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**KAIROS REVISITED: INVESTIGATING THE RELEVANCE OF THE  
KAIROS DOCUMENT FOR CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS WITHIN  
A DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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## ABSTRACT

The writing of this thesis was inspired by a chance remark I had with a friend from the Dutch Reformed Church. I had made the point that having been through such a difficult time of apartheid in South Africa we shall not cross the same river twice. His response to me was that it may be true but cautioned that we needed to be careful not to cross a different river the same wrong way.

It was then that I decided on a hypothesis that the Kairos Document could still be a guide to the present day events in a new democratic dispensation. I then embarked on a study to revisit the Kairos Document to research whether it could assist the Church once more as it grappled with the question of how to relate to this new government that has been elected by the majority of the people of South Africa. The rationale behind all this was twofold: one, fighting apartheid was a hard struggle but clear-cut, it was the apartheid enemy as represented by an easily identifiable National Party and a compliant church, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC); two, the temptation to repeat what the DRC did during apartheid was highly likely. The Church today needs to learn from past mistakes so as not to repeat them. The DRC had an opportunity to positively shape events in South Africa but chose to take the wrong path of leading the State into the disastrous policy of apartheid.

The thesis traces a brief history of the Dutch Reformed Church and how it had failed the entire Church and the country by promoting State Theology, as described by the Kairos Document. Profuse source documents on the history of the DRC have already been written and from which I got my information. Among the writers on the history of the DRC were Cecil Ngcokovane and Colleen Ryan who wrote *Demons of Apartheid* and *Beyers Naude: Pilgrimage of Faith* respectively, and who gave excellently researched material on the history of the DRC in respect of the rise and fall of apartheid. My research led me to another insight, namely, that there were also other Afrikaner prophets apart from Beyers Naude who suffered greatly within the DRC, and that they have gone mainly unnoticed.

What followed was the history of the Church with its fight against apartheid. The leading light in the fight was the leadership of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) with its programmes. There were other strong organisations such as the Black Sash whose work was invaluable, but these did not fall within my scope of research. In addition to my own knowledge of and experience within the SACC, as Director of Faith and Mission, and before this having been Organising Secretary of the Western Province Council of Churches (WPCC), my observer-participant status had been greatly enhanced. For further information I used the South African History Archives (SAHA) at the Cullinan Library, Witwatersand University, for my primary sources, and other relevant books and documents written by SACC stalwart and theologian, Wolfram Kistner, by

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and by Bernard Spong who was for years in the Communications department of the SACC.

I traced briefly the history of the struggle for liberation in South Africa from the general perspective, especially from 1912 when the African National Congress was started through to the Pan African Congress' 1960 march which led to the Sharpeville shootings, to the efforts of the Black Consciousness Movement from 1968 to the 1976 Students Uprising until the advent of the new South Africa. The oppressed people of South Africa did a lot to revive pride among themselves as a downtrodden people with many efforts from a number of initiatives. The Trade Unions, COSATU in particular, also shook the foundations of apartheid in an effective targeting of the economic situation and big business.

The thesis shows how South Africans attacked apartheid from different angles. The production of the Kairos Document seemed to overshadow a number of other efforts that had been undertaken by the Church and yet the KD was a comment on the lackluster contribution of the Church with a view to making it true to its calling. There had been a series of initiatives, including many other publications, which tried to challenge the apartheid government to change its ways. The government then always responded with more repressive laws.

Among the series of attempts at destroying apartheid was the establishment of the Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre to promote friendship and training against a government policy that thrived on racial separation. After the Sharpeville massacre there was the Cottesloe Consultation in 1960 which was sponsored by the World Council of Churches, another church body that was very active in its support for the victims of apartheid. There was also the Christian Institute which became so reputable that it got banned by the government. The Message to the People of South Africa in 1968 made some inroads in terms of raising the level of the debate among white people especially. Many white people at that time enjoyed the insulation against the sufferings of the black masses which they enjoyed through the policy of isolation. The Belhar Confession in 1982 shook the DRC because it contained elements which were directly in opposition to the teachings of the DRC regarding the separation of races.

Other catalysts towards change were the Soweto Students' Uprisings against Afrikaans as a language of instruction at schools in line with Bantu Education. There were also rent boycotts and boycotts of businesses to force the government to change. By the early eighties repression had escalated so much that a group of Christian activists met, first in Cape Town and then in Johannesburg, to chart what is now known as the Kairos Document (Speckman and Kaufmann 2001:18ff).

My research dealt with the three types of theologies as expounded by the KD: State Theology, Church Theology and Prophetic Theology. Again my participant-observer position was activated because I became the next Director of the

Institute of Contextual Theology (ICT) and have understood the KD's importance in the broader history of the Church. The literature I have used had to do with liberation and hope as found in writers such as Moltmann, Jacques Ellul, and liberation theologians such as Albert Nolan, Church and State theologians such as Charles Villa-Vicencio and John de Gruchy and many others.

In my research I analysed the situation in the Church today as exposed by interviews and questionnaires with those who had been involved with the KD before, plus a social analysis gleaned from the media and from discussions and relevant writings. The result of my research is that there are principles and ideas contained in the KD and that the three theologies will be applicable for a long time to come. The context has changed remarkably but the Church needs to develop itself to be able to meet a different challenge. The Church can still fall into the same trap as the DRC did during the time of apartheid by doing the reverse and opting out of issues, and by not assisting the government and the country to mobilise its forces to work towards nation building. Furthermore, the Church needs to work more with other religions across the board to fight against the ills within the country which know no borders.

I maintain again, as I say in my conclusion, that there is still more to be done in this field of the Research I have undertaken and my intention here is to awaken debate again towards a healthy Church-State relationship with the Church constantly being aware of the imperative preferential option for the poor and oppressed. There is another added kind of "poor and oppressed". How is the Church going to deal with those who have become poor by the quality of a life of the poverty of consumerism and materialism plus the oppression of a greedy lifestyle. The Church dare not ignore its mandate.



## DECLARATION

I, Wesley Madonda Mabuza, solemnly declare that this thesis is solely my work and that none of it has been plagiarised.

Signed

**WM Mabuza**

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# The Kairos Document – A Challenge to the Church

## A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa

### **PREFACE:**

*The KAIROS document is a Christian, biblical and theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa today. It is an attempt by concerned Christians in South Africa to reflect on the situation of death in our country. It is a critique of the current theological models that determine the type of activities the Church engages in to try to resolve the problems of the country. It is an attempt to develop, out of this perplexing situation, an alternative biblical and theological model that will in turn lead to forms of activity that will make a real difference to the future of our country.*

*Of particular interest is the way the theological material was produced. In June 1985 as the crisis was intensifying in the country, as more and more people were killed, maimed and imprisoned, as one black township after another revolted against the apartheid regime, as the people refused to be oppressed or to co-operate with oppressors, facing death by the day, and as the apartheid army moved into the townships to rule by the barrel of the gun, a number of theologians who were concerned about the situation expressed the need to reflect on this situation to determine what response by the Church and by all Christians in South Africa would be most appropriate.*

*A first discussion group met at the beginning of July in the heart of Soweto. Participants spoke freely about the situation and the various responses of the Church, Church leaders and, Christians. A critique of these responses was made and the theology from which these responses flowed was also subjected to a critical analysis. Individual members of the group were assigned to put together material on specific themes which were raised during the discussion and to present the material to the next session of the group.*

*At the second meeting the material itself was subjected to a critique and various people were commissioned to do more investigations on specific problematic areas. The latest findings with the rest of the material were collated and presented to the third meeting where more than thirty people, consisting of theologians, ordinary Christians (lay theologians) and some Church leaders.*

*After a very extensive discussion some adjustments and additions were made especially in regard to the section entitled 'Challenge to Action.' The group then appointed a committee to subject the document to further critique by various other Christian groupings throughout the country. Everybody was told that "this was a people's document which you can also own even by demolishing it if your position can stand the test of biblical faith and Christian experience in South Africa." They were told that this was an open-ended document which will never be said to be final.*

*The 'working Committee,' as it was called, was inundated with comments, suggestions and enthusiastic appreciation from various groups and individuals in the country. By the 13th of September 1985 when the document was submitted for publication there were still comments and recommendations flowing in. The first publication therefore must be taken as a beginning, a basis for further discussion by all Christians in the country. Further editions will be published later.*

*25 September 1985 Johannesburg*

## CHAPTER ONE

### *The Moment of Truth*

*The time has come. The moment of truth has arrived. South Africa has been plunged into a crisis that is shaking the foundations and there is every indication that the crisis has only just begun and that it will deepen and*

*become even more threatening in the months to come. It is the KAIROS or moment of truth not only for apartheid but also for the Church.*

*We as a group of theologians have been trying to understand the theological significance of this moment in our history. It is serious, very serious. For very many Christians in South Africa this is the KAIROS, the moment of grace and opportunity, the favorable time in which God issues a challenge to decisive action. It is a dangerous time because, if this opportunity is missed, and allowed to pass by, the loss for the Church, for the Gospel and for all the people of South Africa will be immeasurable. Jesus wept over Jerusalem. He wept over the tragedy of the destruction of the city and the massacre of the people that was imminent, "and all because you did not recognize your opportunity (KAIROS) when God offered it" (Lk 19: 44).*

*A crisis is a judgment that brings out the best in some people and the worst in others. A crisis is a moment of truth that shows us up for what we really are. There will be no place to hide and no way of pretending to be what we are not in fact. At this moment in South Africa the Church is about to be shown up for what it really is and no cover-up will be possible.*

*What the present crisis shows up, although many of us have known it all along, is that the Church is divided. More and more people are now saying that there are in fact two Churches in South Africa--a White Church and a Black Church. Even within the same denomination there are in fact two Churches. In the life and death conflict between different social forces that has come to a head in South Africa today, there are Christians (or at least people who profess to be Christians) on both sides of the conflict--and some who are trying to sit on the fence!*

*Does this prove that Christian faith has no real meaning or relevance for our times? Does it show that the Bible can be used for any purpose at all? Such problems would be critical enough for the Church in any circumstances but when we also come to see that the conflict in South Africa is between the oppressor and the oppressed, the crisis for the Church as an institution becomes much more acute. Both oppressor and oppressed claim loyalty to*

*the same Church. They are both baptized in the same baptism and participate together in the breaking of the same bread, the same body and blood of Christ. There we sit in the same Church while outside Christian policemen and soldiers are beating up and killing Christian children or torturing Christian prisoners to death while yet other Christians stand by and weakly plead for peace.*

*The Church is divided and its Day of Judgment has come*

*The moment of truth has compelled us to analyze more carefully the different theologies in our Churches and to speak out more clearly and boldly about the real significance of these theologies. We have been able to isolate three theologies and we have chosen to call them 'State Theology,' 'Church Theology' and 'Prophetic Theology.' In our thoroughgoing criticism of the first and second theologies we do not wish to mince our words. The situation is too critical for that.*

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Critique of State Theology*

*The South African apartheid State has a theology of its own and we have chosen to call it 'State Theology.' 'State Theology' is simply the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism and totalitarianism. It blesses injustice, canonizes the will of the powerful and reduces the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy.*

*How does 'State Theology' do this? It does it by misusing theological concepts and biblical texts for its own political purposes. In this document we would like to draw your attention to four key examples of how this is done in South Africa. The first would be the use of Romans 13:1-7 to give an absolute and 'divine' authority to the State. The second would be the use of the idea of 'Law and Order' to determine and control what the people may be permitted to regard as just and unjust. The third would be the use of the word 'communist'*

*to brand anyone who rejects 'State Theology.' And finally there is the use that is made of the name of God.*

## *2.1 Romans 13:1-7*

*The misuse of this famous text is not confined to the present government in South Africa. Throughout the history of Christianity totalitarian regimes have tried to legitimize an attitude of blind obedience and absolute servility towards the state by quoting this text. The well-known theologian Oscar Cullman, pointed this out thirty years ago:*

*As soon as Christians, out of loyalty to the gospel of Jesus, offer resistance to a State's totalitarian claim, the representatives of the State or their collaborationist theological advisers are accustomed to appeal to this saying of Paul, as if Christians are here commended to endorse and thus to abet all the crimes of a totalitarian State. (The State in the New Testament, SCM 1957 p 56.)*

*But what then is the meaning of Rom 13:1-7 and why is the use made of it by 'State Theology' unjustifiable from a biblical point of view?*

*'State Theology' assumes that in this text Paul is presenting us with the absolute and definitive Christian doctrine about the State, in other words an absolute and universal principle that is equally valid for all times and in all circumstances. The falseness of this assumption has been pointed out by numerous biblical scholars (see, for example, E Kasemann, Commentary on Romans, SCM, p 354-7; O Cullman, The State in the New Testament, SCM, p 55-7).*

*What has been overlooked here is one of the most fundamental of all principles of biblical interpretation: every text must be interpreted in its context. To abstract a text from its context and to interpret it in the abstract is to distort the meaning of God's Word. Moreover the context here is not only the chapters and verses that precede and succeed this particular text nor is it even limited to the total context of the Bible. The context includes also the*



*circumstances in which Paul's statement was made. Paul was writing to a particular Christian community in Rome, a community that had its own particular problems in relation to the State at that time and in those circumstances. That is part of the context of our text.*

*Many authors have drawn attention to the fact that in the rest of the Bible God does not demand obedience to oppressive rulers. Examples can be given ranging from Pharaoh to Pilate and through into Apostolic times. The Jews and later the Christians did not believe that their imperial overlords, the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Greeks or the Romans, had some kind of divine right to rule them and oppress them. These empires were the beasts described in the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelations. God allowed them to rule for a while but he did not approve of what they did. It was not God's will. His will was the freedom and liberation of Israel. Rom 13:1-7 cannot be contradicting all of this.*

*But most revealing of all is the circumstances of the Roman Christians to whom Paul was writing. They were not revolutionaries. They were not trying to overthrow the State. They were not calling for a change of government. They were, what has been called, 'antinomians' or 'enthusiasts' and their belief was that Christians, and only Christians, were exonerated from obeying any State at all, any government or political authority at all, because Jesus alone was their Lord and King. This is of course heretical and Paul is compelled to point out to these Christians that before the second coming of Christ there will always be some kind of State, some kind of secular government and that Christians are not exonerated from subjection to some kind of political authority.*

*Paul is simply not addressing the issue of a just or unjust State or the need to change one government for another. He is simply establishing the fact that there will be some kind of secular authority and that Christians as such are not exonerated from subjection to secular laws and authorities. He does not say anything at all about what they should do when the State becomes unjust and oppressive. That is another question.*



*Consequently those who try to find answers to the very different questions and problems of our time in the text of Rom 13:1-7 are doing a great disservice to Paul. The use that 'State Theology' makes of this text tells us more about the political options of 'those who construct this theology than it does about the meaning of God's Word in this text. As one biblical scholar puts it: "The primary concern is to justify the interests of the State and the text is pressed into its service without respect for the context and the intention of Paul."*

*If we wish to search the Bible for guidance in a situation where the State that is supposed to be "the servant of God" (Romans 13:16) betrays that calling and begins to serve Satan instead, then we can study chapter 13 of the Book of Revelations. Here the Roman State becomes the servant of the dragon (the devil) and takes on the appearance of a horrible beast. Its days are numbered because God will not permit his unfaithful servant to reign forever.*

## *2.2 Law and Order*

*The State makes use of the concept of law and order to maintain the status quo which it depicts as 'normal.' But this law is the unjust and discriminatory laws of apartheid and this order is the organized and institutionalized disorder of oppression. Anyone who wishes to change this law and this order is made to feel that they are lawless and disorderly. In other words they are made to feel guilty of sin.*

*It is indeed the duty of the State to maintain law and order, but it has not divine mandate to maintain any kind of law and order. Something does not become moral and just simply because the State has declared it to be a law and the organization of a society is not a just and right order simply because it has been instituted by the State. We cannot accept any kind of law and any kind of order. The concern of Christians is that we should have in our country a just law and a right order.*

*In the present crisis and especially during the State of Emergency, 'State Theology' has tried to re-establish the status quo of orderly discrimination,*

*exploitation and oppression by appealing to the consciences of its citizens in the name of law and order. It tries to make those who reject this law and this order feel that they are ungodly. The State here is not only usurping the right of the Church to make judgments about what would be right and just in our circumstances; it is going even further than that and demanding of us, in the name of law and order, an obedience that must be reserved for God alone. The South African State recognizes no authority beyond itself and therefore it will not allow anyone to question what it has chosen to define as 'law and order.' However, there are millions of Christians in South Africa today who are saying with Peter: "We must obey God rather than man (human beings)" (Acts 5:29).*

### *2.3 The Threat of Communism*

*We all know how the South African State makes use of the label 'communist.' Anything that threatens the status quo is labeled 'communist.' Anyone who opposes the State and especially anyone who rejects its theology is simply dismissed as a 'communist.' No account is taken of what communism really means. No thought is given to Why some people have indeed opted for communism or for some form of socialism. Even people who have not rejected capitalism are called 'communists' when they reject 'State Theology.' The State uses the label 'communist' in an uncritical and unexamined way as its symbol of evil.*

*'State Theology' like every other theology needs to have its own concrete symbol of evil. It must be able to symbolize what it regards as godless behavior and what ideas must be regarded as atheistic. It must have its own version of hell. And so it has invented, or rather taken over, the myth of communism. All evil is communistic and all communist or socialist ideas are atheistic and godless. Threats about hell-fire and eternal damnation are replaced by threats and warnings about the horrors of a tyrannical, totalitarian, atheistic and terrorist communist regime--a kind of hell-on-earth. This is a very convenient way of frightening some people into accepting any kind of domination and exploitation by a capitalist minority.*

*The South African State has its own heretical theology and according to that theology millions of Christians in South Africa (not to mention the rest of the world) are to be regarded as 'atheists.' It is significant that in earlier times when Christians rejected the gods of the Roman Empire they were branded as 'atheists'--by the State.*

#### *2.4 The God of the State*

*The State in its oppression of the people makes use again and again of the name of God. Military chaplains use it to encourage the South African Defence Force, police chaplains use it to strengthen policemen and cabinet ministers use it in their propaganda speeches. But perhaps the most revealing of all is the blasphemous use of God's holy name in the preamble to the new apartheid constitution.*

*In humble submission to Almighty God, who controls the destinies of nations and the history of peoples; who gathered our forebears together from many lands and gave them this their own; who has guided them from generation to generation; who has wondrously delivered them from the dangers that beset them.*

*This god is an idol. It is as mischievous, sinister and evil as any of the idols that the prophets of Israel had to contend with. Here we have a god who is historically on the side of the white settlers, who dispossesses black people of their land and who gives the major part of the land to his "chosen people."*

*It is the god of superior weapons who conquered those who were armed with nothing but spears. It is the god of the casspirs and hippos, the god of teargas, rubber bullets, sjamboks, prison cells and death sentences. Here is a god who exalts the proud and humbles the poor--the very opposite of the God of the Bible who "scatters the proud of heart, pulls down the mighty from their thrones and exalts the humble" (Lk 1:51-52). From a theological point of view the opposite of the God of the Bible is the devil, Satan. The god of the South African State is not merely an idol or false god, it is the devil disguised as Almighty God--the antichrist.*

*The oppressive South African regime will always be particularly abhorrent to Christians precisely because it makes use of Christianity to justify its evil ways. As Christians we simply cannot tolerate this blasphemous use of God's name and God's Word. 'State Theology' is not only heretical, it is blasphemous. Christians who are trying to remain faithful to the God of the Bible are even more horrified when they see that there are Churches, like the White Dutch Reformed Churches and other groups of Christians, who actually subscribe to this heretical theology. 'State Theology' needs its own prophets and it manages to find them from the ranks of those who profess to be ministers of God's Word in some of our Churches. What is particularly tragic for a Christian is to see the number of people who are fooled and confused by these false prophets and their heretical theology.*

### CHAPTER THREE

#### *Critique of 'Church Theology'*

*We have analyzed the statements that are made from time-to-time by the so-called 'English-speaking' Churches. We have looked at what Church leaders tend to say in their speeches and press statements about the apartheid regime and the present crisis. What we found running through all these pronouncements is a series of inter-related theological assumptions. These we have chosen to call 'Church Theology.' We are well aware of the fact that this theology does not express the faith of the majority of Christians in South Africa today who form the greater part of most of our Churches. Nevertheless the opinions expressed by Church leaders are regarded in the media and generally in our society as the official opinions of the Churches. We have therefore chosen to call these opinions 'Church Theology.' The crisis in which we find ourselves today compels us to question this theology, to question its assumptions, its implications and its practicality.*

*In a limited, guarded and cautious way this theology is critical of apartheid. Its criticism, however, is superficial and counter-productive because instead of*

*engaging in an in-depth analysis of the signs of our times, it relies upon a few stock ideas derived from Christian tradition and then uncritically and repeatedly applies them to our situation. The stock ideas used by almost all these Church leaders that we would like to examine here are: reconciliation (or peace), justice and non-violence.*

### *3.1 Reconciliation*

*'Church Theology' takes 'reconciliation' as the key to problem resolution. It talks about the need for reconciliation between white and black, or between all South Africans. 'Church Theology' often describes the Christian stance in the following way: "We must be fair. We must listen to both sides of the story. If the two sides can only meet to talk and negotiate they will sort out their differences and misunderstandings, and the conflict will be resolved." On the face of it this may sound very Christian. But is it?*

*The fallacy here is that 'Reconciliation' has been made into an absolute principle that must be applied in all cases of conflict or dissension. But not all cases of conflict are the same. We can imagine a private quarrel between two people or two groups whose differences are based upon misunderstandings. In such cases it would be appropriate to talk and negotiate to sort out the misunderstandings and to reconcile the two sides. But there are other conflicts in which one side is right and the other wrong. There are conflicts where one side is a fully armed and violent oppressor while the other side is defenseless and oppressed. There are conflicts that can only be described as the struggle between justice and injustice, good and evil, God and the devil. To speak of reconciling these two is not only a mistaken application of the Christian idea of reconciliation, it is a total betrayal of all that Christian faith has ever meant. Nowhere in the Bible or in Christian tradition has it ever been suggested that we ought to try to reconcile good and evil, God and the devil. We are supposed to do away with evil, injustice, oppression and sin--not come to terms with it. We are supposed to oppose, confront and reject the devil and not try to sup with the devil.*

*In our situation in South Africa today it would be totally unChristian to plead for reconciliation and peace before the present injustices have been removed. Any such plea plays into the hands of the oppressor by trying to persuade those of us who are oppressed to accept our oppression and to become reconciled to the intolerable crimes that are committed against us. That is not Christian reconciliation, it is sin. It is asking us to become accomplices in our own oppression, to become servants of the devil. No reconciliation is possible in South Africa without justice.*

*What this means in practice is that no reconciliation, no forgiveness and no negotiations are possible without repentance. The Biblical teaching on reconciliation and forgiveness makes it quite clear that nobody can be forgiven and reconciled with God unless he or she repents of their sins. Nor are we expected to forgive the unrepentant sinner. When he or she repents we must be willing to forgive seventy times seven times but before that, we are expected to preach repentance to those who sin against us or against anyone. Reconciliation, forgiveness and negotiations will become our Christian duty in South Africa only when the apartheid regime shows signs of genuine repentance. The recent speech of PW Botha in Durban, the continued military repression of the people in the townships and the jailing of all its opponents is clear proof of the total lack of repentance on the part of the present regime.*

*There is nothing that we want more than true reconciliation and genuine peace--the peace that God wants and not the peace the world wants (Jn 14:27). The peace that God wants is based upon truth, repentance, justice and love. The peace that the world offers us is a unity that compromises the truth, covers over injustice and oppression and is totally motivated by selfishness. At this stage, like Jesus, we must expose this false peace, confront our oppressors and sow dissension. As Christians we must say with Jesus: "Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth. No, I tell you, but rather dissension" (Lk 12:51). There can be no real peace without justice and repentance.*



*It would be quite wrong to try to preserve 'peace' and 'unity' at all costs, even at the cost of truth and justice and, worse still, at the cost of thousands of young lives. As disciples of Jesus we should rather promote truth and justice and life at all costs, even at the cost of creating conflict, disunity and dissension along the way. To be truly biblical our Church leaders must adopt a theology that millions of Christians have already adopted-a biblical theology of direct confrontation with the forces of evil, rather than a theology of reconciliation with sin and the devil.*

### *3.2 Justice*

*It would be quite wrong to give the impression that 'Church Theology' in South Africa is not particularly concerned about the need for justice. There have been some very strong and very sincere demands for justice. But the question we need to ask here, the very serious theological question is: What kind of justice? An examination of Church statements and pronouncements gives the distinct impression that the justice that is envisaged is the justice of reform , that is to say, a justice that is determined by the oppressor, by the white minority and that is offered to the people as a kind of concession. It does not appear to be the more radical justice that comes from below and is determined by the people of South Africa.*

*One of our main reasons for drawing this conclusion is the simple fact that almost all Church statements and appeals are made to the State or to the white community. The assumption seems to be that changes must come from whites or at least from people who are at the top of the pile. The general idea appears to be that one must simply appeal to the conscience and the goodwill of those who are responsible for injustice in our land and that once they have repented of their sins and after some consultation with others they will introduce the necessary reforms to the system. Why else would Church leaders be having talks with PW Botha, if this is not the vision of a just and peaceful solution to our problems?*

*At the heart of this approach is the reliance upon 'individual conversions' in response to 'moralizing demands' to change the structures of a society. It has*

*not worked and it never will work. The present crisis with all its cruelty, brutality and callousness is ample proof of the ineffectiveness of years and years of Christian 'moralizing' about the need for love. The problem that we are dealing with here in South Africa is not merely a problem of personal guilt, it is a problem of structural injustice. People are suffering, people are being maimed and killed and tortured every day. We cannot just sit back and wait for the oppressor to see the light so that the oppressed can put out their hands and beg for the crumbs of some small reforms. That in itself would be degrading and oppressive.*

*There have been reforms and, no doubt, there will be further reforms in the near future. And it may well be that the Church's appeal to the consciences of whites has contributed marginally to the introduction of some of these reforms. But can such reforms ever be regarded as real change, as the introduction of a true and lasting justice. Reforms that come from the top are never satisfactory. They seldom do more than make the oppression more effective and more acceptable. If the oppressor does ever introduce reforms that might lead to real change this will come about because of strong pressure from those who are oppressed. True justice, God's justice, demands a radical change of structures. This can only come from below, from the oppressed themselves. God will bring about change through the oppressed as he did through the oppressed Hebrew slaves in Egypt. God does not bring his justice through reforms introduced by the Pharaoh's of this world.*

*Why then does 'Church Theology' appeal to the top rather than to the people who are suffering? Why does this theology not demand that the oppressed stand up for their rights and wage a struggle against their oppressors? Why does it not tell them that it is their duty to work for justice and to change the unjust structures? Perhaps the answer to these questions is that appeals from the 'top' in the Church tend very easily to be appeals to the 'top' in society. An appeal to the conscience of those who perpetuate the system of injustice must be made. But real change and true justice can only come from below, from the people--most of whom are Christians.*



### 3.3 Non-Violence

*The stance of 'Church Theology' on non-violence, expressed as a blanket condemnation of all that is called violence, has not only been unable to curb the violence of our situation, it has actually, although unwittingly, been a major contributing factor in the recent escalation of State violence. Here again non-violence has been made into an absolute principle that applies to anything anyone calls violence without regard for who is using it, which side they are on or what purpose they may have in mind. In our situation, this is simply counter-productive.*

*The problem for the Church here is the way the word violence is being used in the propaganda of the State. The State and the media have chosen to call violence what some people do in the townships as they struggle for their liberation i.e. throwing stones, burning cars and buildings and sometimes killing collaborators. But this excludes the structural, institutional and unrepentant violence of the State and especially the oppressive and naked violence of the police and the army. These things are not counted as violence. And even when they are acknowledged to be 'excessive,' they are called 'misconduct' or even 'atrocities' but never violence. Thus the phrase 'Violence in the townships' comes to mean what the young people are doing and not what the police are doing or what apartheid in general is doing to people. If one calls for nonviolence in such circumstances one appears to be criticizing the resistance of the people while justifying or at least overlooking the violence of the police and the State. That is how it is understood not only by the State and its supporters but also by the people who are struggling for their freedom. Violence, especially in our circumstances, is a loaded word.*

*It is true that Church statements and pronouncements do also condemn the violence of the police. They do say that they condemn all violence. But is it legitimate, especially in our circumstances, to use the same word violence in a blanket condemnation to cover the ruthless and repressive activities of the State and the desperate attempts of the people to defend themselves? Do such abstractions and generalizations not confuse the issue? How can acts of oppression, injustice and domination be equated with acts of resistance and*

*self-defense? Would it be legitimate to describe both the physical force used by a rapist and the physical force used by a woman trying to resist the rapist as violence?*

*Moreover there is nothing in the Bible or in our Christian tradition that would permit us to make such generalizations. Throughout the Bible the word violence is used to describe everything that is done by a wicked oppressor (e.g. Ps 72:12-14; Is 59:1-8; Jer 22:13-17; Amos 3:9-10; 6: 3; Mic 2:2; 3:1-3; 6:12). It is never used to describe the activities of Israel's armies in attempting to liberate themselves or to resist aggression. When Jesus says that we should turn the other cheek he is telling us that we must not take revenge; he is not saying that we should never defend ourselves or others. There is a long and consistent Christian tradition about the use of physical force to defend oneself against aggressors and tyrants. In other words there are circumstances when physical force may be used. They are very restrictive circumstances, only as the very last resort and only as the lesser of two evils, or, as Bonhoeffer put it, "the lesser of two evils." But it is simply not true to say that every possible use of physical force is violence and that no matter what the circumstances may be it is never permissible.*

*This is not to say that any use of force at any time by people who are oppressed is permissible simply because they are struggling for their liberation. There have been cases of killing and maiming that no Christian would want to approve of. But then our disapproval is based upon a concern for genuine liberation and a conviction that such acts are unnecessary, counter-productive and unjustifiable and not because they fall under a blanket condemnation of any use of physical force in any circumstance.*

*And finally what makes the professed non-violence of 'Church Theology' extremely suspect in the eyes of very many people, including ourselves, is the tacit support that many-Church leaders give to the growing militarisation of the South African State. How can one condemn all violence and then appoint chaplains to a very violent and oppressive army? How can one condemn all violence and then allow young white males to accept their conscription into the armed forces? Is it because the activities of the armed forces and the*

*police are counted as defensive? That raises very serious questions about whose side such Church leaders might be on. Why are the activities of young blacks in the townships not regarded as defensive?*

*In practice what one calls 'violence' and what one calls 'self-defense' seems to depend upon which side one is on. To call all physical force 'violence' is to try to be neutral and to refuse to make a judgment about who is right and who is wrong. The attempt to remain neutral in this kind of conflict is futile. Neutrality enables the status quo of oppression (and therefore violence) to continue. It is a way of giving tacit support to the oppressor.*

### *3.4 The Fundamental Problem*

*It is not enough to criticize 'Church Theology' we must also try to account for it. What is behind the mistakes and misunderstandings and inadequacies of this theology?*

*In the first place we can point to a lack of social analysis. We have seen how 'Church Theology' tends to make use of absolute principles like reconciliation, negotiation non-violence and peaceful solutions and applies them indiscriminately and uncritically to all situations. Very little attempt is made to analyze what is actually happening in our society and why it is happening. It is not possible to make valid moral judgment: about a society without first understanding that society. The analysis of apartheid that underpins 'Church Theology' is simply inadequate. The present crisis has now made it very clear that the efforts of Church leaders to promote effective and practical ways of changing our society have failed. This failure is due in no small measure to the fact that 'Church Theology' has not developed a social analysis that would enable it to understand the mechanics of injustice and oppression.*

*Closely linked to this, is the lack in 'Church Theology' of an adequate understanding of politics and political strategy. Changing the structures of a society is fundamentally a matter of politics. It requires a political strategy based upon a clear social or political analysis. The Church has to address itself to these strategies and to the analysis upon which they are based. It is*

*into this political situation that the Church has to bring the gospel. Not as an alternative solution to our problems as if the gospel provided us with a non-political solution to political problems. There is no specifically Christian solution. There will be a Christian way of approaching the political solutions, a Christian spirit and motivation and attitude. But there is no way of bypassing politics and political strategies.*

*But we have still not pinpointed the fundamental problem. Why has 'Church Theology' not developed a social analysis? Why does it have an inadequate understanding of the need for political strategies? And why does it make a virtue of neutrality and sitting on the sidelines?*

*The answer must be sought in the type of faith and spirituality that has dominated Church life for centuries. As we all know, spirituality has tended to be another-worldly affair that has very little, if anything at all, to do with the affairs of this world. Social and political matters were seen as worldly affairs that have nothing to do with the spiritual concerns of the Church. Moreover, spirituality has also been understood to be purely private and individualistic. Public affairs and social problems were thought to be beyond the sphere of spirituality. And finally the spirituality we inherit tends to rely upon God to intervene in his own good time to put right what is wrong in the world. That leaves very little for human beings to do except to pray for God's intervention.*

*It is precisely this kind of spirituality that, when faced with the present crisis in South Africa, leaves so many Christians and Church leaders in a state of near paralysis.*

*It hardly needs saying that this kind of faith and this type of spirituality has no biblical foundation. The Bible does not separate the human person from the world in which he or she lives; it does not separate the individual from the social or one's private life from one's public life. God redeems the whole person as part of his whole creation (Rom 8:18-24). A truly biblical spirituality would penetrate into every 'aspect of human existence and would exclude nothing from God's redemptive will. Biblical faith is prophetically relevant to everything that happens in the world.*

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Towards a Prophetic Theology*

*Our present KAIROS calls for a response from Christians that is biblical, spiritual, pastoral and, above all, prophetic. It is not enough in these circumstances to repeat generalized Christian principles. We need a bold and incisive response that is prophetic because it speaks to the particular circumstances of this crisis, a response that does not give the impression of sitting on the fence but is clearly and unambiguously taking a stand.*

- *Social Analysis*

*The first task of a prophetic theology for our times would be an attempt at social analysis or what Jesus would call "reading the signs of the times" (Mt 16:3) or "interpreting this KAIROS" (Lk 12:56). It is not possible to do this in any detail in the document but we must start with at least the broad outlines of an analysis of the conflict in which we find ourselves.*

*It would be quite wrong to see the present conflict as simply a racial war. The racial component is there but we are not dealing with two equal races or nations each with their own selfish group interests. The situation we are dealing with here is one of oppression. The conflict is between an oppressor and the oppressed. The conflict between two irreconcilable causes or interests in which the one is just and the other is unjust.*

*On the one hand we have the interests of those who benefit from the status quo and who are determined to maintain it at any cost, even at the cost of millions of lives. It is in their interests to introduce a number of reforms in order to ensure that the system is not radically changed and that they can continue to benefit from the system because it favors them and enables them to accumulate a great deal of wealth and to maintain an exceptionally high standard of living. And they want to make sure that it stays that way even if some adjustments are needed.*

*On the other hand we have those who do not benefit in any way from the system the way it is now. They are treated as mere labor units, paid starvation wages, separated from their families by migratory labor, moved about like cattle and dumped in homelands to starve--and all for the benefit of a privileged minority. They have no say in the system and are supposed to be grateful for the concessions that are offered to them like crumbs. It is not in their interests to allow this system to continue even in some 'reformed' or 'revised' form. They are determined to change the system radically so that it not longer benefits only the privileged few. And they are willing to do this even at the cost of their own lives. What they want is justice for all.*

*This is our situation of civil war or revolution. The one side is committed to maintaining the system at all costs and the other side is committed to changing it at all costs. There are two conflicting projects here and no compromise is possible. Either we have full and equal justice for all or we don't.*

*The Bible has a great deal to say about this kind of conflict, about a world that is divided into oppressors and oppressed.*

- *Oppression in the Bible*

*When we search the Bible for a message about oppression we discover, as others throughout the world are discovering, that oppression is a central theme that runs right through the Old and New Testaments. The biblical scholars who have taken the trouble to study the theme of oppression in the Bible have discovered that there are no less than twenty different root words in Hebrew to describe oppression. As one author says, oppression is "a basic structural category of biblical theology" (TD Hanks, God So Loved the Third World, Orbis 1983 p 4).*

*Moreover the description of oppression in the Bible is concrete and vivid. The Bible describes oppression as the experience of being crushed, degraded, humiliated, exploited, impoverished, defrauded, deceived and enslaved. And the oppressors are described as cruel, ruthless, arrogant, greedy, violent and*



*tyrannical and as the enemy. Such descriptions could only have been written originally by people who had had a long and painful experience of what it means to be oppressed. And indeed nearly 90 percent of the history of the Jewish and later the Christian people whose story is told in the Bible, is a history of domestic or international oppression. Israel as a nation was built upon the painful experience of oppression and repression as slaves in Egypt. But what made all the difference for this particular group of oppressed people was the revelation of Yahweh. God revealed himself as Yahweh, the one who has compassion on those who suffer and who liberates them from their oppressors.*

*"I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave-drivers. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians.... The cry of the sons of Israel has come to me, and I have witnessed the way in which the Egyptians oppress them." (Ex 3:7-9)*

*Throughout the Bible God appears as the liberator of the oppressed. He is not neutral. He does not attempt to reconcile Moses and Pharaoh, to reconcile the Hebrew slaves with their Egyptian oppressors or to reconcile the Jewish people with any of their late oppressors. Oppression is sin and it cannot be compromised with, it must be done away with. God takes sides with the oppressed. As we read in Psalm 103:6 (JB) "God who does what is right, is always on the side of the oppressed."*

*Nor is this identification with the oppressed confined to the Old Testament. When Jesus stood up in the synagogue at Nazareth to announce his mission he made use of the words of Isaiah.*

*"The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour." (Lk 4:18-19)*

*There can be no doubt that Jesus is here taking up the cause of the poor and the oppressed. He has identified himself with their interests. Not that he is*

*unconcerned about the rich and the oppressor. These he calls to repentance. The oppressed Christians of South Africa have known for a long time that they are united to Christ in their sufferings. By his own sufferings and his death on the cross he became a victim of oppression and violence. He is with us in our oppression.*

- *Tyranny in the Christian Tradition*

*There is a long Christian tradition relating to oppression, but the word that has been used most frequently to describe this particular form of sinfulness is the word 'tyranny'. According to this tradition once it is established beyond doubt that a particular ruler is a tyrant or that a particular regime is tyrannical, it forfeits the moral right to govern and the people acquire the right to resist and to find the means to protect their own interests against injustice and oppression. In other words a tyrannical regime has no moral legitimacy . It may be the de facto government and it may even be recognized by other governments and therefore be the de iure or legal government. But if it is a tyrannical regime, it is, from a moral and theological point of view, illegitimate. There are indeed some differences of opinion in the Christian tradition about the means that might be used to replace a tyrant but there has not been any doubt about our Christian duty to refuse to co-operate with tyranny and to do whatever we can to remove it.*

*There are indeed some differences of opinion in the Christian tradition about the means that might be used to replace a tyrant but there has not been any doubt about our Christian duty to refuse to co-operate with tyranny and to do whatever we can to remove it.*

*Of course everything hinges on the definition of a tyrant. At what point does a government become a tyrannical regime?*

*The traditional Latin definition of a tyrant is hostis boni communis - an enemy of the common good. The purpose of all government is the promotion of what is called the common good of the people governed. To promote the common good is to govern in the interests of, and for the benefit of, all the people.*



*Many governments fail to do this at times. There might be this or that injustice done to some of the people. And such lapses would indeed have to be criticized. But occasional acts of injustice would not make a government into an enemy of the people, a tyrant.*

*To be an enemy of the people a government would have to be hostile to the common good in principle. Such a government would be acting against the interests of the people as a whole and permanently. This would be clearest in cases where the very policy of a government is hostile towards the common good and where the government has a mandate to rule in the interests of some of the people rather than in the interests of all the people. Such a government would be in principle irreformable. Any reform that it might try to introduce would not be calculated to serve the common good but to serve the interests of the minority from whom it received its mandate.*

*A tyrannical regime cannot continue to rule for very long without becoming more and more violent. As the majority of the people begin to demand their rights and to put pressure on the tyrant, so will the tyrant resort more and more to desperate, cruel, gross and ruthless forms of tyranny and repression. The reign of a tyrant always ends up as a reign of terror. It is inevitable because from the start the tyrant is an enemy of the common good.*

*This account of what we mean by a tyrant or a tyrannical regime can best be summed up in the words of a well-known moral theologian: "a regime which is openly the enemy of the people and which violates the common good permanently and in the grossest manner" (B HŠring, *The Law of Christ* , Vol 3, p 150).*

*That leaves us with the question of whether the present government of South Africa is tyrannical or not? There can be no doubt what the majority of the people of South Africa think. For them the apartheid regime is indeed the enemy of the people and that is precisely what they call it: the enemy. In the present crisis, more than before, the regime has lost any legitimacy that it might have had in the eyes of the people. Are the people right or wrong?*

*Apartheid is a system whereby a minority regime elected by one small section of the population is given an explicit mandate to govern in the interests of, and for the benefit of, the white community. Such a mandate or policy is by definition hostile to the common good of all the people. In fact because it tries to rule in the exclusive interests of whites and not in the interests of all, it ends up ruling in a way that is not even in the interests of those same whites. It becomes an enemy of all the people. A totalitarian regime. A reign of terror.*

*This also means that the apartheid minority regime is irreformable (sic). We cannot expect the apartheid regime to experience a conversion or change of heart and totally abandon the policy of apartheid. It has no mandate from its electorate to do so. Any reforms or adjustments it might make would have to be done in the interests of who elected it. Individual members of the government could experience a real conversion and repent but, if they did, they would simply have to follow this through by leaving a regime that was elected and put into power precisely because of its policy of apartheid.*

*And that is why we have reached the present impasse. As the oppressed majority becomes more insistent and puts more and more pressure on the tyrant by means of boycotts, strikes, uprisings, burnings and even armed struggle, the more tyrannical will regime become. On the one hand it will use repressive measures: detentions, trials, killings, torture, bannings, propaganda, states of emergency and other desperate and tyrannical methods. And on the other hand it will introduce reforms that will always be unacceptable to the majority because all its reforms must ensure that the minority remains on top.*

*A regime that is in principle the enemy of the people cannot suddenly begin to rule in the interests of all the people. It can only be replaced by another government--one that has been elected by the majority of the people with an explicit mandate to govern in the interests of all the people.*

*A regime that has made itself the enemy of the people has thereby also made itself the enemy of God. People are made in the image and likeness of God and whatever to the least of them we do to God (Mt 25:49, 45).*

*To say that the State or the regime is the enemy of God is not to say that all those who support the system are aware of this. On the whole they simply do not know what they are doing. Many people have been blinded by the regime's propaganda. They are frequently quite ignorant of the consequences of their stance. However, such blindness does not make the State any less tyrannical or any less of an enemy of the people and an enemy of God.*

*On the other hand the fact that the State is tyrannical and an enemy of God is no excuse for hatred. As Christians we are called upon to love our enemies (Mt 5:44). It is not said that we should not or will not have enemies or that we should not identify tyrannical regimes as indeed our enemies. But once we have identified our enemies, we must endeavor to love them. That is not always easy. But then we must also remember that the most loving thing we can do for both the oppressed and for our enemies who are oppressors is to eliminate the oppression, remove the tyrants from power and establish a just government for the common good of all the people .*

- *A Message of Hope*

*At the very heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ and at the very center of all true prophecy is a message of hope. Nothing could be more relevant and more necessary at this moment of crisis in South Africa than the Christian message of hope.*

*Jesus has taught us to speak of this hope as the coming of God's kingdom. We believe that God is at work in our world turning hopeless and evil situations to good so that his "Kingdom may come" and his "Will may be done on earth as it is in heaven." We believe that goodness and justice and love will triumph in the end and that tyranny and that tyranny and oppression cannot last forever. One day "all tears will be wiped away" (Rev 7:17; 21:4) and "the lamb will he down with the lion" (Is 11:6). True peace and true reconciliation are not only desirable, they are assured and guaranteed. This is our faith and our hope.*

*Why is it that this powerful message of hope has not been highlighted in 'Church Theology,' in the statements and pronouncements of Church leaders? Is it because they have been addressing themselves to the oppressor rather than to the oppressed? Is it because they do not want to encourage the oppressed to be too hopeful for too much?*

*As the crisis deepens day-by-day, what both the oppressor and the oppressed can legitimately demand of the Churches is a message of hope. Most of the oppressed people in South Africa today and especially the youth do have hope. They are acting courageously and fearlessly because they have a sure hope that liberation will come. Often enough their bodies are broken but nothing can now break their spirit. But hope needs to be confirmed. Hope needs to be maintained and strengthened. Hope needs to be spread. The people need to hear it said again and again that God is with them.*

*On the other hand the oppressor and those who believe the propaganda of the oppressor are desperately fearful. They must be made aware of the diabolical evils of the present system and they must be called to repentance but they must also be given something to hope for. At present they have false hopes. They hope to maintain the status quo and their special privileges with perhaps some adjustments and they fear any real alternative. But there is much more than that to hope for and nothing to fear. Can the Christian message of hope not help them in this matter?*

*There is hope. There is hope for all of us. But the road to that hope is going to be very hard and very painful. The conflict and the struggle will have to intensify in the months and years ahead because there is no other way to remove the injustice and oppression. But God is with us. We can only learn to become the instruments of his peace even unto death. We must participate in the cross of Christ if we are to have the hope of participating in his resurrection.*

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Challenge to Action*

#### *5.1 God Sides with the Oppressed*

*To say that the Church must now take sides unequivocally and consistently with the poor and the oppressed is to overlook the fact that the majority of Christians in South Africa have already done so. By far the greater part of the Church in South Africa is poor and oppressed. Of course it cannot be taken for granted that everyone who is oppressed has taken up their own cause and is struggling for their own liberation. Nor can it be assumed that all oppressed Christians are fully aware of the fact that their cause is God's cause. Nevertheless it remains true that the Church is already on the side of the oppressed because that is where the majority of its members are to be found. This fact needs to be appropriated and confirmed by the Church as a whole.*

*At the beginning of this document it was pointed out that the present crisis has highlighted the divisions in the Church. We are a divided Church precisely because not all the members of our Churches have taken sides against oppression. In other words not all Christians have united themselves with God "who is always on the side of the oppressed" (Ps 103:6). As far as the present crisis is concerned, there is only one way forward to Church unity and that is for those Christians who find themselves on the side of the oppressor or sitting on the fence, to cross over to the other side to be united in faith and action with those who are oppressed. Unity and reconciliation within the Church itself is only possible around God and Jesus Christ who are to be found on the side of the poor and the oppressed.*

*If this is what the Church must become, if this is what the Church as a whole must have as its project, how then are we to translate it into concrete and effective action?*

## 5.2 Participation in the Struggle

*Christians, if they are not doing so already, must quite simply participate in the struggle for liberation and for a just society. The campaigns of the people, from consumer boycotts to stayaways, need to be supported and encouraged by the Church. Criticism will sometimes be necessary but encouragement and support will also be necessary. In other words the present crisis challenges the whole Church to move beyond a mere 'ambulance ministry' to a ministry of involvement and participation.*

## 5.3 Transforming Church Activities

*The Church has its own specific activities: Sunday services, communion services, baptisms, Sunday school, funerals and so forth. It also has its specific way of expressing its faith and its commitment i.e. in the form of confessions of faith. All of these activities must be re-shaped to be more fully consistent with a prophetic faith related to the KAIROS that God is offering us today. The evil forces we speak of in baptism must be named. We know what these evil forces are in South Africa today. The unity and sharing we profess in our communion services or Masses must be named. It is the solidarity of the people inviting all to join in the struggle for God's peace in South Africa. The repentance we preach must be named. It is repentance for our share of the guilt for the suffering and oppression in our country.*

*Much of what we do in our Church services has lost its relevance to the poor and the oppressed. Our services and sacraments have been appropriated to serve the need of the individual for comfort and security. Now these same Church activities must be reappropriated to serve the real religious needs of all the people and to further the liberating mission of God and the Church in the world.*

## 5.4 Special Campaigns

*Over and above its regular activities the Church would need to have special programmes, projects and campaigns because of the special needs of the*



*struggle for liberation in South Africa today. But there is a very important caution here. The Church must avoid becoming a 'Third Force,' a force between the oppressor and the oppressed. The Church's programmes and campaigns must not duplicate what the people's organizations are already doing and, even more seriously, the Church must not confuse the issue by having programmes that run counter to the struggles of those political organizations that truly represent the grievances and demands of the people. Consultation, co-ordination and co-operation will be needed. We all have the same goals even when we differ about the final significance of what we are struggling for.*

### *5.5 Civil Disobedience*

*Once it is established that the present regime has no moral legitimacy and is in fact a tyrannical regime certain things follow for the Church and its activities. In the first place the Church cannot collaborate with tyranny. It cannot or should not do any thing that appears to give legitimacy to a morally illegitimate regime. Secondly, that Church should not only pray for a change of government, it should also mobilize its members in every parish to begin to think and work and plan for a change of government in South Africa. We must begin to look ahead and begin working now with firm hope and faith for a better future. And finally the moral illegitimacy of the apartheid regime means that the Church will have to be involved at times in civil disobedience. A Church that takes its responsibilities seriously in these circumstances will sometimes have to confront and to disobey the State in order to obey God.*

### *5.6 Moral Guidance*

*The people look to the Church, especially in the midst of our present crisis, for moral guidance. In order to provide this the Church must first make its stand absolutely clear and never tire of explaining and dialoguing about it. It must then help people to understand their rights and their duties. There must be no misunderstanding about the moral duty of all who are oppressed to resist oppression and to struggle for liberation and justice. The Church will also find*

*that at times it does need to curb excesses and to appeal to the consciences of those who act thoughtlessly and wildly.*

*But the Church of Jesus Christ is not called to be a bastion of caution and moderation. The Church should challenge, inspire and motivate people. It has a message of the cross that inspires us to make sacrifices for justice and liberation. It has a message of hope that challenges us to wake up and to act with hope and confidence. The Church must preach this message not only in words and sermons and statements but also through its actions, programmes, campaigns and divine services.*

### *Conclusion*

*As we said in the beginning, there is nothing final about this document. Our hope is that it will stimulate discussion, debate, reflection and prayer, but, above all, that it will lead to action. We invite all committed Christians to take this matter further, to do more research, to develop the themes we have presented here or to criticize them and to return to the Bible, as we have tried to do, with the question raised by the crisis of our times.*

*Although the document suggests various modes of involvement it does not prescribe the particular actions anyone should take. We call upon all those who are committed to this prophetic form of theology to use the document for discussion in groups, small and big, to determine an appropriate form of action, depending on their particular situation, and to take up the action with other related groups and organizations.*

*The challenge to renewal and action that we have set out here is addressed to the Church. But that does not mean that it is intended only for Church leaders. The challenge of the faith and of our present KAIROS is addressed to all who bear the name Christian. None of us can simply sit back and wait to be told what to do by our Church leaders or anyone else. We must all accept responsibility for acting and living out our Christian faith in these circumstances. We pray that God will help all of us to translate the challenge of our times into action.*



*We as theologians (both lay and professional), have been greatly challenged by our own reflections, our exchange of ideas and our discoveries as we met together in smaller and larger groups to prepare this document or to suggest amendments to it. We are convinced that this challenge comes from God and that it is addressed to all of us. We see the present crisis or KAIROS as indeed a divine visitation.*

*And finally we also like to call upon our Christian brothers and sisters throughout the world to give us the necessary support in this regard so that the daily loss of so many young lives may be brought to a speedy end.*

*We, the undersigned, take joint responsibility for what is presented in this document, not as a final statement of the truth but as the direction in which God is leading us at this moment or our history.*

## Chapter One: Introduction

### 1.1 Relevance

The Kairos Document (KD) analysed in an unprecedented way the stances the Church could take as part of the greater community of South Africa and as part of civil society in the latter part of the 1980s, challenging the churches to accept their prophetic role in apartheid South Africa. It created quite a stir and led to numerous initiatives taken by the ecumenical community. However, since the institution of a democratic dispensation in 1994, the churches often appear paralysed and ominously silent when confronted by the challenges of the new South Africa.

