not discuss the Constitutional Court’s decision or the jailing of the then president but tries to academically think about the causes of the eruption of public violence. The author explores the politics surrounding the vaccines and the unintended consequences of the lockdown, discusses “what the Church has become” since the outbreak of this virus, and deliberates the impact of “fake-news” in the era of a pandemic.

**Keywords:** Covid-19; fake news; church in the age of a pandemic; vaccines

## Introduction

This paper is the product of a talk the author gave in a contact session of the Northern Theological Seminary (NTS) of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). The author was requested to share ideas on Covid-19 and vaccines from the viewpoint of a theologian from the reformed tradition. Thus, this paper attempts to deal with the debacle surrounding the “vaccines” from a theological, ethical approach.

The roll-out of vaccines has divided people into two opposing camps, namely those who are pro and those who are against vaccines. Those who are pro vaccines feel that the



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government should enforce vaccination, and those who are against vaccines see vaccines as part of a bigger plot to zombify people.<sup>1</sup> It seems, according to the author, that those who have been vaccinated have developed “vaccine exceptionalism” (Bastian 2021; Dreger 2016). This is because they tend to believe that, in some way, they are (medically) superior to and better than those who are not vaccinated. Those who are not vaccinated or who are anti-vaccines have developed a political high-ground of being “people who do not succumb” to the system.

It must be stated emphatically that the author is not in any way a medical scientist, nor is the author dealing with this matter as an expert on vaccines. The views presented here are based on the readings the author has done as a theologian specialising in theological ethics. The author would like to point out that vaccines have been used since time immemorial to deal with harmful diseases. Usually, vaccines are administered to stimulate the production of anti-bodies and provide immunity against a disease. In this paper, vaccines are dealt with in the era of a pandemic that has crippled the world following the outbreak of the novel coronavirus in Wuhan, China. This infectious disease, as scientific research has shown, causes respiratory illness. However, it has also caused political, social, religious and economic instability and turmoil. Following the outbreak of this infectious disease, many countries were forced to implement a hard lockdown with the aim of stopping its spread. The author, in discussing vaccines, will give a brief breakdown of the notion of the coronavirus, then deal with the role of the church in coping with this disease and how this has affected the church. The article explores the impact of “fake news,” which, according to the author, is especially dangerous in the era of a pandemic, and the article concludes with the author’s personal views on vaccines.

## Setting the Scene: Public Violence

This article explores a challenging time in South Africa—where the country is dealing with a plethora of pandemics, namely corruption, Covid-19, poverty, gender-based violence (GBV), racism, fake news and, of course, the eruption of public violence in many parts of South Africa. This is indeed a difficult time for South Africa, especially for a country that, in the dawn of inclusive political democracy, was known as a miracle child. The country has managed to politically scrape through the after-effects of colonial apartheid (Lephakga 2016). This country appeared, through the lenses of the international community, to be a perfect example of how to deal with the political challenges of the past (Lephakga 2015; Terreblanche 2002).

However, many people in South Africa (and in the international community) were left stunned following the recent eruption of violent protests that quaked the very pillars of the country as a perfect example of dealing with differences. The author has perused the causes of these violent protests, which have left many people shocked, dismayed,

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1 <https://www.businessday.in/coronavirus/story/fake-news-covid19-vaccine-wont-turn-you-into-a-zombie-282639-2020-12-26>.

confused and, of course, a bit conflicted. The term “a *bit* conflicted” points to the fact that some South Africans understand that frustration, feeling left out (socially, economically, historically) and feeling systematically forgotten will tend to make people opt for unconventional ways to voice their frustrations. Frustration, as a common emotional response to perceived opposition, tends to occur when individuals (or groups) feel that there is resistance to the fulfilment of their will or goal or they are blocked (Norwood 2008, 16). Following the transition to democracy, many people in South Africa had hoped that they would be socially, politically, and economically taken on board. Socially, they had hoped that there would be a political process that would improve the conditions through which they could take part in society. They had hoped—like the social inclusion theory advocates (Hayes, Edwards, and Gray 2007)—that those who are in-charge politically would improve their ability, opportunities and dignity as “people” that were previously disadvantaged systematically (Lephakga 2016; Terreblanche 2002). Politically, they had hoped that they would be able to access all the institutions of democracy without fear or favour (Lephakga 2016; Terreblanche 2002). This access means more than voting, but includes the idea of being seen, heard and recognised, socially and economically (Lephakga 2016; Terreblanche 2002). Economically, they had hoped that opportunities would be opened up and they would be able to participate in the mainstream economy (Lephakga 2016; Terreblanche 2002) and not be economic “beggars” (Menka, Khan, and Shamshad 2014). Thus, the author points to the possibility that the recent eruption of violence in South Africa could be the result of frustration, which tends to lead to aggression. The author contends that, as a result of exclusion, frustration can accumulate, which in turn can lead the aggrieved to unleash their aggression towards the “system.”

There are, of course, those who reject the view that frustration and aggression can lead to violence against the “system” (Berkowitz 1989; Milburn 1980). Those who reject this view argue that this is based on overgeneralisation. Some people argue that violence does not solve anything. Some would respond by saying that violence led to the political collapse of colonial apartheid (Lephakga 2015; Terreblanche 2002). Others would go even further and say that violence is more than just the use of harmful physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy; it also includes the systematic denial of one’s existence and history, as well as systematic economic exclusion (Galtung 1969; Lee 2019; Zizek 2008).

