



Rethinking the use of disruptive pop-up encounters for transformation: A missional reading of Acts 8:26–40

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Abstract

Socio-economic, political and religious pop-ups are a normal feature in the global context. While some are disruptive and annoying, others can be very useful. This article, through a missional reading of Acts 8:26–40, seeks to draw missiological lessons from disruptive pop-up encounter(s) in this text. A missional reading of Acts 8:26–40 discovered that the Holy Spirit is not only the author of Christian mission, but also the pop-up Spirit of God, who prompted pop-up encounters between two strangers whose pop-up experience became an encounter that transformed their search for meaning, understanding, transformative ecclesiologies and the praxes thereof. Therefore, disruptive pop-up encounters, creatively embraced and used, are able to generate encountering conversations that are liberating and transforming.

Keywords

Rethinking, disruptive pop-up, encounters, transformation, missional, Acts 8:26–40

There is nothing more annoying than adverts popping up . . . It's enough to make me leave a site. (Scott, information technology professional)

Introduction

Online pop-ups are very disruptive, but some human disruptive pop-up encounters are liberating and transformative. While companies and individuals use online disruptive

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pop-ups for branding and marketing purposes, they are mostly not welcomed as tools that are helpful to website users. They are meant to attract online users' attention, but end up interrupting, irritating, disturbing and annoying them to the point of leaving the site because some of these pop-ups are junk. But 'media consumers are expected to treat interruptions as part of everyday life' (Zha and Wu, 2014: 16). Zha and Wu (2014: 16) add that 'because interruptions are so common and frequent, media users can be accustomed to them, handling the interruptions effectively by either neglecting them or diverting attention to them and then refocussing on their original media activity'. The main issue they are raising is that disruptions will always be there, but media users must find a way of handling them. The same can be said about human disruptive pop-up encounters in the global context.

In this article, I would like to explore the use of the concept of 'disruptive pop-up encounters' to develop an encountering missiology that brings about a liberating and transformative response in the encounter between God and humanity. Lessons are drawn from a missiological transformative pop-up experience in Acts 8:26–40. My missional reading of this text prompted me to decide that the Holy Spirit is a pop-up Spirit of God, who popped up and prompted disruptive pop-up encounters between two strangers whose pop-up experience became a liberating and transformative encounter that transformed their search for meaning, understanding and liberating ecclesiological praxes.

My search for a missiology of 'disruptive pop-up encounter(s)' was highly influenced by various 'disruptive pop-ups' in the public sphere that occupy many of our public discourses in the global context – namely, racism, Black Lives Matter, xenophobia and the 'Foreigners go home' campaign, terrorism, COVID-19 and the collapse of the global markets, gender-based violence and a whole range of socio-economic and political injustices against humanity and nature, among others. I argue in this article that we cannot ignore these disruptions because they are destructive in their nature. But some are prompted by the Spirit of God, who remains actively involved in human activities, and, in the process, also seek to use the church as a transforming agent in the public sphere. It is correctly asserted that '[t]he mission of the triune God demands that the church not only witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ by its being and life, but also participate in the Holy Spirit's work to transform the world's social-historical reality' (Youn, 2018: 229). In every disruptive pop-up that we encounter, be it in our reading of the Scriptures or an event or incident in the public sphere, we should pay attention and discern if the Spirit of God is not at work, as in the case of the missional disruptive pop-up encounters in Acts 8:26–40. In line with the foregoing, the main research question that this article seeks to address is: What missiological lessons can be drawn from disruptive pop-up encounters that emerge from a missional reading of Acts 8:26–40, and how can these lessons be used creatively for social transformation, social cohesion and nation-building?

Setting the tone: a missiological framework

This study is undertaken from a broad missiological perspective (Wright, 2006: 25). Methodologically, I am influenced by the praxis matrix of Kritzinger (2013: 37), which he defines as '[a] missiological approach that discerns contextual priorities

[and] consciously integrates the *theology* and *practice* of mission'. This has shaped his missiological thought in defining 'missiology as encounterology' (Kritzinger, 2008). When applied in a real-life context, Kritzinger (2011: 52) talks about 'transformative encounters'. Mashau and Kritzinger unpack encountering missiology as follows:

[It] explores the complex dynamics of all the encounters in which Christians are involved in the course of their ongoing efforts to embody and share the fullness of life that they experience in Christ. It also involves the attempt to find the most appropriate intellectual instruments (theories, designs and methods) to study those transformative encounters in ways that would help Christian communities become more compassionate and impactful agents of transformation. (Mashau and Kritzinger, 2014: 11)

Building on this encountering missiology, Karecki (2009) speaks about the 'contemplative encounter', while Mashau and Kritzinger (2014) use 'pavement encounters' and Mashau (2018: 133) uses 'transformative pavement encounters' with particular reference to a missional praxis that takes God and one's context seriously. Accordingly, this missiology allows one to encounter God in one's encounter with humanity and God's created world. It also allows one to stand where God stands and for God on matters of social justice, ministering the truth, and going beyond borders in standing with those in the margins (Mashau, 2018: 138–140).