The problem appears both on a theological and a practical level. When in 1990 when then state president FW de Klerk made his groundbreaking announcement about the imminent release of all political prisoners including Nelson Mandela in particular, the Church, which was in a relatively better position to challenge the then status quo, appeared to have been caught on the wrong foot. Since then there has been no visible cohesive response to the new dispensation. It is a debatable question whether the inclusion of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), the South African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC) and The Evangelical Association of South Africa (TEASA) within the political negotiations would have made a difference in securing leverage for the Church as a whole.

Attempts have been made by the SACC to realign themselves in the new South Africa but little is heard of these endeavours. Does the Church in South Africa not think that the existing disunity constitutes a crisis? How much of the entrapments of power, status-seeking and one-upmanship is hindering the Church from being the Church in South Africa? Situations still exist where Christians still can not receive Holy Communion together as in the case of Roman Catholics, for example. With the Orthodox Church, members first have bread and wine during Holy Communion, after which non-members are

served with bread only. In the light of so many differences, some of which are highly embarrassing, the researcher still believes strongly that these differences can still be overcome and the churches can still face challenges together.

In one lecture Archbishop Emeritus, Desmond Tutu, makes the following observations:

The fact of the matter is we still depressingly do not respect one another. I have often said Black Consciousness did not finish the work it set out to do. (BBC News, 27 September, 2006)

Tutu is quoted as saying that government officials often acted like former officials during the apartheid era – treating people rudely:

Perhaps we did not realize just how apartheid has damaged us so that we seem to have lost our sense of right and wrong, so that when we go on strike as is our right to do, we are not appalled that some of us can chuck people out of moving trains because they did not join the strike, or why is it a common practice now to trash, to go on the rampage? (ibid.)

## **1.2 The aim**

The aim is to provoke debate within the Church in conjunction with people of other faiths and begin discussion regarding ways and means of how to contribute meaningfully towards nation building within the present South African context. The aim here is to prove that the principles contained in the Kairos Document (KD) could provide a valuable lens to use, when evaluating the role of the churches today and in the future.

It is the express aim of this thesis to assist the Church to regain its prophetic voice. It has to continue to be the voice of the voiceless in South Africa.

### **1.3 Rationale**

The researcher visited Canada for just a little over a year (from June 2003 to July 2004) at the invitation of the United Church of Canada. The impression gained by him was that South Africans do not appear to appreciate what a beautiful country they live in, and how in spite of all the differences, South Africans managed to build a very progressive society, even though it is a mixture of both developed and developing communities. South Africans tend to spend their time on stressing their differences rather than on what unites them. This thesis aims to contribute towards the reconciliation theme as set out by the aim of the new Constitution in which democratic South Africa is now governed.

One of the strong points and suggestions of the KD is that theology should be done in conjunction with social analysis. The challenges facing South Africa today are still clearly inequalities that are a legacy of the past.

The thesis also examines how the Church relates to power and status. And it shows that the preferential option for the poor is still a valid approach for the church in a democrat dispensation.

### **1.4 The research question**

The challenge for the Church today is how to be constructively involved in the transformation of society, from the past period of oppression to the present era of liberation and reconstruction. Could issues raised by the KD be relevant to the Church today? The Church seems to be continuing to produce what Father Leo Booth calls religious addicts:

I define religious addiction as using God, a church, or a belief system as an escape from reality, in an attempt to find or elevate a sense of self-worth or well-being. It is using God or religion as a fix...

These religious addicts never experience God first hand, never truly get to know God. They only know what somebody has told them about

God. If what they are told about God is dysfunctional, then their relationship with God becomes dysfunctional. (1991:38ff)

The main question that this thesis addresses is whether the Kairos Document could still be relevant for the Church in South Africa today and whether its concerns could once again enable the Church to rise to the challenges stated in the KD, and whether, mindful of the KD's challenges to the Church, it can offer responses and play a meaningful role towards true reconciliation and the reconstruction in the country.

Is the Church gearing up its membership to meet the challenges of today in South Africa?

## 1.5 Hypothesis

The Kairos Document was produced by, in the researcher's view, the church within the Church; that is, a few prophetic individuals who were church activists, as an offering that was meant to shake the Church from its slumbers. It succeeded in galvanising many people through the *Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT)* to begin questioning their own stance within the Church and against injustice. Whilst there are some who feel that the Kairos Document is outdated today, the researcher strongly believes that the KD's theological analysis, critique and method still remain relevant, and will continue to guide the Church in its relations within a democratically-elected Government, to challenge both the State and the wider community to address the many needs of the country in a responsible manner. The time to do that is now, while the relations between State and Church are still, generally speaking, harmonious and the integrity of both entities remains unquestionable.

Even if there are some significant, laudable, and radical changes present in the new South African context, a re-examination of the KD still challenges the churches to:

- support the present government in an informed manner
- speak out against those actions which not only offend justice but bring disharmony within the community of South Africa
- give guidance to the country while empowering their followers to take more seriously responsibility for their own lives, not always wait for the government “to do things for them”
- take issues of governance as part of a believer’s responsibility, to inculcate the values that match the rights entrenched in the South African Constitution among its members.

## **1.6 Research methodology**

The research methodology is devised to assist the researcher to determine the extent to which Church-State relations are conducted within South Africa today. It embraces the latest strategies that came in to play during the period of transition. The research focuses on one of the strongest organs of civil society, the Church, and how it interacts with government as well as the governed, in order to deepen a sustained democracy in the country. The research challenges the Church to re-evaluate its role, vis-à-vis the government, and hopefully discover new ways in which to answer to its prophetic calling.

The thesis contains both a qualitative and a quantitative approach. There are notes on the theory behind the methodology as well as the practicalities involved in the exercise, as portrayed in the introductory chapter.

## **1.7 Quantitative research (literary)**

This involved a literature study of writers such as Albert Nolan, Frank Chikane, and many others who had a bearing on the production of the Kairos Document - which is the primary source of the research. There is also a reference to other material produced during the very turbulent eighties in South Africa – and even before - in which churches such as the SACBC, the



SACC, the Afrikaans churches as well as the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, voiced their opinions. The South African context that produced the KD needs to be thoroughly understood.

### **1.8 Qualitative research (empirical)**

The researcher contacted a number of theologians and practitioners at UNISA, University of Pretoria, University of Natal – as well as other church activists – to capture their views on the significance of the KD for the new South Africa. For this purpose a questionnaire was prepared with the relevant questions.

### **1.9 Researcher as participant-observer**

As someone who has lived through apartheid and now lives in the new dispensation in South Africa, the writer cannot be detached from what is happening in the country. The researcher was ordained into the ministry of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa in 1970. He became chairperson of Diakonia (now Diakonia Council of Churches) in Durban from 1981 to 1983, during the turbulent years of the Church's involvement in the struggle for liberation in Durban. He was Director of Mission and Evangelism of the *S A Council of Churches*, from 1987 to 1991. From 1994 to 2000 he was the Director of the Institute for Contextual Theology. He was, for thirteen years, refused a passport by the SA Government to go abroad. (See Knighton-Fit J, 2003:331)

The researcher therefore must be regarded as a participant observer. Although a proper scientific distance between the researcher and the subject matter will be of importance, it is also evident that his own experience and thinking is reflected in the thesis.

The researcher agrees with Eckhard Tolle's averment:

One of the greatest insights that has come out of modern physics is that of the unity between the observer and the observed; the person conducting the experiment – the observing consciousness – cannot be separated from the observed phenomena... (1997:167)

## **1.10 Terminology**

### **Afrikaners**

“Afrikaners’ is a term commonly used to refer to Dutch descendents of settlers who came to South Africa in 1652 brought by the Dutch East Indian Company as its servants”. (Ngcokovane, 1989:23)

### **Apartheid**

Ngcokovane describes apartheid as follows:

Apartheid simply means ‘separation’ or ‘apartness’. In South Africa it is a system of complete separation of the races from birth to death. It is also the total control of human beings through the legal structure of the state. (1989:23)

### **Black Christmas**

This was an escalation of the fight against apartheid that was started by Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) to force business to pressurise the government towards change. Christmas is the most commercial time when businesses make a lot of money. Black Christmas meant that there could be no celebrations as long as people were being tortured and killed by apartheid forces and as long as their rights as citizens of the country were denied. It was therefore a boycott from buying goods from town especially during Christmas. It was then called black Christmas.

## **Black Consciousness**

This is a philosophy that was adapted for South Africa from the African-Americans in America by Stephen Bantu Biko who started the South African Students Organisation (SASO) (Speckman, 2001:87) Maimela states that SASO propounded a philosophy of Black Consciousness with the aim to liberate Blacks first from their self-incurred mental and psychological bondage, to make Blacks aware who they are as a people and what their position is in society. (1987:66)

## **Blacks**

The term came about in its positive form as a result of the Black Consciousness Movement of the late sixties and early seventies in South Africa. It introduced a sense of solidarity and pride among the three oppressed South African groups... (Ngcokovane, 1989:xi)

In South Africa Blacks also include what those who are of a fairer skin who are regarded as so-called Coloureds, and those of Indian descent called Indians. Liberation movements such as the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan African Congress (PAC), Azanian People's Organisation usually include all three black groups under the terms Blacks. The National Party, which was the governing party and custodians of statutory apartheid, strategically divided the three groups so as to follow the "divide and rule" method.

## **Distinction between a democratically-elected government and a democratic government**

A democratically-elected government does not necessarily become a democratic government. Democracy depends a lot on what kind of governance prevails in the country, and whether such an elected government is to a large extent doing the will of the people in a true sense of a government of the people, by the people, for the people.

## **Dutch Reformed Church/ Dutch Reformed Family**

The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) refers to the first church to be founded by the Dutch colonists and settlers who found their way to the Cape of Good Hope in 1652. For a century and a half the DRC was the only church allowed to operate in the country. The DRC initially counted believers from all racial groups among its membership, but in 1857 Synod decided that separate communion services may be allowed for different racial groups, which eventually resulted in the foundation of four churches within the DRC family: a church for Whites (the DRC), for Coloureds (DRC Mission Church), for Blacks (DRC in Africa) and for Indians (the Reformed Church in Africa)). A process to reunite the churches again has proved to be arduous. Apart from the DRC two smaller Afrikaans churches were also established in South Africa, the Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk and the Gereformeerde Kerk (Doppers).

## **The Kairos Document (KD)**

This was a document produced by the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT), which was started by a concerned group of Christians as a response to State pressure (see below under *A Series of Initiatives*). ICT is the producer and custodian of the Kairos Document (KD). Kairos is a Greek word meaning the moment of truth, a given opportunity. The KD was written by a few theologians, notably, Frank Chikane, Albert Nolan forming the main committee. This happened at the height of apartheid in 1985. This document was circulated to most ministers of religion who were regarded as Christian activists. If they agreed with the contents they signed the document. The KD particularly identified three types of theology: State, Church and Prophetic theology.

## **South African Council of Churches (SACC)**

This is a gathering of traditionally mostly English-speaking churches that had many confrontations with the apartheid government. It switched from a

Council of Christians to a Council of Churches in 1968. SACC is aligned to the World Council of Churches (WCC). SACC boasts previous General Secretaries such as then Bishop Desmond Tutu and Beyers Naude. Since the 1990s the SACC opened its ranks to, inter alia, the Afrikaans churches.

### **South African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC)**

All the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church belong to this organization and act as the equivalent of the SACC within the Catholic Church. They exclude all other denominations. The SACBC does work closely with the SACC and from time to time issues statements pertaining to ethical positions and the situation in the country.

### **The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)**

In order to understand the “truth” behind the apartheid past in South Africa, to endeavour to heal the pain and the many injustices of the apartheid past, to facilitate amnesty to perpetrators, to address the various needs of the victims of apartheid, as well as to initiate initiatives to foster nation building and reconciliation, the S A Truth and Reconciliation Commission was appointed by Parliament in 1995. From January 1996 the TRC criss-crossed the country, holding numerous hearings and workshops, before producing its final report (29 October 1998). The researcher presented the ICT’s submission to the TRC in East London (November 1997).

### **The use of “Church” and “church”**

Where the researcher uses Church it is meant the whole Church. Where lower case is used it is meant a denomination. Where the quotation uses lower case, the researcher has not interfered with the way it is written.

## **1.11 Study outline**

### **1.11.1 Chapter One: Introduction**

The relevance of the subject, the research aims, the hypothesis, the methodology, as well as the most important definitions used in the research is discussed.

### **1.11.2 Chapter Two: Church-State relations under the spotlight again**

From 1948 when the National Party took over until about 1985 when the Kairos Document was published, the Church had been in the spotlight. A brief overview of the relationship between the Dutch Reformed Church and the then apartheid government is included in this chapter. By 2009 there has been fifteen years of a government that has been elected democratically. These were early days for South Africa. Life is beginning to unfold in a very special and unusual way. No one could have foreseen that South Africa would have changed so radically within such a few years. Consider the following points:

1. Almost all the people who are governing today are people who had directly been involved in the struggle for the liberation of the country. Many of them are people of one faith or another, with the majority being Christian. The SACC could find it easy to speak of a “critical solidarity” with the State because some of her own former employees have had something to do with the State (for example, the Rev Frank Chikane and Brigalia Bam, to name just a few). There is thus a certain loyalty and comradeship shared between a majority of government members and church officials. The SACC is familiar with most government members. SACC can vouch for them. The ruling party has the Freedom Charter as its point of departure.
2. It is the first time that South Africans have had to deal with a democratically-elected government.



The thesis examines how the Church can relate to the State, whereas her imperative is also a preferential option for the poor. Whilst it is accepted that the Church's function is to assist the new democracy as it grows by advocating truth, righteousness and justice in issues of governance, the Church itself is struggling with its own identity and its own dividedness. So far the Church has tried to be in solidarity with the State where the State is seen to be redressing the wrongs of the past in alleviating poverty and above all, working with people and the government in their efforts to restore the dignity that had been stripped by apartheid and foster harmony in a fractured country. This is the mandate given to the state by the voters as encapsulated in the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The State, on the other hand controls tremendous resources and has oversight over the security of the land and issues related thereto.

The Kairos Document in 1985, at the height of the apartheid machinery at work, identified a lack of social analysis as the fundamental problem and the reason for the Church's inertia and lack of a prophetic theology:

In the first place we can point to a lack of social analysis. We have seen how 'Church theology' tends to make use of absolute principles like reconciliation, negotiation, non-violence and peaceful solutions and applies them indiscriminately and uncritically to all situations. Very little attempt is made to analyse what is happening in our society...The present crisis has now made it very clear that the efforts of church leaders to promote effective and practical ways of changing our society have failed. This failure is due in no small measure to the fact that "Church Theology" has not developed a social analysis that would enable it to understand the mechanics of injustice and oppression. (1986:15)

The researcher submits that the above-quoted observation is still relevant today. In a conversation between the researcher and a friend who is a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, the researcher said, "looking back at what life was during apartheid, we shall never cross the same river again'.

The DRC man responded, “That is true. But you can still cross a different river the same wrong way”. It is this kind of challenge that calls for vigilance so that South Africa will never regress to the same level as it did during the days of apartheid.

### **1.11.3 Chapter Three: The Kairos Document: Yesterday and Today**

This chapter looks at the history and content of the KD, spelling out the compelling reasons that brought about the production of the document. There were other documents such as *The Message to the People of South Africa* in which the Church played a meaningful role to bring about changes within the country.

The chapter examines why it became necessary to produce these documents. It will be seen that there were other statements during that same period which emanated from the churches as they were struggling to fulfil their role as the voice of the voiceless. The text and history of the KD and the reaction to it have been included in this chapter.

### **1.11.4 Chapter Four: The Kairos Document: A theological analysis**

The Kairos Document has been printed in full at the start of this thesis. An examination of the theological content of the KD is in this manner: there is an analysis and evaluation of the pronouncements of the KD on what was called *Church* Theology, *State* Theology and *Prophetic* Theology in this chapter and the implications of the three theological positions is discussed as well as the implications for South Africa today.

### **1.11.5 Chapter Five: From the old to a new Kairos?**

The argument for the possibility of a New Kairos has been presented in this chapter. Some issues discussed, are:

- How does the TRC impact the new kairos in South Africa? Did the TRC help or hinder reconciliation? Was the TRC able to be an antidote to the toxicity of apartheid?
- An examination of the role of faith-based communities in recreating new values for South Africa within the new dispensation
- What is the imperative towards the abuse of power? What safeguards need to be in place towards this? What can the Church do to make sure that people are so empowered that they themselves can make sure that the democratic gains made politically are translated into similar gains in the Church and in the economic field?
- Political liberation is turning out differently from what was expected because there is no commensurate economic justice. The case for economic justice therefore becomes part of the new kairos as much as the issue of poverty continues to plague the country. It has also been necessary to look at how new found power can be used or abused to affirm or negate respectively the new found freedom.

#### **1.11.6 Chapter Six: Conclusion**

While the Church has a clear role in dealing with the contradictions existing within South African society it also has to put its house in order. This is a summary of the arguments which show certain aspects of the KD are still relevant not just to the Church itself but also in its dealings with the State. The way forward would be for the Church, while engaged in reconstruction, to continue to protect and secure the new found freedom in South Africa. There will also be a few recommendations that would need further research.

## Chapter Two: Church-State relations under the spotlight again

### 2.1 Introduction

In his response to the debate on the State of the Nation address, the President Thabo Mbeki felt constrained to quote Pieter Mulder (Afrikaans-speaking leader of the opposition Freedom Front Party) who had stated the following:

We do not know each other and do not debate with each other. Two minutes on the podium are not debates...

Responding, Mbeki said:

We are emerging but only emerging slowly and painfully, out of a deeply fractured society. This is a society which continues to be characterized by deep fissures which separate the black people from the white, the hungry from the prosperous, the urban from the rural, the male from the female, the disabled from the rest...

It is therefore not an idle thing to imagine that out of this amalgam of inequity, where some have everything and others have nothing, where some instinctively behave as superiors and others know it as a matter of fact that they are seen as inferior, where some must experience change otherwise they perish, and others fear they will perish as a result of change – is it not an idle thing to imagine that out of all this there can emerge a national consensus? (Response of the then President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, to the debate on the State of the Nation, [www.dfa.gov.za/docs/speeches/2007/mbek0216](http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/speeches/2007/mbek0216))

In the light of the above the researcher briefly examines how the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) assisted the

country to move towards reconciliation. The thesis also examines whether the Church did or did not take it forward. As this is also the space to debate Church-State relations when there is still harmony and rapport between Church and State, a critique of the KD assists to give the Church some leverage to deal with the new context. In the preface to the Revised Edition, the writers of the KD state:

We hope that it will serve as a never-ending stimulus to keep the cycle of action-reflection-action moving forward. (KD Preface, September 1986)

As already stated in Chapter One, the present time in which South Africa exists is unique because at the time of writing (2009), it is only fifteen years after the first democratic elections were held in South Africa.

The title of this chapter mentions that Church-State relations are in the spotlight again because it was not the first time that that had been so. The one most notable struggle between Church and State stemmed from what became known as the Cottesloe Consultation of December, 1960. The Sharpeville massacre had necessitated the need for a rethink among serious-minded Church leaders. The World Council of Churches had got involved in the South African struggle for justice and a Rev Bilheimer of the WCC visited South Africa and started having talks with Church leaders such as Dr JB Webb, Bishop Reeves and others.

## **2.2 Church–State relations in the 1950s and 1960s**

### **2.2.1 The role of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC)**

While the Dutch Reformed Church was overtly for segregation, English-speaking churches also followed silently and at times not so silently behind in their own discriminating way. This was acknowledged by the confession made in the Rustenburg Declaration (1991, see below). The assembled churches made the following confession regarding complicity in apartheid:

As representatives of the Christian Church in South Africa, we recognise that the South African situation owes much to the context of western colonialism, to the stifling of conscience by inherited social attitudes which blind communities to the wrong they inflict and to a weakness common to the worldwide Church in dealing with social evil. Now, however, we confess our own sin and acknowledge our part in the heretical policy of apartheid which has led to such extreme suffering for so many in our land... (Alberts and Chikane, 1991:277, 2.2)

We therefore confess that we have in different ways practised, supported, permitted or refused to resist apartheid... (2.5)

Strong criticism was directed quite correctly at the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) for having failed to guide and challenge the previous government headed by the then Nationalist Party. English speaking churches often hid behind the DRC without checking their own stances towards racial and economic discrimination. Granted, many individuals spoke out against injustices within all these churches, including the DRC. Beyers Naude and Roelf Meyer are but two gleaming examples within the DRC of those who stood up against injustice (Ryan: 100, 2005). Few of these individuals could actually testify to general Church support for their actions. There are many examples of individuals who had been ostracized by their churches for standing up against injustice.

The danger is real today that the Church could lie back and hope for the best with regard to issues of justice within the country, while constantly looking back over its shoulder for political correctness and Governmental approval. But Emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu, delivering the Steve Biko Memorial Lecture at the University of Cape Town asked the question:

What has happened to us? It seems as if we have perverted our freedom, our rights into licence, into being irresponsible. Rights go hand in hand with responsibility, with dignity, with respect for oneself and for the other. (BBC News, 27 September, 2006)



According to Wilfram Kistner, the Dutch Reformed Church's theology was definitely influenced by a misreading of Calvinistic thought (Brandt 1988:144f). Thus the DRC developed a theology which had not just supported apartheid but had actually promoted it:

The final influence which swayed the church into accepting apartheid was the current of romantic nationalism from Nazi Germany. Prominent Afrikaner nationalists...who studied in Germany and sympathised with the Nazis because they were the enemies of the hated British, were profoundly influenced by the Nazi idea of racial purity...

In 1926, for example, The Native Commission of the NGK's Federal Council held a conference with English-speaking churches to consider the 'native question'. At the conference the NGK managed to gain acceptance for a resolution that declared that it was not necessarily unchristian to seek the progress of the native people separately from the whites. (Colleen Ryan, 2005:226)

### **2.2.2 The role of the English-speaking churches**

The researcher has no intention of further rehashing the well-documented part played by the DRC in supporting segregation (see Ngcokovane C, 1989:85ff). From the above therefore, the researcher submits that it was not just the DRC which had supported apartheid, there were other missionary-instituted churches, apart from the DRC, which either covertly supported segregation or did nothing to fight it. For example, Kistner observes:

On the whole racial separation has not been justified by the English speaking Churches or Churches of English tradition explicitly, but these Churches are also to be blamed for adapting to political trends in society. It was only during the last thirty years that these Churches started to abolish racial separation within the Churches and to fight apartheid as the policy of the state.

We should not forget that the integrated Churches have often found it hard to elect Black clergy for leading positions...

The churches (sic) of English tradition and in particular the member churches of the SACC together with the Roman Catholic Church have in the past 20 years condemned apartheid as being in conflict with the word of God. However, *the life-style and the socio-political values of the SACC member churches and of members of these churches in many instances were not so different from the values prevailing in the Afrikaans churches of Dutch Reformed background. (My emphasis)* (Brandt, 1988:144)

Bishop Ambrose Reeves also made the following point:

As early as 1954 the passing of the Bantu Education Act might have led to an open Church-State conflict. This was avoided because most of the churches agreed, either willingly or grudgingly, to hand over their school buildings to the Government. At that time six-sevenths of all education of African children was in the hands of the churches and missionary societies in South Africa. It was possible that if the churches had stood together in opposing the Government, the implementation of the Bantu Education Act might at least have been halted for a time. But this did not happen. (Rt. Rev. Ambrose Reeves in the article: State and Church in South Africa, From Notes and Documents, No. 9/72, Google)

From the above it can be seen already that the Church in general had been lukewarm, if not indifferent, at the inception of apartheid. Beyers Naude also discovered this when he attended a Consultation on Race Relations in Mindolo, Kitwe, in 1964. Ryan captures this discovery when she writes:

What Beyers learnt at Mindolo was that the English as well as the Afrikaans churches bore a major responsibility for the race problem in South Africa. (2005:99)

There were also quite a number of apologists for apartheid. For example Neame who wrote in 1952 was another person to rationalise the existence of apartheid. He compares South Africa with other countries and talks of "non-Whites" living in a White Community. The following words attest to this:

The basic principle of differentiation on the ground of colour is accepted by Britishers and Afrikaners alike. It is inscribed in the programme of every political party - with the exception of the Communists. At heart all South Africans are Apartheidists... (sic)  
Differentiation is not a South African invention designed to conceal race selfishness. In other parts of the world some form of separate development has long been advocated as the only practicable way of enabling the non-whites living in a White community to advance to a full extent of their capacity. (1952:54)

### **2.3 A series of initiatives**

The English-speaking churches always claimed the moral high ground, and had indeed produced some of their greatest sons and daughters who had spoken out against injustice and particularly against apartheid. For example, Ngcokovane, citing from an article of Dr JB Webb, mentions that:

Theologians from the English-speaking churches presented theological positions that emphasised unity, restoration and reconciliation as opposed to racial differences. They argued that separation in the Church was wrong; they [the Afrikaans-speaking churches] therefore stood condemned according to Scripture... (1989:154)

This strong statement from the English-speaking Theologians contributed to the failure of an effort that had been made to bring the two, English and Afrikaans-speaking churches to co-operate. The talks merely produced an agreement to disagree. (ibid.)

It needs to be noted though, that even within the DRC, there were prophets who spoke out against apartheid, at a far more heavy cost to themselves.

It would be a mistake, however, for any analyst to give the impression that there had been no dissenting views within the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk with regard to racial segregation. A number of Synod statements reflect the fact that there were still leading churchmen in the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk who question certain aspects of apartheid... (Ngcokovane, 1989:50)

There were strong opponents of apartheid such as Professor BB Keet who argued in articles in *Die Kerkbode* that:

...it is correct to draw from Holy Scripture that different nations and races exist but it is incorrect to draw from this conclusion that Scripture teaches segregation... There is only one *Apartheid* (his emphasis) known to Scripture and that is separation from sin... (Ngcokovane, 1989:51)

For people like Professor Keet, the price of differing with the “volk” (the nation) earned him the title of a traitor. It was far more dangerous for Afrikaans theologians to oppose apartheid and the DRC stance. Little is known or heard of people like these. Even formidable opponents of apartheid like Bishop Ambrose Reeves made use of statements made by people like Professor Keet. In his own argument Ambrose Reeves also quotes the following forthright statement by Keet:

In our South African situation we have all the injustice of group thinking aggravated by the absurd group formation according to the colour of one’s skin. For this difference in pigmentation the individual is held responsible together with his group, as if he had chosen his ancestors. As a consequence we have developed a caste system that surpasses all of its kind; because in others it may be possible to advance to a higher caste, but here there is no possibility for change – the Coloured

man stays Coloured even if he becomes the most exemplary citizen of the country. He is one of a group, a mere cipher without any personal attributes or claims. (Keet, as quoted by Ambrose Reeves: *State and Church in South Africa*, Notes and Documents, No 9/72)

Whilst the focus of this thesis is on the Kairos Document, it is vital to recognise and appreciate that there had been other very serious attempts made by other Church-related groups to be prophetic under the most difficult situations. The following are some of the agencies which worked against apartheid:

### **2.3.1 Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre (1948)**

This centre was set up strategically by church people in 1948 when the Nationalist Party took over. According to the citing in which the Rev Dale White was honoured by the state with the Order of Baobab:

It was established in 1948... to create a safe haven for multiracial inspiration, training and action in an increasingly divided society.

Another serious contributor to transformation in South Africa was the less-spoken of but formidable Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre (WFC), situated near Krugersdorp, which was run from 1963 to 1999 by Fr Dale and Laetitia (Tish) White. In an interview about WFC Laetitia who is still very much involved with the centre after the death of Rev White said the following:

The main purpose for the existence of Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre (WFC) was to offer experiential training for black and white young leaders and to provide psychological and physical space where people could come and explore who they were, away from a situation that was constantly undermining their dignity as human beings. The difference between blacks who were suffering and whites who were being harassed for siding with blacks was that apartheid targeted blacks because they were black and therefore they had no choice; whites

were targeted because they sided with blacks but whites had the privilege of choice. (Interview)

In 1973 WFC had caught the attention of the Schlebusch Commission which released its report:

Expressing disgust at the centre's sensitivity training programme, the government deported Eoin O'Leary, who headed the centre's Personal Responsibility and Organisational Development (PROD) project...The Commission's allegations were subsequently rejected by the trustees, and the PROD programme, without the controversial sensitivity training, was resumed. (Ryan, 2005:153,154)

### **2.3.2 The Cottesloe Consultation (1960)**

The Cottesloe consultation was held at the behest of the World Council of Churches immediately after the 1960 Sharpeville massacre. At the time of the massacre even people like Beyers Naude had not yet fully appreciated the anger and suffering black people were undergoing. That was Ryan's observation as she wrote:

Beyers, in his public utterances on Sharpeville at the time, did not show an appreciation for the real issues at stake, and merely looked at black unrest as a threat to the mission of his church. (2005:55)

The World Council of Churches (WCC) became so concerned about the situation in South Africa that they sent a representative, Bob Bilheimer, to come to South Africa to assist the churches to heal rifts among them that had arisen because of the toxic relations emanating from the bedevilled race relations in South Africa (ibid). Much as the Cottesloe Consultation was regarded as a "compromise that failed" there developed something within the people that had met, and reconciliation took place between the Church of the Province of South Africa (CPSA) and the DRC. It is at Cottesloe that Beyers began to see the light:

Many commentators have pointed to Cottesloe as the Damascus in Beyers Naude's life, when, for the first time he saw the light, even though he still remained ambivalent about the watered-down stance taken by the NGK's delegation. But it was a turning point because it was after that ambivalence that Beyers Naude resolved that it was the last time he would allow himself to be so compromised. (Ryan, 2005:61)

While the majority of delegates from the DRC voted for the Cottesloe resolutions, synod after synod in the churches rejected Cottesloe during the months that followed. The cardinal question that has inspired this thesis is: how did it happen that a God-fearing church such as the DRC, consisting of great human beings like Beyers Naude and many others like him within this church could have been sucked into the quagmire of apartheid which, in the name of God, almost destroyed the Afrikaner nation together with their South African compatriots? The thesis discusses the possibility that there could be a danger that if there is a careless and casual attitude towards issues of governance within the country and the Church as well as other faith-based institutions, there could be a different form of disharmony again within South Africa.

Some of the articles included very fundamental tenets of Christianity such as the acceptance that the Church was the Body of Christ:

...believers should not be excluded from any church on grounds of race or colour; there are no spiritual grounds for the prohibition of mixed marriages. The conference said further that migrant labour was decimating family life which Christians were bound to defend; that wage structures were below poverty line for millions of blacks... (Ngcokovane, 1989:157)

It is these efforts by the Church to try to articulate God's will that have put Church-State relations in the spotlight again. The DRC could then be regarded as having been a "state church" when it should have been prophetic



by speaking truth to power, But the DRC could not have spoken truth to power when it had under-girded that state by being its muse. As will be seen below, the DRC actually encouraged the disaster that was apartheid. The DRC missed a great opportunity to witness to the truth in South Africa but failed to rise to the challenge. It is this which necessitated the need to explore Church-State relations in our young democracy. It took a long time before Naude could suggest something like a “Confessing Church “ having seen what had happened to the Church in Germany during the Nazi era. Inspired by the Barmen Confession in Germany, Naude agitated for a Confessing Church in South Africa. He realised the danger arising from the fact that the German Evangelical Church had thrown its weight with the Nazi regime in the 1930's. But there had also been:

...a strong group of pastors who rejected this compromise. In 1933, some 6000 pastors joined an emergency league to reject the church leadership's support for the Third Reich. (Ryan, 2005:107)

The pastors had come up with the idea of a “national confessing church” which became a movement that was meant to uphold Christian principles against the dictatorship of Hitler. Many pastors suffered dearly for their support of the Barmen Declaration. The researcher observes that this aspect of the contribution of the confessing church in Germany is often downplayed. This act becomes a fulfilment of Jesus' prophecy that “many are called but few are chosen” or, Jesus' metaphor of the salt of the earth, or the light of the world. For the record, Naude's idea of a Confessing Church did not materialise.

### **2.3.3 The Christian Institute (1963)**

The Christian Institute (CI) was started by a group of pastors, notably Beyers Naude, Albert Geyser, Fred van Wyk, A.J. van Wyk and Dr JB Webb. It was launched in June 1963 (Ryan 2005:77). Its main goal was to build unity amongst all the churches. It had a number of study commissions to help conscientise white people to the evils of apartheid. It had a publication called

*Pro Veritate*. Beyers Naude proposed, In the July issue of that publication, proposed that the confessing church he had in mind should be in the form of a movement rather than another church. The CI did a lot of research and made sure that it documented this research:

One of the CI's roles was the collection of facts and statistics about South Africa and its situation, and these were kept readily available as resource material for talks, articles and overseas visitors. (Jean Knighton-Fitt, 2003:209)

The other major contribution of the CI was the study papers produced by commissions called The Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society (SPRO-CAS) which was geared to conscientise whites in the Church to work towards the demolition of Apartheid. The editor of these projects was Peter Randall who wrote the following:

The attitudes and motives of church members in South Africa strongly reflect the situation in the country as a whole, which is characterised by a growing alienation and lack of mutual understanding between black and white people. There are obvious historical reasons for this. Within the Church the evangelisation of black heathen (sic) and the pastoral care of white settlers was generally kept separate. The Nationalist government's policy of separate development has furthered and entrenched the separation... (Spro-cas Report, 1973:43)

Two things stand out in the above quote: one, the fact that Peter Randall did not use inverted commas when mentioning the black "heathen" still escaped many well-meaning whites that it was not the "heathen" that had devised a backward policy based solely on the colour of a person's skin; secondly, apartheid had already been in existence even during "evangelisation" before it was even made into a policy. The missionaries of the DRC were keen to evangelise the so-called heathen to "go to heaven" but not to worship in the Dutch Reformed Church. The fact that evangelisation was done separately

was already a serious contradiction. The “Good News” was already showing signs of a lack of the Gospel motif of agape or Christian love.

#### **2.3.4 Message to the people of South Africa (1968)**

Eight years after Cottesloe, a new initiative – the Message to the People of South Africa – was launched. This was issued by the South African Council of Churches in 1968. In this message was contained the theological rationale why racial discrimination was against the will of God. It is significant that the Statement does not call Apartheid by name. But there is a confession later in the statement:

...even in the life of the Church there is conformity to the practices of racial separation; and the measure of this conformity is the measure of the Church’s deviation from the purpose of Christ.

Cedric Mayson, writing in commemoration of 25 years of the SACC’s existence, says the following about The Message:

The Message was a unique attempt by the SACC to make a theological input to the South African situation, the only time it has done so in such a fundamental and united manner. It was the seedbed of later propositions. In stating the Christian vision of the world and declaring that apartheid was a barrier to it, it committed the church to the struggle against apartheid which has taken another quarter of a century. Only now are we free to tackle the positive Gospel which the Message enshrines. (Mayson, 1993:107)

Of particular interest in this research is the fifth point that was raised in The Message with the stress that “We must obey God rather than man” quoting Peter’s defence in Acts 5:29b. The irony of this verse was that it was not said against political leaders but against religious leaders of the time. It is thus necessary to be a bit circumspect when debating Church-State relations as if the state alone could abuse power.

### **2.3.5 The Institute for Contextual Theology (1981)**

Mounting State pressure that had escalated from 1976 to the early eighties forced a small group of Christians to come together in 1980 to form an organisation that would promote Contextual Theology. There were people who played a prominent part in starting the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) consisting of people like Bonganjalo Goba, Smangaliso Mkhathshwa, Frank Chikane, Albert Nolan, Jim Cochrane, Allan Boesak and others, had been mainly influenced by a challenge from Third World Theologians (EATWOT) to act in the deteriorating South African situation. The group held a meeting at which the following preamble was proposed:

The dynamics of conflict and power which characterise South Africa today are crucial to an understanding of our context by which accurate and mature reflection and judgement can be undertaken. This is as true for those whose reflection takes theological form as anyone else. (Speckman and Kaufmann, 2001:19)

The group went on to decry the lack of relevant critical thinking and research in South Africa because most of the existing research was divorced from the conflict situation in the country at the time.

### **2.3.6 The Belhar Confession (1982)**

This confession came about in 1982, but was only adopted by the DRC in 1986. The Belhar Confession was adopted by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church one month after the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) had declared Apartheid a heresy at its meeting in Australia with Dr Allan Boesak having played a major role in its adoption at the WARC. The two churches, the DRMC and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) came together in 1994 to form the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). The Belhar Confession became one of their official confessions of faith” (Wikipedia). There were a number of articles that went directly against the policy of the National Party government. Take the following examples:

...segregation necessarily leads to enmity and hatred...

...since segregation is sinful, segregation should not be permitted within the body of Christ...

...forced or voluntary segregation should never be maintained for the sake of ensuring peaceful relations between individuals who have enmity or hatred towards others...

The researcher finds it necessary to mention the above because, even if it was a confession within members of one church, the DRC, it was this very church that had supported apartheid. The DRC of all churches had the obligation and the credibility within Afrikanerdom to affect and change the mindset of members of the ruling party and the Afrikaner community. It was a paradox that the Afrikaner group consisted of God-fearing people whose policy of segregation was based on a misguided, arrogant and dangerous theology. It is significant though that the Belhar Confession coincided with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Prozesky 1990:82) and the Belhar Confession pronouncing that "segregation was a heresy". It went so far as to say that:

Claims that racial segregation is the will of God or the promotion of racial segregation on behalf of God interferes with the usefulness of the reconciliation between God and mankind. (Wikipedia)

This assertion, inter alia, makes it clear that the Belhar Confession was going directly against the ideology of apartheid and therefore challenging the policy of the state. The following article also makes that point very clear:

...God ensures justice to people who have been oppressed. That God provides food for those who are hungry. That God frees prisoners. That God restores the sight of the blind. That God consoles sad people. That God protects aliens. That God provides aid to orphans and widows. That God makes life difficult for people who are Godless. (ibid.)

Whilst the Belhar Confession is a critical document in the life of the United Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA) the other members of the DRC Family have not yet accepted Belhar as one of their essential creedal statements. The Belhar Confession, instead of uniting the churches, sadly has become a major hurdle to be overcome in the unification process in the DRC Family.

### **2.3.7 The Road to Damascus (1989)**

This document was published in 1989 in Johannesburg. It was a follow-up to the Kairos Document and thus its sub-title was aptly named *Kairos and Conversion*. Its writers included theologians and church activists who had signed the Kairos Document. Its distinguishing feature was that it was signed by Christians from the Philippines, South Korea, Namibia, South Africa, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala. It was signed by more than four hundred Christians and a few organisations. The reason for the production of this document was mainly the following:

What we have in common is not only a situation of violent political conflict, but also the phenomenon of Christians on both sides of the conflict. This is accompanied by the development of a Christian theology that sides with the oppressor. This is both a scandal and a crisis that challenges the Christian people of our countries. (Preamble, 1989)

The Road to Damascus, though not as well-known as the Kairos Document, was another result of the tremendous influence the Kairos Document had around the world.

### **2.3.8 The Rustenburg Declaration (1990)**

The Rustenburg Declaration was the product of a National Conference of church leaders held in Rustenburg in November 1990 (Alberts and Chikane 1991:13). This was an extremely important conference just prior to the

negotiations that were to bring about a new dispensation to the country. Among the statements made in the declaration was a statement on church-state relations. The statements in part read thus:

In the past we have often forfeited our right to address the State by our own complicity in racism, economic and other injustice and the denial of human rights. We also recognise that in our country the State has co-opted the Church. The Church has often attempted to seek protection for its own vested interests from the State. Our history compromises our credibility when we address Church/State (sic) issues... (Alberts and Chikane, 1991:281, 4.2.1)

*Our highest loyalty as Christians is always to God. The State is always under God, its power is limited and it is a servant for good, firstly to God and then impartially to all the people it represents. We therefore ask that the separation of Church and State, the necessity for freedom to believe, practice and propagate religion, and freedom of association be guaranteed equally to all. (Op. cit. 4.2.3)*

The above therefore is a clear separation of Church and State but also a clear recognition of the “servant-hood” of the State. Whilst not mentioning the need for a strengthening of ecumenism among churches, the Declaration nevertheless created a basis for interfaith dialogue. Thus:

The embodiment of the right of individuals or religious groups to preserve and protect moral values that affect marriage, family life and particularly moral norms...Protection should also be available to all religious groups in terms of their life and worldview. (4.2.4.8)

The Rustenburg Declaration mentions one of the churches’ failings which requires serious attention if the Church is not to pay lip service to true reconciliation in South Africa. The following statement within the Rustenburg Declaration is a case in point:



Some of us have failed to be instruments of peace in a situation of growing intolerance of ideological differences. Others of us have also neglected our calling to contribute to the theological renewal of the Church. (2.7)

Some questions arose from the above: Is it possible for religious leaders or ministers, for that matter, to engage in party politics without having their principles compromised by ideological differences? Taking sides against evil and being partisan in politics could be two different views if St Paul's words are taken seriously:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Philippians, 2:2, 3 NIV)

But it is the nature of party politics to be in contestation or to be in competition with others. Thinking of oneself and one's party as better than others is part of the turf in politics. In other words, party politics are exclusive by nature. That is why perhaps it is to the credit of the negotiators of the drafters of the new Constitution of South Africa that the country began with a "Government of National Unity". Here the State was one up on the Church in South Africa.

There is no evidence that all churches in South Africa took the Rustenburg Declaration seriously. Some certainly did. There is a clear injunction to the Church leaders "to carry the confessions and commitments of this Declaration into the life of every congregation in the country" (3.1) It is debatable whether all Church leaders took that injunction seriously enough to be carried through. Denominations still continue to act with self-interest in building their own constituencies as if other denominations do not exist. The theological renewal urged by the RD has neither taken root nor embarked upon a more robust ecumenism. For example, there is still one church where members of other denominations cannot receive communion from the priests of those churches or from within their buildings. The priest becomes unashamed to pass by

some of those kneeling at the altar if they are not members of that particular church. They are not regarded as true Christians. So much for reconciliation! Churches have not developed their own modus operandi towards true reconciliation with each other.

The point above might not appear very significant. But consider this: Different missionaries arrive in a country that had many divisions according to tribes and ethnic groups. When the missionaries arrive, they further exacerbated these differences establishing denominations, developing different theologies, and by imposing a veneer of superiority on believers as against non-believers. The problem here became one in which the Gospel of love brought by Jesus Christ became undermined by these differences. The RD calls on the:

Church of Jesus Christ in South Africa ... to end all discrimination within the Church on the basis of sex or race. (3.1)

But the question still remains as to why the RD failed to highlight the question of theological differences and the lack of serious ecumenicity. The scandal of Church disunity, denominational arrogance and pride has not been addressed adequately within the RD. It correctly highlights the question of apartheid as having been a heresy, and support of it by the Church as:

...an act of disobedience to God, a denial of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and a sin against our unity in the Holy Spirit. (2.2)

#### **2.4 Faith-based organisations and the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1995)**

The Government of National Unity instituted the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 1995 with the aim of building reconciliation based on truth disclosure. Here was a new State that showed a willingness to use religious leaders towards the reconciliation within the South African community. This was an unbelievable and radical move for South Africa. It was a different route from the one taken after the Second World War where

the perpetrators of the Hitler-inspired genocide were prosecuted under the Nuremburg trials. The TRC was not after retribution, it was in search of reconciliation once perpetrators had confessed.

The Faith Communities made representations to the TRC in which they expressed their own guilt of commission or omission regarding Apartheid. Amongst the submissions made to the TRC, Meiring summarises both acts of commission and omission by faith communities (Meiring 2005). For the purposes of this thesis, the researcher will confine himself to the Christian churches. Among the acts of commission are the churches that participated in state structures.

There is a lingering question as to how long can the Church continue to address the world whilst it is so divided. How long can the Church, made up of its denominations, want to address the world when it does not follow the principle of love propounded by its founder? Love can no longer be treated as a sentimental emotion that has nothing to do with the transforming of people and their material conditions because that would be tantamount to “preaching about love very un-lovingly”. (A phrase once used by the Rev Dr David Bandey, former Principal of John Wesley College, 1969)

## **2.5 Church and state relations with reference to power**

### **2.5.1 The Church’s position**

Church and state are two very powerful institutions that are both capable of abusing their power. Debates around abuse of power tend to be confined to the State. The Church in history however has had its fair share of abuse of power as well, especially since the Church’s co-option after the Constantine era in the early fourth century CE. It is thus important today to take these developments seriously. Before Constantine, there was no debate with regard to the separation of Church and State. They were separate and the Church had been a persecuted minority. Then Christianity was not only a minority religion, it was also a religion that operated more from a position where it

brought in alternative values, that is, values of a new reign, the Reign of God. John W Kennedy in his book, the *Torch of the Testimony*, mentions how Christianity moved away from the periphery to the centre with the advent of her embrace by Constantine whose motives were at best, opportunistic. Kennedy cites the point that Christianity, because of Constantine, became “fashionable”:

...Christianity became fashionable. Although Constantine himself was not a committed Christian, he encouraged others to accept the faith, and there were plenty of people ready to accept anything if, in doing so, they earned the commendation of the State. There was therefore a great influx of pagans into the Christian Church, pagans who had been Christianized by learning the rudiments of faith and being baptized, but who, nevertheless, were still pagans at heart...The ingress of pagan ideas which accompanied this enlargement of the Christian sphere could hardly fail to affect the Church substantially... (1965:88)

Christianity having become fashionable led the State to be accorded a recognized say in Church matters. Church leaders seemed to have welcomed their inclusion as partners by the powerful State. They felt so indebted to Constantine that they began to also give him a prominent recognition within the Church, a recognition he did not deserve. Kennedy correctly asserts that what made this reciprocal recognition possible was the fact that Church leadership had been centralised through the advent of bishops who erroneously wielded enormous power.

