

Reconciliation in Southern Africa: The role of the Afrikaans Churches.

A Historical and Analytical Study of the Contributions of the Afrikaans Churches to the Process of Reconciliation in Southern Africa, with special Reference to their Response to the Work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

By

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SUMMARY

Reconciliation in Southern Africa: The role of the Afrikaans Churches.

A historical and analytical study of the contributions of the Afrikaans Churches to the process of reconciliation in Southern Africa, with special reference to their response to the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

This study investigates the role of the Afrikaans Churches in the quest for reconciliation in South Africa. Since it is a historical and analytical study, much use has been made of the relevant historical material. It is important in a study like this that there be a relevancy for this kind of study. South Africa is a nation with a complex society, who were weighed down for about forty years under an Apartheid policy, necessitating a probe into the influence of apartheid on society at large but also on the Afrikaans Churches. The different cultural groups in our country need to be reconciled to each other. But what kind of reconciliation? Many different definitions of reconciliation are given depending on who defines it. The politicians' definitions were different from that of the church. Because reconciliation is a biblical term, it is necessary to look at the biblical mandate and how reconciliation is defined in biblical terms.

Short overviews of the history of the origin of the different Afrikaans Churches under discussion are given. (Chapter 1)

In order to understand the reaction of the different churches to the announcement of the constitution of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), it is necessary to look at those events that happened in the churches during the years of Apartheid. The fact that the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) is the largest church under the Afrikaners, explains why more space is given to occurrences in the DRC than to the others. Because Afrikaners work together in many situations, belong to the same clubs, etc. it is also clear that the occurrences in the DRC would have some effect on members of the other churches. Attention is paid to the polarisation and tension amongst churches due to race relations as it manifested itself within South Africa and also globally. (Chapter 2)

Through Parliamentary legislation, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established for South Africa. It is important to take note of the mandate of the TRC and its method of work. Different reactions came from the faith communities and especially from the Afrikaans Churches. This researcher investigates the different attitudes in the churches as made known through correspondence in the different church magazines and daily newspapers. Attention is paid to the different reactions of the churches to the special hearings and the question whether churches must confess before the TRC or not. (Chapter 3)

The reactions in the churches on the submission of evidence before the TRC are investigated. Only the DRC and the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) of the Afrikaans Churches and four theologians from the Reformed Churches of South Africa (RCSA) made their submissions. The other churches did not make use of this opportunity to clear their slates. The submission of the Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa (URCSA) is also mentioned as many of its members are Afrikaans speaking. (Chapter 4)

The TRC suggested some proposals on reconciliation for the faith communities. This chapter looks at the responses of the churches to these proposals. There are wonderful things happening where churches were obedient and involved in their surroundings. Mostly they are helping in the areas of poverty relief and unemployment. The question about unity between the 'sister' churches amongst the Afrikaners and unification between the DRC and URSCA is discussed. (Chapter 5)

Is there hope for our country for reconciliation? This question was addressed to a few leaders in the different churches and their responses are given. Churches do not always know how to go about helping their congregants working on reconciliation. Three models are currently being presented in South Africa on how reconciliation can become a reality and are briefly discussed. A new model is then worked out and proffered for use in and by the church to help congregants in the quest for reconciliation. (Chapter 6)

Chapter 7 concludes this study by proposing a few conclusions.

An extensive Addendum is given. This researcher interviewed church leaders. Their responses and other relevant material e.g. submissions by churches etc. to the TRC are given.

A bibliography concludes this dissertation.

OPSOMMING

Reconciliation in Southern Africa: The role of the Afrikaans Churches.

A historical and analytical study of the contributions of the Afrikaans Churches to the process of reconciliation in Southern Africa, with special reference to their response to the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Hierdie studie ondersoek die rol van die Afrikaans Kerke in die soeke na versoening in Suid-Afrika. Aangesien dit 'n historiese en analitiese studie is, is daar baie van historiese materiaal gebruik gemaak. Dit is belangrik in so 'n studie dat besin sal word oor die relevansie daarvan. Aangesien Suid-Afrika 'n land met 'n komplekse samelewing is, wat vir ongeveer veertig jaar onder 'n beleid van Apartheid gebuk gegaan het, is dit nodig om ondersoek te doen na die invloed daarvan in die gemeenskap as geheel, sowel as op die Afrikaans Kerke. Die verskillende kultuurgroepe in die land moet met mekaar versoen word. Maar watter soort versoening? Daar is baie verskillende definisies vir versoening afhangende van wie die definisie gee. Die politikus gee 'n ander definisie as die kerk. Aangesien versoening eintlik 'n Bybelse begrip is, is dit nodig om na die Bybelse mandaat te kyk en hoe versoening in Bybelse terme gedefinieer word. 'n Kort oorsig oor die ontstaan van die verskillende Afrikaans Kerke word gegee. (Hoofstuk 1)

Om die reaksies van die verskillende kerke op die aankondiging van die daarstelling van 'n Waarheids- en Versoeningskommissie te verstaan, is dit allereers nodig om te kyk na wat in die kerke gebeur het gedurende die Apartheidsjare. Die feit dat die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) die grootste kerk onder die Afrikaners is, verduidelik waarom daar meer aandag aan gebeurtenisse wat 'n invloed gehad het op die denke en praktyk in die kerk gegee word as in die ander. Aangesien die Afrikaners in baie gevalle

saam werk, dieselfde klubs besoek, ens is dit te verstane dat dit wat in die NGK plaasvind ook 'n effek op lidmate van die ander kerke sal hê. Aandag word geskenk aan die polarisasie en spanning wat binne en buite Suid-Afrika ontstaan het as gevolg van die rasse-verhoudinge tussen verskillende kerke. (Hoofstuk 2)

'n Waarheids- en Versoeningkommissie (WVK) het as gevolg van parlementêre wetgewing in Suid-Afrika sy beslag gekry. Dit is belangrik om na die Kommissie se mandaat en werkswyse te kyk. Verskillende reaksies het vanuit die geloofs-gemeenskappe gekom en spesifiek uit die Afrikaanse Kerke. Die verskillende reaksies, soos geopenbaar is deur korrespondensie in kerkblaaië en die dagblaaië is ondersoek. Aandag is gegee aan die verskillende reaksies van die kerke ten opsigte van die spesiale verhore en die vraag of die kerke voorleggings moet maak of nie. (Hoofstuk 3)

Die reaksies in die verskillende kerke met betrekking tot die voorlegging van getuïenisse voor die WVK word ondersoek. Van die Afrikaanse Kerke was dit net die NGK, die Apostoliese Geloofsending (AGS) en vier teoloë uit die Gereformeerde Kerke van Suid-Afrika (GKSA), van Potchefstroom wat voorleggings gemaak het. Die ander kerke het nie van die geleentheid gebruik gemaak om hulle aandeel aan die verlede bekend te maak nie. (Hoofstuk 4)

Die WVK het aanbevelings vir die geloofsgemeenskappe gemaak met betrekking tot versoening in die land. In hierdie hoofstuk word gekyk hoe die verskillende Afrikaanse Kerke daarop gereageer het. Pragtige dinge is besig om te gebeur waar kerke gehoorsaam was en in hulle omgewing betrokke geraak het. Meesal word klem gelê op die verligting van armoede en werkloosheid. Dan word die vraag na eenheid tussen die "susterskerke" en die Kerkhereniging tussen die NGK en die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk (VGK) bekyk. (Hoofstuk 5)

Is daar hoop vir ons land met betrekking tot versoening? Hierdie vraag is aan 'n klompie leiers uit die verskillende kerke gevra en hulle antwoorde word verskaf. Kerke weet nie altyd hoe om te werk te gaan om lidmate te help om met mekaar en met ander versoen te

word nie. Modelle word voorgehou wat in ons land en in ander lande van die wêreld gebruik word om daarmee te help. 'n Eie model word ontwikkel en voorgestel om gebruik te word in en vir die kerk. (Hoofstuk 6)

Om die studie af te eindig, word in Hoofstuk 7 tot 'n aantal gevolgtrekkings gekom.

'n Uitgebreide Addendum met onderhoude met kerkleiers en ander relevante materiaal, bv. sommige van die voorleggings van kerke aan die WVK word aangebied

'n Bibliografie sluit die studie af.

GLOSSARY

Afrikaans Churches	Those churches in South Africa to which most Afrikaans speaking whites belong.
Apartheid	A political system in South Africa in which members of different races had different political and social rights and lived, travelled, etc. apart from each other.
Biblical Mandate	The authority to do something given by the Bible. In this case the Biblical authority to reconciliation.
Forgiveness	The action of stopping anger or bitterness towards somebody or about something. To stop blaming or wanting to punish.
Justice	Right and fair behaviour or treatment. Used as retributive justice i.e. focus on punishment and restorative justice i.e. restoring victims, etc.
Reconciliation	The most common meaning is to change from enmity to friendship.
Reparation	The action of compensating for wrong or damage done.
Restitution	The action of giving something that was lost or stolen back to its proper owner. Reparation/restitution are sometimes used interchangeable.
Submissions	To formally present something (a document, petition) for consideration or a decision to be made.
Truth and Reconciliation Commission	A commission established by the South African parliament to start a process of healing and reconciliation in the post-apartheid era in South Africa.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.

AB	Afrikaner Broederbond (Now: Afrikaner Bond)
AE	African Enterprise.
AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa.
ANC	African National Congress.
APK	Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk.
ASC	Afrikaans Sister Churches.
CC	Christian Council.
CI	Christian Institute.
CS	Church and Society.
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk).
DRCA	Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika).
DRMC	Dutch Reformed Mission Church (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk).
GSC	General Synodical Commission.
HRS	Human Relations in light of Scripture.
ICC	Inter Church Commission.
NHK	Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika.
NIV	New International Version (Bible).
NKJV	New King James Version (Bible).
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress.
RCSA	Reformed Churches in South Africa (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika).
RES	Reformed Ecumenical Synod.
SACC	South African Council of Churches.
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
URCSA	Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa.
WARC	World Alliance of Reformed Churches.
WCC	World Council of Churches.
ZB	Zimbabwe.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

South Africa has come from a past of Apartheid. A nation ripped apart by laws and by-laws, which not only kept people apart for decades, but also made life miserable for the majority of its inhabitants. More and more we have come to realise the full extent of the damage that has been done to people – physical and psychological. Frankly speaking there is little chance that the damage can be repaired. Many efforts from government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) are only scratching at the scab of the wound. They're only applying a salve to the wound, but seldom reach the root of the problem. The study is made more relevant by the structure of the South African society with its different indigenous ethnic groups, each with its own culture and own experiences during the years of Apartheid in South Africa. In one way or another there are issues amongst these culture groups that need to be addressed, but the more important issue at the moment is the reconciliation between the white and other communities. A major concern is that a significant part of the white community does not really realise the damage that was done, not only to the other ethnic groups, but also actually to themselves by the Apartheid past.

On 3 July 2000, the *Sunday Independent* published an article by Helen Macdonald, political analyst and lecturer at Stellenbosch University on this issue. She is of the opinion that unless white South Africans reach a point where they can embrace the label that they were beneficiaries during the past, reconciliation will never become a reality in the country. "It is a label that encapsulates an important attitudinal recognition and sense of accountability that is essential for shaping behavioural patterns whether in the world of white business, private schooling or the leafy areas of white suburbia."

If white individuals can realise that they have benefited while many other people have suffered, then they are more likely to move on and ask how they can make contributions toward restoring the much needed balance in this country.

1.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to determine the contributions of the Afrikaans Churches to the process of reconciliation in South Africa. Reference will be made to the proposals, made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), to the faith communities and especially the Afrikaans Churches in this regard. The churches under consideration are: Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church [DRC]); Die Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika [NHK]; Gereformeerde Kerke van Suid-Afrika [GKSA]; Apostoliese Geloof Sending (Apostolic Faith Mission [AGS/AFM]) and Die Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk [APK]. Mention will also be made of the Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa (URCSA) because of their specific historic links and ongoing negotiations with the DRC as well as the fact that a large percentage of the members are Afrikaans speaking.

During the hearings of the TRC the unwillingness of some of the Afrikaans Churches and the initial reluctance of the Dutch Reformed Church to testify was revealed. Since the process of reconciliation is of utmost importance in South Africa it was unthinkable that some of these faith communities did not see their way open to raise their voice for or against truth and reconciliation. The importance of the situation is reflected in the next few quotations:

Reconciliation is going to have to be the concern of every South African. It has to be a national project to which all earnestly strive to make their particular contribution (Tutu, 1999: 274).

Each of the faith communities in South Africa committed themselves to fighting hardship in society - poverty and unemployment, racism and prejudice, corruption and crime, violence and bloodshed (Meiring 1999:285).

Reconciliation is a complex exercise. The need for reconciliation embraces virtually every sphere of society (Meiring 2002:174).

Reconciliation requires that all South Africans accept moral and political responsibility for nurturing a culture of human rights and democracy within which political and socio-economic conflicts are addressed both seriously and in a non-violent manner.

Reconciliation requires a commitment, especially by those who have benefited and continue to benefit from past discrimination, to the transformation of unjust inequalities and dehumanising poverty (TRC Report, Vol. 5: 435).

In reading these and other comments, it is impossible to turn a blind eye to the reality of the situation in South Africa. There is a definite need for reconciliation, not only amongst racial groups in our country, but also in churches, families and amongst individuals.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Research done by different individuals has revealed several problems, which intrigued the researcher to ask a few questions that have to be answered in order to contribute to reconciliation. These questions put the research problem to the table.

Charles Villa-Vicencio made the following remarks in the April 2003-edition of *The SA Reconciliation Barometer*:

Political reconciliation is, by definition, a modest exercise – the beginning of a journey away from a destructive past to the possibility of a different kind of tomorrow.

National reconciliation does not necessarily involve forgiveness. Politically, people live together quite well without necessarily having to work through all that forgiveness involves. It (national reconciliation) involves peaceful coexistence, as the first step towards greater, perhaps even more intimate unity later. It interrupts an established (often violent) pattern of events that prevents people from exploring creative ways to learning to live together.

Problem 1: How can churches develop a clear picture of reconciliation and their role in the process?

Yet another problem is pointed out in a document, *Principles of Healing and Reconciliation in Rwanda (September 1998)*, by Dr Rhiannon Lloyd - who is responsible for the reconciliation ministry of Mercy Ministries International, Geneva Switzerland. She ministers extensively in cross-cultural situations and has been working in Rwanda since the genocide in 1994. She laid down some principles that are relevant in the work of reconciliation and forgiveness in Rwanda:

1. The church as God's agent of healing and reconciliation must be recognised.
2. Cultural barriers that inhibit expressing emotion must be overcome.
3. People must be helped to find God in the midst of suffering.
4. It must be discovered that Jesus Christ is the pain bearer.
5. There is a need to hear and be heard.
6. Understanding of what real forgiveness entails must be created.
7. Jesus as Redeemer must be discovered.
8. God's way of dealing with ethnic conflict must be explored.

Dr Lloyd, on invitation from African Enterprise, also did some work in Kwazulu Natal, South Africa, found that the same principles are relevant here, although,

In South Africa, however, things *are supposed* to be all right now. Many think that since 1994 they are now reconciled and so there is not too much enthusiasm for attending a seminar on reconciliation. One does not have to look far beneath the surface, however, to discover that reconciliation is more needed than ever! Despair, fear, and judgmental attitudes abound, and (apart from some noteworthy exceptions) the various ethnic groups are retaining to their own ghettos. *Sadly, the church appears to be particularly slow in discovering their brothers and sisters in the other ethnic groups.* (Researcher's Italics).

The researcher argues that in African countries like Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the ongoing wars of the past decades spelled out that the need for reconciliation is more pressing than what we experience in South Africa. For them it is a matter of life and death not to be reconciled to one another, while we in South Africa can't see the need for it.

Problem 2: How can congregants of the Afrikaans Churches be empowered to become involved in reconciliation? Who must take responsibility for that?

Researchers from the Institute of Justice and Reconciliation made the following remarks with respect to the question: *Who must take responsibility for reconciliation?*

- Despite a decade of considerable political gains, there is much that needs to be done. The transformation, reconstruction and reconciliation process has only begun. The question that begs answering is who should take responsibility to drive these?

- Still the data reveals that 36% partaking in the survey believe that reconciliation should be the collective primary responsibility of business, government and individuals, with numerous other combinations of these role players being selected by a further 34%.
- The data reveal that only 19% of South Africans were willing to take considerable individual responsibility for reconciliation.
- In all likelihood, a greater portion of the 42% of South Africans claiming not to take very much or hardly any responsibility for reconciliation do so by choice.
- Thorough going transformation, development and reconciliation require the social energy flowing from a greater willingness to take responsibility. Success also depends on visionary leadership, and this should not be restricted to the political sphere. Business, civil society, labourers and *religious leaders* also have a responsibility.

(The SA Reconciliation Barometer, 2003: 4)

Problem 3: Why do the Afrikaans Churches struggle with efforts of reconciliation? Are there any valid reasons for not getting on with the task? What needs to be done for a greater percentage of people (congregants) to take responsibility for reconciliation in South Africa?

Considering the new situation in South Africa after the elections of 1994, the work of the TRC and the road he travelled himself, Prof. Amie van Wyk of the RCSA came to the following conclusions:

- Apartheid is past and a new future beckons, tantalisingly, to all of us. The first is for the Afrikaans Churches, should they wish to keep their trustworthiness and integrity (particularly regarding their prophetic-critical vocation within society), to confess, unequivocally, their guilt about the sins of the past. The longer the procrastination, the more difficult the confession becomes, but also the more necessary.
- The second is that all should strive towards avoiding repeating the sins of the past.
- Thirdly, a completely new situation of reorientation has dawned on all Afrikaners. As a minority group divided amongst itself, Afrikaners have to re-position themselves.
- Fourthly, Church unity, in the form of joint church assemblies with the younger (black) churches, is not an option for the Afrikaans-speaking churches; it is a principled theological responsibility and a practical necessity. It is my prayer and wish that the church, as a community of reconciliation, will not only lead society on the road of

hope, but will in its own existence exemplify that hope (Van Wyk 2001:11).

Problem 4: How can the process of church unity – the so-called ‘acid test’ for reconciliation – on Synodical and local level be enhanced? What should be the role of the local congregation?

1.4 HYPOTHESIS

During the Apartheid years (1961 – 1994) the Afrikaans Churches were often reluctant to exercise their prophetic calling to warn publicly against the system of Apartheid, that violated the rights of the majority of citizens of South Africa. Many reasons can be offered for their reluctance:

- the churches didn’t have a clear picture of what reconciliation entails and their role in the process;
- division within the Afrikaans Churches;
- misunderstanding of the essential message of the gospel of Christ;
- the inherent racism that dogged race-relations in the community at large, were reflected in the churches;
- ecumenical isolation - both nationally and internationally;
- negligence of church leaders (ministers) to convey the decisions of synodical meetings to congregants and to help them to understand the whole issue of reconciliation and to empower them to become involved in it on local level;
- the struggle in the DRC family of churches to unite, is the test of how motivated they are in the process of reconciliation.

The reluctance of some of the Afrikaans Churches to testify before the TRC has had a negative influence on church members and on Afrikaners in general. Also leadership in congregations has not paid enough attention or given enough help to their members to understand and implement the challenges of the TRC regarding the role of faith communities in South Africa. However, if the church does rise to the occasion it can

become one of the major role players and the champion of healing and reconciliation in South Africa.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

This study is primarily a reflection on the issues of reconciliation in South Africa. It will endeavour to collect information on the theme of the thesis, systematise and analyse the information and present a historical view of what contributions the Afrikaans Churches have made to the problem of reconciliation in South Africa. It is primarily a literature study combined with individual interviews. For the literature study books, news paper reports, magazine articles, research results of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation and also the Agendas and Acta Synodi of the different churches were carefully researched. In the Bibliography books are included which were prescribed for study before the commencement of the research. These books are important because they helped the researcher to formulate his thinking about the subject.

One problem is that, due to the size of the church and the fact that most members of the “old South Africa” government belonged to Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (the Dutch Reformed Church [DRC]), much more material has been available on this church than of any of the others. Because of that it may seem as if the other churches have been neglected. Far from that. Care has been taken, as far as possible, to make a balanced study of the afore-mentioned Afrikaans Churches.

Interviews with the following persons have been conducted. They were elected because of the position they held in their respective churches or because of their contributions in the past, positive or negative, to help the church to understand its role in society.

- Brink, Dr Isak of the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk. He is a lecturer at the APK Theological Seminary and also responsible for the department of Congregational Ministry of the APK.

- Burger, Dr Isak, President of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa He and Dr. Frank Chikane played important roles in the unification of the white and black divisions of the AFM.
- Buys, Dr James, former Moderator of the URCSA and currently minister of the URCSA in Wynberg.
- Dreyer, Prof. Theuns of the Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (NHK). He acted as Moderator of the General Church Synod of the NHK. At present he heads the Theological College of the NHK at the University of Pretoria.
- Gerber, Dr Kobus, General Secretary of the DRC.
- König, Prof. Adrio of the DRC. Professor-emeritus of the University of South Africa (UNISA) and pastoral help in DRC Verwoerdburg-Stad. He was, during the Apartheid years, a well-known voice in the DRC against the Apartheid policy of the government.
- Mahlobo, Pastor George, General Secretary of the AFM.
- Nicol, Dr Willem DRC Universiteits-oord. For many years he was one of the younger voices in the DRC against apartheid (and all the pain it caused), and against violations of human rights.
- Swanepoel, Rev. Freek, Emeritus minister of the DRC and former Moderator of the General Synod. He also presented the submission of the DRC to the TRC.
- Uys, Rev. Koos, one of the co-ministers of the DRC Roodekrans, a middle-and upper class, mostly white, suburb of the City of Roodepoort.
- Van Dyk, Rev. Deon was for a long time the Moderator of the synod of the DRC in Zimbabwe and currently minister of the DRC congregation, Skuilkrans, in Pretoria.
- Van Schalkwyk, Mrs Marinda, wife of DRC minister of Lynnwoodrif. She was, for a few years, chairperson of the General Committee of the Dutch Reformed Church's Women's League. At the moment she leads a program in their congregation to assist with

reconciliation between the white church and its neighbours in Mamelodi and Eersterus

- Van Wyk, Prof. Amie, Professor-emeritus of the Gereformeerde Kerke in South Africa (RCSA). He played an important role in the training of ministers of the Reformed Church in South Africa and was also one of the people who, in his personal capacity, testified before the TRC

1.6 PARTICIPANT-OBSERVER

When I, as Researcher, look back on the road I have travelled until now, I can identify many places and people who have been part of my formation and moulding into the person I am today. I thank the Lord Jesus Christ that He made me His and that I can have an intimate relationship with Him and that He is using me to be involved in the reconciliation process in our country.

I grew up on a smallholding, two kilometres from the edge of Sharpeville just outside Vereeniging, a town in Gauteng, South Africa. My parents taught us, as children, to treat all people with respect, even if they are black. As far as I could judge, they had good relationships with black people, although I couldn't always agree with their actions. In retrospect I realise that, over the years, different incidents worked together to shape my present understanding of the need for reconciliation in our country. I describe here a few of the more outstanding incidents.

At the age of twelve I had to stay at home to tend to the livestock while my parents and younger brothers visited my grandparents. My father arranged with one of his 'boys' at the workplace to stay with me during that week. That experience awakened many questions in my mind. Why was old John not allowed to use the extra bed in my room, especially as he had to travel a long distance by bicycle to our place? Why was he told to wash his hands at the outside tap, using an old piece of cloth to dry them? Why did he

have to use a tin plate, cup and spoon, which were stored on the stoep, and not allowed to use our outside toilet?

Later I also realised the discrepancy between the situations of white and black scholars, and was bothered by several questions, such as: Why did we have the privilege of a school bus while the black children from Sharpeville and Top Location have to run kilometres to school? Why did we have free schooling while Anna, our housemaid, had to pay for her children's school fare, books, pencils, etc?

In 1960 I was an eyewitness of the Sabre- and Harvard aeroplanes that swept over Sharpeville. I still remember the tremendous noise as the aeroplanes dived down and then soared up into the sky, an attempt to instil fear in the hearts of the protestors. Naturally the white people were also terrified! Through this experience the sense that something was wrong in our country, grew. Still my father's opinion had a great influence on my way of thinking. As far back as I can remember, he was on the Church Council of our DRC congregation – first as deacon and later as elder, who was often called by our minister to help with difficult situations in families. He could really help people reconcile with one other. He was very disappointed about Beyers Naudé's stand, (Chapter 2, par 2.2.1.1), and was also annoyed by the local missionary who became 'too friendly' with the black people.

While visiting family friends I witnessed a black father attacking his ±6 year old boy with a piece of hose-pipe, while my father and his friend were looking on and even laughing! The farmer actually commanded the father to punish his child for not keeping the cows out of the wheat-fields – while the father himself was drunk at home. I was furious, grabbed the hose-pipe and pushed the father away. This created a tense atmosphere in my relationship with my father and his friend.

As a university student I joined regular 'missionary work' visits to Tembisa Township, as well as an outreach to Sekhukuneland in North-Eastern Transvaal. I discovered that black people are also people who love the Lord and that white people can learn something from their way of worshipping and expressing love for the Lord, and experienced how God

reveals Himself to any one who calls unto Him, irrespective colour, language, intelligence, or position in life.

I became a teacher in the current Limpopo province and, together with my wife, had the opportunity to act as judges at one of the annual Eisteddfods for black schools in the area. This was a very good experience for us, as we were the only white people amongst all the black children, their parents, teachers and even a black Inspector of Schools for music, who was also one of the judges. The experience of being accepted amongst them and having our meal and teatime together is something I never wish to erase from my memory.

In 1976, at the time of the Soweto uprising, we stayed in Roodepoort. Although we were only a few kilometres from Soweto, we had no idea what the real situation was. At that time irritation had grown in my heart because ‘they burn and demolish everything provided for them’. My eyes were opened when Ds. Mataboge of the DRCA in Dobsonville, Soweto, shared with the deacons of our church regarding the circumstances in the townships. I discovered that I myself would most probably have reacted the same way under those conditions! I couldn’t help wondering what was going on in a black person’s mind while passing the grand houses where white people stay. I began admiring people like Rev. Jan Hofmeyr’s and Rev. Willie Cilliers’s courage to continue working in the townships in spite of slander and being called “kaffer boeties” by their own people! Today I am sure that the history of our country could have been quite different if we, as church(es), had been open to all races during those years, and had taken our God-given calling seriously.

From 1977 to 1979 my wife and I were on the staff with Campus Crusade for Christ and were exposed to being part of a cross-cultural team for the first time. We learned to pray together, share in Bible study, eat and play together, and share the same accommodation during conferences. We welcomed black people into our home, and discovered more about what our co-workers had to face in daily life.

I went back to University and studied to become a minister in the DRC and while pastoring two congregations, I had the privilege, in 1994 and again in 1995, to be part of a trainer's team during Mission Ural outreaches to Russia, organised by Mission Europe. In 1998 this exposure resulted in becoming a fulltime missionary with Dorothea Mission. We immediately experienced a natural connection with our black co-workers, came to love and befriend them. During evangelistic campaigns in townships and on farms, I had the privilege of staying with black people in their homes, to bring the Word and visit numerous people in their homes. During one of our regular meetings, staff members from other Southern African countries shared the pain Apartheid had even caused them during annual conferences in South Africa. The Lord led me to ask forgiveness during the meeting on behalf of white staff members and that led to a difficult time for my wife and I because of the attitude of some of the older white staff-members.

Currently two of our children are missionaries, one in Zambia and the other in Kenya. When visiting them, we have opportunities not only to share the gospel, but also to build friendships with local people and even stay with them in their villages.

The Lord convinced us more and more that his plan for our future is cross-cultural ministry. At the moment we are fulltime staff-members of Mercy Ministries South Africa, an organisation that has as its goal ethnic reconciliation, community development and mission member-care (Chapter 6). The Lord has called us to make a difference in the lives of people, and we are committed to carry the torch of reconciliation in our country amongst its peoples. May the Lord receive all the honour!

1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.7.1 Reconciliation

What is the exact meaning of the word *reconciliation*? This is the question from faith communities, and especially the Christian churches, have been confronted with since the TRC commenced its work. The problem arose because the staff of the TRC was not a homogeneous group. There were lawyers, jurists and politicians, as well as clergy

amongst the commissioners and committee members. Even as the work of the Commission progressed, there were voices inside the TRC, raised from different sides of the societal spectrum, asking what is actually meant by it. According to the jurists *reconciliation has taken place when people stop fighting* and the dust has settled in the street. The theologians, on the other hand, posed that *reconciliation is a deeply religious concept*. Members of other faith communities hinted at using their own religious terminology when speaking about reconciliation. “But no matter in which corner you were, there was total agreement that reconciliation, *whatever it might mean, was a costly and very fragile exercise*” (Meiring, 2000: 129).

The concept *reconciliation* is used to describe the process that will bring healing to South Africa. It is probably also one of the most misused words in the recent history in South Africa. Religious groups, churches, political groups and others have found it a convenient word on which to hang their ideological clothing. The Apartheid regime meant one thing when it talked about reconciliation, but those in the struggle spoke about no reconciliation without justice (Hay, 1998: 13).

About twenty years before the establishment of the TRC, discussions were already taking place on the necessity of reconciliation in South Africa.

In 1985, the controversial *Kairos Document* was published which, inter alia, touched on the meaning of reconciliation. In Chapter 3 of this document, critique is given on the so-called “Church Theology”, which takes *reconciliation* to be the key to problem solving. It discusses the need for reconciliation between black and white, and amongst all South Africans. Reconciliation has been made into an absolute principle that must be applied to 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 on 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 in which one side is fully armed and violent oppressor while the other side is defenceless 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 Christian faith has ever meant... (Kairos Document, Chapter 3)

In our current context in South Africa it would be totally unchristian to plead for reconciliation and peace before the present injustices have been removed. No reconciliation is possible in South Africa *without justice*. What this means in reality is that no forgiveness and no negotiations are possible *without repentance*...

Reconciliation, forgiveness and negotiations will become our Christian duty in South Africa only when the apartheid regime shows signs of genuine repentance.

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 (John 14:27). The peace that God wants is based upon truth, repentance, justice and love... (Kairos Document 1985:17, 18).

Consciences were stirred inside and outside South Africa, and the document was reprinted and translated into several languages. But there were also voices from government, the Afrikaans churches and from outside the country claiming that the signatories had helped to intensify the conflict in South Africa, which had led to an increase in violence, because of their support for the armed struggle.

In 1988, the National Initiative for Reconciliation (NIR) defined reconciliation *as the agreement between two parties in a conflict to forgive and accept each other*. This presupposes that both parties are committed to removing the causes of the conflict as far as they can be removed, and bear with them as far as they cannot be removed. Christian reconciliation is based on the fact that God reconciled us to himself in Christ. Christ suffered for our iniquity on the cross, restored us to fellowship with God and with each other, and involves us in God's act of reconciliation by the power of the Spirit (Nürnberg & Tooke, 1988: 84).

With the coming of the new South Africa and the institution of the TRC, many definitions and opinions were aired as to what is meant by reconciliation.

On 9 December 1996, President Mandela signed the *Interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*. This set out the task that lay ahead for all South Africans, describing *reconciliation* as

...an historic bridge between the past of a deeply divided society characterised by strife, conflict, untold suffering and injustice, and a future founded on the recognition of human rights, democracy and peaceful co-existence and development opportunities for all South Africans, irrespective of colour, race, class, belief or sex.

The pursuit of national unity, the well-being of all South African citizens and peace require reconciliation between the people of South Africa and the reconstruction of society” (Quoted in Hay, 1998:14).

The Interim Constitution, without defining what it means by reconciliation, alludes to what it might include:

“It recognises that reconciliation is about the “...*need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for ubuntu but not for victimisation.*” In spite of all these beautiful words, it is still not clear what reconciliation involves on a practical level” (Quoted in Hay, 1998:14).

How has reconciliation been understood in recent South African history? How does the government currently understand it? Hay went on to say,

“For some, reconciliation means ‘forgive and forget’. For others, it means the painful process of confronting the evil perpetrator and the violence caused. Politicians, religious leaders and people on the street all have their own understanding of what reconciliation is all about and how it can be realised. Because of a diversity of meaning of reconciliation in the churches, they too are not sure how to go about to be an instrument in reconciling the nation. This presents a challenge because many people expect the faith communities, and particularly the Christian church, to lead the way in reconciliation” (Quoted in Hay, 1998:14).

This is to be expected because so large a percentage of South Africans indicate that they are Christians. They are still looking to the church to act.

In his book *Reconciliation through Truth*, Cabinet minister Kader Asmal wrote about achieving genuine reconciliation, and made important statements about the different views on reconciliation.

Much public debate, over the TRC and elsewhere, has falsely pitted truth against reconciliation. Right-wing objectors have spoken as though the search for a morally accepted view of our history conflicts with, rather than advances, the several goals of reconciliation. They think reconciliation means a *painless forgetting*. This is a fundamental misunderstanding of the entire concept of reconciliation

The real meaning of reconciliation is something else. To reconcile is, according to the *Oxford Paperback Dictionary*, to:

“1. restore friendship between (people) after an estrangement or quarrel. 2. induce (a person or oneself) to accept an unwelcome fact or situation; *this reconciled him to living far from home*. 3. bring (facts or statements etc) into harmony or compatibility when they appear to conflict.

The heart of reconciliation, as this definition makes clear “...is the facing of unwelcome truths in order to harmonise incommensurable worldviews so that inevitable and continuing conflicts and differences stand at least within a single universe of comprehensibility.

In the political context, reconciliation is a shared and painful ethical voyage from wrong to right, and also a symbolic settling of moral and political indebtedness.

Reconciliation in its rich and meaningful sense is thus a real closing of the ledger book of the past. Reconciliation is part of a revival of the South African conscience.

Thorough reconciliation must reach all institutions. No political party or organisation must be seen as above the need to accept its culpability as author and implementer of apartheid.

Genuine reconciliation involves moral and political restitution in the sense of... to ‘make good again’ (Asmal, 1996: 46-53).

In 1995 systematic theologian, Adrio König, published a book *Versoening: Goedkoop? Duur? Verniet? (Reconciliation: Cheap? Expensive? Free?)* in which he gave his opinion of what reconciliation means. According to him, this is one of the most important words in the religious life of the Christian and the central truth of the gospel. But the concept has also become important in the political sphere. He poses the question: “...why public life has chosen this word? Is it right and good to take hold of a word central to the Christian faith?” (König, 1995:3).

König makes a case for the fact that the meaning of reconciliation is dependent on the situation in which it is used.

“Normally, when estrangement occurs between people, there is a need for reconciliation.

In such cases the cause of the estrangement could long be forgotten, but there is still the

barrier that hampers good relations. In South Africa this came to the front, for example, when the statue of the “Father of Apartheid”, Dr H F Verwoerd was removed from its place and people danced around in jubilation” (König, 1995: 1-5).

This has also been seen in other places around the world. In the former USSR jubilant masses of people danced around the demolished statues of Lenin after an end was brought to communist rule.

As seen from the above there are multiple views of what reconciliation entails. But what emerged out from the TRC were actually the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. He often said, and others identified with him, that true reconciliation rests upon the apostle Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 5. Unless one accepts the gift of reconciliation from God which became ours through Christ, it is not possible to have proper reconciliation between human beings. In South Africa, with its large percentage of people indicating that they are Christians, this is the wavelength people operate on. When one speaks about Justice, reconciliation and truth are loaded terms and one can only really work with them when one sees them as being part of a religious process (Meiring, 2003: 124).

One of the members of the TRC, Prof. Piet Meiring, made the following remarks on the work of the TRC, as regards the question about reconciliation. He said that in spite of many mistakes in the reconciliation process in South Africa, reconciliation does occur, but that it is never to be taken for granted and is like a fragile flower that must be nursed. It does not come cheap and cannot be arranged or organised. At least six lessons may be learned from South Africa’s experience:

1. *Reconciliation needs to be clearly defined.* Right up to the end of the process, the commissioners – indeed, most South Africans – were still unclear about how the term should be understood.
2. *Reconciliation and Truth go hand in hand.* Finding truth is a prerequisite for reconciliation. The victims needed it because it was an important first step on the road towards reparation and reconciliation.
3. *Reconciliation requires a deep, honest confession – and a willingness to forgive.* For lasting reconciliation to occur it is necessary that perpetrators must recognise their guilt honestly and deeply, towards God and towards their fellow human beings and honestly ask for forgiveness.
4. *Justice and reconciliation are two sides of the same coin.* For reconciliation to occur there has to be a sense of justice being part and

parcel of the process. Lasting reconciliation can only flourish in a society where justice is maintained. Issues like unemployment, poverty, education, restitution, etc. need to be considered.

5. *For reconciliation, a deep commitment is needed.* History teaches that reconciliation is not for the faint-hearted. The annals of the TRC contain many stories of ordinary citizens who often reached beyond themselves to facilitate reconciliation.
6. *On the road to reconciliation, one should expect the unexpected.* The road to reconciliation is rocky, full of dangers and disappointments. But it is also full of surprises.

(Meiring, 2002: 286,287)

Throughout history and up to now, human beings have always been involved in processes of peace and reconciliation. Anyone who is involved in such a process should be committed to a personal involvement. One cannot stand aloof from the process. It takes a long time and it can cause a great deal of frustration and at times danger. One's eyes must be open to pick up signals from victims and perpetrators that indicate when they are ready to forgive or to be forgiven. Another fact that is of utmost importance when one is involved in the process, is to be aware of mechanisms that affect relations between people of ethnic and religious groups, such as disparity between black and white, poor and rich, majorities and minorities, etc. One's own prejudices towards an ethnic or religious group may also be a problem. There must at all times be respect for the 'othernesses' of others. (Folbert, 2002: 383-384)

In this study we examine the attempts made by government to start this process via the TRC. But true reconciliation primarily lies in the hands of the faith communities, especially the Christian faith communities. True reconciliation between people is only possible when there is lasting reconciliation between a person and his/her God, for the Christian reconciliation between man/woman and the Triune God of the Bible.

1.7.2 The Biblical mandate to reconciliation

Reconciliation is one of the most fundamental concepts of the Christian message. This fact assumes man's alienation from God and the message then proceeds to show how God, in his work of grace, works reconciliation between Himself and man. God took the

first step in the reconciliation process with man. He made man a new creation and because of that, every Christian is a minister of reconciliation.

Reconciliation takes place when individuals and communities begin to enjoy intimate fellowship with previous enemies, people who have tempted each other to bitterness by hurting each other. This is a miracle made possible by the cross of Jesus Christ. At the cross mercy triumphed over justice. At the cross a mighty flood of reconciling grace was released into the world. At the cross we ourselves were recipients of such mercy that it changed the way we view those who sin against us. Jesus heals our broken hearts through reconciling us to the Heavenly Father, but He also commissions us to the ministry of reconciliation. (Dawson, 2001: 229)

The mandate to reconciliation was given to the church. In 2 Corinthians 5: 17 – 19(NIV) we read: *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone the new has come. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation...”*

Through the years three theories about reconciliation had developed which made the whole issue in Christian faith communities more complicated because of its meaning. Suffice to take notice of these before looking at the Old– and New Testaments.

1. The *theory of Irenaeus* ($\pm 185AD$) holds that the devil must be reconciled. He asked the question: why had Christ come to earth? The answer: so that He could conquer sin, destroy death and give life to man. According to Irenaeus God created man to have life but through obedience to the devil, man lost life. If God let it be, He would have lost against the devil. But through the second Man, the strong man was defeated, man rescued and given back life. The work of Christ was a victory over the powers of darkness – sin, death and the devil. This to Irenaeus was the fundamental aspect of the reconciliation

work of Christ. Scriptures on this theory are, inter alia, Acts 10:38; 1 John 3:8; & 5:19; 2 Corinthians 4:4.

2. The *objective reconciliation theory*, worked out by Anselm (± 1098 AD), has as premise the fact that God must be reconciled. God's wrath was provoked and somebody has to pay – a human. Who else could do it but the God-man, Jesus Christ? Most Christians come to know this theory through the well-known words that Jesus Christ paid for our sins on the cross or that He paid the penalty for our sins. Some of the well-known verses of Scripture that are used to show that Jesus Christ saved us from the wrath and judgement of God are: 1 Thessalonians 1:10; Romans 4:15; 5:6 - 10; Ephesians 2:3.
3. The *subjective reconciliation theory* by Abelard (± 1130 AD). According to him it is not God who was estranged from man, but man from God and therefore man must be subjectively changed through Christ. Man must come into a new relationship with God. God revealed his love for man in Christ. Christ came to show man how to respond to this love, but because man's love cannot be perfect, Christ is man's representative at the Father. Abelard stressed the importance of the life of Christ as well as of the cross as a token of God's love for man. Some of the Scriptures that support this theory are: 1 John 3:16; 4:9-10.

From these three theories one can conclude that reconciliation has richness in itself and that no one can explain all the levels. This also shows us the richness and colourfulness of the Biblical message – so rich it is not always possible to harmonise all the different colours.

It is not necessary to choose between these theories. All of them are part of the history of the church and may be used as the situation at hand dictates.

(König, 1995:17-41; Berkhof, 1973:315-323)

Since it is not the aim of this study to do a thorough exegetical study of Scripture references on reconciliation, it is only mentioned along with a few remarks.

1.7.2.1 Reconciliation in the Old Testament

“The Old Testament is all about God and his Covenant relationship with his people whom He has chosen to relate to intimately. It is about how reconciliation is worked out in this relationship with his chosen people although the word ‘reconciliation’ per se doesn’t appear in the Old Testament. Different terminology is used, such as atonement, restitution, repentance, forgiveness and restoration to explain the healing of broken relationships” (Wessels, 2005:56).

In the creation story in Genesis 1, it is recorded that God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:27). Man is the image bearer of God and this has important implications for how man sees himself and his fellowmen. Right from the beginning creation implied that man is to live in relationships – with God, with himself, his fellowman and nature. Man is called to seek the image of God in others and to respect it. He must even help people who have forgotten that they are image bearers, to discover it again and to kindle it. Because we are his image bearers, his representatives on earth, we are the only carriers of his love in this world (Du Toit, 2001: 9, 10.)

The Pentateuch forms the basis for the whole of the Old Testament and it is here that the ‘method’ of working out reconciliation is found - sacrifices. The history of sacrifices went through three phases. During the first phase, offerings were part of normal living e.g. after the harvest or after healing had taken place. The second phase lasted from entrance into the Promised Land to the Captivity. During this time the offerings were handled by the head of the family. The third phase started after the Captivity and the priests were responsible for presenting the offering, which the head of the family had brought to them. Different kinds of offerings were made. We are primarily interested in the peace-offering and the guilt/reparation offering, as these were brought to obtain reconciliation. One of the important elements of this type of offering was the *blood*. In its

essence it is not the blood that worked reconciliation, but the *life* that was released through the blood (König, 1995: 42 ff.).

The relationship between God and Israel forms the basis of a social network of relationships. Yahweh is holy, therefore any person or thing standing in relationship with Him is also called holy (Leviticus 11:44- 45). Sin places a person's relationship with God in jeopardy. The sinner becomes unholy, unclean, impure and false. The person then has to carry this iniquity, the burden that accompanies the sin, in the form of either the penalty or the retributive punishment that attends a sinful act. The person experiences that burden as guilt. The actions to restore the relationship with God can take many forms. In Leviticus these measures include ritual as well as ethical acts. One of the main rituals is sacrifice. Sacrifices offered at the tabernacle were essential for Israel to find expiation from her sins and thus to continue to be acceptable to Yahweh. The presentation of a sacrifice is both sign and proof of Yahweh's placability. Yahweh guarantees that the ritual sacrifice the people present brings about atonement (Leviticus 17:11).

The question is: what was the significance of the blood? Blood is important because it is essential for life. As long as it flows in the body that body is alive. Although shedding of human blood is a capital offence, shedding of animal blood is allowed in the Old Testament. The animal which had to die, substitutes for the sinner. The blood is an element in atonement because it is the carrier and symbol of life. In Deuteronomy 12:23, blood and life are associated with each other, the one indicating the other. The blood rites performed by the priests enable the one who offers to approach the Lord without shedding his own blood. Because a person cannot approach God without blood, the animal blood takes the place of his own blood. When blood functions as a means of reconciliation, it not only signifies life as a gift of God, but also the life of the sacrifice itself, as a gift which God provides as a means through which man can be saved. In Hebrews 9:22 it is stated "*...and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness*". To be reconciled to God means to be restored to life. Its ethical implication is restored relations with creation and with fellow human beings. It implies balance and equilibrium

in the life of the society and the individual. It can also bring reconciliation between fellow human beings (Venter, 2005: 19-30).

The Pentateuch and especially the book of *Deuteronomy*, talks about the covenant God made between Himself and his people. In this book we find the history of reconciliation between the Lord and the people of Israel. The forty years of wandering through the desert was the result of their disobedience. After forty years the Lord commanded them to turn towards the Promised Land. The time of punishment had passed and the Lord was about to make a new beginning with His people. He would again be their God and they should act as His people this time because they are “the people of his inheritance” (Deuteronomy 4:20) If they should go astray again, there would be punishment, including exile from the Promised Land. (Deuteronomy 4:27). Reconciliation with God would then again become possible, but repentance is highlighted as the prerequisite on their part. Reconciliation would begin on their part with the recognition of their evil ways, followed by repentance and conversion (Deuteronomy 4:29-31). On account of the reconciliation between God and His people, the people had to live within the boundaries of the restored covenant. This is made very clear in Deuteronomy 10:12-22. The reconciliation between Him and them also had implications for their relationship with one another. When the relationship amongst members of the people of God was disturbed, steps had to be taken to bring about reconciliation in one form or another. Such reconciliation could include punishment for the transgressor. Refer to passages like Deuteronomy 15:1-18; 16:18-20; 17:8-13; etc (Van Rooy, 2005: 10-17).

The *Prophets* in the Old Testament played an important role as agents of restoration. The important issues to be considered in discussing reconciliation and the role of the prophets are relationship and communication. Damaged or broken relationships lead to a lack of communication and therefore a lack of real community. The primary focus is on the relationship between God and his people. This relationship was intertwined with the social situations of everyday life. Mention is made in the prophets of the rich and powerful who exploited the poor and weak of society. But the idea that stands out is not that they called the people to reconciliation but only that they uncovered the unjust

situations in society. Examples are to be found in Isaiah 1:11-17 and 5:8-10; Hosea 12:8; Amos 5:7-12.

God's commands do not only demand loyalty and faithfulness to Him, but also involve every aspect of His people's actions and behaviour in society. There is interconnectedness between God and His people. In Micah 6:8 it is made clear that the Lord is not satisfied with rituals and simply going through certain motions to try and please Him. The Lord requires a particular attitude and a way of living: "*He has showed you, O man, 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*" (NIV).

At times the prophets had the difficult task of proclaiming God's judgement and had to call on the people to confess their wrongdoing and return to the Lord their God or to face the consequences of their sin. At other times they also had the privilege of announcing the Lord's mercy and his intention to renew the relationship with his people as is seen in Jeremiah 31 where God announces his "new covenant" via the prophet Jeremiah to his people: "*Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah - not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers... But this is the covenant that I will make... I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people*" (Jeremiah 31:31-34)(NKJV). The people also had to express His care and convey the blessings He had in mind for them. The prophets not only served as witnesses of the efforts of the Lord to reconcile with his people, but also as instruments to bring it about (Wessels, 2005:55-67).

1.7.2.2 Reconciliation in the New Testament

Much work has been done in this field and as it is not the aim of this study to provide a full exegetical record of all the passages on reconciliation in the New Testament, a few remarks will suffice.

Christianity, as one of the world religions, has a tremendous influence on the morality and belief systems of people. It is no wonder that Christians often play key roles in the process of reconciliation. An undeniable fact is that the roots of Christianity are imbedded in what God in Jesus Christ has done to reconcile a world, which has gone astray, to Him (Van der Watt 2005: 96).

In the *Synoptic Gospels* the incarnation of Jesus as Son of God is portrayed. His life and work, His suffering, death on the cross, burial, resurrection and ascension are painted in vivid colours. By the time that Jesus and John the Baptist were born, the belief in a merciful God, full of grace and steadfast love was part of the faith of early Judaism. It is, inter alia, seen in Mary's song, the Magnificat, as recorded in Luke 1:46-55 which shows clearly that she knew about God's *favour* for her, and that "*His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation*" (NKJV). In the song of Zechariah the role of John the Baptist was highlighted as his father sang about the fact the John would prepare God's people by giving them knowledge of salvation and *forgiveness of sin.*" *By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us...*" (Luke 1:68-79). From this and other Scriptures it is clear that forgiveness is, in a sense, grounded in the mercy of God. God's mercy makes it possible for humans to be forgiven for their wrongdoing.

When *John the Baptist* started his preaching and baptising ministry, there were close ties between conversion, baptism and the 'forgiveness of sins'. John made it very clear that the fact that someone belongs to a religious community does not lead to forgiveness, but the fact that he repents. The repentance must become visible (cf. Luke 3:8; Matthew 3:8).

Jesus highlighted the spirit in which mercy is asked for. Forgiveness, which implies the acquittal of the supplicant, is requested by praying to the Lord with a crushed heart and a humbled spirit. In Mark 11:25, an example is found that forgiveness of trespasses is something to be prayed for in the belief that the answer is already given. Jesus made it very clear that the willingness amongst believers to forgive should be unlimited, provided they repent (cf. Luke 17:3-4; Matthew 18:15, 21 – 22).

Breytenbach summarises the witness of the Synoptic Gospels about Jesus and the forgiveness of sins as follows:

...we find that *Mark's* foundation for the forgiveness of sins lies with the authority of Jesus as the Son of Man. *Matthew* stresses the plight of the followers of Jesus to forgive not only the fellow members of the community, but humankind in general. He introduced the death of Jesus as basis for the forgiveness of sins into the synoptic tradition. *Luke* stresses that there is no debt, no guilt, which can be so great that it is unforgivable. Only those humbled in remorse by the vastness of their guilt can expect forgiveness, not the self-righteous (Breytenbach, 2005: 94).

Forgiveness is not for the self-righteous and impenitent. The Lord's forgiveness is for those who come to Him in remorse; those who know that they are guilty and bring their guilt to Him in prayer. The Lord's grace is bestowed on those who have repented, whose ways of thinking have changed (Breytenbach, 2005:84-95).

Van der Watt, in his study of reconciliation in the writings of John, *The Gospel according to John, the Johannine letters as well as Revelation*, gives a clear picture of what the apostle John understands under reconciliation:

- Reconciliation with God is only possible in and through Christ. This means that reconciliation is exclusive in nature.
- Reconciliation is also inclusive through the fact that God loved the world so much that He gave his only Son, Jesus Christ, and everybody is invited to believe in Him and his Son. Reconciliation amongst people is only possible if there has been reconciliation with God the Father through the Son. Everybody is invited to enter into the family of God.
- Reconciliation amongst people takes place in the framework of the family or kingdom of God. When a person becomes part of God's family, he experiences the effects thereof: love, peace and joy. Within this family true reconciliation is experienced.
- When conflict occurs amongst members of the family, the church, the problem is dealt with according to and on the basis of the teachings of Jesus, as found in the Word of God (e.g. Matthew 18). The church should protect the truth of the Word.

Now what does this tell us of our situation today and our efforts to create a better world through reconciliation? There is a huge difference between the reconciliation that John favoured and some present-day expectations. The socio-political idea is that as long as

people work together and are not at war with one other, the goal is reached and reconciliation is attained. But the problem is that Christianity (as is the case with Islam and Judaism) is by nature an exclusive religion. Christ stands central and the whole ensuing religious system is related to and conceptualised in the light of this central reality. In this case reconciliation is defined in terms of the relationship between God and God's people, based on and made possible by what Christ did. People who don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ cannot experience this true reconciliation (Van der Watt, 2005: 97-111).

What does *Paul*, the other great apostle, say about reconciliation?

On his way to Damascus to persecute the followers of Jesus, he had an encounter with the living Christ. His life was never the same again. He became converted and Christ turned him into a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17). Paul knew that God had taken the initiative in this act of reconciliation in his own life and in the lives of others.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Paul emphasises that God took the initiative to effect reconciliation between Himself and the world. The death of Jesus Christ on the cross, on behalf of sinners, visibly embodies this divine act of reconciliation. Christ was made sin so that He could bring sinners into the right relationship with God. Therefore believers have the assurance that no condemnation awaits them in the future (Romans 8:1). Christ permanently reconciled all believers to God.

Paul emphasises the importance of faith, because he knows that all those who believe this message are one in Christ. Faith is nothing less than the believers' participation in the life of Christ, both in His earthly fate and in His exalted heavenly position. Those who were once estranged and hostile, Jesus has now reconciled by His death in order to present them holy and blameless before God. (Colossians 1:21-22). Faith is the channel along which God's reconciliation is internalised in the lives of people. Faith is an existential act, a personal decision to follow the living Christ. Without a human response to accept this gift of God, reconciliation remains a mere theoretical gift. People should let themselves be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20).

People are reconciled to God only through faith in Jesus Christ. Stefan Joubert shows that:

“There is no other way and in his letters Paul constantly show people the basic framework of God’s visible acts of reconciliation in Christ by emphasising that:

- God’s act of reconciliation has a very specific content, namely the giving of Jesus as a sacrifice for the sins of all, Jews and non-Jews alike;
- God’s act of reconciliation has a specific effect, namely the radical transformation of the recipients’ religious status from sinners to children of God;
- God’s act of reconciliation places the recipients thereof in permanent debt to him. They must continually express their gratitude for the gift of salvation in thanksgiving and deeds of obedience” (Joubert, 2005:117).

Reconciliation is an act accomplished by Jesus Christ, not only to bring peace between God and humankind, but also amongst fellow human beings. Reconciliation is a divine act, which brings together God and mankind. It unites old enemies. All hostilities are brought to an end once God touches the lives of those in need of peace. He also unites sinners into a new humanity in Christ. But ordinary people must proclaim this message. Every believer has a ministry – the ministry of reconciliation and this message must be proclaimed to everybody who has an ear to listen. And it must be accepted by faith. The church as a living organism is one where the message of reconciliation is proclaimed and believed (Joubert, 2005: 112-122).

In his study on reconciliation in the General Epistles, Gert Steyn (2005) makes the statement that reconciliation language refers to broken relationships that are restored. The technical terms that are usually used elsewhere in the New Testament for reconciliation are virtually absent in the General Epistles. Some of these words express a passive but positive attitude that creates an atmosphere conducive to reconciliation, such as tolerance, grace and Christian love. Others express an active action, such as atonement, propitiation, forgiveness, redemption, salvation, justification and sanctification. Others again, such as restoration, reunion and peace point to the result of the process, or the state in which the different parties find themselves after reconciliation. When one looks at the process of

reconciliation and related aspects as shown above, there is no doubt that the General Epistles can contribute significantly to our understanding of reconciliation.

Two clear dimensions can be distinguished in reconciliation – a vertical and a horizontal. The vertical describes the restored relationship between God and us and the horizontal describes the restored relationship amongst fellow humans. In the vertical dimension the mediatory role of Christ was crucial in the process of reconciling God with man. Because Christians bear His name they also ought to play a mediatory role in the reconciliation process on the horizontal level.

The master plan for reconciliation between people already exists. God gave us the example (Steyn, 2005: 123-133).