Some would put across the argument that fighting against the system comes with contradictions (Mao 1953; Zizek 2007). They remind us of the biblical narrative of the “exodus,” where the Israelites found themselves in Egypt (Stricker 2008), which represented “enslavement” (Laffey 1998). In response to this “enslavement,” the God of the Israelites (through Moses, their leader) liberated them (Pixley 1987; Zaslow 2017). However, as a result of many disappointments, frustrations and feeling that the so-called “change” appeared to be slow or worse than the “enslavement” itself, the Israelites cried out and asked Moses: “Why did you take us out of Egypt?” (Herman 2016; Hoffmeier, Milard, and Rensburg 2016)? For Israelites, Egypt represented

enslavement, but they had, in the process of their own enslavement, got used to their condition. This is because oppression or enslavement has at its heart the “ideological” grounding. This means that the oppressive system has the core “idea” that one group is somehow better than another and, in some measure, has the right to control the other group (David 2014; David and Derthick 2018; Fanon 2017; Freire 1970; Lephakga 2012; Small 2014).<sup>2</sup> This “idea,” as scholars of the psychology of oppression have shown, gets expounded with ridiculous statements like “more intelligent”; “hard working”; “stronger”; “more capable”; “more noble”; “more deserving”; “more advanced”; “chosen”; “normal”; “superior”; and sometimes “proper looking,” etc. (David 2014; David and Derthick 2018; Fanon 2017; Freire 1970; Lephakga 2012; Small 2014).<sup>3</sup> This “idea” with the said qualities then ideologically attributes the opposite qualities to the other group (oppressed group), namely “stupid (not intelligent or less intelligent)”; “lazy”; “weak”; “incompetent”; “worthless”; “less deserving”; “backward”; “inferior,” etc. (David 2014; David and Derthick 2018; Fanon 2017; Freire 1970; Lephakga 2012; Small 2014).<sup>4</sup> The oppressed then start internalising these qualities, while the oppressing group gladly internalises and acts upon qualities attributed to them (David 2014; David and Derthick 2018; Fanon 2017; Freire 1970; Lephakga 2012; Small 2014).<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, this “idea”—the ideological grounding of oppression and enslavement—gets to put systems and institutions in place in order to institutionalise oppression (David 2014; David and Derthick 2018; Fanon 2017; Freire 1970; Lephakga 2012; Small 2014).<sup>6</sup> This points out that the Israelites, like all the oppressed throughout history, had learned the art of surviving. They (Israelites) at least “ate.” The author is of the view that the Israelites’ response, “... at least we ate,” represents social, economic, psychological and religious defeat. Furthermore, this “... at least we ate” represents the whole notion of “internalised oppression.” This is because the psychology of oppression works in the following way: the oppressed tend to internalise the ideology of inferiority, they see it reflected in the institutions, they experience disrespect interpersonally from members of the oppressing group, and they eventually come to internalise the negative messages about themselves (David 2014; David and Derthick 2018; Fanon 2017; Freire 1970; Lephakga 2012; Small 2014).<sup>7</sup>

In response to the eruption of the recent public violence in South Africa, some people opted to condemn it without even trying to analyse the reasons that led to the public uprising. This is understandable, as scholars who work with the psychology of condemnation have pointed out through research (Cheng, Ottati, and Prince 2013; Lamb 2003). Lamb has argued that condemnation stems from emotional impulses as from an awareness that someone has violated an important social norm (Lamb 2003, 929). For Lamb, usually, the public will condemn certain acts or behaviours based on social

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2 [https://www.grcc.edu/sites/default/files/docs/diversity/the\\_four\\_is\\_of\\_oppression.pdf](https://www.grcc.edu/sites/default/files/docs/diversity/the_four_is_of_oppression.pdf).

3 [https://www.grcc.edu/sites/default/files/docs/diversity/the\\_four\\_is\\_of\\_oppression.pdf](https://www.grcc.edu/sites/default/files/docs/diversity/the_four_is_of_oppression.pdf).

4 [https://www.grcc.edu/sites/default/files/docs/diversity/the\\_four\\_is\\_of\\_oppression.pdf](https://www.grcc.edu/sites/default/files/docs/diversity/the_four_is_of_oppression.pdf).

5 [https://www.grcc.edu/sites/default/files/docs/diversity/the\\_four\\_is\\_of\\_oppression.pdf](https://www.grcc.edu/sites/default/files/docs/diversity/the_four_is_of_oppression.pdf).

6 [https://www.grcc.edu/sites/default/files/docs/diversity/the\\_four\\_is\\_of\\_oppression.pdf](https://www.grcc.edu/sites/default/files/docs/diversity/the_four_is_of_oppression.pdf).

7 [https://www.grcc.edu/sites/default/files/docs/diversity/the\\_four\\_is\\_of\\_oppression.pdf](https://www.grcc.edu/sites/default/files/docs/diversity/the_four_is_of_oppression.pdf).

standards of behaviours that are normative; and they feel that these normative standards have been violated (Lamb 2003). Normative standards are based on morality, and in turn, the law is there to guide and point to acceptable and bad behaviours (Lamb 2003). Lamb argues that this provides boundaries for behaviour, serving as a continuous, repetitive set of instructions as to how we should think about good and evil, normal and pathological, legitimate and illegitimate, order and disorder (Lamb 2003). It is understandable that some have opted to condemn without analysing. Condemnation serves a social function (Lamb 2003, 931–932). That function is to communicate to the members of society (Lamb 2003, 931–932). Some members of society condemned the use of “violence” as a way to communicate to members of society that we don’t do that (transgression, looting and using violence to voice your frustrations) and that we abhor those acts, that way of thinking and that lack of feeling that may have led to the transgression(s) (Lamb 2003, 932–933).

Condemnation, in its communicative function, can be assaultive (Lamb 2003, 932). Lamb argues in this regard that by condemning a wrongdoer, we may want to see him or her squirm or show some other sign of suffering (Lamb 2003, 932). For Lamb, this (seeing the wrongdoer squirm or suffer) also serves a social and communicative function in that public displays of suffering can offer a form of deterrence to would-be transgressors and can solidify a community through an expression of boundary: “These acts will not be tolerated” (Lamb 2003, 932). The author argues that condemnation, with its social and communicative functionality, is understandable but has the potential to make us fail to deal politically, socially and economically with the challenges of those who feel “systematically” left out. We are reminded of the criticism put forward by Rev. Dr Bonganjalo Goba, who (as an anti-apartheid activist, liberation theology and Black Theology of liberation proponent) argued in the heydays of apartheid that Black priests who had internalised White theology and, in turn, had internalised their own oppression, tended to fall into the trap of using the pulpit to lambast the masses through the liturgical usage of the Ten Commandments. The liturgical use of the Ten Commandments is usually referred to as the “Decalogue.” The Decalogue is a set of biblical principles relating to ethics and worship that play a fundamental role in Christianity and Judaism. These sets of biblical principles liturgically serve the purpose of stimulating confession and pushing the “hearer” to grateful obedience. Goba has noted that the Decalogue is used by priests as a “condemnation.” This condemnation, according to Goba, comes in the form of ethical condemnation; that is, through the Decalogue, the priest tells the “hearer” what they should *not* do but fails to tell the “hearer” what they should do.