The prominence given to Bishops and the regard in which a few of these were held above others, giving them, in fact if not in theory, control over their more humble brethren, made for an easy means of communication between the State and the Church, and also an effective means of control by the State once its authority in the Church was fully recognized. (Op. cit. p89)

Both Church and State are powerful institutions as already mentioned. While the State boasts of power emanating from the people through their vote, the Church claims a power endowed from “above”. In the past, the Church omitted to challenge vigorously the government of the day while engaging in the fruitless debate of whether the Church should involve itself in politics. There were times when the Church could afford to make the kind of mistakes, oversights and omissions it had made. There were also many times when the Church played power games while enjoying tremendous and unchallenged power. The abuse of power by the Church has been well documented. The Church’s stance against both Copernicus (1473 – 1573) and Galileo Galilei (1564 -1642) with regard to the latter building on the hitherto unnoticed findings of Copernicus:

...building on those Copernicus insights, began to revise in a public way the perception of the universe and the place of the planet Earth within that universe. Galileo concluded that the sun did not rotate around the earth but rather that the earth rotated around the sun. (Spong, 1998:31)

As Spong correctly points out, this view began to threaten the long-held beliefs of the Church and had forced Galileo to recant. Much as he did recant his findings remained true although the Vatican only accepted that view officially in December 1991 (Op cit p32). This is a clear example of how the Church had grown into a dangerously intolerant institution. The refusal to debate the issues that Charles R Darwin (1809 – 1882) had raised concerning his evolutionary theory was another example of Church intolerance:

The Christian Church resisted Darwin with vigor (sic) but the ecclesiastical power of antiquity had already been broken, and the Church’s ability to threaten Darwin with execution as a heretic no longer existed. Besides, truth can never be deterred just because it is inconvenient. (Spong, op. cit. p37)

In all fairness to the Church, though, it has also tried to move progressively in issues of justice and has itself been shunned by its own adherents who would be against the position the Church was taking. The following words of Kistner's must be noted:

In our efforts for the liberation of man (sic) in South African society, we should in the first instance, be concerned about the freedom of the church (sic) which is rooted in its reliance on the Gospel and which makes it free from being determined by the care whether its pronouncements are acceptable to the authorities or whether church members may dissociate themselves from their church and withhold their financial support. (Brandt Ed, 1988:9)

This thesis investigates whether some Church leadership has an agenda of playing power games which militate against the empowering of church members. Church leadership should assist its membership towards contributing towards transformation within a democratic South Africa. With regard to the old apartheid South Africa Kistner made it clear what church leadership should do:

I suggest that priority should be given to the task of helping church members to become aware of the evil inherent in the South African political structures and of their responsibility not to support but to resist laws and regulations which are basically immoral. (Brandt, 1988:9)

### **2.5.2 The State's position**

One has to agree with Kistner when he points out that power in itself is not evil. It is a gift that must be used for the good without being abused. He cautions against the negative attitude that the Church usually adopts when referring to power:

Very often power is regarded in church circles as something inherently evil. Concerns for problems of power therefore may be suspicious to

many church members. Power in itself is not evil. It is a gift of God given to every person and every society. (Brandt, op. cit. 8)

As mentioned in the thesis proposal above, the researcher made it clear that it was not enough to rely upon the fact that the present Government is being led by former comrades who were engaged in the liberation movement. There are too many examples in history and not far from South Africa that demonstrate that justice and freedom need to be constantly kept under strict vigilance. At the beginning of this chapter, the researcher mentioned that 15 years have elapsed since the advent of democratic elections. Possibilities exist that

- 2.5.2.1 there could be democratic elections, and there could be a great follow-up of democracy flowing in the country with everyone feeling that as far as is humanly possible, Government of the people, by the people, for the people is being implemented;
- 2.5.2.2 there could be democratic elections but democracy would be in name only. Those elected would just continue as if the electorate does not exist until the next time when the Government of the day seeks a new mandate;
- 2.5.2.3 there could come a time when a democratically elected Government would reach a stage where it no longer seeks the mandate of the people and merely uses its majority to bulldoze whatever it wants, against the constitution of the country;
- 2.5.2.4 there could also be the possibility of the danger once mentioned by the then President of South Africa that “the response to the complexity of issues... was that the only way to ensure good governance and stability was to establish one-party states, while allowing elections to take place within this system”. (Mbeki TM, Mahube, 2001:98)

With the above in mind, it is not enough to rely upon the Government to monitor itself. The Church is in the world and it has to engage the Government in its efforts to fulfil its mandate. Having said that though, it is necessary to remember that the very Church has its own issues to deal with



such as doctrinal differences, denominational pride, its dividedness, its hierarchical versus congregational challenges and many other ills which cannot be mentioned here because of the scope of this thesis.

There are times when the State develops a distorted liaison with the Church and where opportunism and patronage plays a prominent part within the leadership of both Church and State. When that happens, as it did with the Dutch Reformed Church and the Nationalist government of apartheid years, the danger remains that there could be collusion fostered either by silence or inertia on the part of Church leadership while the State accords it a prominent place within its walls of government.

The State finds many ways of coercing and cajoling people into submission. It has unlimited power and can use it in a way that can entrench its own hold on citizens. One of the ways that had been used by the apartheid Government was first to demonise Communism and then brand people as Communists who have been made to appear the epitome of evil. Compulsory military conscription had been another horrendous form of coercion where young white conscripts were removed from society and brainwashed into becoming killing machines. It is no wonder that the Church was very supportive of the End Conscription Campaign and gave its blessings to conscientious objectors who also played a very essential part in discrediting the previous Government while gradually eroding its legitimacy.

One other way of emasculating the power of the Church by the State is to co-opt former activists. Smanga Kumalo, lecturer in Practical Theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, highlighted this during an interview:

At the moment churches are very weak because of lack of education and lack of resources. During the apartheid era resources were pouring in from our global friends and networks. The co-option by government of theological activists has emasculated the Church. The government has taken key leaders who are working in government offices. In KwaZulu-Natal many pastors, many reverends and all sorts of

ministers have become chaplains. It is good because we can identify where they are because we can begin to rebuild the Church. (Interview)

### **2.5.3 The Church falters as it aligns itself with the state**

In continuing to prepare ground for further debate on this theme, this researcher agrees with Kennedy's observation that it was this hierarchical kind of government within the Church that fostered, unwittingly perhaps, a kind of "political rivalry" and an inordinate love of power. The organisational aspect of the Church which overtook the spiritual side gave rise to the ascendancy of serious tendencies in which human flaws such as greed for power took effect. As Kennedy points out, the taste of power was to lead to closer liaison with the state:

The degeneration of the Church had set the stage for the unholy alliance between Church and State. (1965:88)

The alliance need not be unholy as Vischer points out. People no longer regard the State as an entity with absolute power where people are expected to just toe the line. People came to realise that it is they who give the State authority to govern and must therefore do so according to the will of the people:

If it [the State] is to fulfil its role, it needs the assent, the participation and the cooperation of the community. It must unite and deploy the resources at work in society. On their behalf, it must share creatively in the fashioning of historical processes. (Vischer, 1978:10)

If the Church was working in the kind of State described above the following point of Kennedy would not have been valid. Unfortunately since the State to which he refers was authoritarian, the Church, following the

State in which it existed, like water taking the shape of the container, also began to emulate the State as the following devastating words attest:

The Church had bartered its liberty for popularity and, as a consequence, was to come under a much worse and more insidious tyranny than it had previously known, the tyranny of a worldly ecclesiasticism. (Kennedy, 1965:88)

The above point is indeed tragic because the Church was meant to be an instrument that was a gift for the enhancement of the quality of life of its adherents here on earth as it points people to God. It was also the vehicle that was meant to truly liberate human beings who would make a significant contribution to the betterment of the world. Kennedy goes on to pinpoint where the deterioration of the Church had begun and how, by gaining tacit recognition by the State, had lost its essence (1965:88): The Church which had operated from a position of powerlessness following the Crucified Christ had come to be aligned with the powerful state. Ecclesiasticism which had been denounced by Christ before in the Gospel, as had been evidenced during the time of the Pharisees who had reduced faith in God to outward observance of religious law (e.g. Matthew 23), reared its ugly head again.

Intolerance within the Church began to grow at an alarming rate, and with it that unreasonable insistence upon non-essentials and upon uniformity which is ever the mark of a lifeless religion. Conformity to the every whim of a central, religious authority became the mark of orthodoxy, and those who would not conform came increasingly to be regarded as rebels, either to be coerced into submission or to be exterminated. (Kennedy, op. cit. p90)

One of the world's worst curses began to be the mark by which the Church is known even today, the desire to control people's lives instead of helping people to make wise choices. The Church seems to have failed to differentiate between guiding and controlling. It removes the one thing that makes human beings responsible citizens of the world – it removes the power of people to make responsible choices because it makes choices for them. It is this removal of this power that leads to poverty of spirit. Kennedy could not have put it better:

The irony of the situation is tragic in its intensity. The Church which had been so violently persecuted, and won for itself such a well deserved freedom, was itself to adopt the role of persecutor and deny to others, even within its own ranks, the freedom it had so lately won. (Op. cit. p90)

Today it is difficult to recognise the Church of Jesus Christ whose 'power' was generated at Pentecost so that the Church could be the strength of the powerless, the voice of the voiceless and the supporter and protector of the poor and oppressed but even more, that its power comes from God. States usually become huge machineries wielding a lot of power and in most cases, do not always have the poor as their priority. This is a valid point in that if the Church aligns itself too much with the State - an institution which operates on its own laws and authority – it then has to make a very radical change from what its Founder intended for it. There was a time when the Church had regarded the State as divinely instituted. But the proliferation of dictatorships necessitates that the Church rethinks its views about the State.

It is because of the above thoughts that the Church began to question the divinely appointed aspect it had previously ascribed to the State. But again this view of the Church was too rigid and had to be tempered with Romans 13: 1-7. The KD had also questioned the authority of the illegitimate South African apartheid State on the basis of this quoted text above. But the KD

does concede that when the State acts in accordance with the will of the people, it falls within the ambit of the Romans text.

What does the term “critical solidarity with the state” mean? The phrase was first used by the SACC when it tried to grapple with the new scenario in which “erstwhile comrades” had become members of government. There were many debates around this issue. But it was clear that the Church could not fulfil its duty if it is not in solidarity with the poor instead of being in solidarity with the powerful State.

To be “in solidarity with the poor” would mean quite a number of things. Smanga Kumalo, makes the following point:

In the early nineties “critical solidarity” was the in thing. It has to be constructive engagement and ethical solidarity. But who must the Church be in solidarity with? (Interview)

Kumalo then states that the Church has no other option but to be in solidarity with the poor. This need not necessarily be against the government because it would enable the government to learn what people’s needs are if it is prepared to share views with the Church.

The moment the government moves away from that and pursues the agenda of big business and the powerful people of the ruling class, it relinquishes the privilege of solidarity that is offered by the Church voluntarily because the Church is always in solidarity with the poor. (Interview)

For example, the Church can begin a vigorous programme of educating its masses to be much more active as members of civil society, and be very vigilant in engaging the State. If the Church were to be likened to a train, it would be a very strong movement. Firstly, a train moves and carries people in it. That is its function. Secondly, the whole body moves, not just the head. The Church is in a continuous crisis in that in most cases whenever reference is

made to the Church it is the leadership in the form of the hierarchy of the Church that becomes involved rather than the whole body of the Church.

Regardless of whether the Church is in critical solidarity with the State or not, the imperative is that the Church must stand with the poor and be where they are. The poor tend to suffer. The Church must suffer with them. The Church's function is to stand where truth, righteousness and justice stand. This is not to say that it excludes being in solidarity with the State where the State is seen to be serving God by being benevolent to the poor as Kumalo above also testifies. The State controls tremendous resources and controls the security of the land and issues related thereto. The State, of necessity, has to operate from a position of power, and an angle in which it controls enormous resources.

There is a sense in which the present democratically-elected government could be viewed as what churches had, in conjunction with other structures of civil society, been praying and fighting for. For that reason, this is a very special and unusual period for South Africa and its people. It is unusual because almost all the people who are governing today are people who had directly been involved in the struggle for the liberation of the country. Many of them are people of one faith or another, with the majority being Christian as many are known personally by the present researcher. It is therefore easy to speak of a critical solidarity with the State. Loyalty is high because of a shared comradeship, and so it should be. Seldom have people shared so much including history. People involved in government know each other well. They can vouch for each other. They have even voted for each other because of personal knowledge. The ruling party has the Freedom Charter as its point of departure as already mentioned. But the situation will not always stay like this. This generation of leadership that has this rich history of the struggle for liberation will pass on and there will be a gradual infusion of leadership which may not cherish the same kind of commitment as the generation that went through painful challenges and hardships.

## Chapter Three: The Kairos Document - Yesterday and Today

### 3.1 Introduction

The circumstances surrounding the publication of the Kairos Document (KD) can be found in the Report of the South African Council of Churches (June 24 – 28 1985). It was at this conference that Beters Naude, the then newly appointed General Secretary of the SACC, gave a prophetic statement:

I believe that there is general agreement within the rank of the SACC that apartheid is crumbling and that the clear signs are there of it only being a matter of time before the massive edifice is going to topple and fall. The when and how of this process can be debated but the fact that it is already beginning to happen there need not be a discussion. (SA History Archives, Wits Library)

(When the Kairos Document came into being, the writer of this thesis, based in Durban at that time, was one of the signatories to this document. The Rev Frank Chikane, who had flown specially from Johannesburg with the document was the General Secretary of the Institute for Contextual Theology at the time).

### 3.2 The context of the KD publication

There were compelling reasons that brought about the production of this document. In the words of Charles Villa Vicencio then:

The intensity of the political situation in South Africa has compelled the Kairos theologians to look again into the theological tradition of the church to locate resources with which to meet the challenge of the times. (A Social History of the Church, 1988:162)



The early 80's saw South Africa slide into more and more chaos because of the intransigence of PW Botha the then apartheid State President of South Africa and the determination of activists and organisations throughout South Africa to bring about democracy in the country. Des van der Water, a minister in the United Congregational Church of South Africa, has given a detailed account of the build-up towards the publication of the KD in his PhD thesis. He correctly points out that the trigger for the publication of the KD must include the State of Emergency proclaimed by PW Botha on July 20 1985:

The imposition of the State of Emergency in 1985 represents a particularly brutal chapter in the Nationalist government's all-too-familiar kragdadige (strongman) retort to the burgeoning popular resistance to apartheid. (1998:16)

Whilst van der Water traces the repression from the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, and with the Soweto Uprising in 1976, the researcher would place the beginnings of serious promotion of conflict from the time when the colonial power, Great Britain, agreed to the formation of the Union of South Africa without the inclusion of indigenous people of the country in 1910, to the time when the Nationalist party won the elections in 1948, with the inclusion of forced removals in 1955 in fulfilment of the Group Areas Act which came into being after the National Party came to power.

To understand the context and the importance of the KD, it is equally necessary to understand the context of the document. What was the state of the nation during the years leading to the KD?

### **3.2.1 Soweto students' uprising (1976)**

The then apartheid government had gone too far by ordering students to learn certain subjects in the Afrikaans language. Representations were made but they fell on deaf ears. Apart from the Afrikaans language issue, there was the fact that the so-called Bantu Education had been designed as an inferior education compared to that of whites:

Although state spending on African education increased dramatically under the Botha administration (from R68, 84 million in 1978 to R237 million by mid-1985), the South African Institute of Race Relations reported that in the period of 1982-83 R1 385 was spent on educating every white pupil, compared with R871 for every Indian, R593 for every coloured pupil and R192 for every African schoolchild. Africans were particularly bitter that in many areas their education system was still rooted in the Verwoerdian theory of preparing them only for manual work. (The Reader's Digest Association, 1988:481)

The Soweto uprising of students had been preceded by another catalyst for change: the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre. As stated above, the Sharpeville massacre resulted in the calling of the Cottesloe consultation which the World Council of Churches facilitated. Within the Dutch Reformed churches the battle continued to rage with those who supported the outcomes of the Cottesloe consultation and those who did not. There were individuals within the DRC who continued to suffer exclusion from essential church structures because of their support for change (Elphick and Davenport 1997:148). Individuals such as Benjamin Keet and Barend J Marais (professors in Systematic theology and Church History respectively) were ostracised by their church for speaking out against the Verwoerdian idea of social engineering which relegated black people to the doldrums of poverty and quasi-literacy in South Africa. (ibid.)

### **3.2.2 Mounting pressure during the 1980s**

Going back to the 1980's, the General Secretary's report of the SACC gives a general view of what the situation was at the time when the KD was written. Under the sub-title *Unrest and Conflict*, Dr Beyers Naude wrote:

From September 1984 when the first major clashes between communities and the police in the black townships occurred, there has been an ongoing situation of unrest in our country. It has developed to such a degree that one is fully justified to describe the situation as the

beginnings of a civil war. The situation of conflict has been aggravated by police actions, by calling in the army to support the police, by constant deaths, woundings and arrests in many parts of the country. (June 24 – 28 1985, *SA History Archives*, Wits Library)

From the above statement alone, it is clear that the oppressed people of South Africa had already made up their minds that they were going to fight for their liberation. One wonders sometimes whether the contribution of the oppressed masses towards their own liberation is being fully recognised by South Africans today in general, and the ruling party, in particular. Frank Meintjies, for example, in explaining rising anger from people even after the democratic elections, states the following:

Generally speaking, there is a need for black people's personal experience of suffering under apartheid to be heard. They want acknowledgement that they were hobbled and constrained by a system designed to feather white people's nests. They want to know that what they have endured will not be forgotten. Somehow, in their workplaces and in business circles, they find this affirmation, by and large, not forthcoming, hence the outburst of anger and bitterness. (2006:45)

### **3.2.2.1 A brief report of the SACC concerning the situation**

The sub-headings of the General Secretary's report to the National Conference quoted above showed the seriousness of the situation then. The General Secretary spoke of the unrest and conflict that was enveloping the country. South Africa had become a pressure cooker. The black community itself had become restless and there was conflict within it. The SACC had given the green light for the day of prayer for the end of unjust rule. In addition there were the treason trials that were in process, the South African Defence Force had killed people in Botswana. There was also the disinvestment issue which had also become a very useful and effective tool against the regime. The report also spoke of an alternative society. Naude, the author and Acting General secretary, ended the report with the following words:

May I close this report by sharing with you the conviction that the period awaiting us could increasingly be one of tension, conflict and crisis and that both the SACC and its member churches should prepare ourselves for increasing demands which will be made upon us in our witness to Jesus Christ, His identification with those who suffer and are oppressed, and His prayer that true peace and reconciliation may be the gift and the experience of all His people. More than ever we will need the strengthening with prayer, biblical reflection on faith and hope... (SA History Archives)

The above are sombre words which spelt out clearly what awaited activists and the community of South Africa. People's anger rose sharply because in 1983, the SA Government had passed a new constitution which the General Secretary of the SACC correctly diagnosed as an act of provocation aimed at the oppressed and would therefore arouse the anger and bitterness which had been suppressed for years because the new constitution was a further entrenchment of isolating black people from the main stream of government while giving a small group to wield power over the rest:

...in concentrating power in the hands of a small leadership group, the government has created a situation of increasing resistance which cannot be resolved as long as the new constitution remains in operation... (General Secretary's Report, June 24 -25, 1985)

Naude continued to hold the valid and only plausible view that unless the government released all political prisoners and allowed political exiles to return and conducted free and fair elections, there would never be peace in the country.

Those were prophetic words indeed and stated three months before the publication of the KD in September 1985, and six years before FW de Klerk's famous February 1990 announcement of exactly what Dr Beyers Naude had stated as a prerequisite for peace.

### 3.2.2.2 The effect of the state of emergency and rent boycotts

There was also an announcement from PW Botha on July 20 1985, that there would be a state of emergency imposed on 36 magisterial districts. A state of emergency is very harsh because it curbs the very little freedom that there is and is very dangerous because people get hurt. In Durban, the violent death of Victoria Mxenge who was a leading civil rights lawyer and had defended many activists, sparked widespread uprisings which led to many deaths. (*The Readers Digest Association*, 1988:483)

The above-mentioned state of emergency then had to be understood in the light of the kairos - the given opportunity – which Nolan says:

The kairos or moment of truth has come *because the day of liberation is near*. Throughout the Bible a kairos is determined and constituted by imminence or nearness of an *eschaton*. (1988:183)

Colleen Ryan mentions that there was an eruption of anger from the black townships of the Vaal Triangle:

The trigger for the uprising was the promulgation of rent increases by the Lekoa Town Council and, as the violence spread to other areas, it was clear South Africa was entering a new phase of resistance and unrest. More than ten people died on the first day of the uprising – including four black town councillors who were set alight and burnt to death – and there was widespread burning of schools, shops, beer halls and other facilities. For the first time South African Defence Force soldiers were sent into the townships. (2005:202)

The facts are that it was the sacrifices and contributions of the people who had left the country, and those who died inside and outside South Africa, and those who were arrested and detained, and others who remained within the country and confronted the apartheid machinery head on with business

boycotts and black Christmases amongst other serious efforts that all together, brought about the significant change in the country.

### **3.2.2.3 The rise of trade unions and impact of industrial action**

In 1922 there had been a miners' strike that led to the introduction of the Labour Relations Act (LRA) which was drafted in 1924. The one major flaw of the LRA was that it only recognised white labour unions for wage negotiations. By 1972 there had been a lot of disquiet amongst the black work force because of rising inflation and an inability to meet their material needs.

As early as 1974, a British parliamentary committee had called for a 'code of practice' for British companies operating in South Africa and which would press for job advancement, put an end to wage and other discrimination at work and recognise African unions. (The Reader's Digest Association, 1988:461)

But as profits were falling because of a highly dissatisfied workforce a number of stayaways ensued which forced employers to request the Government to act. In 1977 the Government appointed the Wiehahn commission under Professor Nic Wiehahn. After two years of this commission, the Government was forced to extend the LRA to include African workers.

There were many other efforts by workers to force change. In 1979, there was the formation of a non-racial Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) which had become the largest union with 95 000 members in 387 factories (ibid). In 1980 there was also a black-consciousness-aligned union bearing the name Council of Unions in South Africa (CUSA). In 1982 one of the strongest unions, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) was formed with more than 100 000 workers (op cit 489). It is from these ranks that formidable leaders like Cyril Ramaphosa (one of the leaders in negotiations for a democratic South Africa) had come.

In 1985 the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was formed. This was a giant federation of trade unions with the exception of black-consciousness-aligned trade unions such as the Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions (AZACTU) and the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU):

The formation of COSATU was accompanied by a massive wave of strikes, with 1985 seeing the highest number of strikes in 10 years. A May Day stay away in 1986 was supported by more than 1.5 million people countrywide. (ibid.)

It was at this time when the Sullivan Code was also adopted in the USA, started by the Reverend Leon Sullivan, urging the removal of all discrimination in the workplace. (op. cit. 461)

It is important to note that mobilisation against the apartheid Government intensified. There were a number of protests organised by trade unions, student organisations and other civic movements. This whole unrest spread to a number of townships within the country and it was becoming impossible to stop. With the intention of wrecking the economy and forcing big business to take note, there were a number of what was termed “stayaways”. They were called stayaways because workers boycotted going to work and students would also stay away from school. (Ryan, 2005:202)

By March of that year, the focus of resistance had shifted to the Eastern Cape. On 21 March, on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sharpeville shootings, police in the Eastern Cape shot and killed 19 people in Langa, sparking an escalation in the bloodshed... (ibid.)

#### **3.2.2.4 Internecine fighting: Another contributor to the Kairos moment**

From Dr Naude’s report, quoted above (June 24 – 25 1985), there are further pointers to what the situation was when the KD was written: There had been internecine fighting between followers of the United Democratic Front (UDF)



and Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO) in the then Transvaal and in Port Elizabeth. The then Bishop Desmond Tutu and Dr Alan Boesak had successfully mediated a truce between the organisations. It was going to complicate matters to have the suffering groups fighting among themselves. Even if the perpetrators of apartheid would rejoice in this type of fighting, in the end the whole country was going to suffer the consequences of such fights.

### **3.2.2.5 SACC's call for a day of prayer for the end of unjust rule**

Dr Naude had also reported on the call by the SACC for a day of prayer to end unjust rule. The Government had attempted to divide the churches but the Church leadership had succeeded in stemming the intended division. The call for the end to unjust rule in South Africa was a very sensitive matter for the Government because it had pursued the policy of apartheid on scriptural grounds. For the SACC, to call for an end to unjust rule could have been, and was, something traumatic to both the apartheid Government in particular and the DRC membership in general.

In retrospect, this was a decisive moment in the church struggle. The SACC had now publicly declared the state to be a 'tyrannical regime' and was praying for its removal. In this tense context the internationally celebrated Kairos Document was published by the Institute for Contextual Theology. (Elphic & Davenport, Eds. 1997:168)

The Theological Statement makes it plain that the Sharpeville massacre had also been part of a kairos moment: The prayer for an end to unjust rule was particularly irksome to the apartheid Government because it was a Government that erroneously believed that its actions had been sanctioned by God to lead the country according to "separate development" – a euphemism for apartheid.

The reality of the Sharpeville atrocity was recognised throughout the world, in the wake of which South African and world church leaders

met at Cottesloe in December 1960 to reject the apartheid system as unchristian. (Theological Statement On Prayer For The End To Unjust Rule' June 16 Memorial Service, SACC documents, History Archives, Wits, 1985, dated according to SACC Minute of the Executive, 18-19 February 1986)

The Soweto uprising was also seen as a kairos moment within the theological statement: The uprising had forced the Church to pay attention to the pain that had been plaguing the country for a very long time. This pain had just been experienced again in the country by the killing of people at Uitenhage (ibid). Churches within the SACC and SACBC had continually voiced their condemnation of oppressive political and unproductive economic structures. The basis of this condemnation was supported by the theological belief that God is a God of justice and was therefore uncompromisingly against the oppression of people. (ibid.)

The most telling statement in the June 16 Theological Statement was the unequivocal call for a regime change. That call in itself was a clear statement from the Church that it was standing where the poor and oppressed were standing and was prepared to risk the wrath of the State:

We have taken the reluctant and drastic step of declaring apartheid to be contrary to the declared will of God. We now pray that God will replace the present structures of oppression with the ones that are just, and remove those in power who persist in defying his laws, installing in their place leaders who will govern with justice and mercy. (ibid.)

The June 16 statement, though brief, was a thoroughly theologically researched statement. It quoted theologians such as Tertullian, St Augustine, St Thomas, including the Dutch Calvinist Abraham Kuyper and Karl Barth.

### 3.2.2.6 Khotso House bombing (1988)

The Security Police raided Khotso House during June and July 1986. The General Secretary of the SACC reported to the executive that it had become well-known that not just the SACC but a number of other organisations had been raided in June and July that year (1986). A number of operational files had been removed from Khotso House and that obviously affected programmes such as Inter-Church Aid which assisted the destitute. Other documentation consisted of other funds which had to do with relief work such as the National Emergency Fund which dealt with those who were being affected by the situation of detentions, arrests, and which was assisting families whose bread-winners had been detained. (General Secretary's Report to the Executive, Johannesburg, 19 -20 August 1986)

The General Secretary mentioned that there were fears that the Government might act against the SACC. The bombing of Khotso House happened at the time when Frank Chikane was the General Secretary in 1988 when two very powerful bombs were planted by security forces serving under Adriaan Vlok, who was then minister of "Safety and Security". The irony was, of course, inescapable (John Allen 2006:7). The bombing of Khotso House merited a very strongly worded editorial from ICT News:

Khotso House is more than a building. It had become over the years an outstanding symbol of the church's stand against injustice. For so many of the poor and the oppressed people of South Africa, Khotso House had become a refuge, a haven, a place of comfort and hope. It represented in many ways the caring heart of the Churches, the house of compassion and justice – or as its very name suggests, the house of peace. (*Editorial, ICT News, September 1988, VOL 6 NO. 3, SAHA, Wits Library*)

That edition of ICT News went further to show how the bombing of Khotso House had become an exhibit of the dividedness of Christendom in South Africa: The phenomenon of militant right wing Christians appearing on the

side of the government complicated the situation. This was the point raised by the KD except that right wing Christianity, an oxymoron, did not even fall under “Church Theology”. It was some kind of sectional angry belief with a blind desire to protect white interests. There was thus a crisis of faith within Christendom:

Christianity today in South Africa is divided, just as Judaism in the time of Jesus was divided. ‘Brother will deliver up brother to death...and you will be hated by many for my name’s sake (Mt 10:21-22)... The rise of right wing religion in our country in recent times has highlighted the divisions in Christianity. (ibid.)

What had become a challenging time was that right wing Christians who were against the people who were struggling and agitating for justice had become militant. Thus the bombing of Khotso House would be supported by them:

Militant right wing Christians are now going out of their way to ‘malign’ anyone who takes sides with the God of justice. They do not seem to have any theological arguments to justify their defence of the status quo. (ibid.)

These are strong words and just emphasises what was mentioned above about the dividedness of the Church and worse still, divided on issues of justice which should have been beyond debate.

### **3.3 The publication of the Kairos Document (1985)**

In 1985, the institute for Contextual Theology held a conference from May 30 to June 2 at Hammanskraal. At this conference, church people and church practitioners expressed dire frustration at what was going on in the country. There was a strong criticism of English-speaking churches for their inability or unwillingness to confront Apartheid. It was at this conference that the idea of

the publication for the KD itself but also for a movement around the socio-political, theological and ethical issues addressed by the document came about. (Des van der Water, 1998:33)

Dr Bonganjalo Goba, according to van der Water, addressed the conference and made the submission that Christians who were involved in the struggle were marginalised by the Church. The institutional Church was being challenged by movements such as Ministers United for Christian Co-responsibility (MUCCOR), Christian Action Movement (CAM), Diakonia in Durban among others. The bombing of Botswana by the apartheid forces in June 1985 prompted a group of Christian leaders to meet secretly. Among the people in this group were the Rev Frank Chikane, who was then General Secretary of ICT, Fr Albert Nolan, the Rev Dr Goba, Sister Bernard Ncube, Rev Molefe Tsele and Fr Chris Langeveldt. The meeting was at Ipelegeng Community Centre in Soweto. The aim was to situate the crisis theologically and to map out an appropriate response that could be adopted by the churches and Christians in general. (Van der Water, 33f)

In an interview with Frank Chikane, the researcher gave a detailed process of the manner in which the KD was born. He had returned from detention to find that the State apparatus was inflicting the worst violence on the people. Chikane further asserts:

I returned to a situation where the pain was deep and it was like the end of the world. I had to ask “where is God? What is God going to do about this? What does God want us to do?” The kairós concept is the moment of crisis and it was such that you could *not just not* (*my emphasis*) do anything about it. When we realised that there were people who had abandoned the struggle but were still detained, it became clear to us that we would rather suffer doing something than be detained for doing nothing. (Interview)

Chikane then mentions how they started redefining terminology pertaining to what had been happening:

It is at that stage that that we said “No, I would rather suffer doing something”. So we began to call it meaningful suffering and differentiated it from senseless suffering. Meaningful suffering meant that I would rather suffer doing something than and let me die doing something. I will die but I will leave something behind. It might be for the coming generations. But others suffer just for doing nothing. They have retreated, but they are still suffering. That is useless suffering – senseless suffering. (ibid.)

Chikane says when he returned from prison he still found friends in the struggle – comrades - running the ICT even though he had been the Director. It was the thoughts mentioned above which made him engage again. A decision was then taken in which these friends suggested that they should call other people to discuss the question: What is it that God wanted us to do in the midst of this crisis? Chikane said that he had thought they were engaging in non-violence. But then he had to change his mind about this thought. He said that when a hit-list was discovered which had thirteen names of himself, of the then Bishop Tutu and Father Lebamang Sebidi, among others. Someone had come to tell them that they had been militarily trained at Westgate even though the trainees had not been told why they were being trained. It was when they discovered what they had to do that they decided to go and inform the people who were being targeted. Many people who were on the hit list took cover but he could not because he had been restricted. The choice was between taking cover and going to jail or going into exile, neither of which were preferable to him. It was at that time that he reflected on the matter of non-violence when people who came to guard him came with arms. When he remonstrated with them about his non-violence stand it is when they responded by telling him that in order for him to have the luxury of non-violence, they had to use violence to guard him. That is when the contradiction of non-violence began to dawn on him. It was then that for the first time in his life he felt he needed to have an AK 47 because:

At that moment I felt strongly that I wanted one person to die with me so that the body of that person could be traced and used by others to identify the person who had come to kill me. (ibid.)

With regard to the KD, Chikane says they never had a document in mind when the discussions started. The ecumenical nature and the mix of theologies that had come together necessitated explanations for the terms that were being used. For example, Chikane's point of reference was more from a Pentecostal perspective and this to a Dominican like Albert Nolan was not everyday language; similarly, Nolan's terminology of the state being tyrannical was foreign language to a Pentecostal like Chikane. It was then that people were asked to write some explanatory notes for the next meetings to make sense of what was being said. These notes gradually developed into the KD as more progress was being made. (Interview)

Several people were requested to write chapters and Fr Nolan was asked to write a preface. In September 1985 the Kairos Document was released by ICT. It immediately became a watershed event in the country. In the SACC report mentioned above, Beyers Naude wrote in glowing terms about the KD. He introduced it as the Theology of Liberation and that it had received unprecedented and significant attention from overseas and elsewhere:

The interest displayed around the world in the Kairos Document was unprecedented in the theological history of South Africa. Never before have so many millions of Christians of all confessions around the world occupied themselves so seriously in theological discussions and debate with a theological document as happened in the case of the Kairos Document in relation to the policy of apartheid. (ibid.)

The statement further stated that the apartheid machinery immediately went into action to brand the document "Marxist". But according to the quoted report, the Kairos Document had inspired the writing of another document with similar strong views as the KD called the Evangelical Witness in South Africa. and which had been signed by:



...32 clergy and preachers of Evangelical, Pentecostal, Baptist churches and charismatic organisations – a document which clearly shows the reaction which the Kairos Document has evoked in the minds of many Christians in South Africa. (ibid.)

The report went on to urge member of the SACC to respond as soon as possible to both the KD and the Evangelical Witness in South Africa. Thus it could be seen that while there were many efforts towards the fight against apartheid as generated by the different church groupings chief among which were the SACC and the SACBC, the KD remained the one document that became of tremendous importance to the debate around the world especially on apartheid, even though the KD was not the sole player in the field of religious struggle against apartheid. It could no longer be disputed that the struggle and attack against apartheid in South Africa involved a very large majority of people and many groups. Sub-headings of minutes of the SACC of 1986 and 1987 give an ominous context of the time of the KD and also reveal efforts with which the SACC was involved. Villa- Vicencio's words are apt here:

In terms of doctrine and principle the English-speaking Churches cannot be faulted, and they have produced numerous courageous leaders, both black and white, who have endured both the wrath of the government and the opposition of the Afrikaans Reformed Church leaders for their stance. But it is in their *general practice* that the English-speaking Churches are found wanting. (de Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio, 1983:67)

### **3.3.1 Rightwing attack on the KD**

#### **3.3.1.1 Signposts**

Equally true is the fact that it was not the DRC only, nor the majority of Afrikaners alone, who supported apartheid. There were other groups and other publications that tried hard and tirelessly to counter the SACC and other

church efforts to fight against apartheid. One of these was called *Signposts*. Its mission statement read:

*SIGNPOSTS* is a periodical to inform Christians of all denominations of the threat posed to their faith by the infiltration of Marxist-based ideas under the guise of new interpretations of the Gospel. *SIGNPOSTS* adheres to the conservative Biblical understanding of faith as traditionally held by Christians. (*SIGNPOSTS, History Archives, Wits, undated*)

Its editor was Edward Cain, and it was based in Pretoria. The thrust of *SIGNPOSTS'* attack was aimed at the ecumenical movement which included the SACBC and SACC. *Signposts* did not differentiate between political movements such as the ANC and the UDF, and the Church. It lumped them into one:

In fact the religious faction within the revolutionary “church” is drawn from the leadership of many of the institutional churches which are members of the SA Council of Churches and from the SA Catholic Bishops Conference. The proposal was to make the Methodist Church a “Peace Church”. (ibid.)

There is a sense in which lumping the ANC, UDF and the Church into one was correct in so far as all three were concerned with justice. But *Signposts* intention was clearly meant as a “smear” tactic so that the Church could be undermined in its contribution to the fight against apartheid. *Signposts* was not just conservative in its attack but it was precisely its display of carelessness about people’s suffering and its strong support for the status quo which made it such an opponent of the KD. The KD therefore, in its critique of State Theology mentioned the following:

State Theology needs its own prophets and it manages to find them from the ranks of those who profess to be ministers of God’s Word in some of our Churches. What is particularly tragic for a Christian is to

see the number of people who are fooled by these false prophets and their heretical theology. (1986:8)

*Signposts* worked tirelessly to entrench the conservative, mainly white-held views, against the liberation of South Africa from the clutches of apartheid. One edition of *Signposts* dedicated the whole publication under the title: THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT'S LONG CAMPAIGN AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA (sic). The World Council of Churches was described as:

...one of the 13 International Communist front organisations established since 1945, by *An Encyclopedic (sic) Dictionary of Marxism, Socialism and Communism* by Josef Wilczynski. (*Signposts*, Vol. 6 No. 4 1987)

This document, which propounded the then minority Government's view that the ecumenical struggle against apartheid was nothing more than a smokescreen for Marxism, covered quite a wide period, starting from 1975 with WCC Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) to August 1987 when the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) would be meeting where similar "anti-south African resolutions will be passed".

The above-quoted *Signposts* publication went on to give some details of almost all the ecumenical efforts to normalise the South African community branding those efforts as the "campaign against South Africa". In its view, that campaign was made up of organisations such as the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches which "are housed in the same building in Geneva, Switzerland and work very closely together". The End Conscription Campaign (ECC) as well as the Dutch Reformed Mission Church also fell in this group because it also called for the release of ANC leader, Nelson Mandela. The National Initiative for Reconciliation (NIR), launched in Pietermaritzburg in 1985 by Africa Enterprise and funded by World Vision was also seen as an organization which was against the then regime in South Africa because it called for, according to *Signposts*, the removal of police and army from the

townships, the release of detainees and political prisoners, the dropping of charges against treason trialists and the return of exiles. Signposts then connected NIR to the “campaign against South Africa” with this statement:

These demands were very similar to ones made by the SACC, ANC and UDF. Eight of the 13 people who signed the Statement of Affirmation were senior officials of the SACC or closely linked to it.

NIR was also “accused” of:

...providing a platform for churchmen who have met with the ANC leaders to give their impressions and appeal for the government to negotiate with the Marxist organisation. (ibid.)

The NIR consisted of Christians who were merely trying to work out a way of beginning the long process of reconciliation. Yet *Signposts* continued to attack the NIR while at the same time attacking the *Kairos Document* and the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT). The statement of the *Evangelical Witness to South Africa* was not spared either. It was viewed as a:

...rehashed version of Kairos, entitled *Evangelical Witness to South Africa*... Its message was the same as Kairos’s except that it was aimed at drawing in Bible-believing Christians who are outside the SACC circles. (ibid.)

The researcher has quoted extensively from *Signposts* because it is also very important to know the type of influences with which conservative white and black people had to deal with and why it had become a serious uphill challenge to change people’s attitudes towards oppression and hatred within conservative circles. It should therefore not be surprising that it took so long for South Africa to come to its senses.

### 3.3.1.2 Gospel Defence League (GDL)

Apart from *Signposts* there were other publications such as the Gospel Defence League (GDL) and the Catholic Defence League, which played a major role as apologists for the repressive government. Ironically all these attacks on the KD and associated institutions were purported to be in defence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not clear where their funding came from but it is clear that these publications were heavily subsidised because they were issued free of charge.

The GDL released a two-page document with a clear bias against the SACC and related organisations. Its writers varied from time to time, and it was published in Cape Town. This publication also launched a vicious attack on the KD. It regarded the KD as a “marxist (sic) revolutionary” document. But more seriously, the GDL published a report of a convention that was purportedly held in Frankfurt, Germany, by a grouping calling itself Germany’s Confessing Fellowship. It had a very interesting theme: “*Revolution in the name of Jesus? The Gospel in the Face of the South African Conflict*”. This document then went on to report how this Confessing Fellowship saw the KD.

Most of these critics were superficial in their critique of the KD. They did not go into the detail or substance of the KD. What one finds is a general condemnation of the KD. Beyerhaus, already cited earlier and who had become the guru of the GDL, had very strong words against the KD even before he had given reasons for declaring it a catastrophe:

I have the strong impression that the KD, indeed, is a manifestation of false prophecy which, if heeded, will prove fatal not only for the future of South Africa and its people, especially its churches, but also for the rest of mankind, whose destiny is closely intertwined with the destiny of this beloved country at the southern end of Africa. (1987:13)

These are strong words indeed. Interestingly, the format of the publication was almost similar to that of the KD – a booklet of an A4 size with 23 pages.

The irony was that Beyerhaus had not found it fit to condemn a policy that discriminated and oppressed so many indigenous people of South Africa. His attack was quite surprising, to say the least. He was condemning the KD because it was attacking the system of apartheid. In his words:

In the 2nd chapter the sponsors wage an all out attack on their main opponent, the present political system of South Africa. It is not an attack on the State as such, but rather on the underlying philosophical and moral foundation by which the system is upheld. (op. cit.14)

The words of Beyerhaus above are baffling. He agrees that the KD is not attacking persons but “the underlying philosophical and moral foundation by which the system is upheld”. One would have thought that what Beyerhaus is saying would actually make the KD a great document. The KD, even Beyerhaus agrees, is not attacking persons but the system. His point was that the KD should have stuck to racism (his words). That is so superficial as to perhaps not warrant a further word. Beyerhaus is attacking the very strength of the KD.

Those who attacked the KD failed to appreciate this very fundamental position of the KD, not to attack persons but rather the system of oppression. Albert Nolan, in his book, *God in South Africa*, gives a very clear explanation of the system people were struggling against:

The most characteristic form of suffering in South Africa, though by no means the worst form, is the suffering through humiliation. Anyone who was not legally classified as white was treated as inferior not only by individual whites but by the whole system of laws with their “whites-only” restrictions. This legalised humiliation, this systemic attack upon the dignity of so many human beings, shocked and scandalised the world. (1988:51)

It is very interesting that Professor Beyerhaus wrote on behalf of the Gospel Defence League a critical analysis of the KD in which he was attempting to

answer whether the KD was a “challenge or danger to the church”. The GDL was dead against those who were struggling against apartheid. Beyerhaus, for example, mentioned that in the KD “Jesus Christ is in no way the centre (sic) of this kairos. In the decisive statements *He is not even mentioned*” (his emphasis) (1987:11). Beyerhaus ignored the statement of the KD in which the writers clearly mention that:

A prophetic theology would have to have in it the mind of Christ, his willingness to suffer and die, his humility and his power, his willingness to forgive and his anger about sin, his spirit of prayer and action. (KD, 1986:18)

Furthermore, the adherents of the GDL ignored many aspects of the KD which were clearly biblical and Christ-centred. The writers of the KD also mention unequivocally that:

When we read the Bible from the point of view of our daily experience of suffering and oppression, then what stands out for us is the many, many vivid and concrete descriptions of suffering and oppression throughout the Bible culminating in the cross of Jesus Christ. (1986:19)

### **3.3.1.3 Letter from the Confessing Fellowship of Germany**

The letter focussed on ‘Liberation Theology’, and took a critical look at the ‘Kairos Document’. The letter stated that at the close of the convention “104 European (and African) Church leaders signed an open “*Letter from Confessing Christians in Germany to their fellow Christians in South Africa*”. The letter attacked one of the main donor partners of the SACC, the German Council of Churches (EKD) for supporting the SACC financially. Furthermore, “the EKD also propagates the Marxist revolutionary ‘Kairos Document’.

The “Letter” went on to condescendingly concede that though they could that the KD sprang from “an impatience” with continued suffering of the masses and lacked a clear reference to Jesus Christ. The letter ironically mentioned



the very contentious issue of putting forward the issue of reconciliation which the Cross of Jesus had brought in a way that gave the impression that the KD rejected reconciliation:

Indeed, the central message of the Good News, 'reconciliation', is rejected as irrelevant in the present South African situation. In the Kairos Document the Gospel seems to be intermixed with Marxist revolutionary ideology, which gives an alien, antibiblical content to familiar words. Jesus is presented chiefly as the political champion of the poor and oppressed, not as the Lamb of God, given for us, who takes away the sin of the world. He is therefore not the biblical, but a false Christ. (2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:6-9)

The insensitivity of the letter regarding the suffering masses of South Africa was mind-boggling. What the letter was unable to realise was that it had not been just black people who had suffered. There were many white people who were trapped first by the colour of their skin which they also could not change even if they wanted to, and also by the policy which made them sacrifice their young men at the alter of the oppression of other races by being members of the SADF, SAPS or other security agents. Had this not been true, there would not have been the End Conscription Campaign (ECC). The KD had made it clear:

It is therefore not primarily a matter of trying to reconcile individual people but a matter of trying to change unjust structures so that people will not be pitted against one another as oppressor and oppressed. (op. cit. 22)

The letter-writers of the so-called confessing churches of Germany, could not have known that the struggle for liberation by blacks had started as early as 1887 with "Imvo Zabantsundu" (Native opinion), edited by John Tengo Jabavu who had the following aim:

To give untrammelled expression to African views and to help bring about closer bonds between blacks and between blacks and whites. African grievances on a wide range of subjects were ventilated in *Imvo...* ( Odendaal, 1984:12)

#### **3.3.1.4 Further condemnation of the KD**

The researcher has concentrated on Beyerhaus because he represented the views of many who were of the mind that the then government was ordained by God. Thus making reference to him or responding to his ideas was also to respond to those who supported the GDL. It must be remembered also that the publication of the KD did not receive acclaim from some eminent Church leaders while others applauded it. The KD, however, became news because the reaction to it was reported in the media. Cas St Leger of the *Sunday Times* made the following report:

Fiery condemnations greeted the publication this week calling on Christians to disobey the State. Shocking, un-Christian and reprehensible were some of the views of eminent theologians on the controversial Kairos Document. (29 September, 1985)

What was surprising was that in the same article, Professor Ben Engelbrecht, then head of Religious Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand was quoted as saying “the document is ghastly and all serious Christians should reject it”. This was an English university and these English-speaking universities were viewed as far less culpable in colluding against the people of South Africa.

The KD does not say that “Church Theology” was useless. It maintains that church theology was lukewarm and superficial:

In a limited, guarded and cautious way this theology is critical of apartheid. Its criticism, however, is superficial and counter-productive because instead of engaging in an in-depth analysis of the signs of the

times, it relies upon a few stock ideas derived from Christian tradition and then uncritically and repeatedly applies them to our situation. The stock ideas used by almost all these Church leaders that we would like to examine here are: reconciliation (or peace), justice and non-violence. (KD, 1986:9)

The above statement is underscored by what Reeves also observed:

The remarkable thing is that the growing tensions and problems created for the churches by the implementation of the racist theories of the ruling National Party did not lead even in the first decade of that rule to a head-on collision between any church and the State authorities. We are bound to ask why no such clash occurred. (Reeves, op. cit.)

### **3.3.1.5 Scepticism over the KD manifested by some church leaders**

But then Bishop Desmond Tutu also did not sign the KD: He had a different reason from those of theologians such as Peter Beyerhaus who wrote a negative response against the KD. Tutu felt the KD had not been very fair to those whites who had fought and sacrificed against apartheid. Yet the KD's position was more to concentrate on the suffering of the black masses and took for granted that it was understood that there were many whites who were against apartheid.