From this cursory paging through the Bible, it is clear that reconciliation is the “heartbeat” of the Triune God. First of all there must be reconciliation between Himself and us and then amongst people. This will be the path that the researcher takes during the latter part of this study.

1.7.3 The scope of reconciliation

According to Christian doctrine, we all live estranged from God, in conflict with our Creator. This conflict can become visible in the various relations in which human beings participate. These relations are (i) between man and God – the way people relate to God (ii) how man relates to himself (iii) amongst different individuals (man and man) and (iv) the way how man relates to his natural environment (man and nature). What is really at stake when we talk about reconciliation is the question how the relations between and amongst all the above mentioned will be healed and restored when there has been discord.

The reconciliation between God and man is the all-encompassing ground and creates the possibility for reconciliation on the other levels (Van der Kooi, 2002: 106).

As the church has the mandate for reconciliation, it has the responsibility to make sure that all these areas come into view in its preaching and teaching about reconciliation. In this study, consideration will be given to reconciliation of the broken relationship amongst people, as it crystallises in South Africa, with emphasis on reconciliation amongst various racial groups and the part being played by the Afrikaans Churches.

1.7.3.1 Reconciliation between fellow human beings

Reconciliation with God must work out in reconciliation amongst human beings. Matthew 22:37 – 40 indicates that love towards God is most important and love to our fellow human beings next. Romans 13: 8- 10 says that love to other people is important, because the presupposition is love to God.

One of the tragic aspects of the current moral discourse in South Africa “... is that while concepts such as repentance, forgiveness, justice, truth and reconciliation are inherently Christian notions, Christians and churches have often withdrawn from the public conversation – thus leaving it open to secularly construed meanings. Often this is accompanied by a type of detached criticism of the attempts to deal with these issues (for instance, the work of the TRC), rather than by a more constructive, albeit critical, engagement” (Vosloo, 2001: 26).

Vosloo quotes Miroslav Volf as saying “theologians *should concentrate less on social arrangements and more on fostering the kind of social agents capable of envisioning and creating just, truthful, and peaceful societies, and on sharing a cultural climate in which such agents will thrive*” (Volf, as cited in Vosloo, 2001:35) This implies that reconciliation has everything to do with the character of the self that engages with other persons. For reconciliation we need people who embody forgiveness and repentance. We need people who mourn in the light of brokenness, reach out in vulnerability to the other and have the courage to embrace or be embraced (Vosloo, 2001: 32).

How we as South Africans, and especially as faith communities, are going to confess or forgive others in the process of reconciliation, depends on the identity question: “Who are we?” There must be the will to make a way for others into our hearts, a will to embrace those that we see as wrongdoers.

When talking about reconciliation in South Africa, we must take into account the differences in cultural settings, for instance, the question of how different cultural groups see time. This is one of the problems we have with reconciliation. There is a difficulty in taking *the pace* of the other. Some want to get on “with the job”, while others want more time to reflect on the past and work out things for themselves. This leads to confrontation and many times goodwill is questioned because of this.

Dr Fanie du Toit, Program Manager of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, interviewed a gathering of unemployed squatters, a group of black entrepreneurs, some successful District Six land claimants, various Bishop’s Court residents, a group of policemen from Mitchell’s Plain, and youth groups along Klipfontein Road in Mowbray, Athlone and Gugulethu. All of them were asked about reconciliation and justice in South Africa. The *white youth* group defined reconciliation as “seeing another’s point of view”. The *coloured group* defined it as “coming together,” and the *black youth* group referred to it as “practical acts, not just hugs and kisses”. The *focus group* suggests that three issues impact directly on society’s dim outlook on South Africa – *unaccountable leadership, slow material development* and *violence*. Black, coloured and white groups all tend to see leaders, from the highest office down to their local councillor, as “corrupt, greedy and neglecting the needs of the people” (*Cape Argus, 12 August 2002*). In reading this article, the question came to mind: Where is the church – the one body that should be able to make a difference and be trustworthy?

On 15 June 2003, an article, *What do we mean by Reconciliation? A View from the University of Stellenbosch*, was published in the *Sunday Independent*. The author, Amanda Gouws, head of the Political Studies Department at the University of Stellenbosch, wrote:

The question that I want to grapple with here is how do we deal with, or what do we say to (white) students who claim that they were too young to have any memory of apartheid and also that they are innocent of any injustices of apartheid. I hear this regularly in my classes... Yet, at the same time for many black students of the same age the wounds of apartheid loom large but because they are in a minority the debate about reconciliation is always uneven and acrimonious in the classroom.

The issue of collective guilt is one that I find very difficult to explain to students who do not want to engage with apartheid history anymore and who are convinced that they should not bear the burden of the past. Inherent in this dilemma is the contentious nature of the concept reconciliation itself. For the students I engage with believe that reconciliation is a 'feel good concept' – the idea that the truth was told during the TRC process and that victims have forgiven the perpetrators for the most part and that we now all live happily ever after.

The idea that reconciliation may also have a socio-economic dimension through which we need to try and transform the inequities of the past to them smack of reverse discrimination where they have to 'pay a price for political decisions that they were not involved in'. For them it is making the playing field uneven not even.

It is only through engagement with greater diversity of race, language, religion and sexual orientation that students start to experientially get to understand that their interpretation is not the only interpretation of the world...

A consequence of this perception of reconciliation is that white students can remain passive – they have to do nothing to change the status quo while black students have to be politically engaged to change it... This begs the question of how you bring reconciliation down to grassroots level – to the mundane of everyday living.

With reference to what Gouws found, the researcher wonders how many of these white students testify that they are "Christians" (as most people in our country do) and that they are in one way or another linked to a Christian church or faith community. Have they heard anything from pulpits or Bible Study groups, small groups, etc. of the need to be reconciled to others? What role did the church play or not play in the forming of the minds of these students and others in South Africa?

1.8 THE AFRIKAANS CHURCHES

This study is on the role of the Afrikaans Churches in the process of reconciliation. Who are these churches?

In 1652 a halfway station was set up at the Cape for the ships of the Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oos Indiese Kompanjie [VOC]). The intention, from the beginning, was that ships could get fresh supplies on their way to the East. After a few years, however, farming started and that was the beginning of a settlement that mushroomed to a nation of \pm 45 million currently (Gerstner, 1997:16).

Jan van Riebeeck brought with him the Reformed Christian tradition and already, on 30 December 1651, he prayed that this tradition might grow and spread. He arrived at the Cape of Good Hope with the Bible, The Nederlandse Statevertaling (Dutch State Bible) and the three formulae of Reformed faith, The Canons of Dordt, The Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession (d'Assonville, 2000: 150,156).

In this paragraph, a short historic overview of the Afrikaans Churches under discussion is given.

1.8.1 The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) (Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk)

From the Cape Colony's beginnings as a garrison, the VOC provided for Dutch Reformed services led by officially recognised religious workers. The first permanent minister arrived in 1665. For more than a century this would be the only church and as the established church, the DRC exercised a virtual monopoly of Christian religion in the new colony. (Gerstner, 1997:16; Giliomee 2003:5)

The relationship between state and church was a problem from the beginning. There was just about no church activity that was free from state interference. During the first British Annexure in 1795, the interference from the state just continued. This was also the case under the Batavian Administration (1803 – 1806). A change, which guaranteed the independence of the DRC, only occurred in the twentieth century (Hofmeyr, 2002:30).

At the Cape, from its founding, it was considered imperative that all children known to have at least one European parent had to be baptised. A significant extension of the baptismal practice concerned the slaves owned by the VOC, on the grounds that the Company itself would serve as ‘witness’ to ensure the children’s training in Christianity. This practice was, however, challenged by a number of ministers at the Cape and repudiated by the Classis of Amsterdam in a letter received around 1697. As a consequence of this, the baptismal register after 1695 had two distinct lists. The one is a list of names of Christian children (from European descent) and the other a list of Slave children of the VOC. It was evident from this that being a Christian was still seen as related to ethnic descent.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, DRC missions were established and when Khoisan converts were baptised, there was a virtual revolt by some settlers who refused to partake of the same table with those not of European descent, or as they said, not ‘born Christian’. According to Gerstner (1997:26-27) this led to the beginning of formal church apartheid.

The one issue that had a very important impact on the DRC was race relations. From the beginning there had been no objection to the black and coloured workers of farmers worshipping together with their masters, in the same church building. In Ordinance 50 of 1828 it was specified that Koikoi and all free people of colour were equal with white people. In 1852 a pastoral circular made it clear to members of the DRC that the church could not discriminate against other people (of colour). In 1857, however, the synod decided the following:

The Synod considers it *desirable and according* to the Holy Scripture that our heathen members be *accepted and initiated into our congregations* wherever it is possible; but where this matter, as the result of the **weakness of some**, would stand in the way of *promoting the work of Christ* amongst the heathen people, then congregations set up amongst the heathen, or still to be set up, should enjoy their Christian privileges in a separate building or institution (Acta Synodi 1857:59, as quoted in Crafford & Gous, 1993: 288).(Researcher’s italics).

It should be noted that the decision was not taken, in the first instance, to divide the Dutch Reformed Church *ad infinitum* along racial lines. On the synodical agenda, a second issue was waiting: that the DRC was to embark on a new a missionary programme far beyond the borders of synod. Evidently the proponents of the abovementioned proposal were concerned that racial tensions would impede the decision on foreign missions. A compromise, for a limited time, seemed thus advised. Be it as it may, this decision for a very long time determined the course of history in the church. The result of the compromise decision was not merely that different communion services became the rule, but, sadly, that different congregations, finally separate churches, came into being. The one DRC evolved into a "DRC Family of churches": The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk (NGSK coloured - 1881); The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika (NGKA black people –from 1910); Reformed Church in Africa (RCA Indians – 1965). Today the struggle to get these churches re-united continues. (Crafford, D 1982: 37 – 42)

After the Second British Annexure in 1806, the influence of English and Scottish ministers became stronger and the DRC couldn't escape it. The influence of the Murray family cannot be overlooked as they brought with them the evangelical impetus into the DRC. Today, as the DRC is going through a difficult time regarding its spirituality, the question is how much of the Scottish evangelical influence is still alive in the church (Hofmeyr, 2002: 78).

With the expansion of the church in South Africa, different synods came into being which were united in a "Raad der Kerken" in 1907. This was the forerunner of the Federal Council of Dutch Reformed Churches (white synods) which in 1964 became a joint body representing all of the churches of the DR family in South and Central Africa, called the Federal Council of Dutch Reformed Churches. The General Synod, which consisted of the different white DR churches in Southern Africa, was formed in 1962 (Adonis, 2002: 114).

Over the years the DRC sent out many missionaries to other countries in Africa – even into the current Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho,

Swaziland, Malawi, Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania. (Cronje, J M 1981:3 – 5; Crafford, D 1982: 572 – 576)

In 2004, the DRC had 1 185 675 members who were worshipping in 1186 congregations and 1747 ministers (Kerkspieël 2004).

1.8.2 Die Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (NHK)

The Voortrekkers who settled in the Transvaal and Free State were bitterly disappointed that the Cape Synod disapproved of the trek in 1837 and sent them no minister. They still saw themselves as members of the DRC although they came to know that the Cape Afrikaners were asserting their own non-racial character without pressure from the government. But in due course the Cape Synod acted by sending Rev. A Murray to Bloemfontein and Rev. JH Neethling of Prince Albert to the Transvaal to assess the situation. During a Church board meeting on 21 May 1852, they had undertaken that the Cape Synod would pay attention to the calling of a minister from the Cape to the Transvaal. But the congregations were aware of the fact that they wouldn't receive a minister unless they became part of the Cape Synod. So they decided that, because they were free as citizens of the Transvaal, they also wanted to be free as church. This was the outcome of the Sand River Convention of 1852 between the British Government and the Voortekkers in which it was stipulated that emigrants north of the Vaal River would have political freedom (Dreyer, 2002: 112).

In the Free State, as far as the church was concerned, all congregations were absorbed into the DRC of the Cape Colony, accepting its policy of non-discrimination against people on grounds of colour or race.

The Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR), Transvaal, however, accepted in 1858 a constitution, in which it was declared that the people were *not* prepared to allow any equality of the non-white with the white inhabitants, either in the Church or State. The person who took the lead in demanding the racial exclusivity was Rev. Dirk van der Hoff, a Dutch minister who had arrived from the Netherlands in 1852 and was for some years

the only minister in the ZAR. The Cape church sent a delegation to the Transvaal to try to incorporate the congregations, but they had to report back that the racial issue was the fly in the ointment. Rev. van der Hoff was determined to found his own church in the Transvaal and hence had his own agenda in advocating racial exclusivity.

The first General Synod (Algemene Kerkvergadering) gathered on 8 of August 1853. At this meeting it was decided to form a new church, Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk (NHK). It would be the state church and would not join the Synod of the Cape DRC. The Lydenburg congregation refused to recognise Van der Hoff as their minister, because they still wanted to have good relations with the Cape (Giliomee, 2003: 176,177).

As time passed, the NHK developed into the People's Church (Volkskerk) of the ZAR (Transvaal). This attempt led, in 1863-64, to an unpleasant situation, in which members of the NHK, with supporters of the establishment, opposed members of the Gereformeerde Kerk (GK) and other dissidents led by Paul Kruger. Eventually, in a political compromise, the NHK was assigned a place as one church amongst many (Hexham, & Poewe, 1997: 125,126).

Towards the end of the British Occupation of the ZAR (1877 – 1881) negotiations between the DRC and the NHK in the ZAR with respect to unification started. This was seen as a need to strengthen a common Boer identity in opposition to the British threat. On 7 December 1885 unification between the two churches did take place in Pretoria. A provisional name was decided on: Die Nederduitsche Hervormde of Gereformeerde Kerk (NH of G Kerk) also known as Die Verenigde Kerk (the 'United Church'). In 1889 the provisional name became the official name. The DRC in Transvaal kept the name NH of G Kerk van Transvaal until 1957. But the unification was short lived – from 1885 to 1892.

Many who had previously belonged to the NHK left the new United Church and linked up with the single NHK congregation Witfontein-Rhenosterpoort in the district of Pretoria. In effect the new NH of G Kerk turned out to be the DRC under a new name in the ZAR (Krüger, JS 2003:151-152). Some of the other reasons were that the NH of G

Kerk (the United Church) propagates mission work, the possibility of equalisation between white and black, and the possibility that there would be better relationships with the British. The fear also existed that the NH of G Kerk was actually the continuation of the DRC because of the few ministers of the NHK who were part of the united church (Hofmeyr, 2002: 150).

After the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, the General Synod had regular meetings to give the necessary leadership and pastoral care to its members who were devastated by the war. In 1907 the *Almanak* and in 1909 *Die Hervormer* came into being. These two publications are still used in the NHK. In 1917 the NHK started a Theological Faculty at the then Transvaal University College, the current University of Pretoria. In 1943 the *Hervormde Teologiese Studies*, a quarterly magazine, saw the light and this is today the oldest Afrikaans theological periodical in South Africa.

In 2002, the NHK consisted of 315 congregations with 156 722 members and 347 ministers (Botha, 2002: 60-62).

1.8.3 The Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) (Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika)

In due course the Reformed Church of South Africa (RCSA) was founded in 1859 by Rev. Dirk Postma. He came from the Netherlands where he had been a member of the Afscheiden Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk, the Separated Christian Reformed Church (SCRC,) which sought to uphold traditional Calvinism against the inroads of theological liberalism. He arrived in the Transvaal in 1858 and sought to work in harmony with Van der Hoff of the NHK. He became aware of the struggle that existed amongst the people due to the singing of hymns, as there were those who wanted to sing hymns and those who didn't. He made contact with a group called Doppers, who were adherents of traditional Calvinist beliefs and practices. They also disliked the singing of evangelical hymns, and the liberal theology of Van der Hoff, as Postma himself did.

In 1859 the synod of the NHK decided to enforce the singing of modern hymns in all congregations. The Doppers argued that only the Psalms of David should be sung. A group of Doppers, led by Paul Kruger, left the Rustenburg congregation of the NHK and invited Postma to become their minister. Thus they formed the Reformed Church which quickly established congregations throughout the whole of South Africa.

Postma played an important role in Afrikaner history, encouraging education and a sense of national identity amongst the members of the church in the Cape, Free State and Transvaal. After the Anglo-Boer War members of the Reformed Church took a leading role in the Second Language Movement, Christian National Education and the development of the rising Afrikaner nationalist ideology. Between 1902 and 1915 it supported the rising Afrikaner nationalist cause, allowing, for example, its various publications and synods to support JBM Hertzog, the leader of the National Party after its founding in 1914 (Hexham, & Poewe, 1997: 126-128).

The NHK, although relatively liberal in its theological view, was opposed to missionary work amongst the black people, while the Dopper majority accepted missionary work as long as it avoided common worship (Giliomee, 2003: 179).

The Reformed Church didn't take long before it paid attention to the training of ministers. In 1869 a Theological School came into being in Burgersdorp. In 1905, it shifted to Potchefstroom, where the Literature Department of the Theological School developed the constitution of the Potchefstroom University of Christian Higher Education.

In 2001 there were 302 Reformed Churches in South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe (Bingle, 2002: 119).

1.8.4 The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM) (Die Apostoliese Geloof Sending van Suid-Afrika)

On 14 May 1908 two missionaries, John G Lake and Thomas Hezmalhalch, from America, landed in Cape Town. They travelled to Johannesburg and started meetings in a small hall in Doornfontein. The date was 25 May 1908 – the date on which the AFM

officially started in South Africa. Two interesting issues are worth mentioning: firstly, the Pentecostal movement in South Africa had the same humble beginning as in Azusa Street, America. Secondly, as in America, black people were from the beginning involved in one way or another.

Within a few weeks the hall in Doornfontein was too small and the meetings shifted to a bigger building which could seat approximately 600 people. This became known as the Central Tabernacle.

Right from the beginning great emphasis was laid on true repentance. This was seen, as today, as the greatest miracle of all, greater than any bodily healing. A person that played an important role in the AFM was Pieter L le Roux, a Dutch Reformed missionary who had been a student of Andrew Murray. He was especially interested in Murray's views on divine healing. He joined the AFM in 1910 and soon became a leader.

The Pentecostal movement in South Africa initially grew amongst the disenfranchised black people and the poor white Afrikaners reeling from the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War. The first services of the newly founded AFM were racially integrated. It was reported that all shades of colour and all degrees of the social scale mingled freely in their hunger after God. The white people, however, soon decided to separate the races in baptisms and like other churches in South Africa at this time, yielded to the pressures of white society to develop segregated churches.

The AFM prospered especially amongst African people and Afrikaans-speaking white people. Pieter le Roux was made president in 1913. In 1955 G R Wessels, a senior pastor in the AFM and its vice-president, became a senator in the ruling National Party, contributing to a serious schism in the white church. The white AFM was to become increasingly identified with and subservient to the apartheid politics of the government. From the founding of the church in 1908, white members had determined the constitution and power had been vested in an all-white executive council. The African, Coloured and Indian sections of the AFM were controlled by a Missions Department and a director of missions appointed by the white church. A series of discussions that started in 1985 led to an umbrella constitution with two sections of the AFM. There are now two presidents of the AFM: in 1993 Frank Chikane was elected by the Composite Division (black, coloured and Indian) of the church and Isak Burger by the all-white section, the Single

Division. In April 1995 the Single Division accepted the constitution for a united AFM, and the biggest stumbling block towards unity was resolved. In April 1996 the AFM became one church (Burger, 1987: Ch 7; Henderson, & Pillay, 1997: 229-234).

1.8.5 The Afrikaans Protestant Church (Die Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk [APK])

The DRC will always remember the date 27 June 1987. On this day a new church, formed by a breakaway group, became a reality and the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk (APK) was born. This took place less than a year after the DRC's acceptance of the policy document *Church and Society* in which there was a radical change of viewpoint on apartheid and racism.

There was a long preamble to the foundation of the APK. From 1980 there were important voices that influenced the thinking and theology of the DRC. To name a few:

- The Reformation Day Witness of eight theologians in 1980.
- The publishing of the book *Stormkompas* in 1981.
- The Open Letter of 123 ministers and theologians in 1982.
- The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) meeting in Ottawa 1982 which accepted the *Status Confessionis* and suspended membership of the DRC.
- The Confession of Belhar of the NGSK in 1982/1986.

Although leaders in the DRC minimised these events, their influence on the minds of people in the DRC cannot be ignored (Chapter Two). This led to the revision of *Human Relations in light of Scripture*, which in turn led to the new policy accepted in *Church and Society*. The DRC was now an open church. The church listened to the voices inside and from outside the church and decided on a new course. This decision led to a raging storm, which had in itself the potential for schism in the church.

Political leaders, especially from the right wing, took advantage of this and, because of the negative reaction from mostly right wing adherents, it became apparent that it was just a question of time before a new church would emerge. A mass meeting was arranged for 28 November 1986 to raise objections against the new direction of the DRC. Prof.

WJG Lubbe was elected as chairman. In 1983 there was already a meeting of 250 ministers in Silverton and 193 of them had signed a witness in which they reconfirmed the status quo of the church's view on Apartheid. The seed had been sown and it started to grow into a large-scale opposing body within the DRC.

On 27 June 1987 about 2500 people gathered in the Skilpadsaal in Pretoria and a decision was taken to found a new Afrikaans church, for white people only. Within 4 months there were 113 congregations and 30 ministers, most of whom had resigned from the DRC as well as emeriti from the DRC.

Within a short time the APK opened its own Theological School for the training of ministers. It has developed over the years and at the moment it is registered with government as the Afrikaans Protestantse Akademie, an institution that also trains teachers (Adendorff, 2002: 1- 11; Van der Merwe, 2002: 421 – 428).

1.8.6 The Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA). (Die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk van Suid-Afrika)

The question might be asked why the URCSA is included in this study. It is because the URCSA is part of the DRC family of churches and because a large percentage of the members of this church are Afrikaans speaking. For the sake of reconciliation, the attempts to re-unite the DRC and the URCSA are of utmost importance in our country. It is therefore not possible to talk about reconciliation and the role of the DRC, if the relationship between the two churches is not taken into consideration as well.

The URCSA came into being when the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk (NGSK)(Dutch Reformed Mission Church – DRMC ‘coloured people’) and the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika (NGKA) (Dutch Reformed Church in Africa – DRCA ‘black people’) amalgamated in 1994. Both the constituting churches had a long history behind them, but it will suffice for this study to give a short overview.

1.8.6.1 *The Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) (Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk)*

Since the early days of the Cape Colony, the settlers had had the tradition that their slaves and workers took part in the so-called ‘house altar’ and that they could also attend church services, but they had to sit in specifically marked seats. That was actually seen as the normal procedure for Christians. But through the years this situation changed as more and more of the indigenous people became Christians and the white people found it more difficult to worship with them in the same building at the same time. (See also the discussion in par. 1.8.1).

In 1828 the Church Council of the DRC Somerset-West discussed an application from a certain Bentura Visser, a coloured (‘bastaard’) who wanted to become a member of the church. He was granted membership provided that he partook of Holy Communion after all the other congregants (white) had finished. At his first Communion he used the sacrament together with the rest of the congregation. The minister, Rev. Spijker, didn’t have any problem with this, but his congregants were very unhappy and they let it be known that “should such a thing happen again, they would rather stay away from Holy Communion”.

This whole issue dragged on and in April 1829 the Presbytery of Cape Town, to which Somerset-West belonged, advised that “according to the teaching of the Bible and the spirit of Christianity, the Church was forced to make no exception in this case: people should take Holy Communion together.” A decision was made to take the whole matter to the Synod meeting later in 1829. At the Synod no decision was actually taken. This led to a situation that for many years this question appeared on the agendas of Church Councils. The Synod of 1857 (see decision on p 51) tried to resolve the problem by saying that according to the Bible it was clear that differences of race and colour should not cause any difference to be made in the preaching of the gospel. However, it was also accepted that there was such a strong colour prejudice amongst some white people that they refuse to tolerate the black people in their midst, especially when it came to “Christian privileges” or to Holy Communion. This sinful predisposition of a section of the church, which came to be called a “weakness”, was accepted and encouraged by

people (white?) who were in a position of power in the name of the “question of Christ amongst the heathen”

This decision, which finally paved the way for separate Churches, was in fact a true indication of the spirit and the practice that had prevailed from early on in the DRC. Some congregations decided to build separate church buildings for black people. Through the years the situation became worse and the black church members were expected to accept the growing number of racist practices with the Christian virtue of humility.

The final solution to this problem was the establishment of the racially separate Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sending Kerk (Dutch Reformed Mission Church) on 5 October 1881. This meeting was the formalising of separate church services, which led to separate church buildings and separate congregations. It had far-reaching effects that are still haunting the DRC family to date (Loff, 1983:10-22; Loff, 2002:54).

1.8.6.2 The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) (Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika)

The DRC started its mission work after the Church had been allowed its own Synod in 1824. Up to that point, attempts to do mission work had been made by private initiative and also, since 1737, by missionary societies. At first the DRC was limited to the Cape Province, but since 1830 there had been a natural expansion to the north by farmers who settled north of the Orange River in search of better grazing for their livestock.

Another expansion to the north occurred with the Great Trek, which started in 1836 and lasted for a few years. This Trek was an organised protest movement, as the Trekkers wanted to free themselves from British rule. Eventually they settled in the Orange Free State (O.F.S), Transvaal and Natal. By far the majority of Voortrekkers were members of the DRC and by moving to the north, they had to make use of missionaries from other Churches who were labouring in the areas where they settled. In 1862 the High Court ruled that delegates from outside the Cape Synod jurisdiction could not be members of

the Synod. This decision divided the DRC north of the Orange River from that south of the river and separate DRC churches were eventually formed in the O.F.S, Transvaal, Natal, South West Africa (Namibia) and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). It was only in 1962 that all DRC Synods again agreed to form one Church with a General Synod.

Through the years the different Synods of the DRC did mission work amongst the indigenous peoples, but there was no mission policy that could co-ordinate the work of the different Synods. During a mission congress in 1929, the DRC started to formulate such a policy and it became a reality in 1935. This policy included, inter alia, the following stipulations:

- The most important aim of the mission work of the DRC is to proclaim the gospel to non-believers (heathen) by using, for example, education and health services.
- Mission work has in mind the establishing of separate daughter churches. The DRC supports the process of becoming independent of these churches.

As a result of the mission work in South Africa and Southern Africa ten Mission Churches were established of which six were in South Africa:

- The Dutch Reformed Mission Church of South Africa (for coloured people) in 1881
- The Dutch Reformed Mission Church of the O.F.S (for black people) in 1910
- The Dutch Reformed Mission Church of Transvaal (for black people) in 1932
- The Dutch Reformed Bantu Church of the Cape Province (black people) in 1951
- The Dutch Reformed Mission Church of Natal (black people) in 1952
- The Indian Reformed Church (Indians) in 1968.

The situation of different churches in the “DRC family” led to much unhappiness in the different churches. It was pointed out that there is a similarity between the Mission Policy of the DRC and the election manifesto of the National Party in 1948.

The various Mission Churches established amongst the Black community in all the provinces of South Africa had federal ties with one other. On 7 May 1963, delegates from all these churches met and decided to unite and form a General Synod of a united Church called the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika (The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa – DRCA). All the existing Synods then became Regional Synods of the DRCA (Cronje, 1982: 37-72; Adonis, 2002: 176).

1.8.6.3 Unification of the DRCA and the DRMC

In 1975 the General Synod of the DRCA discussed a report on the Bible and apartheid and for the first time in the history of the DRC family, this Synod formulated a clear standpoint on the fact that apartheid is unscriptural. Synod accepted this report although the DRCA was to a large extent dependent on the DRC for financial support.

At their Synod meeting of 1978, the DRMC took the same decision and with this they rejected the Mission Policy of apartheid and started to work for unification between the churches.

During the eighties there was great tension amongst members of the DRC family because of the *Status Confessionis* and the acceptance of the Confession of Belhar by the DRMC. This confession came as the culmination of a process of objections from the DRMC against the apartheid laws of the government. During 1978 the DRMC bluntly stated that apartheid was in direct opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ. At that stage the DRC did not take the viewpoint of the DRMC seriously. All that remained was for the DRMC to call a *Status Confessionis* and to draw up a confession (Durand, 1984: 39-45).

During the late 1980's negotiations between the DRMC and DRCA were positive and the general feeling was that they would unite during 1990. This was not possible because the

DRCA had, up until then, not accepted the Belhar Confession as the fourth article of faith. The actual uniting occurred on 14 April 1994 at Belhar, near Cape Town and the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA) came into being.

It is the prayer of the URCSA that the other members of the DRC family will soon unite with them (Adonis, 2002: 176).

The uniting process between the DRCA and DRMC was not unanimous. Two of the Regional Synods of the DRCA, Vrystaat and Phororo (Northern Cape) decided not to unite. Not only were relations disturbed but there were also court cases on the ownership of church buildings. It lies beyond the focus of this study to elaborate on this.

Suffice to say that the two Synods of the DRCA acknowledged the URCSA as member of the DRC family just as they themselves are acknowledged (Du Toit, 2002:175f).

While the finalising this research, new developments occurred in the DRC family of churches, which is touched on in Chapter 5.

1.9 OVERVIEW OF THESIS:

In Chapter 2 an overview is given of the historical situation in the different Afrikaans Churches when the TRC started its work during February 1996. What were the defined and undefined issues? What events took place that had an influence on the different churches?

Chapter 3 examines the constitution and aims of the TRC and the reaction of the Afrikaans Churches to the work of the TRC.

Chapter 4 studies the submissions of the Afrikaans Churches before the TRC.

Chapter 5 discusses the challenges on the road to reconciliation in light of the proposals of the TRC as well as the initiatives taken by the Afrikaans Churches.

At present there are different groups, individuals and churches at work with respect to reconciliation in South Africa. Different models are being used to help congregations and individuals.

Chapter 6 discusses these models and makes certain proposals.

Chapter 7 presents this researcher's conclusions.

The Addenda consist of the interviews with different individuals as well as submissions from different churches and groups at the TRC.

A Bibliography concludes this thesis.

CHAPTER 2: CHURCH SITUATION, JANUARY 1996

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The role that the Afrikaans Churches play in reconciliation in South Africa cannot be viewed in a vacuum. South Africa is a nation consisting of many different faith communities of which the Christian churches and especially the Afrikaans churches form a very important part.

The year 1996 marked an important year in the history of the “new” South Africa. Not only was it the second year of democracy in the country but it was also the year in which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) would officially begin with its work. The question that needs to be answered in this chapter is: What was the situation in the Afrikaans Churches under discussion, with respect to their policies on Apartheid and reconciliation at the start of the work of the TRC?

Different Christian churches are letting their witness be felt in South Africa. There are actually five “streams” of Christianity, namely, The Orthodox, The Roman Catholic, the mainline churches, the Pentecostal/ Charismatic and the African Independent Churches. It lies outside the scope of this study to pay attention to these churches or other faith communities and even the role played by them. However, because of the ecumenical links that exist between the Christian churches, it is important to look briefly at the influence of one such ecumenical body in South Africa to which many of the English churches belong, namely the South African Council of Churches (SACC).

2.1.1 The South African Council of Churches (SACC)

As more and more churches were founded in South Africa there arose an increasing urge for ecumenical relationships between them. Any bilateral negotiations have been recorded through the church history in South Africa. The first attempt made to gather all the Christians in the country to join hands took place in 1860 in Worcester when the DRC took the initiative to organise an inter-church conference of approximately 400 delegates from seven church families and denominations. The result of this conference

was that many more mission and general conferences were held throughout the country. (Crafford, & Gous, 1993: 205).

In his book, *The Church Struggle in South Africa (1979)*, John W. de Gruchy discussed the tension that was evident on the church scene in South Africa during the years of Apartheid at length. It suffices for our study in this section to pay attention to the preparation of the way and the details of institution of the SACC.

In 1936 the Christian Council of South Africa was formed with membership from churches and mission organisations. Members of the DRC played leading roles in its development, but because of the nationalist aspirations of the Afrikaner and the racial issue, the DRC eventually withdrew from any participation in the Christian Council. One of the important factors that led to this withdrawal was that the DRC was as yet not a united church. That would only happen in 1962 when all the different DRC synods united to form the General Synod.

Since 1942 the Christian Council of South Africa organised several conferences in the country to discuss the task of the churches. Initially there was optimism, but by 1948 it was an acknowledged fact that Apartheid was the policy of the new Nationalist Government. Individual denominations started to criticise the new government policy. As time went on the Christian Council of South Africa became an ineffective body. It was no longer prepared for the work that needed to be done and it was virtually unknown to the public. As the Christian Council was not able to execute any more obligations, the newly found Christian Institute (CI) took on itself many of these responsibilities during the early 1960's. The founding of the CI in 1963 by Rev. Beyers Naudé was one of the results of the Cottesloe Consultation of 1960. (De Gruchy, 1979: 28, 39, 55, 115, 116)

One of the recommendations of Cottesloe was the founding of a South African Council of Churches (SACC) which could be affiliated to the World Council of Churches (WCC). At this stage the Christian Council of South Africa's head office was in Cape Town. It moved to Johannesburg under the leadership of Bishop Bill Burnett and in 1968 it

changed its name to the South African Council of Churches (SACC). By 1975 there were already 29 denominations and organisations registered as members, representing about 15 million Christians in South Africa. In spite of repeated invitations, the Afrikaans Churches refused to become members of the SACC (Lückhoff, 1978: 168).

In the SACC constitution its goal is stated as “to co-ordinate the work and witness of Churches and Missionary Societies and other Christian Organisations in South Africa in order to more effectively carry out the Church’s mission in the world” (Quoted by de Gruchy, 1979:117). During the 1970’s the SACC became renowned due to the racial policies of the state and because of programs like the Program to Combat Racism (PCR), but the general public did not actually know much about the other work the SACC were doing. For example, the Division of Inter Church Aid had been deeply involved in developmental- and community projects throughout the country. Amongst other projects undertaken was the study of the problem of migratory labour, scholarship programs for black students and caring for dependants of political prisoners. But one of its most important ecumenical tasks was “to study programs, communications and assistance in the total search for union of the churches in life and witness” (De Gruchy, 1979:117).

During their meeting in 1968 the SACC published one of its most influential statements namely *The Message to the People of South Africa*. This ushered in a new phase in the growing conflict with the state and it attacked the then current political scene at its roots. De Gruchy (1979), Geldenhuys (1982) and De Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio (Eds. 1983) highlighted some of the aspects of *The Message*. It consisted of five paragraphs touching on: What the Christian gospel says; Our Concern; The gospel’s claim; our task; we must obey God rather than men (De Gruchy & Villa-Vicencio (Eds.) 1983: 154-159). One of the statements on what the gospel says made it clear that:

The gospel of Jesus Christ declares that, by this work of Christ, men are being reconciled to God and to each other, and that the excluding barriers of ancestry, race, nationality, language and culture have no rightful place in the inclusive brotherhood of Christian disciples...

There are alarming signs that this doctrine of separation has become, for many, a false faith, a novel gospel which offers happiness and peace for the

community and for the individual. It holds out to men a security built not on Christ but on the theory of separation and the preservation of their racial identity. It presents separate development of our race-groups as a way for the people of South Africa to save themselves. Such a claim inevitably conflicts with the Christian gospel, which offers salvation, both social and individual, through faith in Christ alone... (De Gruchy & Villa-Vicencio (eds.), 1983: 154, 155).

There were more issues addressed in *The Message*, which had some serious consequences. Issues such as: a person's citizenship was dependant on race classification; the system of racial separation hampered the normal experience of Christian brotherhood; A Christian's highest allegiance had to be to God, a threatening situation for many in South African society; etc. It also made dialogue between the English-speaking churches and the Afrikaans Churches extremely difficult, for in effect the statement of the SACC was condemning those who were prepared to justify separate development (Apartheid) on theological grounds (Geldenhuys, O'Brien 1982:107; De Gruchy, 1979: 122).

Regarding its finances, the SACC received most of its support during the late 1970's from outside the country – especially after a Government Commission of investigation, the Schlebusch Commission, into the finances of “affected organisations” investigated the organisation. In 1981 another commission, the Eloff Commission, investigated the financial status of the SACC again because of fraud by its then CEO Mr John Rees.

During the latter years the SACC changed from an institution under white leadership to one that became more representative of the South African society, by having more black leadership. Bishop Desmond Tutu became its first General Secretary in March 1978. He was succeeded in 1985 by the then unbanned Rev. Beyers Naudé and he was succeeded in 1987/8 by Rev. Frank Chikane.

Suffice to mention that after the speech of President F W de Klerk on 2 February 1990, when organisations like ANC, PAC, etc. were unbanned, the political climate in South Africa changed dramatically. Mention is made that the SACC was present at the Rustenburg Consultation in 1990 and it was also actively involved in the Peace Consultation during 1991 in which Rev. Frank Chikane played an important role. (Crafford, & Gous, 1983:213-219) (For more on the SACC see paragraph 2.3.2)

2.2 SITUATION IN THE AFRIKAANS CHURCHES IN THE COUNTRY AND THE ROLE THEY PLAYED IN SOCIETY

The questions to be answered are: What happened in the different Afrikaans Churches during the years prior to the official constitution of the TRC? What was the situation in respect to their policies on Apartheid when the TRC started its work in 1996?

In the rest of this chapter attention will be paid to some of the major events that had an effect on the leadership and members of the different Afrikaans Churches. It was a long road that had to be travelled – to a large extent a bumpy, not so easy road. In retrospect one can see how the road should have been travelled, but, while on the road, the different churches and faith groups travelled according to the light they had at the time.

Sometimes there were clearly marked turnoffs, but because of the momentum and the heavy weight of the vehicle it was not possible to turn, and sometimes the drivers thought it would be best to carry on down the familiar road.

This researcher believes there are no excuses for big mistakes that were made through the government policy of Apartheid. Once on the road, there were prophetic voices which came from the different churches, but these were ignored or silenced

2.2.1 Dutch Reformed Church (Ned Geref Kerk) (DRC)

After the Second World War, race relations in South Africa became the most important problem in the South African society and the Council of Churches (Raad van Kerke) of the DRC would spend most of its time, in the latter 15 years of its existence, on this problem. (The Council of Churches was the precursor of the current General Synod). In South Africa the coming to power of the National Party in 1948 resulted in race relations becoming part and parcel of party politics (Grobler 1983: 290).

Since it is outside the aim of this study to look in detail at the political development of Apartheid during the years around 1948, only a few remarks will be made on developments in the DRC:

- In 1947 a commission of the Council of Churches presented a report to the Council, written by Prof. E P Groenewald, on *Apartheid of Nations and their calling to each other*. In this report attention was paid to race and national Apartheid as well as ‘Guardianship’ (Voogdyskap) in Scripture.
- When this issue was debated at the Transvaal Synod of the DRC, there was a notable dissent regarding the Scriptural basis for the church’s race policy and the issue was referred back for discussion. When the follow up report was given, the synod said it was its conviction that the policy of Apartheid was not only born out of circumstances, but was grounded in Scripture (Grobler 1983:294).
- It is important to realise that some theologians from the DRC kept to their view that there are no Biblical grounds to support Apartheid, but they were willing to accept it as a practical order ruling. The most important figures were Professors Ben Marais and Bennie Keet.
- After 1948, the DRC urged the National Party government to apply the policy of Apartheid and numerous bills were passed in parliament with the consent of the church.

A mere twelve years after the National Party became the government of South Africa, the proverbial power keg exploded. The notorious Passbook Law was the trigger for the explosion. In Sharpeville, a Black Township outside the town of Vereeniging, about 80km south of Johannesburg, demonstrators marched against this law to the police station in the Township. In the upheaval that followed, shots were fired and the airforce sent Harvard bombers to circle the area (maybe to instil fear?). On that day, 21 March 1960, the official statistics said that 69 people died and 187 were wounded. These riots spilled over to other areas and townships in South Africa. As a result not only the political

world, but also the church world, turned their backs on South Africa. Because of this, a time of struggle had begun in the DRC.

The following are just some benchmarks on the road of the DRC for the years after 1960.

2.2.1.1 1960 Cottesloe

As a result of what happened at Sharpeville and the rest of the country, the World Council of Churches (WCC) offered to help arrange a consultation on Christian race relations and social problems in South Africa.

The consultation was held during 7 – 14 December 1960 in a Johannesburg suburb, Cottesloe, because the University of the Witwatersrand's student residence in Cottesloe was the only venue available to stage an interracial conference of its kind in the heyday of apartheid (Gous, 1993:253).

At that stage the WCC wanted to know from its eight member churches in South Africa what they had done to normalise the explosive racial situation in South Africa. Dr F E O'Brien Geldenhuys of the Transvaal DRC was one of the delegates and he remembered the proceedings:

Each of the member churches had to draw up a memorandum about five main themes for discussion by the Consultation: The factual situation in South Africa; The Christian interpretation of the gospel as regards race relationships; The interpretation of the contemporary history from a Christian perspective; The meaning of the current state of emergency in the country; The testimony of the church with respect to justice, mission and co-operation. The memoranda would have been circulated to the others and then it would be discussed by the delegates in small groups. At the end of each day all the delegates came together for a plenary meeting in which the secretary of each group would report about his group's discussion. A drafting committee would then formulate the consensus decisions to be brought before the joint meeting in the end (Geldenhuys, O'Brien 1982: 48, 49).

It was decided that the issues that were accepted with 80% of the vote would be published in the final report. Of the seventeen decisions that were given to the press, four caused problems. These were:

Joint worship:

No one who believes in Jesus Christ may be excluded from any church on the grounds of his colour and race. The spiritual unity amongst all men who are in Christ must find visible expression in acts of common worship and witness, and in fellowship and consultation on matters of common concern.

Mixed marriages:

There are Scriptural grounds for the prohibition of mixed marriages. The well-being of the community and pastoral responsibility require, however, that due consideration should be given to certain factors which may make such marriages inadvisable.

Land ownership:

It is our conviction that the right to own land wherever a person is domiciled, and to partake in the government of his country, is part of the dignity of the adult-man, and for this reason a policy which permanently denies to non-white people the right of collaboration in the government of the country of which they are citizens cannot be justified. (sic)

Coloured representation in Parliament:

- (a) It is our conviction that there can be no objection in principle to the direct representation of coloured people in Parliament.
- (b) We express the hope that consideration will be given to the application of this principle in the foreseeable future (Geldenhuis, O'Brien, 1982:52,53; De Gruchy & Villa-Vicencio 1982:150,151; Lückhoff, 1978:84-88).

In the postscript of his book, *Cottesloe* (1978), Dr AH Lückhoff asked the question, what had happened to the decisions that were taken at Cottesloe? He made the observation that, to a certain extent, the four decisions (cited above) that caused so much trouble, were still actual, although with less emotions. Not much had come from the practical applications of the decisions (Lückhoff, 1978: 170).

The DRC Cape and Transvaal Synods' delegations were at the centre of things, and whereas the NHK rejected the final statement out of hand, the DRC delegates were virtually unanimous in supporting it (De Gruchy 1979: 62-66). The delegates knew, of course, that whatever they had decided still required the ratification of their respective churches. But because they were among the most important leaders of the churches, they had good reason to anticipate that there will be agreement. To the English-speaking churches, there was nothing in the resolutions that were new or unacceptable. The NHK

delegation had rejected the resolutions. And the DRC? What would the Synods do? The response that came was unexpected. As was the source from which it came.

In his 1961 New Year's message to the nation, Prime Minister Dr H F Verwoerd dismissed the decisions as the opinions of individuals. He drove a wedge between the official representatives of the Afrikaans churches and the rest of the church by indicating that the synods still have to ratify the delegates' decisions. The DRC delegates were thus reprimanded by Verwoerd for allowing themselves to be manipulated by the WCC, and told to recant. Most of the DRC delegates did, thus paving the way for the DRC synods of Transvaal and the Cape Province to reject the Cottesloe decisions in 1961 and to resign from the WCC (Lückhoff, 1978:116; Gous 1993:255; Gilliomoe 2003: 528). This placed the DRC irrevocably on its way to isolation. Consultation as a problem-solving method or as a means to effect the change thus fell out of favour – partly as a result of the DRC's reaction to Cottesloe. Confrontation thus replaced consultation as the preferred methodology to bring about change.

But the consultation was memorable in many ways. During the meeting the miracle occurred that the fiery Anglican archbishop and anti-Apartheid campaigner Joost de Blank and the DRC delegates were *reconciled* to one another. Archbishop De Blank had kept the organising of the conference in jeopardy for a while with his threats to pull the Anglican Church out of the meeting. But on the last day of the consultation in front of the whole assembly, De Blank confessed his guilt and asked the DRC for forgiveness for his unfriendly attitude towards them as well as for things that he said. Now that he had the chance to be with them as Christians for a week, he realised that he “didn't do right to condemn them. He does not necessarily agree with their standpoint, but he is sorry that he condemned them in the past” (Ryan, 1990:61; Geldenhuys, 1982:51).

One of the delegates of the DRC at Cottesloe was Dr CF Beyers Naudé, who at that time was the acting moderator of the synod in Transvaal. His vision eventually gave rise to the Christian Institute of Southern Africa, an ecumenical organisation for promoting dialogue between Afrikaans- and English-speaking Christians and for witnessing to justice and *reconciliation* between the races in South Africa. It also led to his being deprived of his

ministerial status by his church, and eventually to his banning by the state (Heaney, 2004:60f). During his banning-period of seven years, Rev. Beyers Naudé had enough time to read, reflect, counsel others, etc. He made this observation with respect to the Afrikaner people:

I reflected more deeply than ever before on the rise and the crisis of the Afrikaner people: On their sense of joy and satisfaction at having attained their political ideals, but also on the tragedy *that they were now inflicting – in many ways the same injustices on the black community as the British had inflicted on them.* Time and again I asked myself: When will the moment arrive when our people will discover that God’s justice would not allow injustice to sustain a system of oppression such as the Afrikaner had instituted and was now desperately trying to uphold? (Ryan, 1990: 202). (Researcher’s Italics)

This reflection of Naudé complements what Mandela said in his inauguration message.

Kinghorn also draws attention to some of the other statements from the “Consultation Statement”

- Our discussions have revealed that there is no sufficient consultation and communication between the various racial groups, which make up our population.
- There are no Scriptural grounds for the prohibition of mixed marriages.
- We call attention once again to the disintegrating effects of migrant labour on African life.
- It is now widely recognised that the wages received by the vast majority of the non-white people oblige them to exist well below the generally accepted minimum standard for healthy living.
- It is our conviction that the right to own land wherever a person is domiciled, and to participate in the government of his country, is part of the dignity of the adult man. (sic)
- It is our conviction that there can be no objection in principle to the direct representation of Coloured people in Parliament (Kinghorn, 1986:119).

He made the comment that in spite of statements like these, it is not possible to interpret the decisions as an effort to bring about integration. At the basis lies “natural” segregation, but that was not the policy of the day.

The next thirty years of South African church history was a period of confrontation, isolation and struggle. The backlash of Cottesloe represented an ecumenical break for the

churches in South Africa. To a large extent the path of isolation for the DRC started at Cottesloe (Heaney, 2004: par. 3.1.2).

2.2.1.2 1968 A Plea for Understanding

In June 1967, a letter and statement of the Reformed Church in America, was received in which the church expressed its dismay over three policies of the Republic of South Africa. These policies, which were inter-related, were:

1. The official policy of Apartheid
2. The policy of Exploitation
3. The policy of Oppression

The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America asked for a response on these matters and went on to say:

Perhaps you desire to share information, which may not be known to us and to make known your concerns and convictions in the relationships of race and in the witness of the Church of Jesus Christ in the state and the world.

In the accompanying statement, which was adopted by the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, it was said that they had good relations with the Reformed Churches in South Africa because of its concern for all people. Therefore the Reformed Church in America

...continues to appeal to the consciences of the Christians in South Africa, calling upon them to reverse the patterns of racism and injustice. And because the time is short, we need to call upon the United Nations to take steps necessary to ensure justice for the oppressed and to aid victims of oppression. We need also to appeal to American businesses and industries to stop investing in South Africa ...for business and profits, as usual, mean a subsidising of injustice...

The letter went on to make some recommendations in regard to the situation in South Africa

- (a) That the Reformed Church in America registers its disapproval through the Stated Clerk of General Synod to the reformed Churches of South Africa on the policies within South Africa which deny basic rights and freedoms to the vast majority of people in that country.

- (b) That the members of our churches be urged to write to our government leaders calling for them to work through the United Nations and diplomatic channels to seek remedies for the iniquities in South Africa (Landman, 1968: 11-15).

The task of answering the Reformed Church in America, was given to Rev. W A Landman, Director of the Information Bureau of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Cape. For many years he had studied the situation in South Africa and was said to be the best equipped for this task. His reply was published as a booklet: *A Plea for Understanding: A reply to the Reformed Church in America* (NG Kerk-Uitgewers). In the Foreword, the then Moderator Synodi of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (Cape), Dr JS Gericke, said:

... we welcome the opportunity of presenting our point of view and attitude. There may be other Churches and Christians elsewhere holding similar views and asking for clarification. This lack of understanding often leads to uncharitable judgements, condemnation and even ostracism.

He went on to say that the publication of the reply will help other Christians to understand the desire of the DRC to come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ as regards the tensions in a multi-racial and multi-national country and continent. As the DRC confesses its allegiance solely to Jesus Christ as Head of the Church he asked for a more sympathetic understanding of the situation in South Africa (Landman, 1968: Foreword).

In his answer to the Reformed Church in America, Dr Landman stated that his aim is to supply the Church with study material about the situation in South Africa. This material was inserted as an Annexure at the end of the booklet. He then went on to testify that he is the last one to claim that the policies and the general situation in South Africa are perfect. He is conscious of the existence of vital problems in the sphere of race and human relations, of the need to find the means suited to practical circumstances regarding human rights, etc. He said that we need criticism and even stricture from brothers in Christ, when such is necessary and justified. But before all this can happen, it is important to understand the situation in South Africa (Landman 1968:21, 22).

He also pointed out the fact that commentators from outside, who have obtained a proper perspective, especially upon visiting South Africa and upon considering the question of

alternatives, have in increasing measure tended to comment favourably, with or without criticism on particular points of detail (Landman 1968:30).

The letter concluded with a few intriguing questions to the Reformed Churches of America regarding their role in the field of human rights in America and elsewhere as a basis for future correspondence. Later the Broad Moderation of the DRC invited Reformed Churches of America to send a delegation to South Africa to assess the situation, but in 1982 they decided to suspend further dialogue with the DRC until it renounced Apartheid (Crafford & Gous, 1993: 357).

2.2.1.3 1974 *Human Relations in view of Scriptures*

At the General Synod of the DRC in 1974, the official policy of the DRC on race relations was approved. It became known as *Human Relations and the South African scene in the light of the Scripture {HRS}*. (This is the English translation of: *Ras, Volk en Nasie en Volkere Verhoudinge in die lig van die Skrif {RVN}*)

This document was to a certain extent the outflow and seal of the earlier work of the so-called Landman Commission, who worked on the report for a number of years and of which the booklet discussed above, *A Plea for Understanding*, was actually the forerunner.

In the introduction to the booklet, HRS, some explanation was given about the policy document:

“The report represented here is the result of careful consideration and reflection. It represents convictions existing in the DRC with regard to the problem of relationships in a multinational country, as seen from the point of view of the eternal and immutable norms of the Word of God. It is the result of the collaboration between professors of theology, teaching staff at our theological institutions and leading figures in the ministry and mission fields.

It was submitted to the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church during its session in Cape Town, from 16 to 25 October 1974. The Synod dealt with certain propositions and arrived at certain conclusions for those propositions.

The report is presented here in its final processed form in the hope that it may contribute to a better understanding of the DRC and serve as a

profitable basis for discussion in the Church as well as for discussion with other Churches and Christians within and beyond the borders of our country” (RVN 1975: 3, 4; Serfontein, 1982:225).

In his treatise on *The Church struggle in South Africa (1979,1986)*, John W de Gruchy made the observation that Christians of all traditions would agree with much of what is stated in HRS. The report discusses the role of the church and state in society, the questions of social justice, human rights and social change and it deals with many specifics such as migrant labour and racially mixed marriages. In the assessment of the report, *the one thing that actually stood out was the distinction that was made between the fact that the DRC rejects racial injustice and discrimination in principle, but accepts the policy of separate development.* For the outsider this appeared to be a major contradiction because Apartheid and separate development are usually regarded as synonymous. Failure to understand this distinction drawn by the DRC, has led to considerable confusion in assessing the position of the church. In the last paragraph, no 66, of HRS, the position of the church is stated:

The Dutch Reformed Church is only too well aware of the serious problem in respect to inter-people, inter-racial and inter-human relationships in South Africa. It seeks to achieve the same ideals of social justice, human rights and self determination of peoples and individuals, based on God’s Word, as do other Christian Churches. It is also convinced that it is imperative for the church to fulfil its prophetic calling, to be sympathetic, to give guidance according to Scripture and to intercede on behalf of man. If the DRC does differ from other churches, the difference is not due to a different view of moral concepts and values or of Christian ethics, but to a different view of the situation in South Africa and the teachings of God’s Word in this regard. There is no difference in ideals and objectives, but merely disagreement on the best methods of achieving these ideals. (RVN 1975: 102; de Gruchy 1986:73)

There were also other observations made about HRS. Serfontein pointed out some of these:

Although the report does not directly say that Apartheid is the only Christian solution in SA, it is presented in such a way as to create that impression. It discusses only a policy of ‘autogenous separate development’. No other system is discussed, analysed, debated or investigated...

Throughout, the phrases used are similar to those found in political terminology explaining Apartheid or separate development: ‘peoples, group, population relationships’ etc...



The specific political situation is dealt with. It is based entirely on the present Apartheid system, taking the Apartheid structure as given... Totally accepting the structure and political terminology it discusses in succession 'Bantu homelands' (par 52 ff.), 'development of Bantu homelands', 'Bantu in white areas' (a highly controversial statement), and 'migrant labour'. *For the Africans the DRC fully accepts the government structure of a non-African political bloc.*

The statement on the coloured people (par 56) is significant. It is said that the cursory nature of this section of the report was due to the fact that a government commission, the Theron-Commission, was still investigating the position of the coloured people. Therefore 'it would be advisable for the church to await the publication of this report'. *Clearly the DRC wanted to see what line the government would follow, in case it caused embarrassment by issuing a conflicting report.*

Thus with the acceptance of *Human Relations in view of Scripture*, the official policy of the DRC in practice means:

- a. *Full support for the government policy of political Apartheid.*
- b. *Racially separated churches, with no black able to become a member of the white DRC.*
- c. Mixed services are only allowed 'on occasion', they are the exception and not the rule and a formal decision of approval by the church council is necessary (Serfontein, 1982:67-69).

(Researcher's Italics)

By the acceptance of this report the DRC made two things clear, namely, that its own policy was dependent on the policy of the government and secondly that it let a great opportunity slip through the fingers to break loose from the stranglehold that Apartheid had on the church and to let its prophetic voice be heard.

In 1975, Dr FE O'Brien Geldenhuys, Chief Executive Officer and Director of Ecumenical Relations in the DRC, went to Europe to hand over the report HRS to the protestant churches in England, Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland with the appeal that the churches must make a study of the report, because it was the view of the DRC as regards the situation in South Africa. (Ned Geref Kerk 1997: 25)

History tells us what happened during the following years regarding the relationships between the DRC and the other Reformed Churches in the world. It deteriorated to such an extent that the DRC was actually placed in a separate corner on the ecumenical floor.