Furthermore, the author puts forward the notion of “politics naming” the perpetrators of public violence in South Africa. This points to the argument that the naming of the perpetrators has a bearing on the political and legal responses (Mamdani 2002; 2007; 2012). The author argues that if the perpetrators are named barbarians (those who are either uncivilised or primitive), criminals (those who are guilty or found guilty of a crime), looters (those who steal), thugs (those who are violent), and even terrorists (those who use violence or the threat of violence to inculcate fear), then the response or

intervention by the state will be a harsh legal response. The state will use the security cluster to come down hard on perpetrators and will make use of legal institutions as a condemnation approach or act.

The author is reminded of the work by Mahmood Mamdani, *The Politics of Naming: Genocide, Civil War, Insurgency*. Mamdani deals with the politics of naming, and his interest is the notion of genocide (Mamdani 2007, 1–8). For Mamdani, the notion of genocide is of interest against the background of the mass slaughters of the 20th century—particularly the holocaust (Mamdani 2007, 1–8). Against this background, Raphael Lemkin (the polish lawyer of Jewish descent who coined the term genocide and also initiated the Genocide Convention) comes to mind. Lemkin convinced the international community that genocide was an offense against international law and that the international community needed to intervene where there was genocide (Mamdani 2007, 1–8). However, Mamdani argues that there is a political motive around the notion of genocide. Mamdani asks the following questions: When is the slaughter of civilians called genocide? Which particular slaughter is going to be named genocide? Which one is not going to be named genocide? (Mamdani 2007, 1–8). In response to these questions, Mamdani argues that there are similarities between the mass killings or slaughter in Iraq and Darfur, but the naming of these killings is not the same (Mamdani 2007, 1–8). The estimate of the number of civilians killed in both places is roughly similar (Mamdani 2007, 1–8). However, the violent occurrences that took place in the two places are named differently (Mamdani 2007, 1–8). In Iraq, it is said to be a cycle of insurgency and counter-insurgency, while in Darfur, it is called genocide (Mamdani 2007, 1–8). Mamdani then asks *why*—Why the difference? Who does the naming? Who is being named? What difference does it make? (Mamdani 2007, 1–8).

Mamdani then simplifies the argument by pointing out that there was serious media attention towards Darfur, but not towards Iraq (Mamdani 2007, 1–8). Iraq was under the occupation of American-led forces, and in people’s imagination, the politics there were messy (Mamdani 2007, 1–8). In Darfur, the politics in people’s imagination were not messy because, as Mamdani argues, Darfur was a place without history and without politics (Mamdani 2007, 1–8). Darfur was just a site where perpetrators were clearly identifiable as “Arabs,” confronting victims clearly identifiable as “Africans” (Mamdani 2007, 1–8). Mamdani further points out that, following the naming of what was happening in Darfur, there was a call from Americans and the so-called international community for intervention (Mamdani 2007, 1–8). This intervention was through military force, which had to be placed under “a chain of command allowing necessary and timely military action without approval from distant political or civilian personnel” (Mamdani 2007, 1–8). The intervention in Darfur should not be subject to “political or civilian” considerations, and the intervening forces should have the right to shoot-to-kill without permission from distant places: these were said to be “humanitarian” demands (Mamdani 2007, 1–8).

This highlights that the naming of perpetrators has a bearing on how the state responds. As a way of comparison, there have been acts of violence throughout South Africa since the dawn of inclusive democracy. These violent acts have resulted in the torching of buildings, destruction of public property and, in some instances the death of civilians. The author is not aware if the perpetrators were named looters, hooligans, thugs, barbarians, or terrorists. For instance, in 2020, the media reported that farmers and their supporters torched a police van and disruptively stormed the courtroom in Senekal, Bloemfontein.<sup>8</sup> This incident sparked a debate on social media and on different platforms, where the police were accused of having double standards when it comes to the condemnation of violence.<sup>9</sup> The state responded, and in turn, the media (via *News24*) claimed that the government spokespeople received threatening phone calls, insults and a barrage of threatening messages.<sup>10</sup> Other groups even argued that the violence in Senekal cannot be condoned but that it was understandable. The perpetrators of these acts were named “farmers”—that is, those who produce food or look after livestock. They were not called criminals, hooligans or any name related to someone who is against the state.<sup>11</sup> This naming, as the author has pointed out, influenced how the state responded. The state did not use rubber bullets, stun grenades or water cannons like they normally use against those named looters, hooligans, thugs and barbarians.

## Novel Coronavirus and the Lockdown: Its implications?

It is imperative to investigate the pandemic, called Covid-19, caused by the “novel corona virus” and containment approaches like lockdowns that were put in place in order to stop its spread. The approach will be to check the information that scientists have provided since its recent outbreak in Wuhan, China and the history of pandemics (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020).

This historical overview is of value, as Brown has noted that, in times of crisis, many of us are strongly drawn to history (Brown 2021). This is because it is within human nature to turn to history in order to draw some valuable lessons from the past (Brown 2021). The “novel” coronavirus is an infectious disease that causes respiratory illness. This virus has the following symptoms: 1) common symptoms—fever, dry cough, tiredness; and 2) less common symptoms—aches and pains, sore throat, diarrhoea, conjunctivitis, headache, loss of taste or smell and a rash on the skin or discoloration of fingers or toes, etc. (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020). This virus is spread through droplets and virus particles released into the air when an infected person breathes, talks, laughs, sings, coughs or sneezes (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu

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8 <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/senekal-chaos-arrested-farmer-allegedly-encouraged-people-to-storm-court-get-accused-report-20201008>.

9 <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/senekal-chaos-arrested-farmer-allegedly-encouraged-people-to-storm-court-get-accused-report-20201008>.

10 <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/senekal-chaos-arrested-farmer-allegedly-encouraged-people-to-storm-court-get-accused-report-20201008>.

11 <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/senekal-chaos-arrested-farmer-allegedly-encouraged-people-to-storm-court-get-accused-report-20201008>.