Tutu did not sign it; he thought it too abrasive and too easily dismissive of the white leadership of the multiracial churches. But he supported its thrust. (John Allen, 2006:288)

It was not surprising that Tutu did not sign because much as he was forcefully against apartheid, he was also very much aware of the contribution that white clerical leadership had contributed to the struggle for liberation. Indeed there were many white people who had been involved in the struggle even though not with the same intensity. Having said that though, as a researcher one

needs to say that the KD was not meant as a catalogue of praise but a theological treatise aimed at galvanising the Church into action. In any case, the leaving out of the contribution of whites in the struggle was minor compared to what was actually happening on the ground. People were dying and their dignity was being trampled upon mercilessly by the system of apartheid. The involvement of white people is beyond dispute. The words of Bishop Ambrose Reeves come to mind:

...it has to be remembered that from the moment the National Party came to power a number of churchmen in all churches were vocal in their opposition to apartheid, and among them a few were prepared to match their words with their actions. (*Notes and Documents*, 9/72)

Reeves then went on to mention priests such as the Rev Michael Scot whose protests against oppression earned him the status of *persona non grata* by the apartheid regime and so was banished from South Africa (*Notes and Documents* 9/72). Reeves emphasised that there were also many individual churchmen (sic) who challenged many other ordinary white members of the church to reject the inhuman policy of apartheid. (op. cit.)

In spite of this view from Tutu, “thirty of the signatories – a fifth of the total - were Anglican”. (ibid) It has to be noted that there were serious diversities in the approach even of the Church to the manner of dealing with a difficult government such as the one headed by PW Botha around that time.

Perhaps Tutu was right in that the issue was not about people’s colour but about the systemic oppression that was going on. There had been many white bishops such as Jooste de Blanc, Bishop Reeves, Fr Huddleston, and many others from the different churches who also took up the banner against apartheid. Indeed among those who signed it were many other white people such as James Cochrane and others.

Therefore the KD was a broad stroke which, in this writer’s view, did not expect that whites who had been involved would take exception in the way it

had been written. Certain sensitivities had to be swallowed as long as the people's suffering could be alleviated.

One of the other difficulties that the Church has faced has been the very ethos that the Church created about itself. It moved from being a less visible "salt of the earth" which mingles with people within the community, especially the poor and vulnerable. Instead, it moved with the powerful and espoused values of power, almost vying with the State for turf.

### **3.3.2 Bias of the critics of the KD**

The difficulty with critics such as those who supported the GDL was that they were also extremely one-sided. They were never seen to criticise the apartheid government. They never bothered about the dignity of all South Africans on all sides of the struggle, for and against, that was being trampled upon by those in power. Many soldiers under the apartheid regime were fighting on the side that was protecting the system of apartheid under the banner of the South African Defence Force. Many of them did not know how to deal with it, and many also fled; while others joined the End Conscription Campaign (ECC). It is for this reason that the KD says:

A regime that has made itself the enemy of the people has thereby also made itself the enemy of God. People are made in the image and likeness of God and whatever we do to the least of them we do to God.  
(Mt 25:49) (1986:24)

It might be added here that this researcher has difficulty in trying to find meaning in the almost vehement opposition to the KD from those people who claim to stand for Jesus and thus have become his security agents as if Jesus was in danger of extinction. Brueggemann is right when he says:

In the imperial world of Pharaoh and Solomon the prophetic alternative is a bad joke either to be squelched by force or ignored in satiation. But we are a haunted people because we believe the bad joke is rooted in

the character of God himself, a God who is not the reflection of Pharaoh or of Solomon... He is a God uncredentialed in the empire, unknown in the courts, unwelcome in the temple". (1978:42)

It is clear that many opponents of the KD were not innocent critics of the document. They were part of the whole power structure that has dominated the world for so long. There was a genuine fear on their part that the benefits they were having by South Africa remaining in white hands, were going to either be shared or fall away. It was for this reason that they were so lacking in compassion. Brueggemann again hits the nail on the head when he says:

Empires are never built or maintained on the basis of compassion. The norms of law (social) control are never accommodated to persons, but persons are accommodated to the norms. Otherwise the norms would collapse and with them the whole power arrangement. (1978:85)

These words are so reminiscent of the words ascribed to Jesus in the Gospel where He was constantly being dogged by the hierarchy regarding His putting people first above the law which, according to Him, was made for people and not vice versa. The apartheid social context was inert and uncaring. The following criticism is apt:

...the compassion of Jesus is to be understood not simply as a personal emotional reaction but as a public criticism in which he dares to act upon his concern against the entire numbness of his social context. (ibid.)

This is very interesting because Jesus also tried hard to sensitise the hierarchy of the synagogue without avail. His reading of the words of Isaiah which Luke quotes in Chapter 4:18 were a clear manifesto as to His intention concerning the leadership He had come to exercise. Jesus was in the prophetic mode and His actions could also have been echoing the words of the Prophet Micah:

He has showed you...what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

And to walk humbly with your God. (Micah, 6:8 NIV)

### **3.3.3 Impact of the Kairos Document**

The KD however did not only meet with opposition. Many voices went up in praise and support of it. The General Secretary's report to the Executive of the SACC (19-20 August 1986) is apt here:

...it was the publication of the Kairos Document in September 1985 which sparked off a tremendous interest and concern in the most unexpected quarters. The interest displayed around the world in the Kairos Document was unprecedented in the theological history of South Africa.

On June 18 1987, a seminar on "Legitimacy of Governments" was held jointly by the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (Wits) and the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT).

The seminar was in response to the demand for a follow-up to the debates resulting from the publication of the Kairos Document in 1985 which had been produced by theologians and lay people concerned with the issues of state legitimacy and tyranny. The seminar provided the theoretical background to the debate. (Press Release, June 18 Circa 1987, SA History Archives)

Speakers at this seminar included Fr Lebamang Sebidi, who was also regarded as a Kairos Theologian, Dennis Davis, the then Professor of law at the University of Cape Town, Edwin Cameron then of the Centre for Applied Legal Studies, Professor Charles Villa Vicencio, then of the University of Cape Town, and Frank Chikane, then of the Institute for Contextual Theology.



The most fascinating positive response to the KD is to be found reported in *ICT News* three months after the publication of the document. At Sing Sing prison in New York, 11 prisoners who claimed to have 105 years in jail among them, adopted the KD:

We have come together also to reflect upon oppression of blacks by whites in South Africa. The focus of our reflection has been on the Kairos Document: "Challenge to the Church: A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa". (*ICT News*, Vol. 4 No. 4, December 1986, *History Archives*, Wits)

The statement was published in full by *ICT News*. The statement went so far as to call on:

Christians in South Africa to dissociate themselves from any church that supports apartheid, for the authority of the church cannot supersede the authority of the Word of God, and God is always on the side of the oppressed. (*ibid.*)

The above goes to show how influential the KD had become within a short space of time of its publication. According to a press release by then General Secretary of ICT, Frank Chikane, who had travelled through Europe, the USA and Canada. The KD had generated great interest and it was being translated into many languages around the world and distributed widely.

The Kairos Document is particularly used in Universities around Europe and the U.S.A. as part of the study material in faculties of theology or religious studies. (ICT Document titled: *Press Release 26<sup>TH</sup>* May 1987, *History Archives*, Wits)

Interestingly, Dr Smanga Kumalo, a lecturer at the University of Natal, mentions that they still refer students to the KD so that they can get some insights into the theology of the struggle at the time. In the researcher's view, this is an important contribution to raising awareness of the students so that

they are able to recognise when churches stop being critical as they concentrate on doing what they consider to be “church work “only. The need for a holistic approach to theology which emanates from a lucid socio-economic analysis will always be a vital part of any serious-minded theologian or religious activist, as Kairos theologians have so ably demonstrated.

Chikane had gone to Sweden in 1987 to receive a Peace Prize on behalf of ICT. Diakonia of the Free Swedish Churches gives this prize annually to:

...churches and church groups in the Third World which have done outstanding work on justice and peace in their countries. This Peace Prize therefore was a recognition of our efforts in the Institute to develop a theology that will help all South Africans to face the reality of the unjust nature of our society and to work tirelessly for a just society which will appropriate the ideals of the kingdom of God in the World.  
(*ICT News*, 1987)

It is to be noted that in that press release, Chikane expressed some strong views on the need for the normalisation of the situation in South Africa. Chikane asked some pertinent but rhetorical questions regarding the then oppressive situation in South Africa:

What do you do in a country where, all those who talk about a just society, where all will be equal before the law; about a non-racial society, where no one will be discriminated against because of the colour of his or her skin; [where all those who talk about a] democratic country, where all South Africans, black and white will participate equally in the decision making processes of the country? (ibid.)

Another significant part of the Press Release was the sub-topic titled: *In Solidarity with Southern African States*. In this sub-topic Chikane mentioned the suffering and pain brought on the surrounding states such as Zimbabwe, Botswana and Mozambique mainly because these states supported the liberation struggle of the people of South Africa. Chikane decried the fact that these states were:

...being held hostage economically, politically, and militarily simply because they receive our brothers and sisters who seek refuge there because of the system... We need to realise that their struggles [are] our struggle as much as they have taken ours as their struggle. We need to move beyond just sympathising with them and just condemning S.A. for its destabilisation strategy but our solidarity must be expressed in the form of action. (ibid.)

### **3.3.4 Some media coverage of the reaction to the publication of KD**

While those who criticised the KD found it wanting in theological and biblical grounding, the writers saw it as “Christian, biblical and theological”. The present writer strongly agrees with this latter view. The writer was a signatory to the document having agreed with its contents. The three identified theologies in the KD were an eye-opener to many of the concerned church practitioners and theologians.

The newsletter of the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) found that the response from the townships had been far greater than had been expected. But the response internationally had also been exceptional:

The publication of this “Challenge to the Church” made front page headlines in some newspapers overseas. The Catholic Herald in London, for example, reported it under the headline, “S. A. theologians call grassroots Church to action”. Reports have also appeared here and there in the international secular press. (Dec 1985, Vol. 3 No.4)

*The Guardian* in London was quoted as saying:

Liberation Theology has taken giant strides in South Africa, promising... to put fresh vigour into the movement in other continents. (16/10/85)

The head of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa at the time, Bishop Peter Storey, had a guarded criticism of the document:

This document makes a contribution to an ongoing debate but it's certainly not the final word. In so far as it talks about the church's role, there are some sweeping statements which need to be worked out a lot more carefully. The question of identifying with the people in their struggle is one that cannot be uncritical or unqualified. (*Sunday Times*, 29/9/85 in *ICT News*, December 1985, SAHA)

What Peter Storey said in his comments was also of course stated in the preface of the KD and echoed by the then General Secretary of the United Congregational Church of South Africa (UCCSA):

The fact that the Kairos Document is described in the preface as an "open-ended" document which will never be said to be final is an important premise on which to base continuing dialogue...

On such a basis, the UCCSA welcomes the appearance of the Kairos document (sic) primarily, as a "Challenge to the Church" and not as a credo for the Church. (Joseph Wing, Secretary, Church and Society Department, undated papers)

It is of note that both Peter Storey and Joseph Wing were the leaders of churches which were predominantly Black in membership. These leaders were both regarded as very progressive. But they could not accept the KD without qualification. *ICT News* further noted that the media as a whole never canvassed the opinion of black Church leaders. There were other opinions from other leaders such as Professor Johan Heyns of the University of Pretoria who also had very strong views about the KD:

A very shocking experience... If the church is going to play that role, then it is no longer a church... They should exercise much more responsibility. (*Sunday Times*, 29/9/85 in *ICT News*)

It was not surprising then that a professor of theology at an Afrikaans University should view things this way. What was surprising was the reaction of Professor Engelbrecht of the University of the Witwatersrand, who is said to have described the document as “ghastly”:

All serious Christians should reject this. It steers in the direction of political involvement which also implies the church steps out of its own sphere into the political sphere to organise it... It was the church’s responsibility to be perceptive to changes that might occur in any morally unjustifiable government: there were obviously elements in apartheid which were unjust. But everything these people can point a finger at as unjust has already been detected by those in power and they know these things should change and have committed themselves to change. I therefore see in this call for civil disobedience an impatience and a lack of compassion which is totally unchristian!  
(*Sunday Times in ICT News*, Dec 1985)

Professor John de Gruchy’s position was that he:

...did not believe that the KD was saying anything new, though it spelt it out sharper and clearer, but merely reaffirmed the church’s position. To say that churches could not become involved in civil disobedience was to go against the whole thrust of Christian tradition. (*Sunday Times in ICT News*, Dec 1985)

The divided views of theologians and church leaders above actually showed how much the Church itself was divided. It is also to be noted that at that time there was a scarcity of black church leaders’ views which happened not to be canvassed by the media. Professor Heyns and Professor Engelbrecht did not acknowledge the struggle efforts that had been made by the masses of within the country and the fact that as amply quoted above, the situation had become very volatile and it was those efforts that were forcing government to have a rethink. Besides, the Church by 1985 was now only beginning to think of Blacks as also having the qualities of leadership.

Many theologians in Europe and North America and other places had begun to study the document, according to the Newsletter. For instance, a document written almost in similar format appeared later titled *Kairos: Central America – A Challenge to the Churches of the World*. It would not be an exaggeration to view the production of this document, which was written in June 1988, as having been influenced by the KD. Part of the introduction says the following:

Central America's "Kairos" arises from 464 years of struggle, agony and hope. The confrontation with the United States' neo-colonial and interventionist policy is coming to a head in the entire region...

We do not intend to give the last word with this "Central American Kairos Document". Rather, our desire is to share our faith and our Christian reading of this historical hour we are living out in Central America in humility, and in this we create an opening for reflection and dialog in communities and churches, together with all persons of goodwill...

The purpose of the Central American Kairos Document was spelt out as follows:

We ask all the churches of the world, but especially those of Rome, Spain, Portugal, England, the United States and the Latin American countries to hold penitential celebrations of great prominence on the occasion of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Latin America's subjugation, committing themselves clearly before their governments to its emancipation.

### **3.3.5 Current comments on the KD by some Christian activists**

The researcher interviewed ten people using a questionnaire. The people involved had been and still are most influential and knowledgeable regarding the KD. Among them are Fr Albert Nolan, a world-renowned theologian, Rev Des van der Water, who holds a PhD on the KD, Dr Luke Phato, a theologian

based at the SACC as Director for the Reconciliation and Healing Committee, Professor Tinyiko Maluleke, the current President of the SACC and head of research at UNISA, Dr Smanga Kumalo, a lecturer in Theology at the University of Natal, Dr Puleng-Lenka Bula, a lecturer at the University of South Africa has been the only woman to return a questionnaire so far, Dr McGlory Speckman, a previously very active member of the Institute for Contextual Theology and presently the Dean of students at the University of Pretoria, Professor Maake Masango, lecturer in Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria, Professor Jim Cochrane lecturer at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, and the Rev Frank Chikane who had until recently been Director in the Office of the Presidency.

On the question of whether the KD was one-sided the following answers were given:

It [the KD] began siding with blacks, which could be described as one-sided and then included others in terms of its broad theology. Looking back it had to side with the oppressed first, and then release the oppressor. (Masango's answer to the questionnaire)

Jim Cochrane, a professor who had been involved with the KD's conception and distribution, also felt that:

In its time, the theology of the KD was entirely appropriate provided one read it as a testimony and not a systematically worked out theological treatise... As a testimony its theology was a powerful representation of a pained, hurt, angry experience that was the reality for the majority of South Africans. (Answer to questionnaire)

Cochrane also was much more precise:

The established anti-apartheid churches were in that sense largely immobilised and failing their people. The KD broke that spell...



With reference to the hurt mentioned above by Cochrane, it is worth noting that Brueggemann also states:

Compassion constitutes a radical form of criticism, for it announces that the hurt is to be taken seriously, that the hurt is not to be accepted as normal and natural but is an abnormal and unacceptable condition of humanness". (1978:85)

In the light of the above, it was thus unfortunate that churches could not stand up and be counted. It was the kind of theology that was taught that insulated church people from rejecting the "abnormal and unacceptable". The survey this researcher has done through interviews and questionnaires reveals that since 1994 and even now, the churches have become concerned with denominational survival and individualism. There is also a realisation that churches are now more interested in increasing their membership than in dealing with serious issues such as poverty and HIV/Aids. (Masango: Questionnaire)

### **3.4 The KD's position on reconciliation**

It is apt to comment at this point on what the KD's position was concerning reconciliation. The KD's stance on reconciliation was rejected by many critics because for them reconciliation without justice was not an issue. This was therefore strange, that any group calling itself "Christian" could fail to empathise with a people that had suffered for so long. Ironically the kind of criticism above underscores precisely what the KD was trying to point out. One would have thought that the writers of the letter quoted above would examine the reasons for the publication of the KD, acquaint themselves with the facts in South Africa and then actually point out what exactly was unbiblical about the KD. The letter maintained that according to the KD "reconciliation' is rejected as irrelevant in the present South African situation". What the KD said of reconciliation was far from a rejection. What was needed was *reconciliation based on justice* (my emphasis):

There can be no doubt that our Christian faith commits us to work for true reconciliation and genuine peace. But as so many people, including Christians, have pointed out there can be no true reconciliation and no genuine peace without justice. Any form of peace or reconciliation that allows the sin of injustice and oppression to continue is a false peace and counterfeit reconciliation. This kind of reconciliation has nothing to do with the Christian faith. (op. cit. p9)

It is difficult to understand the priorities of the critics of the KD on reconciliation and whether they had actually read the letter and spirit of the KD. It is a criticism that implies that Jesus is indifferent to the pain, suffering and deprivation of the poor and oppressed. The KD was, in no uncertain terms, according to the GDL, propagating “a false Christ”. The Confessing Fellowship also went further by likening the KD with the Barmen Declaration (BD) which had been issued in 1934 against Hitler’s Nazism. This comparison of the KD to the Barmen Declaration could be regarded as an unintended compliment to the KD because the BD also was a religious protest against the leadership of the German Evangelical Church for supporting Hitler. According to Ryan, the German Evangelical Church compromised with the Nazi regime because of the close historical ties that existed between Church and State. (2005:107)

## Chapter Four: The Kairos Document - A theological analysis

### 4.1 A general view of the Kairos Document in brief

#### 4.1.1 Introduction

A small group of Christian theologians and ministers decided to work on what was needed at the time. This group was influenced by the possibilities that were inherent in a radical interpretation of the Bible. The preface of the Second Edition of the KD gives some context for the writing of the KD (September 1986) as follows:

- There was a state of emergency.
- Sanctions were becoming a reality.
- Thousands of people were in detention, while many were missing, others restricted and some deported.
- People had become more determined to resist the regime even at the cost of their lives.

Wolfram Kistner had highlighted this resistance by stating that:

...no reconciliation is possible in South Africa in human relationships without repentance on the part of the people who uphold the present political structures and without an active participation in the struggle for justice to be accorded to all South Africans. (Brandt, Ed.1988:207)

While it may appear that the reconciliation that Kistner wrote about was meant strictly in a political sense, his view was holistic in that when he mentioned a struggle for justice it also implied economic justice. Repentance is inferred, as is a change of direction on the part of those who perpetrated apartheid.

The writers of the KD described the KD as:

...a Christian, biblical and theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa today. It is an attempt by concerned Christians in South Africa to reflect on the situation of death in our country. It is a critique of the current theological models that determine the type of activities the Church engages in to try to resolve the problems of the country. It is an attempt to develop, out of this perplexing situation, an alternative biblical and theological model that will in turn lead to forms of activity that will make a real difference to the future of our country. (KD, *Preface*, 1985)

#### **4.1.2 Core theological content of the Kairos Document**

The KD is renowned for having been able to identify three types of theology which developed in South Africa during the apartheid years. The Kairos theologians identified the following:

:

- State Theology
- Church Theology
- Prophetic Theology

The first chapter deals with “The Moment of Truth”. It spells out why there is a moment of truth it terms “the Kairos”: The writers give very clear reasons why the KD was written:

“We as a group of theologians have been trying to understand the theological significance of this moment in our history. It is serious, very serious. For very many Christians in South Africa this is the KAIROS, the moment of grace and opportunity, the favourable time in which God issues a challenge to decisive action. It is a dangerous time because, if this opportunity is missed, and allowed to pass by, the loss for the Church, for the Gospel and for all people of South Africa will be immeasurable”. (KD, 1985:1)

As mentioned above, the KD identified three types of theologies operating within the dynamics of the socio-political situation in South Africa. These were categorised as State Theology, Church Theology and Prophetic Theology. Up until that time, it had appeared as if there had been only one type of theology with a few differences in style. The differences arose because of the dividedness of the Church, which division was itself a crisis:

What the present crisis shows up, although many of us have known it all along, is that the Church is divided. More and more people are now saying that there are in fact two Churches in South Africa – a White Church and a Black Church. Even within the same denomination there are in fact two Churches. In the life and death conflict between different social forces that has come to a head in South Africa today, there are Christians (or at least people who profess to be Christians) on both sides of the conflict – and some who are trying to sit on the fence”.  
(KD, 1985:1)

In some cases it becomes clear that even the language of Christian activists was couched in apartheid terms, the very point Kairos theologians were fighting against. To say that there was a White Church and a Black Church can only have meaning if by white it is not meant the skin colour but the philosophy, worldview and ethos of being white during apartheid, and the same would apply in respect of the Black Church. Needless to say, there were a number of conservative Black people also just as there were a number of progressive White people, the Christian Institute and the Black Sash being two shining examples. For the purposes of the KD though, the manner in which the document had phrased certain matters was understandable because the theologians wanted to highlight the differences and disparities existing within South African society. The use of language, however, cannot be overlooked: The apartheid system was so strong that it created the prism or lens through which even its fiercest opponents focussed.

### 4.1.3 A critique of State Theology

In brief, the KD identified State Theology as a theology of the South African apartheid State which was:

...a theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism and totalitarianism. It blesses injustice, canonises the will of the powerful and reduces the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy. (1985:3)

Of note is the emphasis of the KD to distinguish between 'State Theology' and the theology of the White Dutch Reformed Church. In the footnote of the KD the writers explain as follows:

What we are referring to here is something more than the 'Apartheid Theology' of the White Dutch Reformed Churches that once tried to justify apartheid by appealing to certain texts in the Bible. Our analysis of present day theological stances has led us to the conclusion that there is a 'State Theology' that does not only justify racism but justifies all the activities of the State in its attempts to hold on to power and that is subscribed to as a theology well beyond the White Dutch Reformed Churches. (*Notes*, Chapter 2:7)

The above-stated distinction is important because it does, in a sense, show that there were two streams within the White Dutch Reformed Churches themselves. In other words, while all of them could be accused of having supported apartheid, not all people within these churches did so theologically, thus the identification of 'State Theology'. In IsiZulu it is said:

Abantu abayi nganxanye bengewona amanzi (IsiZulu idiom)  
(People do not go only one way as if they were water)

It is also clear that the use of State Theology comes about when there is no clear distinction between Church and State. There will be another occasion to

further discuss the need for more clarity in relation to the Church-State debate because while the apartheid State used 'State theology' it also advocated separation of Church and Politics.

#### **4.1.3.1      Apartheid and the misuse of theological concepts**

State Theology was accused of misusing theological concepts for their own purposes. This kind of theology was mainly based on St Paul's Romans 13:1-7. The KD states that the:

...misuse of this famous text is not confined to the present government in South Africa. Throughout the history of Christianity totalitarian regimes have tried to legitimise an attitude of blind obedience and absolute servility towards the State by quoting this text. (1986:4)

Albert Nolan made the observation that the apartheid system was itself a religious one and had been under-girded by a church, the DRC. This religious aspect could also be seen the way the system became fanatical in its reaction to Black Theology or liberation theology. This is indeed an interesting point that Nolan makes concerning the assertion that the system is "also religious". It is this "religiosity" of the apartheid State that enabled Church activists to dent its image, otherwise the apartheid leaders would have further plunged the country into a burning furnace because it would have been a case of an immovable rock in the face of irresistible force. The leaders would not have understood the import of theological statements or Church statements decrying the apartheid system as ungodly and therefore a "heresy". The following statement by Nolan is therefore indisputable:

And that is why it makes sense for the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to declare apartheid a heresy. It is just as heretical for us as Christians today as the system of the scribes and the Pharisees was for Jesus in his time. Apartheid is just as much a religio-political system as the purity or holiness system was. The only difference, in this regard, is that the characteristic features of their system was religious,



whereas the characteristic feature of our system is racism. (Nolan, 1988:69)

Nolan has gone further by giving an apt description of what apartheid was about:

...when we speak of apartheid we are not only referring to those laws and policies that discriminate against people of colour, we are referring to the whole system with its security laws, press curbs and state of emergency and with its consumerism, money-making, labour laws and class conflicts. We call the whole system apartheid because its dominant characteristic is racial or ethnic discrimination. Some people now prefer to call it racial capitalism. (op. cit. p68)

From this quote it is clear that apartheid is much more than just racial separation. Racial separation affects the running of the economy for all concerned, so much so that those who make laws would make them to the economic disadvantage of the oppressed.

The KD emphasised that every text must be interpreted according to its context, as Romans 13:1-7 was written within a particular context. It went on to explain the context of the text as quoted:

State Theology assumes that in this text Paul is presenting us with the absolute and definitive Christian doctrine about the State, in other words, an absolute and universal principle that is equally valid for all times and in all circumstances. The falseness of this assumption has been pointed out by numerous biblical scholars. (1986:4)

The KD went on to show how this text is standing out on its own and not related to the manner in which God dealt with oppressive regimes such as those of the Pharaohs in Egypt, or the Babylonian kingdom oppressing the Israelites and so on. Correctly, the KD pointed out that Paul was not addressing an issue of an oppressive State or an unjust State. Paul assumed that the State would act justly because it had been an instrument that was

there to serve a just God. Paul did not need to address the kind of moral dilemma that was experienced by those who were under tyranny emanating from State machinery where the Church had to make the kind of stand Kairos was talking about. Furthermore, Paul was writing to a specific group of Christians – Christians of Rome – who were:

...’antinomians’ or ‘enthusiasts’ and their belief was that Christians, and only Christians, were exonerated from obeying any State at all, any government or political authority at all, because Jesus alone was their Lord and King. (1986:5)

Thus the KD theologians tried to put the Romans 13 text in the context in which that chapter was written. Furthermore, the caution of the KD must be taken seriously, even for the future:

Many authors have drawn attention to the fact that in the rest of the Bible God does not demand obedience to oppressive rulers. Examples can be given ranging from Pharoah to Pilate and through the Apostolic times. (1986:5)

#### **4.1.3.2 The state’s abuse of the law and order concept**

The second point under State Theology which the KD attacked was the concept of Law and Order as used by the apartheid government. The KD pointed out that the apartheid regime used language to de-legitimise those who fought against it. The words “law” and “order” were merely camouflage for a Government that was using illegitimate laws and dismembering South African society while using so-called law and order:

The State makes use of the concept of law and order to maintain the status quo which it depicts as ‘normal’. But this *law* is the unjust and discriminatory laws of apartheid and this *order* is the organised and institutionalised disorder of oppression. Anyone who wishes to change

this law and this order is made to feel that they are lawless and disorderly. In other words they are made to feel guilty of sin. (ibid.)

The use of the word “sin” is deliberate to show that the apartheid State had become a god calling for obedience, failing which people are sinners by not respecting the laws of this god. The State was working on people’s consciences so that they may experience feelings of guilt and so act in a manner that would make them subservient to a State that abuses law and order. As the KD says, it is good to have law and it is right to have order. But then these should not be used to terrorise but to benefit the people as a whole (1986:6).

The State had turned itself into an all-knowing god and therefore:

...told church leaders to ‘preach the pure gospel’ and not to ‘meddle in politics’ while at the same time it indulges in its own political theology which claims God’s approval for its use of violence in maintaining an unjust system of ‘law and order’. (op. cit. p7)

#### **4.1.3.3 The use of communism as a scapegoat for “Total Strategy”**

The other mechanism that was used by the State to continue to oppress black people was the use of the tag that people were being agitated by Communists to act in a hostile manner to the State (KD1986:7). The use of the word “Communists” was a well-calculated one meant to galvanise all people who were supposed to be “Christians” against these “godless” communists. Kistner captured this point quite accurately when he pointed out that the Apartheid government used the term “total onslaught” as a fight against Communism which was “targeting” South Africa. Once the Government’s constituents had accepted this erroneous notion it would be an acceptable rationale for it to use a “total strategy” approach against its own citizens who were agitating for a radical change in the policies of the country. It is also clear that for the security forces to remain loyal to that polarising policy they had to be given the idea that they were “forces of light” (the South African Defence Force and

the South African Police) fighting “forces of darkness”, that is, all the people and organisations which were clamouring for change. Kistner describes “total strategy” as follows:

The term “total strategy” indicates the determination that all aspects of public and private life are to be subordinated to the over-riding aim of upholding the present white-controlled political and economic power structures. (Brandt, 1988:24)

It is clear that the apartheid intelligence services were working hard to find ways of justifying their oppression of the majority of the people.

Even the religious life of people living in South Africa is to be subordinated to this aim. Further, the term “total strategy” is to direct attention to what is called “total onslaught” on the country from outside, and to divert from the root causes of unrest and dissatisfaction within the country, in particular the exclusion of black people from political power-sharing, from land-ownership, and competition in the area of economy. (ibid.)

It was this perceived threat of Communism which was used as a blanket to cover further oppression of the people. It is difficult to know for certain whether the government believed what it was saying or just used the threat of Communism as a decoy. What is not in doubt was the insult it directed at oppressed people. According to the apartheid government black people were not intelligent enough to see that they were being treated unjustly. Someone or some people were the instigators because black people could not think for themselves. This kind of insult, of course, was not surprising because the whole apartheid policy was based on the false view that black people could not be on equal terms with white people. It is indeed the nature of all tyrannies to always blame other forces to hide the true facts. It also does not seem to occur to tyrannical governments that they do themselves harm because they injecting those they oppress with the “virus” of oppression once the oppressed take over, although it is wise for the previously-oppressed to take heed of

Freire's words of caution that those who have emerged from oppression need to realise that if their goal:

...is to become fully human, they will not achieve their goal by merely reversing the terms of the contradiction, by simply changing poles.  
(Freire, 1970:42)

#### **4.1.3.4 Critique of State Theology is not time-bound**

The KD did enhance its importance by not just confining itself to South Africa. It was able to state clearly what happens when a regime (any regime) was no longer serving God. In other words, the critique of State Theology was not time-bound although certain principles need to be established to prevent a recurrence of State Theology. In other words, a state needs to afford people peace and justice so that people may be able to develop and contribute to the progress of the State. The principles contained within the KD will always be applicable where Christians form part of the population and need not be confined to South Africa or the time of apartheid only. It is for this reason that there were so many movements formed around the world fashioned after the KD. Wolfram Kistner's words come to mind. He observes that there is a common feature that keeps on recurring in human history after each liberation experience. Once people become oppressed the oppressor leaves something like a mark on the people so oppressed in the same way that a farmer would impress an identity mark on his ox or even donkey. Kistner argues very correctly that once the oppressor has been defeated or overthrown, the previously oppressed themselves become the oppressor so that oppression in fact never stops because the previous oppressor succeeded to leave an indelible mark on the oppressed. In that sense oppression begins to spread like a virus:

The oppressor has succeeded to impress his or her stamp on the oppressed. After liberation the new people in power practice the same methods of hatred against their opponents which they formerly experienced from their oppressors. They rely on cultivation of enemy

images. People who do not fit into their pattern of thinking are persecuted. In this way the liberation they have achieved, is lost and replaced by a new oppression. (Brandt, 1988:206)

This simply means that the oppression and methods tend to be adopted by those who had been oppressed before and are now wielding power. What is often encountered when dealing with this aspect of oppression is a denial, especially on the part of those who have benefited from the new system. If this happens, Brueggemann calls it reverting to a religion of *status triumphalism* and the politics of oppression and exploitation. Brueggemann was of course referring to the desire of those who wanted a king even after having left oppression in Egypt. (2 Samuel 7) (1978:16)

Russell Botman, states that the KD describes state theology as Calvinistic:

In a certain sense the Kairos Document accused neo-Calvinism in the Dutch Reformed Church of being a “state theology”. “State theology” it maintained was included as public theology, but at heart a theology of the oppressive status quo in South Africa. (In *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology*, 2001:118)

One of the most critical statements expressed by the KD against State Theology was that in its journey of oppression, the State used the name of God knowing that it is using God’s name falsely. For example, the then South African Defence Force (SADF), accompanied by military chaplains and in God’s name, was sent out to enforce its will as it killed and maimed people in both neighbouring States. The SADF was doing the same among its own citizens simply because they dared to fight against an oppressive regime. (KD, 1986:7)

#### **4.1.4 A critique of Church Theology – Influences that shaped the Church’s ambivalent stance towards apartheid and justice**

The KD described Church Theology in the following manner:

In a limited, guarded and cautious way this theology is critical of apartheid. Its criticism, however, is superficial and counter-productive because instead of engaging in an in-depth analysis of the signs of our times, it relies upon a few stock ideas derived from Christian tradition and then uncritically and repeatedly applies them to our situation. (1986:9)

These ideas are listed as “reconciliation (or peace)”, “justice” and “non-violence”. The arguments in this regard are clearly stated in the KD above.

#### **4.1.4.1 The Church’s compromise on issues of justice devalued true peace and reconciliation**

There were areas in which Church Theology was criticised, notably in its stance on issues of justice and reconciliation. The criticism was based mainly on the desire of the Church to be even-handed in a situation that clearly required choosing sides. Thus the fundamental problem was that the churches were slow to engage in social criticism. The Church, for example, was happy to talk reconciliation even when justice had not been attained. According to the KD, Christian Theology does definitely call people to *true* reconciliation and *genuine* peace. Kairos theologians agreed that these two attributes are essential, with the following caveat:

But so many people, including Christians, have pointed out there can be no true reconciliation and no genuine peace *without justice*. Any form of peace or reconciliation that allows the sin of injustice and oppression to continue is a *false* peace and *counterfeit* reconciliation. This kind of “reconciliation” has nothing whatsoever to do with the Christian faith. (KD, 1986:9)

This is how the KD spelt out the condition for true transformation which it urged the Church to ponder and act upon. In other words, reconciliation without justice was regarded as cheap. The KD rejected the “fairness”



principle that both sides of the struggle between oppressed and oppressor must be heard. It was not possible to act fairly when the antagonists were not of equal strength and where the other was clearly wrong:

But there are other conflicts in which one side is right and the other wrong. There are conflicts where one side is a fully armed and violent oppressor while the other side is defenceless and oppressed. (1986:10)

The KD was obviously uncompromising when it came to condemning apartheid and the oppression that accompanied the maintenance of it. That was the reason for its publication. The KD was therefore interrogating the essence of what the Church thought of itself. The question was why it took so long for change to happen in South Africa when the Church was made up of mainly black oppressed people? The Church was accused of offering a peace that allowed for oppression to go on for so long:

The peace that God wants is based upon truth, repentance, justice and love. The peace that the world offers us is a unity that compromises the truth, covers over injustice and oppression and is totally motivated by selfishness. (op. cit. p11)

The reason for this kind of compromise was that the Church had succeeded to preach a Gospel that emphasised the hereafter where there would be “pie in the sky” as the saying goes. One of the jokes that took the rounds at the time was that ministers of the church behaved like “pilots” because they were always flying people to heaven! The Church for black people was a paradoxical blessing: On the one hand it was offering dignity through the death of Jesus Christ according to John 3:16. On the other it was also preaching the blessedness of poverty while requesting tithes and money offerings. There are ministers of the Gospel who still use tithing as a condition for going to heaven as if the blood of Jesus was not enough! There are too many contradictions between what the Church preaches and what the Gospel demands.

While the KD recognised the Church for its role in fighting for justice, it nevertheless queried the type of justice that was advocated by the Church. But, according to the KD, “moralising” with the hope that “conversion” would lead to change was not going to bring about change:

The present crisis with all its cruelty, brutality and callousness is ample proof of the ineffectiveness of years of Christian ‘moralising’ about the need for love. The problem that we are dealing with here in South Africa is not merely a problem of personal guilt, it is a problem of structural injustice. (op. cit. p12)

An article by David J Bosch can be regarded as the forerunner of the Kairos Document, as he demystifies political systems:

All political systems, including democracy, are human inventions which do not have the character of divine revelation. Over all these the church has to adopt an attitude of the utmost reserve. She may not simply cooperate in programmes of nation-building as though she were mainly one partner among others. (*Missonalia, Church and Liberation*, August 1977, Vol.5 No.2)

When it is thought that Bosch is advocating some kind of aloofness from involvement in the life of the State he states that it does not mean that the Church has to be neutral nor does it mean that the Church should not be involved at all except to concentrate on dabbling in otherworldly issues. He does advocate a position in which the Church, while not following party political matters, should be involved in how the State is run. The researcher agrees with this view, and believes that party politics seems to go against the Gospel dictum of “love your neighbour as yourself” and the highly competitive nature of party-political engagement has a tendency of demonising one’s opponents. But the researcher believes that the Church must definitely and vigorously engage itself with issues of politics in general, of justice, of compassion and of development. This kind of involvement is timeless and

puts the Church in a consistently prophetic position. Bosch's views seem no different:

The church will therefore – albeit with fear and trembling, searching her own heart – have to distinguish between just and unjust state, between order and arbitrariness, between government and tyranny, between freedom and anarchy. (op. cit. p27)

#### **4.1.4.2 The Church's ambiguity on apartheid militated against its calling**

Boff, whose book was published the same year as the KD, describes the Church in a manner that shows that when the Church does not truly become what it should be – an instrument under God's direction for the concretisation of God's Reign on earth and a servant that would engender a dynamism of creativity to the world – it will become irrelevant. Boff warns the Church to be sensitive to its calling and not become a law unto itself to the point where it even becomes so rigid that it cannot accommodate new ideas and because of this, its intransigence leads to the fractionalising of the Church:

The Church as an institution is characterized by the rules of the game followed by its members. It runs the risk of losing the beat of history, of stagnating, of forgetting its primary function of service, of fostering passivity, monotony, mechanization, and alienation. It begins to understand itself ideologically, as the epiphany of the promises it safeguards. It imposes itself upon the community it is meant to serve. Truth is substituted by internal certainty and factions are created by cutting short those movements that will not be constrained by the institution. (1985:48)

In the introduction of his book, Charles Villa-Vicencio has also decried the position taken by the Church "throughout its existence". This researcher, however, would differ slightly and date the time of ambiguity mainly from the

time of Constantine when the Church began to align itself with a powerful State:

The Christian church has played an ambiguous political role throughout its history. At times it has blessed and legitimated the state. This has, at least since the Constantinian settlement, been the dominant position of the church. This it has done either by direct support or by default, through affirming a "future happiness" divorced from the existing order. (Villa-Vicencio, 1986:xv)

#### **4.1.4.3 The Church's inclination towards the status quo delayed change**

The DRC did not start as a church that was a tool of the ruling National Party. It is said that it was the issue of Holy Communion that actually made apartheid to be accepted within the DRC:

Until 1829 the NGK was still faithful to Scripture and to John Calvin's interpretation of texts in Scripture on the unity of the Church... But even as late as 1857 the NGK Synod declared: 'The Synod regards it as desirable and Scriptural that wherever possible our members from among the heathen (sic) be received and incorporated in our existing congregations'. (De Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio, 1983:137ff)

It is unfortunate that the same Synod, because of pressure from conservative whites, passed a resolution that allowed for the first time, separate buildings for whites and so-called coloureds while it conceded that this was because of pressure from conservative whites. (ibid.)

The irony again is that the DRC also had the interests of the poor Afrikaners at heart but not so much compassion for other races. It will remain a mystery as to how the Dutch Reformed Churches could accept Christ and reject other people because of the colour of their skin. It would appear that the DRC also at had to defend its stand against the then ruling party. But as time went on

and as ministers of religion within the DRC became interested only in the well-being of their people, it was when the DRC was now aligned with the ruling party that it became even bolder to publicly espouse apartheid. Villa-Vicencio's words are apt here:

When the church has promoted the ideology of the ruling class or legitimated a particularly revolutionary cause, it has found itself in ideological captivity. (1986:xvii)

This statement could be a veiled reference to the stance that was taken by both the DRC which supported Apartheid and the SACC which backed the struggle for liberation. The DRC had not taken a revolutionary cause, while Villa-Vicencio's statement above would be a prognosis of what could happen to the SACC-aligned churches if they also remain uncritical when a new Government is in place:

The central Christian theological tradition has, however, at its best managed to avoid both these extremes. It has recognised and affirmed the need for good social order while allowing for the possibility of rejecting and removing from office those rulers who do not rule in accordance with the divine demand for justice and peace. (ibid.)

The difficulty about this view of theological tradition, though, is that it gives the impression that the Church is immune from being a perpetrator of injustice and violence. "Christian theological thought" alone does not necessarily lead to the expected action which may promote justice, peace and reconciliation, thus, for instance, the publication of the KD. Villa-Vicencio's following input actually supports the observation made by the researcher:

Given the magnitude of socio-political and economic forces in society, the church has, in the course of its history often tilted in favour of the existing system, while at other times segments within the church, influenced by the forces of change, have been on the side of revolutionary change. At times, as is presently the case in the church in

South Africa, the church has been divided against itself. Those whose interests are served by the present regime favour a church of the status quo, while those who suffer under the prevailing political system affirm that part of the Christian tradition which rejects the existing order. (ibid.)

#### **4.1.4.4 The Church and political engagement**

It is very interesting to note that the White DRC was once a church which was involved in matters in which it spoke for and defended the poor Afrikaner and even had to defy the status quo of the time. Villa-Vicencio invokes the words of the Reverend C. B. Brink as he asserts that Brink was one of those Afrikaners who was outspoken about the plight of the poor. One of the submissions he had made to their Congress in 1947 was that the mission of the Church was to speak out for the poor and oppressed which was one of the aims of the Church. Brink felt so strongly about this that he encouraged the idea of a public that would demand a change in policy. The researcher also agrees very firmly with Brink when he says:

If the church does not exert itself for justice in society, and together with the help she can offer also be prepared to serve as champion in the cause of the poor, others will do it. The poor have their right today. I do not ask for your charity, but I ask to be given an opportunity to live a life of human dignity. (Villa-Vicencio, 1986:xxiii)

The KD actually accused the Church of the apartheid era of having a false kind of faith and spirituality arising out of a lack of social analysis:

As we all know, spirituality has tended to be an other-worldly affair that has very little, if anything at all, to do with the affairs of this world. Social and political matters were seen as worldly affairs that have nothing to do with the spiritual concerns of the Church. Moreover, spirituality has been understood to be purely private and individualistic. Public affairs and social problems were thought to be beyond the

sphere of spirituality. And finally the spirituality we inherit tends to rely upon God to intervene in God's own time to put right what is wrong in the world. (1986:16)

The above-quoted text correctly encourages Christians to be involved in social and political matters. The apartheid Government was not in favour of the Church getting involved in politics. The irony of Afrikaans churches actually being the very ones underpinning apartheid escaped the apartheid Government. Some of the architects, especially Dr Hendrik Verwoerd, had studied theology at the University of Stellenbosch and had later changed to Psychology and Philosophy and belonged to the Afrikaner community which was generally regarded as a deeply religious and God-fearing nation but had been dangerously misguided into the apartheid wilderness by its church leaders. Whilst one agrees with the KD not to eschew politics and social involvement, it also depends on how people conduct themselves in politics. The researcher believes very strongly that political engagement should not lead to personal vilification and disrespect among the people involved. If this behaviour was unacceptable during the time of apartheid, it should not be acceptable today. People can disagree without being disagreeable. Difference in ideas is one of a healthy aspect of life but personal attacks and disrespect show a serious lack of maturity. Africans were used to engaging in long debates and discussions until a consensus was reached. This process took long, but time was superseded by respect for all people's views. The Western way of winner takes all was unknown when it came to arguments.

The KD further accused the Church, correctly in this researcher's view, of reformist tendencies which seemed to dictate the pace of change in South Africa. This reformist tendency was geared to address whites and the government with an appeal for a change of heart. It was a sense in which whatever would come from these appeals would be like favours being done to those who are oppressed. That is why the KD called it the *justice of reform*, because the pace then suited the oppressors and benefactors thereof.



#### 4.1.4.5 Debilitating effects of the divisions within the Church

But it can also be shown that the Church also delayed Africans from actually challenging their oppression and changing their socio-economic conditions materially. There had been a kind of Christianity preached to people, especially Africans, which used the element of fear, for example the fear of hell, as a means to convert people. Two things need to be observed: Firstly, it never occurred to Africans why people who brought a religion that talked so much about hell and the fear of God acted as if God did not exist by its careless destruction of African communities and their culture. The Church was also so divisive, and still is, of communities and families mainly because of doctrines which often go against the Gospel. Secondly, it never crossed the mind of the peddlers of religion, indeed of politics even, that no matter how strong the element of fear, it does wane with time and once the fear has vanished, an overreaction against the object of fear ensues and usually goes with a lot of counter violence, because of the so-called “mark of the beast”.

The inescapable paradoxes, contradictions and divisions mentioned above end up affecting how the Church relates to issues of justice. Much as the Church is viewed with suspicion at best and with disdain at worst, it has a presence within the lives of South Africans which cannot be ignored. It contains both the people who criticise it incisively and those who cause the problems:

What the present crisis shows up, although many of us have known it all along, is that the Church is divided. More and more people are now saying that there are in fact two Churches in South Africa – a White Church and a Black Church. Even within the same denomination there are in fact two Churches. In the life and death conflict between two different social forces that has come to a head in South Africa today, there are Christians (or at least people who profess to be Christians) on both sides of the conflict – and some who are trying to sit on the fence. (KD, 1986:1)

Interestingly today, more and more in the suburbs, the colour of the congregations is also becoming predominantly black, while the only colour that is changing in some township churches is the colour of the ministers who may be white in black congregations. Furthermore, as participant-observer, the researcher has noticed very little change in most of the churches with regard to a progressive theology in keeping with the democratic agenda that has gripped the country since the advent of democracy. The hymns are still the same old hymns that were sung over a hundred years ago although new choruses spring up from time to time. These choruses are people's compositions and have a powerful effect on worship services. The only challenge that these choruses face is that most of them are usually lacking in theological depth, and so tend not to last. It would also appear that ministers of religion are in no hurry to lead congregations that, because of their independent-mindedness, could challenge some of the undemocratic practices and some oppressive theological tendencies within the Church. It is also not surprising that the churches' confessions at the TRC were not just an exercise for its own sake but were necessary because the churches also had chosen to survive as apartheid churches during that sad episode rather than continue to bear witness to their calling by endeavouring to live as an alternative society of the people of God. Yet the churches continue to survive.

The KD recognised that the Church was mainly made up of those who were oppressed and tried to work with them:

Nevertheless it remains true that the Church is already on the side of the oppressed because that is where the majority of its members are to be found. This fact needs to be appropriated and confirmed by the Church as a whole. (op. cit. p28)

The KD has the following crucial statement which needs some attention:

Both oppressor and oppressed claim loyalty to the same Church. They are both baptised in the same baptism and participate together in the breaking of the same bread, the same body and blood of Christ. There

we sit in the same Church while outside Christian policemen and soldiers are beating up and killing Christian children or torturing Christian prisoners to death while yet other Christians stand by and weakly plead for peace. (op. cit. p2)

It is a paradox to think that expectations about church people are such that they would be people constantly aware of their calling to work for justice and at the same time there is the notion of people being nurtured with pie-in-the-sky theology. The fact that even those who are perpetrators of oppression are accepted by the Church rests on the following biblical understanding:

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.  
(Rom, 3:23 NIV)

#### **4.1.4.6 Doctrinal differences, traditions and practices distort the Church's message to the world**

The previous item mentioned above about the effects of divisions within the Church shows that Christians need to accept the challenge that there could be instances where churches could be wrong in their outlook and practice in society, and that the issues that divide them are elevated above the Gospel's injunctions. In a sense the Church seems to be operating on so many different interpretations of the Gospel that it can be surmised that each church has its own gospel. There were also churches that claimed to fight against apartheid and discrimination and yet themselves are not ashamed to practice humiliating discrimination and exclusion on the grounds of their own understanding of theology. Theology becomes far more important than the love of neighbour. This researcher has felt humiliated as a fellow-believer by what he experienced from a certain reputable Church when communion is served, simply because he and those who accompany him are regarded as Protestants and therefore not worthy to partake of the Lord's table. It can be argued that that very church which was so vehement in its fight against apartheid tolerated apartheid within Christendom whose cardinal belief is that

all people are created in the image of God. The church displayed a spirit lacking in ecumenicity especially regarding one of the holiest sacraments - that of Holy Communion. In this day and age this kind of practice should not be acceptable regardless of doctrinal differences. It should always be left to the individual to make a decision. Prozesky's words cannot be ignored when he writes:

What thus emerges from a critique of traditional church teaching as distinct from the message of universal love, in the light of the apartheid experience, is that the church has not yet found adequate ways of enriching society with the humane vision of its founder, and harbours within its stack of traditional teachings some major elements which do not square with the implications of the core message of Christianity itself but are uncomfortably akin to precisely some of the most morally and spiritually unacceptable parts of apartheid, in so far as they too involve things like inequality of access to the greatest benefits. How can we condemn political apartheid but condone spiritual apartheid? (Prozesky, 1990:133ff)

Prozesky's quote above was referring to the rejection of religious pluralism that has been the core of much of traditional church teaching. But this also applies among Christians themselves especially because there are Christians whose church teaching enables them to "boast" that they are more saved than others, unaware that they are negating the issue of justification by faith.