In 1982, the Broad Moderature of the DRC recommended that HRS must be revised fundamentally. This recommendation was accepted and this has led to the acceptance of *Church and Society* by the General Synod of 1986 as the official policy of the DRC. (Ned Geref Kerk 1997:26)

2.2.1.4 1980 Reformation Day Witness

On October 31, 1980, the so-called “Reformation Day Statement” was published. It was issued by eight theologians from the Theological Seminaries of the Universities of Pretoria and Stellenbosch namely CFA Borchardt, JH Combrink, AB du Toit, WP Esterhuysen, JA Heysns, WD Jonker, BA Müller and HW Rossouw.

This witness states that group differences need not lead to friction and they plead for the church to carry out the commands of Christ as found in Scripture so that “through the power of God’s renewing grace” Christians may “uphold each other in the one body of Christ”. The following are some of the points they mentioned in their Witness:

1. Together with genuine gratitude for what has been done and achieved in the church sphere, we wish to express our deep concern about the apparent *powerlessness of the institutionalised church in South Africa*
 - a. to carry out its divine calling of *reconciliation* on a meaningful and credible basis in a situation of increasing tension and polarisation between the various population groups in our country;
 - b. to give spiritual leadership to the authorities and community by means of a clear and consistent witness to the promises and demands of God’s kingdom as far as social reality is concerned;
 - c. to resist mutual estrangement and exclusivity amongst Christians and so *to work against the divisions of the church which shame the communion of saints*.

2. In all humility, we plead as members of the NGK with all our fellow Christians and office bearers charged with oversight of church policy and action, to reason together and to strive for:
 - a. the elimination of loveless and racist attitudes and actions which cause hurtful incidents and not the message of God’s reconciling grace of its power;
 - b. to demonstrate the solidarity of Christian love with all those who are placed in positions of helpless suffering and need, by social practice, economic oppression and political policy;
 - c. a *form of church unity* in which the oneness of believers adhering to the same confession can take visible form.

3. We are convinced that the DRC can, together with other churches, through these channels, make a God-honouring contribution towards:
 - a. the advance of mutual trust and acceptance amongst the different population groups of our country, the indispensable foundation of a peaceful community;
 - b. a deeper consciousness of the demands of God's word under which both the authorities and their subjects are called to reform the present order, so that every individual can be given the scope to realise their potential as the bearer of the image of God;
 - c. a concrete witness that existing group differences between people need not be a source of friction because of prejudice, self-interest and defensiveness, but can, through the power of God's renewing grace, be *developed into something that provides for mutual enrichment and the upholding of each other in the one body of Christ* (Hofmeyr, 1991: 303; Serfontein, 1982: 270).
(Researcher's Italics)

The "Witness" caused a storm in the DRC, which lasted for a couple of months. The Afrikaans newspapers and the official paper of the DRC, Die Kerkbode, were flooded with letters, statements, counter-statements and explanations. It was said that the "Witness", for the first time since Cottesloe, brought the DRC to a place where it had to have a serious look at the whole issue of race relationships in South Africa and the concept of reconciliation in the midst of the contemplation of the church. To a certain extent that discussion is still going on today.

For theologians and members of the daughter churches of the DRC family, the "Witness" was not a big, "ground moving" issue. The whole idea of "too little, too late" came through in the remarks from that corner.

In the DRC there was very strong reaction from the more conservative faction. It culminated in a big meeting in March 1981 in the Transvaal, where approximately 600 ministers of the DRC came together at a meeting and the swords really came out. For the first time (?) since Cottesloe, there was an open struggle between the "pros" and the "cons". One of the fiercest pieces of critiques came from one of the office bearers of the Broad Moderation of the DRC. Dr Dirk Fourie said: "The eight theologians had no Biblical grounds for their statement. The church had *no duty of reconciliation towards other race groups...*" Prof. Hennie Rossouw, one of the eight, challenged Dr Fourie in a

letter in *Beeld* on April 4, 1981. He could not believe that Dr Fourie had actually said what was reported. As a leader he projected a certain image of the church, and he should thus correct the report. Three days later, Dr Fourie reacted to this by giving an evasive reply; neither denying nor confirming what he had actually said (Serfontein, 1982: 156). This meeting of clergy of the DRC to discuss such an issue was the precursor of other such meetings that followed, in order to calm the emotions of the more conservative group of members, and clergy, in the church.

According to Willie Jonker there was not such a degree of tension in the Cape. A meeting was held under the auspices of the Presbytery of Stellenbosch, but it was held in very good spirits. He went on to say that the whole issue was “at least a sign that the reflection on the views of the church within itself was of utmost importance” (Jonker, Willie 1997:158,159).

This, not so loud, prophetic voice in the midst of the dark clouds of church ignorance was a clear sign that a Kairos moment had arrived, both for the DRC and the inhabitants of South Africa. As has been said earlier, the golden opportunities to break loose from the stranglehold of Apartheid were either ignored or the ‘prophets’ were suspected of being against the government or being quasi-communists. Most of the time it came from ranks of the churches itself. There is one thing that happened so often during the history of the Afrikaner: if somebody did not agree with the majority’s view, a cloud of suspicion was cast on that person’s bona fides.

2.2.1.5 1981 *Stormkompas*

This book was published by the end of 1981 under the editorship of Prof. Nico Smith, Dr F E O’Brien Geldenhuys and Dr Piet Meiring and consists of twenty-four essays by different theologians, ministers and other members of the church. The contributions held different views about the problems of the moment facing South Africa and the church, especially the DRC. At the end of the book, 44 statements were made reflecting the main points raised by the contributors. And it was these statements which produced another

rocking of the DRC boat. Amongst these statements, the following were those which brought the most controversy:

St 34. The societal system resulting from an enforced political policy of segregation of people means that the human worth of everyone involved is affected. And since one population group – the white people – are advantaged by this system, it does not fulfil the demand of the gospel that justice must be done to all. Hence the church cannot identify itself with such a policy, much less justify, motivate or defend it.

St 35. It is time that the DRC says clearly that the policy of Apartheid in South Africa has many harmful consequences, in spite of the good intentions of the authorities about allowing population groups to develop separately. The church needs to state clearly that the Christian cannot support this policy without question.

St 36. The dealings of the South African government in race relations over the past 33 years must, to a great extent, be attributed to the Afrikaner and his church. The DRC has failed in this respect, to proclaim the full consequences of the Christian message with reference to, amongst other things, the hurtful consequences of the Group Areas Act. It was often other churches in South Africa which gave a lead on this point by raising a prophetic voice on behalf of God's justice.

St 38. *The DRC must prepare its members for the fact that the white man clearly cannot forever exercise control in South Africa.* Thus, it will have to teach them in a Christian way, how they should live and act as Christians in a minority situation. The church will have to make its members realise that even as a minority group, they have an extremely important contribution to make, not only in South Africa, but in Africa as a whole (Ned Gerf Kerk 1997:31). (Researcher's Italics)

By these statements the contributors let a prophetic voice be heard. In retrospect it is obvious that the large majority of DRC members, and also members of other Afrikaans Churches, were not prepared for what was to happen in the years to come.

The DRC leadership reacted strongly. On 24 November 1981, the executive of the Broad Moderation issued a special statement. It was published in *Die Kerkbode* of 2 December 1981: *"The executive urgently call up the members of the Church to remain calm in these difficult times when so many onslaughts are launched against the Dutch Reformed Church."*

In hindsight it is clear that the DRC let another good opportunity slip through its fingers for sitting around a table and thresh out the whole problem of Apartheid and the role of the church.

As was the case in the past, this matter was soon to be overshadowed by a much more controversial issue.

2.2.1.6 1982 *Open letter by 123 theologians and ministers*

On 8 June 1982, a statement in the form of an open letter was made by 123 white ministers and theologians of the DRC family. In this letter they criticised Apartheid legislation, such as that leading to forced removals, while acknowledging that they were part of the white society that accepted the evils of Apartheid. They pledged themselves to work and pray for a just society. In the covering letter, they said that they hope that this open letter will serve the debate within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. The letter touched on (1) giving a more explicit expression to *reconciliation and the unity of the church* and (2) by exercising its prophetic calling in respect of society.

The contributors expressed their conviction that the greatest need in the Church and also in the country is *the need for true reconciliation in Christ between individuals*. They went on to say that they believe that the Church in South Africa has a very important contribution to make. It is not possible to remain silent about the discriminatory laws and symbols of the Apartheid system.

The following points from the letter should be stressed:

1. As regards *reconciliation* and the *unity* of the church
 - 1.1 We are convinced that the primary task of the church in our country is the ministry of *reconciliation in Christ*.
 - 1.1.1 ...this means that it is the inalienable privilege of the church to proclaim the message of *reconciliation between God and man*. Without this aspect of *reconciliation* the issue at point will lose its deepest meaning and significance.
 - 1.1.2 It is likewise the inalienable privilege of the church to proclaim *simultaneously the message of reconciliation between people – even between those who had formerly been enemies* – and to bear witness that for believers, Christ has put an end to human enmity and has united us by creating “in Himself one new man” (Ephesians 2:15,16)
2. As regards the prophetic calling of the church
 - 2.1 We are convinced that the calling of the church extends beyond the ministry of *reconciliation within the four walls of the church*....

2.1.1 *Reconciliation* includes a prophetic witness in relation to the entire life of society and therefore the church dare not remain silent on those matters of moral decay, family disintegration and discrimination.

2.1.2 The church will always bear witness that an arrangement of society based on the fundamental *irreconcilability* of individuals and groups cannot be accepted as a basic point of departure for the ordering of society.

The then DRC establishment was staggered by the Open Letter; their reaction followed the same pattern as in previous situations. “*According to church policy the letter could not be received...* “

The public’s reaction on the Open Letter was surprising. Nearly every day there were letters in the press. Prominence was given on the radio and TV to the issues mentioned in the Letter. As a result of the reactions caused by the letter, a book, *Perspektief op die Ope Brief*, (Bosch, König, Nicol (eds)) was published in 1982.

The letter was received well abroad, as is reflected by Dr Paul Schrottenboer, General Secretary of Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES), who was regarded by the DRC leadership as “a friend”, when he said that he felt very much encouraged by this event. To him it is indicative of an increasing concern amongst DRC leaders that the whole political and theological position of the DRC must be reviewed. He was convinced that this could contribute to ending the often-lonely ecumenical path of the DRC (Serfontein, 1982:188).

There was a solid wall of opposition from the DRC, an indication of the overwhelming sentiments of the church at that point in time. But in spite of this, there was a movement towards a more open society although it would still take some courage to convince synods of the futility of the church keeping on supporting the political scene of the day.

For those who were lifting their voices against the hierarchy of the church, the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer became true: reconciliation is not cheap – also for those who want change. In 1985 David Bosch would remind the church of the same during the National Initiative for Reconciliation conference in Pietermaritzburg. (See Chapter 5)

2.2.1.6.1 *The suspension of DRC membership of The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) 1982*

One of the events that led to another blow on the DRC was the suspension of the church by the WARC (World Alliance of Reformed Churches) during their meeting in August 1982 in Ottawa, Canada. The WARC, under the leadership of Dr Allan Boesak, decided to declare Apartheid a heresy and followed it up by suspending the DRC and the NHK as members. This decision received widespread coverage in the media as well as provoking intense debate in church and political circles. (De Gruchy J, Villa-Vicencio C (eds.) 1983: xv)

The statement adopted by the General Council under section II read as follows:

2. The General Council expresses its profound disappointment that, despite earlier appeals by the WARC General Councils, and despite continued dialogue between several Reformed Churches and the white Dutch Reformed Churches over twenty years the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk and the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika have still not found the courage to realise that Apartheid ('separate development') contradicts the very nature of the Church and obscures the gospel from the world; the Council therefore pleads afresh with these Churches to respond to the promises and demands of the gospel....

4. Therefore, the General Council, reluctantly and painfully, is compelled to suspend the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk and the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika from the privileges of the membership in the WARC (i.e. sending delegates to General Councils and holding membership in departmental committees and commissions), until such time as the WARC Executive Committee has determined that these two Churches in their utterances and practice have given evidence of a change of heart. They will be warmly welcomed once more only when the following changes have taken place:
 - (a) Black Christians are no longer excluded from church services, especially Holy Communion;
 - (b) Concrete support in word and deed is given to those who suffer under the system of Apartheid ('separate development');
 - (c) Unequivocal synod resolutions are made which reject Apartheid and commit the Church to dismantling this system in both Church and politics (Hofmeyr, et al 1991: 336,337).

In the twenty years that separate Ottawa from Cottesloe, more and more churches decided to terminate all dialogue with the DRC until it rejected Apartheid. In South Africa itself the same trend could be seen. Therefore it came as no shock when the decision at Ottawa was taken. The conversation developed in such a way over the years that a confrontation, like the one in Ottawa, was unavoidable (De Villiers, 1986: 144). The critique of some of the brown and black delegates from South Africa reached a high pitch when eleven of them boycotted the Holy Communion service because they didn't want to sit at the Lord's Table with white South Africans. (Die Kerkbode, 25 August 1982). There was a fear that this action of Dr A Boesak and other delegates could lead to more stressful relationships between the "mother and daughter" churches. It became clear that the DRC should look seriously at its own position.

During the meeting of the General Synod of the DRC during October 1982, it was decided that the DRC must not resign from the WARC, but rather stay on as a suspended member.

The Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika decided to withdraw from the WARC and thus entered into almost total isolation.

2.2.1.6.2 1982 Status Confessionis of NGSK and Confession of Belhar

Yet another blow hit the DRC before the end of 1982, when the NGSK declared that it could do nothing else but accuse the DRC of heresy and idolatry because of the legitimising of Apartheid on the basis of Scripture. A *Status Confessionis* had arrived. In the book, *'n Oomblik van Waarheid*, Dr DJ Smit, defines a *Status Confessionis* to mean that " *a Christian, a group of Christians, a church or a group of churches, come to the conclusion that a situation has arisen, that a moment of truth has dawned, when nothing else but the gospel itself, the most basic witness to the Christian gospel, comes into play, so that they have the obligation to witness and act against it*" (Cloete & Smit, eds1984: 22). (Researcher's translation)

A *Status Confessionis* is the acknowledgement that the hour has come that something must be said (Cloete & Smit, eds1984: 25).

The announcement of a *Status Confessionis* was a “cry out of the heart to call fellow Christians, brothers and sisters in the Lord, back from this deceiving way ...” (p36) i.e. from the road of giving a Scriptural basis for Apartheid. Together with this, a concept confession was drafted and during the General Synod of the NGSK in 1986, it was officially accepted by the DRMC a fourth Confession, the *Confession of Belhar*.

In the cover letter to the Synod, it is stated that:

This confession is not a document for theological discussion or a new summary of all the faith baggage. It is a ‘cry from the heart’ ... We utter this confession against a heretical dogma, against an ideological distortion that threatens the gospel even in our church and country.” In the letter there is also a plea for reconciliation “the reconciliation that follows salvation and the change of attitudes” ... (Die Kerkbode 13 October 1982: 3)

What was the reaction to this whole issue? Dr Willie Jonker wrote:

This brought the DRC to an unavoidable situation... This was a touching confession. It spelt out the *Biblical ethos of love, reconciliation and justice* in flaming letters... It calls for *church unity, reconciliation between believers over all boundaries and the willingness to carry each other’s burdens*. It asks the church to stand where God stands: in the corner of those who experience injustice and those who suffer in any way... I was convinced the DRC was put in a position where it has to take a serious decision. It brought the differences between the churches to the only level where it has to be sorted out: the level of confession... It would bring the DRC to the moment of truth. Not only because of the truth of unity of the church, but also because of the truth of the gospel. *I had no doubt in my mind that the DRC has arrived at one of the most important hours in its history* (Jonker, W 1998:162f). (Researcher’s Italics)

In an article ‘Belhar – krisispunt vir die NG Kerke’ (Belhar – a crisis moment for the DR Churches) in *’n Oomblik van Waarheid*, JJF Durand made the following remarks on the reaction of the DRC on the *Status Confessionis* and the draft Confession known as the *Confession of Belhar*.

The DRC underestimated the seriousness and the emotion from which the critical voices through the years had come... The DRC could not really hear, feel and comprehend what the black churches went through under the system of Apartheid. The first reaction of the DRC as voiced by the General Synod in October 1982, gave the impression that there is no other alternative than a split of ways between the churches (Cloete & Smit (eds.), 1984: 125-127).

Looking back on this whole epoch making situation for the DRC and the DRMC, the question that arises was: Why did the DRC wait so long before they reacted to all the issues raised by the DRMC? On 4 April 1984, the official answer of the Broad Moderature of the DRC was published in the official newspaper of the DRC, Die Kerkbode. Was it such a difficult issue to handle or was Durand right when he remarked:

(It seems) that there is a repetition of the past to really understand the seriousness of the situation. ...A more moderate opinion would be that the DRC was in a theological sense not capable to handle the situation. The sterility of the kind of “Creation Theology” with which the DRC had kept itself active in the midst of all the problems over race relations, made the DRC powerless to react meaningfully... (Cloete & Smit (eds.), 1984: 127).

The DRC let slip through the fingers another opportunity of setting the record straight between the DRC and the DRMC.

2.2.1.7 1986 Church and Society (*Kerk en Samelewing*)

During the meeting of the General Synod of the DRC in October 1982, a decision was made that the official DRC policy booklet, *Human Relations and the South African scene in light of the Scripture (Ras, Volk en Nasie)*, must be thoroughly revised *in the light of Scripture* and that the revision will be discussed at the Meeting of General Synod in 1986. A commission was appointed to start with this momentous work. There were suggestions from different delegates that there must be collaboration with some of the other family members of the DRC in this regard, but these were unacceptable for the majority of delegates. Synod decided to:

...officially declare in *Die Kerkbode* that anybody – which means also members of our own church as well as other churches – will have the opportunity to, within a certain period of time, make contributions to the Broad Moderature for discussion by the appointed study commission... (Thus) it is possible that important contributions from outside will be considered. It is, however, important to note that this study is primarily an initiative of the DRC to test its own standing with relation to Scripture...In front of the church lies a momentous and important piece of work. The whole church will wait with great anticipation for the end result (*Die Kerkbode*, 27 October 1982, Editorial: 6).

The *Church and Society* (CS) document was published as the culmination of a long study on the task of the DRC in South Africa. At the meeting of the General Synod in October 1986, this was laid on the table for discussion and finalising, as the new policy document of the DRC on race relations in South Africa. Socio-political concerns were discussed and the religious scene in South Africa was examined. This was followed by a presentation of basic Scriptural principles regarding the Bible as the “yardstick” of the church and its focus on the Kingdom of God. The nature and calling of the church was discussed in the light of Scripture. The prophetic task of the church in the world was described in detail. The role of the church in group relationships led to an ethical discussion on Christian behaviour. The document ends with a description of the practical implications of what it means to be a member of the DRC in South Africa today (Hofmeyr, et al 1991:378).

As the newly elected Moderator of the General Synod, Prof. Johan Heyns, had on his shoulders the immense task of defending *Church and Society* (CS). During a media conference the same day, Heyns told the press that Synod rejected the Scriptural grounds for Apartheid and that he hoped that it will bring new attitudes in the hearts of people. He went on to say that the question regarding open doors was not a new issue but that it was now *de facto* said by the Synod. (The Star; 23 October 1986:1 as quoted by Williams, 2006)

The usual Pastoral Letter that was sent to all DRC congregations after the Synod meeting was used to put the whole CS in perspective, because of the unrest amongst members. In the Letter, Synod made an appeal to church councils and members to make an intensive study of the policy document and not to react to what they read in the press.

Heyns defended CS because he was so much involved in the birth of it and because, as Moderator, he was also morally obliged to do it. According to him it was “very difficult to realise that his colleagues on the Moderature turned back by saying that nothing has changed. Or put differently: Don’t make such a fuss about it. We will change it at the next synod with your help. Then the church will revoke CS again (Meiring, 1994: 180). The reason for this was that they did not want to defend CS, because they wanted to calm members with grievances (Williams, 2006: 217f).

During the weeks following the publication, there was an upheaval of emotions within the DRC. Voices were heard for and against the way the church is heading now. As in the past, it called again for meetings where members of the Broad Moderature had to explain what was meant by the decisions taken about race relations and the DRC. The secular press received numerous letters, mostly from angered church members. In the official publication of the DRC, *Die Kerkbode*, letters for and against the synod's decisions were published. One such letter, signed by twenty theologians and ministers, voiced the meaning that synod didn't go far enough - the proverbial "too little too late" (*Die Kerkbode*, 5 November 1986: 11).

Red lights started to flash as regards a possible church split, because of the course the DRC was now taking. A meeting, of ± 2500 members of the DRC, took place on 28 November 1986 in Pretoria. It was decided that a committee would go into the "possible founding of a new church." Despite all the efforts from the DRC to prevent this, a new church was founded in 1987, the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk (Afrikaans Protestant Church) (APK), a church for white Afrikaners only. In the end the AP Church got ± 30000 members from the DRC and other Afrikaans churches as well as ±100 ministers who resigned from the DRC to join them (*Ned Geref Kerk*, 1997: 44, 45).

2.2.1.8 1989 Vereeniging Consultation

During a meeting in May-June 1988 of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES) in Harare, it was decided that a consultation must be held in the DRC family within South Africa. The Interim committee of the RES would chair the meeting. At the RES meeting, it became clear that there were differences of opinions in the DRC family on Apartheid, sanctions against South Africa and church unity amongst the member churches of the DRC church family. This consultation was held in March 1989 in Vereeniging. Present at this meeting were ten churches, including the four from the DRC family in South Africa, and six from outside the country.

The Vereeniging consultation could not help to bridge the gap between the DRC and the other members of the DRC family on matters such as Apartheid and church unity. At the end of the consultation a draft testimony was drawn up by the delegates.

The day after the draft testimony was read, the delegates from the DRC could not identify with what was being said and issued a short statement, of which the first point reads as follows: “*The delegates of the DRC explicitly reject the system of discriminatory Apartheid. They pledged themselves to entreat the government to dismantle measures and laws which are offensive and destructive to human dignity.*”

This statement brought uneasiness amongst the delegates, especially regarding the words ‘discriminatory Apartheid’ ... (Acta Synodi 1990: 45) The delegates of the DRC could not identify with the testimony, and issued their own testimony.

The consultation said the following on Apartheid:

We say clearly and unequivocally that *we regard Apartheid in all its forms as a sin*, as contrary to and irreconcilable with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We agree that Apartheid in all its forms cannot be reformed, but must be *totally eradicated from the life of the South African nation and church*. In the light of this, we commit ourselves to work together towards the dismantling of Apartheid... (Acta Synodi 1990: 46). (Researcher’s Italics)

As in many times in the past, the DRC delegation again issued their own testimony. Their point on Apartheid, read as follows:

We declare that, since any ideology speaks decisively above and alongside the truth of the Bible, the ideology of Apartheid is a political and social system whereby human dignity is adversely affected, and whereby one particular ethnic group is detrimentally oppressed by another, and cannot be accepted on Christian ethical grounds, because it contravenes the very essence of reconciliation, neighbourly love, and righteousness, the unity of the church and inevitably the human dignity, of all involved and is therefore a sin. Any teaching of the church that would defend this ideology would have to be regarded as heretical, that is, in conflict with the teaching of Scripture (Acta Synodi 1990: 47).

When this statement is analysed in view of the statement of the consultation, it is clear that the delegates of the DRC didn’t see their way open to once and for all get rid of the heavy yoke of Apartheid by calling it what it was – heresy.

2.2.1.9 *The General Synod of 1990*

The General Synod of the DRC had its meeting in Bloemfontein from 16 – 25 October 1990. In the history of the DRC this meeting will be known for its dramatic decisions on Apartheid in South Africa. It was the culmination of a process that started in 1978 with the adoption of the document *Human Relations in light of Scripture (HRS)*. This was revised and in 1986 the document *Church and Society (CS)* was adopted as the official policy of the DRC. The Synod of 1986 opened the way for discussions of *Church and Society* and asked members to send their grievances and objections as well as “better formulations” so that it could be reviewed and presented to Synod in 1990.

In his opening speech, the outgoing Moderator, Prof. Johan Heyns read from John 12:20-26 and said, inter alia:

As General Synod we are meeting at a time when South Africa has come face to face with one of the biggest and most far-reaching changes in its entire history. ...

Without fear of contradiction, we can state that this meeting is taking place during one of the most difficult and challenging times in the history of the Republic of South Africa. ...

In a broader sense the time to end an exclusive white domination of more than three centuries has come. In a narrower sense the Afrikaner, and especially members of the DRC, will have to share their political responsibilities with people of other cultures, other religions or even people with no religion. The irreversibility of this process is, however, not acceptable for a large number of Afrikaners and again many members of the DRC are in this group.

You ask me: What is our task in the changing South Africa? My answer is to live out the contents of *Church and Society* in a practical way (Acta Synodi; 1990:720).

During the synod changes were made to formulations and certain aspects of *Church and Society* and it was adopted as the official decision on race relations of the DRC and clarified for everybody who wants to know what the DRC is saying about Apartheid. A very comprehensive decision was taken (par 276 – 288).

It was stated very clearly that political models should not only be evaluated theoretically but also the practical implications thereof and how it would affect an entire society (par. 276).

Regarding the question of Apartheid, there are strong, emotional difficulties. For some, the white people, it is part of protection of their own identity; there are other groups who perceive it as blatant racism and a way to protect the white minority. Throughout the world, Apartheid is condemned by states and churches (par. 278).

The Dutch Reformed Church realises that there is a long history behind the policy of Apartheid and wanted to state that not everything can be branded as wrong and inhuman in the policy. One cannot deny that positive developments were also achieved during this time. The church acknowledges the right and freedom of peoples to promote their own cultural and other values but then the rights of others must not be affected thereby (par. 279-281).

Synod then declared the following:

282. The Dutch Reformed Church, however, *acknowledges that for too long it has adjudged the policy of Apartheid on the above named grounds too abstractly and theoretically, and therefore too uncritically.* The Dutch Reformed Church had insufficiently perceived that Apartheid as a system had, inter alia, in its struggle against integration also received an ideological and ethnocentric basis. The right and freedom to remain true to one's own cultural heritage, was extended to become a political ideology of Apartheid as a system for the protection of the white minority's own interests to the detriment of others. Love for one's own often took the shape of racism and was expressed in legal and structural terms.

283. While the Dutch Reformed Church, over the years, seriously and persistently sought the will of God and his Word for our society, the *church made the error of allowing forced separation and division of peoples in its own circle, to be considered a biblical imperative. The Dutch Reformed Church should have distanced itself much earlier from this view and admits and confesses its neglect.*

284. Gradually it became clear to the Dutch Reformed Church that the policy of Apartheid as a political system in practice went further than the acknowledgement of the right and freedom of all peoples and cultural groups to stay true to their own values. Apartheid began to function in such a way that the largest part of the population of the country experienced it as an oppressive system which, through the forced separation of peoples, was in reality favouring one group wrongfully above the others. In this way the

human dignity of one's fellowman became adversely affected and was in conflict with the principles of love and righteousness.

285. Any system which in practice functions in this way *is unacceptable in the light of Scripture and the Christian conscience and must be rejected as sinful. Any attempt by a church to try to defend such a system biblically and ethically, must be seen as a serious fallacy, that is to say it is in conflict with the Bible.*

286. *The Dutch Reformed Church wants to state clearly that it condemns all forms of discrimination and the suppression of peoples and wholeheartedly desires that all will be free to share in the privileges of the fatherland and will receive reasonable and equal opportunities to acquire prosperity and riches.*

287. The church has above all, compassion for the poverty and suffering of large numbers of people in our country and declares that it is prepared to co-operate in an ecclesiastical way, in attempts to relieve the present need and to make it possible for all people in our country to have a better future.

288. The church, however, is convinced that a satisfactory political solution is necessary for the social problems which exist at present, and therefore urges all political leaders to co-operate in a responsible way to find a political dispensation which will ensure freedom, justice and a decent existence for all (Church and Society 1990: 38-40). (Researcher's Italics)

The process that Bosch pleaded for in 1985 has started to gain momentum. Here was truly an occasion where Synod could say that to confess and repent could not be imposed by anybody but it was truly a gift of the Holy Spirit. As the Apostles declared at the Jerusalem Conference in Acts 15 "the Holy Spirit and we have decided".

2.2.1.10 1990 Rustenburg Conference

This conference of Church leaders in South Africa was the outflow of an initiative by State President F W de Klerk. In his Christmas message to South Africa in December 1989, he made an appeal to the church in South Africa to formulate a strategy conducive to negotiation, reconciliation and change for the situation in South Africa. During a meeting in June 1990, a motion from the South African Council of Churches (SACC) called on Dr Louw Alberts to chair a steering committee of church leaders to organise a conference of church leaders from across the spectrum of Christian churches in South

Africa to “rediscover its calling and to unite Christian witness in a changing South Africa” (Alberts & Chikane (eds.), 1991: 15). This conference was held in November 1990 when approximately 230 church leaders from 80 denominations and para-church organisations met in Rustenburg.

Of special interest for this study, is the address by Prof. Willie Jonker. He addressed the conference on the topic: *Understanding the Church Situation and Obstacles to Christian Witness in South Africa*. After a preamble he concentrated on four main issues: The isolation between Christians of different races; Differences concerning the rejection of Apartheid; Differences concerning the task of the church in a polarised society; Differences on the understanding of the church’s role in politics. During the course of presenting his second point he made the confession that resounded throughout the world within hours. He said:

I confess before you and before the Lord, not only my own sin and guilt, and my personal responsibility for the political, social, economical and structural wrongs that have been done to many of you, and the results of which you and our whole country are still suffering from, but vicariously I dare also to do that in the name of the DRC of which I am a member, and for the Afrikaans people as a whole. I have the liberty to do just that, because the DRC at its latest synod has declared Apartheid a sin and confessed its own guilt of negligence in not warning against it and distancing itself from it long ago (Alberts & Chikane (Eds.), 1991: 92). (Researcher’s Italics)

After Jonker’s address, Archbishop Desmond Tutu thanked him by saying:

Prof. Jonker made a statement that certainly touched me and I think touched others of us when he made a public confession and asked to be forgiven. I believe that I certainly stand under pressure of God’s Holy Spirit to say that, as I said in my sermon that when confession is made, then those of us who have been wronged must say ‘We forgive you’, so that together we may move to the reconstruction of our land. That confession is not cheaply made and the response is not cheaply given (Alberts & Chikane (Eds.), 1991: 99).

When there is confession and repentance the Christian way is to give forgiveness. This was done in a most wonderful way by Jonker and Tutu, but this solemn moment would again be sullied by what happened next.

From all over South Africa messages and telegrams were received. Most of it was to thank Jonker, but there were also those filled with anger. Many from the last group asked the question: “who gave him the right to confess on behalf of them and the Afrikaner people?” These allegations were also reflected in the press and especially in Die Kerkbode. Even the previous State President Mr P W Botha, phoned Prof. Pieter Potgieter at the conference to object to the confession (Jonker, W 1998:206). The next morning Prof. Potgieter asked to make a statement on this issue. He started by saying that *there are delegates who doubt if the confession was really genuine with respect to the position of the DRC. He said:*

The delegates of the DRC want to state unambiguously that we fully identify ourselves with the statements made by Prof. Jonker on the position of this church. He has in fact precisely reiterated the decision made by our General Synod in Bloemfontein recently. We would like to see this decision of the Synod as the basis of reconciliation with all people and all Churches (Jonker, W 1998:207).

At the end of the conference a declaration, the Rustenburg Declaration, was issued, and as in the past, the DRC delegates were not satisfied with the formulation, and so they again issued their own declaration. This was seen by many at the conference as the pattern which always came to the fore from the DRC: “that they talk together in order to get the most favourable decisions from the DRC view, and then they back off so as not to shock the Afrikaners too much.” And so, in the words of Willie Jonker, “*we left Rustenburg under a cloud in spite of all the wonderful things that happened there*” (Jonker 1998:208). (Researcher’s Italics)

2.2.1.11 1994 ANC Government: Mr Mandela State President

On 2 February 1990, State president F W de Klerk announced in a dramatic fashion the lifting of the bans on the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), the South African Communist Party and other illegal organisations; the freeing of political prisoners incarcerated for non-violent activities; the suspension of capital punishment; and the lifting of various restrictions imposed by the State of Emergency.

On 9 February 1990, Mr. Nelson Mandela was informed that he would be released on 11 February from the Victor Verster Prison. After twenty-seven years in prison, he became a free man.

From the balcony of the City Hall on the Grand parade in Cape Town, Mr. Mandela addressed the “boundless sea of cheering people, holding flags and banners, clapping and laughing...” He said:

Friends, comrades and fellow South Africans. I greet you all in the name of peace, democracy and freedom for all! I stand here before you not as a prophet but as a humble servant of you, the people. Your tireless and heroic sacrifices have made it possible for me to be here today. I therefore place the remaining years of my life in your hands...

The sight of freedom looming on the horizon should encourage us to redouble our efforts... Today I wish to report to you that my discussions with the government have been aimed at normalising the political situation in the country. I wish to stress that I myself have at no time entered into negotiations about the future of our country except to insist on a meeting between the ANC and the government... (Mandela, 1994: 676,677)

For many white people the release of Mandela created a fear that there will be an explosion of hatred against them. At a press conference Mandela, however, made it clear that he harboured no hatred against white people. In prison his anger towards white people decreased, but there was a growing hatred for the system. He wanted South Africa to see that he loved his enemies while hated the system that turned people against each other (Mandela, 1994: 680).

During the weeks, months and three years that followed his release, negotiations went on between the government and the ANC to come to a peaceful solution for the situation in South Africa. On 27 April 1994 all the negotiations culminated in the first ever fully democratic election in South Africa. The ANC won the election and on 10 May 1994, Mr. Mandela was inaugurated as the first democratically elected President of the Republic of South Africa. He pledged to obey and uphold the constitution and to devote himself to the wellbeing of the Republic and its people. In his speech he said, inter alia:

Today, all of us do, by our presence here...confer glory and hope to new-born liberty. Out of the experience of an extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long, must be born a society of which all humanity will be proud. ... We who were outlaws not so long ago, have today been given the rare privilege to be host to the nations of the world on our own soil. We thank all of our distinguished international guests for having come to take possession with the people of our country of what is, after all, a common victory for justice, for peace, for human dignity. We have, at last, achieved our political emancipation. We pledge ourselves to liberate all our people from the continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation, suffering, gender and other discrimination. 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 a human achievement. Let freedom reign. God bless Africa! (Mandela, 1994:746).

In an article in *Die Kerkbode* on 13 May 1994, three days after the inauguration of Mr. Mandela as President, Dr Adelbert Scholtz asked the question: *Will the voice of the church still be heard in a new South Africa?* He discussed the fact that during the rule of the previous government, the different churches in South Africa actually supported different political parties. As examples he used the Anglican Church which supported British Imperialism, the SACC which supported the ANC, the APK which supported the right wing political ideas and the DRC which supported the Apartheid policy of the National Party. How is the church going to conduct itself in the new dispensation? He argued that the new government would not listen to the DRC with the same sympathy as the old government. What is the church going to do in the future?

A very interesting response came to the above-mentioned article. A correspondent sent a letter to *Die Kerkbode* with the title: *Why does the DRC want to talk now?* In his letter he said that he is a coloured male from Prince Albert. He said he wondered why the DRC wants to let its voice be heard in this new era while it was quiet like a cat with slippers on when the National Party government put legislation through parliament: The Act on Mixed marriages; The Immorality Act; The Group Areas Act. Why does the DRC want to talk now? (*Die Kerkbode*, June 1994:15)

2.2.1.12 1994 *The Synod of Reconciliation*

The DRC held their General Synod in Pretoria from 11 – 20 October 1994. This synod would later be known as the "Reconciliation Synod". What made this synod so remarkable was that it was the first time that a head of government made a speech at a General Synod of the DRC. By doing this, Mr Mandela stretched out a hand of reconciliation and said that the DRC has a special role to play in the upbuilding of a just and peaceful society.

In his speech he mentioned *inter alia* the following:

Since my release from prison in 1990, I already had intensive discussions on two occasions with the Moderature of the DRC. Every time I was impressed by their serious search for peaceful and just solutions for the problems of our country. I realised that I have to deal with Afrikaners of high integrity. At these sessions my message to them was that I am not asking the church to be a follower of any political party or political philosophy. The opposite is true because the history of the DRC's support of Apartheid showed how wrong such an approach can be, not only for the country but also for the church itself. I am convinced that the DRC does not only have the right but also a special plight to actively partake in the building up of a just and peaceful society.... I want to speak straightforward to you.

Apartheid was a scorched-earth policy against the majority of people in our country. It was one of the most horrible offences and denials of the worthiness of human beings in the history of the world. Apartheid was fundamentally wrong and a sin.

I don't say these things to rub salt into the wounds, because I'm aware of the struggle in the DRC with Apartheid and the anguish of soul so many members of the DRC experienced. *Church and Society* was a beacon, but that was not the starting point of the long road that brought you here at this synod, nor is it the end point, because the search for light and truth is never ending.... Through the years there were prophets from the DRC who warned against racism and Apartheid. I think of great South Africans like Prof. BB Keet, Dr Ben Marais and Dr Beyers Naudé. I hope that you will give them the acknowledgement they deserve....

The last few years of Apartheid were characterised by unknown corruption and mismanagement, which contributed to poverty and dire living conditions for most South Africans. With my inauguration as President here in Pretoria, I have committed the government of National Unity to trustworthiness and transparency. It is of the utmost importance that the church will actively support the government in its endeavours to fight against corruption.

Legislation for the institution of a truth Commission is at the moment in the process of preparation by the minister of Justice, Mr. Dullah Omar. Commentary by the church will be very helpful. One of the important tasks of this commission will be to ensure that government will acknowledge the human dignity of victims of suffering and human rights violations. I want to invite the DRC to help government in its task to advance Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa (Acta Synodi 1994: 536-537).

At the end of his speech, Mr. Mandela received a standing ovation and the meeting sang the song, 'Laat Heer U seën op hom daal.' (May the Lord bless you and keep you) The public was surprised by the appearance of Mr Mandela at the Synod, because it had never happened in the past that a State President visited such a meeting. For many Afrikaner Christians and churches his presence in the Synod was unacceptable, because there was the ever-present idea that he is not a Christian. But many don't know that when he was seven, his mother converted to Christianity and he went to a mission school. Although he is not outspoken about his Christianity, his attitude and personal testimony in his autobiography is that he is a Christian and has always been a Christian show that his actions and words flow from his conviction (De Klerk, 2003: 322). In his thesis on Prof. Johan Heyns, H H Williams quoted Heyns as saying that Mr Mandela referred to the role that Rev A M Scheffler of the DRC had played in his life during the years of imprisonment. He knew Mandela was a member of the Methodist Church and that he took Holy Communion in the church (William, 2006:366n).

That synod also stretched out a hand of reconciliation to Prof. Ben Marais and Dr Beyers Naudé who were both present at the meeting. Synod also acknowledged that through the years there were members and officials (and even church meetings) who had a clear prophetic voice concerning Apartheid and church decisions. The General Synod acknowledged and confessed that in the past these people were not handled with grace and love (Die Kerkbode 28 October 1994:1).

Looking back over the years since 1960, to what conclusion can one come regarding the role of the DRC in our country? The DRC is singled out, because, until at least 1990, most of the white Afrikaans-speaking people were members of this denomination. Was there a change of mind in the lives of the members of the DRC during these years of

conflict and turmoil? There is one sentence that flows like a silver thread through these years when it came to conflict situations in the church, namely “*The executive urgently call up the members of the Church to remain calm in these difficult times when so many onslaughts are launched against the Dutch Reformed Church.*” To me this statement actually confirms that the members of the church have been kept in a type of bondage resulting in the fact that people couldn’t really think for themselves but always had to ask what our “dominee” says. And most of the time the poor dominee’s (ministers) didn’t have an answer and referred back to the official channels which were actually the breeding ground for the original uncertainty.

This researcher agrees with Alexander Venter when he reflects on the events since 1990. Since the release of Mr Mandela after being in prison 27 years, he became an international icon of moral authority, but his generous attitude of forgiveness and reconciliation has not transformed our country. Laws have changed, but have our hearts changed? In hindsight most of the white people now condemn Apartheid as having been a bad thing. But what are they presently doing to help shape a new country and a new future? Very few white people have been through a process of reconciliation and transformation of their racial beliefs, attitudes and actions. (See Chapter 6) In the main they have still not experienced what history and life was, and is still ignorant of what life is like in the black townships and rural areas. They still have their prejudices intact and growing. They must now, together with the rest of the nation, take responsibility to redress the Apartheid situation. Instead it is found that many people’s racial attitudes are hardening.

The Afrikaans Churches are amongst those who heard the challenges of the TRC (Chapter 5) to the faith communities. God has given the church as the primary instrument in the world, to heal the deep wounds of racial hurt and inferiority of a great percentage of our country’s population. One of the great dangers in South Africa is outward socio-political and economic change without any meaningful inner, personal spiritual transformation. People experience all the outward changes in society but remain the same in their hearts and minds. Who better to address the spiritual transformation of people and communities than the church? (Venter, 2004: 110-113).

It seems that the prophetic words of Bosch in 1985 are so true when he made the statement that in ordinary inter-human communication, people are usually more aware of the sin of others than their own sins. This is seen and heard all around in communication with a large percentage of Afrikaners. (See Chapter 5)

2.2.2 Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (NHK)

As already shown in Chapter 1 the two churches NHK and DRC decided to unite in 1885 as one church, the Nederduits Hervormde of Gereformeerde Kerk (NH of G Kerk) but this union was short lived.

Shortly after the unification a growing number of members of the NHK were not satisfied with the union. Some of the reasons included that the NH of G Kerk (the United Church) promotes mission work, the possibility of equalisation between white and black, the possibility that there will be better relationships with the British. The fear also existed that the NH of G Kerk was actually the continuation of the DRC because of the few ministers of the NHK who were part of the united church. So since 1892 the two churches were again separated as the NHK and NH of G Kerk (Hofmeyr, 2002: 150).

Through the years the NHK, which in 1970 had only 6% of the white population of South Africa as members, was known as a Volkskerk (People's Church), meaning the Church of the Afrikaner people, and has accepted as members only white people. In their Constitution was the infamous Article III, which made it impossible for people of colour to become members of the church.

The NHK, however, went through some episodes that shook its foundations as is shown in the following paragraphs, because it, too, had to face the problems of the expectations of people of colour.

2.2.2.1 *Cottesloe*

The NHK was a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and also of the South African Council of Churches (SACC). When the *Cottesloe Consultation* got underway in 1960, the NHK had ten delegates at the meeting. Already in the preparation meetings for the consultation it was clear that the NHK had problems with the aims and procedures of the consultation (Lückhoff, 1978:53). On the last day of the consultation and in the days that followed, the NHK caused great confusion amongst the Afrikaans speaking church members. An hour before the adjournment of the consultation, the delegates of the NHK handed out a declaration in which they distanced them totally from the decisions of the consultation and committed themselves fully to the policy of the government. The church asked that its declaration must be handed to the press, together with the statements of the consultation. The delegates of the NHK endorsed their conviction that separate development was the only just solution for the race problems of South Africa and that they rejected integration in all its forms. This led to polarisation between the two Afrikaans churches, the NHK and the DRC.

Five days after the consultation, Dr W A Visser't Hooft, General Secretary of the WCC, published his report on the consultation in Geneva. In one of the sub-paragraphs he stated the following about the NHK:

They hold the Apartheid doctrine as an ideology, which quite often seems to take the place of Holy Scripture. For them Apartheid is an absolute principle and as soon as at any point Apartheid is broken through, they shout that this leads to integration, which in their mind is something like the reign of Satan. They have, therefore, voted against almost every new constructive move, which was being proposed.

Now the really serious thing about this is that, as their actions, in the days following the Consultation have proved, they are really saying to the Government and the Afrikaans people: We are the real defenders of Afrikanerdom and the Transvaal- and Cape Dutch Reformed Churches have become traitors.

There is no doubt that in this way they hope to get a large number of die-hard laymen in the Cape and Transvaal Churches to join the Hervormde Kerk. The Cape and Transvaal leaders see this clearly and are terribly worried about it. It is, therefore, all the more to their credit that they have been ready to accept the common statement (Lückhoff 1978: 97-113).

As a result of what had taken place at the Cottesloe Consultation, the NHK decided to withdraw from the World Council of Churches (WCC). The DRC synods of the Transvaal and Cape also resigned from the WCC.

Within the NHK there were also voices which were raised before and after Cottesloe. One such voice was that of Rev. MJJ Redelinghuys, who in an article in *Die Hervormer* of September 1960 and October 1960 asked the question: *Are we without guilt?* (Is ons sonder skuld?)

In the article, he wrote about separate development (Apartheid) and said that it would be good to keep in mind that it is a matter of human relations. Then he pointed out a few interesting facts:

1. We were not honest with the policy of Apartheid because it didn't really centre on the development of the Bantu, but it was more about white domination and elections had been won on this idea.
2. The Bantu had never been consulted about the principle or the application of separate development.
3. Discrimination against others has to do with the fact that one reserves things for oneself without letting others have the same.
4. Because of the Apartheid's laws and bylaws, many instances of unrighteousness and discrimination occurred especially against the Coloured and Indian communities.
5. It is horrible to think that we (the white people) are directly responsible for the poverty of the black people and throughout Scripture we see that God is more concerned about the poor than the rich.
6. The fact that government can decide who may or may not worship in a certain church is an attack on the well-being of the church and thus the church of Jesus Christ can do nothing but to protest against it.
7. Another issue for concern is the discrepancy in salaries of black ministers and teachers against their white co-workers – even if they have the same qualifications.
8. A last point is made and it concerns the situation of the coloured people and Indians. They are not handled in the same way as the black people because it was not made clear to them where they ought to stay and what will happen to them when they are staying amongst us. The only thing that concerns them is that they are suppressed and that is also unjust race discrimination.

The author concluded his article by saying that the church of Christ must always be aware of the danger of the lack of self-criticism, the danger of being one with the world without being open to critique.

In a conversation with Mr Marius Redelinghuys, son of the late Rev. MJJ Redelinghuys, he told the researcher about the suffering that they as family underwent after Rev. Redelinghuys was suspended by the NHK for his views. He had to find a job on one of the mines on the West Rand during the late 1960's and their family was actually ignored by former members of the father's congregation.

Another voice was that of Prof. A S Geysler, who, together with fellow scholar Prof. Van Selms, were also targeted because of their enlightened views on Apartheid and the path the NHK were taking.

2.2.2.2 The church trial of Prof. A S Geysler

Albert Geysler was a New Testament scholar of the NHK section of the Theological Faculty at the University of Pretoria from 1946 to 1962. He began his academic career as a loyal nationalist but was an outspoken critic of Apartheid theology. He became involved in the Apartheid debate in the 1950's after the NHK was challenged by the WCC to provide Biblical justification for its race policy. Geysler was a New Testament expert and an excellent linguist and was thus appointed by the NHK's two-man commission to find such justification. Both theologians came to the conclusion that Scriptures did not provide justification for Apartheid. The church leadership was infuriated and they regarded this as betrayal. Geysler's attacks on Apartheid theology steadily increased until he moved into open confrontation with the church leadership.

In 1961 three of his students lodged a charge of heresy against him. He was charged with heresy with respect to his teachings about Christology, Ecclesiology, Anthropology, Pneumatology and persistent resistance against the ordinations of the NHK. The complainants' accusations against him were not based on publications, but on his class

lectures. At the end of an *in camera* hearing before the governing body of the NHK, he was found innocent of the Pneumatology and Ecclesiology but guilty of the Christological heresy – and he was deposed. He was determined to fight back and took his case to the Supreme Court in Pretoria. He was, however, convinced that the Afrikaner Broederbond (AB) had engineered the charges against him. He shared his views with a life-long friend, Beyers Naudé, who also at that stage had problems regarding his being a member of the AB himself. The outcome of this was that Naudé gave some secret AB documents to Geyser and this eventually leaked to the press. The disclosures shook the country and Naudé was marked in The AB circles as a traitor to the Afrikaners.

During May 1963, the appeal against Geyser's defrocking had reached the Supreme Court. The trial attracted a great deal of publicity and was becoming a major embarrassment to the NHK. The church, however, reached an agreement outside court with Geyser and offered to pay all the costs. The detail of the agreement was kept quiet and did nothing to restore his stature in the Afrikaner community. He had no chance of ever teaching again at an Afrikaans University and for the rest of his working life, he taught at the University of the Witwatersrand. He finally left the NHK when the church's general synod refused to review his case.

In the prosecution and final dismissal of Geyser, the socio-political and socio-religious dimension played a great role even if it was never admitted. The charge was laid against him on 23 September 1961, four months after South Africa became a Republic and nine months after Cottesloe. Geyser was an outspoken critic of Apartheid and of Article III of the church's constitution. He rejected the idea of a *volkskerk*. The original charge included the accusations that: (i) Geyser obstinately resisted Article III and Apartheid. (ii) He emphasised that Apartheid could not be justified Scripturally. (iii) His use of the Bible and his exegesis was problematic. (iv) He claimed that in spirit and intent he continued the traditional Reformed approach and (v) said that he did his exegesis as commissioned by his church and the Word of God. The official verdict of the Commission was that Geyser was arrogant and used derogatory words and had a provocative attitude.

It became apparent that with this verdict the NHK shifted to the right margin of its traditionally declared middle-orthodox position and settled for a formalistic confessionalism.

In hindsight it appears at that time that the NHK found itself at the lowest ebb in the history of the church. Never did it stand closer to the brink of the abyss of isolation from both the larger community of faith and the larger community of the academy (Krüger, 2003:461-466; Ryan, 1990:87-89)

2.2.2.3 *The NHK and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches*

Together with the DRC, the DRMC and the DRCA, the NHK was also member of the WARC until 1982 when it was, together with DRC, suspended because of its support of the government's Apartheid policy (See also p. 80). In an article in *Die Hervormer*, October 1982, two of the delegates of the NHK to the WARC in Ottawa, Rev. C L van den Berg and Dr J H Koekemoer, shared some of the reasons why they think the NHK needed to resign from the WARC.

They felt that there was a neatly organised plan to isolate, intimidate and in the end to suspend the two Afrikaans Churches from the Alliance. From the outset of the meeting it was clear that, especially from the white delegates of European churches, there was hostility against the delegates of the two Afrikaans Churches. Some of the coloured delegates from South Africa didn't even greet the delegates of the NHK. During the meeting, some delegates addresses which clearly showed the influence of the Theology of Revolution. When he gave his address, Dr J H Koekemoer said, inter alia:

The church proclaims and practices the Word of God, which does not disrupt lives in a revolutionary manner, but renews creatively. The resolution expects from our church to suddenly change the life of our community. I am afraid this will cause disruption...

In the South African situation our church will, as in the past, continue to fulfil its prophetic task towards the government, but you cannot expect from us to do something which we are not convinced of ...I am afraid that this resolution opens the way to a heresy chase, the end of which is not foreseeable (Die Hervormer, October 1982:14).

On 17 September 1982, the NHK decided to resign from the WARC. A commission of the General Assembly of the NHK studied the implications of the decisions made by the WARC and issued its own statement on the matter. The statement said, *inter alia*

The Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk cannot comply with the requirements set by the World Alliance and it, therefore, has no other choice but to withdraw. This church will continue to determine its course in response to an earnest investigation of the Holy Spirit and in consideration of its experience through the ages, both with regard to its own internal politics and also with regard to South African politics....

We thus hereby inform the WARC and everyone who may be concerned with this decision that we have terminated our membership of the Alliance... As regards the future, we are still prepared to engage in dialogue concerning our communal task and calling with Christians and fellow believers both in our country and throughout the world
(Hofmeyr, 1991:340)

These negative experiences with ecumenical bodies resulted in the fact that the NHK decided to limit ecumenical relations with churches outside the country but to have bilateral relationships with individual churches. During the past few years the church has decided to start corresponding again with the WCC and WARC (Botha, 2002:67).

During the month of June 2006, delegates from the WARC met with leaders of the NHK to find out whether the NHK can be re-admitted as a member of the WARC in light of the changes in South Africa. There were dramatic changes in the NHK during the last few years: In 1997 the “notorious Article III” which prohibited anybody except white people from becoming members of the NHK was changed. At the General Synod in 2001, the NHK admitted that sin and injustice were committed in the name of Apartheid. These two decisions opened up the doors for the NHK to re-apply for membership of the WARC. A final decision will be taken during the meeting of the executive of the WARC in October 2007 (Die Kerkbode, 23 June 2006:4).

2.2.3 The Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA)

The following question was asked of Prof. Amie van Wyk during an interview: *Were there in the Reformed church “voices” that were heard and did things happen that were*

traumatic for the members in the preamble to the 1994 elections and the work of the TRC in 1996? (Example: In the DRC there were things like the Open letter, Stormkompas, Rustenburg Conference, etc.)

He responded by saying that since the 1950's race relations were on the table of the Reformed Church. The Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES) was a great help protecting the RCSA from becoming one-sided. Already in the 1980's the Synod accepted a resolution that the ideology of Apartheid is sin and added that there was no theological justification for it. He was not sure of how that resolution was realised in all the congregations.

He went on by saying that the RCSA made decisions from time to time about racial issues because they accepted the advice of the RES. On two occasions there had been some "stirrings" in the RCSA. In 1976 the Afrikaanse Calvinistiese Beweging (ACB) (The Afrikaans Calvinistic Movement) held a conference on *Justice in South Africa* in Potchefstroom and they had made some critical statements which caused some uneasiness amongst the people. Another came in 1977 when the so-called "*Koinonia Declaration*" was signed by a group of ministers of the church. (See Addendum 3)

In an article in *Die Kerkblad*, October 2003, Prof. Amie van Wyk reflected on the relationship in the family of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) as it gives a good picture of what happened in the churches during the time of Apartheid. During the years of Apartheid, discussions were going on as regards unification between the Synods of Potchefstroom, Soutpansberg and Middellande. The results of these discussions never reached the ears of the ordinary members of the RCSA.

Missionary work of the RCSA created congregations, but most of the time these congregations existed on their own without any linkage to the "mother church". During the middle of the 1900's a beginning was made to hold conferences to which these young churches could send delegations. These conferences functioned until 1961.

The good exegesis done by Prof. WJ Snyman enabled the RCSA to come to the conclusion that the relationship between churches must transcend cultural boundaries. Thus the RCSA decided in 1964 to call together one General Synod consisting of the four National Synods Potchefstroom (white), Soutpansberg (black), Middellande (black) and Suidland (coloured). This decision was based on the presupposition that there must be separate synodical meetings for the different culture groups (Acta RCSA, 1964: 268; Acta RCSA 1967:188 as quoted by Van Wyk 2003:13-15).

During 1962 discussions were held between the different groups and the first national synods of Suidland (coloured people), Middellande and Soutpansberg (black people) were held in 1963. By 2003 only the synod of Soutpansberg was still meeting on a regular basis, Middellande met sporadically and Suidland stopped their meetings in 1990.