In this article, I want to introduce the missiology of disruptive pop-up encounter(s) based on my missional bias in reading Acts 8:26–40 – a missional hermeneutic, as defined by Wright (2006: 49). A missional hermeneutic speaks to a reading of the Bible with a particular bias to God's missionary acts toward humanity and the world. Wright captures this as follows:

A missional hermeneutic of the Bible begins with the Bible's very existence. For those who affirm some relationship (however articulated) between these texts and the self-revelation of our Creator God, the whole canon of Scripture is a missional phenomenon in the sense that it witnesses to the self-giving movement of this God toward his creation and us, human beings in God's own image, but wayward and wanton. (Wright, 2006: 48)

The kind of bias that I am talking about is one that takes both the Bible and one's context seriously without trying to advocate for the primacy of the text over the context (Van Aarde and Li-M, 2017: 1). This approach to exegesis allows one space for contextual presuppositions in approaching a particular Scripture, but without undermining the exegetical analysis of the text, which takes seriously both the grammar and the historical setting of the text. A summary of a missional exegesis by Van Aarde and Li-M helps to clarify this:

Missional exegesis draws the reader into a fruitful dialogue with the text from his unique contextual vantage point to participate in God's mission, the *missio Dei*. It is textual and contextual, that is, it arises from a specific cultural context and it addresses that cultural context through the exegesis of Scripture. It is an exegesis which gives equal consideration to both text and context and is able to provide missional applications and implications which are both practical, relevant and biblical. (Van Aarde and Li-M, 2017: 9–10)

In this instance, the reading of a text such as Acts 8:26–40 does not just become an academic exercise, but something that is aimed to bring about a transformative encounter between one's felt needs (including one's community) and the liberating biblical response within the overarching mission of God. Wright (2006: 51) opines that 'a missional hermeneutic proceeds from the assumption that the whole Bible renders to us the story of God's mission through God's people in their engagement with God's world for the sake of the whole of God's creation'. This brings into the equation the liberative and transformative nature of the missional bias in reading the Scriptures. Wright (2006: 44) is therefore correct to conclude that 'a missional hermeneutic of Scripture must have a liberationist dimension'. It intentionally liberates the text, inquirer, exegete and context, as in the case of Acts 8:26–40.

On reading Acts 8:26–40, it became clear to me that transformative missional encounters can also be labelled as pop-up encounters that are disruptive in nature. It is for this reason that the notion of 'disruptive pop-up encounters' is introduced in this article to refer to missional encounters in Acts 8:26–40. The word 'pop-up' is used metaphorically to refer to a sudden and intended disruptive encounter by the Spirit of God with the intention of sparking a missional conversation with a disrupted person. This kind of pop-up encounter generates a conversation that is spontaneous and disruptive but leads one to a drastic life-saving and transforming decision, as in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, who sought baptism on his conversion. Such an encounter is considered missional because it is initiated and guided by the Spirit of God. Both the works of the Spirit of God in initiating a pop-up encounter and in guiding that very encounter to the end are intertwined and should not be separated or divorced from each other. Locating the mission of the church in the *missio Dei* ('mission of God'), Konz correctly concludes that:

the mission activity of the church should thus be understood dynamically and pneumatologically: Christians cooperate in the divine *missio* not simply because they are sent by him but *because and as* they are led and filled with the Spirit of Christ, who not only sends, but leads, accompanies, and includes them, by grace, in the revelation of his Word and works to the world, and his continuing redemption thereof. (Konz, 2018: 343)

The Spirit of God is therefore not only considered to be the author of Christian mission, but also to participate actively in every missional encounter that he has initiated, and also guarantees the success thereof. The Spirit of God is referred to as a pop-up Spirit in this article because of the very fact that he is the one who took the initiative to disrupt the angel of the Lord, Philip the Evangelist and the Ethiopian eunuch. All missional disruptive pop-up encounters in Acts 8:26–40 are acts of the Spirit of God, as we shall see below.