There is a further challenge found in Tutu's book, *No Future without Forgiveness*: People become judgmental in their outlook towards other people and then condemn them vehemently. Thus Tutu's words become poignant here:

There is a salutary riposte to our tendency to push blame on to others in a book by the Harvard theologian Harvey Cox with the lovely title, *On Not Leaving it to The Snake*. This helped me to be a great deal less judgmental and to avoid gloating at the misfortune of others. It was

particularly important in the Commission's (i.e. The TRC) encounter with the perpetrators of some of the most horrendous atrocities... (1999:74)

Tutu argues correctly that theology should remind us that regardless of the person's evil deed, it must be possible to respect the person while rejecting the deed, otherwise the perpetrator will be turned into a demon which view then removes responsibility from the individual to take responsibility for his/her actions as a moral being.

The point is that if perpetrators were to be despaired of as monsters and demons then we were thereby letting accountability go out of the window by declaring that they were not moral agents to be held responsible for their deeds. (ibid.)

Here there is agreement between Tutu and the KD theologians to some degree because the KD also made the point that hatred is not justified just because the State is tyrannical. Christians are called upon to love in all circumstances as Mathew 5:44 urges its readers. Where there is a slight distinction between Tutu and the KD is when he would differentiate between the perpetrator as a person and the actual deed. Emotionally, one would view the perpetrator as an enemy whereas as a human-being – especially if one is a Christian - the enemy is the action that has produced the evil deed that should be dealt with. The KD is direct in this regard:

It is not said that we should not or will not have enemies or that we should not identify tyrannical regimes as indeed our enemies. But once we have identified our enemies, we must endeavour to love them. That is not always easy. But then we must also remember that the most loving thing we can do for *both* the oppressed *and* our enemies who are oppressors is to eliminate the oppression, remove the tyrants from power and establish a just government for the common good of *all the people*. (1986:24)

At face value it might appear as if Tutu is advocating for cheap forgiveness until one realises that he actually wants the person to take responsibility for his or her actions. As he says:

If, however, they were dismissed as monsters then they could not by definition engage in a process that was so deeply personal as that of forgiveness and reconciliation. (Tutu, 1999:74)

#### **4.1.4.7 The Church's colonial history, its use of violence and the influence of money militated against its fight for justice**

No one will ever know how Africans would have evolved in the southern tip of Africa if the radical and irrevocable colonial intervention of 1652 had not occurred. No one will ever know how South Africa would have been today. There is a belief that colonialism was just a political excursion practised by colonial powers. Documentation does show, however, that there was a brand of Christianity that accompanied colonialism which, when considering the Spanish conquistadors for example, shows that there was a time when the Church was extremely and unashamedly oppressive. According to Maurice Rowdon, writing about Spanish imperialism in the sixteenth century, he says the following:

Violence became basic to Christian life in the sixteenth century. It even became an essential condition for survival. (1974:10)

The above was with reference to an assertion that in the sixteenth century a new factor had been introduced into Christendom: money. Rowdon makes the point that most of the progress, for example in medicine or making books accessible in the vernacular language, could be traced back to the sixteenth century:

Present-day society – whether we are talking about medical science or the printing of vast numbers of books in vernacular languages or communications or the banking system or exploration or racial or

religious persecution or the arts and literature or state debts or techniques of war or espionage or the ‘whitewashing’ of human minds – was developed at that time. One factor underlay all these activities, a new factor for Christendom: money. Of course money had always been used. But now it had an unprecedented role. The fact that it went far beyond a mere symbol of exchange to become the sine qua non of power had a great deal to do with the violence. (op. cit. 11)

One of the issues that the KD appreciated was that there was a fallacy that tended to be ignored when referring to the Church, namely, that the Church is monolithic. Few organisations can be likened to the Church which usually can have people of opposing views existing side by side. The missionary-instituted churches, for example, had both white and black people being members of the same church in South Africa: The following submission is a case in point:

In most cases, faith communities claimed to cut across divisions of race, gender, class and ethnicity. As such, they would seem by their very existence to have been in opposition to the policies of the apartheid state and, in pursuing their own norms and values, to have constituted a direct challenge to apartheid policies. However, contrary to their own deepest principles, many faith communities mirrored apartheid society, giving lie to their profession of a loyalty that transcended social divisions. (*TRC Report*, 1998, Vol. 4. 65)

Rowdon has pointed out that until the advent of money, life was easy-going and predictable. But the introduction of money started creating wars which were fuelled by the need for money. States started borrowing large amounts of money which ended up with exorbitant interest. The borrowing was to finance war (1974:11). The Church had also become very powerful in the sixteenth century so much so that at most times it was very much aligned with the State. (ibid.)

In the fifteenth century war became used as an investment possibility! This is the time when human beings became even more expendable and



communities became unsettled and some irreparably. Princes at the time used war to amass wealth. The Church and the sovereign states were soon at war with each other, and within themselves, in what looked like a permanent state of unrest. It could even be said that from that time violence became the distinguishing mark of the Christian world. Rowdon again asserts:

Yet thirty years before the [sixteenth] century opened violence was neither expected nor thought necessary... Less than half a century later there were new standards of violence which were more reminiscent of the barbarian period than anything else. Men became strangers to each other over trifling definitions of words – men in the same camp, the same court, the same Church. The divisions were so great that only one factor held sixteenth century Christendom together at all and that was the threat of a Turkish invasion. Without this Europe might very well have reverted to its tribal condition of a millennium before... (ibid.)

This is indeed a sad note that shows how Christianity had been taken for granted and abused throughout the ages. The material aspects of life have always been the guiding factor even in Christendom because Rowdon argues convincingly that it was all because of the growth of the value of money which resulted in exploitation for the sake of profits. It may be said today that things have changed. But human beings seldom change when it comes to matters of greed and power. Indeed this view expressed here does create a crisis not just for the Church or the State but for communities who usually bear the brunt of that exploitation.

There has been a lot of unrest during and after the fifteenth century. War was favoured by princes because it enhanced their profits. War, during this time, became the one engagement which became a money maker for princes. But Rowdon also mentions that the Church became embroiled in wars with sovereign states:

It rocked the foundations of society. The Church and the sovereign states were soon at war with each other and within themselves, in what looked like a permanent state of unrest. It could even be said that from that time unrest became the distinguishing mark of the Christian world. The gap created by the interest rate...was, so to speak, the guarantor of this unrest. (Rowdon, op. cit. p14)

Today, as Rowdon says, the wars which were fought by sovereign states have been transferred to the workers through their trade unions:

Nowadays the chase to close the gap has descended the power hierarchy to the worker who, through his (sic) trade unions... searches for new wage settlements. But prices rise with wages, and the fact that modern society has turned into a frantic animal chasing its own tail is now for all to see. (ibid.)

Rowdon is quoted extensively here because it is important that the reader remembers that talking of church-state relations at times gives the impression that the Church has always been on the side of justice and the poor. This is a fallacy because it is well-known that the Church often had a bloody history. Church theology in South Africa and everywhere, for that matter, tends to prefer to work with people who are subdued, subservient and afraid to voice dissent. This kind of Church theology is continuing today, especially in black areas. In white areas the researcher has found that the Gospel preached there is meant not to afflict the consciences of its hearers. The religiosity and ignorance of a good number of people, both black and white, is often exploited by a Church leadership that enjoys power while its followers refrain from challenging that very power in the light of the Gospel.

Rowdon's words make very sad reading indeed and unfortunately are still relevant today: He mentions that while Spain was playing a leading role in the wars, it was by no means the only country doing this. Switzerland and Germany were also involved in the war games which became the rule rather than the exception. Catholics and Protestants could vent their anger on their

opposition equally. Spain became prominent simply because it was the most powerful nation. (1974:15)

Indeed the need for modesty about the ability of the Church to play a restraining or even moderating role in the face of State power should not be forgotten, especially when Church-State relations are discussed. The Church, by its very nature, is not a liberal institution and may itself be urgently in need of a radical transformation. The account given by Rowdon on the havoc that was caused by violence makes sad reading and shows a deterioration and moral decay that had befallen both Church and State at that time. Rowdon concludes that this violence was not just on people and property but had also negatively affected the whole of nature. He gives the example of Peru where Spanish conquistadors disrupted the life of people by ruining an agricultural system that had served those people for centuries being passed on from one generation to another:

And [managed] to render almost extinct the fine breed of llamas on which Peru depended for its wool and, partly for its meat. They tore down fabulous cities, they massacred where only friendship had been shown them... *The Christian seemed to lose his respect for man (sic) and beast and earth, and regarded them as endlessly expendable for market purposes; which is perhaps to say* (and there is much evidence for this in the religious struggles of the time) that he had lost respect for himself. (1974:16)

#### **4.1.4.8 The Church paradoxically incubates political leaders and societal transformers**

The Church has never been a monolithic movement as has already been stated earlier. Flawed as the Church was, it still acted as a support for the very activists who were fighting the system as pointed out above. Some activists like Beyers Naude, Desmond Tutu and Frank Chikane were ostracised. But by and large you had others who were able to operate using the Church as a launching pad. It is truly a paradox that whatever the Church

in South Africa was, it was also supplying the very prophets who spoke against it. It can therefore be said that in spite of its huge weaknesses, the Church intentionally or unintentionally produced many leaders of the struggle for liberation.

There are compelling reasons why the Church could be regarded as an enigma: it is the very Church from which its critics come and from which they also draw sustenance, while the same church will also nurture those who oppress and torture others. It also gives cover and sustenance to those prophets who would otherwise lack legitimacy and credibility if there had been no Church to belong to. Perhaps it should also be noted that the Church acts through individuals. It is a springboard for many revolutionary activities. In an article titled *The Power of the Church*, Kistner quotes from Professor Danie Oosthuizen's address to Catholic students in 1967:

For the history of the Church has indeed shown that the onus for the fulfilment of the moral, social and political mission of the church has already fallen on solitary individuals, on actions and statements made by men and women in the name of Christ, in the freedom and commitment of their personal responsibility as Christians. History has shown that the burden of action has fallen on people who did not consider that they could shelve their responsibility, and thus the issue, until such time as an organised church had officially given some directive... (Brandt, 1988:10)

Many of the political leadership were people who had been trained in so-called mission schools. Albert Luthuli was a leader of the ANC and was also educated in a mission school. ZR Mahabane, also a stalwart and ANC leader, was another. People like Samora Machel who led Mozambique to its independence and was educated at a Catholic school should also be included, as should Robert Mugabe and Nelson Mandela. Oliver Tambo was going to train as a priest when the call to lead the African National Congress in exile came to him and he had to accept. Robert Sobukwe was a Methodist preacher in Kimberley while Steve Bantu Biko was a staunch member of the

United Congregational Church. Perhaps the fact that that these leaders, with a few exceptions, were people of great integrity says a lot about the sense of values that were instilled through those church schools, coupled with the way Africans are brought up and nurtured on the Ubuntu philosophy and worldview and spirituality. There were many others who were not of African descent who were also either church products or church leaders.

The words of Charles Villa-Vicencio come to mind here:

At other times the church, although more often minority groups within the church, has rejected the status quo by affirming the rule of God, which has meant a renunciation of the existing social order. To take this argument one step further, on occasions, and more often than not, the same church has played two different social functions in society, depending on the cultural and ideological milieu which has impinged on that particular church at a given time. (op. cit. p:xv)

It is clear from this critique of Church theology that there was something about the Church's strength, nevertheless, which could not be destroyed by apartheid. In the African townships churches still play an important part when it comes to bereavements and the Church continues to be the glue which gives coherence to the community. The Church on the ground is fully ecumenical, and there is less of an institutional gate-keeping as happens in church leadership circles. It is unfortunate though, that the Church which commands so much respect and so many numbers, is unable to utilise these strengths to assist the community to be self-reliant. In Klaus Nurnberger's article *The Impact of Christianity on Socio-economic Developments in South Africa*, he tries to show how the Church had started picking up some of the pieces left by colonialism and the disintegration of African society. (In *Christianity in South Africa*, Ed. Prozesky, 1990)

It also needs to be mentioned that in a time when the churches were virtually the only visible non-state and non-tribal organisations left in the black community, they played an inestimable role in structuring

social relationships, providing social identity, leadership and cohesion and acting as training ground for democratic procedures and financial administration. (1990:159)

#### **4.1.4.9 The Church's position on the poor and oppressed**

The position of the Church concerning the poor is very clear if the Church takes Jesus' mission statement in Luke 4: 18 seriously. A study guide entitled *Evangelism and the Poor* by Samuel and Sugden, states the following:

Throughout history the church has understood the gospel (sic) in a variety of ways. But most have ignored the priority of the poor, the present activity of the kingdom in restoration and the incarnate stances of Jesus in his society. (1982:20)

Thus the writers of the KD were not alone in stressing how the Church needed to be biased in favour of the poor. Moltmann also is clear on this. He cites Matthew 25:31 – 46 at length, where Jesus had spoken about how he had been hungry and no-one had fed him and so on because:

...according to this story, the Son of Man who is also the world's Judge, calls all men (sic) to their account, judging them according to what they have done to him in his hidden presence in the poor... (1977:126)

We may link the above observation of Moltmann with the God who shows Himself through releasing the children of Israel from bondage and shows Himself to be the God who sides with the weak and powerless. To further expound on this point, Deist asserts that God:

demonstrates his power in rescuing the weak and the powerless. He intervenes in history to demonstrate his power of salvation. (1981:18)

It would seem today that the above statement may not be that crucial because of the culture of human rights that has developed almost universally. It is still baffling though as to how the previous apartheid Government of South Africa could have been governed by an undoubtedly God-fearing people such as the Afrikaners and yet who still failed to see that that very God was a God of justice. Emmanuel Kant, quoted by Bradley, felt so strongly about justice that he states:

If justice perishes, then it is no more worth while that man (sic) should live. (In Hart, 1995:26)

It is thus to be noted that those who supported the KD and actually signed it are in full agreement with the fact that the KD was biased in favour of the poor. As if echoing Moltmann above, the KD quotes Matthew 25:49:

People are made in the image and likeness of God and whatever we do to the least of them we do to God. (KD, 1988:24)

This researcher also agrees wholeheartedly with Maimela when he says:

If God is acknowledged to be the creator (sic) of all human life in all its aspects, then the conclusion cannot be avoided that the arena of human relationships – in all its socio-political, economic and judicial arrangements – is the sphere in which God is actively involved through the creative and redemptive acts of love. (1987:2)

It is thus incompatible to have, as the apartheid regime had, a love of God through large well-built Afrikaans churches while passing restrictive laws for the oppression of black people in their own country. It is the core of Christianity that it gains its strength from working with the poor and the destitute. It is for this reason that Michael Taylor tried to look at the part played by Theodicy (the vindication of divine providence in view of the existence of evil) in theology today. Michael Taylor cites John Parratt's Book,



*Reinventing Christianity*, where Parrat attempted a survey of African Theology today (1995) and came out with the conclusion that:

Throughout its two hundred and twelve pages, theodicy is never mentioned except for one passing sentence to suffering as possibly ‘a means to a higher good’. (200:26)

Taylor goes on to say:

This silence does not mean that suffering in the form of poverty and oppression is ignored. Far from it. It is central to one of what Parratt regards as the two main concerns of African theology. One is to relate Christianity to African culture, with its sense of solidarity, respect for human lives, and for community with the living and with the ancestors. It is a deeply religious culture. The other is to address contemporary political issues. (ibid.)

It might also be added here that, in answer to Beyerhaus above in his criticism of the KD’s theology that it was not theological, theology is not just about the correct beliefs, it is also about doing the things that need to be done. And so Parratt observes:

The task of theology is essentially practical. It has to do with orthopraxis rather than orthodoxy: taking sides with God to overcome oppression and social disturbance and eradicate poverty. Liberation is a central theme of the Bible as it is of much African theology. (ibid.)

Further emphasising the need to tackle poverty, Archbishop Tlhagale wrote a letter to President Jacob Zuma:

Poverty diminishes all of us. If you are to leave a life giving legacy, focus your government’s attention on the weakest – the old who are not appreciated, the electronically excluded, the sick who don’t have strength, the hurt, the victims, the illegal immigrants, the single parents,

the orphans and the vulnerable. Society is measured not by the success of the strongest, the richest or the most powerful, but by its care for the weakest and the most defenceless. I hope that you will inspire all South Africans, so that the vulnerable in every home and community become our first concern. (*Sunday Times*, Article: *Hopes on Which to Build as a New Era dawns for South Africa*, April 26 2009)

It is unnecessary here to expound further on the devastation and havoc caused by the HIV/Aids pandemic and as exacerbated by poverty. The effects of this serious scourge have been well-documented.

If South Africans were to adopt the family view of African culture, then the question of highly paid executives and business, the unemployed and other disadvantaged people, would be dealt with differently. In the African family, there is very little boasting about one's education, status, or possessions. The more educated a person is, the more his/her responsibility towards contributing to the well-being of the less fortunate within that family. In South Africa, particularly, it should be a known fact that there are many people who would have been highly educated and extensively skilled had it not been for Bantu Education, material deprivation, job reservation, and the often forgotten fact that most people who earn very little spend most of their time travelling to work and most of what they earn to pay for transport. In the African family there are no disabled people because those who are able fend for them. An indaba with all stakeholders in South Africa would be highly desirable. Systems are created by people and they cannot be used to stifle the economic growth of others.

At one time the SACC made a pronouncement about the preferential option for the poor. If the Church was a follower of Christ, then it should be clear where it would be. Echegaray's words are poignant here:

Jesus chose the way of complete solidarity with the masses, A power not based on this kind of solidarity would have been power founded on a lie. (1980:30)

This solidarity is one of the pillars of building a solid base against poverty which came about because of inequality. It is to be accepted that poverty is unnatural and has to be eliminated. But this elimination cannot be done remotely. Involvement of both the Church and the State as essential partners is vital especially when the State is a democratic one. Taylor again makes this point:

Solidarity... is part of the every day jargon of the struggle against poverty. (2000:103)

Then he goes on to relate his own experiences in South Africa with people like Beyers Naude who gave up his own church and own people to be in solidarity with the suffering black masses.

He belonged to social and religious circles which could be described as bastions of apartheid. He had cut ties with all of them to stand instead with their victims who had come to regard him as one of their great friends and a most revered colleague and confidant. (ibid.)

It is because of this kind of solidarity that the KD advocated that there should be sides taken. In its critique of Church theology the KD asks:

Why has Church theology not developed a social analysis? Why does it have an inadequate understanding of the need for political strategies? And why does it make a virtue of neutrality and sitting on the sidelines? (1986:15)

#### **4.1.4.10 The Church's position on the sacredness of people's liberation**

One of the issues that was not debated or expressed by the KD was the sacredness of the liberation of those who had been oppressed and indeed of all people. The document confined itself to the thrust and efforts that lead to the eradication of the oppression of apartheid. The KD's stance was quite

understandable then and correct. But the KD, whilst admitting that the Church was not totally apathetic towards justice or fighting for justice (1986:11), nevertheless accused the church that through its statements, gave the impression that it wanted the “justice of reform”. The KD explains this as:

...the justice that is determined by the oppressor, by the white minority and that is offered to the people as a kind of concession. (ibid.)

The KD also criticised the above approach on the basis that it relied upon ‘individual conversions’ when responding to moralising demands to change the structures of a society (1986:12). Here the KD seems to have grossly underestimated the power of individual conversion that can even influence a radical change in structures. Perhaps, because of the scourge of apartheid, Kairos theologians removed their eyes from the ball, namely, that what Christianity is about is also found in the Lord’s prayer: “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in a heaven”. The echoes of that refrain continue to shake earthly kingdoms throughout history. Jesus showed that God’s rule was not just the desire of God for God’s people, but was also a hunger of God’s people for God’s kingdom. It is this heavenly-induced moral change that can also bring about true structural change. In Norman Perrin’s book he has the following relevant words:

Jesus saw in the kingdom of God the moral task to be carried out by the human race, and... it is the organization of humanity through action inspired by love. Christianity itself is therefore completely spiritual and thoroughly ethical. It is completely spiritual in the freedom given to the children of God through redemption, which involves the impulse to conduct through the motive of love – and it is thoroughly ethical in that this conduct is directed towards the moral organization of mankind (sic), the establishment of the kingdom of God. (1963:16)

It is therefore not just a political battle to fight against injustice. It is a deeply spiritual matter, as the KD also maintains that Prophetic Theology should not only give hope but must itself be deeply spiritual. Individual conversion does

lead to structural change and Kairos theologians should never underestimate this. Church history has seen a number of social transformers who were deeply spiritual such as John Wesley, William Wilberforce, John Calvin, John Knox, Martin Luther, Martin Luther King Jr., South Africa's own John Knox ka Bokwe and other African leaders who were mentioned earlier. A further shining example is the prophet Ntsikana who prophesied that the great God will bring people together in a new form of gathering. He said it in an inspired IsiXhosa hymn:

UloTixo omkulu, ngosezulwini...

(He is the great God of heaven...)

Ulohlanganis' imihlamb' eyalanayo. (Hodgson 1980:19)

(He who brings together those groups which reject each other)

The struggle for liberation is not an option for some. All Christians should share the responsibility and ensure that nothing destroys it again. From a Christian perspective, it is a liberation that is found in the words of Moses and Aaron to the king of Egypt:

The Lord, the God of Israel, says, 'Let my people go, so that they can hold a festival in the desert *to honour me*. (My emphasis. Exodus 5:1b, Today's English Version)

It is a freedom in order to live out a life as God intended it to be lived by His people. Liberation goes with responsibility: to hold a festival, a celebration of life, in God's honour. Hans Kung captures this when he says the following:

There can be no talk therefore of the future of the kingdom of God without consequences for present day society. But neither can there be any talk of the present and its problems without looking to the absolute future by which they are determined. If anyone wants to talk about the future in the spirit of Jesus, he must speak of the present and vice versa. (1976:221)

And so perhaps church theology will remain “church theology” and be of no use to the world but to itself? Presently, in the face of the new dispensation, the Church in South Africa has withdrawn into its shell – almost as if it has quarantined itself – and has reverted to institutionalism. There is almost an attitude of: “now that we have delivered freedom, we can turn our backs on South Africa and build our institutions.” Albert Nolan puts it this way:

The church (sic) is in a much weaker position to face the issues of today for several reasons: Firstly because the churches have lost a great deal of their moral authority and credibility because of the behaviour of so many of their representatives. Secondly because the churches do not seem to be addressing the real issues of the day. What they say appears to be irrelevant. On the really important issues the churches appear to be silent. Thirdly, there seems to be no prophetic voice of the recent past. (Answer to questionnaire)

The question, of course, is, “what has changed?” Nothing seems to have changed because since Constantine, the Church lost its bearing and almost could be likened to Isaiah before he saw the vision after the death of his king, Uzziah (Isaiah 6:1 -8). It is possible that much is expected of a Church which is unable to deliver that which is expected of it. It could be meant to be a reservoir for producing prophets. It could also be that prophets arise in spite of the Church.

#### **4.1.5 A critique of Prophetic Theology in the KD**

##### **4.1.5.1 Introduction**

Prophetic theology was propounded as the major reason for the publication of the document. The KD’s diagnosis was very clear:

Our present KAIROS calls for a response from Christians that is biblical, spiritual, pastoral and, above all, prophetic. *What is it then that*

*would make our response truly prophetic? What would be the characteristics of a prophetic theology? (1986:17)*

The first thing to notice in the above was that, in spite of their progressive outlook in theology, the KD theologians were still parochial in their approach to the challenge facing South Africa at the time. The exclusion of people of other faiths confined the Kairos to calling for a response only from Christians and this gives the impression that apartheid was a scourge visited only on people of the Christian faith. This aspect does not, however, reduce the importance of the KD. From the text quoted above, KD theologians were fully aware of the need for a biblically-based analysis and that it also had to be spiritual.

#### **4.1.5.2 The nature of prophetic theology in the KD**

The KD argument for prophetic theology was an either/or, black or white approach to the situation in South Africa and in general. The language of the KD when dealing with Prophetic Theology was narrow in the sense that it concentrated on one thing: the obnoxious policy of apartheid and its oppressive nature. The KD then created the impression that the oppressed themselves could not be subjected to Prophetic Theology because they were oppressed. This was understandable because the KD was trying not to fall into the trap of extending criticism to the oppressed who were already suffering. This point is, however, dealt with elsewhere.

The KD identified the following elements with regard to Prophetic Theology:

- It includes reading the signs of the time.
- It is always a call to action. The prophets call for repentance, conversion and change.
- Prophetic theology is always confrontational.
- It emphasises hope.



- It is thoroughly practical and pastoral. It will denounce sin and announce salvation.

One of the most significant contributions made by kairois theologians was that it was not enough just to denounce sin:

But to be prophetic our theology must name the sins and the evils that surround us and the salvation we are hoping for. Prophecy must name the sins of apartheid, injustice, oppression and tyranny in South Africa today as “an offence against God” and the measures that must be taken to overcome these sins and the suffering that they cause. (1986:18)

All the above elements are important if the Church is to make a significant contribution to South Africa. It is understood though that since the Church is not a monolithic institution there is always a small group that always remains faithful to biblical imperatives on justice. The reason for this is that the Church comprises of both oppressed and oppressor, both poor and rich, Black and White. The researcher invokes the words of Fr Smangaliso Mkhathshwa when he says the following:

The unbiased examination of the church shows the following:

It is deeply divided – morally, physically, geographically, culturally, economically, racially, ethnically, as well as socially. The scandal of such division has precipitated the alienation of hundreds of thousands of politically aware Blacks from the White dominated congregations. (Vorster, 1986:62)

Interviewees felt that the KD came at the right time. On the question of how the theology in the document could be rated, there were these responses:

Clearly the KD took a strong prophetic rather than pastoral or priestly theological orientation. It did not seek to be theologically all-inclusive or comprehensive, and rightly so. (Des van der Water, Questionnaire)

Others, like Speckman, made the point that the document was biased towards the poor and oppressed, although “it was founded on shaky biblical ground”. (In answer to questionnaire)

Smanga Kumalo felt that he did not think he had exhausted his understanding of the document.

I see its theology as open-ended. It is not put as a final word, but [is] a tool. There are students still doing their Master’s degree and PhD’s on it... (Interview)

#### **4.1.5.3 The significance of prophetic theology according to the KD**

According to the KD, prophecy has the following important aspects:

It is always confrontational. It emphasises hope, it is deeply spiritual, it is thoroughly practical and pastoral, denounces sin while announcing salvation. (1986:18)

On being always confrontational, it means prophetic theology is not afraid to take a stand and naming the sin. (ibid.) It stands where truth and justice stands, regardless of the consequences. Clear examples are those prophets who were mentioned above, in addition to which there were many others over the years. This was a repudiation of the reformist theology mentioned earlier. The apartheid regime was no longer in the realm of rational debate.

The KD highlighted the importance of Prophetic Theology as a means to bringing about God’s will. As this thesis examines this very backbone of and reason for the KD, a deeper analysis of its essence is in order here. It is necessary to repeat what the KD says about Prophetic Theology:

...prophetic theology concentrates on those aspects of the Word of God that have an immediate bearing upon the critical situation in which

we find ourselves. The theology of the prophets does not pretend to be comprehensive and complete. It speaks to the particular circumstances of a particular time and place – the KAIROS. (1986:17)

The nature of prophecy is such that it is often not compatible with church teachings. In most cases, prophets come from the church. They are spiritually nurtured by a church. Prophets do spring from the Church to actually do the analysing. The issue to be addressed is whether prophets are not part of the Church when they act as prophets? Secondly, the Church does become the incubator in spite of itself, or put differently, it becomes the incubator quite reluctantly. In almost all the cases where prophets have arisen, they have done so through the ranks of the Church. It is not possible to be a prophet without belonging to a church, even though it is possible to be prophetic outside the institutional Church (ref. Beyers Naude and the DRC) and even though the Church may expel them (Frank Chikane, like Beyers Naude, had also been expelled by the church to which he belonged, the Apostolic Faith Mission). If the Church is the people of God where two or three are gathered, it follows that even prophets are part of the Church even when they are out of their churches.

The KD describes how the Church could be truly prophetic.

To be truly prophetic, our response would have to be, in the first place, solidly grounded in the Bible. Our KAIROS impels us to return to the Bible, and to search the Word of God for a message that is relevant to what we are experiencing in South Africa today. This will be no mere academic exercise... prophetic theology concentrates on those aspects of the Word of God that have an immediate bearing upon the critical situation in which we find ourselves. (ibid.)

According to Villa-Vicencio:

The moment of crisis in church-state relations has repeatedly dawned for the church through the ages when there has been a direct

confrontation between the church's restrained yet expectant aspirations for society and the naked and at times tyrannical power of the state. In this situation the inevitable question has emerged: is capitulation, compromise, or martyrdom the only alternatives available to the church? (1986:xix)

Although it is also to be noted that Villa-Vicencio also speaks of the Church as if it was a monolithic entity, the Church has always had a small number of people that stood up against tyranny. Martyrdom is not an easy matter. It is a fulfilment of the words that those who follow Jesus must be prepared to lose their lives. A clear interpretation of Jesus' words would mean that to be his follower a person had to stand for truth and justice regardless of the consequences. The KD states:

Prophetic theology differs from academic theology because, whereas academic theology deals with all biblical themes in a systematic manner and formulates general Christian principles and doctrines, prophetic theology concentrates on those aspects of the Word of God that have an immediate bearing upon the critical situation in which we find ourselves. (1986:17)

In other words, prophetic theology is relevant to a particular situation and within a particular context. This means, according to the KD, that there is a need for constant reflection on the happenings of the time and how the Word of God has a bearing on that. Albert Nolan points out that the KD was an address to the Church. It was described as follows:

It is an attempt by concerned Christians in South Africa to reflect on the situation of death in our country. It is a critique of the current theological models that determine the type of activities the Church engages in to try and resolve the problems of the country. (Preface)

The KD, in its action to address the Church in South Africa, was also giving the Church a recognition that had already been lost. Many young people, in particular, began to take the Christian faith seriously.

#### 4.1.5.4 The KD as a people's theology centred on the Bible

Christian activists, believers in the God of Jesus Christ, took it upon themselves to interpret God's Word through the prism of their own suffering and pain. People had reached a point where they could no longer rely upon the way in which the Church appeared lukewarm against blatant oppression. This document was indeed regarded as a people's theology as evidenced in the following statement:

The origin of the Kairos Document (KD) is a direct result of and reaction to the intensified implementation of the apartheid policy and the state of emergency... It is the product of a process of discussions which started in the ecumenical Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) in Johannesburg. It has its origins in the grassroots of society. This document was not produced by the various churches or their leaders at the synods or ecclesiastical meetings. It was revised five times before being published in September of the following year. (Hofmeyer & Pillay, 1994:288)

The KD was not a theological treatise in the sense in which western theology could be interpreted. It was a document produced out of the crucible of the situation existing during that time. It was no doubt inspired by the Christian conviction of those who wrote it. It was a call to action. Or perhaps, it was a call to put prayer into action.

Puleng Lenka-Bula, a theologian based at UNISA, responded to the researcher's questionnaire in this manner:

The Kairos document represents in the tradition of the church and theological scholarship a prophetic witness in the midst of structural oppression and abuse which sought to bear witness and proclaim God's justice in a world that was and continues to be unjust. (Response to questionnaire)

#### 4.1.5.5 Prophetic theology also targets the Church

But there has also been tyranny in the manner in which the Church has operated, especially during the time of the Crusades. The hierarchical nature of most churches attests to this and in most times flies against the teaching of the Jesus of the New Testament. Throughout history, there have been church people who have co-operated with tyrannical powers and sold their souls for luxurious living.

Within the Church Brueggemann identified two trajectories, namely, the Davidic trajectory which follows the triumphal royal route, and the Moses trajectory which follows the egalitarian strand which identifies with the poor. The dominant culture has led to “numbness” and “lack of compassion” by the dominant group towards the poor and oppressed (1978:46). Brueggemann further identified these trajectories as contending forces within the Church and were characterised as the “dominant consciousness” and the “alternative consciousness”, the “dominant community” and the “alternative community”. The “dominant consciousness” was represented by Pharaoh, Saul, David and Solomon, and the “alternative consciousness” was promoted by Moses and the prophets (op. cit. p80).

It would seem therefore that, according to Brueggemann, the alignment with power by the Church did not start with Constantine taking the Church under his wing; it started much earlier with the “church” of the Old Testament. And so, if one follows Brueggemann, Christianity tends to see the Messiah more in the form of a Davidic descendent, read “royalty”, than in the manner of the prophets, read “servant”.

Albert Nolan, for example, asks a pertinent question almost echoing Brueggemann:

Why is it that in Western Christianity so much emphasis has been laid upon God as king or monarch with royal majesty and absolute

sovereignty? This God has been made in the image and likeness of the kings and emperors of Europe. (1988:191)

Coming back to the question of the Church, it has to be accepted that when the institution “church” is mentioned it is not just an amoeba-like entity. The generalising that follows from Villa-Vicencio can be read with this in mind:

The different doctrines of church and state that have emerged throughout history are attempts by the church to take its responsibility with the utmost seriousness. This responsibility concerns primarily the obligation to ensure that the state provides just an orderly government for the benefit of all its citizens. At the same time it is the obligation of the church to concern itself with the eventuality which arises when the state resolutely refuses to heed the call of its people for justice and uses its power to impose tyranny rather than good order. (1986:xix - xx)

From the above the deduction can be made that when the KD called this period of oppression in South Africa a “kairos”, this was a correct assessment. But in his book *God in South Africa*, Albert Nolan, one of the renowned Kairos theologians, makes the following point concerning what he considered to be the limitations of the KD.

The limitation of the Kairos Document, however, is that it does not provide us with sufficiently plausible reasons for believing that our time is kairos. There can be no doubt that our time is experienced by many Christians as a kairos, but the document does not explain why, or at least adequately and rigorously. The impression is given that our time is a kairos simply because there is a serious crisis and conflict in the country and especially because the Church is in crisis on account of the divisions in its ranks. That is true, but it is not the fundamental reason why our time is experienced as a kairos. (1988:183)



This observation of Nolan is not only surprising but could also be a case of splitting hairs. It was a *kairos* because it was a defining moment in which the struggle of the people had come to a head in a way as never before. In 1976, the United Nations had declared apartheid a crime against humanity and this declaration had been ratified by a number of states (*Report to the Catholic Bishops*, from The Theological Advisory Committee of the SACBC, 1985:167). When Nolan wrote the book in 1988, little did he know that the events were escalating so much that they would lead to the famous, history-making, paradigm-shifting words of FW de Klerk in parliament on 11 February 1990. At any rate, Nolan's remarks could not fundamentally alter the *kairos* matrix.

Nolan, quoting his own book which he had written earlier (1976), mentions that a *kairos* is the fact that the moment of truth brings with it *liberation*). In this case, what would then constitute "the moment of truth" now that liberation has come?

The *kairos* or moment of truth has come *because the day of liberation is near*. Throughout the Bible a *kairos* is determined and constituted by the imminence or nearness of an *eschaton*. (Nolan, 1976:86; *Missonalia* 1987:61ff)

#### **4.1.5.6 Prophetic theology also as manifestation of a holistic God**

Prophetic theology speaks of a holistic God who is Lord of all. Christianity - the way it had been practised by the Church, as both English and Afrikaans churches has some measure of discrimination within a continuum of liberation and oppression – showed a fragmented god who had not been able to influence socio-economic life in South Africa. This researcher therefore agrees with Maimela when he says:

...if God is acknowledged to be the creator (sic) of all human life and thus the Lord over this created life in all its aspects, then the conclusion cannot be avoided that the arena of all human relationships – in all its socio-political, economic and judicial arrangements – is the sphere in

which God is actively involved through the creative and redemptive acts of love. (1987:2)

Maimela also captures this holistic aspect of God well when he says:

...because political and theological concerns are not separable, the situation in South Africa leads us to ask questions such as: What does God mean in a situation of oppression? What has God to say to such a political arrangement? What is God willing and capable of doing about the evils that threaten to destroy Blacks directly and physically and to destroy whites indirectly and spiritually? (1987:6)

It is also a matter of interest to note that in the townships there were many efforts to alleviate people's sufferings but these were not taken into consideration when documentation was being kept. There were formations such as the LAGUNYA Fraternal in Cape Town. LAGUNYA was an acronym for the Langa, Gugulethu and Nyanga Fraternal which operated in the 1970's during the time of the Crossroads informal settlement removals and the students' uprisings. There was also MUCCOR, which was a fraternal based in Soweto which was fighting rent increments and other unfair local government practices. Even within the South African struggle, there has always been the danger that this dominant consciousness from the privileged class of academics and professionals could still be discernable. In most cases White and Black academics would tend to flock together and legitimate each other as they relate only among themselves to the point where they neglect the efforts of others who may be outside the sphere of academic life. For example, more research still needs to be conducted on formations such as the Soweto Committee of Ten which also made some serious interventions in the early eighties as they gave direction to particular issues during the most difficult times when Soweto was like a pressure-cooker.

#### **4.1.5.7 Some limitations of prophetic theology in the KD**

##### **4.1.5.7.1 Prophetic theology in the KD was confined to the oppressor**

The KD dealt with one part of the whole struggle. Correctly, it dealt with the root of the problem facing South Africa. It therefore dealt extensively with prophecy meant for the oppressor and that was its stated objective in the first place. The KD had no deliberate intention to adopt a holistic approach to its prophetic stance. A holistic approach would disturb the trend of the KD because it would mean acknowledging that the period of oppression had exuded toxic social fumes that affected all. The whole environment was poisonous for both oppressor and oppressed. If the oppressor were the beast, then the oppressed would also exhibit the mark of the beast (Revelations Chapter 13). While the oppressed could not be expected to take the blame neither could they be absolved from their own responsibility where they acted incorrectly or made poor choices in their own lives. Pobee makes the following valid point:

...we need to get away from the idealization of poverty and indiscriminate damnation of the rich. If indeed 'the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it:' and if indeed God's love goes out to all and God punishes sin wherever it is found, then it cannot be said that God has a bias against the rich. We can only say after Jesus, it is often harder for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. (1987:30.31)

Indeed the above statement may appear strange for the topic under discussion. But it cannot be ignored that Pobee talks of those who have gained their riches legitimately and the struggle for liberation must not be used to discourage rewards for hard work. Pobee's statement is merely a caution that prophetic theology should not be a one-sided theology. Let the reader consider further Pobee's following comment:

It is not as if all the poor are righteous. The poor also cheat; they oppress their wives; they tell lies like the rich... (ibid.)

In other words, the poor are no less human – responsible beings - just because they are poor or oppressed, and that is the point the researcher is making. Otherwise it makes nonsense of Paul’s statement that all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. (Romans, 3:22, 23)

Niebuhr is also not very far off the mark in making the following point:

Orthodox Christianity has held fairly consistently to the Biblical proposition that all men (sic) are equal sinners in the sight of God. The Pauline assertion: ‘For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God’... is an indispensable Christian understanding of sin. (1941:233)

The one outcome of the serious oppression under apartheid was the distortion of the Gospel understanding of sin and oppression because even if one could have been free politically, sin would have continued to oppress. It would compound the problem if the oppressed, simply by virtue of being oppressed, were to be denuded of their full humanity in the sense that they are regarded as so helpless that they are like dough in the oppressor’s hand. True enough that there would be a number of people who accepted without question that it does not matter as long as they are alive and thereby abdicating their responsibility to do something about it, not aware that to accept oppression is also sinful unless one is actually doing something about it. One recalls what Frank Chikane said above, namely, that it was better to die fighting than to die like sitting ducks. Freire’s words come to mind:

Within their unauthentic view of the world and of themselves, the oppressed feel like “things” owned by the oppressor. For the latter, *to be is to have*, almost always at the expense (sic) of those who have nothing. For the oppressed, at a certain point in their existential experience, to be is not to resemble the oppressor, but to be under him (SIC), to depend on him. Accordingly the oppressed are emotionally dependent. (1970: 51)

That is how many people under continuous oppression would behave while others, as history and the recent post-colonial past has shown, rebel against this with all their might. It is understandable, though, that the KD was addressing a particular situation that needed a single-minded approach. It is for this reason that Church Theology was criticised for advocating even-handedness. Neither is this researcher advocating even-handedness, but rather a holistic approach. Niebuhr's words make the above point even clearer:

The Biblical analysis agrees with the known facts of history. Capitalists are no greater sinners than poor labourers by any natural depravity. But it is a fact that those who hold great economic power are more guilty of pride before God and of injustice against the weak than those who lack power and prestige... (1941:240)

The KD agreed with some of the leadership of the churches, for example, Peter Story, at the time head of the Methodist Church, and Joseph Wing, then secretary of the United Congregational Church, when they said that the KD was not the last word on the debate (see above under church reaction on the publication of the KD). In this regard the KD also stated the following:

The theology of the prophets does not pretend to be comprehensive and complete, it speaks to the particular circumstances of a particular time and place – the KAIROS. (ibid.)

The nature of the KD was such that it had to be precise and reader-friendly. If it were to be bulkier than what it was, many people would not have the time to read it. Its strength was also its weakness. Its strength was that it was brief and to the point. Its weakness was that because it had to be brief and to the point, it could not cater for other concerns.

#### **4.1.5.7.2 The exclusion of women during the production and signing of the KD**

One serious limitation of the KD – the lack of women signing the KD - that was not pointed out by others, was exposed during a Laverna Conference that had been organised by the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) with the theme: Feminist Perspective to the Kairos Document. This conference was attended by about eighty women from across the country, including delegates from Namaqualand and Namibia. (*ICT News*, Vol. 5 No. 3 September 1987). A delegate at the conference, Denise Ackerman, made the observation that:

The document had been circulated mostly among men theologians, and that it was not compatible with Feminist Theology as she understood it. The document does not point out the oppression of women adequately if at all... The inclusion of sexism and feminist in particular should have been included in the analysis of the document. (ibid.)

#### **4.1.5.8 Prophetic theology manifested through individuals within the Church**

The difficulty with prophetic theology, though, is the nature of prophecy and the carriers of prophecy. Prophetic Theology tends to be idiosyncratic. It is unusual to have a mass movement of prophecy. It is usually carried out by individuals who then move others to action. It is for this reason that the struggle for liberation has outstanding figures who are well-known and a host of followers who also made sacrifices but are unknown.

The question remains as to whether the whole Church can be prophetic. It is a moot point whether it is in its nature to be prophetic. Throughout Church history it has never happened that the Church has acted uniformly in a prophetic manner. John de Gruchy however, treats the Church as if it does act uniformly:

The prophetic witness of the church derives from the biblical mandate to which the church is called to be faithful. It is the mandate of proclaiming God's justice and grace to the nation. So our prophetic task and witness in society remains much as it was and ever must be. (Guma and Milton, op. cit. p 92)

There have been movements within the Church that have been prophetic. The Church has always been conservative by nature and the hierarchical nature makes it an unwieldy organisation that carries within it all sorts of people. There is also an assumption that all people who are in church have a synoptic view of life. This researcher's experience within the Church is that the Church has a tendency of, at best, co-opting all those who appear to speak strongly against injustice in general, and particularly relating to socio-economic situations and the political environment, or at worst, would expel them as had happened with people like Beyers Naude in the Dutch Reformed Church and Frank Chikane in the Apostolic Faith Mission, and many others.

When the KD states that a prophetic theology must be deeply spiritual it uses the term "spiritual" differently from what is commonly known about the term. In a common manner, the term "spiritual" is wrongly used to mean "religious". But the KD used the term much more comprehensively:

All its [prophetic theology] words and actions will have to be infused with a spirit of fearlessness and courage, a spirit of love and understanding, a spirit of joy and hope, a spirit of strength and determination. (1986:18)

The above goes against the Church's general portrayal of Christianity as a religion of fear, compromise and general acceptance of suffering. The researcher refers to the times when throughout Christendom, sermons were fraught with hell-fire and brimstone, pie-in-the-sky types that used to be the norm in churches. New converts to Christianity were not imbued with the spirit of "fearlessness and courage" as its founder, Jesus Christ had been imbued,



and it was this failure on the Church's part that enabled apartheid to last longer than it should have. People who joined the struggle were demonised and regarded as non-Christians. Christians were supposed to be the religious people with holy looks and constantly having their heads down.

The KD goes further as it describes Prophetic Theology:

A prophetic theology would have to have in it the mind of Christ, his willingness to suffer and die, his humility and his power, his willingness to forgive and his anger about sin, his spirit of prayer and action. (ibid.)

If the above were true for all Christians, churches would have fewer members because of the very high price of being a follower. The reason for this decline would centre around what Bonhoeffer called a "costly discipleship". What type of church does exist, especially amongst the suffering masses? Pobeie gives this answer:

It is a truism that African churches have become carbon copies of the churches of the North which themselves were built on the basis of the idea of Christendom. That model makes for grandeur...well-fortified edifices like the huge cathedrals, church vestments and vessels of gold and silver. The churches like their functionaries are quick to acquire riches. The clergy, by their training and attire, are at the very least middle-class persons. What we have is a model of the Solomonic temple. That model, transplanted to Africa, which is by and large poor, not only lacks relevance but also queers the pitch for churches. (1987:60)

Pobeie's words must be taken seriously because of the challenges faced by the personnel of the Church in general. The challenge is that in most cases, the majority of the people who are church congregants are among the poor, especially when considered within the context of and with reference to the KD. It is a moot point whether prophetic theology can truly come from those whose lifestyle is different and infinitely better than that life as experienced by the

poor. Consider this: Jesus mentions the things that militate against the prophetic mode: Speaking against the Scribes and Pharisees he says:

So you must obey them and do everything they tell you.  
But do not do what they do,  
for they do not practise what they preach... (Matt, 23:3)

Everything they do is done for men (sic) to see. (Matt, 23:5a)

They love the place of honour at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues;

They love to be greeted in the market-places and to have men call them "Rabbi". (Matt, 23:6,7)

In spite of the above serious caution from the writings of the Gospels, the missionary-instituted churches have gone ahead ignoring the fundamental principle of being in solidarity with the oppressed and the marginalised. According to the above-quoted scripture, spiritual leaders of the Church encourage their being put on pedestals and centre-stage. Thus even those who may consider themselves prophets would move on occasions from the centre to the periphery - where the marginalised are - to comfort, and to express anger at the treatment of, the afflicted. Being put on a pedestal by congregations has been the Achilles' heel of almost all church leaders and ministers of the Gospel. Frantz Fanon makes the following telling point:

The Church in the colonies is a white people's Church, the foreigner's Church. She does not call the native to God's ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor. And as we know, in this matter many are called but few chosen. (1963:32)

Mkhatshwa, much later, also makes a similar assertion:

This model [of the church as Mother and Teacher] betrays the church's former links with colonialism. In this model, the church was present in

the world by virtue of a pact or treaty with secular powers. The latter provided for all the church's needs and guaranteed its existence. A relationship between two hierarchies was established – the sacred and the civil. Needless to say, such a close identification of the church with the high and mighty could only alienate the poor and weaken the witness of the church... (In Vorster, Ed, op. cit. p64)

Following upon what Pobee, Fanon, and Mkhathshwa say above, it then would explain why, with that kind of leadership, particularly pertaining to South Africa, the Church had a majority of lukewarm Christians who espoused peace at all costs – thus a false peace - and so could not make a dent in the fight against apartheid. It is therefore to be deduced from this that it is the leadership of the churches that actually have control over change. For a very long time the missionary-instituted churches were led by people who could be regarded as non-indigenous. These churches became very powerful and were most influential in South Africa, particularly in black society. Mkhathshwa made the following submission:

It is not an exaggeration to say that the church in South Africa reflects the greater society – its values, ethos, attitudes and aspirations. In my opinion most Whites still suffer from a colonial hangover. Hence the disproportionate influence of Whites in church life, leadership and financial control. (Vorster, 1986:62)

In the same way that South Africans will not be able to just immediately be in a transformed mode, the same can be said of the Church and church people. Consider how vast the difference is from the time Fanon wrote and the time when Mkhathshwa wrote – a difference of almost three decades - but the Church has not changed much. Its conservative nature is not geared to promote change and throughout history the Church has never acted in unison to effect change. In fact, the Church has always stood against change if it is remembered that it took time before it could accept the Copernican revolution.