Of great importance for the RCSA were the meetings of the General Synod during the time of Apartheid. The first meeting was in 1965 in Ikageng. Believers could meet each other across cultural boundaries as brothers in the Lord and take decisions together about the extension of the Kingdom of God. From this date on the General Synod met another five times, in 1975, 1980, 1984, 1988 and 1992. Seen against the background of the difficult political circumstances the existence of the General Synod of the RCSA was of utmost importance for the church, but it was an experiment that was not successful. From the young churches there was critique about the constitution of the General Synod, especially because of the role of ethnicity. They stated that the General Synod had too many characteristics of a national church (volkskerk) and that unity cannot start at the “top” but it must start at ground level amongst local congregations. From the Middellande synod had come the most severe critique against church-Apartheid.

To relieve the tension between the “mother church” and young churches, a meeting was held in 1986 where delegates of all four national synods were present. At the end of this conference consensus by all the delegates was reached which was communicated to all four synods. In this consensus the focus fell on church unity, also with respect to church meetings. In spite of the fact that three national synods accepted the results, the synod of

Potchefstroom decided to distance itself from this decision. This decision of Potchefstroom has resulted in a lack of trust between the younger and older churches of the RCSA.

The critique of the younger churches received support in 1989 from the Christian Reformed Church in North America, which suspended its relationship with the RCSA. Also from the Reformed Ecumenical Synod there was critique against the RCSA. In 1988 the RCSA withdrew from the RES. Although there is still tension amongst the different synods, there is light at the end of the tunnel. In 1995 unity as regards theological training was reached. The RCSA were the first of the Afrikaans Churches to reach this ideal. Church unity is not only for church meetings, but it must be seen in unity of faith, hope and love, in dogma and everyday life.

Discussions in the RCSA must continue because it is part of the ongoing reformation of the Church of Christ (Van Wyk, 2003:13-15).

2.2.4 The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM)

In his book, *My buurman se Kerk (1973)* (My neighbour's Church), Dr Piet Meiring addressed some questions to one of the very well known pastors of the AFM, Dr Justus du Plessis, the then General Secretary of the AFM. During the years since the founding of the AFM in South Africa, it was a church for the poor. The Reformed Churches had seen the AFM as a "sect" and it was only in 1990 that the DRC accept it as a Church. Through the years and especially through the years of depression of the 1930's, many of the not so "well-off" members of churches like the DRC and others found a spiritual home in the AFM and the church helped them to have their human dignity restored.

One of the controversial situations in the AFM occurred when Dr Gerrie Wessels, pastor of the AFM became a member of the Senate of the then Government. This event also brought the AFM closer to the politics of the day. This also led to young men doing military duty and those who didn't want to do it, served their country by joining non-fighting units. Because the people from the AFM were part and parcel of the broader

South African society, they could not hide from the things that went on through the Apartheid years (Meiring, 1973: 106-120).

In a question to Pastor George Mahlobo, General Secretary of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa about the role of the churches and especially the pastors as regards their role in South Africa, he answered that it seems to him that white members view the church as a sort of custodian for its cultural values. An issue such as language is a challenge in education, in the schools. What remains is the church. In the AFM all cultures are welcome, but the AFM Afrikaans churches are still Afrikaans, and it seems that although the church is one, there are still some churches which find it difficult to “integrate” with cultures other than Afrikaners. The church is, however, moving to a situation where there can be multi-racial worship services in the near future. For example in a city like Pretoria, they have Doxa Deo, a multi-racial congregation

The question was asked of Pastor Mahlobo: *Would you say that the pastors of the local congregations do enough to help their people understand the whole issue of reconciliation?*

Response: We see in the cities that pastors are more inclined to mix with pastors of other race groups. But in the smaller towns, where pastors are dependent on the congregation for their stipend, it is not so easy. But our pastors must do much more to help their congregations. Even in Johannesburg there are white pastors of the AFM who have never been to Soweto. They don't know what is going on there.

He went on to say that the AFM has to deepen its unity by encouraging the integrated training of theology students. At the moment there are still different Theological Colleges for the different race groups. Discussions are underway to examine how to reflect the composition of the church in the student body. (Addendum 13)

Since the AFM is not often on the front pages of the media, the researcher thought it well also to have an interview with Dr Isak Burger, President of the AFM. The question was posed to him: *Were there things that happened in the AFM that caused members to be traumatised in the wake of the coming elections in February 1994 and the TRC in 1996?*

(Example: In the DRC there were things like the Open Letter, Stormkompas, Rustenburg, etc)

He responded in the following way:

We must make no mistake. The profile of the members of the AFM is exactly the same as that of the other churches. They are working and living in the same society and have the same social and economical challenges. People who fear that if their daughters are in church and there are black or brown boys, there will be relationships; there will be problems with pension funds, etc. The one difference between the road to unity in the DRC and the AFM is that the DRC has a Belhar, where we have a Frank Chikane. The same emotions that are created by Belhar were also with us regarding Frank Chikane. You must remember that 70% of our members are black and brown, and the chances were almost 100% that he would be the president. So we had the same hurdles and problems that had to be overcome. I cannot say that the AFM members were all of one mind and that there were no problems. But mercifully, at that stage I had already been president for 8 years and the people trusted me. (See Addendum 1)

In a questionnaire submitted to Dr Frank Chikane, Vice-President of the AFM, he indicated that he was the President of the Composite AFM Church (which included the African, Coloured and Indian Churches) until unity in April 1996. From 1996 to 1999 he became the Vice President of the united and non-racial AFM. To the question, *The AFM became a united church in April 1996 and made much of the celebrations. Did the Afrikaans-speaking members have the same enthusiasm (from your perspective) as the rest of the church?* Dr Chikane answered:

As far as I can remember, there were some who were enthusiastic about the unity and enjoyed the celebration. But the majority of them were more concerned what all this meant to them. I would take a risk and say that even the leadership of the “white church” went into the unity with deep feelings of anxiety and uncertainty and were under enormous pressures from their constituencies. As in the political arena, they came into unity with the intention of conserving as much of their past life as possible, as well as ensuring that the leadership remained in the main in ‘white hands’. In this regard, I would say that the ‘enthusiasm’ would have been more about the above than the unity itself. (See addendum 14)

Dr Chikane also made it clear that he is concerned about the general classification of the AFM of SA as Afrikaans church, as this description is not correct. He would be happier to say that the AFM of SA is one of the South African churches with high numbers of

Afrikaans speaking members (including here the Coloured membership, as they also are Afrikaans speaking).

From the above it is clear that pastors and members of the AFM were also influenced by the political situation in the country.

2.2.5 Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk (APK)

The Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk (APK) is still a ‘young’ church (eighteen years in existence) which came into being in 1987. Prof. Isak Brink was asked: *Would you say that the church has lived out its testimony as part of the population of South Africa in a significant way since 1987?*

He responded to this question by saying:

The message that the APK is bringing to its members, is a pure Biblical message. People view us as having a stigma of politics around us, but I am not worried about that because we know what we do and what we convey to the people. If we carry out the message of the Word of God, then we trust that they will carry this message out and that will touch the whole population of South Africa. So, I think, yes, we are doing it but according to the working of the Church of the Lord Jesus. We are not doing it by making *statements*, especially not *written statements* because the media does not love us very much except when it is sensational. We do not have the channels to carry out our message, except through our members.
(Researcher’s Italics)

In the Deed of Foundation (Stigtingsakte) of the APK it is clearly stated:

We declare that only white Afrikaners and other white people who can identify with the white Afrikaners, may enjoy membership of this church, because we believe that God created a diversity of people-groups – also the Afrikaner; that God called to Himself – also from the Afrikaner – a people group for himself (God’s volk). (We declare) that where Christ dwells in a people-group the most intimate relationship comes into existence between the people-group and Christ; that every people-group may have its own place of worship where it can have intimate koinonia with God. (We declare) that the called people-group of God in every people-group – also the Afrikaner – can form its own church; that the diversity of church formations does not alter the God-ordained unity of the Church of Christ, but actually enriches it...” (Adendorff, et al 1997:26). (Researcher’s translation)

During the beginning years of the APK, Synod meetings spent much time on internal structures to establish a firm foundation for the new church. But as the circumstances in the country changed, more and more matters of current interest were discussed, for example the issue about religious freedom. Questions such as, when is it necessary to take up arms to defend oneself, were asked. Also the APK witnessed to the government on pressing questions of the time.

(Adendorff, et al 1997:27-38)

In his 1992/3 Christmas and New Year's message to the people of South Africa, State President F W de Klerk sent a plea to the churches of South Africa to organise a Day of Confession and Prayer – a day on which believers could thank the Lord for all the blessings received. This speech was followed with a letter dated 25 Jan 1993 to the Central Church Commission (CCC) of the APK, as well as to all church leaders in South Africa. The CCC answered the State President and said, inter alia:

We have to inform you that we as the responsible Commission of the APK do not see our way open to partake in such a Day of Confession and Prayer... We will call our members to intercede for all matters that serve our people, if it is the will of God..." (Die BoodsAPPER, April 1993:8, 9).

During the years that followed, this became the modus operandi of the APK – to oppose efforts from government and other churches to work with them. One such example will suffice. During February 1994, the CCC of the APK received an invitation from delegates of the DRC, NHK, RCSA and AFM to join in a discussion on the role of the church in this crisis situation in South Africa. The CCC accepted the invitation but made it very clear to the meeting that the APK didn't want to be compromised by issuing a statement afterwards as is the usual practice at these types of meetings. During the meeting the CCC stressed again the fact that their members are people who had not been satisfied with the practical views of the church and that they are not in any way going to be subservient to any political party.

Not everything had gone well during the meeting and so the APK distanced itself from the discussions and statement issued by the other churches. The APK made an appeal to the State President to cancel the general election of April 1994 because of the anticipated

chaos in the country. During this time they will call upon all believers to humble themselves and intercede for the country according to 1 Timothy 2:1-2 (Die Boodskapper; 4 April 1994:4).

In the official mouthpiece of the APK, the monthly periodical Die Boodskapper, articles appeared regularly on their view of the situation in other Afrikaans churches, government, etc. Most of these expressed a negative attitude, especially towards the DRC, as is understandable, knowing where they (APK) originated. In one such article, dated June 1995, the author took the Confession of Belhar as his theme and stated, *inter alia*, that this church (DRC) is on its way to the guillotine. He went on to say:

“Belhar knows only about horizontal reconciliation and this is no Christian reconciliation. The Bible knows first of all one reconciliation – the removal of guilt and the stopping of enmity between God and man. (Romans 5:10,11)... Nowhere is reconciliation used for the removal of God-given boundaries to bring about the ‘united world’ to which Belhar is pointing.”

The article went on to say that if Belhar was examined in light of Scripture, it failed the test. The DRC had put itself on a conveyer belt on its way to the guillotine – even if it takes two or more years (Die Boodskapper, June 1995: 1, 8).

As regards the task of the APK, it is said that the church has an obligation towards the outside world and that local churches must equip their members to reach out to other countrymen with the care of Christ, to protest against things that can harm the church, to witness to government, to let a prophetic voice be heard towards other churches, etc (Adendorff, et al 1997:96).

It must be said in all honesty, that the APK is very serious about its role in South Africa to be a home for the Afrikaners who couldn't find peace of mind in the other churches anymore. They put high premium on Biblical preaching, Covenant based Sunday School and other cultural activities, but how they will manage to retain the current younger members, especially the younger generation who haven't much to do with all the political paraphernalia of the past, remains to be seen.

2.3 ECUMENICAL TENSION DUE TO RACIAL RELATIONS

2.3.1 The Afrikaans Churches in the ecumenical arena

After its inauguration on 13 March 1907, *The Council of Dutch Reformed Churches (CDRC)* didn't pay immediate attention to ecumenical issues, but as time went by, the CDRC played a role in initiating and co-ordinating contact between the DRC and other Churches. From the history of the DRC it is possible to show that this church had tried, from shortly after the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), to normalise relationships with the other Reformed Churches in South Africa. Delegates from the Cape synod tried in 1917, 1923 and 1925 to establish co-operation with the other two Afrikaans-speaking Churches but without results.

After years of negotiations the first official meeting of the *Inter Church Commission (ICC)* (Tussenkerklike Kommissie) was convened on 14 March 1939 by the CDRC in Bloemfontein. At this meeting delegations of the DRC and the Reformed Church (Gereformeerde Kerk) were present. The Nederduits Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (NHK) was not present at this first meeting but a delegation from the NHK was present at the ICC meeting of 1943. The original goal was to propagate church unity and over the years, this was the driving force for this Commission to continue its work. One of the problems that the three churches had to face was the fact the ICC was only an advisory body. It could only make recommendations to the different Church Synods.

After the dissolving of the CDRC and the inauguration of the General Synod of the DRC on 12 October 1962, there was hope that the relationships between the three Afrikaans Churches would be better and more fruitful than in the past (Grobler, 1982: 237-253).

Through the years the ICC concentrated, to a very large extent, on the interpretation of the Canons of the Reformed faith, the studying of Scripture, the view of the Church, etc. The different churches had called on their members to become more involved with one other – each one in his or her own circle of influence, but also through joint worship services, the sharing of the pulpit and other communal projects in the community.

But a new development was taking shape – another body of representation for all churches of Reformed Confession in South Africa. During Synod meetings of the three “sister churches” voices were heard regarding the establishment of a *Conventus* of Reformed Churches.

2.3.1.1 Conventus of Reformed Churches in South Africa

During the last years of the 1990’s, voices were heard from, inter alia, the RCSA, NHK and the DRC as to the formation of a new ecumenical body to accommodate the Reformed Churches in South Africa. These discussions resulted in the formation of *The Conventus of Reformed Churches in Southern Africa*. It suffices to take notice of the *purpose, church polity position* and *participating churches* of the *Conventus*. (For a complete document, see Addendum 15).

1. Purpose:

On the basis of our common faith, confession and Reformed tradition

- to witness prophetically to our community and, if necessary, to society and the authorities;
- to provide mutual support and assistance where it is requested; and
- to co-ordinate possible co-operation with regard to common interest and responsibilities in society.

2. Church Policy Positioning

The *Conventus* is an assembly where churches discuss common matters on the basis of their common faith, confession and Reformed tradition, with due regard to the individual nature, ethos and history of each church. The agenda focuses on a Reformed witness in the name of the *Conventus*. Particular viewpoints of participating churches are not forced upon other participating churches. No church shall dominate another church.

3. Participating Churches

All Churches in South and Southern Africa with a Reformed confessional basis that identify themselves with the *Foundation and Functioning of the Conventus of Reformed Churches in Southern Africa* could become members.

The first meeting of the *Conventus* was held on 10 March 1999. Meetings are held on an annual basis. To date the *Conventus* has had eight meetings.

The number of participating church communities is currently at least thirteen out of more than twenty possible reformed churches in Southern Africa. The following reformed churches take part in the *Conventus*: the Afrikaans Protestant Church, the Calvin Protestant Church, the Christian Reformed Church, the Free Church in South Africa, the Reformed Churches in South Africa, the Reformed Churches Midlands, the Dutch Reformed Church, the Nederduitsch Hervormde Church of Africa, the Presbyterian Church of America, the Reformed Church in Africa, the Rhenish Church, the Reformed Churches Soutpansberg, and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa

2.3.2 Ecumenical relationships between the Afrikaans Churches and other churches inside and outside of South Africa

During the 1930's the DRC had the lion's share in the establishment of ecumenical relationships. Around 1930 approximately sixty churches were working together in the *General Missions Council* with the sole object of preaching the gospel to the black inhabitants of the country. During 1936 the precursor of the South African Council of Churches, the *Christian Council of South Africa*, was established with two DRC ministers, Dr William Nicol (Chairman) and Rev. J M du Toit (full-time secretary), at the helm. But during the years of World War Two, the DRC withdrew from the Christian Council, although remaining a member of the WCC (Meiring 1991: 76).

For South Africa, 1948 marks the beginning of a new epoch when the National Party became the newly elected government. It would produce an effort, unparalleled in the history of the world, to completely reconstruct a society by separating its human races. Over the decades the Apartheid system would develop into a maze of legislation. The entire South African population would be classified in four categories: White, Coloured, Indian and Black. This act unleashed worldwide protestations and it was not accepted by everybody, especially in the church. One of the first attempts of Afrikaners breaking away from this system, occurred in 1955 when thirteen Pretoria academics, including political scientist W H Kleynhans, Greek scholar P V Pistorius and theologian B J Marais, produced a petition against the removal of the 'Coloureds' from the common

voters' role in the Cape. During the same time, theologian B B Keet published his booklet: "Suid-Afrika – waarheen?" (Whither South Africa?)

In 1980 the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA – Indian) proposed an umbrella body for all four churches of the DRC family. The white DRC did not accept the idea and it proved to be another missed opportunity for normalising relationships within the family. In the years to come the DRC would reap the 'whirlwind' (Krüger, 2003:204-207, 246f).

Serfontein (1982: 128) argues that apart from the black "daughter" churches and the other Afrikaans-speaking churches the DRC had no formal links with any other churches in the country. (It must be remembered that during the 1960's and up to 1987, there was no APK and the AFM was still seen as a sect. The APK came into existence in 1987 and the AFM was considered a church by the DRC, for the first time, at the General synod of the DRC in 1990.)

Up to 1980 the DRC had generally steadfastly refused to participate in inter-church gatherings called either by the SACC or other SA-based Christian organisations. In 1981 the DRC took a surprising step when Dr P Rossouw, the Ecumenical Affairs Liaison Director of the DRC, sent an invitation to ten major churches in South Africa to attend a conference to discuss the situation in the country.

The churches invited were the Baptist Church, the Church of England in South Africa, the Federation of Lutheran Churches, the Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church, and the Church of the Province of South Africa, the United Congregational Church, the NGKA, RCA, the NHK and the RCSA. The two Afrikaans Churches NHK and RCSA declined the invitation. Serfontein thought that the DRC took this step as part of a strategy for eventually launching a counter-organisation to the SACC. In the invitation letter it was said, *inter alia*, that no new structure was envisaged. Part of the letter read:

The general Synod of the DRC has decided that a penetrating analysis should take place between the DRC and other protestant churches with a conservative confessional basis. This far-reaching decision was taken on conceivable grounds and lends itself to something very noble in the ecclesiastical and broader South African situation if we put our hands together to the plough.

One thing must at the outset be stressed with emphasis – no new structure is envisaged. When we proceed on the lines of matters of mutual consent, our mutual calling, responsibility and menace and lastly points of difference, then we as believers may be sure that the road ahead will become clear.

The majority of the churches invited sent representatives to the meeting held in Pretoria on August 26, 1981. This was the first time, since the Cottesloe Consultation in 1960 that so wide a representation of churches had gathered. But in spite of all the good publicity the conference received, there were voices against it. Rev. Sam Buti of the NGKA slammed the conference. He reflected the views of several other black and white theologians present and deplored the fact that the SACC was not invited and that the DRC was only interested in ecumenical contact when it took the initiative itself. He went on to say that the conference had tended to ignore the deep differences between the churches on theological, political and social issues.

Serfontein suggested that the DRC had a two-fold aim in the conference. He said that the DRC tried to drive a wedge between the SACC and some of its member churches, and also between black and white radicals and conservatives in those churches. The second aim was to convince the German and Swiss churches – with whom the DRC was in dialogue with at a time – that it was indeed involved in making contact with black and multi-racial churches in South Africa, (a point on which it had been criticised) and also because leaders of the black DRC and other churches have asked churches in Europe to break off their bilateral relationships with the DRC (Serfontein 1982: 128-131).

As has been mentioned above (par 2.1.1) the SACC, in step with the WCC, supported the “Programme to Combat Racism” (PCR). This brought vehement reaction not only from churches in South Africa, (especially the Afrikaans Churches) but also from across the world. This has led to ecumenical isolation of the Afrikaans Churches and especially the DRC. There was a time when the DRC was on the frontline of ecumenical developments outside of South Africa. In October 1876 the DRC of the Cape became one of the first members of the newly inaugurated *World Alliance of Reformed Churches* (WARC). In 1948 the *World Council of Churches* (WCC) came into being and again the DRC was there. The Transvaal DRC became a member in 1949 and the Cape DRC in 1953.

The *Reformed Ecumenical Synod* (RES) was formed in 1946 and right from the beginning the DRC was also part of this ecumenical body (from Meiring, 1991: 76). Crafford and Gous (1993) showed clearly how, one after another, churches and groups in the world, began to avoid contact with the DRC: The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands; the Schweizerischer Evangelischer Kirchenbund; the Reformierter Bund Deutschland; the Reformed Church in America; the United Presbyterian Church in the USA; the Christian Reformed Church in North America (Crafford & Gous, 1993: 353-362).

In South Africa itself, conflict was unavoidable because of Apartheid and the Afrikaans-speaking Churches' support of it.

After Cottesloe, in 1963, Rev. Beyers Naudé founded the *Christian Institute* (CI) and it produced a journal, *Pro Veritate*. Through this journal and other studies, the CI provided material to challenge and guide Christian understanding and action. In 1965 the General Synod of the DRC resolved that all members of the church should resign from the CI. There was more and more an alienation from Naudé and the CI by Afrikaners. Thus he turned more and more to English-speaking Christians for support and also became more directly involved with black people in their struggle. This resulted in Naudé's banning in October 1977. (For the role of the CI and Naudé, see the Thesis of M J Heaney 2004.)

The CI was instrumental in bringing many of the African Independent Churches into relationships with one other and with the wider church in South Africa and beyond. The CI also played a determining role in the Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid South Society (Sprocas). Sprocas developed the *Message to the People of South Africa (The Message)* which was published by the South African Council of Churches (SACC) in 1968.

The Message was a decisive rejection of Apartheid and separate development as being contrary to the Christian faith in principle.

During the time after Cottesloe the *Christian Council* (precursor of the SACC) was relatively ineffective and, partly because of this, the CI took on many responsibilities that the Council should have taken on in the early sixties. Because the Message was so controversial in South Africa - even the then Prime Minister, Mr B J Vorster reacted on it, it is necessary to briefly highlight a few aspects of it.

The Message was a six-page document, which attempted to show how Apartheid and separate development are contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Its starting point was the conviction that, in Christ, God had reconciled the world to himself and therefore made reconciliation between people both possible and essential to the Christian faith. The Message proceeded to point out the implications of this atoning work of Christ, in terms of the South African society. First of all it made it clear that “excluding barriers of ancestry, race, nationality, language and culture have no rightful place in the inclusive brotherhood of Christian disciples”. The main burden of the Message, however, was that this unity within the church could not be divorced from what was happening in society itself. Apartheid and separate development attacked the church at its centre; they denied the work of Christ. The Message declared:

There are alarming signs that this doctrine of separation has become, for many, a false faith, a novel gospel which offers happiness and peace for the community and for the individual. It holds out to men a security built not on Christ but on the theory of separation and the preservation of racial identity. It presents separate development of our race groups as a way for the people of South Africa to save themselves. Such a claim inevitably conflicts with the Christian gospel, which offers salvation, both social and individual, through faith in Christ alone.

The task of the church is to demonstrate the reality of this reconciling work of God in its own life. Thus Christians “are under an obligation to live in accordance with the Christian understanding of man and community, even if this is contrary to some of the customs and laws of this country”.

Reaction to the Message was dramatic. The English newspapers came out in strong support of the council and its Message, while the Afrikaans papers deplored it. Because the DRC justified separate development on theological grounds, the SACC statement actually condemned it, together with other churches with the same view. Therefore

dialogue between the DRC and English-speaking churches became extremely difficult. The Message also ushered in a new and more intense phase in the relationship between the state and the churches associated with the SACC, and, of course between the state and the council itself (De Gruchy, 1986: 103-122).

During 1982 the membership of both the DRC and NHK was suspended from the WARC because of their support of the policy of Apartheid. So by the mid-1980's the DRC was only a member of the RES, now called the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC). During the REC's meeting in Chicago 1984, the DRC delegation had a difficult time. At that meeting the REC voted with a majority against Apartheid and declared it to be a sin. The DRC and the RCSA were confronted about their support of the government's policy of Apartheid.

By 1988, during the Harare meeting of the REC, it was decided that a conference must be held in South Africa to try and solve the tension between the DRC and the other members of the DRC family. This became known as the "Vereeniging Consultation" of March 1989 (See par 2.2.1.8) (N G Kerk, 1997: 40-41).

However, in spite of all the ties between the DRC and other churches outside South Africa, one by one these ties were loosened. It happened more and more that non-Afrikaans churches from South Africa would use opportunities in ecumenical councils to expose the DRC to public contempt, because of its racist pro-government or pro-Apartheid viewpoint. It became clear that there was no longer room for the DRC in most of these councils. Dr F E O'Brien Geldenhuys made the comment that for the past thirty years the DRC was continuously on the defence at all the ecumenical bodies, because of its support of government policy. Unless the DRC was willing to listen to well-meant critique from other reformed churches, it would shunt itself into a cul-de-sac (Geldenhuys, 1982: 102).

D J Bosch, in an article *Die Ope brief in Konteks (The Open letter in Context)*, came to the same conclusion. He said that nobody could deny any longer the fact that the position of the DRC, with respect to international church relationships, was alarming. The

isolation of the DRC was a clear-cut fact. The big question is: how is the church going to handle this situation? Many people inside the church will see the “attacks” as a further proof of the prejudice of the other churches, and that they are totally under the influence of a leftist ideology. Thus, the sooner we break ties with them the better for us (from Bosch, 1982: 46, 47).

It was quite clear at this stage that things could not go on in this way in South Africa. Something had to be done to break out of the isolation in which South Africa found itself – not only the Afrikaans-speaking churches, but also the country as a whole.

From 1986 a change came in the DRC. At the General Synod of 1986, the document *Church and Society* was accepted as the official policy of the DRC. This document made it clear that it is no longer possible for the DRC to endorse the policy of Apartheid. The acceptance of this led to the church’s split 1987 when the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk (APK) was founded. In 1990 *Church and Society* was revised and it was on this ground that Prof. Willie Jonker confessed regarding Apartheid during the Rustenburg Consultation in 1990 (Strauss, 2002: 391,392).

After the Rustenburg Consultation, many churches were willing and ready to join in bilateral discussions with the DRC. The WARC, however, still upheld the suspension of the DRC. In March 1993 a delegation was sent to South Africa to have discussions with member churches and the DRC. The aim of this meeting was:

To obtain first-hand information about the process of unification which has started in the family of Dutch Reformed Churches ... Above all, the papers and discussions addressed themselves to whether or not the DRC has complied with the requirement of the WARC council in Ottawa, 1982.

At the end of the consultation, the delegates of the DRC, Professors PC Potgieter, JA Heyns, PGJ Meiring and Dr FM Gaum, reacted with a statement in which they wanted to bring clarity about the position of the DRC on Apartheid. They said, inter alia:

- 1 The DRC has acknowledged that Apartheid, as it was theologically justified and supported by the DRC, has largely contributed to a system of unequal, unjust distribution of economic resources, which has led to the serious discrepancy in income, standard of living, unequal education and training between White and Black. The DRC

has above all, compassion for the poverty and suffering of large numbers of people in our country and declares that it is prepared to cooperate in an ecclesiastical way in attempts to relieve the present need.

- 2 The DRC is committed to the dismantling of the system of Apartheid in both church and politics. In our frequent discussions with political leaders we are candid about it and we have handed our General Synod's 'Declaration of Christian Principles' to, amongst others, Pres. FW de Klerk, Mr N Mandela and Dr M Buthelezi.
- 3 Lastly we want to assure this consultation that the DRC is committed to the unity of the DRC family. We agree with the statement that this is the acid test whether the DRC has finally distanced itself from the racism of Apartheid and we are willing to be part of this process.

At this stage the WARC was not convinced that they must lift the suspension and, in August 1997, they mentioned the issue in the agenda of the meeting in Hungary (Ned Geref Kerk 1997: 58-60).

In 1997 the General Assembly of the WARC decided to lift the suspension on the DRC and by 1998 the DRC was again a full member of this worldwide ecumenical body (Strauss, 2002: 393).

One of the big moments in the history of the DRC came on 13 July 2004 when the DRC was welcomed back into the *South African Council of Churches* (SACC). At the meeting, Dr Coenie Burger, moderator of the DRC, said, inter alia, that it was wonderful to be where the DRC belongs. He and others in the DRC sometimes wonder how it was possible for the DRC to endorse Apartheid. He thought that if the DRC remained part of the ecumenical movement, it may possibly never have happened. The first mistake the DRC made was to think it could read and understand the Bible on its own. The second mistake was Apartheid. Burger said that the DRC's last Synod committed itself to God but also to the country. "*We are Africans,*" he said, "*and we want to be part of this country, have part in the solutions to problems and we want to do it together with the ecumenical movement*".

From 1962 to 1986 the DRC had discussions in its Synod meetings on the plausibility or not of having ties with the SACC and each time it was rejected. But in 1986 a change came and before the Synod meeting, the executive of the SACC met with the Broad

Moderation of the DRC. A press release stated “the need for more discussions has been aired and it will be referred to the different bodies for discussion” (Acta Synodi 1986:526). At the Synod of 1990 it was decided to apply for observer status to the SACC but it was not until 6 July 1995 that this was granted.

In 2002 the General Synod decided, by a two-thirds majority vote, to apply for full membership of the SACC and, as stated above, after sixty years the DRC was back where it belonged (Meiring, “*Welkom tuis, broeders*”. Die verhaal van die Ned Geref Kerk en die Suid Afrikaanse Raad van Kerke [1936 – 2004]).

In 1992 the Ecumenical Council of the NHK reported, at their General Synod, that it had come to the conclusion that participation in discussions with, or membership to the “big” ecumenical bodies, was not in the best interests of the church. These meetings normally degenerate into one or other pressure group. But the Council wanted to press the importance of ecumenism on the heart of the Synod because it is important for the Church and its testimony in the world to have these contacts with other churches. The General Synod reaffirmed once again the importance of ecumenical ties, but is of the opinion that for the current situation it is best to have bilateral contacts with other churches (Acta Synodi 1992: 247-258).

At the Synod meeting of September 2001, the Ecumenical Council reported that the resignation of the NHK from the WARC in 1982 would have far reaching implications for the church, because the resignation also impeded its relationships with other member churches of the WARC. Other mainline churches from the Reformed tradition are very cautious as regards having contacts with the NHK. In some cases these churches didn’t even reply to requests to have discussions. If the NHK wants to have ecumenical contact with the bigger group of Reformed churches, it will have to enter into discussions with the SACC and the WCC.

Reports were made that discussions with the SACC and the WCC were under way. The Ecumenical Council made the remark that for the past decades the NHK was in ecumenical isolation and that the church will have to take the initiative if it wants to

normalise and/or better its relationships with other churches. (Acta Synodi, September 2001: 466-472)

After all that happened as discussed above, the question is: Do the Afrikaans Churches have a future role to play with respect to reconciliation in Southern Africa? This question will be discussed in the next chapters.

CHAPTER 3: TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

3.1 ESTABLISHING A TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION (TRC)

In 1995, the South African Parliament, through a unique, democratically verifiable process – after a prolonged, consultative process – established the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), by passing *The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act (No 34 of 1995)*.

From the year 1974 until the year 1994 no less than nineteen truth commissions have been established in many parts of the world, but the establishment of the South African TRC marked a unique moment in world history. It was the first time that a nation had created a truth commission through a public and participatory process, by way of an Act of Parliament (De Lange, 2000:14).

The TRC featured unique and historic characteristics. It was a public process – open to the general public, to come and listen to proceedings. Perpetrators had the opportunity to disclose their involvement during the struggle, while victims could share their grief and uncertainty about lost loved-ones. It was a process that started to put the country on the road to healing and reconciliation. Provision was made for amnesty as well as reparation. Truly, the South African TRC (with all its shortcomings) is a model for many in the world (Hayner, 2000:33).

According to Mr Dullah Omar, Minister of Justice, it is important to understand the context within which the TRC took place (Omar, 1996: 24). The Commission is based on the final clause of the Interim Constitution, which reads as follows:

This Constitution provides a historic bridge between the past of a deeply divided society characterised by strife, conflict, untold suffering and injustice, and a future founded on the recognition of human rights, democracy and peaceful co-existence and development of opportunities for all South Africans, irrespective of colour, race, class, belief or sex.

The pursuit of national unity, the well-being of all South African citizens and peace require reconciliation between the people of South Africa and the reconstruction of society.

The adoption of the Constitution lays the secure foundation for the people of South Africa to transcend the divisions and strife of the past, which generated gross violations of human rights, the transgression of humanitarian principles in violent conflicts and a legacy of hatred, fear, guilt and revenge.

These can now be addressed on the basis that there is a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not retaliation, a need for *ubuntu*, but not for victimisation.

In order to advance such reconciliation and reconstruction, amnesty shall be granted in respect of acts, omissions and offences associated with political objectives and committed in the course of the conflicts of the past.

To this end, Parliament, under this Constitution, shall adopt a law determining a firm cut-off date which shall be a date after 8 October 1990 and before December 1993, and providing for the mechanisms, criteria and procedures, including tribunals, if any, through which such amnesty shall be dealt with at any time after the law has been passed. (The cut-off date was later changed to 10 May 1994. R)

With this Constitution and these commitments we, the people of South Africa, open a new chapter in the history of our country (quoted from TRC Report Vol. 1, 1998:55-57 in Omar, 1996:24, 25).

As regards the Interim Constitution, the editor of the Prayer Bulletin of The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA) made an interesting comment in the September 1996 issue when he said that “the Interim Constitution can be seen as a cease fire treaty that makes it possible to avoid a violent race/ethnic war, in favour of a give and take, win-win, political compromise”.

It is important to note that at that stage, before the establishment of the TRC, it was a well known fact that the then President, Mr Nelson Mandela, believed that it is not possible to suppress, or just forget, the truth regarding the violations of human rights in our country. It ought to be investigated, recorded and made known. Therefore the President supported the TRC. The new government to be elected committed itself to build up a culture of human rights in the country.

Dullah Omar stressed that the objective of the TRC was not to go on a witch-hunt or to drag violators of human rights before court to face charges, as many opponents of the TRC feared. He stressed that the commission was a necessary exercise to enable the people of South Africa to come to terms with their past on a morally acceptable basis and to advance the course of reconciliation (Omar, 1996:26).

Mr Eddie Makuen, General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), said that the SACC welcomed the announcement of the TRC. It was based on work previously done by the SACC, because there was a close connection between Mr Dullah Omar and Dr Brigalia Bam, former General Secretary of the SACC, because of the high esteem the government placed on the role the churches could play towards reconciliation in South Africa. He went on to say that the role of the SACC flowed from a commitment that had been made to the upliftment of the country based on a common South African identity and dealing with issues in the past. The SACC didn't sit back and wait for the government to establish the TRC, but took the initiative by engaging with the Minister's and appealing for such a body.

It became clear that the SACC changed from an organisation, which supported the struggle against Apartheid, to one that was working to make a success of a new nation to be formed – the Rainbow Nation of South Africa. Already at the National Conference in 1995, the SACC's members discussed the establishment of a TRC. The concern regarded the opening of the wounds, which was seen as an imperative for healing to take place. It was then pointed out that it would be a painful process, as indeed it was.

3.1.1 The mandate of the Commission

The act that brought the TRC into being, *The Promotion of National Unity and reconciliation Act*, was thought to provide “a useful window into Apartheid and an important vehicle for determining justice and the truth”, by helping people to remember the past years of Apartheid. It was not always understood in public commentary on and

interpretation of the Act. People were still thinking in old South African legal categories, instead of seeing it as being designed to assist them in the upliftment of the moral and political scene of the new South Africa. One of the problems that arose was that the “Commissioners of the TRC will face moral dilemmas, because they are bound by an Act that makes no distinction between Apartheid and its opposite”. The fact is that the Act does not forbid such distinctions. The Act provides, in its section governing the actions of the Commission when dealing with victims, that “victims shall be treated equally and without discrimination of any kind, including race, colour, gender, sex, sexual orientation, age, language, religion, nationality, political or other opinion, cultural beliefs or practices, property, birth or family status, ethnic or social origin or disability” (Asmal *et al*, 1996: 14, 15).

The objectives of the Commission were to promote national unity and reconciliation in a spirit of understanding, which transcends the conflicts and divisions of the past by:

- establishing as complete a picture as possible of the causes, nature and extent of the gross violations of human rights which were committed during the period from 1 March 1960 to the cut-off date (later determined as 10 May 1994), including the antecedents, circumstances, factors and context of such violations, as well as the perspectives of the victims and the motives and perspectives of the persons responsible for the commission of the violations, by conducting investigations and holding hearings;
- facilitating the granting of amnesty to persons who make full disclosure of all the relevant facts relating to acts associated with a political objective and comply with the requirements of this Act;
- establishing and making known the fate or whereabouts of victims and by restoring the human and civil dignity of such victims by granting them an opportunity to relate to their own accounts of the violations of which they are the victims, and by recommending reparation measures in respect to them;

- compiling a report providing as comprehensive an account as possible of the activities and findings of the Commission contemplated in the three paragraphs above, and which contains recommendations of measures to prevent the future violations of human rights (Meiring, 1999:13,14; Villa-Vicencio et al, 2000: 22,23).

3.1.2 Constitution of the Commission

It was decided that the Commission would consist of at least eleven and not more than seventeen commissioners, as appointed by the President. In December 1995 the seventeen commissioners were appointed by President Mandela and they had the mandate to appoint eleven committee members to their number, representing the different cultural, racial, political and religious communities of South Africa. From the beginning the churches in South Africa were very much involved in the establishment of the TRC. In an interview with Dr Brigalia Bam on August 27, 1999, she made several comments on the institution of the Commission. She was part of the panel that chose the members for the Commission. A very important fact that was highlighted was the very concrete outreach to the DRC. She remembered that President Mandela said to her, on several occasions. “If we are talking of reconciliation in the country, there is no way we can walk about it without involving the DRC. They have a strong following. They are influential” (Bam, 1999; 2003:26ff)

It is interesting to note that it was reported regarding Desmond Tutu that “he was presented with one of his greatest challenges, not only relating to the seventeen very varied Commissioners, but also the handling of the complex dynamics the work of the TRC implied” (Frost, 1998:144). And complex it was indeed.

The commissioners were allocated to three committees: The Human Rights Violations Committee, The Amnesty Committee and the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee. There was also to be an Investigation Unit.

The lifespan of the Commission would be two years after which a report of its findings must be handed to the State President.

According to the Government Act establishing the commission, it had no power of persecution, or any juridical function, but could subpoena witnesses and had search powers and access to all documents.

The *Human Rights Violations Committee* (HRVC), empowered to set up an investigating unit, had authority to record allegations and complaints, make recommendations and collect and receive articles relating to gross human rights violations. Information in its possession could be made available to the other committees. This committee should focus on all the victims in our country and create a safe place where they can come, in a dignified manner, to deal with very hard issues – such as their own personal pain. Therefore the HRVC had to allow victims to tell their stories in the language of their choice, the aim being to record not only the truth of their disturbing past, but, more importantly, to restore the human and civil dignity of those victims.

The HRVC collected thousands of statements from victims from all over South Africa during the two and a half years of its existence. Many were invited to submit their statements at public hearings conducted in a number of cities and towns in the different provinces.

“Gross human rights violations” had a rather restrictive definition. It was defined as murder, manslaughter, kidnapping, rape, severe ill treatment that left permanent scars, mentally or physically. That meant that not everybody who suffered under Apartheid automatically qualified for making statements.

Apart from the victims’ hearings a number of special hearings had been organised to look into specific areas, to try and establish as complete a picture as possible of major instances of protest uprising of victims of racist oppression in the past e.g. Sharpeville 1960, Soweto 1976, the Boipatong massacres in early 1990’s, etc. Also special interest groups were heard: prison officials, security police, women, faith communities, Christian Churches, etc (Meiring, 2002:281-282).

The *Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee* (RRC) was to consider matters referred to it by the other two committees, and to gather evidence about the identity, fate and

whereabouts of victims as well as the nature and extent of their sufferings. It could also make recommendations, which might include urgent interim measures of reparation. Reparation was defined as including “any form of compensation, *ex gratia* payment, restitution, rehabilitation or recognition.” One of the dilemmas of the committee was the huge gap between the expectations of victims and the understanding of reparation by the Government and its capacity (and even willingness) to deliver.

Five areas of need came to the fore: medical, emotional, educational, material and ‘symbolic’ (such areas as erection of tombstones, reburials, etc.) The TRC felt strongly about the matter of reparation: the victims of Gross Human Rights Violations had a moral and a legal right to proper reparation. If the amnesty process seemed to indicate that the TRC process was ‘perpetrator friendly’, the reparation proposals were to show that the process was ‘victim friendly’ (Meiring, 2002:284).

The Act placed limitations on the committee in that it became aware that it had no authority, infrastructure or resources to assist victims in any way. The defined mandate was to draft policy recommendations to be presented to the President. One difficult step was to recommend the ‘closed list’ approach which meant that anyone whose name was not on the list of the HRVC, would not be eligible for consideration as a victim and thus would not receive reparation (Orr, 2000: 242).

The *Amnesty Committee* (AC) also had an arduous task. Meiring reflected on it and said that it had:

“to receive applications from perpetrators – from all sides of the struggle – who desired amnesty. The offer of amnesty was extremely generous. It enabled perpetrators of gross violations, on making a full disclosure of the acts under consideration and by persuading the AC of the political and military nature of those acts, to walk out of the amnesty court with a clean slate. No legal actions or even civil claims could be brought against a perpetrator once he had received amnesty. The judges and lawyers together with their legal teams criss-crossed the country to conduct their hearings and then had to go through all the evidence to make a recommendation about the person(s) who applied for amnesty. The Committee had been given very strong powers to conduct their business, having the authority of a Court of Appeal.

Perpetrators from the previous government as well as those from the ANC and other liberation movements were brought before the Committee. From the ranks of the white people the perception grew that the TRC was no more than a witch-hunt, with the purpose to embarrass the National Party Government. On the ANC's part it was said that the perpetrators of the liberation movements operated on a higher moral level and they should be treated with more leniency" (Meiring, 2002:283,284).

The hearings of the Committee could be held, if necessary, in public, unless its members and the Supreme Court Judge chairing it decided otherwise (Frost, 1998:142,143).

The first hearings of the Human Rights Violations Committee commenced on 16 April 1996 in East London. This was but the first of 140 hearings, which took place during the two and a half years of the life span of the TRC, to involve the South African community. "During these hearings 21 400 victims submitted statements, the names of 27 000 victims were recorded, 7 124 perpetrators applied for amnesty. But not only were there hearings of the HRV Committee, but also sessions where business people, academics, medical doctors, jurists, religious groups and spiritual leaders, etc. could give their perspective on the past" (Meiring, 1999:370).

One of the most challenging stories for this researcher, as regards the process of reconciliation, happened during the first meeting in East London. Meiring remembered it as follows:

One morning before the hearing commenced, a black minister, rose to address the people around him. "There must be a mistake somewhere," he said. "I brought nearly my whole congregation along to be here today. They had to come and listen to what the victims say. They wanted to stretch out their hands to all the white people of East London, to forgive them, to be reconciled with them," waving his hand over the people in the city hall, over the many black people and the small group of white people. But I see nearly no white people to talk to today. There is nobody with whom we can be reconciled. Where are they? (Meiring, P 1999:28)

Yes, where were they? Where are the majority white people today, ten years after the starting of a process of reconciliation in the country? Maybe the problem must be sought at the doorsteps of the white faith communities, especially the Afrikaans Churches.

People turn to their religious leaders for counsel during times of need and uncertainty. What were the messages that came from the leaders?

3.2 ATTITUDE OF CHURCHES TOWARD THE TRC

When the Minister of Justice, Mr. Dullah Omar, announced the possibility of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission for South Africa, in August 1994, the English Churches accepted it favourably but there was an immediate reaction from the Afrikaans Churches. It revolved around the questions: What is truth? What type of reconciliation will it be? Must Christians – even churches – confess before a worldly commission? From all over there were ideas as to how one must interpret truth in the context of South Africa. Many individuals and some churches, through their official papers, gave their views.

3.2.1 From the Dutch Reformed Church

When Mr Mandela, the first State President of the “new South Africa”, was invited to speak at the General Synod of the DRC in October 1994, he too commented on the institution of a Truth Commission. He said:

Legislation for the institution of a Truth Commission is at the moment in the process of preparation by the minister of Justice, Mr. Dullah Omar. Commentary by the church will be very helpful. Government will acknowledge the human dignity of victims of suffering and human rights violations. I want to invite the DRC to help government in its task to advance Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa (Acta Synodi 1994: 537).

In the Afrikaans press, both secular and in the church, there was an initial uneasiness amongst Afrikaners regarding the proposed TRC process. They wanted to know what was behind this seeking of the truth. Many, especially from the political right-wing adherents, were “abusive” towards the institution of such a commission and words like “witch-hunt, Nuremberg, retaliation, etc,” were heard. There was a fear that the church would skate on thin ice when it becomes involved in something like this.

Dr Willem Nicol, minister of the DRC Universiteitsoord, and well known for his positive actions in the past for normalising relationships between the different races in South Africa, reacted in the following manner when he heard about the appointment of the TRC:

“I thought it was a good thing, because I believe in opening up and talking about issues. But when the things started to open up at last, I had no energy left to continue putting pressure on the Afrikaners. We have pressured them to a point where the National Party and the General Synod agreed to put an end to Apartheid. At that stage I experienced that the Afrikaners were treated as the underdogs in this country. RDP came and our people have lost power. They were bleeding, and when the issues the TRC opened up became known, the people were unhappy about it and I didn’t have the energy to make a study of what was happening. So, I’m afraid that we as pastors, with respect to the TRC, didn’t really support our people. Later on, I wondered whether the TRC was necessary. At that stage I thought it was only to insult the Afrikaners. Now with hindsight, I have to admit that it was the right thing to do” (See Addendum 4).

Die Kerkbode, the official mouthpiece of the DRC carried the debate regarding the TRC, which was hectic at the time.

Prof. Danie du Toit from Stellenbosh Theological Seminary made the comment that there is no truth without a context and that such a commission should not be appointed without making sure about the context in which certain events took place in South Africa during the past. Facts regarding the truth cannot be established outside or above the history of the country. A Truth Commission can serve a purpose, but then impartiality from all parties is a prerequisite (*Algemene Kerkbode*, August 1994:1).

Prof. PC Potgieter reminded people that different culture groups have different views of what truth is.

Commenting on the speech of Mr Mandela at the general Synod of the DRC, Dr Sampie van Vuuren said that it is important to know that the church is by definition the institution that carries God’s truth. When the world is seeking the truth, the church is intensely involved (*Die Kerkbode*, 3 February 1995). This comment answers the question as to the church’s task. If the church wants to be true to its prophetic calling, then it cannot be quiet in this regard, even if speaking out would give rise to anger amongst some of its

members. Through the past decades the church didn't make it easy for its rank and file members to understand changes in its thinking and decision-making and there are many of them who want the church to clarify certain issues.

When the commission starts its work, they must seek to unveil the truth of the whole South African community. It would be unjust to probe for the truth regarding the former SADF and SAP operations, and not doing the same for the ANC and its adherents during the years of Apartheid. The previous government spoke about a war situation, as the ANC and its allies spoke about a freedom-struggle. If the commission should look only to the one corner and not the other, then clearly there will be a situation where truth will not be served, at least not according to Biblical standards. We must remember that Christ told us that those who do not want to forgive those who trespass against us cannot appeal for forgiveness themselves, as we read in Matthew 6:14, 15. This shows us that mutual forgiveness is more important than being selfish. To this truth the church must testify very powerfully, otherwise it will be guilty before God (Van Vuuren 1995: 6).

Frits Gaum, Editor of *Die Kerkbode*, official mouthpiece of the DRC, said that he was, from the beginning, convinced that the DRC must be part of the work of the TRC. The DRC had no other option, in the light of the confessions regarding Apartheid, which had been made. In a time like this, it is important that the church must be in the frontline to seek truth and reconciliation for all our people. We have to go and give our perspective on issues and testify on why we did what we did. That's why the Executive Committee of the DRC nominated seven persons with the hope that at least one would be chosen to be one of the Commissioners of the TRC. In the end none were elected, but Tutu himself invited Prof. Piet Meiring to be one of the Committee members. And Prof Piet Meiring did a great job and did his utmost to convince the DRC to have more trust in the TRC (Gaum, 2004: 56f).

In the *Algemene Kerkbode* 9/10 February 1996, a letter appeared, written by 46 ministers of the DRC, in which they declared their support to the TRC. In their letter they made, inter alia, the following comments:

“The aim of the TRC is to work for national unity and reconciliation amongst the citizens of this country. It is our opinion that the DRC must support these aims whole-heartedly. In practice it means:

- to get an overall picture of the causes, the nature and scope of the situation in which human rights were violated;
- that procedures for the giving of amnesty must be simplified;
- that the fate of victims must be made known and their humanity be affirmed in different ways;
- that a report must be made available with recommendations for the future.

We make the following appeal to the leaders of the DRC:

- *to pray regularly and in an organised way for the work of the TRC;*
- *to support the work of the TRC and to become practically involved where possible;*
- *to inform the members of the church with great enthusiasm about the reasons for existence, aims and way of functioning of the TRC;*
- to accompany members who have to testify before the commission in humility and to help and care for those who were victims.

The DRC has already, at different occasions, confessed guilt with respect to Apartheid. We also acknowledge that there were gross human rights violations. *We are now standing before the test to put these testimonies into practical acts.* One of these is a sincere support of the TRC and its aims. Any rousing of suspicion or steering clear of issues can jeopardise the moral grounds of our life as church in the future.

It is now time for the past to be opened up and as believers to start working towards the new future. *We trust that the church will have the courage and the humility to accept this difficult task. We cannot drop our members now* (Algemene Kerkbode, 9/10 February 1996: 11). (Researcher’s Italics)

When one looks at this letter and, especially the appeal to the leaders of the church, it is as if one can hear the echo of the summons of the church leadership to their members before the elections of 1994, that God Almighty will work a miracle in the country and that there would be no anarchy. And God answered the prayers. Then why was it not possible to get the church motivated for the most important act of faith in the history of this country – to get the different people groups to a point that they would walk the path of trust and reconciliation?

The researcher is of opinion that the same problem, as occurred so many times in the past, the choir of voices which rose up from pews and pulpits: Who are they to tell us

what to do? Through this attitude another prophetic message to the church was smothered in its infancy.

In an interview with Prof. Piet Meiring, committee member of the TRC, the reporter of *Die Kerkbode* asked the question: *How can the Afrikaans churches become involved in the work of the TRC?* He responded as follows:

“There is so much that the church can do. If the church openly identifies itself with the process and makes a call to their members to commit themselves to truth and reconciliation in our country, it will make a huge difference. At the end of the day it is the Christians in South Africa, who knew that they came to the truth through Jesus and believe that it is only He who can work lasting reconciliation between people, who can make a contribution. In every congregation there are victims who have to be accompanied in love. And in every congregation there are perpetrators who, in one way or another, have asked for amnesty. For these people and their families these things are very traumatic. To accompany them pastorally is a huge challenge. Above all the churches in the country must pray for the TRC, because if the Lord is not having his hand on this process, it will be in vain. “

Question: What do you think about the number of requests that the DRC must make a submission before the TRC?

“One of the first tasks of the TRC is to give a comprehensive overview of what happened in our country over the past three decades. While the deeds of the past are written down and evaluated, a lot of attention will have to be paid to the contexts of the event and the motives of the people involved. I believe that the DRC, as any other denomination in our country, can make a contribution. The DRC has been involved in a lot of things and had sometimes drafted strong viewpoints about developments in our country. At one stage our church made a big change in its attitude towards Apartheid. For future generations it will be good to hear how the church felt about some issues and why it did some things – or didn’t do. And if we have to put our hand on our own bosom while writing our submission, we will have to do it. Such a submission can become an opportunity to witness”.

Question: Will the work of the TRC really bring truth and reconciliation in our country?

“It depends on all of us. Over the past few months I came to the conviction that the staff of the TRC, under the chairmanship of Archbishop Tutu, are really trying to do their utmost for this process to be successful. As regards the hearings and the examples of reconciliation that have flowed from that, there are enough to give us hope. But whether the process will, in the end,

be successful, depends on the people of South Africa and whether they will take ownership of it or not. Above all it is in the hands of the Lord” (Algemene Kerkbode 13/14 September 1996: 5).

Members of the Moderature of the General Synod of the DRC visited Archbishop Tutu, the chairman of the TRC, during the last week of February 1996. The aim of their visit was to clarify some of the issues regarding the work of the TRC. These discussions brought some clarity in the minds of the leaders of the DRC. According to Tutu the aim of the commission was: (1) to try to bring reconciliation and healing in our society and not to begin a witch-hunt; (2) the commission wants to bring justice and wants to do its work unbiased and doesn't want anybody to tell it what to do; (3) it will take approximately two years to uncover atrocities of the past and then the commission will close the books and let the past to rest and (4) It will be a traumatic time for all of us, but when done right, it will be a time of purification, a catharsis which can lead to healing in our torn society.

Tutu made it clear that he understood the questions about the composition and the task of the commission. He said: “*For people with questions and objections I say: Give us a chance! We want to show with our own deeds that we want to make a positive contribution to a better South Africa*” (Die Kerkbode 1 March 1996: 1, 6).

3.2.2 From the Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (NHK)

It became clearer and clearer that there was a discomfort in the Afrikaans churches regarding the work of the TRC. Some of the fears that were voiced by spokespersons of the church were: The TRC will be a politicised endeavour, contrary to the reconciliation we read about in the Bible. This could lead to a use of Biblical reconciliation themes, like confession of sin and forgiveness, in a political way. Another concern was that of truth. What truth? Truth according to whom?

Dr Daan van Wyk, former Editor of *Die Hervormer*, official publication of the NHK, said that the commission was so politicised that a person of the cloth cannot be the chairperson. This remark was made because of rumours that the commission would be led by Bishop Stanley Moghoba (As we know Archbishop Desmond Tutu was the

chairman of the commission in the end). The NHK cannot be against efforts to investigate criminal offences of the past, but it is important that it must be in an attitude of forgiveness. The question that lived in the hearts of many was: Is it the goal of the commission to work towards forgiveness, or will it be a witch-hunt against one part of the community? (Die Kerkbode, 28 July 1995)

In Die Algemene Kerkbode of 10/11 May 1996, Dr Wim Dreyer, Editor of *Die Hervormer*, made the following comments regarding the TRC:

“Important for us as Christians is that the TRC must use Christian terminology throughout. The Bible tells us that man, because of sin, is guilty before God and thus lives in a broken relationship towards God. Therefore the TRC must not only use Biblical language, but also themes of confession of sin and forgiveness, which lead to reconciliation. Against the background of political theology, by which we are bombarded more and more, it is not strange that Christian terminology is also politically interpreted. Let us be frank about it: although some churches and church leaders want to make the TRC something Christian-like, it is a political instrument. The reconciliation the TRC is looking for is political reconciliation.

“The Ned Herv Kerk van Afrika has, in principle, no objection against truth and reconciliation. On the contrary, the church has, in the past, asked for less propaganda and more truth in the media and that political leaders must be more honest with the citizens of the country. But we must keep to this perspective: real Christian reconciliation is reconciliation between God and man in and through Jesus Christ. ... No commission has the right to do the work of the church for it”.

It is correct to say that the church must do the work of reconciliation, but when the church is not doing it in such a way that people come closer to one other and allow one another part of God's sun, then nobody can take exception when a body like the TRC is trying to help with it.