Missiology of disruptive pop-up encounter(s): Acts 8:26–40

A missional reading of Acts 8:26–40

A missional reading of Acts 8:26–40 should be done within the broader context of the Book of Acts. The Book of Acts is a biblical narrative that speaks of God's missionary

acts through the apostles. It starts off with a promise of the Holy Spirit, who will come and empower the church to become a witness of Christ in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8). It then continues with the movement of the church, through persecution, to bring the gospel to the end of the world (Acts 8:1). As and when believers were scattered from Jerusalem, they preached the gospel wherever they went. It is within this context that Acts 8:4–8 introduces Philip as a pop-up evangelist of the kingdom gospel. Philip is considered a pop-up evangelist for two reasons. First, being guided by the Spirit of God in mission, Philip popped up or invaded the Samaritan space, and changed their conversations and belief system (Acts 8:4–25). Second, guided by the angel of the Lord, Philip left his successful ministry in Samaria to go and invade the space of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26–40). This pop-up encounter did not just disrupt the Ethiopian eunuch's journey and activities on his chariot; it also generated a missional conversation that led to a liberative and transformative experience.

This was a defining moment with regard to the missional nature of the church – a church that embraces all humanity to the very end of the world (Jabini, 2012: 52). Acts 8:9–25 gives a detailed narrative of a very fruitful ministry of Philip in Samaria to demonstrate that the Spirit of God is at work beyond Jerusalem and among the Jews. Shauf (2009: 766) asserts: 'It is true that the Christian movement has extended beyond the orthodox Jewish circles by the time Philip receives his call to head down the road toward Gaza'. This was a fulfilment of God's promise to bless all nations through Abraham. Wright (2006: 327–328) comments that '[t]he trajectory that moves from Abraham to all the families of the earth is the trajectory of blessing'.

The foregoing did not just become true with the Samaritans; it became even more special with the inclusion of an African – the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:27) – who represented the Gentiles being welcomed into the new community of Christ. For this reason, Jabini (2012: 54) concludes that '[i]t is therefore clear that the gospel does not know of geographic, ethnic, or racial barriers'. Dividing walls are broken down as the pop-up Spirit of God moves barriers, as reflected in Acts 8:26–40. Acts 8:26–40 defines a missional journey as a journey of more disruptive pop-up encounters, and they emerge as discussed below.

Encounter between a pop-up evangelist and a pop-up angel of the Lord

Philip's ministry in Samaria was disrupted by his encounter with the 'pop-up angel of God'. The angel is said to be a pop-up angel of the Lord because, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he popped up, disrupted and instructed Philip to 'rise and go' south of the road leading to Jerusalem, redefining a missional approach to Christian mission in embracing not just mass (Acts 8:4–8) but also personal evangelism (Acts 8:26–40). The disruption experienced by Philip is critical in redefining how we should view a Christian mission – the church and missionaries serve at the behest of God as instruments serving the *missio Dei*.

In defining his understanding of the changing paradigm in mission and in defining the church's place and role in God's mission, Bosch (1991: 390) concludes: 'To

participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God's love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending'. We see God's movement in action and making his instruction for the church to reach out to the very end of the world by instructing Philip to 'rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza' (Acts 8:26). Therefore, Bosch (1980: 198) correctly concludes that 'mission is an essential aspect of the life of the church and of individual Christian'. White and Niemandt capture the essence of this discussion as follows:

In fact, without the *missio Dei*, the mission of the church would simply be a grasping at mere straws; it would be salvation by works alone. Mission is more than mere human activity reliant on emotion, volition and the action of finite beings. (White and Niemandt, 2015: 2)

Encounter between a pop-up evangelist and the pop-up Spirit of God

Strelan (2001: 31) suggests that Philip is a running prophet because, just like other prophets of Israel in the Old Testament, 'he carries out a mission under the impulse of the Spirit'. This speaks to the significant role of the Spirit of God in mission as outlined in the Book of Acts. The Spirit of God is said to be the power behind the entire movement – the Spirit of God fuels the fire of mission like petrol fuels a fire. Hence, the apostles, and by implication the early Christian church, were instructed to wait in Jerusalem for the power of the Holy Spirit before taking the gospel to the end of the world (Acts 1:8).