#### **4.1.5.9 The position of prophets against apartheid joining the democratic government**

There is also the question that has arisen since 1994 concerning the position of Christian activists who were active against the apartheid regime. There has been a silence which shows that they do not seem to have continued with the same critical stance that they had taken before the new dispensation. It is easy to criticise these Christian activists for their silence now that they are in the new Government and many of them can be erroneously accused of having reneged on their past pledges within the struggle. This question of the position of former Christian activists is crucial if the past is not to be repeated where a church (The DRC) had been too close to the then ruling party that, instead of challenging the minority Government, it actually assisted in the propagation of State Theology.

The silence of the activists could be in part because the present Government is the first democratically-elected one and needs all the support it can get to rebuild a socially-ravaged country. The silence, then, should not be mistaken for colluding with the ruling party and thus aligning themselves with the powerful at the expense of the poor.

Jesus has arrived and was preceded by the imperative: Repent! The strange thing about the call of Jesus is that it was preached by Jesus to the very poor who had come to hear them (Luke 13:1 – 5). But when John saw the Pharisees and Sadducees he called them a “brood of vipers” (Matthew 3:7-10). With the ordinary people, they are admonished to “repent from their sins” (Matthew 3:1-6). Prophetic Theology is not just meant to speak against the oppressor. The oppressed could also be candidates for prophecy. The researcher refers to the words of Professor Bonganjalo Goba concerning moral decay from which many people who had been engaged in a long struggle tend to suffer:

It is always dangerous to draw parallels between events in the Bible and our contemporary experience, because the socio-political contexts

are not the same. But what is significant is the way God responds to moral decay, particularly that depicted by the apostasy of the people of Israel. God intervenes by providing a new vision, a new moral perspective. This in my view is the significance of the prophetic traditions of the Bible. Today the prophetic task is embodied in the mission of the church... Churches are searching for a new prophetic vision, at a time when our country is in a state of moral crisis. (Guma and Milton, 1997:66)

Goba further notes that people may argue that morality is a relative term and that people would differ on what morality is depending on the context. But he does concede that from a Christian perspective the following definition is appropriate, even though Christians may not be in agreement on what constitutes Christian morality:

In the Christian context the rules of conduct and patterns of behaviour are shaped and informed by a biblical vision which seeks to demonstrate a sense of loyalty and deep faith in Jesus Christ. (ibid.)

Part of the moral decay has been as a result of the demoralisation suffered under the apartheid system and the erosion of the Ubuntu values, as people fought a heinous system which left them scarred in the process. Goba invokes the philosophy of Black Consciousness when he argues that moral decay came about because apartheid had denigrated people to the point where they began to also hate and despise themselves, as the values by which they lived were eroded by the destruction of their culture and cultural norms. Goba again correctly captures some of the symptoms of a nation that had been pushed to the brink:

The way activists were killing their enemies was by necklacing. They also were exhuming dead bodies from graves and burning them. This system of deep moral decay created deep cleavages and divisions between whites and blacks, between adults and youth, women and men, and in fact produced a very sick society. Our focus as churches in

that context were driven by a passion for justice, especially addressing political structural injustice at the expense of facing the moral consequences of that oppressive political system. (op. cit. p67)

The KD had not envisaged that there would be such a decay and had not prepared for it because the one major confrontation was apartheid and no one could have foreseen that things could degenerate to that level. The KD made the following submission:

In the time of Jesus the Jews were oppressed by the Romans, the great imperial superpower of those days. But what was far more immediate and far more pressing was the internal oppression of the poor and ordinary people by the Herods, the rich, the chief priests and elders, the Sadducees and Pharisees. These were the groups who were experienced more immediately as oppressors. In one way or another they were puppets of the Romans and to a greater or lesser extent they collaborated with in the oppression of the poor. (1986:20)

It has always baffled and intrigued this researcher as to why Jesus preached to the poor and oppressed the type of sermons such as the famous "Sermon on the Mount". The other way of looking at it is that Jesus was not prepared to waste his time preaching to the rich and powerful except those who went to him like Nicodemus and Zaccheus, being the two most prominent names mentioned. Jesus gave them time and spoke to them. But generally, it appears that Jesus spent most of his time with the poor and oppressed, including his own disciples. It is this researcher's position that Jesus knew that the oppressed had been doubly oppressed by the constant marginalisation they had experienced from their oppressors and by their internalisation of that oppression. People do not react in the same way to oppression. A few people are able to rise above their position of oppression and out of their own conviction, fight gallantly against it. Others engage in the fight because they are afraid that the leaders of the revolution might punish them.

#### 4.1.5.10 Prophetic theology is discerned from social analysis

Prophetic Theology has to do with reading the signs of the times and, having reflected upon the Scriptures, discern God's will in a given situation. This reading of the signs of the times is the one part of transformation that is necessary if one has to act correctly in a situation which demands a particular response or remedy. It is this lack of analysis by the Church during apartheid that led to Church Theology instead of Prophetic Theology. At the time of the pressure being piled upon by all the formations that were fighting for liberation from apartheid, no proper analysis could be made of the core of oppression that was impacting on people's lives. It is for this reason that the KD advocates for a proper social analysis or diagnosis so that it can then be interpreted in the light of God's Word. In other words, there should be a continuous search for God's will so that transformation is seen as a process rather than a once only event (1986:17). The kairos always called for action. It was not enough to just keep on denouncing without any follow-up to correct what is wrong.

[The prophets] call for repentance, conversion and change. They are critical, severely critical, of the status quo; they issue warnings about God's punishment and in the name of God, they promise great blessings for those who change. Jesus did the same. "Repent", he says "the KAIROS has come and the Kingdom of God is close at hand". (1986:18)

This social analysis is also taken from Jesus' words when he tells people to read the signs of the times. The idea of social analysis came from the see-judge-act method. Not much has been said by the KD on how social analysis must be done. But reading from the text, one can glean some methodology that brings out what is actually happening from a socio-economic and religio-political perspective.

Analysing the situation in South Africa the KD said:



What we are dealing with here, in the Bible or in South Africa today, is a social structure. The oppressors are the people who knowingly or unknowingly represent a sinful cause or unjust interests. The oppressed are people who knowingly represent the opposite cause and interests, the cause of justice and freedom. Structurally in our society these two causes are in conflict. The individuals involved may or may not realise this but the structural oppression that in South Africa is called apartheid will sooner or later bring the people involved into conflict. (1986:21)

The word “today” is an important word because it speaks of the present rather than what was or could be. The social analysis therefore must be done regularly using the Bible and also looking at South Africa. The churches must therefore engage communities so that people can educate themselves. They have to “see” and observe what is happening. They have to apply their minds as to the “who” is doing “what” and “why”. After that, there is also the question of “What needs to be done so as to change the situation”. The present researcher had been involved in the Institute of Contextual Theology workshops in which social analysis started by asking people present to give their own experiences and to say why they thought they were having such experiences and what causes them. Eventually the discussions moved towards determining what actions could be taken in those situations. This need for continuous social analysis is another very valuable contribution that was made by the KD especially for Church activists. The ICT was a gathering place for all those who wanted to make a meaningful and lasting contribution to change in South Africa.

There has to be the will to participate in social analysis. There are times when leaders, of whatever hue, are themselves afraid to conduct social analysis or to train their people to do this. Social awareness assists people to have a proper diagnosis of the problem and to look for appropriate answers. Social analysis is a self-directed learning which assists people to make up their own minds as to what to do. It is a method that eschews paternalism and promotes respect for the people involved. There is a sense in which practising social

analysis becomes participatory research in which individuals learn also from their own experiences.

It is from the above methodology that the KD was able to identify the two sides, where some gained from the system of apartheid and others were losers in that system:

On the one hand we have the interests of those who benefit from the status quo and who are determined to maintain it at all costs... (1986:21)

On the other hand we have those who do not benefit in any way from the system the way it is now. They are treated as mere labour units, paid starvation wages, separated from their families... (ibid.)

The KD then goes further by showing how each of the two sides can be subdivided further according to their different opinions. According to the KD there were only two sides:

There are two conflicting projects here and no compromise is possible. Either we have full and equal justice for all or we don't. (op. cit. p22)

The above conclusion would echo what the *UBUNTU* philosophy says: *UMUNTU NGUMUNTU NGABANTU* (literally: a human being is human because of other human beings): "I am because we are". In other words as long as there is one person hungry and suffering, there can be no happiness.

What the KD should also have insisted on is the need for a continuous social analysis of the situation so that the Church does not find itself again repeating the mistakes of the past. It would be interesting to do social analysis today to find out whether the issues of oppression have been truly addressed or are being truly addressed. It is worth repeating what was quoted above to use that as a barometer for progress. The KD correctly observed that there were people who did not benefit in any way from the system the way it was then.

The KD mentioned that people were “treated as mere labour units, paid starvation wages” and so on. It is debatable whether, if a social analysis were to be conducted today, the findings would be different. The economy of the country is still firmly in control of those who had been privileged before with a few elites who have joined them. A lot still needs to be done in this regard.

#### **4.1.5.11 Prophetic theology and tyranny**

The KD was at pains to explain what tyranny meant by explaining that by definition a tyrant is “an enemy of the common good”.

The purpose of all government is the promotion of what is called the common good of the people governed. To promote the common good is to govern in the interests of, and for the benefit of, all the people. (1986:22)

The KD went on to show that a tyrannical government would of necessity rule with violence because people would have to be suppressed. This view led to the question as to whether the Nationalist Party’s apartheid form of government did not fall under that category. The KD went into the detail of why the apartheid government should be regarded as tyrannical:

Apartheid is a system whereby a minority regime elected by one small section of the population is given an explicit mandate to govern in the interests of, and for the benefit of, the white community. Such a mandate or policy is by definition hostile to the common good of all the people. In fact because it tries to rule in the exclusive interests of whites and not in the interests of all, it ends up ruling in a way that is not even in the interests of those whites. It becomes an enemy of all the people. A tyrant. A totalitarian regime. A reign of terror. (1986:23)

The KD did not end there. It went ahead to relate this view as to why then Christians do need to act against that tyranny:

A regime that has made itself the enemy of the people has thereby also made itself the enemy of God. People are made in the image and likeness of God and whatever we do to the least of them we do to God. (Mt, 25:49, 45)

It is also the measure of the document that it did call upon people not to hate other people but to “love our enemies”: As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the KD admonished its readers not to hate the perpetrators but to hate what they were doing and deal with that (1986:24). The main action to be taken was to establish a just government that would rule in the interests of all.

#### **4.1.5.12 Liberation and hope in the KD**

Prophetic Theology is not just about doom and gloom. It is done so as to bring about change. It is not just a condemnation for the sake of expressing anger. It is a judgement meant to transform society for the better. It is for this reason that the KD did not end up just with the anger against oppression and injustice. It ended up on a note of hope that true liberation will come:

There can be no doubt that Jesus, the Son of God, also takes up the cause of the poor and the oppressed and identifies himself with their interests. (1986:25)

The writers mention that they also, like all people, desire true peace and true reconciliation and that these are “assured and guaranteed”. That phrase was truly prophetic because five years later, South Africa was to hear words from the National Party President announcing in parliament the arrival of a new dispensation. The reason why the KD had a revitalising influence on all those who loved justice was also its hopeful tone:

There is a hope. There is hope for all of us. But the road to that hope is going to be very hard and very painful. The conflict and the struggle will intensify in the months and years ahead. That is now inevitable – because of the intransigence of the oppressor. But God is with us. We

can only learn to become the instruments of his peace even unto death. We must participate in the cross of Christ if we are to have the hope of participating in his resurrection. (1986:27)

The very last sentence ends with a call to action and a pledge to act with full confidence and trust in God. Indeed, Moltmann, in a form of a paradox, boldly states that the cross helps believers to distinguish reality from fantasy. The cross of Christ is a statement that God cares:

The cross of Christ is the sign of God's hope on earth for all those who live here in the shadow of the cross... The cross of Christ is the presently given form of the kingdom of God on earth. In the crucified Christ we view the future of God. Everything else is dreams, fantasies, and mere wish images. (1975:57)

It becomes clear therefore that hope as stated in the KD is not misplaced. It became the sure knowledge that just as the Children of Israel eventually moved out of bondage and found themselves in the promised land, so also would the poor and oppressed in South Africa reach their promised liberation. The rest is now history.

## Chapter Five: From the old to a new Kairos?

### 5.1 Introduction

From the onset it must be clear to all that the new democratic dispensation is very different from the apartheid one. The strengths of the new democracy are many and varied. South Africans of all hues are faced with the challenge of ensuring that the famous words of Nelson Mandela at his inauguration will stay forever fulfilled when he said:

Never, never, and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another... The sun shall never set on so glorious an achievement! (1994:613)

Earlier the KD stated prophetically:

There is hope. There is hope for all of us. But the road to that hope is going to be very hard and very painful. The conflict and the struggle will intensify in the months and years ahead. (1986:27)

### 5.2 A reminder: The rationale for the publication of the KD

It is imperative to remember what the reasons were for the production of the Kairos document in the first place. One of the major reasons was the excessive oppression that was taking place as shown above, and the immeasurable resistance that subsequently just as effectively ensued, until the apartheid government gave in. The other reason was that from the KD's perspective people's liberation was the sacred right of all human beings given by God. The KD makes its position very clear when it explains what it means to live under an oppressive regime:

A regime that has made itself an enemy of the people has thereby made itself an enemy of God. People are made in the image and

likeness of God and whatever we do to the least of them we do to God.  
(Mt 25:49) (KD, 1986:24)

The fight for freedom was against apartheid. But it should also have spelled out that it was not just against that system but for something better than that system. It should be freedom for its own sake. Reading in Galatians 5:1 these words are unequivocal:

Freedom is what we have – Christ has set us free! Stand, then, as free people, and do not allow yourselves to become slaves again. (GNB)

Nelson Mandela's understanding of freedom is the following:

I was not born with a hunger to be free, I was born free – free in every way that I could know. Free to run in the fields near my mother's hut, free to swim in the clear stream that ran through my village, free to roast mealies under the stars and ride the broad backs of slow moving bulls. As long as I obeyed my father and abided by the customs of my tribe, I was not troubled by the laws of man or God. (1994:616)

Mr Mandela asserts that he had developed a hunger for freedom when he began to realise that it had been taken away from him and from all people who looked like him (ibid). There was a progressive development towards this hunger and he then decided to join the African National Congress (ANC). Now that Mandela and his comrades had walked out of prison, and the fact that all South Africans could now vote and had actually done so and, for the first time in the history of South Africa, had ushered in a new democratic government the road ahead was still long, winding and uphill.

When I walked out of prison, that was my mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor both. Some say that has been achieved. But I know that this is not the case. The truth is that we are not yet free; we have merely achieved the freedom to be free, the right not to be oppressed. We have not taken the final step of our journey, but the first



step of a longer and more difficult road. For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others. The true test of our devotion to freedom is just beginning. (1994:617)

True freedom then has become elusive when the words of Mandela are taken seriously. If, in spite of having voted there is still non-freedom, then, in a sense, there is always a kairos. There is a new kairos challenging the democratic government and mainly the very black people that have been suffering for such a long time. The legacy of apartheid is a fact and the resultant ramifications of its effects are very evident. Mamphela Ramphele puts it well:

We also should not underestimate the psychological legacy of three centuries of colonial rule followed by apartheid. Both black and white South Africans have work to do to lay the ghost of racist stereotyping to rest. (2008:15)

More poignant also is what Desmond Tutu says with regard to this apartheid damage:

Perhaps we had not realised how wounded and traumatised we all were as a result of the buffeting we had all in various ways taken from apartheid. This vicious system has had far more victims than anyone had thought possible, because it is no exaggeration to say that we have all in different ways been wounded by apartheid. (1999:154)

Tutu mentions that it was the TRC that actually sharpened his vision into the abyss of the apartheid atrocities. Perpetrators had become the victims, the prisoners of their own machinations. They were like people who had been riding a tiger, and could no longer get off it without it ravaging them.

Tutu continues:

In one way or another, as a supporter, a perpetrator, a victim, or one who opposed the ghastly system, something happened to our humanity. All of us South Africans were less whole than we should have been without apartheid. Those who were privileged lost out as they became more uncaring, less compassionate, less humane and therefore less human; for this universe has been constructed in such a way that unless we live in accordance with its moral laws we still pay a price. And one such law is that we are bound together in what the Bible calls 'the bundle of life'. Our humanity is caught up in that of all others. We are human because we belong. We are made for community, for togetherness, for family, to exist in a delicate network of interdependence. (ibid.)

### **5.3 The legacy of apartheid that created the old Kairos**

The old paradigm which proscribed the freedom of black people was attacked by blacks themselves who responded to the challenge that had been thrown at them. They fought against their given status of perpetual serfdom and so refused to co-operate with those who were oppressing them, as mentioned earlier. Those who were born after the late eighties and early nineties, may not find it easy to conceptualise the damage that was done by apartheid. It must be extremely difficult to live in a situation in which people find themselves not knowing why things are as they are. It was like when children of all races grew up under apartheid but could neither read nor understand why when people are black they live in an ignominious way and all people who are white live differently and under much better conditions.

Few young people of all races today will ever understand the damage apartheid did to those who grew up directly under it. The researcher as a participant also remembers many very vivid mind-changing incidents that happened to make him realise as never before, how oppressed toxic apartheid has been for his mind. But the mess created by apartheid is at times like a scrambled egg. It appears almost impossible to unscramble apartheid within a short space of time and without trauma. Mandela's Long Walk to

Freedom warned of the danger of revealing certain state secrets. The long walk to freedom would also symbolise the long walk it is going to take to free the mind. It will need a lot of hard work, patience, dedication and love. The evil committed by apartheid is immeasurable.

But the words of Desmond Tutu during the hearings of the TRC need to be repeated. There had been public hearings on the biological warfare conducted by the apartheid government despite the new democratically elected government being unhappy that such hearings should be conducted because undertaking that everything would be done to make sure that the security of the state was not compromised:

What was revealed in these public hearings was devastating... It soon became clear that, contrary to previous claims by the apartheid government, its Chemical and Biological Warfare programme had certainly not been only for defensive purposes. It had major offensive characteristics. What was so shattering for me was that it had all been so scientific, so calculated, so clinical... (1999:142)

Apartheid had become an umbrella for sadistic and murderous tendencies. It had not just produced victims but also monsters. The people who had run that system, both commanders and foot soldiers, would live with tortured thoughts long after their victims had forgiven them. At the end of the day, apartheid probably also did more damage to its perpetrators, especially those who had to carry it out, than can be imagined. How could people who believed in God, people who went to church almost every Sunday, read the Bible that talked of love of neighbour and all the great principles of the Bible – how could they have conceived such an evil system, a system that even turned perpetrators into psychologically damaged victims? Tutu, like all decent people, continued to marvel at all this:

The evidence that emerged at our hearing showed that scientists, doctors, veterinarians, laboratories, universities and front companies had propped up apartheid with the help of an extensive international

network. Scientific experiments were being carried out with a view to causing disease and undermining the health of communities. Cholera, botulism, anthrax, chemical poisoning and the production of huge supplies of Mandrax, Ecstasy and other drugs of abuse... were some of the projects of this programme. (ibid.)

It is not surprising that Tutu became so astounded, considering that he had made the point that in all probability, drug addiction in the Cape Flats could be attributed to that Chemical Warfare:

For me, the Chemical and Biological Warfare programme was the most diabolical aspect of apartheid. I was ready to accept that its perpetrators would do almost anything to survive but I never expected them to sink to this level. (ibid.)

It can never be properly articulated how that heinous policy of apartheid affected ordinary black people because in the fight against apartheid, there were a number of boycotts, including school boycotts and boycotts of white businesses in town. It is impossible to really fathom the depth of efforts that were made by ordinary people in their fight against apartheid.

#### **5.4 The death of Apartheid**

At the time, the KD's message of hope appeared to be misplaced as more deaths and more repression was perpetrated by the regime on the oppressed of South Africa. But then within five or six years, FW de Klerk was to make his famous 1990 February speech which altered the course of South Africa. The KD in its message of hope had also stated that, in spite of all the hardships:

There is hope. There is hope for all of us.... God is with us. We can only learn to become the instruments of his peace even unto death. We must participate in the cross of Christ if we are to have the hope of participating in his resurrection. (1986:27)

Then Archbishop of Cape Town, Desmond Tutu, had also mentioned his moments when he just held on to his hope:

There had been so many moments in the past, during the dark days of apartheid's vicious awfulness, when I had preached, 'This is God's world and God is in charge!' (Tutu D, 1999:2)

Then of course Tutu shares some very deep thoughts shrouded in his characteristic humour:

Sometimes when evil seemed to overcome goodness, I had only just been able to hold on to this article of faith. It was a kind of theological whistling in the dark and I was frequently tempted to whisper in God's ear, 'For goodness sake, why don't You (sic) make it more obvious that You (sic) are in charge?' (ibid.)

The release of Nelson Mandela and other political leaders was almost like a resurrection, marking the beginning of the death of apartheid. The resultant changes were so profound that it was difficult to recognise South Africa as a nation that was tearing itself apart. The euphoria was palpable. The hope, after all, was being realised. The very act of releasing Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners was itself a monumental step for South Africa. Tutu mentions that after voting there was understandable jubilation as people danced and cheered:

The atmosphere was wonderful and such a vindication for all those who had borne the burden of repression, the little people whom apartheid had turned into the anonymous ones – faceless, voiceless, counting for nothing in their motherland – whose noses had been rubbed daily in the dust. (Tutu, 1999:3)

The new dispensation meant more than just a new start and new views that hitherto had never been thought of. Suddenly, there was going to be a normal view of working in the public sector and serving also ones people in a society

that could rightly be regarded as still very “abnormal” at the time because old habits die hard.

South Africans were suddenly propelled into a new direction just when everybody thought the country was at the brink of a war in which none could win using weapons. Language hitherto used before, language of anger and bitterness, language of condemnation, had to change and change rapidly and radically as people were plunged into a new mode of being human. It meant a new way of looking at serving the public. Indeed the changes would be breath-taking. For a great change, black people would also begin to feel part of the country and in fact would end up running the country. Performing public service such as being appointed to act in the jury was so vital that in Athens where democracy is purported to have begun Pericles is quoted as telling the Athenians that:

It is not poverty that they should consider shameful but the refusal of even a poor man to make his public political contribution to the running of the state. (Cartledge P, 2000:72)

Nelson Mandela puts it more comprehensively:

In life, every man (sic) has twin obligations – obligations to his family, to his parents, to his wife and children, and he has an obligation to his people, his community, his country. In a civil and humane society, each man is able to fulfil those obligations according to his own inclinations and abilities. (1994:615)

To support the above claims, the researcher invokes the words of Pope John XX111 which resonate with the idea of true liberation:

A regime which governs solely or mainly by means of threats and intimidation or promises of reward, provide men (sic) with no effective incentive to work for the common good. And even if it did, it would certainly be offensive to the dignity of free rational human beings.

Authority is before all else a moral force. For this reason the appeal of rulers should be to the individual conscience, to the duty which every man has of voluntarily contributing to the common good. But since all men are equal in natural dignity, no man has the capacity to force internal compliance on another. Only God can do that, for he alone scrutinizes and judges the secret counsels of the heart. (Pacem in Terris, 1963, in Villa Vicencio, 1986:117)

Then Mandela went on to point out what he thought was also inherently evil about the system of apartheid in South Africa. It did not allow for full humanity, genuine *ubuntu*, for one to serve one's fellow human-beings:

But in a country like South Africa, it was almost impossible for a man of my birth and colour to fulfil both of those obligations. In South Africa, a man of colour who attempted to live as a human being was punished and isolated. In South Africa, a man who tried to fulfil his duty to his people was inevitably ripped from his family and his home and was forced to live a life apart, a twilight existence of secrecy and rebellion. (1994:615)

## **5.5 The building of democracy begins**

Speaking about the day of his inauguration, Mandela paid tribute to those countless people who sacrificed for the struggle when he stated the following about the day of liberation:

That day had come about through the unimaginable sacrifices of thousands of my people, people whose sufferings and courage can never be counted as repaid. I felt that day, as I have on so many other days, that I was simply the sum of all those African patriots who had gone before me. That long and noble line ended and now began again with me. I was pained that I was not able to thank them and that they were not able to see what their sacrifices had wrought. (1994:614)



While Mr Mandela had been referring mostly to his comrades who had struggled side by side with him, he could well, as he often did, also have been referring to the countless people that would forever remain nameless but who nevertheless had made an invaluable contribution to the struggle for liberation. Those people could have been the mothers and fathers who eked out a living to feed their children and educate them for the nation, or for them to directly contribute to the struggle as the parents of the 1976 children of the revolution, for example, could testify.

Whilst the democratically-elected government has done remarkably well to begin a process that attempts to normalise a previously inhuman situation – a situation that had been abnormal for more than three and a half centuries - it can be favourably argued that the negotiated settlement was the next best thing outside of an outright victory. Its strong points start with the new Constitution of the country which is under-girded by a strong Justice system headed by the Constitutional Court (CC). It is thus not surprising that Albie Sachs, a judge of the CC, mentions the tremendous role played by judges in safeguarding democracy:

I see the role of judges in the world of diversity and conflict as striving for the protection of human dignity. The court is very, very important in terms of the basic norms, standards and values of the society, which continually evolve and develop. (*Mail and Guardian* Article by Jackie Kemp titled: Steering a ship called dignity, July 3 – 9, 2009)

One of the challenges of the South African public is to adjust to what it means to be under a democratically-elected government. The South African parliament is the nearest to what government of the people, by the people, for the people means. It began with the Government of National Unity (GNU) and the proportional representation system agreed upon during negotiations. It should be noted that apart from a number of definitions of democracy, there is also this explanation:

Democratic governments are those in which fundamental human rights of citizens are protected by the collective and in which the views of a population-at-large, not just a ruling elite, are reflected in the actions of the government. (*Origins of Democracy*, Research paper at [www.icpd.org/democracy/index.htm](http://www.icpd.org/democracy/index.htm))

But in the same vein, it was the Greeks who, it is claimed, created the slaves even though they are reputed to have been the first in the world to introduce democracy:

But the Greeks were the first to create the slave in the complete sense, what is sometimes called the chattel slave: that is, an unfree (sic) person who has been alienated forcibly from his or her natal family and community, traded as a mere commodity and kept as property without any effective personal, let alone political rights. (Cartledge, 2000:178)

## 5.6 The KD and the new government

In the quest to know whether the KD could be useful today, after fifteen years democracy, it is very clear that the context has changed. It is no longer a context in which people are dealing with an illegitimate government. The new government does not have to use unnecessary methods such as having to appeal to “state theology” to legitimise its existence. It has no need to because it is elected by the majority of the people of South Africa on the basis of justice and the Freedom Charter. The new democratic state, however, wasted no time in harnessing the use of the prophets who had fought against the apartheid regime. Des van der Water makes this point in his article, *A Legacy for Contextual Theology*:

With the country’s first democratic elections and the adoption of the Interim Constitution in April 1994, the churches had become effective allies with the new government of National Unity. It is notable that a number of prominent church people and Christian activists of yesteryear... were taking their place in the corridors of power. Prophets

of the apartheid era were becoming parliamentarians within the new social dispensation. (Speckman & Kaufmann, 2001:47)

But there are lessons to be learned here for the future. One of the distinctions that must be made is that a democratically-elected government does not necessarily mean a democratic government. These lessons should caution all governments about the co-option of religion or religious leaders as a disguise for the misuse and abuse of power. It is important to note that both the previous government and the present government have at least one common denominator: power. The difference between the two, however, is huge. The previous government had arrogated power unto itself and was an oligarchy.

Russell Botman also makes a similar point in the same book in his article entitled *The Crisis in Contextual Theologies: A Way Ahead?*

Contextually, the nature of the state has changed. The post-apartheid state has a secular, constitutional sovereignty. It has no religious pretensions and no longer has its own sovereignty as with the Apartheid regime. South Africa now has a secular constitutional state although its constitution has a theistic appearance with its inclusion of the name of God. The Constitution of South Africa ends with “Nkosi, Sikelela l’Africa (God bless Africa). The inclusion of the name of God means nothing more than that the country is a secular state acknowledging religion but without claiming legitimacy on the grounds of religious values. (Speckman & Kaufmann, 2001:120)

Power has its own trappings, regardless of who is wielding it. The state has to operate from the position of power, and rightly so. For the sake of especially the poor, the South African government has to guard against using power against its own citizens. There is no guarantee that those who fought for liberation will do their best to uphold the principles of justice.

There are certain red flags to be noted. Some states will not use state theology but other mechanisms besides state theology to justify their actions.

The problem to be faced is that, when people are engaged in a struggle for liberation, in most cases the leadership will after some time begin to own the struggle together with its fruits. Whereas previously the oppressive state treated people like their underlings or slaves, it does happen that people who engage in the liberation of others tend to forget that it was for the people that they waged a struggle in the first place. It is not surprising therefore that Paulo Freire pointedly says:

Many of the oppressed who directly or indirectly participate in revolution intend – conditioned by the myths of the old order – to make it their private revolution. The shadow of their former oppressor is still cast over them. (1970:31)

## **5.7 South Africa today**

### **5.7.1 The escalation of militant protests despite a new democratic government**

It has been pointed out that South African township people seem even more militant over bad government than people in other countries in Southern Africa. Why? Perhaps it is that they remember the more recent struggle they had for their freedom. It could be that people looked at the situation in Zimbabwe and realised that they could no longer leave things in the hands of their leaders and hope for the best.

There are a number of examples from the press which attest to what might be termed the people's fury.

#### **5.7.1.1 The cancer of widespread corruption continues: Manifestations of the legacy of a colonial mentality**

Apartheid was itself a corrupt policy and it enabled people to continue corruption with impunity. One would have thought things would begin to be different, but widespread corruption continues to dog the South African

community. There was a report that in Mpumalanga the community at Thandukukhanya protested vehemently against what it alleged was:

“...widespread corruption within the municipality, including nepotism, the awarding of tenders, service delivery and addressing unemployment”. They were against the mayor and her councillors. The homes of... [name withheld] ...and three other councillors were torched, as was a shopping centre owned by Indians, four trucks, and the local clinic, library and community hall. Foreign shopkeepers were chased out of Thandukukhanya and their businesses looted. Two people died... (*The Star* of July 01, 2009)

There were other recent protests in places like Zeerust in North West Province. It was reported that:

Lehurutse residents protested throughout last week and threw stones at motorists in the N4. People arrested during the protest face charges of public violence and those arrested also face charges of robbery... They stopped some of the vehicles and robbed motorists. (*The Star*, June 29, 2009)

There is a Setswana idiom that says:

BANA BA MOTHO BA KGAOGANYA TLHOGO YA TSIE  
(Children of the same family share the head of a locust)

The above is a powerful message: a family will always share something regardless of how small it may be. It was unheard of that leaders would eat alone while the other members of the family are starving. Leaders or the elders would never make themselves comfortable while the rest are suffering. The cries for meaningful service delivery leave a deep sense of shame on all decent people. Greed is also fuelled by an insatiable appetite to consume, thus the disease of consumerism which actually and strangely enough, drives capitalist economies. C Douglas Lummis makes the following telling point:

...much of the consumption which we associate with affluence is 'conspicuous consumption', the specific pleasure of which is that there are others who cannot afford it. Nor is conspicuous consumption limited to the rich: establishing a mental association between a product and the upper-class life styles is how non-essential goods are sold to the poor, as every advertising agency knows. Nor is conspicuous consumption unknown in poor countries: the implantation of the desire for it is a big part of what modernizations have touted as 'the revolution of rising expectations'. By implanting in people the desire for elite status, and by convincing them that bits and pieces of that status are infused in various consumer goods, the salesmen hope to keep the development squirrel mill turning over... (In Sachs W, op. cit. p48)

It is at best a sign of confusion, or a serious lack of analysis, to denounce colonialism when the mentality of colonialists, as hoarding of land, goods and wealth, as seems to be the case in Zimbabwe, becomes the norm and practice of the previously oppressed leadership. Hall reminds everyone that the earth is the Lord's even if in some sense it belongs to human beings:

Ownership, far from producing the sense of "belonging," produces anxiety, the anxiety of which Jesus often spoke: the anxiety of those who worry about tomorrow, who hoard up treasures on earth, who build greater barns and lose their souls. Anxiety of ownership – a thing that Marxism also recognizes in its way – leads inevitably to distortion. The home becomes a fortress, a defense (sic) a false attempt to achieve permanence and security. The tents of the wilderness, say prophets, are more truly home than the palaces of Solomon. (1976:85)

There can never be a defence for of greed which has become the new and unforgiving colonial slave driver controlling life in the new South Africa amongst most of the elite. It is tantamount to declaring war, not against poverty but against the poor. It becomes a mockery of all that is beautiful about African traditional religion and the spirituality of ubuntu, and indeed all religions with the exception, of course, of Satanism. It has been so much part

of the culture that even when King Moshoeshoe was besieged on the Thaba Bosiu Mountain he could still send some herds of cattle to his enemies to eat while encamped at the foot of the mountain.

This version of UBUNTU/BOTHO which says: "I am because we are" has been lost. It needs to be revived. Mayibuye i-Afrika (Let Africa return) should mean a return to the values of Africa. These values can heal a nation suffering from a continuation of crime even after apartheid. The following words make a lot of sense: The poverty of spirit of the rich has led to the material poverty of the poor.

The privacy of life which Western man has come to almost make a religion of, to them [Africans] becomes a hurdle, resulting in depression, mental disturbances and often even suicide. John Mbiti is right when he changes the Cartesian dictum to 'I belong, therefore I am'. There is no person who does not belong. Belonging is the root and essence of being. Therefore the whole system of African society and the ordering thereof (law) is based on this. Everyone has someone he/she belongs to, who should reap the benefit of his/her life, or take on the responsibilities which arise out of that life... (Setiloane G, 1986:10)

Augustine Shutte also makes a similar valid point as Setiloane's:

I only become fully human to the extent that I am included in relationships with others... living in the spirit of UBUNTU is not just a conventional obligation. It is my very growth as a person that is at stake. It is a matter of life and death. A person who is generous and hospitable, who welcomes strangers to her house and table and cares for the needy, increases in vital force. She builds up an identity that is enduring, that will not disintegrate – even in death – but continue to be the centre of life for all. A final aspect of a person existing only in relation to others is that personhood is a gift. (2001:24-25)



### 5.7.1.2 Sloth in service delivery

Some of these protests occurred in Cape Town at a housing project called N2 Gateway where people had occupied houses illegally. There are constant strikes and threats of strikes from those who are engaged in building stadiums for the 2010 World Soccer Cup (The Star June 29 2009). There has also been a huge doctors' strike for more pay and better working conditions (June 29 2009). There have been many such uprisings within the country especially since the latest elections of April 2009.

Siphamandla Zondi, director for Africa at the Institute for Global Dialogue, gave the following explanation for these protests:

These protests remind us that the struggle was not merely about ideological victory or political power as such, but also about making it possible for the poor, with the help of a legitimate government, to lead decent and happy lives. (*The Star*, July 28, 2009)

This was the whole point about the publication of the KD and the fight against apartheid. Otherwise it is pointless just to exchange one form of government for another whilst the situation of extremity is not completely eradicated. It is worth repeating what the KD said about the suffering of the time:

...we have those who do not benefit in any way from the system the way it is now. They are treated as mere labour units, paid starvation wages...all for the benefit of a privileged minority... It is not in their interest to allow this system to continue... They are no longer prepared to be crushed, oppressed and exploited. They are determined to change the system radically so that it no longer benefits only a privileged few. And they are willing to do this even at the cost of their own lives. What they want is justice for all irrespective of race, colour, sex, or status. (1986:21)

### **5.7.1.3 The humiliation of unemployment and destitution of job losses**

A former Minister of Social Development in the Cabinet in the democratic government and who is also a member of the National Executive Committee of the ANC made a strong plea for unemployed youth to be given employment and social grants if not yet employed:

Social Development Minister Zola Skweyiya has warned of a potential uprising in South Africa if the country fails to provide jobs for youth. (*Sunday Times*, July 1, 2008)

Skweyiya also pointed out that unemployment was the root cause of Kenneth Kaunda losing power, and the reason for Zimbabwe youth to invade white-controlled farms. He also warned of the danger that the South African economy was failing to absorb young graduates. (ibid.)

There was a report of serious job losses - put at 179 000 – in just one quarter:

The formal economy shed 179 000 jobs in the first quarter as fallout from SA's first recession in 17 year took its toll... Analysts said the job losses reflected a labour market "in distress", and warned the economy could shed up to 400 000 jobs this year as companies cut costs with global and local demand waning. (*Business Day, SA loses 179 000 jobs in one quarter as slump hits hard*, June 24 2009)

### **5.7.1.4 Recession exacerbated by excessive and often misplaced government spending**

At the same time, the newly appointed Minister of Finance, Pravin Gordhan, also warned about excessive and inappropriate government spending especially because of the recession:

...falling exports and the high current account deficit all contributed to a negative picture which demanded the adoption of new approaches. He conveyed a strong message on the need for austerity, calling on government departments to tighten belts... Expenditure would have to be deferred in some cases. (*Business Day, Gordhan warns state to cut costs as revenue falls short*, June 24, 2009)

The above warning comes amidst more spending that the government needs to make even as the recession bites. According to the *Sowetan* newspaper the government will have to spend R2 billion rebuilding houses that had extremely poor workmanship, despite having already spent about R500 million in the past three years rebuilding houses that had been built shoddily. (July 10, 2009)

Another R58 million had been given to a consortium to build RDP houses and three years later not a single house had been built (*The Star* July 9 2009). It is such carelessness that puts the government in an awkward position where functionaries do not seem to share the government's vision of creating better living conditions for its people. Pravin Gordhan's warning on government spending becomes very appropriate in these circumstances.

In the *Business Day* publication quoted above, there is mention of another ominous warning by newly appointed Minister of Mineral Resources of further job losses because in her view:

SA's mining industry had been hard hit by sharply lower commodity prices due to the global economic downturn and was under "severe strain"... Analysts had forecast that the sector could lose more than 100 000 jobs this year owing to the crisis. (Minister says mines under severe strain, July 24, 2009)

There was some comfort though because the minister, in the same article, is quoted as saying that "government led processes" to save jobs had been

successful to some degree because the losses had been confined to 25 000 jobs “representing about 5% of the total employment in the industry”. (ibid)

#### **5.7.1.5 Lack of appropriate skills: One of the residues of Bantu education and job reservation**

Bantu Education has had a debilitating effect on the economy of the country. Willem Saayman emphasises the inadequacy of Bantu Education to equip young people and mentions the recent attacks on Africans who come from outside South Africa:

On top of it all, a new element has been added to the explosive mix: the presence of large numbers of poor legal and illegal immigrants from many African countries. In a situation where housing is inadequate and unemployment very high, it is easy for the anger of the poor, unemployed and homeless to be directed against them. (*Missonalia*, Vol. 36 No. 1, April 2008, p20)

But this anger seems to be exacerbated by other things apart from desperation. Saayman captures it again:

All of this plays itself out in post-1994 South Africa, characterised by very conspicuous crass materialistic consumption as a way of life for a small minority. (ibid.)

When mostly unemployed people, or those who have been working for years without serious personal economic development, see their peers who had been without any means of earning a livelihood suddenly appear well off because they have become councillors, all sorts of human emotions such as jealousy and envy spring up and a new form of restlessness takes hold. Jean Paul Sartre says in his preface to Frantz Fanon’s book:

...he [Fanon] shows clearly that this irrepressible violence is neither sound and fury, nor the resurrection of savage instincts, nor even the

effect of resentment: it is man (sic) recreating himself. I think we understood this truth at one time, but we have forgotten it – that no gentleness can efface the marks of violence; only violence itself can destroy them. (op. cit. p18)

There is a danger, though, with regard to the above matter of protests against service delivery, if the definition of freedom by the Greeks is anything to go by:

One ancient Greek definition of freedom was not having to be dependent on anyone else; conversely, unfreedom (sic) was having to depend on another for one's livelihood and lifestyle. (Cartledge P, 2000:179)

If the above definition of freedom means not to depend upon anyone for one's livelihood, then it is still a long journey that has to be travelled for freedom to be truly entrenched. The original self-reliance that had characterised the African before colonisation needs to be revived. People need to be made aware that there are other alternatives to life than being reliant on others for one's existence. In spite of continuous oppression people were born with resilience, otherwise none would have persisted with standing up as toddlers after every fall and none would have walked after stumbling and falling so many times. There are many wonderful stories of young people who have obtained outstanding results in education while living in shacks; there is a huge number of people who have succeeded in spite of all odds.

There are two serious challenges that cut across Church and State concerns. The one challenge is that schools and universities in South Africa do not promote entrepreneurship or do-it-yourself employment. Education in South Africa is geared towards helping people "look for employment", to put the onus on someone to find people something to do. Added to this challenge is the fact that most schooling was about how to remember rather than how to think. Why is that a challenge? It is so because the new democratic

dispensation is creating space for people to unravel themselves as they evolve.

This researcher can never recall a lesson at school in which he was asked by the teacher to write a letter on “how to employ someone”. It was always a letter on how to apply for a vacancy. The whole paradigm of teaching then was truly training for subservience, or training to be under somebody. Ramphela recalls what Hendrik Verwoerd had tried to do:

Of the biggest challenges in Post-1994 South Africa is the state of [the] education and training system. The social engineering of Hendrik Verwoerd, who in the 1950s formalised and refined apartheid as a system of governance with deep socio-economic ramifications, reached its zenith when as Minister of Education he imposed Bantu Education on African people... 'The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all aspects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour'. A clearer commitment to education for servitude one could not find. (2008:171)

The schooling system then was also not helping in enhancing the self-realisation that black people needed, as is required by any other developing nation. Instead it was creating a mindset of dependency and servitude, as intended. This observation may appear innocuous, but it is this kind of mentality that under-girded Bantu Education and which is now causing the country to find it difficult to employ the majority of people who have finished school. What will remain a mystery, though, is how black people were not cowed by apartheid, nor disabled by Bantu Education, and indeed were spurred on by the adverse conditions they experienced. It could be that they also had the resilience and patience of the male weaver bird which builds a nest using one blade at a time. If the female bird destroys the nest because it is a security risk for its young, the male weaver has to start all over again. There seems to be a shared resilience between the male weaver bird and the people who succeeded in spite of apartheid.

#### 5.7.1.6 Political patronage: A form of manipulation and oppression

There is another danger that needs to be checked before it takes root which is constituted by a serious distortion of people's liberation, namely, government by patronage and which is just as dehumanising. Government by patronage also dehumanises the dispenser of it for it is an arrogation of power to oneself which actually begins to show tendencies of dictatorship. It is when leaders forget that it is the people who bestow power upon a leader, or leaders, to govern on their behalf. Patronage is another form of control and could be easily regarded as bribing others in order to dominate them. Needless to say, that would be very far from what the KD advocated, nor indeed, those who paid the ultimate price for the liberation of all the people of South Africa and all those who laboured hard to see the country free. The following words cannot be over-emphasised:

True dominion does not consist in enslaving others but in becoming a servant of others; not in the exercise of power but in the exercise of love, not in being served but in freely serving; not in sacrificing the subjugated but in self-service. (Moltmann, 1977:103)

This leads to some examination of the use of power. This examination is essential for the oppressed to understand if they are not to repeat the abomination of the past. Ruling by patronage could spell a new enslavement. This kind of evil could be expressed in Jacques Ellul's words as he ponders the second temptation of Jesus which concerned being tempted with power:

At issue here [referring to one of the temptations] is the conquering and ruling of all the kingdoms of the world. Once again it seems to me that rule is to be taken in the broadest sense. What is envisaged is not just military conquest or political domination but every kind of secular domination, including that of masters ("Do not call me master"), employers, ecclesiastics, institutions, parents, and so on. Every kind of power which men (sic) exert, or try to establish, over other men, is in view. Whatever may be the means of power, whether money, personal



authority, social status, economic structure, military force, politics, artifice, sentimental or material extortion, seduction, spiritual influence, what is proposed by Satan is power in any or every form. (1976:55)

#### 5.7.1.7 Persistent racism

The other serious challenge to the new democracy is endemic racism brought about by the legacy of apartheid. South Africans cannot look at themselves as different from other human beings who experienced the results of years and years of isolation from each other and still expect that there would be immediate cohesion because people have voted. For example, Souden and Nkomo, referring to the infamous Reitz incident at the University of the Free State where white students humiliated a few elderly black female and male workers by allegedly making them drink urine as a “prank”, made the following submission in answer to Professor Wilmot who had asserted that the Reitz fiasco was a mere “act of common assault”:

Context is important here. Our understanding has to be informed by the history of apartheid South Africa. Furthermore it is important to understand the history of the institution itself, how black employees have been mistreated and that discrimination has been commonplace for black students. (Article: *Racism is our Legacy*, *The Star*, July 2, 2009)

It is this researcher’s considered view that the denial of the damage done by years of separation of communities, with whites in leafy suburbs and blacks in depressed townships in the main completely deprived of social amenities and entertainment facilities, - that denial itself – constitutes a crisis because it is a denial of an existent racism that disables a proper response to the crisis. Mandela’s words underscore this point:

The policy of apartheid created a deep and lasting wound in my country and my people. All of us will spend many years, if not generations, recovering from that profound hurt. (1994:615)

These wounds do not go away easily. They create other wounds as they go along. One of those wounds is denialism. There had been a huge hope that the TRC would also assist in lancing the boil of racism in one way or another. Sampie Terreblanche, however, makes this damning statement about the TRC:

Unfortunately, the TRC has ignored the gross human rights violations perpetrated collectively and systemically against millions of black people under white political domination and racial capitalism. Its inability and/or unwillingness to systemically analyse South Africa's history of unequal power structures are puzzling. By only trying to cover the 'truth' about one form of victimisation under apartheid and ignoring another (and perhaps even more important) form of victimisation, the TRC has failed dismally in its quest for truth and reconciliation. (Terreblanche S, 2002:125)

No doctor can give proper medication without a proper diagnosis of the illness. It is only once the reality of what happened has been faced that healing can begin. Ramphela also makes a similar diagnosis in her observation:

...we face dilemmas in transcending the divisions and values we inherited from apartheid. Forging an identity as a non-racial, non-sexist, egalitarian society, the kind of society to which we committed ourselves in our constitution, requires us to lay to rest the ghosts of racism, sexism, ethnic chauvinism and authoritarianism. These are stubborn ghosts that will not be easily exorcised, with an enduring global resonance that has proven tenacious even in mature democracies. (2008:25)

Theresa Oakley-Smith, managing director of Absolute Indaba and a contributing editor of *The Star*, makes the following observation while decrying the lack of diversity that was displayed by Hellen Zille in choosing an all-male and almost all-white cabinet:

This lack of diversity in political groupings is symptomatic of a broader South African malaise.

We are blessed with a broad range of diversity, we are one of the most diverse nations in the world – and yet, after 15 years of democracy we still gravitate towards people who look like us...

Very few of us have close friends of different races and many of us still feel uncomfortable in neighbourhoods where people look or behave differently from us. (*The Star, Crossing the Great Racial Divide*, May 18 2009)

Racism dies hard even in places that appear quite liberal today. I am here referring to Canada. There is a sad story that occurred in Canada around the 1930's regarding Herb Carnegie, a hockey player who was regarded as a wizard in hockey. But because he was black, "Herb Carnegie never made it to the NHL (National Hockey League)".