“The General Church Meeting of the Ned Herv Kerk took the next decision in 1995: ‘From its theology, the church understands its ministry of reconciliation as a commission from Jesus Christ its Lord. This ministry is to the glory of God. It wants to bring all people to faith and wants to establish that faith. The ministry of reconciliation is through the preaching of the Word of God’ (Die Kerkbode 10/11 May 1996:7)

In *Die Hervormer* of 1 May 1995 Rev. APJ Beukes asked the question: *Why a Truth Commission?* He made a few remarks in his article on the importance of truth and especially truth as it is understood in Christianity. As regards the TRC he said that firstly we must remember that this commission operates in the political context, because of that ideology plays a role. Then truth is not truth per se, because there are always alternate purposes. Truth becomes relative. Secondly, it seems as if there is already a distinction between those who defended Apartheid and those who attacked it. Atrocities that had been committed in the past can never be judged without understanding the context in which they took place. Thirdly, the truth can also be relative. That which is truth to one can be a lie to another. The unveiling of facts is not necessarily the truth. The minister had said repeatedly that the aim of the TRC is that people want to know about their loved ones. This is understandable. But we can be caught in a spiral of revenge and retaliation. Maybe it would have been better if there was no TRC. From a Christian perspective the truth is that we must make a new beginning in the spirit of forgiveness. The wrongs of the past cannot be glossed over, but to start a witch-hunt that will get one party into trouble is unsatisfactory and the truth will still be covered up (*Die Hervormer*, 1 May 1995:3).

Considering all these statements and many more made in the letter columns of newspapers etc. it is no wonder that there was a general despondency towards the work of the TRC, which led to a general feeling that the Afrikaner was targeted by the government as the skunk in the story. The result? People, Christians, gave themselves over to apathy and hiding behind walls and big dogs.

The editor of the monthly periodical of the NHK, *Konteks*, asked this question in December 1995: *What will our children say about this?* (Wat sal ons kinders daarvan sê?) With very sharp words and a cynical voice, he said that our own Truth and Reconciliation Commission is busy with their work and for the following six decades or more, South Africa will be a place of abuse for the Afrikaner. He said that everybody who was part of the struggle was part of a holy struggle while the rest are guilty of sin against humanity! Must one ask forgiveness for that? He then went on to say:

The latest is the painful letter of a 33yr old Afrikaner minister who cried before the TRC about all that had happened. He asked: ‘how is it possible that so few tried to do something? How is it possible that I could only be an onlooker? Then I wonder how can I live with this guilt and shame in my inner self?’

Then the author of the article came to his question as to what to tell his children regarding all this. He said there is a rising suspicion against the whole life of the Afrikaner.

Everything that has been done in this country carries the mark of cruel oppression. He concluded his article by saying that each (Afrikaner) parent must tell the history to his or her children with the necessary vibe and passion. We must prevent by all means that they believe the lie that everybody from the past were hooligans and exploiters.

3.2.3 From the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA)

The initial response from the RCSA was similar to that of the NHK. A few of their well-known ministers commented on the TRC and its process.

Dr P Bingle, of the Reformed Church (Gereformeerde Kerk), asked that truth must be handled in love. One cannot go about in a cold, clinical manner when you are seeking the truth. According to the Ninth Commandment, justice must rule when someone speaks the truth. Dr Bingle also drew attention to the fact that there is a spirit of reconciliation at work in the country and that the Truth Commission’s job description should be worked out with great care (Algemene Kerkbode, August 1994:1).

Prof. Amie van Wyk made the following comments on the constitution of the TRC:

My first reaction was positive, because it was one of the first efforts in the world of a divided society where an official attempt was made to bridge poles, to bring about peace and to work for reconciliation in society as far as possible. Later on there was criticism as to the way that the TRC went about its work, but the effort in itself, I personally appraised.

As regards the reaction of the church leadership of the Gereformeerde Kerk it is not so easy to talk about. Unless somebody put it on the table it was not on the agenda of a church board, or classis, or regional synod, or the national synod. It is true of any church. How do you get such a thing on the agenda of any meeting? The TRC didn’t do it, because they didn’t send a letter to all the churches. So, because it was not on the agenda, it is very

difficult to know what the church leadership thought about it (See Addendum 3).

The Editor of *Die Kerkblad*, 20 December 1995, said that not only is it important to know who will be the members of the TRC, but what will be the aim of the Commission. The fact that the TRC must determine the truth has in itself the presupposition that there exists something like objective truth, outside of man. The question is then aired whether it is possible to find such truth. He then went on to concentrate on the fact that there is a trend in religious circles namely *relational truth*. It boils down to the fact that what is truth for one is not necessarily truth for another – for Islam truth is something else than for the Hindu, etc. Over and against this, is the Reformed Christendom, which said the Word of God is the only, unmoveable truth. He concluded his article by saying that each person must find for himself or herself answers to these objections.

Prof. S Postma made the suggestion that time is the best remedy to solve problems and used the example of the Afrikaners who are not holding a grudge against the English for the Anglo-Boer War anymore. He has reservations about the possibility that the commission won't have enough time, and juridical knowledge to differentiate and test testimonies. He is convinced that the TRC carries in itself the embryo not to work reconciliation but embitterment (Postma, 1996: 6, 7).

Dr Tjaart van der Walt wrote in *Die Kerkblad*, 24 April 1996, that the church could not shrug its shoulders against the task of reconciliation and dump it on the TRC. The church must not only prophetically call its members to repentance, but must also accompany them to become new creatures through the Grace of God. Then he called on the church to pray for the TRC as well as all the people who will be testifying. He asked that people must not write off the commissioners before hand, because there are non-Christians in their midst. He also asked that people must not expect more from the TRC than what one would expect from any State department.

In a short comment in the September 1996 issue of The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa's (TEASA) Prayer bulletin for reconciliation, Prof. B J van der Walt of the University of Potchefstroom said: "The individual Afrikaner, the Afrikaner as a group, the Afrikaner Churches and Afrikaner political and other organisations should categorically and unequivocally confess regarding their role in supporting Apartheid. Without this no true and lasting reconciliation in South Africa will be possible".

3.2.4 From the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM)

The AFM is a Pentecostal church with \pm 50% Afrikaans speaking members (this figure includes \pm 40 white Afrikaners and another \pm 10% coloured Afrikaans-speakers). Dr Frank Chikane had his reservations about calling the AFM an Afrikaans church. It could rather be called one of the South African churches with high levels of Afrikaans speaking members (See Addendum 14).

As seen previously, they shared the same questions and reservations as the other churches in South Africa.

Dr Isak Burger, President of the AFM, was asked about his reaction when he heard about the constitution of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

He responded in the following way:

The TRC started its work in February 1996. It was the same year that our church structurally became one. That happened in April 1996. At that stage we were still not one, but a white division and a black division. I was the president of the white division. When you ask me about my reaction, I think I felt like the average Afrikaner at that stage. I wanted to wait and see. As the process went on, one felt that this would be a process of endless probing into the past and digging up and making public the sin of the white population. It was a time one felt ashamed and embarrassed about the things that were unveiled. But as the process went on, I experienced that it became more trustworthy. I think it was especially the role Archbishop Desmond Tutu played in the commission. I met him during the organising of the Rustenburg Consultation, when we were on the steering committee. His involvement and the way he communicated through the media brought great peace to my mind. If you ask me about the church leadership, especially that of the white division, their feelings were about the same as mine. (See Addendum 1)

Pastor George Mahlobo, General Secretary of the Apostolic Faith Mission commented also that in general the AFM was satisfied with the proceedings of the TRC, although it is difficult to hear of some of the atrocities that took place. As already discussed in paragraph 2.2.4, the AFM is “open” to all cultural groups, but we find that the Afrikaans churches are still Afrikaans and are keeping to it. The prayer is that the Holy Spirit will reveal to all members of the AFM what His will is for the church.

3.2.5 From the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk (APK)

The question was addressed to Prof. Isak Brink of the APK: *What was your first reaction when the announcement came about the constitution of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission? Did a change occur in your mind during the work of the commission?* His response was that it didn't bother him. It was upsetting to hear some of the things that went on and that every child of God should be upset about it. Whether or not all the things happened as it was said, is difficult to say, because few of the testimonies were tested. The things that were reported did not have an influence on him personally. There was no change of mind. As church they heard it, but it did not give them suddenly another message. They didn't have guilt feelings, because it is the more conservative Afrikaner that has no problems with his workers etc. He personally thinks that the commission was there to lash out against the Afrikaner and not always to investigate the real truth (see Addendum 2).

The researcher could not find any other official views on the TRC from this church in any of the monthly publications of the APK, *Die Boodskapper*, or in the publication, *God let Grow (God laat Groei: Feesbundel ter herdenking van die tienjarige bestaan van die Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk 1987 – 1997)*

In a short article in *Die Boodskapper*, June/July 1996, under the heading “*What is the TRC doing with the Truth?*” (Wat maak die Waarheidskommissie met die waarheid?) the author, Rev. Theo Danzfuss, who is a minister of the DRC, discussed how he

experienced the meeting of the TRC for the dedication and blessing of the commissioners in Gauteng. To him the interfaith service was a blasphemous meeting and he concluded his report with two statements that churches must say to the TRC:

1. If the TRC expects the blessing of Jesus Christ, Who said “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life...” then it should stop praising other gods.
2. If the TRC expects the co-operation and support of the true Christians in South Africa, then it should show more respect for the fact that we are not willing to equalise our God with the gods of other religions... Their task in South Africa is not to reconcile religions with each other, but to execute a certain politically motivated task.

In *Die Boodskapper*, January 1996, report was given of the Seventh General Synod held in September 1995. No mention was made of the then Truth and Reconciliation Commission-to-be. Things that were discussed were, inter alia, how to celebrate the Day of the Ascension, Day of the Covenant and the 6th of April as Christians; the necessity to have daily family devotions; the necessity of Christian schooling or home schooling; etc. No word was said about the things that were of utmost importance for the country as a whole.

This same tendency was found in *Die Boodskapper*, August 1997(4, 9), in which a preview was given of the General Synod to be held during September 1997. The work of the different Commissions of Synod will be discussed – things that need to be done, as in any other church – but things that need the attention of people in a “new” country, was nowhere to be found.

In *Die Boodskapper*, April 1997, two articles drew my attention. In one, written by Prof. J J Pienaar: Transformation – the deathblow to true Christendom (*Transformasie – die dolksteek vir die ware Christendom*), he discussed truth and reconciliation as characteristic of transformation and said, inter alia, (researcher’s translation):

On the horizontal level the false Christian and the heathen must be reconciled with the true Christian with regard to the so-called injustices. It’s like the Calvinist with someone from the Islam, etc. Only when the horizontal reconciliation is finished, then will the truth come through. At the moment the TRC is busy with this false reconciliation task in the RSA. Everybody must be “reconciled” with everybody to open up the truth in the

end. The truth that is referred to here is the holistic world, the New World Order...

The second article was a declaration of a certain society called Society Bible and Nation (Vereniging Bybel en Volk), in which the Executive of the Society raised objections against the TRC because of their neglecting to handle the amnesty applications of Afrikaners in prison. The Society insisted that the TRC must give precedence to the amnesty applications of those suffering in the prisons before they listen to those outside the prisons.

3.2.5 From the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC)

In the family of the Dutch Reformed Churches, it was especially from the DRMC that the TRC received a lot attention.

Dr Pieter Fourie, Editor of *Die Ligstraal/Ligdraer*, publication of the DRMC, was strongly in favour of the constitution of a Truth Commission. Wounds cannot heal unless they are cleansed. From a Christian perspective a Truth Commission is desirable to prevent the things of the past from happening again in the future (Algemene Kerkbode, August 1994).

Dr Allan Boesak, in his book *The Tenderness of Conscience*, described, inter alia, how he felt about the introduction of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The National Executive Committee (NEC) of the ANC discussed the question of how to deal with the past, not only of white South Africa but also that of the ANC. In 1993 the incumbent State President, F W de Klerk interrupted the work of the NEC to ask that the intended commission must not be the Truth Commission, but the Truth *and* Reconciliation Commission. The ANC conceded to that.

Boesak went on to say that he was not against the idea and in the light of his own Christian conviction he welcomed it. Because he knew the Afrikaner, he was cautious to expect too much of the National Party's declarations on this whole issue of truth and reconciliation. He did not believe it had to do only with political motivations but with

religious and theological motivations as well, because, according to Boesak, in the Afrikaner's mind these two things go together. He said that the "truth" about Apartheid alone would be too confrontational; too merciless an exposure of what the NP had hoped would remain forever hidden. Adding the "soft" touch of reconciliation with its gospel imperatives of forgiveness and acceptance would, in turn, allow the softening of that truth, should the country ever be confronted with it.

Although the TRC came into being as a legal entity, by an act of Parliament, it was deliberately decided to move it away from Parliament and embark on a process of truth and reconciliation. The presiding president, Mr Mandela, appointed Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the "priest and father confessor" as Chairperson. Boesak said that the politicians calculated that these decisions would help to convince the millions of South Africans who are Christians, as well as enhance the acceptability of their own political agenda. The complaint that the TRC was too spiritual must not be laid at the door of the Commission or the church, or even with Tutu. Desmond Tutu is known for his Christian convictions, and his direct Christian testimony causes great discomfort (Boesak, 2005: 181f).

In general the attitude of the Afrikaans Churches to the TRC was negative, although there were voices and leaders who were positive. Right throughout the process, up to the final report, there were those who would have wished away the TRC if they could.

3.3 THE CHURCHES AND SPECIAL HEARINGS.

3.3.1 Introduction.

During the course of the work of the TRC, the Committee on Gross Human Rights Violations invited thousands of victims, as well as perpetrators, from many communities to submit their statements. It was done at 140 hearings held in many parts of the country. Then the TRC invited representatives of special interest groups – the medical corps, lawyers, etc to do the same. The very last of these 'special hearings' was devoted to the

South African faith communities. These special hearings took place during 17 – 19 November 1997.

There was a serious debate in the ranks of the TRC as a number of commissioners questioned the wisdom of having such a hearing at all. Surely the faith communities – even the Afrikaans Churches who for many years publicly supported the policy of Apartheid – were not guilty of gross human rights violations? What would they confess to? But the rest of the commissioners felt that the churches as well as the other faith communities were so closely involved in everything that happened in South Africa, on both sides of the struggle, that it was inconceivable not to invite them to address the TRC. The pastors, priests, bishops, moderators, imams and rabbi's needed an opportunity to tell their stories; stories of guilt and shame, of pain and suffering, but also stories of courage and conviction, of forgiveness and reconciliation.

In total forty-one faith communities made written submissions or gave representations at the hearing. Each of the representatives was asked to address primarily four questions: (i) to what extent has their community suffered under Apartheid? (ii) were there some in their community that overtly or covertly supported the racist policies of the past? (iii) Was their community – or some in the community – involved in the struggles against Apartheid? (iv) What contribution may be expected from their community in the process of nation building and reconciliation?

(Taken from the TRC Report 1998, Vol 4:59-; Meiring, 1999: 265-285)

3.3.2 The Churches' reactions

3.3.2.1 The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC)

In the General Synodical Commission (GSC) of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) there were heated differences of opinion on whether the church must make a submission to the TRC or not. First of all there were negative feelings because not one of the seven persons who were nominated was elected as a commissioner of the TRC. Therefore the compilation of the TRC were seen as one sided. Furthermore, for many, it was

unthinkable that the DRC must again go and confess, because it had been done a few times in the past at Synod level and in Rustenburg.

Rev. Freek Swanepoel and Prof. Pieter Potgieter had opposing viewpoints in the GSC as to whether they must make a submission or not. Swanepoel, the chairman, thought it would be a good idea, but Potgieter opposed it. There was a vote and, with a majority of three votes, the meeting decided against a submission. Swanepoel didn't want to accept the result and told the waiting press exactly that (Gaum, 2004: 57ff).

In an interview with Swanepoel, he commented on this matter. While there was this difference of ideas in the GSC meetings, the presbytery of Stellenbosch and the submission of the theologians of Potchefstroom continued, and that was news. In the end it was decided that he would write a submission and deliver it at the special hearing for faith communities of the TRC, but that he had to make it clear that he is not doing it on behalf of the entire DRC. In the meantime a beginning was made on the writing of *Op reis met Apartheid* (Addendum 11).

After many discussions, the GSC decided in the end that the DRC must prepare a publication regarding its own trip on the road of Apartheid. In 1997 the booklet, *Die verhaal van die NG Kerk se reis met Apartheid*, was published. It was accepted by the church as a document, not for all times, but for a specific period in time. Of importance are the 26 statements at the end of the booklet which looked back on the road travelled and in the last chapter mention is made of a new journey: a journey of reconciliation (Gaum 2004: 60; Ned Geref Kerk 1997: 72,77).

3.3.2.2 *The Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk in Afrika (NHK)*

For many Afrikaners the name Desmond Tutu is synonymous with the anti-Christ. This is due to the fact that during the Apartheid years, he was one of the leading figures in the struggle for the freedom of the majority people in South Africa. The fact that he was

appointed as chairman of the TRC made it no easier for many to accept the bona fides of Tutu and the TRC.

In Paragraph 3.2.2 the reaction of the NHK to the work of the TRC was discussed and it didn't change officially during the two and a half years the TRC had been doing its work. But from time to time it became clear that for the leadership of the church and for many congregations, feelings towards the TRC were negative and clarified how a great number of congregants may feel.

In an article about Nation building (*Nasiebou: Wensdenkery of werklikheid?*) a discussion on the work of the TRC came to the conclusion that the TRC apparently didn't succeed in its goal. It seems as if there is only further division instead of reconciliation. The task of the commission is not an easy one, but the question is whether it will, in the end, work reconciliation and greater national unity and, in so doing, help with the programme of nation building. Most South Africans wanted the TRC process to conclude, so that they can get on with their lives, because all the public confessions and unearthing of monstrosities of the past, tended to drag people into a pit of depression instead of towards peace, reconciliation and forgiveness. This part of the article concluded that it seems as if the TRC cannot really make an impact on the process of building a new nation (*Die Hervormer*, 1 October 1997: 6).

Articles like these and others don't really help Afrikaners to develop a positive outlook on the future. The task of the church leadership at a time like this is to help their members understand that we are in a new dispensation. The only way to make South Africa a better place to live and work is for all of us, especially the Afrikaner with his talents and ability for hard work, to work together and take the first steps on this road.

In *Die Hervormer*, mouthpiece of the NHK, an article was published on the theme of *Tutu's Confession (Tutu se bieging)*, in which the author is against Tutu's confession on behalf of the Christians of South Africa, who had thought that their religion is unique and that South Africa is a Christian country. This confession was part of the submissions of

faith communities before the TRC on 18 November 1997. The question the author wanted to ask Tutu was: Is it possible for the Church in South Africa to negotiate regarding the truth of the gospel? Can the church confess for its preaching that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life? Can Tutu confess on behalf of all Christians? In his discussion of the topic, the author stated, correctly, that no religion could say that it has all the truth. That would be very naïve. There are other religions, which have already existed for centuries, and their traditions must also be upheld. Against this background Tutu didn't have a choice but to confess, but this downgraded Christianity to one of the many religions which can help people morally. This means that every person can choose which religion suits him the best. In further discussion, the author showed the centrality of Jesus Christ as Son of God in the Christendom, and therefore he concluded that the Church (the NHK?) does not want to be part of this confession (Die Hervormer, 1 December 1997:1).

Officially the NHK has distanced itself from the proceedings of the TRC. (See Chapter 4)

3.3.2.3 *The Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA)*

In January 1997 the synod of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) had its meeting in Potchefstroom. Although it is the second smallest of the Afrikaans speaking Churches in South Africa, it has, through the years, played an important part in Afrikaner ranks. At their meeting, the delegates had to decide on a proposal prepared by one of the regional synods, to decide whether the RCSA should accept accountability for the establishment as well as the practice of Apartheid. There were objections from some delegates because, according to them, the proposal did not specify precisely which of the past RCSA decisions were in contention.

The chairperson of the Synod, Dr Jan Visser, took a strong stance when he said that the church should be very careful how it lives in a country where there is a climate of a guilt psychosis. The church must not become unhinged in such a situation. He said that he did

not feel any responsibility at all for the horrors committed in the name of Apartheid (Meiring 1999: 100,101; Die Kerkbode, 24 January 1997: 7, 16).

Prior to the meeting of the Synod the editor of *Beeld* (10 January 1997) devoted an editorial to these upcoming discussions. He stated that it would be difficult for the church to appear before the TRC, even to make a written statement. Although many of the congregants would be shocked, that must not withhold the RCSA from taking part in the process of truth and reconciliation. The RCSA would make a historical mistake if it excused itself from the process. The challenge was put before the church to use the time to make a clear statement, a courageous Biblical testimony (Quoted in Meiring 1999: 101).

The editor of *Beeld* wrote, inter alia, in the article: *A Cross-road* ('n Kruispad):

The national synod must decide whether the church should say something about the Apartheid past and its role in it. The Reformers boast about the fact that they never tried to give a Biblical foundation for Apartheid. That is to their credit. But did they ever try to denounce Apartheid as unbiblical? If they did it how energetic was it and at what level?

There is opposition from a wide front, not only in the Afrikaans community. There is also a fear that even a hidden 'affirmation' can look like a confession.

Churches, not only the RCSA, must look at the situation from a broader perspective. The churches didn't stand aloof from the Apartheid era. Therefore they cannot stand aloof from the current societal order and events.

The RCSA ought not sweep the problem under the proverbial carpet by directing it to commissions or study groups. Its witness must be heard now. Not in three years time, because then the country would have moved on and another issue will be at stake which will ask for a new witness from the church" (*Beeld*, 10 January 1997: 8).

On 15 January 1997, Dr Theuns Eloff, former minister of the RCSA and currently vice-chancellor of the North-West University (Potchefstroom), reacted on the debate about the RCSA and the Apartheid past. In an article in *Beeld*, *Wat het die Gereformeerde Kerk met Apartheid gedoen?* (*What have the Reformed Church done about Apartheid*) he looked at the whole situation:

Like all Afrikaners of the time, the Doppers, in the thirties and forties of the previous century, were in favour of separation of races and people-groups as the solution for South Africa's 'colour problem'. Members, ministers and theologians of the RCSA had a great share in the creation of a philosophy in which the roots of Apartheid started to grow.

The church itself, via its synods or congregations, never went to the government (like the DRC) with public requests to pass Apartheid legislation. That would be against the way the RCSA saw the church.

Reformers used their influence to get Apartheid officially on the scroll through the so-called national congresses (especially 1941 and 1950).

In spite of this the synods of 1961 and 1964, against the prevailing ideology of total separation, decided to inaugurate a general synod, consisting of equal delegations from the four 'national synods'. Even if it was not the ideal situation (because race was still the guiding line for the white and coloured synods although it has changed in the meantime) in principle it created one Reformed church.

At the moment there are still two other synods: Soutpansberg for Venda-speakers; and Middelland for Sotho- or Tswana-speakers.

Differences between the different national synods as regards Apartheid and the application thereof are still there. On principles like justice, unity and diversity, and love of one's neighbour, there was (and is) agreement.

In 1970 the white Potchefstroom synod decided 'the policy of separation of races will be promoted'. This was the first time that a synod of the RCSA made a declaration for or against a specific political policy. This decision was recalled in 1985 because it implied that the RCSA supported a specific political model (Apartheid) and not because synod meant that the policy was unscriptural.

At the General Synod of 1980 it was decided to ask government to see to it that there will be a political model within which every citizen of South Africa will be able to accept his or her responsibility as person, created by God, and also to enjoy such treatment from others. This was the first time that a synod of the RCSA indirectly critiqued the ruling government policy.

During the sixties and seventies, there were quite a number of leaders and philosophers from Potchefstroom, who were very critical about aspects of Apartheid. The same critique also came from some other non-Dopper academics.

The Koinonia Declaration of 1977 was another example of people willing to stand up in public against Apartheid and to live with the consequences of their decision” (Beeld, 15 January 1997: 9)

From the rest of the article it is clear that the problem with RCSA synod was that they never rejected Apartheid unambiguously. Eloff concluded his article by saying:

“At the current assembly of the synod there must be a report. Then it will be seen what the Doppers (at least the Afrikaans speaking members) have done with Apartheid in the end” (*Beeld 15 January 1997:9*).

The RCSA considered the invitation of the TRC to make a submission, but they decided not to participate – although four theologians from this church (Revs. Alwyn du Plessis, Bennie van der Walt, Amie van Wyk and Ponti Venter) made a submission in their personal capacity. (TRC Report, Vol. 4: 60). (See next chapter)

Beeld reacted to this by saying that the RCSA let the opportunity pass to give guidance regarding the Apartheid past in a clear voice. He went on to say that it may be true that many in the RCSA (as in the other ASC’s also) did not know about the atrocities, but then it should have been a good time to confess the ignorance and negligence.

3.3.2.4 The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM)

In a letter to the Chairperson of the Human Rights Violation Committee of the TRC, the Executive of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM) made known their decision to make a submission to the TRC. Both the leader and co-leader of the AFM, Dr Isak Burger and Rev. Frank Chikane would appear before the Commission to make their submission.

3.3.2.5 The Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk (APK)

The APK has distanced itself from the proceedings of the TRC. See Ch. 4

3.3.2.6 *The Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa (URCSA)*

The URCSA accepted the invitation to appear at the special hearings of the TRC, although it was in a difficult position, because it was a united church of the formerly DRMC and the DRCA. As such they carried a double burden because many of their members had a problem with co-operation with Afrikaans churches. Their submission was the longest of all the faith communities.

By the time the hearing for the South African faith communities had to be held, the Afrikaans Churches had, in some way or another, discussed the issue. Some were willing to go and make a submission, while some decided that they didn't want to have anything to do with it at all, as pointed out above.

As has been shown in previous chapters, a God-given opportunity was, again, at hand for the Afrikaans Churches to break with their Apartheid past, but some of them decided not to participate and turned their backs on the extended hand of the rest of the South African people – an action that, even today, makes it difficult to talk about peace and reconciliation. Not even to mention forgiveness.

CHAPTER 4: HEARINGS OF THE FAITH COMMUNITIES AND SUBMISSIONS OF THE AFRIKAANS CHURCHES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This researcher agrees with Terry Dowdall (1996:27ff) that at heart of the work of the TRC was psychological change. This is true, whether one is looking at the individual traumatised survivor, the perpetrator, the onlooker in society, the local community, the country or the family of nations. This researcher is of the opinion that this was also true of the individuals, groups and churches that came to make submissions to the TRC. For both perpetrators and victims there were more positive than negative things to come out from the hearings. So, also, for those who stood in front of the commissioners and gave testimony as to how he or she, or his/her church or group acted in the past.

Why was it necessary to have a special time to listen to submissions of the different faith communities in South Africa?

Cochrane investigated the problem of defining faith communities, as it is a problem in a country like South Africa, with the diverse composition of its inhabitants. It seems that there is a degree of homogeneity amongst organisations, but this is far from the truth when one look at 'faith communities' like the SACC, on the one hand, and the Ramakrishna Institute on the other; or followers of traditional African religion compared to members of the DRC. So it was very difficult to pinpoint an exact norm for a faith community (Cochrane et al. 1999:17-20). It seems safe to say that one speaks of religious communities as synonymous for faith communities (TRC Report Vol. 4 Ch 3).

Since the official founding of South Africa as a country in 1652, religion has played a major role in the lives of its people. It was particularly the Christian faith that had penetrated into the country and also towards the North of Africa. But as the population has grown, so also have other religions and faith groupings. Through the years it has become apparent that, on the one hand, there were faith communities who gave their blessing to Apartheid, whilst on the other hand, others condemned it. Thus one finds that

from churches, mosques, temples, synagogues etc. have come blessings as well as curses toward the same object (Cochrane et al. 1999: 15, 16).

It was therefore necessary to bring faith communities into the process of the TRC, also “to remind themselves of their obligation, testified to within their own traditions, to participate in social transformation and the national process of reconciliation” (TRC Report, Vol. 4 Ch 3: 59).

Those Christian churches that testified to the commission, could go back and look the new South Africa in the eye, lift the eye to the horizon and walk steadfast into a new future.

And so 17-19 November 1997 were the days of the faith communities. According to Meiring letters were sent out to the different Christian denominations and other Christian groups in South Africa, as well as to other faith communities like Muslims, Hindus, etc. It was not all plane sailing to get the churches there. In some cases letters of invitation and even telephone calls were ignored. Amongst the Afrikaans Churches the RCSA abided by the decision of its Synod which ruled that the church would not make a submission. The NHK did not respond to the invitation and we have seen that the APK distanced itself from the TRC. The AFM, however, immediately decided to attend and so too the URCSA and, eventually, the DRC. Many of the Churches also provided written submissions (Meiring, 1999:266ff).

During the submissions it became evident that there was no church or faith community that didn't have to confess in one way or another. Professor Bennie van der Walt, from the RCSA, commented on the process and said that it is not easy to look critically at oneself, especially when it is in front of the blinding lights of television cameras. But it is important for festering wounds to be opened so that healing can start. He went on to say that we must (1) acknowledge our responsibility, (2) repent, (3) confess our sins, (4) ask forgiveness from God and the people we aggrieved; (5) make restitution where it is

possible so that (6) there can be reconciliation. Just trying to forget the past is no solution (Van der Walt, 1998: 18f).

Then the time arrived for the submissions.

4.2 SUBMISSIONS

For two years many people told their stories to the TRC and now it was the opportunity of the faith communities to step onto the podium to stand before the people of South Africa. The questions in the minds of the people were: Were the churches and the other faith groups guilty of atrocities? Did they have something to confess? Were all the churches involved in deeds of Apartheid or were it only the Afrikaans Churches, and by name the DRC, as the largest group amongst the Afrikaners?

According to Meiring, letters were sent to 101 different Christian denominations and ecumenical bodies in South Africa, as well as to other faith representatives. From the beginning it was relatively easy for the English mainline churches and the Charismatic and Pentecostal groups to participate, but it was another matter to get the Afrikaans Churches to co-operate by providing a submission to the TRC. The researcher believes that another golden opportunity to really stretch out the hand of confession, forgiveness and reconciliation had passed them by. In the end none of the submissions from the Afrikaans Churches had the backing of the whole church. What does this say about the “preparation” of members with respect to a new dispensation? (Meiring, 1999: 266)

4.2.1 The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC)

The DRC took intense notice of the work of the TRC. The church promised to support and intercede, but also made a serious request that the TRC would act fairly to all sides. Although there were many voices within the DRC not to partake in the hearings of the TRC, there were also those who supported the work and asked the church to let its voice be heard.

Prof. Julian Müller of Pretoria also suggested that the DRC must confess before the TRC. According to him the fact that consensus eluded both sides, is because we work with two views of confession of guilt – a past perspective and a future perspective. The one is a specific event and the other is a process. That means that some members of the DRC have the idea that once you have confessed, everything is well. The baggage of the past is thrown off. There are others, however, whose belief is that confession is not a once and for all exercise. For them the process of healing is only possible through confessing again and again. When we see it like this we have more to do with the future than with the past. He went on to say:

“Therefore, according to me, the DRC should think very seriously about confession before the TRC. Thus it will again provide the opportunity to confess its share in the injustice of the past...

In the past the DRC played an important part in society and will hopefully do so in the future. For many the contribution of the DRC in the Apartheid era is still a big problem. If a continuous confession of guilt, on whatever platform, can serve the purpose, the church must not shrink back. (Müller, *Die Kerkbode*, 6 September 1996:13)

The submission of the DRC, at the hearings for the faith communities, was not the first time that this church was in front of the TRC. On 15 October 1996, while the TRC had a human-rights hearing in the Paarl, two ministers of the DRC, from the Presbytery of Stellenbosch, came to make a statement on behalf of the Presbytery. At the beginning of their presentation, Archbishop Tutu said to the audience:

“It is remarkable that of all the churches it is the NG Kerk (DRC), in particular, who comes to the Truth Commission first. It is appropriate, because the church had played an important role in society in the past. But I hope that many churches will follow this example” (Meiring 1999:82).

The Presbytery wanted to make a contribution towards the process of healing and reconciliation. They shared some information on the history of more than three hundred years, since the DRC started working in Stellenbosch. As a church it is very important to live in obedience to the Word of God. The church is part of the Reformed tradition of Christendom and believes that Jesus Christ is the Lord of lords and that the sovereignty of God must be proclaimed in every aspect of the community. They believe that the

Church of Christ has to be, in every situation, a witness to the truth, justice, reconciliation and love. They went on to say:

When we look back, we realise that there were times in the history of Stellenbosch that we as Presbytery didn't live out the prophetic responsibility that the Lord gave us or we were reluctant to do it. We are thinking about the last forty years when the government policy of Apartheid has broken down the human worthiness of people in our area, which has led to gross human-rights violations. In the area of our Presbytery there were those who built on the ideological framework through which these violations were justified. Views within the Presbytery and decisions that had been taken, very often functioned within this framework (ibid.).

The delegation from Stellenbosch confessed that people in Stellenbosch have been worked out of positions of influence in the past, because of the colour of their skin. This brought much pain to people to whom the church was not always sensitive. It was this insensitivity and political blindness that caused members of the Presbytery not to understand the cry of their brothers from the DRMC as is portrayed in the Confession of Belhar. Because they were dwelling amongst one another, the white people should have known the pain they bore. (*It was only in 1989 that the Presbytery could identify itself with the Confession of Belhar and in 1996 the Presbytery decided to accept the Confession*)

They said that efforts were made in the past to bridge the gap between the white church and the other members of the DRC family. There was even a combined Presbytery constituted, but all these initiatives failed. In spite of many positive efforts, the times they had to talk, they flinched away, for example, on issues such as detention without trial.

“At last we came to new insights. Therefore the Presbytery confessed in 1985, by means of a decision, our conduct during the time of Apartheid. At this stage we are confronted by the TRC with the pain and heartaches of fellow South Africans during the previous regime, and therefore *we have the need to confess* again our guilt before God and men. We wanted to do it at this hearing of the TRC, here in our own vicinity where our own people are sharing their pain and heartaches. *We confess* that we kept quiet at times when we should have spoken. *We confess* that, although we tried sometimes to protest against injustices, it was not bold and loud enough. Sometimes we commented on certain things, but many times we didn't see our way open to speak against the system. Many times we capitulated against opposing forces. We became tired and stopped protesting in times when we should have carried on.

Today *we confess* these things anew before the many people of Stellenbosch and the surrounding areas. *We confess* before the youth and children of our own church and congregations who feel that through our actions we have failed them (ibid.).

They ended their submission on a high note by giving hope that the Lord could work true forgiveness, reconciliation and healing in the country, because the Lord is a Lord of transforming grace. They hoped that He would use the Presbytery and the church in the future as an instrument for reconciliation.

“Therefore we commit ourselves to work and seek together with fellow believers for the will of God in our whole society” (ibid.).

At the end Tutu was visibly moved:

I am sure that I express the feelings of everybody in the hall when I say how thankful I am to God for what happened here today. I am deeply humbled. But this is what the grace of God does with a person. If you, like Isaiah the prophet, experience how guilty and full of shame you are standing before God, you also experience how God comes to join you in the fire, as it happened with Daniel’s three friends! The God of glory is also the God of the Cross... You are here today as wounded menders, the kind of menders that God can use for his purpose. I think God has a wonderful sense of humour. He looks down and says to us: ‘But what did you think? This is my world! Everything will turn out well!’ (ibid)

What struck all the people was that the ministers did not try to rationalise, that they did not balance their confession with the well known “Yes, but...” It was not necessary for them to remind the audience of all the good things the DRC has done through the years. Tutu did it when he told the people that the DRC was not only guilty of Apartheid, but that the church had done good things as well, things that could serve as an example to the other churches in the country (Meiring 1999: 85, 86).

The Synod of the Western and Southern Cape of the DRC also made a submission. After the finishing of the witness of the DRC *Reis met Apartheid*, it was decided by the above mentioned synod to take this and hand it over to “Drs Desmond Tutu and Alex Borrairie in the offices of the TRC in Cape Town. We talked openly with one another and Tutu was openly pleased that the Synod did this. He was, however, not very happy with the

negation of the so-called liberation theology, because he called himself a liberation theologian” (Gaum, 2004: 60).

It was thus very clear that there were voices within the DRC who couldn’t wait for the “official church” to get on with its task and make a submission.

On Wednesday, November 19, 1997, Rev. Freek Swanepoel, the incumbent Moderator of the DRC, took his place on the podium of the TRC. He didn’t actually have a mandate to speak for the church as a whole. A few days earlier, the General Synodical Commission decided that he should go to represent the DRC, and make a submission to the TRC, but that he had to bear in mind that he would not speak on behalf of the General Synodical Commission or the DRC. (Meiring 1999:277; Meiring 2003:250; Gaum 2004: 61) He began his speech with a few general comments:

Mr Chairman, I am thankful to the TRC for the invitation to take part in these faith community hearings. I truly believe that this will strengthen the essential process of reconciliation, firstly between faith communities and thereafter also in the broader community.

He mentioned that the commitment of the DRC towards reconciliation could be summarised by the two words, *reformation* and *transformation*. These imply a change and renewing of thinking on practical affairs as well as a transformation of structures and activity in the community. The DRC wants to be part of the solution of the country’s problems and not (as in the past –*Researcher*) part of the problem itself.

“Mr Chairman, my witness can be summarised as follows:

1. The DRC are committed to reconciliation.
2. We need other religious communities in this process.
3. How do we see the practical implications of reconciliation?
4. The past and the future” (ibid.).

He continued his submission in Afrikaans. He also said that he does not speak on behalf of all the members of the church, because there are often different groups in a church, those who support and those who oppose an issue. But he believes that the groups, who are positive, are in the majority.

He went on to say that the majority of members commit themselves to a future of reconciliation and prosperity between all people. The church wants to play a servile role,

to transform decisions on reconciliation, love for neighbours and involvement in the needs of people, into practical deeds.

In the past we were used to doing our own things, but we realised the necessity to take up the theological responsibility in collaboration with other churches and admit that, as regards mutual spiritual goals, there must be co-operation without prejudice.

As regards the practical implications of reconciliation, Rev. Swanepoel went on to say:

Reconciliation on a horizontal level is always between people. Therefore, in reconciliation there is always a personal element. For the DRC, reconciliation starts with building people up and therefore the preaching of the gospel will always be up foremost. There is a great need for the spiritual upliftment of people with regard to human dignity, co-existence and neighbourly love. People must learn values like acceptance, longsuffering, respect, honesty, etc...

Reconciliation also requires the development of the environment in which people live as well as their living conditions. Already during the General Synod of 1994, the DRC acknowledged that South Africa needs a program for the upliftment of communities and decided to enrol in the RDP program.

The DRC acknowledge the problem and extent of poverty in a large part of our population. The church is concerned about that part of the population where it seems there is no change in the situation (ibid.).

To build a strong future, Swanepoel continued, it is necessary that the past must be brought to a close. The DRC wants to talk honestly about the past, if its contributions towards reconciliation are accepted. The DRC has had its own struggle to reject Apartheid. Already in 1986 the church confessed regarding the mistake of giving a Biblical sanction to Apartheid. This was followed in 1990 by a further confession as was again done at Rustenburg, where the delegation of the DRC identified wholeheartedly with the confession of Prof. Willie Jonker. He went on to say:

In 1994 the General Synod acknowledged those members, office bearers and church meetings which allowed a loud and clear voice be heard against Apartheid.

The church also acknowledged that its rejection of Apartheid had also been influenced by these meetings as well as discussions with brothers and sisters of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.

Perseverance on this standpoint has led, from time to time, to the loss of members and office bearers.

He said that in many congregations there is already a spirit of reconciliation working. He also gave as example the GCOWE-consultation of 1997 in Pretoria. This worldwide conference were attended by approximately 180 ministers of the DRC and, at the end of the conference, they publicly declared and confessed regarding wrong attitudes and deeds in the past and they committed themselves to work alongside other churches for salvation, unity and justice. The movement of reconciliation is growing.

The church has also continuously looked with compassion to the great numbers of people who have been aggrieved during the time of Apartheid, leading to poverty and suffering. Reluctance, disobedience and a lack of insight on the part of members and officials, regarding the need of society, have also been confessed before the Lord. The DRC asks for forgiveness from these people and acknowledge that its voice of protest and compassion had been too small.

It is therefore the wish of the DRC that work must be done in a dynamic way to bring about a radical change for the better in the living conditions and future opportunities of people who, for so many years, were without it.

He concluded his submission with the words:

The church lives in the hope that the Almighty Lord will bless our country with true peace, liberty and diligence. We dream of a country in which people accept one another and where every person can make his or her contribution towards peaceful co-existence. As a church we would like to be guided by God's Word: 'Try to be at peace with everyone' (Hebrews 12:14).

Signed: Rev. Freek Swanepoel; 14 November 1997.
(Complete submission in Addendum 18)

Time was allowed for discussion and questions and after this Rev. Tutu turned to Rev Freek Swanepoel and thanked him for coming to say that the DRC are sorry. He also said that he prayed that the DRC will be used by God in the future. It is good to know that the church, which in the past was guilty of so many things, turned around, confessed to its members and the nation and is now on a new road (Meiring 1999:279).

Was this the best the DRC could do, one wants to ask? Maybe, under the circumstances, playing the cat-and-mouse game of 'should we or shouldn't we go to the TRC' into consideration, this submission could have come from any other church. The fact that it

didn't have the support of the DRC as a whole made it like so many other confessions in the past – a play with words. At the time of the submission the big issue of unification within the family of churches in the DRC was still hanging in the air – the so-called acid test hadn't proven anything yet. The submission didn't really give hope to people who had waited for something like a word of restitution or reparation on the part of the DRC.

The researcher believes that the fact that the DRC did make a submission to the TRC has given the church, once again, a little hope of credibility in the eyes of society at large. The important fact is that the Church said that it was sorry because it did not comprehend or offer to help ease the plight of the majority of people in the country.

4.2.2 The Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (NHK)

Although an invitation was extended to the Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika, they did not respond to the invitation. (TRC Report Vol. 4: 60; Meiring 1999: 274)

In a personal interview with Prof. Theuns Dreyer, the question was asked:

According to the TRC, the NHK had not acted on their invitation to have a submission made before them. What would you say was the reason for not partaking in the process?

According to Prof. Dreyer, the Moderature of the General Church Assembly discussed this at length when they received the invitation. He then gave some reasons why they decided not to react by saying 'yes' or 'no'.

According to him they had a problem with the composition of the TRC, in which was seen prejudice because political parties like the ANC and others, were behind this thing, and the Afrikaner and the Afrikaans churches did not really have a voice. From the outset the NHK perceived that it was clear to them that the whole thing would be driven in a specific direction.

He pointed out a second reason for not participating, namely that the process took on the idea of a juridical process with the exception that there would be no testing of the testimonies and no cross-examination of witnesses. In such a case, how would one know what was the truth?

The third reason was that because the whole idea of reconciliation had already been given a political flavour, we said to ourselves that it is important that reconciliation should take place. But reconciliation is in the first place an issue of faith or a church issue and thus we must use the church to bring people to reconciliation. In the political arena, the word reconciliation has evolved a different meaning than in the church. We see reconciliation in the first place as between Christians because of their relationship with God in Jesus Christ. This is a thing that must flow spontaneously from faith.

If we would say ‘yes’ and we went to the TRC, then we would be in the whirlpool of political prejudice and we couldn’t loosen ourselves from that. If we would say ‘no’, then the media would have made such a fuss about it that the NHK refused to work with the TRC, with the implication that the NHK didn’t want reconciliation. So we decided to only take notice of the invitation, because by saying ‘yes’ or ‘no’ we would have hurt the church. In 1998 we did make a decision on confession of guilt. In the first place it had to do with confession of guilt before God and the church called all those who had to do with past practices which could violate human rights to confess their guilt before God and neighbour. How could one confess as a church, for all the people, because so many didn’t even know what was going on? The church also said that we must confess as a whole, if there was something that we did wrong, but we couldn’t think of any wrong doing at that stage (Addendum 6).

At last it was clear why the NHK has stood aloof from the whole TRC process. It is, however, a pity that so many Afrikaners, who are members of that church, have to live and work with so many other South Africans who knew how they felt and that they are not truly free. As someone once said: “The Afrikaner is the one who needs to be liberated from the past.”

4.2.3 The Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA)

During 1997 the synod of the RCSA met in Potchefstroom. Although it is the second smallest of the Afrikaans speaking Churches in South Africa it has, over the years, played an important role in Afrikaner ranks. At this meeting the delegates had to decide on a proposal prepared by one of the regional synods, to decide whether the RCSA should accept accountability for the establishment as well as the practices of Apartheid. There were objections from some delegates because, according to them, the proposal did not specify precisely which past RCSA decisions were in contention.

The RCSA considered the invitation of the TRC to make a submission, but they decided not to participate – although four theologians from this church (Revs. Alwyn du Plessis, Bennie van der Walt, Amie van Wyk and Ponti Venter) made a submission in their personal capacities (TRC Report Vol. 4 Ch 3 p 60). At the hearings only Bennie van der Walt and Ponti Venter could be present and they submitted their confessions.

In a personal interview with Prof. Amie van Wyk, he shed light on the submission they had brought to the TRC (see Addendum 3).

I drew up the draft of the confession, and the others helped to finalise it. In the end only two of us could present it at the TRC. The writing of that confession undoubtedly had an effect on me. It was something of a cry of distress, and when *Beeld* heard that something is going to be said, they wanted to publish it immediately, although we wanted it to be published first of all in *Woord en Daad*. In the end it was done as we asked.

As the representatives of the four theologians from Potchefstroom, Bennie van der Walt and Ponti Venter submitted their testimony before the TRC:

A Public Confession from Potchefstroom

The undersigned hereby make a public confession of guilt regarding their share in, and neglect with regard to Apartheid. The dictates of their conscience have urged them, more and more, to do this”.

The confession was drawn up under the headings of *Confession of guilt* and *Justification*. First of all they confessed that they were disobedient to God by not speaking out against the execution of the ideology of Apartheid and wanted to stand in the gap like Daniel

(9:5) on behalf of the people of Israel: “*We have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws.*” (NIV)

They went on to declare that they were not faithful enough in their prayers, love and empathy for the people in distress and the victims of social injustice. They were guilty of the violation of basic human rights and all these injustices could only be removed by mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation. They not only pleaded for forgiveness from God, but also from fellow-believers and fellow-citizens. They went on to say:

On our part we undertake, as far as humanly possible, to make amends, in word and action, for the damage that we did to them through the unfair discriminatory system.

Regarding *Justification* they said:

There is no doubt that the ideology of Apartheid should be regarded as a sin, and the Biblical justification of it as heresy (*Proceedings of the synod of the Reformed Churches in South Africa, 1991:160/169*). Apartheid, after all, was a system of legitimised domination, discrimination and social injustice, which caused enormous suffering, humiliation and even death. The question is therefore relevant as to what should be done with the above acknowledgement of sin and heresy.

In the next part of their submission they went into the whole issue of confession of sin and the Scriptural grounds for that. They also showed that people like Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel stood in the “gap” for the nation of Israel.

They made it clear that their confession of guilt must not be seen as an attempt to testify against the guilt of the Afrikaner, but as an attempt to work for their liberation.

They went on to say that there are great areas of concern in our country at present; such as the increasing crime-rate, corruption and environmental pollution.

They made this confession, not out of external pressure, but because of internal conviction.

They end their submission with these words:

With this confession of guilt an attempt is made to serve the cause of the Kingdom of God in South Africa. We are convinced that confession of guilt encourages forgiveness, promotes reconciliation and therefore contributes to personal, ecclesiastical and social healing (Psalm 32).

Signed by: *Alwyn du Plessis, Bennie van der Walt, Amie van Wyk and Ponti Venter* (for complete submission see Addendum 17)

Bennie van der Walt reflected on this wonderful opportunity and said that it was touching to hear how the leaders of different churches confessed towards other churches about how they had condemned them in the past and how they asked for forgiveness.

Sometimes he grieved when he thought about the fact that his own church was not there and was “represented” by only two members. Sometimes he was despondent when he realised how little power the Reformed Christian faith showed in our country over the past fifty years. One asks oneself if it is possible that the Lord can use the church in the future of our country (Van der Walt, 1998: 18f).

4.2.4 The Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM)

Dr Burger and Rev. Chikane started their submission by saying that it was not easy for them to come to the meeting. Just as there were members who had voted against unification, there were also those who opposed the decision to send them here to make the submission. Some members even resigned from the Church. Dr Burger and Rev. Chikane said that the AFM is grateful to present a truly rainbow submission in which black, coloured and white members jointly accepted responsibility for the past (Meiring, 1999: 277).

The submission referred to a short Historical Overview, which highlighted the fact that the AFM started out as a multi-racial, multi-lingual, Pentecostal church, reaching out to all sectors of the South African community. Because of ideological issues, the church split up into Coloured, Black, White and Indian factions. In spite of this, interaction endured between the different factions. During the eighties, however, there was a stirring within the AFM family to become united. This was not without its problems and pains, but God’s will prevail, and by Easter 1996, the AFM was, once again, one church.

In a moving ceremony, the newly elected President of the united church, Dr Isak Burger, on behalf of the old white church, sought on behalf of the white people, forgiveness from the former Coloured, Black and Indian churches. The then newly elected Vice-President of the AFM, Dr Frank Chikane, accepted Dr Burger’s pleas and, on behalf of the churches of colour, apologised for possible hurt caused by these churches. They went on to say:

But it would be dishonest to deny that there still are pockets of racial discontent in some areas. We are working on that and have no doubt that God, in his great providential nature, will also turn the thinking of those still entrapped by their past.

In a paragraph entitled: *Political Overview*, the submission went on to declare how South Africans were prisoners of a political system in which the Black, Coloured and Indian communities were looked at as objects, rather than members of the human race. This paragraph concluded with the statement:

For that we all have to seek God's forgiveness and pray that such inhumanity would never again touch the shores of this great land.

Dr Burger then talked about the AFM and the System in which churches had to live out their prophetic calling. The AFM realised that many of their members were hurt by others who were part of the government and had to be obedient to those who were their superiors. As a church the AFM is trying hard to bring about healing and reconciliation in their ranks and to help and assist those who were physically and psychologically hurt by violation of their human rights. It is important, Dr Burger went on, to uphold the principle that forgiveness and reparation are inter-linked in the AFM. He went on to say:

What the AFM cannot deny, is that thousands of its members were employed in the structures of the former government. Many of our members held top positions in the former government organisations. The Police alone employed tens of thousands of our people, Black, White, Coloured and Indian. All our white young men were called up for military duty. We do not know how many committed evil deeds – and probably will never know.

Dr Burger said that the AFM had to admit that many of its members worked in structures where they could never foresee the misery and hardship caused by the executors of the government's policies.

This submission is necessary, because during the dark days of Apartheid many sought answers to the myriad of questions posed by members of the AFM. Answers were given by fellow Christians, who were even members of the AFM and because they were trusted, it was accepted without ensuring that it was the truth.

A plethora of laws made it impossible for the ordinary man to delve any deeper. We are today deeply hurt as we become aware of the injustices of

the past, as they are being brought to light by our own Commission, by our Courts and the media. We are baffled, stunned and confused. In the AFM there is not a section that did not in some way assist the old system to flourish and there is not a section that did not harm fellow believers.

As Dr Burger continued with the AFM's submission the audience heard that the AFM failed in its duty to question the system more, especially in the light of its continual preaching of love, charity, hope, justice and peace. The AFM missed the mark, because it was blinded to all the evils that had been unearthed in the past months by the TRC.

For that we need to apologise sincerely to all those out there who suffered. We can never reach each one of them ourselves. We are thankful for a forum through which we can express our sorrow.

We also owe it to them to plead with each member of the AFM to search himself/herself and to put right personally anything that has to be put right. We owe it to them to become more faithful watchdogs of what are happening in this country and to ensure our past history is never repeated and that future generations never be allowed to forget our past and perhaps stand accused of even worse transgressions than we had committed".

In conclusion Dr Burger declared that the AFM would like to reach out to those whom they can assist, to overcome the hurt of the past. The doors of the AFM will never be closed to such persons (see addendum 16).

In a personal interview, Dr Burger revealed to the researcher how he felt when he finished his paper at the TRC:

Let me tell you a story of what happened. I had the document that I presented to the TRC. When I finished, I asked the Chairperson whether I could show a short clip from the video that was made of the conference during the uniting of the church. It was the part where Frank Chikane and I were hugging each other. The cameras roamed over the people. You could see tears streaming from the eyes of black and white. What a psychological impact! People hugged each other. One black man came running to the stage and hugged me. Last Saturday a brown member told me that that day he was liberated from the racial hatred that he had in his heart. Spiritually and psychologically, that moment was the culmination point in our church. That was the moment of reconciliation between the black and white divisions of our church. When we finished, Rev. Tutu stood up and made the comment that they were on holy ground. He started to sing a

spiritual hymn in which Jesus was glorified – and that in front of the Muslims, Hindu's etc. (see addendum 1).

Dr Isak Burger and Rev. Frank Chikane were honoured with the Ubuntu-award in 1997, sponsored by Mageu 1, a division of Malbak. They received the award because of the role they played in the promotion of church unification and reconciliation in South Africa (Die Kerkbode 21 March 1997:16).

4.2.5 The Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk (APK)

During an interview with Prof. Isak Brink of the APK, it became clear that the leadership of the church didn't want to be involved, in any way, in the work of the TRC. They just took notice of what was happening but in no way did they partake in any of the activities of the TRC or pay any attention to any challenges directed to the faith communities (see addendum 2).

4.2.6 The Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa (URCSA)

The Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk (URCSA – Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa) had submitted one of the longest and most comprehensive submissions to the TRC.

The TRC had given a guideline to help in giving direction to the submissions and the submission of the URCSA followed that guideline, but very comprehensively. After reviewing the history of the URCSA, Rev James Buys, who was the spokesperson said, *inter alia*:

The amalgamation of the two churches represents a watershed in the history of the DRMC and the DRCA. This union represents a *kairos* moment in the life of the church in which it departs from Apartheid and contradicts the justification of racially divided churches. The event of unification, furthermore, had great symbolic value in view of the historical context in which it took place, namely, 10 days before the first free and democratic elections in SA.

It was clearly stated in the submission that it was not possible to reflect on every decision and action taken by the church. In broad strokes it gave an overview of what they understood under the violation of Human Rights. It said:

“The URCSA never condoned but rather sought to criticise the Apartheid government for the violation of rights. In this regard, it can be indicated that the church’s decisions and synodical debates (that are not always reflected in minutes) exposed members to persecution. In this sense members became the victims of violations. When, with the benefit of hindsight, we ask ourselves whether the church had done enough to prevent and oppose human rights violations, we emphatically answer: No!

The submission went on to pay attention to the following points of concern:

Group areas and homeland policy; Migrant labour; Mixed marriages; the Apartheid war: Chaplain Services; Apartheid structures.

Because the Chaplain Services of the Afrikaans Churches, during the “war against terrorism and Communism” by the previous government, was mentioned from time to time during the process of the TRC, it was necessary to hear what the URCSA had to say about that:

Although individual members of the synods opposed the idea of participation in the chaplain service, the church continued to support ministers with this service. Through this act the church participated in this “holy war” and even blessed it. It neither resisted it nor guided its members in opposing it. Thus the church contributed to gross human rights violations, polarisation and indescribable suffering and grief.

The reason for the failure to live up to the principles of faith, opposing the human rights violations could be found in the fact the URCSA is rooted in the reformed tradition and it relies strongly on the Calvinist doctrine on church-state relationships. This doctrine clearly teaches the responsibility of the church, as an institution and as individual members. Therefore:

The failure to denounce, resist and incite to resist Apartheid and its resulting violations of human rights constitutes the failure of the church to live up to its faith convictions.... Many decisions were taken but no challenge to action by its members followed. In the main the church’s voice in this regard was relatively quiet before 1980.