After Philip goes down the road leading to Gaza as directed by an angel of the Lord, the Ethiopian eunuch is introduced, followed by the narrative bringing to our attention the intervention by the 'pop-up Spirit of God', who prompts Philip to go next to the chariot and walk side by side with the eunuch. It is clear from the foregoing that the Holy Spirit is the author of mission; Rakoczy (1995: 32) therefore correctly concludes that 'to engage in the mission of the gospel is full-hearted response to the leading and guidance of the Spirit of Jesus who is ever-active'. Defining mission as the moment of the Holy Spirit, Mashau (2009: 93) agrees that the Holy Spirit 'does not only call, but also directs (sends) (Acts 13:2, 4) and empowers human beings to participate in the *missio Dei* as instruments in the hand of God in advancing his kingdom on earth (Acts 1:8)'. The Spirit of God, therefore, does not just pop up to initiate a missional pop-up encounter; he also guides the direction the conversation should take and the end result of such a missional conversation.

It is clear from the above that the Holy Spirit is the missional Spirit who initiates and remains at the heart of God's mission to the world, and represents the very presence of God as the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. The work and presence of God in mission is ignited by the Holy Spirit, who also reveals in the Acts 8:26–40 narrative that his work is inseparable from the ministry of the Word of God. Philip is encouraged to come closer to the eunuch because the Spirit of God wants to use the evangelist to interpret Isaiah 53:7–8 for the eunuch. On the inseparability of the ministry of the Holy Spirit and that of the Word of God, De Vries comments:

the Holy Spirit always works by communicating the Word about Christ. There is an inseparable relationship between Christ and the Spirit of Christ, and there is a perfect harmony between the objective truth as revealed in the Scriptures and the subjective witness of the Spirit who inspired the Scriptures. (De Vries, 2015: 4)

Encounter between a pop-up evangelist and the Ethiopian eunuch

On introducing a pop-up encounter between Philip and the eunuch, Acts 8:27 identifies the eunuch by his geographical location, gender and social standing in his community – a treasure to Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. He is also introduced as a religious being who is God-fearing and a worshipper who travels to Jerusalem for Pentecost. The constructs identified around the eunuch's identity demonstrate how God works across geography, gender, race, disability and his otherness against the Jews who would allow Gentiles to be part of their religion only by proselyting them. It is fascinating to see that an African came to know Christ and was able to take the gospel back to his native country way back before the imperial and colonial era of the 16th century and beyond. What is even more fascinating is that the encounter between Philip and the eunuch is an encounter with a multitude of layers, or multiple encounters, as described in the following.

First, it is *an encounter between migrants with the migrant God*. According to Stenschke (2016: 138): 'Migration and mission go hand in hand'. Mission is about crossing frontiers, and we see this with the narrative of Acts 8, which records the missionary work of the evangelist Philip in Samaria (Acts 8:4–8) and to the eunuch (Acts 8:26–40). Stenschke (2016: 136) agrees that 'the first move of the Gospel beyond the confines of Jerusalem is caused by persecution'. Apart from Philip as a migrant missionary, the narrative reveals that the eunuch is also a migrant from Ethiopia (Dube, 2013). However, we need to note that the encounter between the two travelling strangers is happening as a process initiated by the migrant God and in his presence. In mediating the hermeneutic of 'stranger' in the context of migrants and migration, Botha (2013) talks about God as a migrant God. In mission, we should therefore always respect the image of the migrant God in the migrant other when encountering one another as strangers. The entire narrative shows that, in mission, the migrant God does not remain to be worshipped in Jerusalem but, wherever the movement of people occurs, God's presence is guaranteed.

Second, it is *a guided encounter around Scriptures and in search for understanding*. In the encounter between Philip and the eunuch, their conversation is characterized by 'thought provoking' and 'solution seeking' questions around the Scriptures (Weissenrieder, 2014: 139). Realizing that the eunuch is busy reading Isaiah 53:7–8, Philip enquires if he can make sense of what he is reading: 'Do you understand what you are reading?' (Acts 8:30b). In his response, the eunuch points out that there is a need for someone to guide him and immediately requests Philip to join him in the chariot to assist him (Acts 8:31).

The invitation provides Philip with the opportunity to explain the passage of the Scriptures that the eunuch was reading (Mbiti, 2005: 234). The fact that the eunuch

invites Philip to be his guide, a partner in search for meaning, shows the need for correct Scriptural interpretation in mission, while the dialogue between the two demonstrates that a missional conversation is not a monologue. Mashau (2009: 94) asserts that '[w]henver the word of God is communicated, it also involves human interaction'. To demonstrate that the eunuch is not an object, Weissenrieder (2014: 139) remarks: 'the Ethiopian eunuch acts and speaks (v. 30 reading; v. 31 answering; v. 34 saying; v. 36 exclaiming) and he understands: he sees the water (v. 36) and he descends into water (v. 38)'. This is a very important discussion that helps to shape the shifting missional conversation – both Philip and the eunuch are subjects and objects of God's mission as directed by the pop-up Spirit of God.