In his day, Carnegie was a blur on skates, but he would never get further than the Quebec Senior League. In 1938, then – Maple Leaf owner Conn Smythe said he would give \$10, 000 to any man who could "turn Carnegie white". (*Toronto Star*, Wednesday, January 28, 2004)

#### **5.7.1.8 Inequalities**

When Mr Nelson Mandela, for example, experienced trips outside prison he could not help noticing the huge difference between the life of white people and the life of black people. He made the following observation:

These trips were instructive on a number of levels. I saw how life had changed in the time I had been away, and because we mainly went to white areas, I saw the extraordinary wealth and ease that whites enjoyed. Though the country was in upheaval and the townships were on the brink of open warfare, white life went on placidly and undisturbed. Their lives were unaffected. (1994:521)

That was another huge travesty of justice against both white and black people perpetrated by the apartheid system. Whites had been successfully insulated against the sufferings of their own fellow human-beings in South Africa. The tragedy is that those two worlds that Mandela spoke about still exist to this day although with a slightly different complexion. In the past, whenever people spoke of “dismantling apartheid” it sounded as fruitless an exercise as trying to unscramble a scrambled egg. The geographical damage that was done by apartheid appears to be permanent: The poor will always be the sufferers who have to spend more money on transport going to work simply because they are black; when there are industrial actions affecting transport black people again continue to suffer because they cannot get to work on time; when there are marches in the city hawkers who happen to be black again suffer because the strikers will loot their stuff and leave them dry.

#### **5.7.1.9 Different race groups operating from distorted perceptions about each other**

There is the challenge of dealing with distorted perceptions of people who live in the same country, claiming it as their own, and yet almost all riddled with suspicion about the other. The worst thing about South Africans is that the Afrikaans saying that “dit maak nie saak hoe dun ‘n papier is nie, dit het altyd twee kante” (it does not matter how thin a paper is, it always has two sides) is usually ignored. It is for this reason that Mr Mandela spoke of a system that dehumanises all. He gives the panacea for this in his book:

How would the ANC protect the rights of the white minority? They wanted to know. I said that there was no organization in the history of South Africa to compare with the ANC in terms of trying to unite all the people and races of South Africa. I referred them to the preamble of the Freedom Charter: ‘South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white.’ I told them that whites were Africans as well, and that in any future dispensation the majority would need the minority. ‘We do not want to drive you into the sea’... (1994:527)

Here again the KD makes a valid point to illustrate that there are no winners in an oppressive or tyrannical situation:

Apartheid is a system whereby a minority regime elected by one small section of the population is given an explicit mandate to govern in the interests of, and for the benefit of, the white community. Such a mandate or policy is by definition hostile to the common good of all the people. In fact because it tries to rule in the exclusive interests of whites and not in the interests of all, it ends up ruling in a way that is not even in the interests of those whites. It becomes an enemy of all the people. A tyrant. A totalitarian regime. A reign of terror. (1986:23)

#### **5.7.1.10 Could disengagement from political activity be caused by “struggle fatigue” for some?**

There is the danger that those who drive reconstruction could be suffering from what has been coined as “struggle fatigue”, that is, tiredness from being constantly engaged in a continuous fight in one form or another against apartheid. But even if they did not suffer from this, there is this very human element of those who were involved in the struggle that they should in a way serve their own interests first and an understandable stance of entitlement. Jean-Paul Sartre in his Preface to Frantz Fanon’s Book has described the onset of this fatigue of oppressed people in the following manner:

Sheer physical fatigue will stupefy them. Starved and ill, if they have any spirit left, fear will finish the job; guns are levelled at the peasant; civilians come to take over his land and force him by dint of flogging to till the land for them. If he shows fight, the soldier’s fire and he’s a dead man; if he gives in, he degrades himself and he is no longer a man at all; shame and fear will split up his character and make his inmost self fall to pieces. The business is conducted with flying colours and by experts: the ‘psychological services’ weren’t established yesterday; nor was brain-washing. And yet, in spite of all their efforts their ends are not achieved... (Fanon, 1963:13)

The efforts to destroy the leaders of the struggle and even the ordinary people who suffered did not succeed indeed because the majority has emerged strong and decisive. But that should not deceive the people into thinking that there have been no scars emanating from the battle against oppression. There are people of all colours, who have this belief that it is possible now to forget what happened and move on. This researcher strongly agrees that South Africans cannot linger for too long on the past. The past becomes extremely complicated and at times incorrigible for it has tarnished all, both oppressor and oppressed. It definitely must be used as a point of reference though because it is the people's history and it is what made them who they are. Jean-Paul Sartre says it succinctly:

Our victims know us by their scars and by their chains, and it is this that makes their evidence irrefutable. It is enough that they show us what we made of them for us to realise what we have made of ourselves. (op. cit. p12)

Personal pride might make people deny the facts of oppression. But this denial is far more dangerous to any transforming society in that there will be no proper diagnosis of challenges and thus no correct remedy that can be applied. It does not need a rocket scientist to understand the implications of these denials. There is no way people can live for years in the mud and filth of apartheid, both oppressed and oppressors, and still come out of that situation unscathed. For example, Archbishop Tutu Emeritus recounts how difficult it had been during the first meetings of the TRC for people to trust each other:

We came from diverse backgrounds and we were to discover that apartheid had affected us all in different ways. We learned to our chagrin that we were a microcosm of South African society, more deeply wounded than we had at first imagined. We found that we were often very suspicious of one another and that it was not easy to develop real trust in one another. We realised only later that we were all victims of a potent conditioning which gave us ready made judgments of those who belonged to other groupings, although we

would, most of us, have protested vehemently that we were not using stereotypes. (1999:70)

The above should really dispel the tendency to deny that years of oppression left scars on the lives of the people of South Africa. Apartheid was not just an enemy of black people. It was a highly toxic attack on the community of South Africa. This attack came in many varied forms as Ramphela points out. It was also under-girded by the abuse of the security systems of the country and the corruption of the personnel running those systems, as Tutu realised at the TRC hearings. That is why it is so vital to have this transformation which Ramphela describes in the following words:

The term 'transformation' is used here to denote fundamental changes in the structures, institutional arrangements, policies, modes of operation and relationships within society. (2008:13)

The lifting of the lid from a boiling pot brings its own challenges and fair share of violent protests. There are reasons for this:

After decades of exploitation and repression, and after two decades of creeping poverty and rising unemployment, the poorer segment of the population (almost exclusively black) was living in abject poverty and destitution. It was indeed going to be an enormous task to get the South African economy going again, to restore its international standing and to reconcile the distributional conflicts that the transformation from the apartheid regime towards a democratic dispensation unleashed. (Kakwanja P and Kondlo K, 2009:107)

#### **5.7.1.11 Globalisation and the negative effects of multinationals and market forces**

Today governments are unable to secure freedom for those they govern. The operative word in the twenty-first century is *profits*. The profit motif leads to a smaller labour force being needed to do the work which used to be done by



many people. Mechanisation of work has led to huge unemployment. Outsourcing of work has deprived many workers of social benefits such as pensions and medical aid, just to name but a few of these ills. Malls in the black townships have killed the corner shops. This appears to be the new kairos and is much more difficult than the fight against apartheid. It is captured in the words of Patrick Bond who describes a phenomenon called global apartheid:

The phenomenon of global apartheid is defined by Washington-based Africa advocates Salih Booker and Bill Minter as ‘an international system of minority rule whose attributes include differential access to basic human rights, wealth and power. (2004:4)

This is the new challenge that is facing the world and governments. Whereas there used to be nation states, today they are merely nation states by name only. Markets determine what governments will do. Kim Yong Bock states in an article quoted by the researcher:

The nation state was supposed to be the political expression of the people’s will and sovereignty. It was to provide security against foreign enemies and socio-economic threats, and to ensure the welfare of all the people. Now in many ways its role is superseded by the corporate powers, that is, *the trans-national powers in the global market* (my emphasis). (Quoted by Mabuza in Speckman & Kaufmann, 2001:108)

A similar view is mentioned by Terreblanche in his analysis of the situation after apartheid in South Africa:

But with the rise of global capitalism and the ideology of neo-colonialism, power relations within the industrialised countries (the so-called Rich North) shifted drastically towards private sector corporations. In all capitalist-oriented countries – but especially those of the Rich North – power has been concentrated in the hands of the relatively small managerial elite of large corporations which control not

only huge economies and financial resources, but also formidable ideological and propaganda power... the economic, financial, and ideological power concentrated in the Rich North has also increased dramatically vis-à-vis that of the governments of countries in the Poor South. (Terreblanche, 2002:104)

Yong Bock though, maintains that governments are not completely powerless. They can still do something for their people.

Still, a truly democratic state can do much for the people. But increasingly the political effectiveness of liberal democracy is being questioned, even as dictatorial states are being rejected. The result is political helplessness. (Speckman & Kaufmann, 2001:108)

In other words, the challenge is for good leadership even in such situations. A good leader is not afraid to make tough decisions as long as he or she knows that they will benefit the people. Ramphela again comes to the fore when this point is raised:

Leadership is vital for this shift to occur, whether at the personal, family, community, institutional or societal levels. Good leaders expand the boundaries of possibility to enable others to reach beyond what they thought were their limits. (2008:27)

Governments find themselves unable to carry out social programmes that have meaning even though there is no doubt that the will is there. Witness the many uprisings where people are crying for service delivery for which people are no longer prepared to wait. It is what they see happening in front of their eyes that causes this restlessness. The media plays no small part in directing the minds of people to issues that make them angry. Whilst it is understandable that the media has to do its work by exposing what is happening in the country, there are also many good things that have been done since the democratic government took over. Little is said of them.

It is also a fact that the new government has to compete with the private sector in salaries and other incentives. There have been endless fights between trade unions and the government and the Church's voice has not been heard. It is no longer a struggle against apartheid. It is about how to put food on the table. This is the challenge to both State and Church. The whole point about the Kairos Document, indeed, about the struggle for liberation, was so that people may not just be free, but actually have the minimum of their needs met. People want to be employed and be able to live healthy lives.

## **5.8 The promotion of transformation in South Africa**

### **5.8.1 Democracy creates space for the continuous struggle towards full humanity**

The question continues to be asked as to why in this new democratic dispensation, there seems to be a growing turmoil of protest against those who are the custodians of democracy. There is such a surprisingly high militancy in the protests that at times one would gain the impression that nothing has been done, since the new dispensation, to change the material conditions of the people. There is no doubt that there are unfulfilled needs. The Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) organised a celebration, in 1995, of ten years after the publication of the original Kairos Document in 1985. At that celebration there was a review of the three types of theologies as had been propounded by the KD. It is so remarkable that one of the testaments could well have been published yesterday in 2009:

While democracy and justice have made tremendous gains since the writing of the first Kairos Document, many people today experience a deep sense of disappointment, even disillusionment and anger. Many of the changes which people expected have not materialised. This is often described as the non-delivery of all that had been promised and hoped for. (Dladla, 1996:70-71)

While it is understandable that there are serious protests over poor service delivery, the new leadership has been voted for by the vast majority and appears willing to listen. So, ten years after the publication of the KD, the Kairos theologians agreed that Romans Chapter 13 had become applicable in that the new government was a democratically-elected one and could not be looked at as “undemocratic and illegitimate” (Dladla op cit:p76). The new government had become acceptable:

If the present government is democratic and legitimate, then we must now regard it as God’s servant working for our good and we are obliged, in terms of Romans 13, to obey the state. (ibid.)

Where does the Church fit in now? Archbishop Buti Tlhagale, in a special letter to the new President, Mr Jacob Zuma, made the following plea:

The greatest legacy that any leader can leave behind is one of enhanced dignity for all the people of South Africa. This dignity will be enhanced by choices, policies and programmes that are life giving. I would like to be part of this future and to see the churches and other faith-based communities contributing to the building of a life giving culture in South Africa. (*Sunday Times*, April 26, 2009)

One of the reasons for the slowness in nation building could be that at times some of those who are governing have adopted the same tendencies as those who were their masters before: Ramphele refers to China Achebe’s critique of post-colonial masters:

Achebe ascribes this failure of leadership to ‘the failure of our rulers to re-establish vital links with the poor and dispossessed of this country’. (2008:68)

It is thus essential to take intellectuals such as Ramphele seriously because they speak from a proven record of their involvement in the struggle against apartheid. The following words from her need to be noted:

The challenge for our young democracy is whether the political elites will rise to the task of establishing these vital links with all those who are poor and vulnerable. Such links are essential for the development of an ethos of civic duty amongst those serving the public that would compel them to put the interests of the poor people first. (ibid.)

Ramphela's words are also echoed by Archbishop Tlhagale in the open letter already cited above:

The voices of civil society and the faith-based community are important, but most important are the voices of the marginalised, the suffering and those who are not yet living the South African dream. (ibid.)

The other side of the coin, of course, is that there should be a commensurate effort to assist the poor to stand up and use the space created by the new dispensation. Mr Mandela, speaking about an ANC manifesto that combined the Reconstruction and Development Programme with affirmative action, called "A Better Life for All", gave the following warning:

Just as we told the people what we would do, I felt we must also tell them what we could not do. Many people felt life would change overnight after a free and democratic election, but that would be far from the case. Often I said to the crowds, 'Do not expect to be driving a Mercedes the day after the election or swimming in your own backyard pool.' I told our supporters, 'Life will not change dramatically, except that you will have increased your self-esteem and become a citizen in your own land... I challenged them. I did not patronize them... if you want better things, you must work hard. We cannot do it all for you; you must do it yourselves'. (1994:605)

South Africa is not going to grow from self-praise alone even though it is necessary not to be cynical about success and progress. Whilst it is acceptable to constantly express encouraging statements about the "rainbow

nation”, there is a need for a critical examination of where South Africans are and where they want to be. It will not help in the development of the country to use intimidating accusations such as labelling critics as Afro-pessimists when people express critical statements regarding the slowness of progress in the new democracy.

Being self-critical is a bitter medicine which has to be taken by South Africans if a strong nation of self-reliant people is to develop to its maximum potential. South Africans should not do things to please the world only but should do them to please themselves mainly. If it is true that in ordinary life those individuals who do not indulge in a critical analysis of their own actions seldom reach very far, it should also be true of any nation. If it is true that a person who always lives on blaming others, rightly or wrongly, does not get very far in life so too is it true with a nation that attributes all blame to others. Much as the Bible says one cannot live by bread alone, nations cannot live by blame alone, if that slight distortion of Jesus’ saying could be allowed.

On the other hand, while the turmoil over service delivery mentioned above may appear to be disorderly and anarchic, it could be that the protesters are letting leaders know that their votes must not be taken for granted and that their liberation is non-negotiable. There is perhaps a thin line between a timocratic government – government by those who love honour – and a democratic one in which government is by the people, for the people and of the people. Freire’s words must not be ignored:

The revolution is made neither by the leaders for the people, nor by the people for the sake of the leaders, but by both acting together in unshakable solidarity. This solidarity is born only when the leaders witness to it by their humble, loving and courageous encounter with the people. (1970:124)

Perhaps herein lies the source of so much disgruntlement from the people, that they feel unloved and used. It could be that people want to see evidence of care and compassion from their leadership. Siphamandla Zondi, quoted

earlier, makes it clear that it is absolutely vital to have leaders who have vision and are prepared to lead in a bold manner: But he also decries the fact that no political party seems to be training leaders specifically to lead with a view to inspiring their own communities:

We need more than bricks and mortar. We need principled and conscientious leadership at a local level. We need men and women whose personal motives are to inspire and mobilise communities to take charge of their own development. No party can claim to have this calibre of leadership because none has a deliberate programme of leadership development. (*The Star*, July 28, 2009)

Freire makes the following apt observation that the oppressed tend to be emotionally dependent on their liberators and the liberators know this and will take advantage of it.

Using their dependence to create an even greater dependence is an oppressor tactic. (1970:53)

Liberators must understand that it is their duty to help the people who have become dependent so that they are able to reflect and act and help them to be independent. The researcher has already pointed out that the liberation of anyone is a sacred right. It is for this reason that people give their lives so that others may be free:

*However, not even the best-intentioned leadership can bestow independence as a gift. The liberation of the oppressed is a liberation of men (sic), not things (my emphasis). Accordingly, while no one liberates himself by his own efforts alone, neither is he liberated by others. Liberation, a human phenomenon, cannot be achieved by semi-humans... (ibid.)*

As this researcher pointed out elsewhere in this thesis (see 5.7.1.6 Political Patronage; 5:10 Kairos and Liberation) it others to then a is unacceptable for



people who liberate others to then abuse them by using methods such as patronage which creates further dependency:

When men are already dehumanized, due to the oppression they suffer, the process of their liberation must not employ the methods of dehumanisation. (ibid.)

### **5.8.2 Detoxification of the apartheid mentality: A necessity for transformation**

It is a difficult matter to talk as if there is now complete freedom when there are still quite a number of serious issues to deal with. Ramphela calls them the ghosts that must be laid to rest:

The process of transformation to normalise South Africa has at its core the laying to rest of these lingering ghosts lest they continue to haunt our future. The most stubborn ghosts are those whose names we are often too afraid to mention: racism, ethnic chauvinism, sexism, and authoritarianism. (op. cit. p10)

The apartheid era and particularly the days when the apartheid government was also fighting hard to retain its power, was a time of crisis. There had been this fallacy that after apartheid life would return to “normal”, and thus the end of the kairos. To reconstruct a new society even as the country is engaged in deconstructing apartheid is proving to be even more difficult as the South African icon, Mandela, pointed out above (1994:617). Transformation or substantial change is very demanding. Ramphela’s words on transformation cannot be ignored:

Transformation of a society entails a complete change in both form and substance, a metamorphosis, as happens in life cycles of insects such as butterflies...

The scale and scope South Africa embarked on after apartheid is without precedence. The country has had to wrestle simultaneously

with political, economic and social transformation at all levels.  
(Ramphela, 2008:13)

The statement above intimates that the burden on the leaders driving transformation is immeasurable. Leadership of this kind would demand single-mindedness and extremely selfless altruism. Ramphela also introduces a spiritual dimension to that leadership even as she elucidates the type of change that is envisioned:

Shifting the frame of reference is about transcendence. It is a deeply spiritual matter that forces one to be true to deep convictions even if one may be going against conventional wisdom. (2008:27)

Ramphela illustrates this change very clearly and this researcher agrees with her completely in this view and supports the following statement from her concerning transformation:

It is about making oneself vulnerable by abandoning known ways of seeing the world and engaging with others to explore different approaches. (ibid.)

### **5.8.3 The need for constant vigilance to safeguard liberation**

Among the liberated there will also be the new oppressors who want to practice how to wield power over others. To this researcher there will always be a *kairos* until everyone is truly and decisively free. As Taylor points out above, the people themselves need to know that nothing now stands between them and their progress in life. Half measures will not do and the efforts which end up creating a huge dependency syndrome will not liberate anyone. Dependency is another form of oppression because people become indebted to the one on whom they depend.

When we want to help the poor, we usually offer them charity. Most often we use charity to avoid recognizing the problem and finding a

solution for it. Charity becomes a way to shrug off our responsibility. But charity is no solution for poverty. Charity only perpetuates poverty by taking the initiative away from the poor. Charity allows us to go ahead with our lives without worrying about the lives of the poor. Charity appeases our consciences. (Yunus M, 1999:249)

Yunus' point for is unarguably true. But one would not like to discard charity altogether because there are times and situations which can only be helped by charity simply because the recipient is down and out. Charity then becomes like the oxygen mask for when someone cannot breathe on one's own but requires some assistance. There is thus sometimes a place charity before development. But definitely charity alone and as an end in itself cannot be viewed as development and consistent charity creates dependency. Ivan Illich argues that charity can also be used for control of the other:

Welfare is not a cultural hammock. It is an unprecedented mediation of scarce resources through agents who not only define what need is, and certify where it exists, but also closely supervise its remedy – with or without the needy's approval. Social insurance is not reliance on community support in case of disaster. Rather it is one of the ultimate forms of political control in a society in which protection against future risks is valued higher than access to present satisfaction or joy. (Sachs, 1992:96)

Being a black person in South Africa or in Africa sometimes gives the impression that it is an easy matter for rulers to feed their dictatorial appetite on those over whom they exercise control. It is for this reason that Nelson Mandela's pledge is so significant when he said at his inauguration:

We have, at last, achieved our emancipation. We pledge ourselves to liberate all our people from continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation, suffering, gender and other discrimination.

*Never, never, never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another...* (emphasis mine) The

sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement. Let freedom reign. God bless Africa! (1994:614)

Culture can, at times, also be abused as people become coerced into living in a particular way and are made to believe that the only life worth living is one where people live under certain specific rules. The immediate question is why do some want to control others? As democracy develops a new culture develops in which elected people act, not as servants of the people but as “bosses” because they are in control. It should never be forgotten that those who are elected should be servants of the people who elected them and should help in creating conditions in which people feel the difference of moving from oppression to liberation. People who serve should not be the ones who eat the food first before those they serve have eaten. One of the serious dangers in the liberation of people is the diversion that has been brought about by an unparalleled consumerism and a gluttony for acquisitions.

It has been said that the African National Congress’ Polokwane Conference is regarded by many as a prophetic life-changing episode because it was a radical response to and utter rejection of government by patronage as another form of subtle oppression. What happened at that conference may not have had a semblance of religion, but standing for the truth is as much a religious exercise as praying. When people reclaim their freedom, it is a religious exercise because freedom is God-given. The poor cannot be helped by a “helicopter” approach when dealing with their plight, just because the socio-political practitioner happens to be in better social circumstances than the poor. Jesus, for example, comes as:

...one of the poor, and as a poor man who showed solidarity with other poor people. (Pixley and Boff, 1989:58)

Indeed, the KD also mentions this point quite clearly:

Throughout his life Jesus associated himself with the poor and the oppressed and as the suffering (or oppressed) servant of Yahweh he suffered and died for us. "Ours were the sufferings he bore, ours the sorrows he carried" (Is. 53:4). He continues to do so even today. (1986:20)

It could be added here that it was not just about poor people but all the marginalised people of the world. Witness the number of daring encounters he made with the Samaritan woman at the well, or the man mugged on the road to Jericho, or Zaccheus the tax collector. Brueggemann calls it compassion:

Compassion constitutes a radical form of criticism, for it announces that the hurt is to be taken seriously, that the hurt is not to be accepted as normal and natural but is an abnormal and unacceptable condition of humanness. (1978:85)

The KD did not spell out what kind of liberation or freedom was possible, nor did the Kairos theologians spell out what was desirable. Within the legitimate clamour for service delivery, there should also be the awareness that the new democracy has come to create space for people to self-actualise. It would not be surprising if the new democratic government is striving to bring awareness to its citizens that people and communities can stand up and take responsibility for their lives. There is also a sense in which the uprisings are the flexing of muscles and an unmistakable refusal to be abused again by the powerful. It is truly ironic that what the KD said in 1986 can easily be repeated today even under the new dispensation. At the time of apartheid the following words were extremely relevant:

On the other hand we have those who do not benefit from the system the way it is now. They are treated as mere labour units, paid starvation wages... and all for the benefit of a privileged minority... They are no longer prepared to be crushed, oppressed and exploited. They are determined to change the system radically so that it no longer

benefits only the privileged few. And they are willing to do this even at the cost of their own lives. What they want is justice for all irrespective of race, colour, sex or status. (KD, 1986:21)

#### **5.8.4 The importance of faith and personal transformation in contributing towards radical change in communities**

The words of Nico Basson show how a person can be truly transformed and become a positive contributor to bringing about change in the country. He was born of conservative parents in the then Northern Transvaal and had been a soldier in the South African Defence Force (SADF) which was regarded as the arch enemy of the oppressed. He had served in Namibia as a soldier where the SADF had engaged in serious excesses. Basson decided to expose those excesses. He wrote:

I think peace and stability in this country (South Africa) can only be achieved when the individual goes through a transformation process. I changed my viewpoints after a long process of self discovery and development in the spiritual field. We must become facilitators of attitudes. We must change rigid attitudes towards a more open and holistic society... (Article: *Total Onslaught* in Tribute Magazine, 1992:30)

The above shows how important it is for people who want to be involved in transformation to be prepared to forego old paradigms with a view to creating new ones. Diamond cuts diamond as the saying goes. A change of paradigm is one of the most difficult exercises in a human-being's life, as this researcher can testify. Few people understand the power of accepting vulnerability once one's vision has changed. It often involves huge sacrifices which may include loss of life. This is the hidden and paradoxical power behind the crucifixion. For Jesus to be able to change the world it needed him to be crucified. The Mandelas, Sobukwes, Sisulus, Bikos, Hellen Josephs, Lillian Ngoyis all had to undergo their own form of "crucifixion" before they could be effective in bringing about change. The story of Ramphela herself is another example. And she makes it clear what type of leadership could drive that change:

Leadership is vital for this change to occur, whether at a personal, family, community, institutional or societal levels. Good leaders expand the boundaries of possibility to enable others to reach beyond what they thought were the limits. (ibid.)

Ramphela's views above also coincide with the researcher's in his belief that it is not just leaders who are benevolent that are needed for transformation. It is also very vital to have inspiring leaders who are able to awaken the true spirit of the people to stand up and regain their own pride in doing things for themselves especially when space for this has been created. Wounded people do not need leaders who encourage a victim mentality which constantly feeds upon blame, whether that blame is legitimate or not. Wounds must be dressed and it is well-known how persistent hurt can be and how indelible the marks of wounds of oppression can be; but there are people who have already paid the ultimate price for this liberation and created space which must be taken full advantage of.

The well-known stories of people such as Viktor Frankel about how they survived Hitler's concentration camps, and the South African heroes of the struggle, Nelson Mandela and the men with him at Robben Island, including Robert Sobukwe who was in isolation on Robben Island, gave all people an awareness of a new way of life, a philosophy that made it possible for victims of heinous oppression to realise that it was not what happened to you that mattered most but rather what it is that you do in life with what happened to you. There are countless women who not only stood by their husbands but who also fought for the struggle in their own right, while others joined the liberation armies against oppression. They chose to be in control of their situation rather than be controlled by it. It is these men and women of tremendous resilience who remain a reservoir of strength for South Africans.

The power of religion in general, and in the researcher's case, Christianity in particular, to give courage to many people so deprived has been the reason why many down-trodden people espoused this religion. The present researcher can at this stage only speak of Christianity specifically because of



personal experience, and is not intending to pit Christianity against other religions. The restoration of dignity and self-respect goes with the recognition of one's ability to think for oneself. Part of the new democratic dispensation should include this resuscitation of self-respect and recognition of other people's thinking capabilities. Moltmann's words in this regard are incisive. He states that the Gospel announces the Lordship of God (Yahweh) which will be limitless and boundless and brings with it righteousness, fellowship and peace. The announcement is addressed to all those who experience life as misery. These are the prisoners, all those who are poor and oppressed and whose lives are filled with hopelessness.

The message that God has seized the power over his enslaved people is the call to the new exodus: "Awake, awake, put on your strength. O Zion... loose the bonds from your neck... (Is.52:11f)... The new exodus into freedom surpasses the old one through its festive character... In the proximity of the rule of God, what was till then impossible becomes possible. (1977:78)

One of the most outstanding outcomes of liberation by God is that one is now able to choose, whereas before, because the person had been so poor and oppressed, choice was a luxury. Much as Moltmann puts it poetically this researcher fully endorses his view on liberation:

The fetters are no longer binding. They can be thrown away. Weakness is no longer unnerving. Men can lay hold of its strength. Dust is no longer degrading. It can be shaken off. In the proximity of the rule of God, that is to say, 'petrified conditions begin to dance'. Hope becomes realistic because reality is full of every potentiality. Even though liberation is made possible through the message 'God is king', yet it is equally the act of men who 'free themselves', who repent and go forth. (ibid.)

The above mentioned words add to this researcher's argument that in most cases people's liberation is not treated as a sacred right, nor is it treated with

the respect and dignity it deserves. It is thus very essential that people who were in the dumps, who were down and out, hopelessly oppressed, must themselves be participatory to their development. It is dangerous “to do things for people” as that kind of act will merely serve to increase people’s reliance upon things being done for them:

Participation is practised widely in development circles... It inspires what is sometimes referred to as the ‘non-operational’ approach which refuses to do things for people or over their heads but at the very least works with them and at best enables them to do what they are perfectly capable of doing for themselves. (Taylor, 2000:100)

One of the essential requirements of any leader is to rekindle among the people that confidence to know and act with the understanding that people are born with dignity and sufficient capacity to think for themselves. People must be free to even make mistakes as long as the process is about learning:

[Participation] guards against the notion that outsiders know best, even if an outsider’s perspective can be useful. It accepts that people, whether rich or poor, are as wise as anyone about what is best for them and how to bring it about. Participation respects their ability to and assumes that everyone has a contribution to make... (ibid.)

#### **5.8.5 The revival of Ubuntu as a way of life for South Africa’s transformation**

It is this researcher’s contention that if action for liberation is devoid of compassionate leadership it becomes an exercise in both egotism and narcissism. Compassion should always be the driving force for wanting to lead or for agreeing to lead when requested to do so by the populace. It is the same compassion that Africans refer to as ubuntu. Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane, Chairperson of University of Cape Town Council, gives the following explanation:

In Africa, the word “ubuntu” wonderfully encapsulates so much... It means “I am, because we belong together”. It is to live and care for others, being kind, just, fair, compassionate, trustworthy, honest, assisting those in need and upholding good morals. Ubuntu is about generous magnanimity towards others – especially those who are different. Ubuntu can help us in the vital task of forging a South African identity. (Article: *Another View*, *Sunday Times*, August 9, 2009)

To be abused again after the struggle for liberation is supposed to have been won is unacceptable. The word cruelty is used here because nothing can ever justify the erosion of people’s rights again after a liberation war had been won and new leaders have taken over. It does happen at times that some former comrades of the struggle can stand in solidarity with leaders who have lost the plot and no longer have the vision they once had of a free people. Freire’s thesis hits the nail on the head when he says:

Not all men (sic) have sufficient courage for this encounter – but when men avoid encounter they become inflexible and treat others as mere objects, instead of nurturing life, they kill life; instead of searching for life, they flee from it. And these are oppressor characteristics. (1970:124)

What runs through Christian theology is this powerful metaphor of life where John quotes Jesus telling his disciples that:

I came that they might have life and have it in abundance. (John, 10:10)

Echegaray also states quite clearly:

Jesus chose the way of complete solidarity with the masses. A power not based on this kind of solidarity would have been power founded on a lie... a power not exercised in solidarity with the masses is a

perfidious power and a power threatened at its very foundations.  
(1980:30)

The above simply means that anyone who does not mind being led by leaders who despise them has been completely subjugated. Echegaray further emphatically makes the point that:

Jesus does not accept hierarchies built on a foundation of wealth and oppression. (1980:87)

## **5.9 The KD and economic justice**

Kairos theologians had not realised that political liberation was toothless without economic liberation. The number of uprisings calling for service delivery against the democratically elected government attests to this. The KD concentrated more on the system of apartheid with its core of racism without emphasising that the refusal to share resources of the land equally was the driving force behind the oppressive system. Mamphela Ramphele elucidates this point quite unequivocally:

Political freedom without economic power has proved meaningless to countless post-colonial countries. This becomes apparent when one compares the post-colonial development of African countries with that of the 'Asian tigers' (Hong Kong, Singapore, North Korea and Taiwan). These Asian countries first achieved economic power, which led to high levels of economic growth and industrialisation, resulting in their establishing themselves as developed countries by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (2008:21)

This researcher agrees wholly with Ramphele that for political freedom to be truly experienced as genuine liberation it should go hand in hand with economic power. That was the reason why people were oppressed and precisely why people fought against their oppression. The serious offence of apartheid was not just about discrimination. It was also about human dignity.

The African Ubuntu had been grossly violated. The philosophy and spirituality of Ubuntu says:

Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu (IsiZulu)

Motho ke motho ka batho (SeSotho)

A human being is a human being through other human beings

This ubuntu philosophy, which is the core of this researcher's culture, involves quite a number of issues which are also evident in other people's writings. For example, ubuntu philosophy would be in agreement with Pobee's view that the poor are not only those without power, but also those with power:

Poverty is a reminder of the heartlessness in the world and by the same token a call to the rich and powerful to return to their humanity.  
(1987:67)

It is a fact though, that while economic freedom is the sine qua non of any liberation, it comes with a certain price: realignment of norms and values and a change of behaviour. It does become an unavoidable irony when those who were materially poor during the time of the struggle suddenly become well to do and actually begin to flaunt it. What usually happens in instances like these is that those who suddenly become well-to-do begin to develop an attitude towards their peers who are still wallowing in dire poverty. The reason for this seems to be, as Pobee observes:

The issue of poverty is of course linked with issues of power. Wealth goes with power. (1987:61)

## **5.10 The KD and liberation**

What then is freedom? Or put in a different way, what is liberation? What is the core of it? The researcher reluctantly observes that when decolonisation in Africa began in Ghana in the early 1960's there has not been a commensurate tendency to respect the God-given right of persons to be truly

free. For example, the Gospel perspective on liberation is based on the fact that whenever people came to Jesus he would ask them one question: “What would you wish I do for you?” Jesus never imposed himself on people. The power to choose is a sacred one and belongs to those who experience freedom and has always to be respected (see p220 above). The kind of God who says, “Listen! I stand at the door and knock” (Rev 3:20 Today’s English Version) makes a statement that ultimately the choice is yours to open the door simply because even if God has the power to do so, God leaves that prerogative to the individual to make a choice. Leaders of the people need to respect that right for people to choose. Ellul empowers his readers when he says that to accept liberation means the following:

Accepting freedom is to recognise that one is under the protection of God alone. Conversely, to put oneself under the protective authority of God is to be free. To seek any other protection whether it be in the army, in fortresses, in alliances, or in the state, is to fall into slavery again. If there is freedom only because God frees Israel, an exclusive relation between Israel and God is implied, and the liberator is thus the only security that this people can find. (1976:97)

To have power should not necessarily be viewed as an evil in itself. It is the use of it that is of material importance here. It is impossible to claim solidarity with the poor masses while exhibiting symptoms of dominance in whatever form, as Ellul so brilliantly articulated above. The reason for this proviso is found in Helder Camara’s words again:

The temptation of people endured to long centuries of domination, which have deprived them, and still deprive them, of the right to think, to make decisions, and to act, is to wait passively until they are told what they must do. When the lay and religious animators who devote themselves to them tell them that they have not come to act for them but with them, they come up against the fear of brutal repression; the poor do not dare to speak, to express themselves, to act, for fear of being crushed by the strong. (1979:49)

Camara makes a very valid point especially when he mentions how people who have “endured long centuries of domination” have had their God-given ability to think being filtered away by deprivation, and how those same people were afraid to make decisions because of the fear of brutal repression. Fear becomes a powerful instrument for the conditioning of the mind.

Freire’s words hit the mark here in support of the researcher’s agreement with Camara:

...the oppressed, who have adapted to the structure of domination in which they are immersed, and have become resigned to it, are inhibited from waging the struggle for freedom so long as they feel incapable of running the risks it requires. (1970:32)

While the KD did not spell out in detail the desired outcome with regard to the type of freedom it was advocating, it nevertheless looked to a futuristic result:

A prophetic theology of our times will focus attention on the future. What kind of future do the oppressed people of South Africa want? What kind of future do the political organisations of the people want? What kind of future does God want? And how, with God’s help are we going to secure that future for ourselves? We must begin to plan the future now but above all we must heed God’s call to action to secure God’s future for ourselves in South Africa. (1986:26)

#### **5.10.1 The search for liberation: A continuous process**

The kind of freedom that was being envisaged was not politically explicit and the KD did not insist on spelling out what true liberation would entail. The KD did not state what it is that frees people to be who they want to be. If it was a business it could be said that the KD did not spell out key performance areas (KPA’s) with which the liberation could be gauged once it had been attained. It is not surprising then when other people begin to wonder whether the eyes of the people were distracted and their gaze removed from the ball:



Electing a democratically legitimate government should never have been understood as somehow delegating our obligation to continue to safeguard and deepen that democracy. Hence, standing back today and citing a lack of decisive leadership from government is not a valid position to take. The question is: how did we fail to advance the transformation that in 1994, at least, we could acknowledge would require radical structural transformation? (Isobel Frye, Director at Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute, *Sunday Times*, June 8, 2009)

Frye gives some explanation for this lack of foresight:

Part of the explanation might be that, in the moment of victory, we lost faith in ourselves. The gargantuan task that lay before us cowered our belief that we could fashion a nation along the principles that had always guided us – equality, dignity and freedom. We chose to be guided by international voices, who hailed our victory in one breath, yet gave us the “real rules” of the game [in the] next. (ibid.)

The KD was also too cautious and not bold enough to say what would safeguard people’s freedom. To be governed does not imply subservience to some powerful individual or group of individuals who alone call the tune. The KD mentions that as much as the Jews were under the yoke of the Romans, they also suffered from internal oppression:

In the time of Jesus the Jews were oppressed by the Romans, the great imperial superpower of those days. But what was far more immediate and far more pressing was the internal oppression of the poor and the ordinary people by the Herods, the rich, the chief priests and elders, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. These were the groups who were experienced more immediately as oppressors... (1986:20)

The above is very interesting because it could have certain implications regarding what actually constitutes oppression. The KD speaks of Rome as

the imperial power of the day using surrogates to govern those in Rome's domain. There have been quite a number of examples where one type of oppression was substituted for another. Today there are different forms of superpowers: for example the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). At the tenth commemoration of the publication of the KD, Kairos Theologians who had re-assembled, including invited overseas partners, issued a report in the form of a booklet entitled *Kairos 95 – At The Threshold of Jubilee*. The title of the report had been the theme of the conference. (The researcher was then General Secretary of the ICT and had engineered the commemoration with Dr Molefe Tsele as the organiser of the conference.)

### **5.10.2 The indivisibility of freedom**

It is mind-boggling how tyranny actually imprisons even those who run it and keep it going. Those who are oppressors also need to be liberated from an oppressive system. The KD does imply this view in the following words:

As Christians we are called upon to love our enemies (Mt 5:44). .. once we have identified our enemies, we must endeavour to love them. That is not always easy. But then we must also remember that the most loving thing we can do for both the oppressor and for our enemies who are oppressors is to eliminate the oppression, remove the tyrants from power and establish a just government for the common good of all the people. (1986:24)

Nelson Mandela was unequivocal about the need to liberate whites also: He mentioned that freedom was indivisible:

It was during these long and lonely years that my hunger for the freedom of my own people became a hunger for the freedom of all people, white and black. I knew as well as I knew anything that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed... I am not truly free when I take away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I

am not free when my freedom is taken away from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity. (1994:617)

One of the scourges of oppression is that it tends to leave a mark on both oppressor and oppressed and it could be that the new leaders then emulate their previous masters:

The oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor, and adopted his guidelines are fearful of freedom. Freedom would require them to eject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility. Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. (Freire, 1970:31)

One would hope that the following words of Michael Taylor would not prove to have been prophetic of the new dispensation in South Africa. Taylor makes a critical view about the Magnificat in Luke 1:46-55. He finds that it does not promote harmony in the power relations between those who were oppressed and their oppressors:

The kind of strategy hinted at in the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) and informing many a revolution is no solution. To remove the mighty from their thrones and exalt the humble and meek and those of low degree is only to offer another social group the opportunity to behave like the one before, once power is in their hands. One oppressor with his egocentric behaviour is simply replaced by another. (2000:95)

Taylor talks of the possibility of these activists as having exchanged places with their former oppressors and also having appropriated their values. Thus the fight against colonialism does not just then become a fight against injustice alone, but subconsciously becomes a yearning to have what the oppressors have, as it becomes evident that most of the behavioural mode and lifestyle of the oppressor is now inhabited by most of those previously-oppressed and are now in the position of power which brings them closer to the pot of gold. It is indeed interesting that there is a term “previously

disadvantaged” as compared for example with “previously oppressed”. Fanon spoke about some of these previously oppressed leaders when he said:

The colonised man (sic) is an envious man. And this the settler knows very well; when their glances meet he ascertains bitterly, always on the defensive ‘They want to take our place’. It is true, for there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler’s place. (1963:30)

The above could be true for ordinary political wrangles where oppression is merely in respect of one party over another. The above-held views by Taylor and Fanon do not hold water in the South African situation. It could be that individuals will behave in such an egocentric and even autocratic manner. But it does mean South Africa is unique because of the checks and balances of its world class constitution safeguarded by a Constitutional Court.

But there are other prophets who are not necessarily Church leaders. The reference here is to Nelson Mandela who stated categorically:

I have never cared very much for personal prizes. A man does not become a freedom fighter in the hope of winning awards... (1994:603)  
(Mr Mandela was referring to his excitement when he heard that he and Mr de Klerk had jointly won the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize)

The exemplary leadership style of Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and others, in word and deed, needs to be emulated. One often wonders what South Africa would have been like had these leaders been freed much earlier from Robben Island, and those in exile returned. It remains the task of present-day prophets to guard against what Fanon cautioned against:

In Capitalist societies the educational system, whether lay or clerical, the structure of moral reflexes handed down from father to son (sic), the exemplary honesty of workers who are given a medal after fifty years of good and loyal service, and the affection which springs from harmonious relations and good behaviour – all these aesthetic

expressions of respect for the established order serve to create around the exploited person an atmosphere of submission and of inhibition which lightens the task of policing considerably. In capitalist countries a multitude of moral teachers, counsellors and 'bewilderers' separate the exploited from those in power. (1963:29)

It is noteworthy that Fanon is not specific but generalises about those in power. Fortunately in South Africa lessons from the past have been learnt and chances of the above happening again are slim.

There are two ways of looking at the struggle in relation to Prophetic Theology and the new South African dispensation. It can be accepted that confusion reigned supreme when the announcement came that a new democratic order was coming.

### **5.10.3 Liberation: Space for reconstruction**

It is always easier to stand against than to stand for something. The struggle was against the system of apartheid and that was a clear and measurable target. Reconstruction is far more difficult. Much as apartheid was a heinous crime against humanity, it united all people of goodwill, black and white, to stand up and be counted. In South Africa it can be said that, in spite of the fact that there was no outright military victory against apartheid forces, political and moral victory was assured.

The new dispensation meant that the time for reconstruction had arrived. A number of issues had to be taken into account, however. It had to be acknowledged that there were some formidable, though not insurmountable challenges, militating against a full realisation of the fruits of democracy.

It is unfortunate that, even as South Africa celebrates a democratically-elected government which reputedly has one of the best constitutions in the world, children have been dying unnecessarily from malnutrition and from HIV/Aids. Sadly also, even though apartheid is officially over, South Africa is host to more than two million refugees from Zimbabwe and other neighbouring

countries where there is strife. Others have come into infected by mothers, due to the lack of a comprehensive programme for addressing the issue. Fortunately, the government has again taken up the fight against the pandemic with a new vigour.

Even though South Africa does have an obligation to assist its neighbouring countries, as those countries had done for us during the apartheid years, the huge immigration does put a strain on the country's economy. It is still debatable whether South Africa could have contributed more decisively towards justice and compassion by using more effective methods to bring an end to an oppressive regime in Zimbabwe.

## **5.11 The meaning of moral and political victory over Apartheid**

### **5.11.1 Resisting the temptation to dwell on bitterness and blame**

One of the unintended consequences that comes with oppression was well-captured by Mr Mandela when he alluded to the outcomes which had not been foreseen by the oppressor:

But the decades of oppression and brutality had another unintended effect, and that was that it produced the Oliver Tambos, the Walter Sisulus, the Chief Luthulis, the Yusuf Dadoos, the Bram Fischers, the Robert Sobukwes of our time – men of such extraordinary courage, wisdom and generosity that their like may never be known again. Perhaps it requires such depths of oppression to create such heights of character. My country is rich in the minerals and gems that lie beneath its soil, but I have always known that its greatest wealth is its people, finer and truer than the purest diamonds. (1994:615)

It is very interesting that, whilst Mandela mentions the struggle against the oppression of one human-being by another, even at that time, he had also realised like the KD had, that the fight against apartheid was a fight against a system rather than the people themselves. He simply refused to attack the

persons who had themselves already been dehumanised by a system in which there would never be any winners because oppression always shows up the oppressor as a pathetic loser. Mandela therefore knew that he and his comrades was engaged in fighting the system of apartheid which had imprisoned the very people who had espoused it because they also had no peace. It was a system that capitalised on skin colour or race. Therefore all who lived in this system were imprisoned because all people, whether black or white, had been born with their respective colours and that was never going to change. It is for this reason also that racism is evil whichever way one looks at it. It is also true that racism and power go together and that those that tend to use power find themselves in a position which they use to marginalise others.

There is also the challenge of resisting the temptation to play the blame game whenever it is suitable. This is not a suggestion for abandoning history, otherwise why would there still be commemorations of the holocaust long after it had occurred? It would be wrong to forget that for more than three and a half centuries black people were not just oppressed but were dispossessed of their land, their culture and their dignity. That will stay true whether people remember it or not. But there is also the need to move forward so as to counter the effects of what black people went through and to become a serious player in world affairs. If an individual lives a life of continuously blaming others, whether true or not, that individual usually does not succeed in life. The same is true of a nation.

#### **5.11.2 Eschewing self-pity arising from a mentality of victimhood**

The other serious challenge is how to fight against the understandable temptation of living with the mentality of victimhood. In this new democratic South Africa, black people need to know that nobody can now victimise them as they are now running the country. Instead of self-pity and behaving like victims, blacks now need to remember that they are survivors and that they must join the government as it embarks on nation building. The building of a strong and progressive country requires moving forward with the knowledge



that apartheid has been vanquished forever. Of course it cannot just be forgotten that there has been a lot of damage in many ways. But time does not stand still and the need for reconstruction has become increasingly urgent. It has to be admitted though that the past does create a mentality that causes people to stall while gazing on their victimhood even when this mentality prevents their advancement and development. There is always a sphere of control, however small, where the person or individual has to make some kind of choice as was made by people like Nelson Mandela and Victor Frankel and thousands others who, as mentioned earlier, showed in their lives with regard to the torture they suffered and incarceration they experienced that with their strong resilience they could not never be destroyed.

### **5.12 The long route of the South African Kairos**

Reading Sol Plaatjie's book, *Native Life in South Africa*, it becomes clear that the notion that kairos is a one time event must be discarded, considering the setbacks that black people had to suffer since the formation of the union in 1910. The Native Land Act of 1913, for example, which gave rise to blacks becoming "squatters" (2007:50ff), was only meant for black people and no white person in spite of coming from outside South Africa has ever been called a "squatter", even today. Of all the laws in South Africa, this was the most disempowering because it actually made Africans landless and thus without any means of remaining independent:

And no matter what other principles one might read into the Act, it would be found that the principles underlying it were those of extending the 'Free' State land laws throughout the Union – an extension by which natives would be prohibited from investing their earnings in land whereon they could end their days in peace. (ibid.)

It is not surprising that Plaatjie quotes a Wesleyan minister who said about the signing of this Act by the then Governor General:

I blush to think that His Majesty's representative signed a law like this and signed it in such circumstances. (ibid.)

Plaatjie himself agreed with the strong sentiment expressed above:

Personally we must say that if anyone had told us at the beginning of 1913, that a majority of members of the Union parliament were capable of passing a law like the Natives' Land Act, whose objective was to prevent natives from ever rising above the position of servants for whites, we would have regarded that person as a fit subject for the lunatic asylum. (2007:57)

It is not surprising that in Plaatjie's observation the debate concerning this Act created great alarm:

As might have been expected, the debate on the Bill created the greatest alarm amongst the native population, for they had followed its course with the keenest interest. (2007:51)

Countless efforts were made to rectify the situation but without success. The above is mentioned to highlight how in a sense, the Land Act was also part of a kairos for black South Africans. Therefore a kairos is a long process with given moments for people to act. It is for this reason that a new moment in the long kairos could not be amiss even in this new dispensation. An explanation of this view follows below.

The challenges for black people in this country have been many and varied. One of these challenges was brought about by the introduction of a landless population that was turned into squatters on their own land. The 1948 rise to power of the Nationalist Party became another very decisive moment because it brought in a host of extremely disempowering laws against black people and the policy of apartheid became entrenched. Fighting this policy cost lives and many families became scarred for life.

Even now:

Four out of every ten employed South Africans are unable to cope with account payments, and at least one-fifth of civil servants are under garnishee orders, in which they are locked for the next four years.

This is according to Statistics SA data, which show that the number of civil summonses issued for debt increased by more than 10 percent in the three months to May, compared with the same period last year.

(*The Star, Business Report*, July 24, 2009)

The above has been quoted so as to highlight and juxtapose the plight of the unemployed as compared with those who are employed. If the employed feel the pressures of financial vulnerability, what prospects could there be for the unemployed. This is what the former Minister of Social Development, Dr Zola Skweyiya, warned about as mentioned earlier.