A confession of guilt and a plea for forgiveness were worked into the submission. It stated:

The URCSA wishes to use the opportunity

- (a) in view of acts of commission or omission to consequently oppose human rights violations;
- (b) in view of its subtle recognition of the illegitimate Apartheid regime through liaison, representation and negotiation;
- (c) in view of its silence and conscious and unconscious lack of clarity in word and deed, to confess unreservedly its and, vicariously, its members' guilt.

We herewith plead for the forgiveness of our fellow citizens and the Supreme, Triune God.

A question regarding this confession of guilt has arisen in the mind of many white South Africans, especially those in the Afrikaans community: "Was it also addressed to them and their pain and loss at the hand of the "freedom fighters?"

To end its submission, the URCSA proposed a few actions that may contribute to reconciliation. This will be reflected on in the next chapter.

During an interview Rev. Buys, who did the submission on behalf of the URCSA, commented on the TRC and this opportunity. He said, inter alia, that with the TRC a process was introduced that highlighted a few dimensions. Firstly there was the opportunity for people to witness in front of the commission regarding the period of Apartheid and what could be done to work reconciliation in the country. Combined with that were the hearings of persons who applied for amnesty. What is striking about this process were the cases of people who had lost somebody and come into contact with the perpetrators. Just the knowledge of what happened to the victims, the circumstances and the attitude that was cultivated in the commission, is something that wouldn't have been possible otherwise.

4.2.7 Open letter of Dr Beyers Naudé

During June and July 1997, an Open Letter of confession was sent to pastors and church leaders. In all, 610 pastors had responded by signing the letter. The letter, with the signatures attached to it, was submitted to the TRC on 15 November 1997 (Du Toit, 1998: viii).

The letter was submitted by Prof. Nico Smith, who, with Dr Beyers Naudé had drawn up the letter. Since it is of such importance for the church in our country, the letter in its entirety is quoted here.

An open letter to pastors of all churches in South Africa

To us, as preachers of the Word of God, the responsibility is entrusted to proclaim, at all times, the gospel of reconciliation with God and our fellow human beings in Christ. This responsibility entails the prophetic denouncement of all forms of injustice, oppression and violence committed against any human being.

As we read and hear what happened in South Africa during the years of Nationalist Party rule we, as preachers of God's Word are confronted with the question: "How could it possibly have happened while we, as preachers of reconciliation, justice and peace, were preaching this message from our pulpits every Sunday?"

But the question, which disturbs us even more, is this: "How was it possible that those who intentionally committed murders and sabotage against fellow citizens could have been, as is now becoming evident, members of churches and even regular churchgoers? Was there *nothing* in our preaching, liturgies and sacraments that disturbed the consciences of those who were directly involved in the evil deeds committed?"

Therefore we have indeed more than enough reason to feel deeply guilty for having spiritualised and even gagged the gospel to such an extent that those in government and those responsible to execute government policy did not feel confronted by our preaching. We are guilty of having allowed the rules to execute the ideology of forced separation for the sake of the so-called law and order, without offering united resistance, as preachers of justice and peace. We admit and confess that we too were blinded by an ideology, which represented itself as justifiable from the Bible. We lacked the gift discerning the spirits, because we had no real desire to receive this gift.

In the light of the above, we want *to confess publicly* that we as preachers were co-responsible for what happened in South Africa. In fact, our guilt should be considered as more serious than that of any other person or institution. We, who were supposed to be the conscience of the nation, did not succeed in preventing the most serious forms of abuse of the human conscience. As a result of this, the criminal violation of people's human dignity, and even the destruction of human life, continued for too long.

But this *confession* of guilt is not intended to be vague and general. We *confess* our guilt by mentioning specific examples of our failure to be

faithful to the gospel. We first of all *acknowledge and confess* that for many of us, especially those in the white community, life was very convenient and comfortable under the National Party rule. Many of us, therefore, could not and would not see the oppression and violation of millions of people in our country, hear their cries for justice and failed to take action.

We furthermore *acknowledge and confess* that when we sometimes *did* feel uncomfortable about the way the government and other institutions persisted in its abuse of power, we did nothing because of fear. We thereby allowed evil (with the co-operation of Christians) to continue its devastating work against the people of God.

In the same breath, *we commit ourselves* to call upon Christians to be careful in their support of political leaders and their policies. We furthermore *commit ourselves* to challenge Christians on their political and socio-economic responsibilities.

We also want *to make amends* for neglecting the needs of the poor and oppressed. Therefore we *commit ourselves* to the task of guiding God's people towards involvement in actions to eliminate the socio-economic inequalities of our country. We have evaded this responsibility for too long.

We furthermore *commit ourselves* to the task of encouraging people with the gospel of hope – especially in these days when many have lost hope and are despairing of the future of our country. This we will do by replacing the longing for the previous so-called better days with dreams of an even better future. The same gospel, therefore, also urges us to commit ourselves to engage in the reconstruction of our society.

Although we recognise that some pastors have stood bravely in the struggle for justice, it is our hope that every church pastor who reads this document will recognise the challenge facing us all, which we dare not push aside. We are compelled to make a choice: either we confess our guilt in order to be set free for greater and more faithful service to the gospel of Jesus Christ, or we ignore this challenge to confess our guilt and thus declare ourselves not guilty of what happened in our country. If you are willing to identify with this document, and commit yourself to a process of unified action in a process of healing and rebuilding our nation, send your reply before the end of June, to the following address:

(Address given)

This document with the signatures will be submitted to the TRC and we express the hope that it would serve as a unified response from pastors. We hereby also wish to extend this invitation to spiritual leaders of other regions, to participate in this submission. Thereafter *a national conference*

of all those who have signed this document will be arranged in order to discuss the implications of our confession. (Researcher's Italics)

Drafted and signed by: Beyers Naudé, Nico Smit, Cornel du Toit, Tinyiko Malukele, Moss Nthla, Nico Botha, etc.” (Du Toit 1998: 9-11)

After hearing this, Prof. Piet Meiring made the following comment: “If Oom Bey, of all people, said that he suffered fervent remorse – what about me? If he was beseeching his fellow South Africans to forgive him, shouldn't I be doing far more myself? I was convinced that I was not the only person who felt like this” (Meiring 1999: 280). Indeed, he was not the only person.

Many critical voices were heard after this letter was submitted. Not all theologians agreed with Beyers Naudé and his colleagues. Right from the start of the proceedings of the TRC, there were many theologians and ministers of churches who lifted their voices regarding the incompetence of the TRC. The TRC was definitely not the mirror many churchmen wanted to face. Bouke Spoelstra, from the Reformed Churches, joined the debate. He was a retired professor emeritus from Potchefstroom. He had serious objections against the TRC and the roles of Tutu and Boraine. The actions and the composition of the TRC made Spoelstra think of the “witch-hunts and the inquisition of the Middle Ages...”. According to him, Tutu and Boraine and their colleagues on the TRC were incompetent and ill equipped to undertake the journey to truth and reconciliation” (Meiring 1999:158)

The conference that was referred to in the letter was hosted by the Research Institute for Theology and Religion at UNISA on 23 and 24 March 1998. The aim of this conference was to present a forum in which there could be reflection on all aspects pertaining to the church and confession. The idea surfaced that it would be a sad day for religion in this country if the TRC hearings, with all they revealed, passed without the churches' responding to them. The sad fact is that most church leaders seemed reluctant to reflect on the role the church played during the Apartheid era. This corresponds to the hostility expressed by so many church members toward the TRC. It is difficult not to be sceptical

regarding the initiatives that white mainline churches will take to further the reconciliation process (Du Toit, 1998: viii).

4.2.8 Did the submissions by the churches serve any purpose?

Meiring asked the question whether the three days of church hearings was a worthwhile event. It is not easy to give a clear-cut answer to this question. Since this study is about the role of the Afrikaans Churches, it is difficult to say, because not all the churches under discussion brought submissions to the TRC. In reality it was only the URCSA, which, as far as we know, had the backing of their church. Even the AFM didn't have the backing of the whole denomination and neither had the DRC. The NHK and APK didn't have anything to do with the TRC, while from a corner of the RCSA a submission was made by four theologians, as their General Synod decided against participating (Meiring, 1999:281).

As stated earlier, the researcher believes that the psychological effect of making a submission to the TRC could be of great value, not only for the person who did it, but also for the denomination, even if it was with reluctance.

Meiring made it very clear that those churches and other religious groups played different roles during the past. As regards the Afrikaans Churches it was very clear that they gave active support to the previous regime and even gave a theological foundation for Apartheid. In those churches' submissions, confessions were made and the victims were asked for forgiveness. The researcher believes that in the case of the DRC, where confession had actually started in the synods of 1986 and again in 1990, at Rustenburg and other opportunities, it was, at this time, certain that those who made the submission meant what they said (Cochrane et al 1999: 37-43).

In the TRC report it was mentioned that for some churches it was an act of omission – of not letting their voice be heard when it should have (Report TRC Vol. 4 Chapter 3).

Could the churches now sit back and rejoice because reconciliation had arrived? No!!

The TRC was just a catalyst to open and close the books of the past, so that the communities of South Africa could come to grips with the issues at hand. This paved the way for the years to come, especially for the churches, and again especially for the Afrikaans Churches, for their own sake and trustworthiness. Will it come easy? No!! It will need hard work. Will there be guidelines as how to go about it in the years to come? Yes! This will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: CHALLENGES ON THE ROAD TO RECONCILIATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

When it was decided to have special hearings for different sectors of society, the TRC had high expectations of the faith communities and especially the Christian church. For many years in South Africa it was believed that the church was the one organisation that would be the factor to reckon with. This supposition was made when statistics showed that approximately 76% of the people of the country were members of a Christian church (Hendriks, & Erasmus, 2002: 13-30). But the praxis shows that there is a decrease in numbers and more and more adherents to the mainline churches are just disappearing from the scene. They have had enough of the church.

During the proceedings of the TRC, a delegation from Rwanda visited South Africa. The Rwandan Minister of Justice, Dr Faustin Ntezilyayo and his colleagues told a group of TRC members what happened during the genocide in that country. Piet Meiring, one of the committee members of the TRC asked him:

While all these things happened in Rwanda, what was the role of the churches? With so many faithful in the country they should somehow have made a difference? Did the churches contribute towards reconciliation?

The minister exploded:

The churches! They did not play any role. No, it is worse than that. The Christians were part of the problem! Some of the ministers and priests and even nuns were just as guilty as all the rest... In some churches men and women and children were decimated at the pulpits and altars. Christians who had been neighbours for years, Tutsis and Hutus, attacked each other.

Later the minister asked Meiring:

...Please tell me, in all the things that happened in your past, all the things unearthed by the TRC, did the Christians play any role? Did the churches really take the need of the people seriously, help the people to reconcile? Moreover, with the problems you are facing today, does it matter that there are Christians in South Africa?"(Meiring, 1999:110)

Yes, does it matter that there is such a high percentage of people in South Africa who indicated that they are Christians?

Carl Niehaus wrote in an article, *Reconciliation in South Africa: Is Religion Relevant?* (1999), that he can't answer other than in the negative, if he would be asked if religion was a decisive factor in the transformation of South Africa? He does this as a Christian, because he questions the fact whether the Christian religion is still today a decisive factor for reconciliation anywhere in the world. He went on to say, and argued his case, that Christians must be freed from the illusions of the real influence of the church today.

When one listens to these words of a person who had become part of the struggle, was imprisoned (and tortured), who studied theology while in prison and became part of the negotiation team of the ANC for the Interim Constitution during the time 1990 – 1994, then one can understand his own disillusionment with the church, but that he has got something to say that is applicable for today is absolutely certain.

Niehaus made the following worthwhile comment about the negotiations. He said:

During the process of negotiation for the Interim Constitution that guided South Africa towards the first democratic elections of 27 April 1994, the church played a very marginal role. It was the leader of the South African Communist Party, Mr Joe Slovo, who – in following up on what his predecessor Braam Fischer had advocated in prison years before – suggested the most significant compromises for a peaceful settlement to the broad anti-Apartheid front. He argued for it with great conviction until it was eventually accepted. If there is someone who, together with President Nelson Mandela and Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, ought to be recognised as a moral and intellectual prophet of the relatively peaceful settlement in South Africa, then it is not a religious person, but the outspoken communist and atheist Joe Slovo (Niehaus, 1999:87).

As regards the TRC, Niehaus said that it was the religious convictions of Desmond Tutu that played an important role in its functioning. Because of this there were objections against the religious role the TRC played. Niehaus concluded that it was people like Tutu who let one see how important one's faith is, "but also how irrelevant the church is in the broad sense.

How were the churches and specifically the Afrikaans Churches planning to become relevant in the post-TRC season? This is the question that needs to be answered in this chapter. Which direction must they take? Are there any guidelines to follow? Yes! The TRC set up a few proposals in their address to the faith communities regarding what to think about in their attempt to work towards reconciliation. These proposals will be discussed in paragraph 5.3.

When one embarks on the road to reconciliation, it can be a lonely road, as many people in our country have experienced in the past. Above all it requires obedience to the Word of God. And these demands can be difficult, but worthwhile, for the Afrikaans Churches to follow. In the following paragraph twelve theses are given as a kind of test of obedience on this road. They are not new – they originated in 1985, during the heyday of the struggle and the quest for reconciliation.

5.2 THE PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION AND THE DEMANDS OF OBEDIENCE

Reconciliation is a costly exercise. It demands commitment and obedience. One of the most profound statements in this regard is from the pen of Prof. David Bosch, the late South African missiologist.

During September 1985 the National Initiative for Reconciliation (NIR) was born out of Christian concern regarding the rapidly escalating conflict situation in South Africa. A group of approximately 400 church leaders, from a broad spectrum of denominations in the country, were called together by African Enterprise (AE). The point of departure was to consider, that, with 70% South Africans confessing that they are Christians; the church of Christ should be able to afford, not only a potential common base, but also a potential network of communications, which surpasses that of any other organisation in the country.

On 11 September 1985, Prof. David Bosch presented a paper, *Processes of Reconciliation and demands of obedience – Twelve Theses*, at the meeting of the NIR in Pietermaritzburg. In the introduction, he gave a short overview of whom and what the

Afrikaners are where they came from and where they are going. Then he put forth twelve theses on the processes of reconciliation and obedience.

1. *Cheap reconciliation is the deadly enemy of the church.*

During the Second World War, Dietrich Bonhoeffer introduced the term ‘cheap reconciliation’, a term that has been used all over the world. What is meant by ‘cheap reconciliation’? It is reconciliation that costs us very little, that can be obtained at a minimum of expense. There are people who think that when you are really reconciled to Christ, you will almost automatically also be reconciled to one another. Cheap reconciliation means to tear faith and justice from each other, driving a wedge between the vertical and the horizontal. It suggests that we can have peace with God without having justice in our mutual relationships.

When one think about the role played by the Afrikaans Churches during the past decades, it is clear that in their preaching and pastoral care, the role of religion and churchism was a big one. In the more evangelical churches, the relationship between the believer and Jesus Christ was much more pronounced and thus the role of Christ’s reconciliatory work got more attention. But it is a sad fact that the basic relationships amongst all the people of the country, white, black and coloured were not really paid any attention. Two of the churches that are under discussion in this dissertation, stated outright that reconciliation with God is the important issue and they teach that to their members and from there the members must figure out reconciliation with other people on their own. This boils down to what Bosch calls cheap grace. The researcher is afraid that this is going to mean, if it hasn’t already, the death of the church.

2. *All of us are prisoners of history, and are, as such, challenged to become prisoners of hope.*

The history of South Africa is indeed a prison that locks us in. Through the years there was faction fighting: black against white, black against black, Afrikaner against English, etc. We have been

driven into so many camps and have built so many walls around us, peeping through keyholes at one another. We cannot get rid of our past by just shaking it off and starting afresh. Our history goes with us into the future. But our history is also the key that can open the prison for us, that can take us into a future of hope. The metaphor of a bird in a violent storm is used to explain this.

If the wings of the bird are set wrongly, it will be smashed against the cliff. But if the wings are set correctly, the storm itself will lift the bird above the cliff soaring into the sun. We do not need new wings. We only need a new setting for our wings.

One of the goals of the TRC was to open the books of history – open the wounds that were afflicted during the Apartheid years so that the truth could be revealed and that the same mistakes will not be repeated in the future. This formulation was precisely one of the big reasons why there was a reticence and even reluctance in the Afrikaans Churches to co-operate with the TRC. They were kept captive by their own history and to break loose from that was too much for some. Frost (1998) stated that Prof. Johan Heyns believed that the DRC had “led South Africa to Apartheid as far back as 1857... it now had to lead the country away from it.” Frost went on to quote Heyns: “there is a necessity for liberation for black people, but also for white people. We are all prisoners of our history and we must all rid ourselves of perceived ideas about black people and white people because only a liberated people can create a new society”. The researcher doesn’t believe that this has happened yet. There is still a long way to go.

But the DRC, for instance, has broken out of the grip of the past and organised a Year of Hope (See par 5.7.2) during which the whole church was led to look at the future with hope. This was followed by a Statement of Commitment during the General Synod meeting in 2000 (See par 5.7.1).

3. *The biblical concept of reconciliation has as its corollaries the concepts repentance and forgiveness.*

We cannot talk about the one without, at the same time, talking about the other. We must reflect on the meaning of repentance and forgiveness as well, since they can help us to give a clearer picture of what reconciliation means.

From passages such as Ephesians 2, Romans 4 and 6 it is clear that reconciliation between people is one of the results of reconciliation between God and people. During the late 1980's and through the '90's some of the Afrikaans Churches such as the DRC, RCSA and the AFM made efforts to let their voices be heard with regard to reconciliation when they confessed in public that they distanced themselves from Apartheid. The DRC did it at their synod meetings of 1986, 1990 and also at the Rustenburg Consultation and have tried to work more diligently towards unification with the other members of the DRC-family of churches. Since the writing of these pages, the process has already gained momentum and there are very high expectations that it will succeed.

The AFM had their official unification of the two sections during 1996. Both these churches brought submissions to the TRC, as well as some theologians of the RCSA, in which confessions were made and forgiveness asked.

4. *In ordinary inter-human communication people are usually more aware of the sin of others than of their own sins.*

The Biblical metaphor is applicable in this situation: Why do you see the speck in the eye of your brother, but the beam in your own eye you do not see? If we think about reconciliation in a context where there is a win/lose situation, the fronts harden. Michael Cassidy made a comment on such a situation that it is as if each group had its own muscular Christ. And if any group's Christ becomes too muscular, the others groups' either go back into their shells or they make their Christ even more muscular. If Christ becomes muscular,

he ceases to be the man of Calvary. The marks of the nails disappear behind the flexing of those powerful muscles.

One of the problems amongst churches in South Africa is that we can easily point fingers at others and criticise them for what they are doing or not doing. Past history has also shown that clearly. The TRC pointed out in their report that churches have had the opportunity to look at themselves in a mirror and what they saw were acts of commission and legitimisation as well as acts of omission during our Apartheid's history. Bishop Michael Nuttall of the Anglican Church mentioned that his church was "unwilling to speak out when it should have" and apologised for that as well as "for the often arrogant condemnation of those whose ideas and actions differed from those of the Anglican Church" (Meiring, 1999: 269). Churches that supported the struggle were really vicious toward those who did not. On the one hand active support for the struggle; on the other hand those who fight against "terrorism and communism". It is sad to say that those who were in the "corner" of the government committed just as many atrocities by omitting their responsibility to warn. Amongst this last group one could classify the Afrikaans Churches.

5. *In the context of the Christian faith, by contrast, we judge ourselves before we judge others.*

As Christians we can be critical about others only after we have been critical about ourselves. We should be prepared to carry the burden of our own guilt as well as that of others; and carrying the burden of their guilt means forgiving it, wholeheartedly. This is the difference between the critic and the prophet: The critic accuses, the prophet weeps; the critic boasts, the prophet beats his breast; the critic remains unscathed, the prophet is ridiculed, ostracised, persecuted. Criticism is easy, but therefore also cheap; being prophetic is terribly demanding and therefore very costly.

To a very large extent the Afrikaans Churches had been very critical towards people like Beyers Naudé, Desmond Tutu, Alan Boesak, and others. They were scolded and called names. The researcher believes this was because of the fact that too many Christians in the church is more concerned with tradition and religion – most have a Church vision – as opposed to an intimate relation with Jesus Christ and a Kingdom vision. When one’s view of the church changes from church orientation to kingdom orientation, one tends to see other Christians in a different light. We have seen this in South Africa. Since the work of the TRC commenced, the true leadership of people like Naudé, Tutu and Boesak has been revealed. This is sadly not true amongst a large contingent of Afrikaners, but there are big changes taking place.

6. *If we are followers of the One who was crucified we, too, will have to be cross-bearers.*

This is the normal Christian life! The Cross is the hallmark of the Christian Church. Jesus showed us the way and when we are his disciples we must know for sure that we ourselves will get hurt. The true Christian will bear on his body the scars of Jesus. This is quite the opposite of the world. Where the world demands violence the Christian brings peace and where the world cries for vengeance, the Christian offers forgiveness. They turn the world upside down.

Since the earliest days of the Afrikaans Churches’ involvement with Apartheid i.e. by giving theological sanction to it, there were individuals who had raised their voices against it. At the same time there were leaders’ voices from the “other corner” who criticised the church and the government. “Church leaders like Archbishop Tutu, Dr Beyers Naudé, Dr Frank Chikane, Fr Albert Nolan, Bishop Simeon Nkoane, Dr Wolfram Kistner, were amongst these” (Niehaus, 1999:86). They became cross-bearers because of their relentless prophetic utterances against the system. But there were many others, who knew in their hearts that they should stand up, but didn’t do it in the same way as those mentioned above. One of them was Prof. Johan Heyns. A quote from Frost is meaningful in this regard: “It is a terrible mess which we are’ in, he would say privately, but when

urged by Prof. Klaus Nürnberger to make his views known he would say, ‘If I simply stand up and say what I know the same will happen to me as happened to Beyers Naudé’. Maybe this was the big problem in the Afrikaans Churches – too few wanted to see themselves as imprisoned, scolded or abandoned by their own people (Frost, 1998:62).

7. *Repentance and conversion always affect those elements in our lives that touch us most deeply, which we are most attached or devoted to, without which – so we believe – we simply cannot exist.*

Many of these elements may be very good, but our faith challenges us to live without them. It is about ‘self-denial’, about ‘dying to self’.

Abraham had to give up Isaac; Paul had to give up his ‘pedigree’.

They had to deny themselves. The gospel challenges us to be willing to give up our privileges, to deny ourselves. The gospel challenges us to do justice now, even if our world comes to an end.

Bonhoeffer’s words ring in our ears: Only the one who believes, obeys; only the one who is obedient believes. God does not ask about the extent of our successes but about the depth of our obedience. I am suggesting that we should begin thinking about the possible emergence of a situation where we, as white, Afrikaner Christians, become the underdogs. We should be able to continue being Christians even in such circumstances.

These prophetic words of Bosch became true on 2 February 1990 when in Parliament President F W de Klerk unbanned the liberation groups in South Africa, as well as set Mr Nelson Mandela free. This was the beginning of a time of repentance and forgiveness, given and received, of negotiations, which ultimately resulted in free democratic elections for all South Africans in April 1994. The door was opened on the government’s part for confession and repentance for the out going government. But the opportunity slipped away. For the first time in its history, South Africa has a black majority government and the ‘the white Afrikaners have become the underdogs’, to use Bosch’s words. This led to intense debate in the Afrikaans Churches, because for many it seemed

as if the ‘writing was on the wall’ that the ‘bastion of Christianity’ was crumbling before the ‘total onslaught’. It seems as if the Afrikaner, in this whole process, experienced a difficult time being Christians, because there is a clear decline of membership in the historical Afrikaner Churches.

8. *Confession of guilt and repentance cannot be imposed by others, but is a gift of the Holy Spirit.*

If repentance and restitution approximate even remotely the kind of steps I have intimated in my previous theses, there is no chance that demands from others will persuade me to take such steps. (During the Amnesty process of the TRC it was not expected of perpetrators to say they were sorry, because you can’t orchestrate forgiveness-Researcher). I’ll only take them willingly if God has changed my heart. I can, however, challenge those who share my privileges to open their hearts too. I may then be used by the Holy Spirit as a catalyst. Ideally, then, it should be white Christians who challenge other white Christians, Afrikaners who challenge their fellow-Afrikaners, to come to recognise that we all share the guilt of the sins we have committed, that we should recognise the guilt for what it is, confess it, and take deliberate steps at making restitution.

Afrikaner Christians are beginning to express and confess their guilt, even publicly. They have been doing so for some time already, mostly as individuals or unofficial groups. Now, for the first time, a regional DRC body, in its official capacity, has done the same. The presbytery of Stellenbosch, in its recent annual meeting on 29 August 1985, released a statement that says, inter alia:

1. We recognise that, in South African society, racial discrimination plays a fundamental role in both structural and personal matters; we confess that this is contrary to the biblical principles of love of one’s neighbour and justice.

2. We also acknowledge that the ideal of Apartheid did not succeed in creating social justice but has, on the contrary, led to human misery, frustration and injustice.
3. We confess that the DRC has often insensitively and uncritically tolerated the negative realities of the consequences of Apartheid.
4. We therefore hereby declare ourselves prepared
 - a) to assess the Apartheid system in all its consequences truly, honestly and critically;
 - b) with all other people in our country, to seek prayerfully for a meaningful alternative for our land, and to do whatever we can to alleviate the suffering caused by the system.

At last the process has begun. We pray that it will gain momentum. We must not wait for others and make our confession of guilt and repentance subject to or dependant on theirs. We dare not even demand forgiveness; we may not withdraw our confession of guilt if the other party fails to forgive us. Confessing our guilt is in itself a supreme blessing and a sign of grace. It opens up the fountains of new life and cleanses us.

It is astonishing to think that already in 1985, the Presbytery of Stellenbosch actually opened a door for the DRC, as well as for all the Afrikaans Churches, to persist and confess and repent of their support for Apartheid. This Presbytery was also the first to bring a submission to the TRC during 1996. But, as Bosch said, it cannot be imposed on others, but must be driven by the Holy Spirit. Did the Afrikaans Churches have a doubt about what the Spirit can do or were they just disobedient to the prompting of the Holy Spirit out of fear.

9. *Our most terrible guilt is that of which we are unaware.*

There are enough examples in the gospels to show that ignorance regarding a certain situation is no excuse. To say that you are unaware regarding something wrong does not lessen guilt. Not being aware of our guilt may be our most terrible guilt.

When one trespasses a law of the country it is no excuse if you say you didn't know about it. One is guilty of the trespass. One of the main excuses that were heard from churches during the work of the TRC was that "we didn't know". Even the chaplaincy of the police and the defence force, who were with troops in overt and covert operations, said that they didn't know about the full extent of what was going on. There is no excuse for all South Africans who "didn't know" – we were guilty. During the special hearings of the TRC, two former cabinet ministers, Leon Wessels and Roelf Meyer, appeared before the commission. Wessels said, inter alia:

"The political defence of 'I did not know' is not available to me, because in many respects I believe I did not want to know..." Meyer agreed with him during his presentation (Meiring, 1999: 242).

10. *God forgives us our debts as we also forgive our debtors.*

These words are from the Lord's Prayer. They intimately link reconciliation with God to reconciliation with our neighbour. The person who honestly confesses his or her guilt knows, categorically and totally, that God forgives. We cannot receive God's forgiveness and remain unyielding to our human debtors.

Desmond Tutu has written about forgiveness and told about the picture that was published in the Journal for Spirituality and Health. "Three United States ex-servicemen were standing in front of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. One asks, 'Have you forgiven those who held you prisoner of war?' 'I will never forgive them,' replies the other. His mate says: 'Then it seems they still have you in prison, don't they?'" (Tutu, 1999:272)

11. *If we reject the road of reconciliation we are crucifying Christ anew.*

Confessing our sins, repenting, forgiving and reconciling are not optional extras for those who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. If we refuse to walk this road, we are denying our Lord. We are saying,

in effect, that what Christ did, is of no consequence. The question: “Are you prepared to be reconciled with your brother and sister?” is in essence the same as the question: “Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?”

Often the question was asked: How many times must we confess? We have confessed – there is no need to do it again. The Biblical way is not to wait for someone else to confess before you do, but when you become aware of a trespass or a wrong attitude you have to confess. It is the same with forgiveness. How many times? The Lord Jesus Christ said: Infinity! (Matthew 18:22ff)

12. *Reconciliation is not a human possibility but a divine gift.*

When Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane, his disciples abandoned Him and fled. But still, in spite of what happened, the band of disciples constituted a community of hope in the midst of despair; and so do we, not because of ourselves but because of our Lord who bound us together and enlisted us in the ministry of reconciliation.

When one look back it is true that there is always hope, because “God is the God of surprises” (Tutu in Meiring 1999: 126). These words were uttered on 21 April 1997, after former police officer, Eric Taylor, who applied for amnesty for his part in the death of the Cradock Four, had requested to meet the families of the four murdered men and asked them to forgive him for the deed (Meiring 1999:123-126). This was but one of the examples of how God is working in the hearts of people when they came to see Him as the worker of reconciliation.

These theses were laid on the table in 1985. It is twenty-one years later, 2006, and Christians are still struggling to get to a point where they will take the ministry of reconciliation seriously. A few things have happened as has been shown above, but was it enough? No. When is the Christian body in South Africa, going to be obedient to the Word of God – without reservations and excuses?

It has been said that reconciliation means to build bridges between people, but is it not better to say that everyone that is seeking reconciliation is a bridge-crosser. God has already built the Bridge, Jesus Christ, and this Bridge must be crossed. The Church has been given the ministry of reconciliation and if it does not use it, it is disobedient to Him.

The researcher is convinced that churches must again or perhaps for the first time, look at these theses and use them as yardstick to measure their progress towards reconciliation. They can be used in conjunction with the proposals of the TRC – to check and crosscheck if progress is being made.

5.3 PROPOSALS OF THE TRC

The TRC, in its *Final Report* expressed high hopes for what may be done in South Africa to promote healing and reconciliation – calling on the faith communities to fulfil a unique role in this regard.

Faith communities enjoy a unique and privileged position in South African society. They are widely respected and have far-reaching moral influence. As such, they should play a key role in healing and reconciliation initiatives.

Amongst the recommendations of the TRC were a number of *challenges to the different faith communities*. These can be used as guidelines as already mentioned above:

- Different religious groups must seek ways to communicate with one another as a basis for eliminating religious conflict and promoting inter-religious understanding.
- Religious groups must seek ways of incorporating marginalised groups into their communities as a way of addressing the problems contributing to various forms of asocial behaviour.
- Faith communities must promote a culture of tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

- Forms of worship must be explored which transcend language and cultural differences.
- Religious communities must take the initiative to expose members from predominantly white and black communities to one another.
- Religious groups, in consultation with other NGO's, must establish institutional forums to promote reconciliation. Specific attention should be given to the establishment of a peace-corps, not only as a means of helping communities in need, but also for developing the skills of less privileged youth. Such a body could also be used to expose more privileged members of the community to the needs and the living conditions of the majority of South Africans. Given the racial and ideological conflict prevalent in the country, the Peace Corps should include conflict resolution and peacemaking as an integral part of its curriculum.
- Religious communities should develop theologies designed to promote reconciliation and a true sense of community in the nation. Particular consideration could be given to:
 - the role of white people as the beneficiaries of Apartheid, with regard to reconstruction and reconciliation;
 - the empowerment of black people and those who have suffered gross violations of human rights to move beyond 'victim-hood' in regaining their humanity;
 - the characteristics of good citizenship, the rule of law and the 'common good' in society;
 - the articulation of a global ethical foundation which is in keeping with the major beliefs of the various religions (TRC Report, Volume 5, 1998:316ff).

At the East London hearing of the TRC all the representatives of the different communities categorically stated their commitment to work together for healing and reconciliation and nation building (Meiring 2005:169ff).

To work on this would keep the different faith communities occupied for many years to come. There are already many things happening in the different faith communities; even if it is on a small scale. Many Afrikaans congregations have become involved in their nearby communities. One is only sceptical about some of the “projects”, because it is still ‘doing things **for** the people’ instead of ‘doing it **with** the people’ and endeavouring to help the poorer communities to take ownership as integrated communities.

The next few paragraphs show what is being done as a result of the proposals of the TRC.

5.4 CHURCH INITIATIVES AND RESPONSES TO THE PROPOSALS OF THE TRC

When the final report on the work of the TRC was handed to President Mandela on the 29th October 1998, Desmond Tutu said, inter alia, the following:

Not everybody will be happy with the report. Many have already started to discredit it in advance. But even should they succeed, what would they achieve? It will change nothing of the facts... We did not dream up these facts, the perpetrators themselves came to tell them.

When Mr Mandela received the report he spoke highly of the commission and the work they did. Naturally it was not possible to attain everything, either in regard to the truth or the process of reconciliation. He said:

I accept the report as it is, with all its deficiencies, as the TRC’s contribution to reconciliation and building a nation. ...Let us approach the future together. Finally we are free, can we accept our calling with responsibility. But to build a better future, we need everybody’s hands – your hands, as well as mine (Meiring, 1999:367).

Are these words of Mandela coming true in post-TRC South Africa? The researcher agrees with Meiring when he said that many people, who, at the initiation of the work of the TRC were not interested, are coming aboard to help make a difference in our country. The question whether the TRC could bring about reconciliation during the two and a half years of its existence must be answered with an emphatic no. The only thing it could do, was to open the minds of the people of our country to look around, perceive the beauty of

nature and all the people and get to work to make this country something to be proud of. Meiring asked the question: “Has the process helped to bring people closer to one another – or just the opposite? History will have to make the final judgement on this as well. As was the case with the quest for truth, humility is necessary when we speak of reconciliation. Reconciliation is indeed something wonderful, something fragile, a gift from above. But it is not something one can arrange or organise”. He went on to ask: “Who is responsible for the process of reconciliation? Naturally we would say that every individual, every group, every denomination and religion has a contribution to make. But the most important group in the country are the Christians. There are no two ways about it. There are great challenges and opportunities for the churches in the country, and their millions of members” (Meiring, 1999: 374-377).

Did the churches in South Africa listen to the proposals of the TRC in this regard? The researcher is of the opinion that there is hope that faith community, and especially the Christian church, is on the move. In some instances the movement is very slow, in other instances a lot has already been done.

John Paul Lederach in his book *Journey towards reconciliation* used the narrative of Esau and Jacob (Genesis 25-33) to illustrate his concept of reconciliation. The researcher believes that this is currently applicable in our country. Lederach suggested that:

- (i) *Reconciliation is a journey*: When Jacob returned to his own country after years with Laban, he came face to face with his brother Esau. After his flight away from his brother, he had to take the trip back. But there was unresolved conflict between them. Reconciliation is the journey toward and through conflict. Jacob knew one thing – God promised him to be present in this whole venture.
- (ii) *Reconciliation as encounters*: In the story we read of at least three encounters. There are encounters in every journey of reconciliation – with self, God and others. Jacob had to face himself first – a type of outward and inward journey. Further, the journey towards reconciliation always involves turning towards the people who have

contributed to the pain one experiences. When you turn to seek the face of the enemy, you look into the face of God (Genesis 33:10).

(iii) *Reconciliation as a place*: Esau and Jacob came to a place of heartfelt reunion where they had to face each other. A place is a specific time and space where certain things come together on the journey.

Reconciliation is a journey, an encounter and a place. God calls us to set out on this journey. It is a journey through conflict, marked by places where we see the face of God, the face of the enemy and the face of the own self (Lederach, 1999: 22-26).

Something of this metaphor is seen in the following examples of reconciliation that took place when the Christian Church gets involved in communities and the lives of individuals.

5.5 EXAMPLES OF RECONCILIATION IN COMMUNITIES

5.5.1 Healing Cradock after Apartheid (Nyameka Goniwe)

Mrs Nyameka Goniwe, the wife of Matthew Goniwe, one of the ‘Cradock Four’ who was assassinated by state security forces in 1985, relates how the community of Cradock in the Eastern Cape, has stood up from total despondency to start with a program they called Cradock Community Healing Programme (CCHP). She reflects on the deep scars that the people of Cradock had to carry because of the rule of Apartheid. Apartheid is a thing of the past, but the damage to the people, physical and psychological, will stay with them for the rest of their lives. She said that community members need a space where they could reflect on the past and where the many untold stories of trauma, suffering, loss of hope and opportunities, depression, anger and weariness could emerge. She went on to say:

The Cradock Community Healing Programme (CCHP) came about as a result of my reflections about my own loss and pain, exposure to the discourse of reconciliation, reading about the subject, insights of other people and being challenged to respond to questions that included lessons

drawn from my involvement as an activist at both community and development levels. The experience of participating in the TRC process made me realise the value of storytelling.

Mrs. Goniwe tells the story of how the CCHP took responsibility for the healing of individuals in Cradock, via a community-based steering committee, in which the *faith communities* were also involved. Consultative meetings were held with community-based organisations so that these could fully understand the concept and the program they would buy into.

The faith communities – as one of the most prominent groups in the community – applauded the timing of such a concept as something that will ‘jerk the church out of its slumber and drive it to develop a focus and direction’. Some spoke of ‘the need for the church to reconcile within itself’, while others saw it as ‘an opportunity for the church and the community leadership to meet in order to get to know each other and reconcile’. (Researcher’s Italics)

The whole process is under way and people have expressed appreciation for what is going on. The image of the community of Lingelihle, the township, is also being transformed. What about the involvement of the church? She relates that the involvement of the Church is adding value to the process and ensuring that it is taken seriously. She goes on to say:

The church’s embrace gives the concept a level of acceptance and the respect it deserves. An example of the active role was seen in an inter-faith church service that focused on peace and reconciliation. Its main aim was to honour and recognise those who died during the bitter years of our struggle. An additional benefit of this occasion was to acknowledge and validate victims and survivors who suffered in different ways during Apartheid. This storytelling gathering, triggering sad and painful memories about the past, allowed a release of emotions. A candle-lighting ritual was added to the ceremony and was followed by reading the names of all those who lost their lives, and those who took an active role in the liberation struggle. The service contributed a lot towards enabling families to reconcile with what happened to their relatives”. (Researcher’s Italics)

Cradock is a town consisting of three communities separated physically along racial lines. The healing process has made it possible for the three communities to participate in a *community dialogue seminar* with the aim of confronting and reflecting on issues of difference, while seeking areas of commonality that can bring them closer together. The three racially divided residents’ groups never came together before and the move is being

hailed as a successful, groundbreaking development in the arena of reconciliation and nation building (Du Toit, 2003: 275-280).

When one tests this example against the proposals of the TRC, it becomes clear that this is a community that really tried to reach out to each other to make Cradock a better place to live for all its diverse racial groups.

5.5.2 A partnership between Gugulethu and Stellenbosch (Amelia Burger)

Here follows another example of how it is possible for communities to work together. Faith communities can play a very important role in promoting social and economic development as well as interracial interaction. Amelia Burger talks about the tremendous work that has begun through this partnership. She says, *inter alia*:

There can be no reconciliation without people getting to know one another, without creating space for people to interact, for things to ‘rub off’,” says Spiwo Xapile, minister of a *Presbyterian congregation in Gugulethu*. “The reality of God is to be found in human relationships, whatever the colour of the skin”, he continues. “One has nothing to gain by keeping away from people. Reconciliation happens when people meet and get rid of their preconceptions. Before we make assumptions or judge people, we need to get to know them as people’.

Spiwo met Prof. Jan du Toit of the University of Stellenbosch and, through a friendship that developed between them, they planned and worked together and in the end they fitted out six shipping containers to serve as a development centre, next to the church where Spiwo pastored, with an initial focus on practical skills training and after-school studies. Because of the high unemployment rate, various courses for the unemployed were introduced by the church in the JL Zwane Centre. Jan said: “People must learn to help themselves. The meaning of reconstruction and development is that communities must work for themselves”.

With the help of fund raising and donations a community centre could be build.

Questions were raised against Spiwo’s involvement with the University of Stellenbosch (US) and white people. But he sees the interaction as an opportunity for reconciliation, to create space for positive collaboration with the perceived ‘enemy’. Spiwo remarked:

One cannot shut people out. One's own forgiveness depends on one's capacity to forgive. If we forgive white crime, we help ourselves. To keep on hating and bearing grudges just leads to suffering. We must go through a process of healing past wounds – and some of these things racial communities have to deal with by themselves – otherwise we'll have problems that make communities self-destructive.

The centre has given the people of Gugulethu a new sense of identity and even self-worth.

A minister from the white DRC Student Church (DRCSC) in Stellenbosch was commissioned to work at JL Zwane for four years until the beginning of 2001. He described his time in the township as a close encounter with the broader South African society – a unique experience he will always remember. As time passed the *relationship between the two faith communities reached maturity* and a proper relationship of mutuality could be established.

The *concept of partnership* requires a fundamental mental shift from the idea of one community 'helping another'. It suggests that easing one community's needs is mutually beneficial. Put differently, it involves *viewing both communities as having needs to be met and resources to share*.

The partnership between US and JL Zwane received a new dimension when the DRCSC entered into the partnership. The partners did *planning together* and developed a planning methodology that they called '*matching needs and resources*'. Both parties identified their own needs and resources and then linked them. It is instructive to see how many 'matches' could be made. *Gugulethu had many resources to offer and Stellenbosch many corresponding needs. Similarly, Gugulethu had many needs and Stellenbosch many resources to match.*

A combined committee of participants from both faith communities needs to drive each project. These committees report back to a general meeting of both communities, as well as to each community separately. These feedback sessions might be held during special church services dedicated to the cause, where progress can be celebrated. (Du Toit, 2003: 235-238) (Researcher's Italics)

Looking at this example, it is quite clear that both communities have resources and needs and that an important feature of their mutual co-operation was the fact that they could share the needs and resources. It was not a case of one community giving and the other

only receiving. In this way both benefited and the reconciliation that took place is of unspeakable value.

5.5.3 Individual acts of reconciliation

During the TRC hearings, important acts of personal reconciliation and forgiveness took place from all sides of the spectrum – perpetrators to victims and vice versa. There are numerous examples of this. Du Toit (2003) and Meiring (1999) mention different cases of personal reconciliation that took place during and after the TRC hearings. People whose names were heard time and again are Amy Biehl, Nyameka Goniwe, Ginn Fourie, Brian Mitchell, Mahlomola Tlale, the “Bisho massacre”, and others.

Since the end of the TRC hearings, the process is still going on. One interesting case to illustrate this happened in 2006 and has had an impact on the whole country, positively or negatively.

On 3 August 2006, Adriaan Vlok, former Minister of Law and Order and Dr Frank Chikane, Director-general in the office of the President, had met in Chikane’s office. It took Vlok two months to arrange the meeting. He had one thing in mind and that was to ask for forgiveness. At this meeting forgiveness were asked and given and as an act of humility, Vlok washed Chikane’s feet. Mr. Vlok, who gave orders to blow up Khotso House, and so many other operations, had undergone a transformation after the death of his first wife in 1994. He said it took him twelve years to come to a point where he could rid himself from his own pride, egotism and selfishness.

Chikane had made the comment in his church in Soweto, where Vlok was also addressing the congregation, that he believed the apology was sincere and that more was likely to follow. He then said: “The fact that Mr Vlok has come to make a confession to me, and is here with us today, is a miracle... We must not let the past we’ve defeated, dictate our future” (The Star, 4 September 2006:1).

Vlok had also made contact with nine mothers from Mamelodi, whose sons were murdered by the police, and who asked him to help them to get the bones or something back from their sons. He asked them for forgiveness also and washed their feet as well.

This also attracted the attention of the public and some Afrikaners and even of the other races were furious about this, while others thank the Lord for the example and that a road has been opened for others to follow (Vlok's personal testimony, Sunday 4 January 2007, Paarl).

This whole event reverberated even in the Presidency. In his weekly letter, September 8-14, 2006, President Thabo Mbeki gave ample space to Vlok's encounter with Chikane. He said, inter alia:

“But, centrally, I believe that this happening, and especially the legitimate and necessary debate it has provoked, has also made it necessary for all of us as South Africans, to pose the question whether we are indeed listening and hearing one another! Or is it a case that the chasms that continue to fracture our society are so big and deep, that we are still unable to hear one another!

In the Bible he gave to Frank Chikane, he inscribed the words, “I have sinned against the Lord, and against you. Please forgive me.” and referred Rev. Chikane to the Biblical Psalm 51. This Psalm contains a verse that says, “Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.”

His words and actions said to me that even as he embarked on an intensely personal journey, Adriaan Vlok communicated a message to all who will listen, including the Afrikaner people he led, that together we must build a new and humane society of hope, in which we are each one another's keeper. As a South African, I felt uplifted and strengthened that Adriaan Vlok had spoken and acted as he did” (Mbeki; Presidential Newsletter, September 8-14, 2006)

What powerful words from the President of our country. May we take notice of it and start doing it. Reconciliation is not a “humanly thing” but it is an act of God, who changes one's inmost being, to be reconciled to Him and then one can be moved to reach out to those around one. When one looks around one at this stage, and see the gulf of neo-racism starting to rumble, especially amongst a faction of Afrikaners (adults and youth, even children) there tends also to be a wave of pessimism and depression engulfing our people. May the Lord, who worked in the heart of a person like Adriaan Vlok, and others, do it in the hearts of the rest of our country's inhabitants also.

Not everyone shares the enthusiasm of the moment. One person that has a question mark in his mind regarding Adriaan Vlok, is Fr Michael Lapsley, who lost both hands, an eye and part of his hearing as the result of the explosion a letter-bomb sent to him by the security police in April 1990 while Vlok was still the Minister of Law and Order.

Lapsley had been invited by Prof. Piet Meiring to attend a session on forgiveness and reconciliation at the South African Missiological Conference in Pretoria during January 2007 at which he could meet Vlok.

He said that during the “feet washing” incident he was out of the country. A number of his friends had asked him what he thought of it and at that stage he was not sure. Then at this conference he had the opportunity to hear Vlok testifying about the change in himself, etc. Then Lapsley, as first respondent on Vlok’s message said the following:

I said that it was a significant moment for me because I had been a victim of the Apartheid State. I went on to reflect a little on some of the public response to his initiative as well as my own. I expressed respect for the step Vlok had taken. Many people were worried that he did not seem to be at all forthcoming about all that he knew about the past. I said that it was not often easy for people to believe in an apology until people saw what perpetrators did with the rest of their lives, including their money, their time, their energy.

There was some discussion and after the meeting ended, Lapsley pressed Vlok again, privately, about what he must have known as a member of the cabinet and State Security Council. To this Vlok said that *he admitted that he should have questioned more but he didn’t because he didn’t want to know*. (Researcher’s Italics) Lapsley went on to say:

I have always been slightly incredulous that the whole world knew in significant measure, exactly what was happening in South Africa during the Apartheid years, especially those who were at the top of the chain of command. The inquest into Steve Biko’s death in police custody took place back in 1978 and was comprehensively covered in the Rand Daily Mail. I remember saying to myself, “Let no-one ever say, ‘we did not know’.

I wondered for a moment whether I should forgive Vlok for what happened to me, but how do you forgive what is claimed to be unknown? I remember once reading that the words; “I forgive you” is also an accusation (Lapsley, in Sunday Independent 28 January 2007).

What happened here? Lapsley, the Director of the Institute for Healing of Memories, who is helping people to receive healing from their pain from things that happened in the past,

has found that he cannot trust the testimony of Vlok. The researcher is also baffled by the fact that Vlok said: “I never asked questions because I did not want to know”. How is it possible that this could happen, because one should believe that the Minister, as head of a Department, is the one who actually should know more than anyone under his command? That he should be on top of every operation or the planning thereof. The question that now haunts the minds of many people is: ‘To what extent can one really have pity with Vlok?’

In *Die Burger*, 7 February 2007, an article appeared under the heading “First prosecutions after the TRC” (*Eerstes vervolg na WVK*). In the article it is said, inter alia:

The first prosecutions concern the attempts of Dr Frank Chikane, Director General in the Presidency, to find out more about who tried to poison him in 1989... This is paving the way for the prosecution of Mr Adriaan Vlok, former minister of Law and Order...

The article went on to reiterate the past few months’ attention on Vlok’s “feet washing” etc. and also Pres. Mbeki’s reaction (see above). It then said that Vlok didn’t want to comment on the possibility of prosecution.

During the finalising of this thesis, the above mentioned possibility of the prosecution of Vlok and others became a reality. On Friday 17 August 2007, Adriaan Vlok and four other ex-policemen were brought before court for their part in the Frank Chikane poison case. Vlok and Gen. Johan van der Merwe, Ex-Adjunct Police Commissioner, were each sentenced to 10 years in jail, suspended for 5 years. The other three each received a 5-year sentence, suspended for 5 years (*Die Beeld*, Saturday 18 August 2007). This whole drama started a new polarisation process in the country. Within the opposition parties in Parliament and white people in general there is fear that a one-sided “witch-hunt” is underway. The general feeling amongst white South Africans is that there must be a balanced way of prosecuting - including people from the current government who had not received amnesty.

Dr Coenie Burger, previous Moderator of the DRC, made the comment in an article: *Versoening is op ‘n mespunt (Reconciliation is balancing on a knife-edge)* in *Die Kerkbode*, 10 August 2007, that matters regarding reconciliation in the country can go

wrong if this issue is not handled with a great deal of wisdom. In the same article, Prof. Piet Strauss, current Moderator of the DRC, said that he is afraid that this new revealing of the past can create a lot of bitterness and lead to a lack of motivation to go on working together towards reconciliation.

It remains to be seen what will be the outcome of this whole venture, which was brought into the limelight by Adriaan Vlok, seeking forgiveness and the washing of feet.

5.6 SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (SACC) STRATEGY AND PLAN OF ACTION IN RESPONSE TO THE FINAL TRC REPORT

The SACC played an active role in the mobilising and preparing of churches and communities for the TRC hearings. Similarly, SACC submitted proposals to the TRC regarding the Reparations and Rehabilitation Policy. In short, the SACC was visible and influential in the TRC process. Now that the TRC has finished its work, the SACC cannot sit back. The SACC must reactivate the TRC process by monitoring the implementation process of the TRC's recommendations.

The SACC has adopted a program as its initial response and a plan of action to the post-TRC process.

In the adopted program the main objective is *to implement, as far as possible, the recommendations of the TRC and to assist SACC member churches and the Provincial Councils to grapple with the issues of our country's past.*

The following programs have been adopted for the post-TRC process in 2003 – 2006:

1. *Reparations:*

- Advocacy for restorative reparations as a matter of urgency.
- Securing the TRC list of survivors who were recommended to receive urgent interim reparations.

- Network with other organisations such as Freedom Park Trust, regarding the implementation of other categories of reparations recommended by the TRC.
 - Network with other organisations to formulate strategy for victims of gross human rights violations who did not appear before the TRC.
2. *Pardons, Indemnities and Amnesties:*
- Monitor government initiatives on presidential pardons.
 - Lobby government to delay general amnesty and indemnity.
 - Set up a study group to explore other ways of achieving lasting reconciliation.
3. *Healing of Memories:*
- Interact with local communities with a view to allowing them to articulate their ways of healing.
 - Workshops on healing of memories to be held in all the regions.
 - Establish support groups especially in the townships and rural areas.
4. *Liturgies and other rites of reconciliation:*
- Develop models of reconciliation and rites suitable for regional contexts.
 - Advocate for Constitutional entrenchment of national reconciliation.
 - Intensify the use of 16 December as a day of national interfaith services and events of reconciliation.
5. *Inter-Religious Dialogue:*
- Promote inter-religious understanding through joint programs of actions with all faith communities.

The work plan consisted of short term and long term plans to be executed. When one examines this it becomes very clear that the SACC has done a lot of work during the past few years.

1. Short term:

- Mobilise resources, e.g. funding proposals.
- Identify at least 3 Provincial Councils to roll out the program.

- Set up regional and congregational TRC information and implementation desks.
 - Collate the TRC recommendations in Vol. 5 and the Codicil.
 - Interact with national government departments regarding recommended victims' list.
 - Advocate for activation of reparations.
- 2. Long term:**
- Interact with victim support groups and Freedom Park Trust for implementation of all categories of reparations.
 - Intensify healing-of-memories workshops and setting up of support groups.
 - Set up study groups to explore ways for securing lasting reconciliation.
 - Hold national and regional interfaith prayer services and events for reconciliation.
 - Lobby government regarding the idea of general amnesty and indemnity.
 - Monitor the implementation of the TRC recommendations.

(Document Source: *SACC strategy and plan of action in response to the final TRC report*)

Of the Afrikaans Churches it is only the DRC and the AFM that are members of the SACC and, therefore, whatever their programs for the future hold, as members of the SACC, they also have some guidelines as to what to do and how to go about it with regard to reconciliation.

5.7 ATTEMPTS IN THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH

Much has been expected from the DRC after the Synod of 1990, the Rustenburg Consultation and the synods of 1994 and even 2004. There is still an atmosphere of anticipation when the DRC speaks or does something. During the church's submission at

the TRC, Rev. Freek Swanepoel said that the church will give attention to reconciliation in the country and, since then, good things have happened. In this section we will examine some of the groundwork that has been done, via synod resolutions and how it was practically applied.

Reconciliation is a fragile ‘commodity’. It is something that does not come on its own. The question that needs to be answered when looking at the attempts of the DRC, is: “What role can the DRC play to accelerate the reconciliation process?” Prof. Piet Meiring suggests that there are five challenges for the DRC specifically to help this process.

These challenges have been derived from those posed by the TRC:

1. The concept *reconciliation* must be understood clearly: This was one of the problems in the work of the TRC, that the concept was a bit vague. What is the type of reconciliation that we are looking for? The lawyers and politicians had their idea and the baruti had had their idea. And that led to a certain amount of stress amongst commissioners in the TRC. The Biblical view, which Tutu followed, was the one found in 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 which shows that true reconciliation is only possible when people are reconciled to God, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. If we do not really know what we mean when we use the word *reconciliation*, how would we be able to help people? Can the DRC help with this?

As regards this, the DRC is in a difficult position, because of the diverse meanings found within the DRC. Over the last couple of years a significant movement has taken place and different views have found a nesting place under the roof of the DRC. From a staunch Reformed Church more moderate and even charismatic voices were heard. Responses differ from congregation to congregation, to such an extent that one sometimes wonder if you are still in a DRC congregation? Then there are also the inroads that are being made from the so-called *Jeus-seminar*, in South Africa known as the New Reformation (Nuwe Hervorming). Therefore one would also have different ideas about the meaning of *reconciliation*.