Third, it is *an encounter with a message of Christ*. On his enquiry as to whether the prophet in Isaiah 53:7–8 is talking about himself or someone else (Acts 8:34), Philip opens his mouth and shares the good news about the crucified and risen Jesus Christ as the suffering Messiah who the prophet is talking of (Acts 8:35; see Wright, 2006: 516). The emphasis on opening the mouth points to the need for verbal proclamation. Speaking of the distinctive nature of the Christian mission in verbalizing the message, Mashau (2009: 93) remarks: 'this verbal proclamation of the word has the element of public annunciation and it presupposes that there must be people called and sent for this task (messengers)'. But it is not to the exclusion of journeying with those who are in the margins and lonely. There should always be a creative accompaniment of the two in mission. The sharing of the good news about Jesus Christ shows the importance of Christ in mission.

Fourth, it is *an encounter that leads to conversion*. According to Mashau (2009: 97): 'the process of conversion takes place within the context of the encounter between a Christian missionary with people of other faiths'. This encounter brings to the fore the question of mission and conversion. Without the Spirit of God, the eunuch would not have understood the Scriptures and come to faith in Christ. And without the Spirit of God, the evangelist would not have seen the need to go down and meet with the eunuch and help him to understand Isaiah 53:7–8. This attests to the fact that mission is the moment of the Holy Spirit. Speaking in the context of Pentecostalism in Ghana, White and Niemandt (2015: 3) emphasize that 'the role of the Holy Spirit has been paramount in the *mission Dei* process' and also in leading 'the church toward the fullness of the truth which it has not yet grasped'. However, it is also critical to note that the eunuch's conversion and need for baptism (Acts 8:36), after the sharing of Jesus Christ as the one spoken of in Isaiah 53:7–8, is the work that only the Holy Spirit can do in mission. De Vries asserts:

Without the Spirit's work of conviction, there is no evangelical repentance and thus no true spiritual need for Jesus Christ and his salvation. Thus without this work of the Spirit there can be no personal regeneration, and corporately, no revitalisation in the church. (De Vries, 2015: 5)

Mashau (2014: 9) contests that 'if mission is *missio Dei*, then it is not the task of Christian mission to convert people, but God's task (see 1 Cor 3:7)'. What is even

more interesting is that the conversion experienced by the eunuch presupposes inclusivity in mission beyond social, economic, political, racial, cultural and geographical frontiers. This defines the nature of a faith community as an inclusive and cross-cultural community (Du Plessis, 2010: 12).

Fifth, it is *an encounter about a liberating ecclesiology, transformed spirituality and missional praxis* – that is, the encounter between the two is a faith-to-faith encounter. Philip was a Christian missionary and the eunuch was a God-fearing person who followed Judaism. Their ecclesiologies and spiritualities were challenged in many ways. According to the Jewish tradition, as recorded in Deuteronomy 23:1, the eunuch was restricted to join the assembly of the Lord, but having received the good news about Christ, Philip was able to baptize him to join the community of those who worship God in spirit and in truth, and those without geographical, socio-economic and religious limitations (see Brown, 2016: 106).

Missional encounters as life-transforming disruptive pop-up encounters

What is more interesting as the two journey side by side is that their encounter is very informative and transformative – life-giving and life-affirming. Philip is led to a transformed ecclesiology and praxis. Philip had to baptize the eunuch as soon as he believed. The eunuch, on the other hand, is led to a transformed spirituality – from being an adherent of Judaism to a believer and follower of Christ (Jabini, 2012: 56), which leads him to a request for baptism and Philip obliging. With the new missional lenses of looking at life, Scriptures and God's work, the eunuch travels back home with a transformed attitude toward worship – with joy and ready to be an agent of transformation in Africa.