2020). According to scientific research, larger droplets will naturally fall to the ground within a few seconds, but tiny infectious particles can linger in the air and accumulate in indoor places, especially where many people are gathered and where there is poor ventilation (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020). This infectious disease has changed how we as “beings” relate to one another, as the new normal requires us to:

1. Wear masks. According to research, the public wearing of masks is most effective at reducing the spread of the virus when compliance is high. This is because many particles that are emitted when one speaks, breathes, laughs and/or coughs become smaller due to evaporation and can spread quickly through the mouth or nose (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020).
2. Practise hand hygiene or sanitising. According to research, germs (and now this infectious disease through droplet particles) are everywhere, and they can get onto our hands and items that we touch during our daily activities and, as such, could spread infection (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020). Accordingly, the washing of hands with soap and water or sanitising with sanitisers that contain a high dosage of alcohol is important as a preventive measure against an infectious disease like Covid-19 (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020).
3. Practise social distancing. According to research, social distancing helps to curb the usual way of greeting or interacting like handshaking, hugging or any other form of direct contact. Social distancing in this regard refers to keeping a distance from others by avoiding crowded spaces like malls, social events, and so forth. Social distancing has been practised throughout history when dealing with transmissible diseases, like during the Black Plague (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020).

This deadly coronavirus (causing Covid-19) has ravaged people’s livelihoods, families, countries and economies throughout the world (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020). Covid-19 saw many people losing their loved ones, many people being hospitalised, many people losing their jobs, losing their sense of belonging and having to adapt to the so called “new normal” (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020). This virus became known to many of us following its outbreak in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, when the World Health Organisation (WHO) was notified through its China office of a cluster of pneumonia cases (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020).

In January 2020, the WHO declared the outbreak of Covid-19 a “public health emergency of international concern” (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020). The WHO made it clear that this declaration was the result of a concern that this infectious disease (virus) can quickly spread to countries with weaker health systems (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020). The WHO referred to “novel” coronavirus because the word “novel” originated from the Latin word “*Novus*,” which means new (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020). In the field of medicine or medical sciences, “novel” refers to a virus or bacterial strain that was not previously identified (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020). Therefore, it can be said that Covid-19 is a new



disease caused by the new coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, which was not previously seen in humans (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020). It must, however, be pointed out that there are many coronaviruses that were historically found in animals and had the potential (and some did) to jump from animals to humans (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020).

The outbreak of this virus saw many countries (both those with stronger and weaker healthcare systems) forced to implement hard lockdowns. The notion of “lockdown” refers to the forced confinement of a person to a place with limited movement or sometimes with no option of having your natural right of having freedom of movement (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020). Historically, this confinement was usually reserved for those punished by law. However, history has shown that sometimes governments or any other authoritative structures imposed lockdowns trying to save lives or thinking they were saving lives, like with the “Black Death Pandemic (Plague), early outbreaks of cholera to the influenza pandemic” (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020).

Lockdowns generally limit or restrict natural rights, which refer to those rights that are given to all humans. These rights are usually non-negotiable (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020) and can only be partially limited, for instance, via the limitation clause of the Constitution. The Constitution of South Africa (in section 36) indicates that constitutional rights (i.e., natural rights) can be partially limited to a specified extent and for certain limited and democratically justifiable purposes. Thus, with the recent lockdown that was necessitated by the outbreak of Covid-19, the government of South Africa was forced, in justifiable purpose (as we were informed), to limit certain rights of citizens in order to “save lives.” Lockdowns have been imposed throughout history and usually refer to the notions of “stay-at-home,” “shelter-in-place,” or “quarantine.”

Lockdowns or quarantining have been with us since time immemorial and can be traced back to the time of the Black Death (Plague), early outbreaks of cholera, the 1918 influenza pandemic, and others that followed. Throughout history, lockdowns or quarantining was used for restraining the movement of persons or goods on land or sea because of any outbreak that had the potential to be contagious (Mohan and Nabiar 2020; Zhu and Niu 2020). The history of pandemics has shown, as Tognotti argued, that organised institutional responses to disease control began during the plague epidemic of 1347–1352 (Tognotti 2013). Tognotti, like all historians who have studied the history of pandemics, noted that the plague was initially spread by sailors, rats, and cargo arriving in Sicily from the eastern Mediterranean. This plague quickly spread throughout Italy, decimating the populations of powerful city-states like Florence, Venice and Genoa (Tognotti 2013). Furthermore, Tognotti points out that the pestilence then moved from ports in Italy to ports in France and Spain. From north-eastern Italy, the plague crossed and in no time affected the populations in Europe (Tognotti 2013). Medicine, as Tognotti has pointed out, was incapable at that “moment” of fighting against the plague and the only way to escape infection was to avoid contact with

infected persons and contaminated objects (Tognotti 2013). Medical scientists at that time were busy studying the plague and trying to come up with medically suited ways to deal effectively with it (Tognotti 2013). It is against this backdrop (of the spreading of the plague) that some city-states prevented strangers from entering their cities. Some cities imposed what is termed the “*cordon sanitaire*” (restriction of movement of people), and this restriction was imposed by armed guards along transit routes and at access points to cities (Tognotti 2013). The implementation of measures like this required firm action by authorities, including prompt mobilisation of repressive forces (Tognotti 2013). A rigid separation between the healthy and infected persons was accomplished through the use of makeshift camps. Quarantine (which in today’s language refers to “self-isolation”) was first introduced in 1377 in Croatia via the building of the permanent plague hospital (lazaretto) in 1423 (Tognotti 2013). Following this, many cities and countries (especially Italy) started adopting “self-isolation” hospitals (Tognotti 2013). These hospitals were usually built far away from main cities or centres of habitation to restrict the spread of the disease but close enough to transport the sick (Tognotti 2013). Due to the belief that the plague was spread by ship merchants, rats, and passengers from ships, these “self-isolation” hospitals were usually built close to sea ports so as to isolate ship passengers and crew who had or were suspected of having the plague (Tognotti 2013). The term quarantine means “40 days” and came to be used regarding those who were isolated for 40 days when suspected of being sick of the plague (Tognotti 2013).