2. A “Theology of reconciliation” must be developed: This was one of the forthright challenges that came from the TRC to the faith communities. This is not an easy instruction because it is possible to become so entangled in it as the DRC did during the Apartheid years, with its biblical sanction of Apartheid. Attempts have been made, but the process must be continued. From all quarters the DRC is expected to take a leader’s role in this because of its strong Reformed tradition.
3. A search for “truth” is ongoing: The TRC tried to construct as clear a picture of our past as they could. They tried to resolve the problem of “what is the truth?” But this process is not over yet and the DRC and other churches in the country are challenged by it. Only a handful of people could testify before the TRC. There are still millions of people from all racial groups who are living with pain in their hearts. Would it be possible for the church to carry on with this process, by having mini-truth commissions where members and other people could come to for help? (See Chapter 6 for models)
4. Justice and reconciliation are two sides of the same coin: Reconciliation and justice goes hand in hand. Reconciliation is not cheap and you can’t talk about reconciliation and negate the responsibility that people have towards one another. You cannot talk about reconciliation and neglect poverty, reparation and the land issue. Does the DRC see its way open to get involved in these issues?
5. Church members must be accompanied on the road to confession, forgiveness and reconciliation: The church must make it very clear to its members that true reconciliation is not possible if people are not willing to openly confess wrongs and ask for forgiveness. Will it be possible for the DRC to accompany its members along this road? Can the church help the victims to forgive? Amongst the members of the DRC there are men and women who went through terrible experiences and who must learn to accept and to forgive. There are organisations that can help the church with this. (See Chapter 6) But churches must

also help their members to celebrate acts of reconciliation by having special celebration services, etc.

6. A need for strong leadership: All over the world there is a cry for strong leadership – especially in the church. The church needs leaders who will be able to help people to cross bridges in the different communities. Church members will have to realise that, in the years ahead of us, there can be no such thing as cheap grace and how indispensable costly grace is. Can the church cultivate and groom such leaders? We have to look at the youth of the church, but the question is: Where are the youth, especially the youth of the DRC? (Meiring, 2003: 117-121).

When one looks at these challenges for the DRC as well as for other Afrikaans Churches (and their brothers and sisters in other language groups), there is only one way to go: down on our knees. Presently (2006) there is so much turmoil in the country, because of the high crime rate, land claims, murders of farmers, fraud, the uneasiness in the Afrikaans Churches regarding theological issues, etc. that it seems as if Afrikaners especially, are not very interested in any kind of reconciliation.

The DRC, however, has taken the proposals of the TRC to heart and there are truly wonderful things happening in the church and through the church. In the next few paragraphs examples of these will be highlighted.

5.7.1 Statement of Commitment

The DRC responded with a whole-hearted commitment to the proposals of the TRC. At the meeting of the General Synod in 2002, a *Statement of Commitment* was adopted to guide the vast amount of serious planning towards the future of the DRC. This Statement will also guide the Church in its response to the TRC.

Statement

During the meeting of the General Synod we, the delegates, experienced a growing conviction of the love of Christ and therefore, also of the vocation and position of the Dutch Reformed Church in Southern Africa. Therefore:

(a) we commit ourselves anew to the Lord who brought our Church here 350 years ago. We thank Him for the privilege that we can still be part of his church. We are convinced that only the gospel of Christ can lead us upon the path of salvation. Therefore we, as church, wish to proclaim the Word of the Lord in all circumstances and witness everywhere to the hope which lives in us.

(b) we commit ourselves anew to our continent, and in particular to Southern Africa. We are distressed by the tragic stories of the most terrible forms of violence, the tremendous extent of poverty and famine, the consequences of the Aids pandemic, the lack of respect for people, animals and the environment and that we, too, are implicated. General Synod extends its sympathy to the many victims. We also want to make a difference. Therefore we commit ourselves to work together with others to find solutions for our society. As a Church we make ourselves available to be involved at every level where we can be of help. We assure the government of our intercession and our commitment to service to the community.

(c) we commit ourselves to greater unity with other churches. We wish to re-unite with our Church Family, which, we believe, is in accordance with the will of God. We also wish to affirm and expand our ecumenical relations and along with other Christians join hands to build up our countries and relieve painful circumstances.

(d) we appeal to our congregations to be involved in the healing of our countries. We thank the Lord for the commitment of members and for the many positive and widespread actions we hear about. Let us show the world once again that by being “salt of the earth” and “light of the world” our prayer is that the Kingdom of God may come. We have a Lord. We are here. We are his Church. To God be all the glory (Acta Synodi 2002: 584; Acta Synodi 2004: 426).

In an interview with Dr Kobus Gerber, General Secretary of the DRC, (See Addendum 9) the question was asked how the DRC sees its role in reconciliation in the future. His views can be summarised in the next few statements.

Because of the DRC’s involvement in the ecumenical bodies, The South African Council of Churches (SACC) and The Evangelical Alliance of Southern Africa (TEASA), it is involved in what is happening on a larger scale.

With respect to reconciliation it is important to remember that it is not something hanging in the air. The focus will have to be on local levels/communities and guiding people to journey with one another in a process. It has different aspects to it. The one important issue is *Reparation*.

There must be one or other form of reparation. It includes much more than material issues. If churches are going to focus only on money, it will be unjust towards our country. The country must be repaired! Together with all the role players, who had been present at SACLA, the issues to address are HIV/Aids, poverty, crime and violence, morality, a deeply rooted atmosphere of human rights, etc.

The whole issue of land reform is also included in reparation. In an African and post-Colonial context there can never be discussions about reconciliation aloof from the land debate, because when you talk about land in an African context, it is something different than in a colonial context. Therefore it will be good to think and move towards a Reparation Fund. There are certain things that fall under the jurisdiction of government, but for its own good the ecumenical church must help manage it. Some business people attached to the DRC have indicated that they will contribute, with the provision that the churches manage it. As part of reparation, the church must make available its skills, sources/buildings and human potential to make a difference in local communities.

Another important aspect to think about in this whole issue of reconciliation is *A National Program of Action*: The DRC, as part of this country and nation, wants to be involved in the bringing about of a program that deals with racism, sexism, discrimination, intolerance, etc. In the schools some of these are already included in the curricula, but the church will have to implement it in its catechism curriculum and its preaching. Such a National Program of Action must include a theological angle from which discussions can follow that will make sense to our children and youth. In the 2002 Statement, the DRC declared that it wants to be involved with this country and its people.

Gerber is of the opinion that the DRC must define what is understood by the word reconciliation. A few years ago the DRC had great action around the Year of Hope. This was a program where good things happened, but one does not really accomplish much

through programs. It must become part of people's lives. It must become the blood in their veins.

Two things of importance have happened since 2000 in the DRC. First was the Statement of Commitment and second was the clarification of seven priorities the church wants to focus upon. This changed the agenda for the DRC.

Another thing that is necessary to think about regarding the recommendations of the TRC, is *Healing of memories*: We must listen to one another's pain. At the Synod of the URCSA an important decision had been taken with regards to this. They asked that in the Family of churches such a process must be initiated. This can be a facilitated reconciliation exercise. Part of the problem the churches face is that for the government the initiative was taken through the TRC, but the churches, amongst one another, haven't passed through this exercise. For example, there are things that had been done by the DRC against the Roman Catholic Church and by them against the DRC, which must be discussed. Members of the DRC still experience the SACC as an enemy. This type of "story-telling" must become part of the reconciliation process. The pain in peoples' lives must become words.

Researcher: Do you have hope for the future? That reconciliation will take place in our country?

Kobus Gerber: Yes, very much. There are thousands of signs. If you examine what is happening at the moment in the DRC, where small congregations are working in their communities – people go to squatter camps to help with, amongst other things, bed-wash Aids patients. We don't know about all these cases, but what is happening is unbelievable. We are working on a database of all these things.

There is a bigger thing happening in the country. Churches of reformed descent have started to talk to each other about uniting. The Conventus for Reformed Churches became a reality with approximately 14 churches being involved in. The question is asked: should we not walk this road together? I do not think we must become despondent when a first process doesn't produce the results.

Dr Gerber went on to mention the "close list" policy of the TRC and that it is difficult to understand the policy surrounding it. The researcher is quoting the specific points from the TRC Report to clarify Gerber's use of the term.

36. The commission, anxious not to impose a huge burden on the government, adopted a 'closed list' policy. Effectively this limited the payment of reparation only to those victims who made statements to the Commission before 15 December 1997. In the period between December 1997 and January 2002, victims' groups confirmed with the Commission that they had collected more than 8000 statements from victims who, for a variety of reasons, were unable to access the Commission. The consequence of ignoring this group of people has potentially dangerous implications for South Africa, as communities may become divided if some receive reparation that is not accessible to others, who have had similar experiences.

37. The Commission is of view that the 'closed list' policy should be reviewed by government, in order to ensure justice and equity. It needs to be noted that, in many other countries, which have gone through similar processes, victims have been able to access reparation many years after the truth commission process has been completed (TRC Recommendations: TRC V 6, Sec 5, Chapter 7: 732).

What Dr Gerber said is a mouthful. To work out all the details and to assist ministers and congregations with this will demand a lot of wisdom. But the point is made that the DRC wants to be involved in the country's problems and especially with reconciliation amongst the different groups. But to do this will ask the co-operation of every member of this church. There can be no spectators. And the time to start is – yesterday!

5.7.2 Year of Hope

At the meeting of the General Synod in October 1998, the following decisions were taken:

1. The General Synod accepts its immense responsibility to give, together with other churches in the country, attention to the following important issues:
 - the facilitation of reconciliation
 - the fight against poverty, as well as,
 - the decline of moral values in the country.
2. The General Synod appoints an *ad hoc-commission* to provide the General Synodical Commission (GSC), as soon as possible, with concrete proposals in this regard.

3. The GSC is empowered to act on the proposals of the *ad hoc* commission if it is acceptable to the GSC.
4. It is important to work closely with other members of the DRC family in this regard (Agenda General Synod, 1998:402; Acta Synodi, 2002:332).

The *ad hoc* commission was elected, the Commission for Reconciliation, Poverty and Moral restoration (RPM-Commission), to work out some practical proposals for addressing these issues. *A Year of Hope* was introduced by the DRC in 2001. During that year attention had been given to the three issues as were decided on by the synod. The issues of poverty and moral values were discussed in congregations during the first two terms and reconciliation during the last term.

To assist pastors and church leaders to facilitate these themes, the commission published two booklets to be used in the congregations: *Jesus Christus bring Hoop (Jesus Christ brings Hope)* – an anthology of 13 sermons to be preached during the Year of Hope; *Op Pad na Versoening (On the Road to Reconciliation)* – guidelines for Bible Studies on reconciliation by the congregation. These Bible Studies, written by Dr Fanie du Toit could also be seen as a “theology of reconciliation” (Meiring, 2003:118). In the introductory chapter of *Pad na Versoening*, Prof. Piet Meiring, chairman of the RPM-Commission, wrote the following on the Ministry of Reconciliation:

Reconciliation in our country is a very complex issue, but it must be done. The Lord gave us the ministry of reconciliation. This book makes it clear that we must get involved in all facets of our community life. To name a few:

1. *Political tension* in the country is not making it easier for people to be reconciled with one another. There are too many unresolved issues.
2. *Economical problems* are like mountains. For many years promises have been made, but the gulf between rich and poor is just expanding.
3. *Cultural differences* are a gift from God, but some are using it for their own purposes.
4. *Racism* is still alive. To get it off our law books was one thing, but to get it off our hearts is quite another.
5. *Family stress* is something that needs a lot of attention. Family violence, family murders, etc. are just escalating.
6. *Crime and corruption* levels are rising. This makes it difficult to bring about a change of attitude in people’s lives.
7. Amongst the *churches* there is disunity, stereotyping, unwillingness of believers to reach out to others, etc.

8. Differences amongst *faith communities*. South Africa is a country of many religions, and we have to learn to respect one another.

To be agents for reconciliation amongst all these issues, ask of each one of us commitment, conviction and sacrifice. '*Reconciliation is not for the faint-hearted.*'

The big question that had to be answered in the Year of Hope and the years to follow was: does it make a difference that there are churches in South Africa?

For many members of the DRC the *Year of Hope* was a positive and inspiring experience in which the church found a new role. Church media and commissions worked together with enthusiasm. There was expectancy that the *Year of Hope* would become a season of hope in which the DRC and other churches would continue working on poverty, moral issues and reconciliation.

Three years later in 2004 the question was still: does it make a difference that there are churches in South Africa? Often it seems as if the *Year of Hope* or as people would want to call it *The Season of Hope*, has deteriorated into a *Season of Despair*. The gap between the rich and poor in the country is only widening; it seems as if morality is going down the drain and the general feeling amongst the ordinary people is that there is no real hope for reconciliation, because of the type of activism from all quarters, that is beginning to raise its ugly head.

But in spite of all these negative voices and acts that are running rampant in the streets of our communities, there is still hope, because God Almighty is still on the throne and He is still asking, as in the beginning: "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9)

5.7.3 Season of Listening

During 2006 the DRC started with a Season of Listening and congregations have been asked to get involved in this program of listening with a renewed, open mind to God. The DRC wants to live before God as a listening church, according to Zechariah 8:23. To accomplish this, it is necessary to create a place where members can listen and live

according to the Will of God. The vision is that people will (a) *find their joy in the Word of God (Psalm 1:2-3)* (b) *listen in love to one another (Colossians 3:12-16)* (c) *listen with compassion to the world (Philippians 1:9-10)* and (d) *live purposefully and with understanding in a changing world (Luke 4:18-19)*. These will be underscored by four important values: *a teachable attitude, trust, compassion and openness* (<http://www.gemeentes.co.za>).

Many congregations throughout the church have decided to become involved in this venture and it is heard, from all over, that members are being blessed by this.

Researcher's prayer is that this will not just be for a time and then it is gone, as with so many "Years of ..." in the past, but that it will have a lasting impact on the lives of people. This again will depend on the attitude and motivation of the leadership in the congregations.

5.7.4 The process of Church Unity

This process has gathered momentum during the time of writing this thesis, and will be discussed in later paragraphs.

5.7.5 Examples of congregations involved in the process of reconciliation

5.7.5.1 DRC Lynnwood, Pretoria

The Lynnwood congregation of the DRC has a long history of being active and co-operating with reconciliation in our country. Already in the nineteen-seventies the first minister of the congregation, Dr Murray Janson, pleaded that the DRC must open its doors for black people to hold their church service and for that he had to suffer from the church's hierarchy. President Mandela was invited to attend a worship service in the congregation in 1995 and since then the congregation has been active with numerous outreach- and reconciliation projects.

During a church board meeting in November 1997, it was decided to invite Archbishop Desmond Tutu to lead a worship service in this posh white Dutch Reformed Church in

Lynnwood. This was the parish church of some of the members of the former government. Of this occasion Tutu said:

I was feeling tense and apprehensive as I prepared to go to Pretoria because many in the white community, especially Afrikaners, had regarded me as an ogre, barely Christian and they wondered whether I was not now presiding over a witch-hunt against Afrikaners. I received a very warm welcome, however, in a church that was quite full. The music was superb. A group of children processed in with symbolic candles. My text was Romans 5:8: “Whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”. I preached my only sermon – that God loves us freely, as an act of grace, that we do not have to impress God in order for God to love us as a reward.

Then I said that Afrikaners imagined that they had only two options in South Africa’s political, social and community life – either to be top dog, domineering, or to be underdog, subservient, the doormat for others. I said there was an exciting *third option, that of embracing the new dispensation enthusiastically and using their enormous resources in money, skills and experience to help make the new ordering of society succeed for everyone’s sake...* (Tutu, 1999: 185) (Researcher’s Italics)

After the sermon Ockie Raubenheimer addressed the congregation on the questions they, as ministers of the congregation, had in their hearts after hearing all the revelations of the TRC, etc. “We asked one another: ‘Where have we failed as ministers of the gospel?’” He then turned to Archbishop Tutu – and unburdened his heart: “I have to say to you: we are truly sorry ... we have asked the Lord to forgive us!”

With tears in their eyes, the minister and the archbishop, the one white the other black, held one another. The man who, for years, had defended Apartheid and the man, who had spent his life fighting it, comforted each other (Meiring, 1999:364).

In an interview with *Die Kerkbode*, 3 July 1998, the question was asked of Rev. Raubenheimer: “*How do you see the role the DRC ought to play to bring about reconciliation between our different ethnic groups?*”

Raubenheimer answered as follows:

... The Lord who had given the commission to the DRC also gave us the equipment and the opportunity. (The day)... when we succeed in uniting all the churches of the DRC family, one third of the Christians in South Africa will be members of this (new) church. It will not only be the biggest church in South Africa, but also a powerful instrument in the Lord’s hand. In this there is a great challenge and responsibility for each one of us. At the same

time we must reach out to other Christians in our country, who, like us, also have the need to work for justice and peace in their lives. We must not wait for one another, but start immediately with ourselves. If we start today, we will be a few meters further on the road tomorrow (Die Kerkbode, 3July 1998:6).

To return to Sunday 14 June 1998: Through the working of the Holy Spirit the Lord showed in a wonderful way that reconciliation is possible. To many people it was again a sign of HOPE! But there were also the Afrikaners and other white people who saw this as the entrance of the anti-Christ into the bastion of Afrikanerdom – the church.

5.7.5.2 DRC Lynnwoodrif, Pretoria

Meanwhile, a few street blocks away a sister church, Lynnwoodrif, has interesting activities going on as result of the initiative of a few women congregants.

In an interview with Mrs Marinda van Schalkwyk, wife of the minister of the DRC Congregation Lynwoodrif in Pretoria, she told about the attempts that they made to work reconciliation between their congregation and a congregation of the URCSA in Mamelodi, a nearby township.

Mrs van Schalkwyk and some other congregants saw it as a commission from God to reach out to others, because they realised how important relationships are in order to reach church unity.

It all started by inviting the ward of the URCSA congregation Pagameng in Mamelodi, Pretoria, Stansa Bopapi, for a multi-cultural meal at the church's restaurant. Tables were filled with mixed groups who could share with one another about things in the past that caused pain, but also positive things that they see in one another. The reports on this event were all good.

This was repeated the next year and it was again a success. Then a project was offered to them to facilitate a South African Women and Dialogue (SAWD) event. Mrs Mbeki is the patroness of the initiative. The AIDS ministry in the congregation was responsible for this initiative. The SAWD is an interfaith venture. To host such an event was a very

stressful experience, especially since they couldn't get even 50 white women together, so they had to invite Stansa Bopapi and women from Pagameng. In the end it was a moving experience to share stories and tears together.

Mrs van Schalkwyk was very enthusiastic as she related the following:

Some time later they came back and asked if we cannot organise a SAWD program for the whole country – an event of between 800 and 900 women. We gave a quotation but the University of Pretoria was cheaper and they have the hostels, etc. The chair of our AIDS ministry and I were asked to be speakers at this meeting. I must tell you, that we were approximately 11 white women amongst the ± 900 black women. I experienced no class prejudice amongst the women – from Mrs. Mbeki (wife of President Mbeki), the newly elected Vice-President and other women Ministers of Cabinet. I delivered my speech in Afrikaans, because there were translating services. For me, it was a wonderful and touching experience to feel the warmth and goodwill amongst all these women. (Some of these women were from the rural areas with their blankets around them.)

Out of this small initiative from a group in a congregation grew a new awareness of how wonderful the Psalmist summarised it in Psalm 133:1 “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! The way is paved for this congregation to walk on this thorny road of reconciliation. Thorny? Yes, because not all congregants (Afrikaners) are at ease with this initiative.

Mrs van Schalkwyk continued:

Something else that came our way that excites me so is to get involved in schools in Eersterus. Gangsters are a big problem in the schools. So one of our missionaries can present the Cross Roads program and we will start early next year with this in one of the schools in Eersterus. We also helped with a building team to repair one of the classrooms at a school. We have talked too much, now we must start doing things.

Q: As I'm listening to you, I gather that you have a lot of hope for the future?

R: Absolutely, although it is a slow process. I'm concerned about our own people. They tell me that some pupils in our high schools are really ultra right-wing orientated. We must understand that, because they are the children who don't get jobs. (Researcher's Italics)

In an earlier paragraph concern was mentioned for this new wave of white activism (racism?). But in spite of this, a passion in the heart of a few believers to make a difference in their community, has led to this initiative. It is possible to start a ministry of reconciliation in the congregation. Don't wait for the other to start. (See Addendum 5 for interview)

5.7.5.3 *N G Kerk Skuilkrans*

This congregation is a typical suburban congregation with between 3500 and 4000 members. It is on the border between the affluent Pretoria and the townships of Mamelodi and Nellmapius. This is not co-incidental.

This congregation believes that reconciliation is of the utmost importance and that it must be part of the official ministries. One thing that stands out is that they are not busy with large-scale reconciliation operations, but they try rather to put a few small-scale events on the table. For them it is about a lifestyle of reconciliation.

What are they doing? Arno Meiring, one of the ministers said the following:

- *We share our facilities:* We have decided to share our facilities with the broader community. We not only have projects driven by members, but we also accommodate other organisations and church groups. Examples are: The synod of the URCSA Northern-Transvaal was housed here; the congress of the SACC, about dialogue and reconciliation, was held here; different Welfare organisations are using our auditoriums and classrooms for their projects; etc.
- *We take great pains in our relationship with the URCSA:* It is of the utmost importance for us to have good relations with neighbouring congregations of the URCSA. We are going the extra mile to listen to them and to start projects with them. We have formal forums (and our presbytery meetings) where we can talk to one another. We have to spend time on these meetings. To build relationships is a costly thing as one regards the time spent.
- *We organise purposefully:* From time to time we tried purposefully to organise reconciliation meetings at the church. During our Pentecost meetings we have speakers of different church traditions. We invite theological students of the URCSA to do some practical work together with our ministers. We try to enlarge our members' territory.

- *We haven't arrived yet:* Everything is not always going smoothly. It is a struggle to get our English worship services going; people in the vicinity of the church building are not always very happy. We believe, however, that when we do things with a reconciliatory style, we will arrive at our destination (Meiring, 2005:159).

5.7.5.4 Helderberg Development Centre (Helderberg Ontwikkeling-sentrum)

“You made a human being of my wife. Never in her life could she find a job. You have trained her and placed her in a permanent job. She has changed. The ‘human being’ in her has appeared for the first time in many years”.

This is the testimony of the husband of one of the students of the Helderberg Development Centre. This Centre came into being as a project of the DRC Helderberg in Somerset-West, in February 2002, as an Article 21-company, with the vision to help unemployed people of the Helderberg-basin to master basic skills to provide an income for themselves and their families. An employment office forms part of the activities and enhances the effectiveness of this Centre. This also determines how many students can be accommodated. All this was made possible by a group of congregants of the DRC Helderberg in Somerset-West who made available their skills and time.

By the end of 2004 there were already 128 unemployed women being trained in home management. Of these women 80% were successfully employed. The Centre's Management decided to continue focusing on the relieving of poverty and to help the unemployed in the community.

There is a long waiting list of people who want to be trained, but because of limited space it is not possible to expand at the moment. The Centre, at this stage already, functions five days per week. Everything is not moonlight and roses but in dependence on God they discovered that God can be trusted and that He provides when people do not think they can continue.

The motto of the Centre is *Kukhanya* – ‘place of light’. The students themselves have given the Centre this name because they saw the light there (Möller, 2005: 81).

There are other congregations in the DRC in which beautiful things are happening – congregations such as Moreletta Park, Stellenberg, Stellenbosch, Wynberg, etc.

But what about other Afrikaans Churches? The opportunities for stretching out a hand of friendship, peace and reconciliation are plentiful. The flame of hope is starting to flicker. Here and there are signs of Afrikaans congregations having an English service in their building especially for the sake of black people. This is happening in the RCSA and is found more in the cities, such as Pretoria, but one can predict that this is the beginning of a tidal wave amongst the Afrikaans Churches. Let's hope that expectations will not be disappointed. The researcher reckons that we cannot continue keeping people of colour out of the Kingdom of God (or is it our kingdom?).

Since 1996 the AFM became one united church and all over the country there are signs that multi-cultural worship services are being held and where this is not the case, there is movement, amongst members, to reach out to different cultural groups. This is also happening in the smaller country towns. In such churches there is no fear of being "overwhelmed by others".

These are the testimonies of only a few of the literally hundreds of congregations in the DRC, and other Afrikaans Churches, where the Holy Spirit is showing people what He means by reconciliation. There is a new generation of pastors, ministers and other church leaders who are really working hard to set the records straight and who are trying to give hands and feet to the original proposals of the TRC. In many smaller towns there is no other way for the Christians than to worship together and one finds that DRC, URCSA and other Afrikaans groups are also working together. There must be jubilation in heaven!

5.8 CHURCH UNITY!?

5.8.1 DRC Family of Churches

Since the early 1980s the movement towards church unity amongst the Dutch Reformed family of churches came into being. Negotiations went well at first and then broke down, but there was always the will to carry on because all the members of the family saw it as the will of God that the church must re-unite. At that stage the family consisted of the

Dutch Reformed Church (White), the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (Coloured), the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (Black) and the Reformed Church in Africa (Indian).

What follows is a summary of the road that has been travelled, since 1994, as regards church unity in the family of Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa:

- In April 1994 the DRMC and the DRCA united to form the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA). However, not all the congregations of the DRCA went along with this unification (See Ch 1). This would later prove to be a big stumbling block for the realisation of church unity.
- In August 1994 the executive committees of the DRC and the URCSA reaffirmed their commitment to visible church unity as soon as possible and that a suitable structure for this unity must be found.
- In October 1994, the General Synod of the DRC noted with pleasure the recent developments in the unity discussions and expressed its earnest desire to work together with the other members of the family in the establishing of one denomination on the basis of an approved Church Order.

At a meeting of the South African Alliance of Reformed Churches during March 1992, the delegates of the DRC, Prof. Pieter Potgieter, Prof. Johan Heyns, Prof. Piet Meiring and Dr Frits Gaum gave the meeting this assurance: “*We want to assure this consultation that the DRC is committed to the unity of the DRC family. We agree that this is the acid test, whether the DRC has finally distanced itself from the racism of Apartheid and we are willing to be part of this process*”. At the General Synod meeting of October 1994, this statement was endorsed by Synod as a decision (Acta Synodi 1994: 443; Gaum, 2004: 37, 38).

- In November 1994 delegates of the DRC, URCSA and the RCA met for the first time and they agreed to the forming of a Joint Committee (JC) in which the three churches would co-operate in the writing of a draft Church Order for the one denomination of the DRC churches.

- On 7 March 1995 the first meeting of the JC was held. Sub-commissions would start working on different issues and report back to the JC.
- Different sub-commissions started working on issues like the name, basis and extent of the new denomination, etc.
- In October 1996 the General Synodical Commission (GSC) of the URCSA took a decision that would bring the negotiations to a standstill. It concerned the Confession of Belhar. The decision was: "... it is therefore necessary to once again confirm that the *Confession of Belhar is non-negotiable as a confessional standard for the united church.*"
- The DRC General Synod of 1998 confirmed the results of the comments received on the Confession of Belhar, but also reconfirmed its commitment to bring about one denomination for the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.
- In November 1998 an Appeal Court case between the URCSA and the DRCA was heard. As a result of all the negativity surrounding the whole issue, the relationship between the DRCA and the URCSA became severely strained and this resulted in the URCSA not being prepared to allow the DRCA to join the Joint Committee.
- By the end of 1998 the members of the family had come a long way on the road to church unity, but on the other hand all was not well. The ongoing discussion between the DRC, the RCA and the URCSA had practically come to a standstill and there was great tension between the URCSA and the DRCA as a result of the ruling of the Appeal Court Case.
- The years between 1998 and 2002 were dominated by the question whether the DRCA can be allowed as a member of the Joint Committee and so, as a member of the family, become part of the unity process.
- During 2002 and 2003 negotiations went on between the churches but in the end they are still not united.
- In spite of good progress since 1994, the road to church unity has not always been easy. On the contrary, quite often it was very frustrating. In spite of all the negative experiences, much has been achieved – at least as far as the DRC is concerned. A stage has been reached where, despite the fact that some problems

still exist, all the churches of the Reformed Family in South Africa are involved in, and are positively committed to, church unity (Coertzen, 2003:333f).

During an interview with Rev. Freek Swanepoel, who was Moderator of the DRC from 1994 to 1998, he made the following remarks on the unification process of DRC and URCSA:

Initially it went well with the moving towards church unification, but then something happened which brought the negotiations to a standstill. Actually we stood at the same point where we are at now, viz. Belhar and how the model for the new church must look. We agreed that congregations must exist, as is the case, that presbyteries must continue to exist geographically. Over the years there was no problem with geographically determined presbyteries, but now, since we started talking we must also look at language and other issues. It is *a pity that language became an issue, because that has stopped the wagon. The reconciliation process is, in a sense, steered by 'voices' of certain people in the church who used the outside press more than the church.* I am sure that at that time reconciliation was easier than now. There was a movement closer to us from other churches for which we were very thankful. In reconciliation you can move on your own up to a point, but then you need others around you. During those four years many things happened. We were not a working synod, but as synod we did a lot of things. (Researcher's Italics)

There are 'forces' at work amongst the different churches of the DRC family, which are trying their utmost to derail the unification process. Researcher is of meaning that if re-unification succeeds, it would be a devastating blow to the Satanic forces in the air who tried through all the ages to get rid of the church, as has been described in Revelation 12.

Dr James Buys, Moderator of the URCSA for the period 1994 – 1998 also shared his view on the unification process. He is of opinion that the whole process has received a new impetus after 1994, but that the Belhar Confession was one of the problems that got in the way. One of the other problems that has to be considered is that of the structure of the re-united church, especially when one talks about organic unity "with an overall general synod, united regional synods, presbyteries etc. One comes across opposition and this has to do with need for ministry, language problems as well as other minor things. It is interesting to see how the option for organic unity has had a negative impact on the broader idea of reconciliation". He said that one of his greatest concerns is that the Lord

has commissioned the church to be a united church and that “it will be a miserable day when church unity and the way it must come into being will be a continuation in any form of race, language or any other form as we know it currently and in the form that dates from our history”.

Q: During the eighties there was much talk about church unity and from time to time it was said: ‘Now we are very close. Next year, we will be united’, and then something happened that brought everything to a kind of stand still. What was the problem that caused there to be hope one moment, and despair the next moment?

In his answer to this question, Rev. Buys said, inter alia, that he thinks there were forces at work in the country before 1986, which tried to prevent unification.

As an example take the then N G Sendingkerk (DRMC) and the Reformed Church in Africa (Indian) (RCA). They were on the brink of being united. The prevention of that uniting effort nearly led to the downfall of the RCA. It brought a schism in that church which resulted in the fact that for a time the synod of the RCA could not function. It took years to work reconciliation between the parties who were involved.

He said that another problem had to do with the fact that there are forces that want to make church unity impossible and want to re-group in race and language entities.

Race plays a role, there’s no doubt about that. There are different dimensions to it. The Afrikaner went (and is going) through a difficult situation. They lost political power, gave up rights they had in the Apartheid era, then the last haven they have, where there is still a character and identity and language, is the church. It literally causes an anxiety to consider giving this up. There are some who want to go further – the total re-unification of congregations. Wynberg, not because I’m here, is such an example of a congregation that tried to work with the history of the two congregations of 1881. Here we can say that two congregations have physically united (Addendum 12).

When one listens to these arguments, then one can come to the conclusion that the will to be re-united is there, but, as mentioned above, there are truly ‘forces’ at work to bring this wagon to a standstill from time to time.

At the General Synod of the DRC in 2004, Prof. Thias Kgatla of the URCSA was one of the speakers and the theme of his paper was: *Some obstacles towards church unification.*

In his address he thanked the DRC for its mission work in Africa and for the souls that were brought to the saving grace of Jesus Christ through the work of the church. But then he went on to say, inter alia:

However, when examining where the DRC is today in terms of Church unity in the Dutch Reformed family of Churches, it is as if we are talking about a completely different church. One feels like a traitor if one praises the DRC for what it has done. In fact, the critics of the church are quick to conclude that the church did all it did because it was driven by the ideology of Apartheid. ... Some of us, who appreciate the good work this church has done, find ourselves in a very precarious situation. How do you say this church spread the gospel with good intentions in the past and yet it is still not united with other members of the Dutch Reformed family of churches?

In the **1980s** this church was saying **Church unity is important and the unity should be more visible**. In the 2000's the church is still saying the same thing and yet there are no tangible signs that the church means what it says. Critics of this church have been made prophets of light because of non-mobility of the church towards church unity. Those who love the church and advocate its intentions are being discredited and ridiculed. because of the paradoxes in what the church preaches and does.

Kgatla said that the church has to show its credibility in the New South Africa, but there is a problem in that there are people in the Dutch Reformed family who don't want church unity. His conviction is that the church must not give heed to those voices but do the will of God. It is true that there are obstacles on the way, but it must be faced and addressed in due time. Prof. Kgatla proceeded to lift out some of the obstacles like historical issues, which led to mistrust, suspicion and prejudices amongst members of the churches. There are negative images and attitudes, stereotyping, name calling, etc. He then went on to say:

My purpose with this paper is to plead that the attitudes and behaviour of the past should not be allowed to be manifested or to stall the process. Mistrust is the second last step in a continuum of actions taken by those who are prejudiced. The first step is discrimination... The second step is isolation... The last step is dehumanisation and hatred. In our search for unity we must eliminate these stereotypes, for Christ did not call us for bitterness and hatred. ...

People that stereotype other people are either evil or insecure... There are also people who stereotype others just to make them feel bad or put them down. How much is in the Belhar Confession, which is not stereotypical? Stereotypes are unfortunately a standard impulse....

He then discussed some positive responses to prejudice and stereotypes. He said to combat these things you need to understand the nature of it. He made the statement that it takes courage to stand against injustice and to actively fight the prejudice and stereotypes. But we must stand firm and get out of our comfort zone for God's purpose of making Christians one. He then highlighted some strategies to work on to bring church unity.

As we strive for structural visible church unity between these churches, we should seriously encourage our members to practice the following:

- Encourage members to share any experiences they may have had with racism, gender or other discrimination as well as prejudices they might have against other groups. Joint projects where congregations are engaged in at local and grassroots level may facilitate this encounter.
- Encourage members to read the constitution of South Africa, Church Confessions and to relate their insights of these documents at their joint Bible Studies, etc.
- Encourage members to talk about the wealth of the country and how it is made. Discuss virtues such as hard work, management, envisioning, and public witness as well as how this could be used to uplift the local congregation.
- Encourage members to listen to and respond with openness and respect while acknowledging that genuine differences exist and to build on shared hopes and values.
- Encourage ministers to exchange pulpits and allow congregations to invite one another to their festivals, Holy Communion and bazaars. Consider one another as important and as 'comrades' in the service of God (Acta Synodi 2004:403).

The General Synod of 2004 said, inter alia, the following on the unification process:

The DRC reconfirm its serious and clear commitment to the re-unification of one Church with the other three churches of the Family, URCSA, DRCA and RCA. This commitment is based on the conviction that the Lord asks it of us – to his glory (John 17:23) and because of our mutual calling (Ephesians 4:4) and witness in Africa now. We believe that we, as family, belong to each other and that we need each other and together we can make a difference in our country.

The DRC regrets it that the unification process drags on. We are convinced that there are enough grounds for the process to start again.

The General Synod then highlighted some of the grounds, namely a shared history; the fact that all churches have already accepted the Formula of Unity; and the Confession of Belhar is in essence accepted. Good co-operation structures are in place in many congregations and presbyteries. Church schism must be avoided at all costs and, as the process develops, other issues will be dealt with (Acta Synodi 2004:311-313).

In *Die Kerkbode*, 9 July 2004, there was a report on the Conventus of Unity between the Synods of West and Southern Cape, East Cape of the DRC and the Western Cape Synod of the URCSA could discuss unification. Somebody made the following remark about the Conventus: *“The only words that can describe this Conventus, is that it is God’s doing. As the meeting progressed, mutual trust and trustworthiness grew. The meeting made a contribution to clarity and led to a mutual commitment between the role players. We will probably still make a lot of mistakes, but at this Conventus a good foundation was laid”*. It just shows that there is willingness from both sides for unification to take place. Maybe it will be sooner than we think.

In *Die Kerkbode*, 26 November 2004, Rev. James Buys elaborated on the decision of the General Synodical Commission (GSC) of the URCSA on church unity. He said that the agenda of any future discussions with the DRC would be steered by the Confession of Belhar. The GSC has rejected the decision of the DRC that Belhar can be an optional Confession of the church. He said that the DRC has to change its decision before there can be any further discussions. He said that it is alarming that the Moderamen of the DRC knew what the standpoint of the URCSA was regarding Belhar before the General Synod of 2004 had taken its decision.

In *Die Kerkbode*, 13 May 2005 it is reported that the DRC and URCSA have resumed their discussions on church unity. After frank discussions between leaders of the two churches, the URCSA will comment on it in writing. The leaders have agreed that there are certain areas where more momentum can be given to reaching unity such as co-operation amongst congregations.

Reconciliation is not cheap. It is costly. It is a process. It is a journey from point A to B and on this road are many obstacles as has been pointed out above. But ...God is still in control and He is the Author of Hope!

Up until June 2006, it seemed as if the DRC had failed its own acid test. But then Almighty God showed Himself as the God of Hope: At Esselenpark, near Pretoria, the Moderators of the DRC and the URCSA were having a meeting from 19-22 June 2006. They first gathered separately and then they came together. And as of one accord they decided that the problems, which kept them apart for so many years, have no further influence on the will to unite. In an emotional moment the Moderator of the DRC, Dr Coenie Burger confessed again the things on the DRC's part that caused problems. He received the forgiveness from the URCSA. The Vice-Moderator of the URCSA, Dr Allan Boesak confessed the things that he himself said that made unification nearly impossible. He received forgiveness. But the one thing that the URCSA had said was non-negotiable in the unification process for so many years, the acceptance of the Confession of Belhar by the DRC, was dropped by the URCSA!

On 16 August 2006 the Executive Committees of the four churches of the DRC family met in Bloemfontein to discuss church reunification and the way forward for the four churches. The discussions were open and frank regarding the road travelled together thus far as well as the way ahead. After the meeting, they issued the following statement:

In a spirit of Christian love the parties apologised to one another for the many wrongs they have committed towards one another in the past. These apologies were accepted unconditionally by all the parties.

The four Executive Committees committed themselves unanimously to covenant for the reunification of the Dutch Reformed Family. Reconciliation will be an essential part of the process of reunification between ourselves. We use the term "covenanting" because we want to bring ourselves and the reunification process under the authority of the Word of God and the will of Christ. We covenant together, not from our own will or under pressure from social and political processes, but because we believe that the Lord, who graciously committed Himself to us, requires this of us.

With regard to the issues on the table, we committed ourselves to be humble, patient with one another, and treasure the bond the Lord has

created in our family. Part of this process is that we call on local congregations and all other structures to continue to seek reconciliation, mutual fellowship, mutual support, and co-operation.

As a first step in the process, a meeting of our extended leaderships will be held on 6-8 November 2006. The General Synodical Committees of the four Churches as well as the Executive Committees of the different regional synods will meet. An Interim Committee was formed, consisting of the four moderators and the four secretaries of the Churches. The Interim Committee will do all the preparations for the historical meeting in November 2006.

The Executive Committees also decided to establish a Trust Fund for Reunification. A call will be made to all our structures and members, as well as our friends in Southern Africa and abroad to contribute to this fund to help us realise our dream.

We rejoice in the Lord! We give Him all the honour! Once again He surprised us with His grace and love for this family of Churches.

DRCA: Rev. M Lebone, Rev. J Ramolahlehi, Dr S Corrie and Dr A Hoffman

URCSA: Prof. T Kgatla, Dr A Boesak, Rev. P Makoko, Rev. C Goeman, Rev. D Maletle and Rev. P Moloi

RCA: Rev V Pillay, Rev. B Shunmugam and Rev. M Sukdaven

DRC: Dr C Burger, Prof. P Strauss, Dr N Niemandt, Rev. E Büchner, Dr K Gerber and Dr H Koornhof

Bloemfontein: 16 August 2006 (Addendum 20)

In the mean time another event had taken place. The Presbyteries of the URCSA and the DRC in Stellenbosch decided, after long discussions and negotiations, to unite. On Tuesday night 24 October 2006, the historical first meeting of the United Presbytery of Stellenbosch took place. In a statement the Presbytery declared, inter alia, that it is with thankfulness and amazement that they experience how the Lord has put them together. They said that in this way the vision came true, to accompany, motivate and support the different congregations in the practical living out of their calling to witness with a united voice.

The wheels of church reunification, which had started to turn during June 2006, were really pulling the wagon along. From 6 - 8 November 2006, 127 representatives of the

Reformed Church in Africa (RCA), The Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA), The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) met at Achterberg near Krugersdorp to discuss the reunification of the family of DRC churches and how this can be realised. This, also, was a historical meeting because of the number of delegates to speak on reunification. In the end the usual declaration was given:

As a follow-up to a meeting of the four executives at Bloemfontein, on 16 August 2006, a broader representation of all four of these churches solemnly committed themselves to the reunification of the DRC family.

The meeting realised anew the importance of the individual identities, which include differences in language and practice, for these individual churches. The meeting is convinced that the richness expressed by this diversity should be nurtured in the re-united church and should be used constructively to the benefit of the church and the Southern African society.

The meeting identified core values for the re-unification process. It appointed ten task teams to work on these different aspects of reunification, in the light of these core values. A follow-up meeting was scheduled for March 2007.

The meeting is convinced that church reunification requires shared faith convictions, mutual trust and respect. Members at the levels of church council, presbytery and synod are encouraged to get to know one another better and to address common challenges together, since the key to a reunited church lies with local congregations and their acceptance of ownership of this challenge. The meeting gratefully acknowledges the many places where this is already done. The celebration of Pentecost next year presents an excellent opportunity to strengthen relationships.

The meeting acknowledged the specific requirements and procedures of the different churches that need to be complied with in this reunification process. The meeting is part of a process in which the different churches with their congregations should be partners. The meeting is convinced that the unification process is God's direction for the DRC family and that God himself will open the doors when people see no obvious way forward. The spirit of unity and enthusiasm at the meeting was encouraging and brought hope.

The meeting acknowledges the common calling of the family of DRC churches in Southern Africa and is bound to this commitment (Addendum 22).

During 2007 there will be more meetings, as the nitty-gritty of reunification will be thrashed out. There is no guarantee that it will be a smooth road. There are already voices speaking out, especially from congregations and individuals in the Afrikaans DRC, regarding legal assistance and court cases over church properties, etc.

Indeed a road that cannot be travelled without all participants, not standing, but on their knees to hear from the Lord: “...*but the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year*” (Deuteronomy 11:11, 12).

But it is also true that there are other Afrikaans congregations (from different denominations) who just carry on as if they are the only people in South Africa and as if God belongs to them. It is a pity. The researcher is a former teacher who is very interested in what is going on amongst our youth and it is heartbreaking to observe that many youngsters from conservative Afrikaans background are just following the ways of the old South Africa, because this is the example they see in their homes and hear from their pulpits.

Maybe it has something to do with what Dr Allan Boesak is calling “*the De La Rey phenomenon*” which was influenced by an Afrikaans song ‘De La Rey’ in which the singer is looking for a new leader, a true “Boereleier” like the late Gen. Koos de la Rey of the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1901 (Boesak, 5 February 2007, Speech at Faculty of Theology, University of Stellenbosch).

5.8.2 Unity within the circle of the Afrikaans ‘Sister Churches’

One of the sad stories in the reformed Church community in South Africa is the fact that amongst the Afrikaners there are four churches with the same Confessional basis and Church governing system. For many years the three Afrikaans Speaking Churches the

DRC, NHK and RCSA were known as the ‘Sister Churches’. Since 1987 a fourth Afrikaans speaking church, the APK, became a piece of the ‘puzzle’.

As mentioned in Chapter 2 an Inter Church Commission (ICC) came into being during March 1939 to which the three ‘sisters’ belong. Through the years the ICC had on its agenda church unification between the ‘sisters’, but there have always been problems. Each of the churches sends delegates to the work sessions of the ICC where discussions take place on a wide variety of themes, which are the concern of the churches. These work sessions convene every second year. For many years the question about church unification was a pressing one, but since the mutual decision to no longer make unification a pressing issue, the discussions are more open and relaxed over mutual contributions in the community. On different levels there exist official structures through which co-operation is formalised.

The APK received observer status in 2001.

During the late 1990’s all three “sisters” were taking decisions for a Conventus of Reformed Churches. The first meeting took place in 1999. (See page 90 and following regarding the Conventus of Reformed Churches.)

It seems that the Afrikaans Churches are at this stage at ease about the status quo, which is actually a sad case. But maybe ... one day when it’s too late!

Dr Fanie du Toit, Program Manager of The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) made the following remarks about reconciliation:

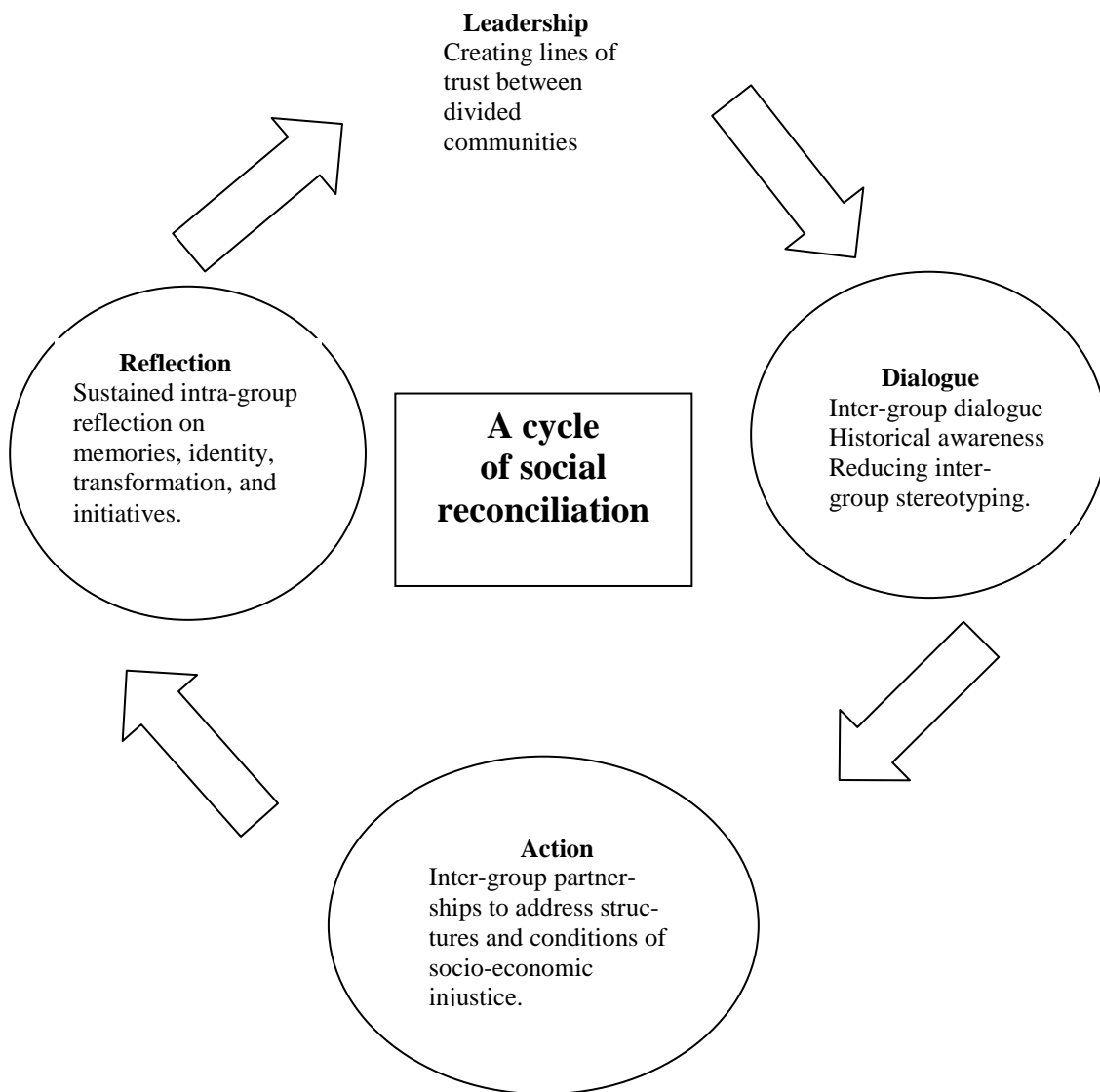
Reconciliation is only possible when the masks behind which people hide come down and people can see each others faces; when the pathos, the individuality and the dignity of others can’t be ignored any longer. It is when people look each other in the eye and realise: Here is a fellow human that is also looking at me. ...

Reconciliation is not a project that can be completed on a Saturday afternoon or by a church commission somewhere in a corner of the congregation. Because reconciliation becomes a way of life, it is a process that changes a congregation on every level. It causes opposition; any leader, who is willing to obey the Word of God on this level, will have opposition. The Christian message assents to the fact that reconciliation brings about

deep changes, but it helps us to understand that such changes are for our good.

The IJR monitors reconciliation projects all over South Africa. Many of these projects are driven by churches or churches are co-responsible for the project. During this time four themes have surfaced that are largely present as part of the process: *leadership*, *dialogue*, *action* and *reflection*. These four themes form a 'cycle of reconciliation'.

Leaders have to take initiative and create an awareness of the potential for reconciliation. *Dialogue* must start where shared values are identified and historical awareness and consensus building are promoted. *Action* must be taken as inter-group partnerships address structures and conditions of socio-economic injustice. *Reflection* is necessary to help understand the local dynamics and promoting community responsibility and working towards inter-community initiatives.



(Du Toit, 2005:154; 2003: 304)

Clarification of terminology: Inter-group – between different groups.

Intra-group – within a group.

5.9 CONCLUSION

How David Bosch would have loved it, to hear and see these things happening. When he stood in front of his audience in 1985 and said the words ‘In ordinary inter-human communication people are usually more aware of the sin of others than of their own’, he would maybe have put in the words “ in inter-church communication leaders are usually more aware of the sin in other churches than of their own”.

The TRC had done its work and thrown down the gauntlet of proposals before the faith communities. For the sake of this study, especially the Afrikaans Churches, it is heart warming to see that at least the DRC, through its General Synod and Regional Synods, had taken up the gauntlet and tried to give hands and feet to the proposals. Many onlookers would have said that it was too little too late, but the fact is something is happening through the work of the Afrikaans Churches.

When one measures the initiatives taken by congregations, it becomes clear that the theses Bosch put forth in 1985 were true and prophetically spoken. Every one that is involved in the process of reconciliation knows by now that it is not a cheap process – not financially, but in human resources, attitudes, the quest for repentance and forgiveness, etc. But the hope that it has given is unmeasurable. The words of 2 Corinthians 8:5 become true in the lives of many individuals in churches, and even congregations by and large: *“And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God’s will.” (NIV)*

When one thinks of the unification process in the Dutch Reformed family, it went through a few steps to come to the point where it is now. There had to be repentance, forgiveness spoken and received, cross bearing, listening to the Holy Spirit’s prompting, etc. The Executive Committees have committed themselves now to work with new vigour for unification as soon as possible. They have to be aware of the pitfalls along the way. Reconciliation takes place when two opposing forces clash and somebody gets crushed in between. The leaders of the different churches involved must always

remember that reconciliation is not a human possibility, but a divine gift. This is also true when the 'sister churches' are in discussions with one another and the churches involved in the Conventus for Reformed Churches.

But it is a pity that what is said cannot be said about all the Afrikaans Churches and especially about many congregations of these churches in the country. One can only keep on praying that everybody will be able to see the light, before the darkness comes and nobody can work any more.

CHAPTER 6: DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE RECONCILIATION MINISTRY: MODELS AND PROPOSALS

6.1 INTRODUCTION: HOPE FOR RECONCILIATION?

How serious are we about reconciliation? What does the ministry of reconciliation look like? Up to now we have looked at what happened in the Afrikaans Churches during the Apartheid years, the constitution of and work of the TRC, and the efforts of the Afrikaans Churches to bring about reconciliation. Now we want to ask the same question Alex Boraine asks when he thinks about reconciliation. Is it possible for a country, a nation to be healed and to be reconciled, or is it only possible for individuals or groups? Can there be healing and reconciliation of a nation in a meaningful way? (Boraine, 2000:360). Are we going to have lasting reconciliation in South Africa during the years to come? How will it be accomplished? Is their hope?

The researcher has asked the following question to seven leaders and ministers in different Afrikaans Churches: *Do you have hope for reconciliation in the country – not only at highest levels, but also on grass-roots level, in the congregations?* How do these seven people see the future of this country? Do they have hope? These persons have been selected because of their position in the church and the contributions, positive or negative, they have made in the past about issues in our country.

- Dr Isak Burger, President of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa

As regards our country, *I am a bit worried*. There is escalating polarisation in our country because of certain things that happen e.g. young people who do not get jobs. The ongoing RDP makes things very difficult in our country. At a meeting I told President Mbeki that they have to look into it. I believe that the majority of white people do not have a problem with racism, but you still have individuals whose skins are very thin. *Hope? Yes and no*. We have come a long way. I think that the problem in the future will not be the tension between black and white, but tension between revolutionary- and moderate factions. The opposition party of the future will not be a largely white party, but a revolutionary black party.

I have hope. I don't have a 1% option to leave the country. But I see things that I'm worried about. *But when we look at the church, I have hope, although I don't see growth in the white churches. But the church is growing in leaps and bounds amongst the black and brown citizens of our country. The church has a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate reconciliation and it is the one place that can be a window to show how reconciliation can and must take place.* (Addendum 1)
(Researcher's Italics)

- Dr Isak Brink, Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk. He is a lecturer at the APK Theological Seminary and also responsible for the department of Congregational Ministry of the APK.

Do you mean reconciliation between people? *(Yes)*

In our church I am involved in situations where there is a need for people to reconcile with one another.

As regards reconciliation between churches, we (the APK – R) are not fighting with anybody. We ask our congregations to normalise relationships. We experience more and more that invitations to local communities come our way. It becomes easier and in some places there is even the exchanging of pulpits between churches.

When we talk about reconciliation between people, then we must remember that *there will never be reconciliation between light and darkness and I don't think the Lord asks that of us.* The Lord made it very clear that He didn't come to bring peace between light and darkness. Because of that, *I think it is an illusion to think that everybody in this country can live together as reconciled people.*

(Q: So you have no hope?) *No, I have absolutely no hope, because this is not what the Lord asks of us. Reconciliation between believers and tolerance, yes that is something else. Tolerance we propagate as far as we go, but I don't think it is the task of the church to reconcile people with one another in the first place.* Yes, reconciliation with God and that reconciliation will work through according to the second table of the Ten Commandments. It does not mean that the church must not officially say that it wants it. This we will do but with the absolute knowledge *that I don't think reconciliation between people is possible.*" (Addendum 2)
(Researcher's Italics)

- Prof. Theuns Dreyer, Ned Hervormde Kerk van Afrika. (NHK) He acted as Moderator of the General Church Synod of the NHK. At present he heads the Theological College of the NHK at the University of Pretoria.

It depends on what one understands under reconciliation. When you look at it theologically, it is reconciliation with God, through Jesus Christ. But it also has social implications. If it is, like Paul says, that you have peace with God, and reconciliation and peace have nearly identical meaning, then this peace with God must also spill over to your neighbour and the community. Do I have hope? Reconciliation is not something cheap. It has its price. Bonhoeffer wrote about it. With a nearly 80% Christians in this country, there should be hope. But now, we had the same situation before 1994, and we had Apartheid. With this I want to say that man is a sinner although he is a redeemed sinner, but with this I don't want to say that you must give more weight to sin than to redemption. I want to say that this reconciliation is expensive and it is a process, and in our country there is still a lot of racism. And racism is the counter pole of reconciliation. There is still a lot of work to be done. Just think about the gap between the Afrikaans Churches and the English Churches. A question that arose from time to time is why haven't the English churches confessed to what happened in the Anglo-Boer War?