The kind of transformative response generated in Philip's life (faith in Christ, baptism and joyful worship) could only have happened to the eunuch because of the faithful preaching of the gospel – authentic evangelism. Speaking of authentic evangelism, Bosch affirms its liberative and transformative nature:

Of course, to those who are experiencing personal tragedy, emptiness, loneliness, estrangement, and meaninglessness the gospel *does* come as peace, comfort, fullness, and joy. But the gospel offers this only within the context of it being a word about the lordship of Christ in all realms of life, an authoritative word of hope that the world as we know it will not always be the way it is. (Bosch, 1991: 417)

Missiological lessons from Acts 8:26–40

In reading the narrative of Acts 8:26–40 from a missional perspective, the following missiological lessons can be drawn:

- Life is a journey where humanity journeys together in the presence of God. This journey is characterized by disruptive pop-up encounters that can be annoying, but the missional encounters experienced by Philip and the eunuch are mutually beneficial, liberative and transforming.

- Missional encounters are generated by the Spirit of God and serve the *missio Dei*. The Spirit of God is the author and guide, and the one who brings about regeneration in one's life when we encounter God in Scriptures and in others.
- They are encounters together toward life. They help humanity to disrupt each other's spaces and have critical engagement in the search for meaning in life matters such as socio-economic, political and religious struggles. Missional disruptive pop-ups should therefore allow humanity space to engage in pop-up issues in their context(s), such as geopolitics, racism, gender-based violence, COVID-19, the collapse of global markets, poverty and unemployment, and all other life issues that humanity grapples with.
- Missional disruptive pop-ups create encountering spaces where humanity can creatively search for meaning, understanding and guidance from the Word of God and the Spirit of God, who is said to be our counsel. This is the time to encounter Christ for life-giving and life-affirming faith, which liberates and transforms humanity for good. To Bible-readers, these creative spaces allow humanity to enrich each other's understandings and journeys. Speaking about the importance of Scriptures in the African context(s), Mbiti (2005: 234) remarks that 'the Bible functions in Africa also as a motivation for personal and national well-being, to the extent that it gave rise to creative approaches to reading and understanding the Bible'.
- Missional disruptive pop-up encounters do not necessarily happen in the centre of religious life like Jerusalem; they can happen even in the margins, where God is already at work before the missionary arrives.
- As we encounter others, we find real meaning of who the Spirit of God and Jesus Christ is to our lives, and this is liberating. Speaking about the work of the Spirit of God and the need for liberation in the South African context, Rakoczy (1995: 44) concludes: 'A spirituality of liberation is vitally necessary for our country as a perspective which offers directions in mission and ministry which will enable people to grow and flourish in the Spirit'.
- The liberative encounter with fellow humanity and with the work of the Spirit of God in our lives generates conversion, joy (praise) and witnessing. This becomes clear in the life of the Ethiopian eunuch, who experiences inner conversion, prompting him to seek baptism and thereafter go home praising and witnessing to the greatness of God. These are the kinds of fruits generated by a missional pop-up encounter which is initiated and guided by the Spirit of God. There is therefore a missional calling to be witnesses of the same grace that we have received from God. The kind of faith and joy displayed by the eunuch on receiving the life-changing Christ is the best witnessing tool. Bosch (1991: 414) correctly contends that 'evangelism is only possible when the community that evangelizes – the church – is a radiant manifestation of the Christian faith and exhibits an attractive lifestyle'. This kind of transformed ecclesiology will be accompanied by transformed praxes that prompt the church, as and when it is disrupted by pop-ups in the public sphere, to become God's transforming agent that actively participates in the mission of God. Youn correctly summarizes that 'God requests the church . . . also to participate in God's transforming

and liberating work in the world'. Any disruptive pop-up encounter becomes missional and Spirit-led when it prompts the church to active participation in the *missio Dei* in the public sphere. Practically, the church should actively embody God's rule on earth and call for justice in public/global discourses such as racism, Black Lives Matter, xenophobia and the 'Foreigners go home' campaign, terrorism, COVID-19 and the collapse of the global markets, gender-based violence, and a whole range of socio-economic and political injustices against humanity and nature, among others.

Conclusion

This article has explored the notion of disruptive pop-ups in the public domain in an effort to creatively rethink and propose missional disruptive pop-up encounters through a missional reading of Acts 8:26–40. A missional reading of this text reveals that missional disruptive pop-up encounters with the Spirit of God, Scriptures, the missionary and fellow humanity from all walks of life are liberating and transforming. Above all, the journey of studying the Word of God in search for meaning should continue to be a useful tool to liberate and transform our society. If well applied, it will surely transform our ecclesiologies and spiritualities, and the praxes thereof, so that in the end we remain a missional, liberated and transformed community. As in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, a liberative and transformative pop-up encounter that is missional and Spirit-led generates conversion, leading to unspeakable joy and witness (testimony) to the very grace received.

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