Many cities also added as a way of containment the passing of health bills that detailed the sanitary status of a ship’s port of origin (Tognotti 2013). Ports were closed for ships from plague-infected areas, and ships suspected of carrying the plague were signalled with a flag that would be seen by lookouts. Immediately a boat was dispersed from the mainland to that ship, and the captain in a lifeboat to the health magistrate’s office. He was kept in an enclosure where he spoke through the window; thus, the conversation took place at a safe distance (Tognotti 2013). The captain was required to show proof of the health of the sailors and passengers and provide information on the origin of merchandise on board (Tognotti 2013). If there was suspicion of disease on the ship, the captain was ordered to proceed to the quarantine station, where passengers and crew were isolated, and the vessel was thoroughly fumigated and retained for 40 days (Tognotti 2013). The lessons learned from the plague and all the containment measures that were put in place assisted the world in dealing with pandemics that followed, like cholera and influenza (Tognotti 2013).

The use of lockdowns and quarantining came with unintended consequences throughout history. For instance, following the outbreak of cholera, many cities adopted an approach that led to authorities doing everything in their power to keep marginalised members of the population away from cities (Tognotti 2013). Another instance of this was in 1836 in Naples, where health officials hindered the free movement of prostitutes and beggars because they were suspected of being carriers of contagion and thus a danger to the healthy urban population (Tognotti 2013). This containment approach

appeared to be targeting a certain segment of the population—that is, the poor (Tognotti 2013). In some countries, the suspension of liberty that comes with the enforcement of lockdowns and quarantining was used as a tool to stop political opposition (Tognotti 2013).

The unintended consequences of lockdowns and quarantining were repeated when dealing with Covid-19. Scholars of history point to the fact that special laws used to enforce lockdowns and quarantine are detrimental to the poor. During the plague, cholera, and influenza (and now Covid-19) they were forced to be confined in their poverty, while the rich secluded themselves in their homes, enjoying quality wines and provisions, music and other entertainment (Tognotti 2013). Furthermore, the wealthiest (described by some as “ruthless”) even deserted their neighbourhoods, retreating to comfortable country estates. This gave an impression that “the plague was meant to harry only those remaining within their city walls” (Tognotti 2013). This meant that the poor had no other option but to remain or be confined to their usual environment of poverty, poor sanitation, lack of food, and so forth. The poor, who were forced to stay at home, “caught the plague by thousands right there in their own neighborhood, day after day, and swiftly passed away” (Tognotti 2013). Some who were servants were forced to attend to their sick masters in wealthy households, and unfortunately, many of them succumbed to the illness (Tognotti 2013). Some of the poor who, for obvious reason, could not leave infested cities were convinced of their imminent death and decided to simply drink and party away their final days in nihilistic revelries, while in rural areas, laborers died “like brute beasts rather than human beings; night and day, with never a doctor to attend them” (Tognotti 2013).

We now turn to the impact of lockdown and quarantining in South Africa during Covid-19. The lockdown unmasked the reality of the notion of “two South Africa’s,” as Stiegler and Bouchard have argued, the lockdown showed the image of South Africa as a country that is both diverse and contrasting (Stiegler and Bouchard 2020). Lockdown regulations were partially well respected among the middle class, and people, in general, stayed at home, managed to work remotely with access to the Internet, and families were often happy together (Stiegler and Bouchard 2020). On the other hand, the situation was different in the poorest areas and informal settlements (Stiegler and Bouchard 2020). Lack of proper sanitation, lack of food and financial resources made things worse, as there was fear of a human catastrophe if the virus was to spread in these poor communities (Stiegler and Bouchard 2020). The state appeared to be enforcing lockdown regulations on poorer communities (Stiegler and Bouchard 2020). The poor were forced by conditions to go out and look for food, and unlike the middle class, the poor could not work remotely, which meant there was no income (Stiegler and Bouchard 2020).

Another unintended consequence of the lockdown was that it created opportunities for the rich and the politically connected. This, in turn, caused frustration among the poor. The rich and the politically connected could cash in on the opportunities of providing

masks, sanitisers and personal protective equipment (PPE), while the poor, like the biblical Lazarus, “longed to be fed with the crumbs that fall from the table.” It must be mentioned that the state tried to distribute food to the poor and even gave them relief grants.

## The Church and the Fight against the Pandemic

The ravaging effects of this infectious disease did not spare the church. The church, as we traditionally know it, has been challenged, and Christians have been forced to re-imagine the church anew. The church has been forced to adapt, embrace and was, in some respects, forced to let go of its old habits or even be transformed for better or worse. Studies in adaptation theory (Beyer 1995) or cognitive development theory (Huitt and Hummel 2003) deal with the natural ability of an organism (in this context, the church) to adapt or adjust to the environment, information and experiences. Furthermore, psychologists dealing with cognitive development argue that the most important process of cognitive development is adaptation, and this process of adaptation involves two stages, namely assimilation and accommodation (Huitt and Hummel 2003).

This is mentioned here not to deal with the adaptation theory or cognitive development theory per se, but to point out that the church has been forced (as a result of the ravaging effects of this infectious disease) to adapt to the “new normal” or suffer the same fate as species in the so-called natural selection of “dying and becoming extinct.” Furthermore, psychologists (or those in business studies) often point out that “to embrace” involves a process of accepting and seeing an opportunity in a situation where change is inevitable. During lockdown, the church found itself at the crossroads, as the Lord said in Jeremiah 6:16, and had the opportunity to decide on a new path. The quest of the church has always been to maintain the traditional beliefs and ways of maintaining the practice of churches (Pillay 2020, 266–275). This is no longer viable—the pandemic has radically altered every aspect of life as we know it, presenting a threat to long-established and cherished patterns but also offering opportunities for significant and life-affirming change (Pillay 2020, 266–275). Furthermore, biologists point out that transformation involves the process of change, that is, altering into something new. The church has been forced by this infectious disease to transform, and as Pillay (2020, 266–275) argues, “to do church differently and to re-imagine the future of the church.”

The outbreak of this infectious disease has challenged the heart of the gospel in that it has brought dehumanisation and destroyed the human-beingness of those who are called to be the children of God. It has caused those who are the image of the living God to scorn themselves and question their standing in the creation of the living God. The church needs to respond adequately and take a stand in times like these when the heart of the gospel message is threatened. The church needs to re-evaluate itself and re-think how to “do” church differently and to re-imagine its future (Pillay 2020, 266–275).