Matthew Lester, in a column titled Tax Talk, also makes the point that the government cannot on its own and alone create jobs. He refers to the statistics of the unemployed and says:

Isn't it terrible how flippant we are about these numbers (sic). It doesn't matter what the official unemployment rate is, if you are unemployed, it's 100%. And nobody can tell you how desperate that is, unless they've been there.

The problem is that we confuse "participation" with whingeing.

Our constitution encourages us to debate in everything we do. But we complain and offer no constructive suggestions.

Creating jobs is just not going to happen if we leave it to the government alone. Jobs are found in an ecosystem created by role-players. And South Africa's role-players are at war with one another and it's high time for a cease-fire. (*Business Times* section in the *Sunday Times*, June 14, 2009, Professor of Taxation Studies at Rhodes university)

### 5.13 The position of the Church in the new South Africa

It can therefore be said that, indeed, increasing poverty and unemployment are some of the elements of the new kairos. Whereas during the apartheid era it was Church versus State, people like Lester are calling for a new matrix for doing things. The Church needs to begin to be realistic in its view of the Kingdom of God. The Lord's Prayer is about calling the Kingdom of God to happen here on earth "as it is in Heaven". Sermons alone are not going to bring about this transformation.

If the Church is not prepared to be in dialogue with not just the State but also with Trade Unions, Big and Small Business and the unemployed, its impact will be minimal. The Church has been too quiet after 1994. Church-State relations do not always have to be antagonistic. South Africa needs to adopt the African family values that prevailed before the confusion that occurred after colonisation that destroyed African culture with its spirituality of ubuntu. Africans had families to which all those of that clan and surname belonged. It is only after colonisation that, as Africans were being deflowered of their culture, they began to speak of extended families as opposed to just 'families'.

The kairos is here no longer caused by the present South African Government as this Government now belongs to the people. Whatever crisis there is in the country it has to involve the Church. The Church in particular seems paralysed in the new dispensation. According to Kumalo the reason for this inertia is to be found in the following:

The Church is suffering from a struggle fatigue. Those who were active then have now become tired. There is also a sense that the Church is asking itself the question: how must it relate to a legitimate government? Things have become complex whereas things have been simple before: the Church was fighting an apartheid system of government ... (Interview)

One seems to sense a paralysis of inaction never experienced before in the South African churches. The Church should not underestimate its ability to effectively influence events in spite of its own weak disposition. Kumalo also made the following point:

The Church needs to have a strong leadership in place, with basic principles and with a particular agenda. There is what we call a *missio ecclesia* where the Church has a mission to itself, and a *Missio Dei* where the Church has a mission of God out there. Thus the Church must strengthen itself because it is only a powerful Church that can withstand powerful forces of oppression. (Interview)

Dr Alan Boesak, addressing a conference on World Mission and Evangelism held in San Antonio, Texas, in May 1989 - and at which the present researcher, who was then director of Mission and Evangelism at the SACC, was leading a delegation from the SACC - pointedly mentioned the following:

The church is not prophetic when we make our decisions in assembly or in the synod or wherever. The church is only prophetic when we have somehow found the courage to live that confession in the world and to live out God's will in the world. (In Wilson, 1990:158)

In that same address, Boesak made the following wish:

It is a wonderful thing to be able to say to your children: "I am in this battle now, but you don't have to worry. But you don't have to fight, because your fight is with other things..." My son will one day speak to this gathering, but he will not come and tell you about children dying, or about children in detention, or about P. W. Botha or whatever their names may be as the years go by. He will not tell you about these things. He will speak to you of other things. Of love, justice, compassion and mercy that our country in the end learned to understand. (op. cit. 161)

Sylvia Talbot, then vice-moderator of the WCC Central Committee, speaking at the same conference as Dr Boesak above, made this assertion:

Words are powerful. I am sometimes critical of our propensity to resolutions and statements, especially when they are not followed up by action. Yet I know that when the Christian community speaks with a common voice against a travesty of justice, or to advocate justice and peace, its voice is heard. Our words confront the words of the powerful and carry power if we speak God's truth. Statements and resolutions offer hope to people in difficult and life-threatening situations. They testify to that. (op. cit. 97)

To corroborate the above the researcher also cites Moltmann when he states:

But Christ is his church's foundation, its power and its hope. As the Reformed confessional writings show, that is the reason why the Reformation subjected all human rules and statutes in religion and the church to the yardstick of the Gospel of Christ. (1977:5)

Moltmann continues:

It is only where Christ alone rules, and the church listens to his voice only, that the church arrives at its truth and becomes free and a liberating power in the world. (ibid.)

The above quote and the following statement from Moltmann can be used to challenge the stance that had been taken by the churches in South Africa vis-à-vis their service to the then ruling party. It is for this reason that the KD came into being.

Acknowledgement of the sole lordship of Christ in his church makes it impossible to recognise any other 'sources of the proclamation apart from or in addition to this sole Word of God'. It cannot admit that there

are any sectors of our lives in which we belong, not to Jesus Christ, but to other masters'. (ibid.)

The researcher also agrees with the views of Moltmann above in so far as they agree with the Confessing Church and refute oppression by political powers. The implications of these views are enormous for the Church at all times. No better words can replace what Moltmann so ably stated:

What the Confessing Church declared with these words, in opposing the state's claim to lordship, must also be said today in opposing the claim to domination asserted by unjust and inhuman social systems; and it must be said through the theological conception of the church. The theological conception of the church is therefore always at the same time a political and social concept of the church. The lordship of Christ is the church's sole and hence all-embracing, determining factor.... It can neither be shared nor restricted. That is why Christianity's obedience to this liberating lordship is all-embracing and undivided. It too cannot be limited, either by the church or by the state. (ibid.)

The new democratic government and the South African community as a whole inherited inhuman and unjust social systems even as negotiations were ushering in a new dawn. Proverbially then, the baby has come with the bath water. The Church has no option but to get involved. During the days of the struggle against apartheid there were many voices within and outside the Church arguing strenuously that church and politics do not mix. This was a rather shallow and perhaps even dishonest and ignorant viewpoint. This view of Moltmann proves the researcher's point:

Historically, the church has always had a political dimension. Whether it likes it or not, it represents a political factor. It is hence only a question of how it presents itself as a political factor. (1977:15)



Cochrane argues, quite rightly, that it is testimony to the above statement that apartheid was grossly undermined by resolutions that apartheid was a heresy as declared by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches [which met] in Ottawa in 1982, and the Confession of the black-based Dutch Reformed Mission Church formulated at Belhar, a suburb of greater Cape Town (in Prozesky M Ed.1990:82).

Added to the above, Cochrane found it necessary to mention the Harare Declaration of 1985 and the Call for the End to Unjust Rule which, inspired by the publication of the Kairos Document, shook those who were upholding the apartheid Government on theological grounds. (ibid.)

Albert Nolan, another leading theologian and fierce opponent and fighter against apartheid, states categorically that the theology of the KD:

...was decidedly partisan in the sense that it took sides against apartheid as sinful, evil and a crime against humanity. Like all prophetic theology it took sides against injustice and in favour of justice. Its strength lay in the fact that it did not compromise or try to sit on the fence. This was indeed what it accused the churches of doing. (Questionnaire response)

Whilst the efforts to topple the previous apartheid regime were conducted by very highly motivated revolutionaries with very high ideals, there have also been among the liberators those whose negative actions have almost cancelled out the high ideals which were part of the formulation of the Freedom Charter. The reason for this could be found in the words of Michael Taylor:

A Christian analysis of human nature revealed a darker side to it which, out of a deep-seated insecurity far more than sheer perversity, leads us to protect ourselves and defend what we perceive to be our own self-interests against the interests of others. What power we have as nations or classes or organized capital or labour we shall use for these

purposes, and the weaker we are the more vulnerable we shall be to policies that benefit someone else. (2000:95)

#### **5.14 Views and attitudes of some former church activists to the KD**

From the interviews and questionnaires, a range of ideas regarding the KD were expressed, as can be expected. Jim Cochrane, an activist who contributed to its formulation after the first draft had been prepared and had spent six months representing it in the Western Cape argues that:

It [the KD] was important in its time and has enduring importance as a monument to engaged theology. (Answer to questionnaire)

Cochrane further argues that it was:

...part of its time and not adequate to our current situation, either in South Africa or globally, except in reminding us about the easy accommodation of 'Church Theology' to the powers that be, and the importance of the "prophetic" tradition within Christianity. (ibid.)

Albert Nolan described the KD as a People's Theology:

It was not an academic document though it made use of the insights of some professional theologians. It was the faith of the people seeking understanding. (Answer to questionnaire)

Des van der Water, a Congregationalist theologian whose PhD (1998) was based on the KD, says of the KD:

The KD was a document whose time had come and of course it spoke quite powerfully to the situation of the time and the socio-political context. (Answer to questionnaire)

Other influential theologians, such as Luke Phato, who is engaged in the Healing and Reconciliation Committee of the SACC, and Maake Masango, a lecturer at the University of Pretoria (UP), and others interviewed through a questionnaire, also mention how the KD still remains an important document. From general views obtained through interviews and questionnaires, it is clear that the KD was an extremely important document. Professor Tinyiko Maluleke, Dr Smanga Kumalo and Danie Botha, a former Dutch Reformed Church dominee and Kairos theologian who is also an ex-member of the Namibian Parliament, gave extensive responses on their present views of the document.

Des van der Water shares similar views with Prof Maluleke of UNISA and President of the SACC, and comments that:

While the KD was sharply relevant during the latter 1980's in southern Africa, some of the issues raised then are still relevant today.  
(Interview)

### **5.15 The position of Christian activists within governing structures**

The KD made a telling critique of those churches and Christians who had supported the apartheid government. We now have a democratically elected government which has to base its policies on the will of the people. It should not be difficult to support the government in that sense. But the KD also made a very significant point when it stated clearly the importance of political activity:

Changing the structure of society is fundamentally a matter of politics. It requires a political strategy based upon a clear social or political analysis...It is into this political situation that the Church has to bring the Gospel. (1986:15)

It can therefore be said that the KD does not in any way discourage or decry the participation of either Christians or even Christian activists in politics. The

KD correctly points out that there are no Christian solutions to political problems but there are Christian ways of approaching political challenges (ibid.) There is therefore no contradiction according to KD's reasoning, when former Christian activists enter the political arena in this democratic era.

And yet, power and wealth tend to warp the minds of people who were known to be very sane but who suddenly undergo a radical change which begins to liken them to their previous oppressors. This need not always be the case because there are very many believers who serve in Government who do it as a calling at great sacrifice to themselves and their families. Their integrity cannot be questioned. Some wisdom comes from the words of Sylvia Talbot:

While some Christians continue to debate the appropriateness of the different forms of witness, other Christians are making their witness public and visible to express clearly what their faith says about matters of vital importance to our existence. The presence of Christians in places where decisions are made is as critical as our presence in places where people hurt. Until we understand that, internalize it and act on it, how will we really be able to represent or reflect Christ in our lives? (In Wilson, 1999: 96)

Talbot then also cautions against viewing people in government as though they are selling out. Her point about Christians being in positions where they can influence events or decisions is crucial. But caution must be taken regarding misplaced loyalties. People's interests must take precedence over loyalty to party leaders. There is a big difference between party politics and politics for justice and politics in general. According to an understanding of Christian faith, God incarnated Himself in Christ. Therefore the Christian religion is not static. It is dynamic and works through involvement in the world and in that sense the researcher supports Talbot's position above.

What has happened, though, is that while there were thousands of Christians who occupied positions of influence during the apartheid years, divisions, poverty, dehumanisation and general suffering took place. It is when one

contemplates this phenomenon that many questions arise as to what causes decent, God-fearing human beings to perpetrate pain on others who are not like them? What causes those who gained power through fighting for liberation, to suddenly turn against their fellow human beings and unleash mayhem on their lives and those of their children? The researcher's observation is that there is still a dissonance between faith and the practice among many Christian believers. It is a known fact that many Government workers belong to some faith, and yet this phenomenon has not translated into widespread faithful service to their fellow human-beings, and thus the outcry on poor service delivery. The number of protests happening so frequently in the new dispensation is a consequence of unfulfilled promises brought about by government employees whose actions are completely incongruous with the Government's strategic plan and intended outcomes.

## **5.16 People's expectations on democratic governance**

### **5.16.1 Leadership and service**

There is a concern, though, which arises from a point that the KD was silent on, namely, what could happen if and when the oppressed come to power. In that sense those who propose that there is a need for a new people's theology (Nolan) and that the KD does remind us of the easy accommodation between church and state (Cochrane) are not far removed from Maluleke's assertion.

There is a danger, though, that there could be a misinterpretation by those in power that they are being attacked unfairly or are not being given a chance, or that their contribution and sacrifice as public servants is not valued. This is where the challenge is going to be: how to convince those who get into power that it does not matter who is in power, because if there is no leadership from the front in such a way that the oppressed become proud of their leaders, South Africa will not become what was envisaged by those who fought so hard for its liberation. History is strewn with examples of wasted lives and opportunities because lessons of the past had not been learnt. Paulo Freire, a

champion of the oppressed people in Brazil who had been expelled by the military government in 1964, found that an element of humility in leading the oppressed was absolutely necessary. He sees the use of constant dialogue among the oppressed as an essential part of liberation.

To its credit, the new democratic government has a policy of BATHO PELE, meaning, people first. It is the implementation that is lacking. The government can have as many excellent principles, excellent schemes and pour huge sums of money into service delivery but if the implementers do not actually follow-up with service delivery, there will be constant uprisings. An article in the Sunday Independent titled A Place God and Batho Pele have forgotten cites the plight of a family at Gobe Village in the Eastern Cape. While the woman and her son are registering to vote she mentions that life at the village is tough although she will vote for the ANC, “the party of Mandela”. The article, written by Caiphus Kgosana, says:

If electricity is a luxury for this family, water is even scarcer. One of ...’s sons who ekes out a living at a factory in Gauteng, brought with him a Christmas gift last year – a large, round green tank that catches rain water through roof gutters. The water is undrinkable and the tank is virtually useless when it’s not raining. Drinking water is obtained from a communal tap that villagers pay R5 to a local headman to access. “We only get free water when there is a funeral or a function”...

When the rain tank runs dry, he loads two 25-litre containers into a wheelbarrow and pushes them several kilometres down the road to a stream from which he draws water.

This is not God’s front yard; it’s a place that he (sic) and the Eastern Cape provincial government forsook a long time ago. Service delivery and fancy titled government interventions such as “Batho Pele” pass quickly by the main road. They never enter Gobe village. (*Sunday Independent*, Caiphus Kgosana, *A Place God and Batho Pele have forgotten*, March 1, 2009)

The researcher has quoted this article at some length to highlight the point made above that either service delivery becomes the vehicle of liberation or there is continued poverty and suffering. Unless those at the forefront of service delivery are determined to do their bit, the government will spend money in vain. Service delivery is not just a give and take exercise. It is a mutual undertaking towards creating an egalitarian society. Thus there should be a dialogue to make it possible to lead in an informed manner so as to be precise in making service delivery. Paulo Freire encourages dialogue among the people who are led and their leaders:

...dialogue (among the oppressed) cannot exist without humility. The naming of the world (taking full responsibility), through which men (sic) constantly re-create the world, cannot be an act of arrogance. Dialogue, as the encounter of men addressed to the common task of learning and acting, is broken if the parties (or one of them) lack humility... how can I dialogue if I am closed to and offended by the contribution of others? ... Someone who cannot acknowledge himself to be as mortal as everyone else still has a long way to go before he can reach a point of encounter... (1970:78-79)

The removal of poverty, particularly as an act by those who are believers in God, is a divine imperative. Orlando Costas asserts the following:

The Bible does not glorify poverty; it condemns it as a scandalous condition and demands justice for the poor. Precisely for this reason, God identifies himself with the poor. This is also why Jesus assumed a life of poverty and why Paul associated the preaching of the cross with the humble and ignorant (1 Cor.1: 18ff). The Gospel is a protest against the scandal of poverty and a call to eradicate it from human life. Those who respond to this message must themselves renounce any form of manipulation and oppression and commit themselves to the well-being of their neighbour. They must surrender totally to the God who in Jesus Christ has promised to liberate the world from oppression. And oppression (an obvious consequence of sin) is a



fundamental cause of poverty... The call to conversion implies not only commitment to transform the present, but also the hope that the transformation will one day truly come to pass... (Samuel and Sugden, 1982: 83ff)

### **5.16.2 Leadership and power**

South Africa needs leaders who know that their election to public service has to do with service delivery so as to promote a better life and dignity for all. If they see themselves as having found a way of getting rich by being servants of the people without delivery it will be quite a challenge. Admittedly, those who have been elected must receive undiluted respect and honour. But they in turn need to respect and honour those who elected them. The elected ones have to know that they are exercising power at the behest of the voters. From a Christian perspective, Echegaray points out:

Jesus knew that a power not exercised in solidarity with the masses is a perfidious power and power threatened at its very foundations. (1980:30)

There is nothing wrong with people being elected to serve the people. It is quite a sacrifice that elected representatives make and the country does owe them a lot of gratitude. Power is there to be used for the good of the people as a whole. It is for this reason that I agree with Boff when he says:

Christianity is not against power in itself but its diabolical forms which generally show themselves as domination and control of the masses... (1985:57)

After all, the KD was an attempt to dislodge the suffering masses from the iron grip of merciless power. Somewhere along the line Moltmann's words will have to be impressed upon those who govern:

True dominion does not consist in enslaving others but in becoming a servant of others; not in the exercise of power, but in the exercise of love, not in being served but in freely serving; not in sacrificing the subjugated but in self-sacrifice. (1977:103)

### 5.16.3 Leadership and the poor

What Moltmann says should not be difficult to comprehend because presently South Africa is still blessed with the presence of those who fought and sacrificed almost everything to see South Africa free. It is that spirit of sacrifice which has to be invoked and utilised. There is also absolutely no reason to doubt the determination and sincerity of purpose in dealing with poverty. Perhaps it is at this point that the words of the KD should be recalled. It mentions that people who have been exploited and paid poor wages have very little benefits accruing from their sacrifices. The workers had been deliberately put far from their positions of work and have to use the little they receive for transport whilst they have no participation in the running of the places of work or the governance thereof:

*They are no longer prepared to be crushed, oppressed and exploited. They are determined to change the system radically so that it no longer benefits only the privileged few. And they are willing to do this even at the cost of their own lives. What they want is justice for all irrespective of race, colour, sex or status.* [All emphasis mine] (KD, 1986:21)

Yet while it may be easy to distinguish between oppressed and oppressors, between the rich and the poor, Pobee makes a wise caution. He accepts that:

The issue of poverty is linked with issues of power. Wealth goes with power. (1987:61)

But there is a numbness and insensitivity to the poor by the rich that they themselves suffer from some kind of poverty of spirit, that serious lack of

Ubuntu which renders a person less than what he or she actually is. Pobebe again says:

Poverty is a reminder of the heartlessness in the world and by the same token a call to the rich and powerful to return to their full humanity. (1987:67)

Boff also makes a telling statement concerning the poor:

Faced with the injustice that is made concrete in poverty, God himself is indignant... Jesus histories (sic) this intervention: God comes and restores justice to the oppressed not because the oppressed person is pious and good but because he or she is a victim of the oppression that has caused his or her situation of poverty. (1985:25)

To support a much deeper understanding of the condition of the poor, the following explanation is apt, namely, that we tend to be in denial that oppression is at the core of poverty and that this oppression arises from the powerful who are indifferent to the plight of the poor. The following description of the poor is so apt that it forces the researcher to describe it in the words of their writer:

...through the whole story of poverty – as lack of basic economic needs for subsistence, as dispossession both economically and socially, as inability to overcome loss, calamity or deprivation, as need for help in order to survive... (Samuel & Sugden, 1982:43)

The poverty of spirit and the complete lack of humaneness (Ubuntu) and utter cruelty becomes the disease suffered by oppressors everywhere as they destroy the poor. The researcher cannot agree more with the words below which give a far better description of the offenders and enemies of humanity:

...there is a ruthlessness of power, a denial of rights, an arrogant indifference to need which penetrates society – in the exercise of

political and administrative power, of judicial power, of economic power – which amounts to systemic oppression... we must not hide our faces and refuse to see or recognize that at the core of poverty is something we can do nothing about unless we do it about ourselves as well – remove the structures of domination and oppression from the lives of the people. (ibid.)

The above quote, in putting poverty as a systemic product, fits neatly into the purpose of the writing and publication of the KD and the reason why struggle heroes and heroines such as Nelson Mandela and others had actually waged the war against the system of apartheid.

#### **5.16.4 Leadership and justice**

The issue of justice is so central when we encounter oppression that it cannot be ignored and must be actively promoted. Boff's words must be taken seriously:

God is only encountered on the path of justice. The living God is not a God of prayers, incense, and asceticism. In Isaiah 1:11 – 18 we learn that what pleases God are not sacrifices and prayers but “to seek what is just, to help the downtrodden, and to do justice to the orphan”. (ibid.)

Walter Brueggemann also states emphatically:

...there is no freedom of God without the politics of justice and compassion, and there is no politics of justice and compassion without a religion of the freedom of God. (1978:18)

There should be a constant effort to impress upon the elected and those in the employ of government that people come first and that they will no longer stand by while those they were with in the trenches continue to appear to have a glorious life alone. The critical warning of Archbishop Tutu during the time of apartheid is still applicable today:

But it will not be that the hungry masses will forever just look on at the groaning tables of their wealthy neighbours... if we are not careful it could be that starved men and women will march on empty stomachs, to invade the well-stocked larders of the wealthy. Desperate people use desperate methods. We will die as fools, if we cannot learn to live together as brothers – to paraphrase Martin Luther King. (1982:85)

One matter that has not been mentioned by any of the interviewees is the question of reconciliation and healing which, for example, was mentioned by Dr Wolfram Kistner:

I suggest that the concern of the Kairos Document is reinforced and better understood if considered in the setting of the universal dimension of God's reconciliation in Christ. The universality of God's reconciliation in Christ obliges Christians to combat and demolish structures in the Church and in society which obstruct God's concern for the living together of all people in peace, and for justice to be accorded to all people, as well as His concern for the protection of His Creation (sic) against destruction and reckless exploitation. (Brandt, 1988:207)

It is this writer's submission that South Africa's new democratic order, which is extremely and supremely significant, has at least created space for the long and arduous reconstruction of a broken community. If there is one thing that would constitute a *kairos moment*, it would be the difficult road of healing the South African community. It is not an impossibility because the masses have stood together regardless of race or gender and voted for a new and democratic government in peace and happiness, the past notwithstanding. It can however, not be ignored that there are presently many voices articulating frustration with the present service delivery because things are moving ever so slowly. One senses a deliberately simplistic view of the situation obtaining in the country. It is a simplistic view because it overlooks several very poignant challenges.

### 5.17 Is there justification for a second KD?

Jim Cochrane, one of the theologians who was also active during the publication of the KD and had assisted in its distribution, agrees that in its time the KD was important but that it is no longer adequate in our current situation. He does concede however, that it still does remind us:

...about the easy accommodation of 'Church theology' to the powers that be, and the importance of the prophetic tradition within Christianity.  
(Questionnaire)

While it may be true that the KD is "no longer adequate" in our current situation, it is necessary though to note that there are still tendencies even with this new dispensation for Church leaders to have "easy accommodation" with the present government in the same manner that prevailed between the Dutch Reformed Church and the state.

Fr Albert Nolan also seems to harbour the same sentiments as Cochrane but gave a yes and no answer. He also believes that the KD:

...is relevant as an example of contextual and 'prophetic theology', but that the KD is no longer relevant because the context has changed... what is needed is a new people's theology. (Answer to questionnaire)

Tinyiko Maluleke, a professor at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and incumbent president of the SACC, and also a signatory to the KD, feels differently. According to him the KD:

...is still very relevant for South Africa. One of the weaknesses of the responses that the KD invoked was that it invoked more reaction outside than inside South Africa. It became a hit in Europe even though

it was vilified there also. Kairos Europa would not have been born if it was not for the KD. Latin America was inspired to write the Road to Damascus...It could be that the time has come for us as South Africans to go back to it. It has a lot of reference because power is still with us and we have seen how state power transforms those who appropriate it. It is not that those who appropriate state power will come and impact upon the state. The state also impacts on them, especially the kind of state transfer we have had because literally we had former liberation activists and former liberation theologians moving into palace. The power of the palace over those who have entertained it has been amazing: it has been phenomenal. That is the kind of angle we need to look at. There the KD again becomes extremely relevant. (Response to Interview)

### **5.18 South Africa experiencing a paradigm-shift**

There can be no escaping that there will always be those who govern and those who are governed. The question is how this should happen? One of the challenges South Africa faces is that at times there is an underestimation of the effects oppression had on all the people, both black and white. And for this researcher, that underestimation could lead to denial which would then result in a refusal to effect corrections whether they are personal in one's own life or in society as a whole. It cannot be avoided that oppression leaves an indelible mark on those affected, both oppressed and oppressors. The denial of this could easily constitute a kairos because it would be difficult to administer the correct medicine when the illness has not been properly diagnosed. As researcher-participant one had experiences which proved beyond reasonable doubt that constant oppression and continuous exclusion leads to self-oppression and self-exclusion in a number of situations in life, until one realises the damage that had been done to one's psyche.

Moving from apartheid to a democratic state required a paradigm shift. Let it be admitted that there has been one in Regele the country. and Schultz describe a paradigm shift thus:



A paradigm shift is nothing short of a revolution. In a revolution everything is turned upside down. All of our assumptions come into question and many are abandoned... [there are ] two kinds of change: continuous (incremental) and discontinuous (chaotic). When a paradigm shift occurs, the change is completely discontinuous and generates chaos everywhere. (1995:185)

For example, Regele and Schultz quote Joel Barker that “when a paradigm shifts, everything goes back to zero”. But they go on to say:

When a paradigm shifts, the rules change, the game changes, and what we believe changes. If we operated under a paradigm that is passing and do not understand the change, we will find ourselves lost and confused about the future and our role in it. (ibid.)

Sometimes the question arises as to whether South Africans have a tendency to expect too much in terms of the price that has to be paid for change. We do have a past and we:

...are all prisoners of the past. It is hard to think of things except in the way we always thought of them. But that way solves no problems and seldom changes anything. It is certainly no way to deal with discontinuity. (Charles Handy, 1991:54)

The South African situation is such that it could be regarded as splendid because a new constitution was drawn up and as a country, conducted relatively peaceful elections to set up a democratically elected government in 1994. There seemed to be an assumption that everything will stay peaceful because of the stress-free nature in which such radical change occurred.

Then there is the huge challenge of HIV/Aids. *The Toronto Star* (Canada) mentioned the figure of 600 people dying per day in South Africa, according to Quarraisha Abdool Karim, a researcher at the University of Natal (Toronto

Star, Tuesday, August 5, 2003). This number was seen as a conservative one and that it would grow as time went on. The then President of the country, Thabo Mbeki, had been accused of adopting a denialist stance.

The KD never went as far as spelling out the kind of paradigm or frame of reference that would be necessary if the oppressed themselves were truly to take charge of their own lives. This is an important point because oppression leaves residues within people's minds which militate against them. Margaret Legum's article states:

...in many countries traumatised by political oppression over generations, poor people have burdens much deeper than lack of resources. They have become severely depressed and demoralised and need special treatment. (*The Star*, May 7, 2007)

At times South Africans find it difficult to accept that they are like all other people and cannot take short-cuts to true liberation. South Africans are in denial that the situation in South Africa needs a lot of therapy for all those who were previously disadvantaged and for those who are still experiencing situations of dire poverty and deprivation. There is also therapy needed for all those who were in positions of power and privilege: how to let go and assist with Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). Failing which, another disaster may be looming. The miracle that South Africa had a bloodless transformation should not be allowed to die. It is necessary therefore that everything must be done to reinforce the belief all share that life is worth living in the new democratic South Africa.

There must be visible moves which have to be made to move faster towards qualitative transformation. This thesis has tried to address these urgent issues. Again the Church has a challenge to which it must respond. What role then should the Church play in this change of paradigm? The following quotation could give an idea the types of efforts made in other countries. South Africa may not go that route but much more needs to be done rather than just the giving of grants.

In Chile and Tunisia, specialised psychosocial community workers have been trained to work intensively with poor families. Through them families get access to what is needed to lift them out of poverty. For that families have to agree, for instance, that their children will be vaccinated and attend school, adults must undergo skills training, and addictive behaviour must be addressed. (ibid.)

One of the most important paragraphs in the article is something we all need to take seriously:

Resources to train an army of specialised family social workers would need a national consensus that eliminating poverty is the over-riding purpose of all government. (ibid.)

It is the above explanation of a paradigm shift that makes the South African change unique because of a lack of visible chaos. But then, looking deeper into the situation since 1994, there is something disconcerting: None other than the then Minister of Social Development, Zola Skweyiya, warned of dire consequences of joblessness. He “warned of a potential uprising in South Africa if the country fails to provide jobs for the youth” as he pointed out that there was a forty per cent unemployment rate even as more people are losing jobs. (*Sunday Times: Skweyiya warns of revolt by jobless youth*, June 1, 2008)

### **5.19 Some perspective on xenophobia in South Africa**

Quite recently South Africa had to deal with the very grave situation of xenophobia which had been unthinkable before. There are several explanations why this could have happened. The unstable situation in Zimbabwe left the borders open and policing became almost impossible. When the non-South Africans arrived they did not stay in the leafy suburbs. They stayed in the informal settlements because that was where they could eke out a living. Informal settlements have no serious infra-structure. There are very few toilets, little electricity, if any, and the houses are mainly made of

corrugated iron. These tin-houses are extremely uncomfortable when it is hot, and when it is cold. The major complaint of South Africans was that “these foreigners take our jobs”. It is true that many restaurants employ people from outside, especially from Zimbabwe and according to information, pay them very little. It is understandable that people who are desperate will accept any form of pay as long as they can just live.

### 5.19.1 Xenophobia as a Global Phenomenon

Whilst it may appear that it is only South Africans who are extremely xenophobic, there was a thought provoking article in *Globe and Mail*, a Canadian weekend paper, giving an ominous report about xenophobia in Russia which was mainly perpetrated by so-called skinheads:

Tolessa, who studies at Moscow’s famous People’s Friendship university, describes a life dominated by fear. When a Nigerian man was beaten to death by neo-Nazis near the campus recently, every African in the city felt a shiver down the back, he says, knowing it could have been them... We can’t go out after 6 p.m. especially on the metro. When people look at us, they just see our colour – they call us ‘*chorniyy*’ (black). (Saturday, January 31, 2004)

What is even worse, according to the report, is that two parties with ultranationalist leanings made surprising gains in the previous month’s parliamentary elections. One of the parties openly advocated xenophobia “with a nostalgic call for the renationalization of key resources”.

The situation became unbearable when a dormitory where there had been foreign students was set on fire, killing 23 of those students. Of particular interest to the researcher is the insight given by the university director Dmitri Bilibin, where this arson happened. He said that:

...membership in skinhead groups is growing and xenophobia is becoming more popular, something he blames on the social chaos

caused by Russia's rapid transition to market capitalism and its sudden embrace of Western ideas. Many young people...have come to feel that their country, once the centre of an empire, was betrayed somehow, and ethnic minorities have become the scapegoat of choice. (ibid.)

Canada is regarded as a liberal and tolerant country. But even there the scourge of xenophobia is evident. In an article titled International Credentials lose value in Canada as reported in the *Globe and Mail*, Gurmeet Bambrah, a Kenyan woman who boasted 3 engineering degrees:

...owned and operated a business for 18 years. She oversaw the construction of water treatment facilities and other development projects financed by the World Bank. (January 30, 2004, article by Marina Jimenez)

But she was refused employment in her field when she arrived from Kenya. She had to do odd jobs. Many immigrants of a darker skin find this type of impediment when they arrive in Canada (ibid.)... Bambrah herself states:

I was a fellow of Britain's Institution of Civil Engineers, only one of 18 women in the world with that title. (ibid.)

The following comment in that article is quite revealing of the prevalent attitudes even at that time:

The failure to recognise foreigners' credentials costs the Canadian economy \$1- billion a year, the Conference Board of Canada says. The issue has galvanized politicians, lobby groups and academics who believe Canada's economic growth is stymied by the inability to absorb all this outside talent. (ibid.)

Note that "the issue...galvanised" interested parties to act, not so much out of moral conviction about the state of Canada which treats people of a different

skin colour in a xenophobic and racist manner but because it was not economically viable to do so! There were many highly qualified expatriates in Canada whom the researcher met. Some of them were driving taxis because they could not get better jobs.

### **5.19.2 Xenophobia as self-hatred**

If then we look at what has happened in South Africa, it becomes reasonable to believe that, while there are some rumblings in spite of the quiet revolution that was brought about by the new dispensation, there is relative stability. There is a need to examine whether it is fair to accuse South Africans of xenophobia. Recently a minister of the South African parliament said it was not xenophobia but Afrophobia because the foreigners attacked are wholly black and come from African states. These are echoes of self-hatred as identified by Steve Bantu Biko in the early seventies.

Firstly, as already mentioned earlier, resources are very scarce for people who are unemployed. The fear and anxiety is not because people do not like other people. It is because of the scarcity of resources. It happens where there are situations of extremity. Historically, therefore, situations of extremity occur among those who are oppressed.

Secondly, there is a much deeper reason, apart from xenophobia, underlying these actions of rejecting people from outside South Africa. The fact that it is Black people who look at the colour of the foreigner's skin and act negatively against them needs a closer look. The question to be asked is whether that could be regarded as self-hatred. It could be said that oppression becomes internalised to the point where there is self-hatred. The hatred, in other words, turns outwardly and is expressed in hating the other. For example, Martin Buber states:

Hate is by nature blind. Only a part of a being can be hated. He who sees a whole being and is compelled to reject it is no longer in the kingdom of hate, but is in that of human restriction of the power to say

*Thou.* He finds himself unable to say the primary word to the other human being confronting him. This word consistently involves an affirmation of the being addressed. He is therefore compelled to reject either the other or himself. (Herberg Will, 1952:49)

When people no longer have pride in themselves they usually behave in a manner that is inhumane because they themselves are not treated in a humane way. Mtutuzeli Matshoba captures this in his writings about life in the hostels:

What do you say of the very idea of building such a place [as the hostel], of removing men from their livestock and what little land they had, and burying them in filth? Is that not meant to kill a man's pride? (Hodge N, 1984:226)

### **5.19.3 Xenophobia as part of frustration which causes scape-goating**

Frustration does lead to the kind of anti-social behaviour seen with the xenophobic violence. The following comes from a psychological perspective to prove that when people are frustrated in their goals of life, they will behave in a particular manner:

Aggression is perhaps the most common single reaction to frustration. In deed there are those who believe that there is a necessary connection between the two and that frustration inevitably leads to some degree of aggressive behaviour. This is an overgeneralization. It is true that the sense of annoyance, bafflement, or confusion resulting from the blocking of organized, goal-directed activity often finds an easy outlet in aggressive reactions... When our activation level is high and behaviour is interfered with by things or people, we tend to become aggressive towards them". (Gerald, 1963:172)

Consistent oppression according to Barney Pityana, creates the following:



The bulk of the black people... have accepted their degenerate status. The pride of people hood in them has been shattered. They have more than just accepted their lot, for some even help destroy their worth as human beings. They are being resettled in droves, and 13 per cent of the land, and that the most uneconomic, is allocated for their use...

One has to take account of years of indoctrination starting from the first encounter of white colonists with black tribesmen, when whites were set up as a standard. From their capitalistic tendencies one has come to measure status by the amount of money one has. In this way the class situation was introduced as a value even for blacks. The urgency is that we have to liberate the mind of the black man (sic). (Woods D, 1978:48, 49)

The demonstrations then are a groundswell of the poor refusing to take their poverty lying down. When the poor themselves stand up it is a challenge to both the government and business. The rich are also not going to lie down and just let their wealth slip through their fingers. There will be a huge fight. Could this be the kairos, the given opportunity for South Africa to show its mettle?

## **5.20 Conclusion**

In South Africa, Life has changed radically. It is this change that has created another paradox for the country. There is now free movement and people can live where they want. When the apartheid government built infrastructure, it was going to cater mainly for whites and a few co-opted blacks. The country is undergoing the strain of short-sighted city and town planning. No government in the world can cope within such a short space of time with the high extent of uncontrollable urbanisation. While race relations have eased and many black people's lives have improved tremendously, there are still many people who are angry, especially those who had been highly expectant of what they perceived as inevitable relief. Thus, instead of people becoming depressed there seems to be a groundswell of anger and despair. This then manifests itself in a number of ways such as suicides, femicides and so on. Crime has

always been rampant even during the apartheid years. But the violent nature of crime has never been as endemic as it is now, 15 years into the new democracy. It is one of the most difficult things to understand when, as happens in most cases, in the course of committing crime, the perpetrators use extremely excessive violence against their victims. When people's lives are far less than the value of cell phones, it spells a crisis.

The above is a challenge to all South Africans to use their experiences to fight against poverty and greed. Greed is one form of crime which incubates more corruption which in turn robs the country of valuable resources. It is always a fallacy and a lack of proper analysis to ascribe violent crime to poverty alone. In the main, most poor people are generous to a fault while they continue to eke out a living under the most difficult circumstances. The researcher, whose parents had been materially poor, has lived through that experience but had the rich values of ubuntu instilled him.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion

### 6.1 Introduction

The original question posed by this thesis was whether the Kairos Document could still be used as a matrix for church-state relations. What has been clear above is the unquestionable importance that the document played during the fight against apartheid and in raising awareness in the Church. While it is also clear that the KD was not the only effort by the many churches to chip away at the apartheid monolithic structure, the KD was the document that was able to decipher where the problem lay. It had a methodology which, in this researcher's view, should be an all time prism through which church-state relations are viewed. The researcher accepts that the context has changed considerably and that the critique of the State will be on some other basis rather than on State Theology as has been the case with the apartheid government. Church Theology will also be different from the critique that had been made of Church Theology with regard to its relationship with the State. It is also clear from the research that Prophetic Theology will still be necessary although not necessarily against the State as had been the case with Prophetic Theology's critique of the State.

### 6.2 Hypothesis and research question

The research question was whether elements of the Kairos Document could still be useful to the Church in the new South Africa. The researcher's work in this regard validates this hypothesis, albeit with a radical modification of objectives and targets.

While accepting that the context in South Africa has changed irrevocably, the three types of theologies, namely State, Church and Prophetic Theology are still a relevant matrix through which the Church has to examine its own involvement with the State. But even more than this, the Church itself needs

to reclaim its space alongside the poor by keeping in check the kind of power the Church relies upon.

This researcher's findings are also in agreement with the views of a significant group of theologians and Christian activists, namely, that the Kairos Document has been enduring but that it would need adaptation to suite the new context brought about by the new democratic dispensation. Since power and wealth tend to have the same effect on human beings regardless of colour and regardless of their previous status either of oppression or poverty, the Church has to be vigilant by constantly engaging in social analysis. The Church has to involve itself more with issues of economic justice.

There is a new oppression that has become far more dangerous and difficult to fight and that is the oppression of greed which in turn promotes corruption. The resultant greed has also contributed immensely to paralysis in service delivery. The role of Prophetic Theology, especially in this area of moral decay, cannot be over-emphasised.

### **6.3 Summary of the chapters**

#### **6.3.1 Chapter One: Introduction**

In the introductory chapter the relevance of the thesis, the hypothesis, as well as the methodology used in the research, was described. Some basic definitions were offered, together with an overview of the chapters to come.

#### **6.3.2 Chapter Two: Church-State relations in the spotlight again**

The relations between Church and State were found to move almost in the form of a continuum and depended on the particular church as a denomination. With some churches the relationship was too close, as was the case with the Dutch Reformed Church, and with others it was distant as was the situation with the SACC aligned churches. During the apartheid years there was virtually no confrontation between the DRC and the government of

the day on the question of apartheid, except for a few brave prophets within the DRC itself. On the other hand, there was a lot of confrontation from the leadership of the SACC-aligned churches and from the SACC itself.

There will always be prophets within the Church who may or may not be supported by the Church. There is a paradox here in that the Church always nurtures the people who then later become prophets, ironically from the teachings of what might be termed as a conservative Church.

### **6.3.3 Chapter Three: The Kairos Document: Yesterday and Today**

There were so many compelling reasons for the writing of the KD in the mid-eighties that when it was written its time had come. The KD achieved beyond expectations what it had intended: A national debate ensued as never before. The government was livid with anger and galvanised its supporters such as Signposts and the Gospel Defence League. The Church was also provoked into action. But more than the negatives, more and more people began to be interested in the Church and in an activist theology which produced results. At the time there was a State of Emergency and people were dying from direct government action and from internecine fighting with the government allegedly using surrogate methods. The situation was calling for a serious rethink on all sides.

There had also been a lot of hatred emanating from all sides. The situation was just toxic. It was as if people were not living in the same country. The country was extremely divided. What was even more amazing was that the majority of the people who were at each other's throats were in the main Christians, with almost seventy per cent of them being church goers according to surveys of the time.

Both Church and State exercise authority and both have power. The State derives its power from the mandate given it by the people and has to receive this mandate from time to time, and in the South African case, after every five years, but the Church derives its mandate from the Gospel and usually never

has to renew it. Whereas it is much easier to monitor the State because of democratic principles, the Church is not a democratic institution and thus is fraught with many complications.

As shown above there are different challenges today which seem to be even more daunting than before. These are challenges of a lack of service delivery. People are rising up against their very own government with the service delivery mantra. A new form of enemy has taken root – the enemy of greed and excessive consumerism. Only recently the General Secretary of COSATU, Mr Zwelinzima Vavi, made a screaming headline titled *Greed Will Destroy the ANC*, and it was a scathing attack on his own comrades who seem to think it is “payback time’ because of the new mentality of entitlement.

He said that there was a danger that political power was now about access to resources and the ability to dish out tenders. “The tender is the new enemy of our movement, not the Congress of the People or Hellen Zille’s Democratic Alliance. It is crass materialism which is the most formidable enemy that we must confront and defeat. If we do not, the revolution is going [to fail]”. (Sunday Times, August 23, 2009)

What is interesting about the above quote is that one would have expected it from Church leaders. It now comes from a very strong leader of a very strong trade union. The Church seems to have taken a back seat. That is the new kairos today. It had been easy to fight a clear and known enemy called apartheid; yet it has become extremely difficult for the Church to even make a whimper about the moral and ethical challenges of today. That seems to be the real crisis.

#### **6.3.4 Chapter Four: The Kairos Document: A theological analysis**

##### **The relevance of the three theologies as analysed in the KD:**

The present writer has found the research quite convincing regarding the natures of both Church and State that they need constant subjection to be

tested against the background of Church Theology and State Theology. Admittedly, there have been phenomenal changes. It has to be remembered though that these changes were not brought about by negotiations alone. Negotiation came as a result of the tremendous pressure that had been applied from all sides. It is these pressures that made it possible for leaders such as Mr Nelson Mandela, working within the ANC leadership, to initiate talks with the apartheid government to rescue the country from further ruin.

### **Lack of Social analysis**

The KD had decried the lack of social analysis by the Church in its theological approach to issues in the land during the apartheid era. The KD, in its social analysis lens, identified the issue in this manner:

It would be quite wrong to see the present conflict as simply a racial war. The racial component is there but we are not dealing with two equal races or nations each with their own selfish group interests. The situation we are dealing with here is one of tyranny and oppression. We can therefore use the social categories that the Bible makes use of, namely, *the oppressor and oppressed*. (1986:20)

The most devastating aspect about the race issue is that it fostered psychological and attitudinal damage which itself in many unacceptable ways harmed both black and white for a long time. Most black people tend to suffer from an apartheid-induced inferiority complex whereas most white people tend to suffer from an apartheid-imposed superiority complex. To ignore this effect of apartheid on the white and black people of this county would lead to inaccurate corrections that would lead to harmony and peace in this country. The humiliation brought about by racism will stay with those on the receiving end for quite some time. The same can also be said of the white people. For years they viewed themselves as superior and that is not going to change overnight. This aspect still remains in the domain of the challenge to the Church, and this time, to the State also.



There is therefore always a need for appropriate training in social analysis to be given to all practitioners of religion. The answer to the question of whether it is still necessary to do social analysis today is a resounding yes and always.

### **6.3.5 Chapter Five: From the old to a new Kairos?**

On the Tenth Anniversary of the publication of the KD the Institute for Contextual Theology held a conference in Johannesburg which included overseas partners. The Theme of the conference was KAIROS 95 - At the Threshold of Jubilee. The following statement comes from a working paper titled: What is Our Kairos Today?

*While democracy and justice have made tremendous gains since the writing of the first Kairos Document, many people experience a deep sense of disappointment, even disillusionment and anger. Many of the changes which people expected have not materialised. This is often describes as non-delivery of all that had been promised and hoped for.*

*The living conditions of the majority of the people have not changed. The poor appear to be getting poorer, while the rich become richer. The RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme) does not seem to be delivering the jobs, houses, water, electricity, etc., which it promised. There is a serious crisis in education, in the health services and in the civil service. Civil servants like nurses, teachers, policemen and policewomen, municipal workers and other officials are demanding better wages and salaries. The government says it does not have the money.*

*In the meantime more and more people are joining the ranks of the unemployed. Crime is on the increase and our crime rate is said to be higher than anywhere else in the world. Corruption at every level in government departments and in business gives rise to more and more cynicism and despair. It appears that no way has yet been found to*

*integrate the position and authority of hereditary chiefs into a democratic government.*

*The Kairos, however, is not just the sum total of these social problems – it is the growing perception that the government may not be able to solve all these problems, that the government may not in fact be able to deliver on its promises or to live up to influence the society, to instil values, or to point the way ahead. The church does not seem to have any solutions. It is not preaching any real alternatives. There is no message of hope about a future which will be really new, different and hopeful. There is no message of hope for the poor.*

*There is a crisis of expectations but there is also a crisis of hope and trust, a deep mood of disillusionment and despair. This is our Kairos, and challenge, our opportunity and our moment of truth... (Dladla, Ed. 1996:70-71)*

Today there is a different atmosphere and the tensions of racism and oppression have eased somewhat. While there is a lot of violent crime, space has also been created for South Africans to work together to bring about a peaceful and prosperous country. There is evidence that a very large number of both black and white people want to make the country a great one in spite of the many challenges still facing it. Previously, areas which were predominantly white are gradually increasing in the number of black people entering those areas and the ideal would be a move towards meeting the demographic habitation requirements of the country.

## **7 Recommendations for further research**

One can never exhaust the theme of this research. There is always room for further research.

1. What part can the Church play in South Africa in the face of so many safeguards for democracy in South Africa? Account must be taken of

the part played by law makers in Parliament and the Constitutional Court. How does the Church relate to NEPAD and other Millennial Goals.

2. How can the Church begin serious co-operation with people of other faiths to promote highly responsible citizens in the country? How can interfaith dialogue be strengthened in South Africa to enable people of different faiths to contribute significantly in the enhancement and consolidation of transformation?
3. What does “Economic Justice” mean for South Africa, taking into account the true meaning of poverty. Can South Africa afford to operate along the same paradigm as the so-called developed nations? There is a need to redefine poverty and richness. Should ministers of religion not be encouraged to learn the basics of economics to enable them to engage their congregations in economic debates?
4. Can the Church and other Faith Based Organisations also look into their own SADC, that is, Southern African Churches for Development.
5. Research into the white prophets who defied their own “volk and nasie” (kith and kin), would assist many people to learn more about how these prophets such as Dawie Bosch and Geyser worked tirelessly as truly faithful servants of the living God. Only a few, such as Beyers Naudé, have been celebrated.
6. Is there a kairos regarding ecological issues in South Africa?
7. The contribution of black organisations and leaders in the townships should be researched and the findings published. There are many unsung heroes whose stories must be told.

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## APPENDIX

Names of Interviewees		Date
Danie Botha	Interview	16.11.2008
Frank Chikane	Interview	07.11.2009
Jim Cochrane	Questionnaire	17.11.2008
Smanga Kumalo	Interview	07.10.2008
Puleng Lenka-Bula	Questionnaire	12.12.2008
Tinyiko Maluleke	Interview	26.06.2009
Maake Masango	Questionnaire	21.04.2008
Albert Nolan	Questionnaire	15.07.2008
Luke Phato	Questionnaire	17.11.2008
McGlory Speckman	Questionnaire	22.01.2009
Bernard Spong	Interview	01.02.2009
Des van der Water	Questionnaire	17.11.2008
Laetitia White	Interview	13.03.2009