Throughout history, the church has always taken a stand. Even in times of crisis, for instance, in ancient Roman times, when the plague struck, it was the church that demonstrated the most humanitarian care towards the sick and dying that left the emperors dumbstruck (Just 2020; Zentner 2015). The church provided food when the sick were confined to their spaces (Just 2020; Zentner 2015). The church provided prayers for the sick (Just 2020; Zentner 2015). The church broke the barriers that were created by confinement (Just 2020; Zentner 2015). Church historians even point to the fact that, following the outbreak of the plague in Germany, Martin Luther asked the Christians to take a stand and asked that Christians there should give special prayers dedicated to the sick, asking for God's mercy (Hancock 2020; Runham 2020). Luther even asked that, on top of prayers, there should be responsible practices of sanitation, medication, self-quarantine and social distancing to help stop the spread out of love for others (Hancock 2020; Runham 2020). Furthermore, Luther advocated for Christians to offer relief through food and securing spaces (of course that are isolated) for the sick in order to receive care and recover (Hancock 2020; Runham 2020). More importantly, Luther refused the call to flee the city and protect himself. Instead, he remained in the city and ministered to the sick (Hancock 2020; Runham 2020). Luther, in a sacrificial stand, said to those who asked him to flee: "We die at our posts. Christians doctors cannot abandon their hospitals, Christian governors cannot flee their districts, Christian pastors cannot abandon their congregations" (Hancock 2020; Runham 2020). Luther did not advocate for recklessness but instead argued that the plague did not dissolve our duty as Christians; instead, it turned them to crosses. These crosses, for Luther, must be carried while taking all the necessary precautionary measures.

Church historians also point to the fact that, during the influenza and/or Spanish flue that ravaged the world like this infectious disease is doing, the church even opened its church buildings to serve as health clinics (Hancock 2020; Runham 2020). A caring church is a church that does not teach that self-harm is an act of faith. Self-harm in this regard refers to a reckless act of saying "God will protect me" even though you expose yourself to harm (Hancock 2020; Runham 2020). Exposing yourself to disease under the guise that you "Love your neighbour" actually goes against the fifth commandment (Hancock 2020; Runham 2020). Luther, in dealing with this commandment, pointed out that killing also included endangering others through negligence or recklessness (Hancock 2020; Runham 2020). In fact, church historians argue that Luther encouraged Christians during the plague to obey quarantine orders, fumigate their houses and take precautionary measures in order to avoid spreading the plague (Hancock 2020; Runham 2020). Other theologians argue that hygiene is key, and this should not be a selfish stance of "self-preservation" but an ethic of service to "our neighbour" (Hancock 2020; Runham 2020). This means that, as Christians, we wish to care for the sick, and in doing so, we should not infect others or allow ourselves to be infected.

The church should "do" anew the church/worship services and should find creative ways to do pastoral therapy. Regarding church/worship services, Pillay points out that for the longest time, Christians have been accustomed to gathering physically for public

worship (Pillay 2020, 266–275). This gathering is important because it is that moment and experience when the church (the people of God) gathers in community and communion to ascribe praise and glory to God (Pillay 2020, 266–275). This gathering is a time for celebration, fellowship, and renewal of faith and hope (Pillay 2020, 266–275). Gathering in person has made celebration, fellowship, and renewal of our faith and hope deeply linked to church buildings (Pillay 2020, 266–275). Christians have forgotten that the church foremost refers to the believers—and of course, gathered together—and this “together” can be in person or in spirit (Pillay 2020, 266–275).

This notion of gathering together in person has, throughout the ages, led to some ministers not only encouraging believers to come to church (building) but also guilt-tripping them for not coming to church (building) (Pillay 2020, 266–275). However, this infectious disease has reminded us harshly that the church is not the building but the believers gathered in spirit (Pillay 2020, 266–275). Pillay argues that the Covid-19 lockdown has forced many people to turn to electronic platforms to continue with public worship after their church leaders were left with no option but to say, “please join us on YouTube or other electronic platforms” (Pillay 2020, 266–275). For some, this was a blow, but as Pillay points out, this arrangement has also provided an opportunity for Christians to be exposed to other forms of worship, liturgical practices and preaching than they are accustomed to (Pillay 2020, 266–275). On the one hand, the electronic medium has created opportunities to “wonder” and “experiment,” while on the other hand, it has led to either a deeper appreciation of their church tradition and worship practices, or it has opened others up to a totally new world of worship experience altogether (Pillay 2020, 266–275). This is all good for those who can access electronic platforms (Pillay 2020, 266–275), but South Africa is not only diverse, it is also contrasting. As stated previously, during lockdown the poor were confined to poverty and poor conditions, and as such, it can be argued that the poor were also left with no access to the Internet, which is central to accessing electronic platforms. The church must find ways to accommodate those who cannot access these platforms in their quest of “doing” the church differently and re-imagining its future.

The church should also find creative ways of “doing” pastoral care in their attempt to “do” anew the church and in re-imagining its future. Traditionally, pastoral care requires physical co-presence, which involves human-to-human interaction and human touch, which because of the lockdown restrictions, was impossible. The lockdown caused a lot of anxiety, loneliness, stigma and depression for many Christians (Johnston et al. 2021). In times like these, many Christians require(d) the presence of their ministers for what is termed spiritual care or just for a minister to be there, and this was not possible (Johnston et al. 2021). Pastoral care, in the traditional sense, requires ministers to do house visitations for the sick and do counselling for the bereaved in person, and this was disrupted due to lockdown regulations (Johnston et al. 2021). Ministers are also required to be there for their members and to take holy communion with those who are home-bound. That on its own served the purpose of doing pastoral care but again, this was impossible because the restrictions advised against it for health concerns (Johnston et

al. 2021). The traditional way of doing pastoral care by being personally present as a way to connect with members, the bereaved, and the home-bound has become rather difficult and thus requires the church to rethink “doing” pastoral care. During lockdown, most ministers resorted to doing pastoral care telephonically or by contacting members through e-mails or text messages; and, of course, those who did not have phones, e-mails and access to any other technological platforms missed out (Johnston et al. 2021). In times like these, the church should take a stand and act, help provide relief for the needy, train members of the church or some family members to be a link to do pastoral care or counselling, and fight against the stigma created by this infectious disease.

## Fake News and the Fight against the Pandemic

The fight against this infectious disease gets tougher every day, especially when the information environment is plagued by another pandemic (or “info-epidemic”) called “fake news” (Greifeneder et al. 2020). The notion of “fake news” might appear to be new, but “the intention to deceive [which is what fake news is intended to do] is as old as humankind, and systematic fake news campaigns have been documented throughout history” (Greifeneder et al. 2020, 1–8). Disinformation can be traced back as far as the World Wars and what was called “freak journalism” or “yellow journalism” as far as the Spanish War (Molina et al. 2019, 180–212).

The notion of fake news is, on the surface, taken to mean “false information,” but Molina et al. (2019) warn against this over-simplification because “fake news” as a concept has ballooned to include more than simply false information, with partisans weaponising it to cast aspersions on the veracity of claims made by those who are politically opposed to them (Molina et al. 2019, 180–212). Molina et al. argue that, for us to be able to understand the concept of “fake-news,” we must make a distinction between misinformation and disinformation (Molina et al. 2019). This distinction is made so that we try to understand the real purpose of “fake news” (Molina et al. 2019). For some scholars, misinformation (in the context of “fake news”) refers to false information that is spread because people who spread it believe it to be true (Greifeneder et al. 2020, 1–8; Molina et al. 2019, 180–212). Disinformation (in the context of “fake news”) refers to false information that is spread, even though the one who spreads it knows or is certain that it is false (Greifeneder et al. 2020, 1–8; Molina et al. 2019, 180–212). The one who spreads misinformation spreads it because s/he is under the impression that it is true and informative, while on the other hand, the one who spreads disinformation does so with the intention to deceive (Greifeneder et al. 2020, 1–8; Molina et al. 2019, 180–212). Thus, Greifeneder et al. argue that the term “disinformation” refers to false information that is created to harm a person, social group, organisation, or country, whereas “misinformation is merely false but not intended to harm” (Greifeneder et al. 2020, 1–8). Hence, it is important when dealing with the notion of “fake news” as “false information” to point out that the intention is to harm and that “harm,” as Greifeneder et al. (2020) point out, can be achieved by spreading information (whether factual or not) with harmful implications and that is

accepted and shared with others (Greifeneder et al. 2020, 1–8). Once this information is accepted, it is difficult to correct and can continue to influence related beliefs, even when people no longer endorse the information (whether factual or not) that gave rise to those beliefs (Greifeneder et al. 2020, 1–8; Molina et al. 2019, 180–212).

Furthermore, Greifeneder et al. (2020, 1–8) point out that the notion of “fake news” is often associated with the political realm, especially following the election of Donald Trump. However, Greifeneder et al. (2020, 1–8) point out that this notion has always been there, especially in the domains of consumer products, health, and finances. Greifeneder et al. (2020) point out that fake news has gained public attention for several reasons: 1) First, misinformation (and disinformation) has become part of everyday life. Research has shown that Twitter data which fall into the category of fake news, misinformation, or disinformation are retweeted more rapidly and more often than true information, particularly news on politics; 2) Second, to the extent that people believe misinformation (or disinformation) and act upon it, fake news can have serious consequences; 3) Third, peaceful human interaction and individual, as well as societal prosperity, strongly depend on interpersonal trust. For instance, fake news about a government has the potential to erode society’s trust and, therefore, constitute a threat, especially to democracies (Greifeneder et al. 2020, 1–8).

This points to the dangers of the rise and popularity of “fake news” while the world (and particularly the country) is dealing with this infectious disease called Covid-19. In times of crises, as scholars of psychology would point out, it is within human nature to blame, that is, to hold another person or group responsible for perceived faults—real or imagined. Watts argues that “fear provokes emotions and creates vulnerability in our minds, paving the way for the acceptance of bogus information we’d usually not consider credible” (Watts 2020).

For instance (in an attempt to take lessons from history, as Brown would say), during crisis of the plague or the Black Death, it appeared to those who were heavily hit by the plague that Jewish Communities were dying in fewer numbers compared to their Christian neighbours (Rietzmann 1998). As such, many saw this as evidence that the Jews were intentionally spreading the disease by poisoning wells, rivers and springs, and as a result, the news (disinformation) was spread and this led to the Jewish people across Europe being tortured and killed (Rietzmann 1998). On the other hand, during the same plague (Black Death) there was disinformation that the real reason for the rapid spread of the plague was divine punishment for collective sin and the alignment of the stars (Zenter 2015). This points to the fact that we as humans are repeating the same mistake (as stated); in this time of crisis, disease, poverty, violence, climate change, anxiety and fear, misinformation and disinformation are spreading more rapidly than the virus itself. Throughout social media, info is spreading that this infectious disease is a bio-weapon produced in order to weaken powerful countries and/or depopulate the world so that those who produced it can asset their strength in the world (Zannettou et



al. 2020). Furthermore, info has been spread that the outbreak of this infectious disease is just a cover-up for the 5-G (wireless network) related sicknesses.

## Vaccines and the Politics

Covid-19 vaccines and the world-wide drive to vaccinate people are contested terrain. There is significant confusion and politics involved in this regard. Medical experts seem to be giving out conflicting arguments, which have added to the confusion. Although conflicting arguments are part of the science terrain, in a time of crisis, when the world is dealing with a pandemic and info-epidemic (fake news), such conflicting arguments have caused fear, terror and uncertainty. Therefore, it is understandable that people will rather believe theories based on what is closest to their own beliefs. Mervis (2015), in a piece titled *Politics, Science, and Public Attitudes: What we're Learning, and why it Matters*, points out that people are often influenced by their existing beliefs when they evaluate any particular scientific result. Holding strong beliefs makes a person more likely to reject a “dissonant” message or actively oppose it (Mervis 2015). In a time of crisis, the speculative realm makes it difficult or rather impossible for the truth to catch up when theories are retracted for scientific reasons as new info comes forward. It is normal in the scientific realm (given the information available at the time) to hold to a particular finding, but as soon as new information becomes available, the previous findings will be retracted. However, in the age of disinformation, it is difficult for the truth to catch up when disinformation has already been spread, accepted and shared over and over again. Regarding the vaccines, throughout social media people have been arguing that, for as long as politicians are leading the campaign for the vaccines, they will continue to be suspicious because for some reason, “politicians lie.” For the general public it would be better if the campaign were led by scientists who have not taken a political stance but a scientific one. Throughout history there has always been a puzzling link between science and politics, or what we can call the “politicisation of science” (Bolsen and Druckman 2015). The politicisation of science usually occurs when big business, governments or any group use pressure (be it legal or economic) to influence the findings of scientific research or the way the findings get disseminated, reported or interpreted (Bolsen and Druckman 2015). Howe (2020), in a piece titled *Stick to Science: When Science Gets Political*, points out that politics is deeply engraved in scientists’ working life (Howe 2020). It becomes evident through funding agendas, cultural lobbies and personal bias that politics can shape the game in a myriad of ways, influencing the direction and quality of research (Howe 2020). Although the notion of politics affects everyone, the politicisation of science has negative effects because it can cause doubt in people who, under normal circumstances, would not defy scientific consensus or ignore scientists.

The issue of vaccines is more contested in this era of political polarisation of members of society who are divided along ideological and/or political party lines. Political polarisation refers to a political stance of coercing people to hold a particular ideological position or to follow a particular party position line. The intention is to persuade people

to think, see and view things along ideological lines and political party lines and to politically split people into opposing sides based on ideological or party line positions (Weber et al. 2021). Garcia Arenas, in a piece titled *Political Polarization: The Phenomenon that Should Be on Everyone's Lips*, points out that the degree of political polarisation in a society is a key variable that quantifies the extent to which public opinion is split into two opposing extremes (Garcia Arenas 2019). For Garcia Arenas, this is an important variable to take into account: the greater the polarisation, the more difficult it is to generate broad consensus amongst groups with different views in order to undertake reforms that allow society to achieve progress (Garcia Arenas 2019). Furthermore, a high degree of polarisation can lead to irreconcilable positions, making it difficult to reach agreements (Garcia Arenas 2019). Political polarisation, therefore, has the potential to divide and cause different groups of people to mistrust the government, its institutions and the media. This mistrust will lead some groups to trust institutions that, unfortunately, advocate for pseudoscience. The split between those who are for vaccines and those who are against them might be a result of stances that are particularly influenced by beliefs that are profoundly influenced by ideology or a party-political line, or even a (pseudo) religious position. This split makes it difficult because even when scientific research is presented, then questions remain: Who are these scientists? What is in for them? Who funded them?

The issue of vaccines is more contested, especially given the moral concerns raised about pharmaceutical companies and their role in the manufacturing of vaccines. The argument has been put forward that the pharmaceutical companies have monopolised the industry, thus making it difficult for other industries or governments to participate in producing vaccines in order to deal with the global crisis caused by Covid-19. This argument is supported by the patents (which the pharmaceutical companies have) that provide legal protection against being copied (see David 2021). These patents give manufacturers (pharmaceutical companies) the rights to their discoveries, as well as the means to control the market in order to make more money— which (as they argue) is an incentive to encourage innovation (see David 2021).

The moral argument here is that these are not normal times (where only the legal patent argument is enough), and as such, the patents on vaccinations should be waved so that the “recipe” for the life-saving jabs could be made widely available and they could be produced in bulk and even locally (see David 2021). David, in a piece titled *Covid: The Vaccines Patent Row Explained*, has pointed out that, in turn, pharmaceutical companies have argued that the costs that are involved in coming up with vaccines are incurred mostly in research and development, and thus, the waiver argument will erode revenue and deter innovation (David 2021).

Another argument has been put forward that the cost of vaccinating the world against Covid-19 could have been cheaper or could be cheaper if pharmaceutical companies were not profiting from their monopolies on Covid-19 vaccines. It is alleged by The People's Vaccine Alliance that the pharmaceutical companies are charging way above

the estimated cost of production (The People's Vaccine Alliance 2021). The business model of these pharmaceutical companies could have been remodelled in this time of crisis in order to save lives, and of course, in the process they would have still made a profit (The People's Vaccine Alliance 2021). The People's Vaccine Alliance (2021) argues that big pharmaceutical companies receive a lot of money in public investments, then charge exorbitant prices for life-saving medicines, and then pay little tax. This, according to The People's Vaccine Alliance, "is gold dust for wealthy investors and corporate executives but devastating for global health" (The People's Vaccine Alliance 2021). The People's Vaccines Alliance argues that, instead of these pharmaceutical companies partnering with governments and other qualified manufacturers to make sure that there is enough vaccine for everyone, they prioritise profit by enforcing their monopolies and selling to the highest bidder (The People's Vaccine Alliance 2021). This is seen as being unethical because it is argued that these pharmaceutical companies sold most of their vaccines to rich countries that could afford to pay way more than the cost of production (The People's Vaccine Alliance 2021). Fuentesfina (in Action Aid 2021)<sup>12</sup> has argued that this virus is an inequality virus. This is because "We create vaccine billionaires but fail to vaccinate billions of people in desperate need" (The People's Vaccine Alliance 2021).

## Conclusion

This paper was initially a talk the author gave at the Northern Theological Seminary of the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa, days after the eruption of public violence in South Africa. The author was requested to share ideas on Covid-19 and vaccines but felt that it would be unjust to ignore the link between public unrest in South Africa and the Covid-19 pandemic. The article analysed the causes of that violent uprising and tried to deal with opposing views on the eruption of public violence. The author then dealt with the novel coronavirus and explored containment measures like lockdowns and their implications. The paper discussed the notion of fake news and how it affects the fight against this infectious disease, which has ravaged people's livelihoods. We deliberated the issues of how the church should re-think "being the church," how the church was affected by this infectious disease, and what role it can play in the age of a pandemic. The article analysed fake news, misinformation, disinformation, and the info-epidemic. In conclusion, the articles discussed wide-spread contentions surrounding vaccines. The author contends that vaccines have become a contested terrain smeared with politics.

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