Do I have hope? Yes, where there is faith, there is always hope. But it is a hope and an expectation for which one must work. It is not a cheap reconciliation. The church is primarily the agent for reconciliation in the community. The church is the community of reconciled people that God gave to a society. It must be the model for those outside the church. But the problem with the church is the division in the church. Those outside the church want to know how the church can propagate reconciliation, when there cannot be unity in the church. There is an appeal to the church to move closer to one another, but it is also an appeal to the local church, to treasure unity and reconciliation and to live it. Yes, I have hope, but we must know that we live in a society where there is still a lot of tension and things like poverty, unemployment, Aids, etc. The reconciliation task of the church is unlimited. But something nearly as important is the question: What is your calling in this situation? Otherwise you must move to Australia, etc. But as long as you are here, and the Lord wants to use you to be an agent for hope and reconciliation, then you must do what you must do. (Addendum 6) (Researcher's Italics)

- Dr Willem Nicol, Minister DRC Universiteitsoord. For many years he was one of the younger voices in the DRC against apartheid and all the pain and violations of human rights.

I think we are very much blessed. I perceive these issues in very definite categories. I was afraid of right wing terrorism and I think the reason it didn't manifest, is because the Afrikaner had a proper upbringing. There are too few terrorists amongst the Afrikaners so that you can't get the snowball effect. When we look at our society in general and you notice what is going on in Zimbabwe, you realise they had too many wars. When people are warring too much, they become wild. In our society people know that they must stick together because of bread and butter issues. I don't think the powers that would like to break this country, are strong enough and the powers that keep us together are too strong. The immense poverty in our country is linked to the whole world economy, which is in dire straits during this time. For things to get better there must be some big economical growth in the whole world. I do not think we continue to employ so few people in the mainstream economy. These are the difficult macro economical questions, and I don't know how much hope I have for this. Deep in my heart, I think man is a wonderful creature. There will be plans. Although the mainstream economy can only provide for half of the people, the others will find that they must stop putting their hope on jobs. They must plant their own carrots on their own plot.

Q: So big a percentage of people indicated that they are Christians. Don't you think that the Christian hope can carry through this whole quest for reconciliation?

There are things going on and because of our Christian upbringing that we must love our neighbour as ourselves, *there are more and more congregations that are doing things that can be the catalysts to help the poor to help themselves. I think the basic Christianity of people will make a difference in the end.* (Addendum 4) (Researcher's Italics)

- Mrs. Marina van Schalkwyk, Minister's wife, DRC Lynwoodrif. She was the chairperson of the General Committee of the Dutch Reformed Church's Woman League.

Q: "As I'm listening to you, I gather that you have a lot of hope for the future?"

R: Absolutely, although it is a slow process. I'm concerned about our own people. They tell me that some pupils in our high schools are really ultra right wing-orientated. We must understand that, because they are the children who don't get jobs". (Addendum 5)

- Prof. Adrio König. Professor-emeritus of the University of South Africa (UNISA) and pastoral help in DRC Verwoerdburg-Stad. During the apartheid years he was a well-known voice in the DRC against the apartheid policy of the government.

I'm careful of the word 'reconciliation'. To say there must be reconciliation in the country. I cannot think about reconciliation other than as a theological reconciliation. Then I must say 'no', because then we must come to a point that we say that all people in Africa have been reconciled with God, and I think that is an illusion. I would rather say: the hope that there will be 'peace' or 'stability' in our country. Then I would say 'yes'. I just try to give another connotation, away from the theological idea of reconciliation.

You know our church to be politically conservative but if I look at what happened in the church the past ten years, I must tell you it is not just a leap, but a quantum-leap. The *attitude towards people* outside the church, towards other faith communities and even our own missionary work, etc. *has changed a lot*. But it's because the reality outside the church has changed and people look at it differently. Because we are at school together, we work together and suddenly we realise that our attitude must change. *I have hope that we will have stability and peace and a more tranquil atmosphere in our country; that there will be a climate of acceptance and mutual respect for each other. I think this is what is happening at the moment.* (Addendum 8) (Researcher's Italics)

- Rev. Koos Uys. One of the ministers of the DRC Roodekrans, a middle-and upper class, mostly white, suburb of the City of Roodepoort

"Positively! I just realise that I, as minister of the congregation, must work more diligently in that direction." (Addendum 7) (Researcher's Italics)

When one look at these statements, there is a general feeling of hope, but it must be a reconciliation carried by the church to the people. The church must be the model of how reconciliation actually works.

- Nico de Wet, a young Afrikaans speaking student who actually grew up in Japan where his parents, Rev. Tobie and Annalie de Wet, are missionaries.

Nico came to stay in a “township” next to Stellenbosch in the New South Africa. In a letter to his family and friends dated 15 November 2005, he testifies about his hope for reconciliation in South Africa.

He is staying with a Xhosa family who, together with several other families in the community of Kayamandi, the traditionally “black” township of Stellenbosch, are housing foreigners who come to SA to volunteer at local schools and crèches. He is, however, the first and only “white” South African amongst the volunteers, and of this apparent record his “black” host family is very proud! He testifies that he is enjoying his stay in Kayamandi and is experiencing the warmth and hospitality of his host family. The energy and optimism of the people is overwhelming and exciting.

In spite of all the positive things that he is experiencing, there is a darker side. He says:

...the saddest aspect of places like Kayamandi is not the poverty itself but the fact that it is nearly completely separated from the privileged classes of South African society. For the majority of privileged South Africans, Kayamandi is, as every other “township” in South Africa, completely avoidable if one so chooses. In fact, one needs to make an effort to be aware of the situation(s) of these neighbourhoods/subtowns. Apartheid has quite skilfully made South Africa into a musician that holds two opposite extremes right next to one another with the one extreme knowing virtually nothing of the other.

This “separation”, however, is the reality of the entire world; yet here in South Africa it is so bizarre, for the privileged are physically and emotionally separated from the underprivileged in spite of the diminutive distance between the two. It is like placing a city in Japan, for example, right next to a town in Malawi - two completely different worlds operating right beside each other. It is somewhat shocking that eleven years has passed since the dismantling of the Apartheid laws, yet little has changed. Eyebrows of “white” people still rise when they hear of my residence in Kayamandi. It is amusing, though saddening, as I walk into Kayamandi, to see heads turn with stunned, white faces as they drive past me in their vehicles.

He ponders the fact that so few white people have ever been in a township and have never seen the schools, they don't know about the broken families, about child abuse and the many who grow up without the presence of a father. They have stereotyped black people as those who will stab, rape and mug one if he dares go into the township.

...Well, I have sustained no stabs or any vicious blows by the way. In fact, all I get from these people are smiles. These people smile and are happy, regardless of their abject poverty and are most friendly toward me. There are many, in fact most I have come across, who attempt fervently to break the cycle of poverty; who are people with great integrity. There are people here with hope and energy that "skrik vir niks!" (Fears nothing)

But they need help. There are barriers that not even the most talented and energetic can overcome. The challenge for me, and every other "Whitie", in this country is not merely to reach out and become aware of the lives of "black" people, but also to become part of these people and allow them to become part of us. They are not merely "Blacks"; they are our brothers and sisters, our fellow South Africans, our fellow Africans, and our fellow human beings. We need to literally hold hands and rebuild this country together. We need to help one another! The fact is: everyone will be better off! Through friendships respect and trust are built much easier.

I am so proud to be African, especially South African! The energy and opportunities in this country are truly unrivalled! But it is sickening that many of us live in prosperity, while many of our fellow South Africans are uncertain whether they can feed their families for the day. I agree with the sentiment that the past cannot be blamed anymore. We are ALL accountable for what happens NOW, TODAY, in this country!

Can we still turn our backs on the situation in our beloved country? Can we as Afrikaans Churches keep on ignoring the proposals of the TRC?

The Lord has given to individuals and groups of people the insight and the methods of helping and assisting people to get rid of pain caused by circumstances in the past.

In the next few paragraphs models will be looked at that can be used as instruments in helping churches to understand reconciliation.

6.2 MODELS OF RECONCILIATION MINISTRIES

One of the problems of faith communities and especially the Afrikaans Churches in South Africa, with the exception of a few of the ‘mega-churches’, is how to start working on a plan to bring about reconciliation in communities. For many years churches have been busy in townships and other informal communities to help with soup-kitchens, literacy classes, upliftment of women and other projects with very good results, but it has still remained something that “we are doing for them.” Many church members busied themselves with these, without becoming involved in the day to day living of those with whom they worked – without knowing anything more than, maybe the names of the “helpers”. I have experienced that in many of these cases it is still the idea of the “have’s” reaching down to the “have nots” and that the latter had to be very thankful for what has been done for them. But when all is said and done, the “have’s” returned to their plush suburbs and homes, without worrying about or inviting the other party to visit or have a meal together. Reconciliation is much more than this and therefore it is so important that churches be accompanied on the road to reconciliation by organisations whose task it is to assist with this.

Some of the models of reconciliation ministries that are at the moment being used in our own and some other countries will be discussed in the next paragraphs. Congregations and groups, who are really committed to work towards reconciliation in their communities, may find a suitable model for their context or can be helped to work out their own program.

6.2.1 Institute for Healing of Memories (IHOM)

The Institute for Healing of Memories (IHOM) was set up on 1 August 1998. It grew out of the Healing of Memories Chaplaincy Project of the Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence and Torture. When the TRC was established, it soon became apparent that only a minority of South Africans would have the opportunity to tell their stories before the

TRC. It was argued that platforms needed to be available for all South Africans to tell their stories. It was in this context that the Healing of Memories workshops were developed by Fr Michael Lapsley as a parallel process to the TRC.

In his book, *Michael Lapsley, Priest and Partisan. A South African journey. (1996)*, Michael Worsnip recorded the life of Michael Lapsley, the Director of the Institute for the Healing of Memories. He was born in New Zealand in 1949, at the beginning of the Apartheid era in South Africa. At the age of thirteen he read the book by Trevor Huddleston, *Naught for your comfort*, which had an incredible impact on his life. At the age of seventeen he entered the Society of the Sacred Mission (SSM), an Order in the Anglican or Episcopal Church. In 1973, at the age of 24 he arrived in South Africa and enrolled at the University of Natal (Durban) where he also worked as a chaplain to students on two black campuses and one white campus until 1976. When he came to South Africa he was a pacifist and his speeches and sermons displayed a passionate and convincing commitment to pacifism based on his belief in the value of humanity and the human person. He had begun to understand the sharp realities and the implications of living in South Africa with a white skin. Soweto 1976 was a turning point in his life and on 30 September 1976 he left for Lesotho, which at that stage was already the base for many fugitives. He was asked to continue as National Chaplain-in-Exile by the Anglican Student's Federation.

His years in Lesotho were characterised by ups and downs and in the end he left Lesotho and went to Britain for consultation with the Director of the SSM. During this time it was decided that he should enrol at the University of Zimbabwe and he was able to secure for himself a job in the Diocese of Harare. On 1 August 1985 he became the rector of Mbare, a township in Harare.

During his years in exile outside South Africa, Lapsley was actually a thorn in the flesh of the South African government and it was on 28 April 1990, that he had opened an envelope with magazines from South Africa and a letter bomb exploded in his hands. He lost both hands, the sight in one eye and part of his hearing.

After his recovery he returned to South Africa and worked in the Diocese of Johannesburg headed by Desmond Tutu. He became chaplain of the Trauma Centre for

victims of violence and torture from 1993 to 1998 and during this time he developed the Healing of Memories workshops as a parallel process to the then forthcoming TRC (Worsnip, 1996; Du Toit, 2003:264-265).

IHOM seeks to contribute to the healing journey of individuals, communities and nations. In addition to running workshops the institute also holds seminars, discussions and sermons which are aimed at assisting individuals and groups to cope with traumas of the Apartheid past. Workshop models are being developed to help people deal with feelings such as anger, hatred and guilt about the past, in order to move towards reconciliation and forgiveness in the interest of self-healing. An experiential way of learning about and from the past is used in the workshops.

Each of the workshops facilitates an individual and collective journey, which explores the effects of the nation's past. Emphasis is placed on confronting the issues raised on an emotional, psychological and spiritual level, rather than on an intellectual one. The workshops provide a unique opportunity for participants to experience and relate their unique journey, while sharing with others in theirs. Common themes that arise in a journey – such as anger, hope, hatred, joy, isolation, endurance and a discovery of the depth of common humanity that are shared – are reflected upon. Participants work together to create a celebratory liturgy which includes poetry, dance, song, prayer and readings. This life-affirming ritual functions as a symbolic release from destructive memories. These workshops provide encouragement to people to take an important step on the path towards healing and wholeness. It attempts to assist victims to become victors so that they are helped on their road to creating a new life for all. (IHOM Pamphlet of Introduction)

These workshops are seen as just one step, although often important, in the journey towards healing and wholeness. Healing memories does not mean forget the past, but rather try to find a way of no longer allowing memories to paralyse or destroy participants. It is important to find that which is life-giving and to put all that is destructive behind; to find ways of preventing history repeating itself and of breaking the

cycle of victims and victimisers that has been lived with for so long. These workshops are an attempt to assist victims to be victors, and help them on the road to new life.

International workshops have been conducted as response to invitations in the following countries: Rwanda, Eritrea, Sri Lanka, East Timor, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Northern Ireland, Germany, Australia and different cities in the USA.

The researcher attended one of these workshops in the Western-Cape and can testify to the immense help he experienced, to become free of memories from the past that were still lurking in the darkness of the mind. After this experience, he tried to establish how many Afrikaner people had attended one of these workshops. The reaction? A shocking few! In an article, *This takes some understanding and effort!* in *Footprints*, the Newsletter from IHOM, David Botha of Buvton (Bureau for Continuing Theological Training and Research – Stellenbosch) and facilitator at IHOM, made the following comments:

White Afrikaans speaking people have a defective insight into the pain other fellow South Africans had to suffer because they lack meaningful contact with them. The emphasis here is on “meaningful”. They tend to deny the gross atrocities that were done to other people during the Apartheid years because it is too painful to acknowledge. They also disclaim any complicity in the cruelties of the past. They often excuse themselves with the statement: “We did not know.” This leads to a dismissal of any responsibility for the past. But they are also ashamed of the truth and afraid of being blamed for things they did not do.

Like all other people *they also prefer to suppress their own pain rather than to deal with it openly.* (Researcher’s Italics) This is especially true for those who were operationally involved in the propaganda for and maintenance of Apartheid. Men are mostly the victims of this suppression. This pain is aggravated by anger towards the political leaders of the past who used them and who now refuse to take responsibility.

Afrikaans speaking people had an ambivalent experience of the TRC process and many even ignored it completely. They are therefore suspicious of anything – like our Institute – that has any alliance with the TRC.

To expect from them to attend a three-day workshop is asking a lot. Mostly they are not prepared to make such a big sacrifice. ... Church politics also plays a role in the fact that potential workshops do not take place. Internal

politics in congregations and between congregations often smother initiative. The leadership is mainly responsible for this. These are some of the realities we face in trying to involve more white people in our workshops. ...It is of utmost importance that we do involve everyone in our society in our workshops. For only together we can become whole!

In Chapter 5 of his thesis, C H Thesnaar (2001) examines in detail the liturgical moments of a weekend workshop. This will not be repeated here but what is necessary for this discussion will be referred to.

Within the South African context, as is true of others also, it is important that victims and perpetrators must realise that attending such a workshop and taking part in the liturgical elements of healing is not a warranty for healing and reconciliation between them. *Every workshop warrants the first step on the journey to healing but the journey cannot warrant that a person will, after attending, be healed already.* (Researcher's Italics)

What is the aim of the journey? Every journey is in fact a collective journey, which wants to determine the effect of the years of Apartheid on victims and perpetrators. It is to remind each individual of the past so that it can be dealt with. Accent is laid on the effect of Apartheid on the emotional, psychological and spiritual aspects and how to handle it. This type of journey provides the unique opportunity for victims and perpetrators of different cultural backgrounds to visit examine and experience their own individual journeys. During this process they can also share in the journeys of others through their stories.

During the journey at the workshop, every victim and perpetrator will have the opportunity to spend time on individual reflection, creative exercises and listening in small groups to each other's stories. There will also be opportunities for participants to reflect in the big group on general themes and issues that surfaced in the small groups. Themes that usually emerge are: anger, aggression, hope, hate, isolation, guilt, endurance, shame, pain, suffering, etc. Questions such as, where was the church during this time, also surfaces. Why did the church and government lie to us? Must I forgive? Can I forgive? How does forgiveness work? Must we confess to one another?

The impact of the story-telling and the discussion of the themes and questions are so intense during the big and small group meetings that the participants become aware of one another's humanity. Together with this each one becomes aware that he or she shares in the other's humanity.

See Addendum 24 for some of the elements of a weekend workshop program.

The effectiveness of this workshop is based on the creativity and adaptation in any given situation. It is important to know that this journey is only the first step for each one on the road to healing and wholeness. This can help to make a contribution to the process of reconciliation in South Africa (Thesnaar, 2001: Ch 5).

6.2.2 Mercy Ministries South Africa (MMSA)

Mercy Ministries SA (MMSA) is part of Mercy Ministries International (MMI) with its head office in Switzerland. From their **Mission Statement** it is clear *that Mercy Ministries is an international, cross cultural, professional group with the passion to impact a needy world by caring for, and equipping, Christian workers through the integrated ministries of member care, ethnic reconciliation and community development. As a Christian community, with shared vision, MMI practice these ministries in different places around the world.*

The Cross is central to all aspects of our ministries. Our priorities are to offer Christ centred services to the least evangelised, highly traumatised, least developed, and/or complex humanitarian emergencies. We are committed to developing cross-cultural resources on behalf of and for Christian workers. We initiate and encourage interagency co-operation and standards to better develop, serve and protect Christian workers....

In South Africa, MMSA concentrates currently on Biblical ethnic reconciliation which flows over into community development. It would also like to develop the ministry towards member care for Christian workers (pastors, missionaries, etc.) because we are all very well aware of the need for that in our country.

The process by which people are accompanied in Biblical reconciliation was first developed by Dr Rhianon Lloyd.

Dr Lloyd grew up in Wales and had been trained in medicine and psychiatry and, after working in this field for a couple of years, she joined Youth with a Mission (YWAM) in 1985. After a few years she was asked to set up a course for Operation Mobilisation (OM) to minister to the needs of Christian workers. She then joined a team from Medair (a Christian relief organisation) and worked for a time in Liberia and then, from September 1994, she worked in Rwanda, at the beginning of the genocide.

She was invited to join African Evangelistic Enterprise (AE) and since 1995 they began to run three-day workshops for Christian leaders in Rwanda on ‘The Role of the Church in the Healing of the Wounds of Ethnic Conflict’. After doing this workshop, people found themselves able to forgive and reconciliation started to take place.

During 1998 her work came under the cover of Mercy Ministries International, also called Le Rucher Ministries, because Le Rucher is the residential centre situated near Geneva, Switzerland.

In 1996 Africa Enterprise invited her to South Africa to run the same seminars in Kwa-Zulu Natal and as a result she also conducted workshops in the Western Cape and Gauteng. Getting the ministry launched in South Africa was much more difficult than in some other African countries. The reason seems to be the fact that groups in South Africa are not really in a “state of war”, and getting reconciled is not a matter of life and death. Handing the ministry over in South Africa took a while longer, because of people who didn’t really count the cost before making commitments. Reconciliatory work is not for sissies. But a core team has been trained and from 2004 until the end of 2005 thirteen workshops have been conducted in communities and churches all over the country. (Newsletter: Rhiannon’s Ramblings, May 2006)

The workshop is called: *Healing the Wounds of Ethnic Division*. In South Africa at this stage MMSA concentrates on bringing *Christians*, especially *leaders* from different ethnic and church backgrounds, together and, through a process, accompany them on a road of healing, forgiveness and reconciliation at the foot of the cross. It is not focussing

only on the pain experienced during the years of Apartheid and the struggle, but involves all traumatic experiences in the lives of participants.

One of the foundation stones of this Ministry is that the Cross of Jesus Christ stands in the centre. It is only through Jesus as the Pain Bearer (Isaiah 53:4, 5) that there can be healing. In a safe environment, participants are able to experience healing and develop new perspectives and attitudes. They are then equipped to influence others to demonstrate a new quality of relationship and bring hope to their communities. At present the workshops are being conducted in South Africa, Rwanda, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Wales. (Mercy Ministries Pamphlet)

When MMSA speaks of reconciliation, they do not mean a political process where people from different backgrounds work together. Neither do they regard reconciliation as a social issue whereby people work together in our country merely tolerating one another. People can work together, tolerating each other for years but still have deep pain and bitterness in their hearts towards one another, not being able to forgive one another for injustices of the past. When they speak of reconciliation, they mean the reconciliation which is read about in the Word in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 and other Scriptures. This is true sustainable reconciliation where people open their hearts to one another and accept each other as brothers and sisters in the Lord, because they are first reconciled to God. Forgiveness and reconciliation are only the end products which occur at the closing of the process, after the people have received healing from pain and bitterness and anger which they might have harboured in their hearts for many years. The participants are taken through an entire process, of which each part builds on the previous, culminating in a climax at the end when they can celebrate their childhood of God, blessing and affirming one another in Christ.

The workshop is normally presented over a weekend from Friday night to Sunday afternoon or as the church or group's program allows it. Ample time is given for lecturing, story telling and interaction, small-group activities as well as a celebration time.

There are certain principles at the roots of this workshop:

1. *The church must be recognised as God's agent of healing and reconciliation.* In every situation, God is the God of hope (Romans 15:13), and He places His hope in His people (Ephesians 3:10-). In every nation His strategy is to use the Church. The Church is His agent of healing. But first it needs healing itself. That's why the strategy is to call together the Christian leaders from every denomination and ethnic group to spend three days together in God's presence, where they could encounter His healing love.
2. *Overcoming cultural barriers in expressing emotion.* Different cultures express their emotions differently. This can be a major obstacle in helping people towards healing. The only way is to focus on Jesus as the transcultural model of perfect humanity from whom all cultures could learn.
3. *Finding God in the midst of suffering.* 'Where was God in April 1994? Where was He on 11 Sept 2001?' These are some of the questions that introduce this part of the workshop. A safe place must be created where participants could own their doubts and voice their inner questions without fear of being condemned. Church leaders are encouraged to allow people to ask their questions, and to be merciful with those who doubt, seeking a deeper understanding of God's ways.
4. *Discovering Jesus as the Pain Bearer.* It's only when we are assured of God's intentions and feelings towards us that we can risk coming to Him with our pain. Jesus as pain- and sin Bearer must be discovered. It's not only our sins that are on the cross but also all the consequences of sin. In the workshops people are helped to look at the Lamb, Who is inviting them to offload their grief on to Him.

5. *The need to hear and be heard.* Before pouring out their pain to the Lord, participants also need to listen to one another's hearts. Small groups are used to create a place where they can share their stories. They are not only to listen to the facts but also to the pain in each other's heart.
6. *Understanding real forgiveness.* There is a need to understand Biblical forgiveness and its cost. Forgiving others requires the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb just as much as our receiving God's forgiveness.
7. *Discovering Jesus as Redeemer.* Another key is to discover Jesus as the Redeemer – not only of our sins but also of all our lives' tragedies. Holding on to the bigger picture of God being able to redeem everything gives hope to face the future.
8. *Exploring God's way of dealing with ethnic conflict.* Because ethnicity gives people a significant part of their identity, ethnic conflict is an attack on the core of their being. The workshop focuses on two ways of coming to a place of reconciliation:
 - *Discovering a new identity in God's Holy Nation*
 - *Standing in the gap with identificational repentance.*

Addendum 25 gives an overview of the topics that are covered during a workshop.

The researcher has had the opportunity to be involved in these workshops and can testify to dramatic changes that start occurring in the lives of people of different ethnic groups, but also amongst members of the same church, when they have learned to bring their pain and suffering to the cross of Jesus Christ and reach out a hand of forgiveness and reconciliation to others.

MMSA is experiencing the same problem as other organisations e.g. IHOM, namely that so few white people, and especially Afrikaners, are attending the workshops. Those who attend are normally members of multi-cultural churches, which invited MMSA to help them with reconciliation.

6.2.3 The Foundation for Church-led Restitution (FCR)

The Foundation for Church-led Restitution was born when one man received a prophetic word from God that believers in South Africa should be responsible for restitution and that the church will be the body that has to facilitate this process.

In February 2002, 13 Christians from diverse backgrounds started to meet regularly to discuss the South African Church's responsibility towards restitution. They agonised over the biblical basis for such action and its role for the healing of the divide between the poor/black church and the rich/white church. This culminated in the establishment of the FCR in 2003. (Robertson, 2005:132-134; www.restitution.org.za)

In communication with Deon Snyman, Director of FCR, it becomes clear that since its inception the Foundation focused on advocating the importance of church-led *restitution* within the South African society. The Foundation has as its Vision to see the South African church begin modelling biblical restitution that will bring justice and healing to the nation. The way it will be done, i.e. its Mission, is to be a catalyst for biblical restitution within the South African Church community.

This was primarily done through *workshops* where church members from all spheres of society around the country shared and discussed their personal stories and understanding of biblical restitution. Networking and partnerships have been formed. Conferences were held with a number of articles written for publication. Two farms donated by Charles Robertson helped with the establishment of the Foundation and the initiation of a bursary fund.

Presently various *restitution discussion groups* are meeting in Cape Town. Christians from the rich/white church and from the poor/black church meet monthly. Relationships

are being formed and personal stories are being shared. Healthy debates are leading to practical ideas on implementing restitution.

The Restitution Foundation is working towards establishing a church-led restitution people's movement and sees its future role as a catalyst within the broader church community. Specific focus areas were identified as cornerstones for such a movement:

- Prayer.
- Discussion groups.
- Job creation.
- Housing for the homeless.
- Land reform.
- Restitution opportunities around the 2010 Soccer World Cup.
- Rendering of professional services.
- Quality education for disadvantaged.
- Advocacy for a just South African economy.
- Propagating restitution.

Task teams are being established for each focus area with a mandate to:

- Identify restitution initiatives.
- Establish partnerships.
- Mobilise the church community.

In order to realise these focus areas, FCR's strategy is to establish task teams for each focus area. Task team members will meet bimonthly to develop and implement specific business plans with measurable outcomes for each focus area and raise the necessary financial support needed. Each task team will be responsible to identify existing restitution related initiatives within a specific focus area, to establish partnerships with these initiatives and to mobilise the church community to participate in these initiatives. (www.restitution.org.za)

Robertson holds a belief that "restitution can be applied in a spirit of asking forgiveness and charitableness and with an awareness of the numerous wrong deeds of the past

against others. It is the beginning of a process to rectify the sins of the past” (Robertson, 2005:104).

According to the FCR it is very important to get all believers of all races of all church denominations involved in this Church-led restitution. All in all there are three areas of involvement: the givers, the receivers and the facilitators. Thus the people who are involved have equally important roles to play. Immediately it brings us to the realisation that not all people will accept this church-led restitution. From many corners there will be opposition, but these reactions must not stand in the way of restitution. Let us look more closely at this process as Robertson explains it (Robertson, 2005: 105-112).

The givers: The FCR is of opinion that all believers, irrespective of their back-ground or financial situation, must be motivated to become givers. There is no indication of how much or what must be given because giving has to do with the attitude of the heart. Hand in hand with the giving process is the idea of development of relationships between the giver and the receiver. If this is not happening, the whole process can develop into a system of paternalism.

The receivers: These are the people who are in need and suffered some injustice and can deliver proof of that. It is important to mention that those who believe they ought to get something must be helped not to have unrealistic expectations.

The facilitators: As facilitators we have the local congregations, because the church is still seen as the most reliable facilitator irrespective of all the complaints about the role of the church in society. FCR has identified five areas from those mentioned above, which the churches, as facilitators should focus on:

- Prayer for and teachings about prayer for restitution.
- Participation in discussion-groups. Believers of different ethnic and culture groups can come together and discuss openly and honestly issues about restitution.
- Healing of the wounds that givers still have because of things from the past that they were involved in.
- Help for people to experience again or for the first time their human dignity. This is one of the greatest needs in our country and people

need to be set free and trained to be human again on different levels i.e. spiritually, socially, emotionally, psychologically and economically.

- Establishing of long-term relationships between giver and receiver of a restitution gift.

When we look at these things we cannot but say that the church as facilitator has an immense task on its shoulders in the whole quest for restitution. Especially in South Africa where the reality tells us that it's normally the white churches that have the riches and the black churches that are lacking in the necessary means for day to day living.

6.3 DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

6.3.1 Introduction

As the researcher is working in the field of reconciliation, he has come to the conclusion that he harboured a few important questions in his mind about some major issues. Why do the Afrikaans Churches not really want to get involved in a process of reconciliation in our country? Is it only the Afrikaans Churches or do the English Churches also struggle with this? It seems as if there is a strong apathy from the majority of Afrikaners to get out of their self imposed prison and start living in a free country as part of the 'rainbow nation'. The researcher experienced that there is an atmosphere of growing frustration or even hatred building up amongst the rank and file of white citizens and it becomes more and more visible in the Afrikaans Churches, especially as regards the possible re-uniting of the DRC and the URCSA. The researcher also sensed this in conversations with some ministers of the URCSA that the "people on the ground" can't really see the necessity of such a venture. As has been discussed in previous chapters the Afrikaans Churches came through a difficult time after the dismantling of Apartheid. It was a time of introspection, confusion, disillusionment, denial and a feeling of being uprooted. Meiring mentioned the work of Kübler-Ross, renowned worldwide for her work in the field of trauma counselling, and came to the conclusion that the process

people are going through in any traumatic experience can also be applied to the Afrikaner. Kübler-Ross said that patients, who are confronted with severe trauma, go through certain stages, which function as defence mechanisms. These stages are denial; anger; negotiation and rationalisation; deep depression; acceptance. In one way or another, the Afrikaners are going through this. Furthermore the situation of escalating violence, corruption, criminal activities, land reforms, etc. is not making it easier for the Afrikaner minority. And then there is the quest and urge for reconciliation ...and this seems too much for them (Meiring, 1999:112-114).

There is an aloofness of many white people as soon as they hear that one is working in a cross-cultural situation, especially in the field of reconciliation. Rev. David Botha also mentioned that he came across that as facilitator of IHOM (See par 6.4.1). The researcher has tried to motivate church members and even ministers to attend workshops of IHOM, but as soon as some of them heard that Fr Micheal Lapsley is involved, they were turned off because of his involvement in the struggle during the Apartheid years. The congregation where the researcher worshipped invited him once to talk about reconciliation and quite a number of congregants walked out of the service when he shared his testimony and his alliance with the ANC. To others it was a blessing, but the question that the church board asked afterwards was whether it is worth the trouble to invite a person like him to talk about reconciliation, because during the days following the church service, there were lots of complaints. Some felt that they can't see the necessity of making extra attempts towards reconciliation as it seems that it is coming only from the white population group. This is but one example of many where we experience that the average Afrikaans church member does not have the desire, and don't even see the urgency, for reconciliation. The researcher visited a friend, and some of his Afrikaner friends were present as well, with their guns strapped to their sides. The whole evening the discussions centred on the problems in the country and how they would love to use those guns – and they were all Afrikaners and members of Afrikaans Churches. How do you engage such church members in events of reconciliation? And how do you present the need so that they, and there are thousands like them in our country, will see

the necessity of a changed attitude and a willingness to get reconciled with God, their fellowman and themselves?

During workshops on reconciliation people have the opportunity to talk about their pain. The researcher has listened to many younger black and coloured people experiencing an inward resentment towards white people, and the previous white government, for things that happened to their parents and grandparents as the result of the policy of Apartheid. It is only after they have realised that many white people also harboured pain because of these things, and even because of what is happening currently in the country, e.g. RDP (Reconstruction and Development Program) and young white people leaving the country, etc. that they are willing to forgive and to start working together for a better future for all the peoples of South Africa.

6.3.2 Researcher's own position

6.3.2.1 Introduction

As a Christian I believe that true, lasting reconciliation is not possible if it is not founded in what Jesus Christ has done on the cross. I believe in what Alex Boraine said that reconciliation in the Christian religion is not earned, but is a gift from God. All that is expected is that it must be accepted, because nobody deserves it. When one is reconciled to God it always involves reconciliation with one's fellowman and in the reconciliation process there are "a number of steps that take place: confession, repentance, restitution and forgiveness. The focus in traditional Christian religion is very much on the covenant between God and the individual, and the bridge to that relationship is Jesus Christ. At its best, reconciliation involves sacrifice and commitment" (Boraine, 2000:360).

To be reconciled to somebody else means, for me, that I must know who I am, that I am rooted in God and His Word because He is the one who reconciled men with himself in Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17-22) If this is true of me, then I must, first of all, make sure that the other person also has a relationship with Jesus Christ. Only then can our hearts really connect and is true reconciliation possible.

Reconciliation doesn't occur on one level only, because, as mentioned in Chapter 1, four relationships had been distorted if not totally broken during the Fall of man: The relations between God and man, man with himself, man and man, man and nature. In each of these relationships it is necessary for the church to have a clear picture of what is meant by reconciliation and, from this, develop a definite strategy for how it is going to accompany its congregants in the reconciliation process i.e. what is its role and what will its role be in the future. It is also important that the church empowers its congregants to get involved in acts of reconciliation and take responsibility for it.

6.3.2.2 *Truth, forgiveness, justice/restitution and reconciliation*

In this whole process there must be the ongoing quest for truth and justice with all that it entails. To do this it will mean that the church will have to change many of its beliefs and traditions. In order for this to happen it would require more preaching from the pulpits regarding God's requirements for truth, forgiveness, justice/restitution and reconciliation. This then will require that preachers/church-leaders would have to ensure that their message is focused on the practice of being a Christian everyday – and not only on Sundays. I think many of the reasons why churches do not have a clear picture of reconciliation, and their role in the process, is because of a wrong or distorted church view. (Research Problem 1) What is church? Who is church? Do congregants (and for that matter, church goers) understand that the Church is the Body of Christ and that each local church and its members are part of this Body? So, when we talk about the church and its responsibilities in reconciliation, it boils down to the role of each church member's role. This will challenge not only the church view but also the worldview of many church members. It is my sincere opinion that truth, forgiveness, justice/restitution and reconciliation are not something that is taught only, but is the living out of an everyday intimate relationship with the Lord. I firmly believe that if this is not going to be the pattern for how the churches, and especially the Afrikaans Churches, will live in the future, we can talk about reconciliation without getting anywhere.

We in South Africa must realise that it is not only a matter of reconciliation between black and white, but also amongst the different black ethnic groups in the country. When

I talk to people from the different ethnic groups, it becomes clear that in the political realm, a stressful situation is developing between two large ethnic groups, the Zulu's and the Xhosa's. I am not so sure if our reconciliation efforts are focusing on these situations as well.

Truth:

As has been showed previously, one of the main objections from Afrikaans Churches to the TRC was about the question: *What is truth?* Now Christians know that it is not a new question, because it was the same question Pontius Pilate posed to Jesus' words "...for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of the truth listens to me." (John 18:37, 38)

Boraine focused our attention on the TRC-report which stated that there are four kinds of truth: (1) Objective of factual truth, which in South Africa's case had to do with things that were revealed as a result of public findings and particular incidents and specific people. (2) Personal or narrative truth, where victims/people's own stories and oral traditions play a major part. (3) Social or dialogical truth, where the experience plays a role and that can be unearthed through interaction, discussions and debate. (4) Healing and restorative truth, which means that the 'truth' which is uncovered, must contribute to the reparation of the damage of the past and it must help with prevention of the same damage in the future (Boraine 2000: 288- 291).

I believe that truth can be a very subjective concept because it also has to do with the person's /organisation's/church's life philosophy and worldview. And that again depends on a lot of influences from all corners of the spectrum. Even if the question is asked of the church regarding a certain matter (or dogma), a myriad of answers will be given e.g. the different English Churches will see this as the truth, the Afrikaans Churches will say that is the truth, the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches will each have their own view and then we haven't even began to hear the views of all the African Independent Churches. So what is truth? Ten years after the TRC there is still a lot of "truth" that hasn't be told with regards to the old government system; but what about speaking "truth" in the current situation in the country? The big question for me is: "Truth" according to whom?

As a Christian I tend more and more to change the question to: *Who is the truth?* This changes the whole issue of truth because Jesus Christ Himself said:

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6) And later He spoke of the Holy Spirit and said: *“...and (the Father) will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth”* and *“But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth.” (John 14:15; 16:13)* So, when we talk about truth, we talk about a Person and the relationship with that Person.

Wouldn't it have been something, during the years of Apartheid and the time of the TRC, if the people who were involved in atrocities had spoken from a basis of an intimate relationship with the Person of Jesus Christ? I know that many of the witnesses, victims and perpetrators, at the TRC said that they were Christians, but so have more than 70% of South Africans indicated on the State Census the past couple of years – with no change in the situation in our country. It's even getting worse day by day.

Forgiveness:

It has already been said, quoting Bonhoeffer, that reconciliation is not cheap. The reason? Forgiveness as pre-requisite for reconciliation is so costly. To forgive is one of the hardest and most costly things in the world. What other model is there for us on how to forgive than the model we have of how God forgave us. For Him to forgive us, cost Him the death of his Son, Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary. Taking up this model in our situation means that someone has to pay the price, someone has to take responsibility for sin against humans and the pain inflicted by that sin.

If it is difficult to give forgiveness, it is just as difficult to ask for forgiveness, because it asks of one to repent of wrongs (sin?) against others. It asks of one to exhibit one's brokenness before God and openness before fellowmen. And I believe that is too costly for a proud people like the Afrikaner. Often we hear the remark: *How many times must we still ask for forgiveness?* This comes mostly from the Afrikaners and certain groupings within the Afrikaans Churches. *Must we still be made the skunk of the world?* I believe that's why so few Afrikaners attend inter-racial gatherings, whether cultural or Christian. It is because of fear of being pointed at. The result of this is that nobody wants to take the responsibility to stand before the world, as Jesus did on the cross, and become sin on behalf of your people group. Then, when a person like Mr Adriaan Vlok did that,

what ought to be the everyday way of life of the individual Christian and Christian Church, the majority say ‘Too little, too late’, instead of following the example in his or her circle of influence. From my own experience in the field of reconciliation, I agree with Alex Boraine who made the comment that during the era of the TRC, “the willingness to forgive, to start again, cut across men and women, black and white” (Boraine, 2000: 354). But, I want to state categorically that if we, as Afrikaners and the Afrikaans Churches, are not going to ask for forgiveness from the people of South Africa and extend unconditional forgiveness to others, we can forget about lasting reconciliation in this country. There are enough Scripture references on what forgiveness is and what it is not. I believe it would do church members good to look at those again.

Justice/restitution/reparation:

These concepts are not new in the Christian language but it has been brought to the front by activists during the years of struggle for a free South Africa – especially the word *justice*. Although the idea of *restitution* was, for many years, and still is, used in the context of evangelism and revival, it has actually, with the idea of *reparation*, come to the fore during the time of the TRC, because of the work of the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee, as well as through the work of The Foundation of Church led Restitution (FCR) (See par 6.2.3). Antjie Krog made the comment that “...reconciliation and reparation go hand in hand. The one cannot be without the other. If people don’t get reparation, they won’t forgive. If people are not forgiven, they won’t offer reparation” (Antjie Krog, 2002:130). Desmond Tutu quotes from the TRC report as he said “without adequate reparation and rehabilitation measures, there can be no healing and reconciliation, either on an individual or a community level ...In addition ... reparation is essential to counterbalance amnesty....The Government should thus accept responsibility for reparation” (Tutu, 2000:58).

To understand the full extent of this, it is necessary to look more closely at the concept of *justice*. According to *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, the word *justice* has the primary meaning: (a) right and fair behaviour or treatment (b) the quality of being fair or reasonable ... When one thinks about the situation in South Africa at the moment it is difficult to be unbiased when thinking about justice. From the black population there is the cry for justice over the past, especially on the issue of restitution and therefore the

land claims. From the white people there is the cry for justice because of reverse racism and the Redevelopment program of the Government, which resulted in many white people losing their jobs. There is a saying doing the rounds: *The most terrible thing that can happen to you in South Africa today is to be a white male*. As a result of this situation, many skilled white people are leaving the country for countries like Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Canada and the USA. This leads me to the idea of emphasising the distinction between *retributive justice* and *restorative justice*. The chief goal of *retributive justice* is to focus on punishment. Boraine is quoting Tony Marshall who explained that “restorative *justice* is about restoring victims, restoring offenders and restoring communities (Boraine 2000:426). Regarding restorative justice Desmond Tutu said that:

...the central concern is not retribution or punishment, but in the spirit of *ubuntu* the central concern is the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships, a seeking to rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community he has injured in his offence (Tutu 1999:54,55).

I agree with Tutu when he said that when we make efforts to work for healing (of memories and hurts) for forgiveness and reconciliation, then restorative justice has been served. But I am afraid that we still have a long way to go in South Africa, and particularly in the white community, to reach this goal.

Reconciliation:

I want to take the most common meaning of the Greek word *katalasso* = *to change from enmity to friendship*, as basis for this discussion. I believe we use too much theological and even political/social jargon when we speak of reconciliation, so that the average church members get lost in it all. The question that I grapple with is: *How can we help the people in the pew, the churchgoer, the person who says he/she is a Christian, to go out and start ‘doing reconciliation’?* Yes, I agree with Meiring when he said, inter alia, that:

Reconciliation and truth go hand in hand; reconciliation requires a deep, honest confession – and a willingness to forgive; justice and reconciliation are two sides of the same coin; for reconciliation to happen, a deep commitment is needed (Meiring, 2002:286, 287).

I want to stress the last few words of the above quotation: *for reconciliation to happen, a deep commitment is needed*. The church, and for the sake of this study, the Afrikaans Churches, need to commit themselves to reconciliation on *all* levels of the community in which they serve. Like revival, reconciliation can also become messy and it needs people who are not afraid of getting dirty, in the event of working for that for which our Lord Jesus Christ has given his life – to reconcile people with God and with one another and He has given us the ministry of reconciliation. (Romans 5:1-12; Ephesians 2; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21). Bosch’s comment (Ch 5) is of importance here. He said that repentance and conversion (which are the basis of reconciliation- R) usually touch those things in our lives like our standing in society, ego, self image, etc., the things without which, we think, we cannot function. But in the course of reconciliation, one has to ‘die to self’, forget one’s ‘pedigree’, like a Paul.

6.3.3. Suggested Model

It is important to take note that this model is suggested for use in the Church, whether English or Afrikaans, but since this study concentrates on the Afrikaans Churches, the researcher had them in mind while developing this.

The researcher suggests that this model be worked through in the form of a workshop, consisting of different sessions, in a non-threatening situation. The best way may be to think and work together in small-groups so that participants can experience that they are in a safe place where they can share with one another without fear. By working through this, congregants, including the church leadership and especially the minister, can be empowered to become involved in reconciliation. (Research Problem 2) Experience with these types of workshops has shown that *the role of the leader is of utmost importance. If the leader is afraid to be open and vulnerable, it can create tension amongst the participants and they will not participate whole-heartedly during discussions and other activities*. In many churches there is still the problem that congregants see their minister as being more exalted than the ordinary members are and expect from him super-human qualities. The researcher thinks that the most important thing to remember is that reconciliation must become a way of life. It’s not a once-and-for-all event or seminar or

workshop, but an attitude of the mind, because at the foundation of it all is an intimate relationship with God, the Creator and Sustainer of life – of all people.

The researcher suggests that the following must be included in a plan that must be worked through by the participants. Ample time must be allowed for discussions and intra- and inter-personal reflections. If the participants could come from different ethnic backgrounds it will be much more rewarding to work together to accomplish a common goal: that of coming to know one another in a safe place and to get “the feeling” of one another’s mindset and even culture. The researcher thinks this is one of the major problems in our country that we have been living together for many centuries but still don’t know one another’s culture and way of thinking.

1. Background: It will be beneficial to have a few short small-group discussions on the issues of truth, forgiveness, justice and restitution and reconciliation. This will depend on the age groups represented. Not many people, especially some white people, have taken much note of the discussions regarding these topics in the debate during the time of the TRC. So it would be a good idea for people to get some clarity in their own minds of what they think regarding these. The following questions may be included to stimulate the discussions: *What do you understand under the concept of reconciliation? What do you think needs to be done, or needs to be known, for reconciliation to take place? What is truth? Are there different kinds of truth or is there only one, ultimate truth? Would you consider a question like: Who is truth? How would you define the concept of forgiveness? Would you say it is easy to forgive? What about asking somebody’s forgiveness? Would you say that asking and giving forgiveness is a prerequisite for reconciliation? Do you think we lived in a just society prior to 1994? What do you think regarding the situation today? How would you evaluate the next statement: Restitution/reparation is absolutely necessary before true reconciliation can be achieved?* These or similar questions can be discussed in alternate groups if there is not enough time for every group to discuss them all. In the end feedback from the groups is important, because it will give an indication of how much the participants have grown in their understanding of the current issues in the country.

2. **Biblical basis:** Christians can go to no other source than the Bible to find a basis for profound reconciliation. It is important that the church must first of all ask what God's view is on reconciliation before we ask the world. Material from Chapter 1 par.1.7.2, and others, can be used as background. Both the Old- and New Testament's witness on reconciliation needs to be discussed. One suggestion is that participants in small groups can discuss some passages from the Old- and New Testament. From Old Testament passages such as Genesis 1:24-28; Exodus 32:31f; Lev 17:11f; 2 Chronicles 7:14f; Isaiah 53; Isaiah 61; Mica 6:1; Daniel 9:3; etc., we can deduct that disturbed relations have profound social and cosmic implications. Reconciliation follows after the acceptance of accountability, expressed in a confession without 'buts' or 'because of circumstances'.

New Testament passages that can be included in the discussion are Matthew 5:23-24; 18:21f; Romans 3:25; 5:5-15; Ephesians 2; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Colossians 1:20f, etc. During the discussions it may come to the fore that the gospel asks from us to be defenceless, broken and naked before others.

Following this, it is suggested that a thorough discussion of 2 Corinthians 5:17 be held, beginning with the concept of the '*new man*'. Attention must be drawn to the fact that the regenerated man in Jesus Christ is no longer living according to the laws of the Kingdom of Darkness, but that Jesus Christ has brought him out of that and placed him into the Kingdom of Light (Colossians 1: 13-14) and must now live according to the principles of the Kingdom of Light (God). These principles include humility, obedience, repentance, forgiveness, dying to self, openness and brokenness, servanthood, endurance, faith, prayer, etc. There are enough Scripture passages that underwrite these principles.

When these few concepts are understood, it becomes clear that the Christian cannot live without a clear understanding of what God's idea is about reconciliation. From here on it is now relevant to look at the broken relationships, as mentioned earlier. Each of these will comprise a separate session of $\pm 1 - 1\frac{1}{2}$ hours..

3. **Healing of the broken relationship between God and man:** It is good to start with God and man and the broken relationship between them. Starting with God, questions such as: *Who is God? Can God be seen? How do we know there is a God?* In

discussion groups a few minutes can be allowed to let each person make a drawing of how he/she sees God. It will probably be one of His attributes, but that doesn't matter. It's not necessary to go into any dogmatic discussion of God, but it will be good to point out a few of His attributes as He has revealed it in the Scriptures. Through this the people will come to have, once again, or for the first time, a vision of who God really is. *God is supreme and sovereign; God communicates with man; God is omnipresent and omniscient – everywhere all the time and He knows everything; God is omnipotent – all-powerful; God is holy and righteous; God is loving, merciful and gracious; God is faithful and immutable – He never changes.* Some Scripture verses that can be used as a starting point are: 1 Kings 8:27; Ps 147:4, 5; John 4:24; Revelation 1:8; Col 1:17; Isaiah 9:6; Romans 8:15-17, etc.

Man: God, of his free will, created man. Nobody said He had to do it. He just said: *“Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (Genesis 1: 26-27 NIV).* Some questions that can be included in the discussion are: *Why do you think God made you the way you are? Since you are made in God's image, how will your life reflect Him? What would you say is your greatest need? What happened to this beautifully created being? What would you do when you find yourself caught in making a mistake in front of others? What do you think is the worst thing about disobeying God?* The purpose of these questions is to get the participants to a point where they understand what went wrong in the relationship between God and man.

God had created man good, but disobedience towards God resulted in the breaking of the relationship (Genesis 3:1-24; Romans 1:24ff; 5:12-21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 2:1-3). Since sin came into this world through one man, redemption has been worked through one Man, Jesus Christ and through Him God worked, in his grace, reconciliation with Himself. (2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Ephesians 2:1-21) Because of this work of Christ, man received a new identity: no longer an orphan but God's child (John 1:12); no longer a rebel but justified (Romans 5:1); no longer separated from the love of God (Romans 8:35); salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:13,14), etc. Man also has a responsibility and that is to accept it, to believe that Jesus Christ died for his sins and, by doing that, he

is grafted into the tree of life, Jesus Christ, and becomes a child of God. (John 1:12; 3:16; 1 John 5: 11-13)

3. *Reconciliation of man with himself:* It is important that the participants must have time to think about their own lives. It is suggested that each person draws a time-line of his own life and marks, if possible with dates, events that happened during their lifetime that have had an impact on their way of thinking and on their behaviour. It will be good if the leader of the seminar/workshop takes the lead by using his own time-line as an example. It is of the utmost importance that each participant must be honest with himself and his situation. This is the only way truth can be served. We are living in an age where there is no time left to beat around the bush as to who we are and where we came from. It is of no use to try and please people, but when you are alone with yourself, it is a different story. Discussion of each timeline in the small group will help participants to voice things that they most probably have never talked about before. Further questions might be posed for reflection. *How do you see and think about yourself? Are you satisfied with what you see and think?*

It is important to show participants that there are different dimensions in each one of us: The heart/spirit in the centre; Emotions; Will; Mind and Physical body. The researcher here uses the concept that Neil Anderson followed in his book, *Victory over darkness, 1990 (Reprint 1996)* when he tried to help people to become whole. With the fall of man each of these aspects was affected, which in essence has an effect on all life's faculties: faith, reason, relations, work, sexuality, etc. and these need also to be brought in line with the 'new identity' – they need reconciliation. Therefore it is important to spend some time thinking through these dimensions and allow the Holy Spirit to work in you for the healing of each.

Another important suggestion is to introduce the concepts of *openness and brokenness and dying to self because* it is of utmost importance to understand these in order to start seeking reconciliation with fellowmen.

Openness and brokenness: Is there a difference between these two concepts? The researcher would like to define it as follows: *Openness is to not live behind a mask, not*

building walls around you, but to be transparent. This bring accountability to the fore; no more 'beating around the bush'. It means to be open to people around you, which doesn't mean that your deepest secrets must always be made known – there is a place for that – but that people will know exactly where they stand with you. Brokenness is an ongoing, constant way of life – a moment-by-moment lifestyle of agreeing with God about the true condition of my heart and life as He knows it to be. Thus brokenness is to be open before God as David said in Psalm 139:1 “O Lord, You have searched me and known me.” And in v23 he said: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxieties” (NKJV). Today it is very difficult for people to think in categories of pain, mourning, humbleness. No, our culture is obsessed with feeling good, looking good. We want everything to be as painless as possible. The researcher once read in a gym: “No gain without pain”, but today we want the gain without the pain. This is also true when we think about the majority of Afrikaners and reconciliation. David understood that God was not looking for religious acts or devout acts. In Psalm 51:17 he wrote: “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart – these, O God, You will not despise”(NKJV). God wants a humble, contrite heart and if this does not become part of our daily lives as Christians we will have a difficult time in working for lasting reconciliation. Families will keep on living separated from one another until fathers, mothers and children have been broken and when this happen churches will again be the vibrant witness and instruments for revival and reconciliation in our country. Maybe this is the crux of the problem for the Afrikaans Churches in their struggle with efforts of reconciliation. (Problem 3)

Many believers are afraid to think about the concept of brokenness because they think it means that you must walk around sad and gloomy. There is the idea that broken people never smile and enjoy a joke. In her beautiful book, *Brokenness*, author Nancy Leigh DeMoss makes the comment that brokenness is not a feeling or an emotion, but rather a choice that one makes to live a life in total commitment to God – “the absolute surrender of my will to the will of God...submitting myself to His direction and will in my life” (DeMoss, 2002: 53).

Dying to self: Most of us struggle with the ‘Me-Myself-I’ syndrome, which causes much trouble in relationships with others. I believe that one of the problems amongst Christians is that we tend to stand too much on our ‘rights’ á la the whole issue about Human Rights. If we will only remember that in the Kingdom of God we don’t have rights but privileges, it will be easier for us to accept one another and to live reconciled lives. To die to self is a concept that is found throughout the New Testament – just look at passages like Mark 8:35; 10:29-31; Matthew 19:16-21; Romans 6; Romans 12:1,2; Gal 2:19,20; Philippians 3:7-11;etc. There is the story of the theological professor who wanted to make this concept very clear to his class. He took them to a nearby cemetery and let them gather around one of the grand tombstones. Then he told one of the students to curse the person in the grave with all the language skills that he had. After a while he asked the student to start praising the person. When he was finished, the professor asked the class: “When the person in the grave was cursed, what did he do?” The obvious answer was: Nothing! “And when he was praised, what did he then do?” The same answer: Nothing! The lesson to learn from this little story is that when a person is dead, he cannot react to anything. So *to die to self* means just that – to be dead to anything that comes to you from people, whether it is a curse or praise. The only thing that matters is what God has to say about you.

The researcher believes that if this will be our attitude as Christians, and especially as members of the Afrikaans Churches, much more will happen regarding our relationships with our fellow-men.

4. *Reconciliation between man and man:* Where do we find the necessity for reconciliation in relationships? Everywhere. Whether it is in the family, the workplace, society, the church, etc. In our country there is a need for reconciliation in all the above spheres, but especially between the different ethnic groups. As mentioned above it is not only conflict between white and black, but also amongst the different black ethnic groups. The way to go about helping people resolve their conflicts is not so easy. There is a wholehearted belief that every situation has its spark of hope and our task, as Church, is to help fan that little flame into something that will change the face of our country for the better.

Nowadays the concept of time-lines and drawings is a well-known method of helping people to come into contact with their fear or pain. A suggestion is that during the discussion of the present topic, participants should receive a big piece of paper to draw his or her life story in pictures, especially as it relates to conflict areas – whether family, church or race related, etc. An important concept to understand is that it is not so easy for people during the story-telling time to open up because of intrinsic fear of “what are the people going to say about me?” That’s why it is important that participants understand the whole concept of openness, brokenness and dying to self. Here already is a situation where they can practice it and the leader must point this out to them. People also fear being judged or victimised – especially the Afrikaners. In the small group these drawings can be shared with one another, or if the person does not feel safe enough in the group, he or she can share with the leader.

After the small groups shared their life drawings there must be time for quiet contemplation on what was heard. Then a time of sharing in the big group can help to bring the whole concept of reconciliation with one another into the spotlight by giving a time for confessions towards others in the group – especially if it is an ethnically mixed group. The leader should help others by taking the initiative in this. Assist participants to confess and ask forgiveness for own sin or negligence but also to ‘stand in the gap’ for others of their group. If a person is confronted with personal sin(s) in his life, let him write it on a piece of paper to deal with later. This works to the respect of confidentiality and building of trust.

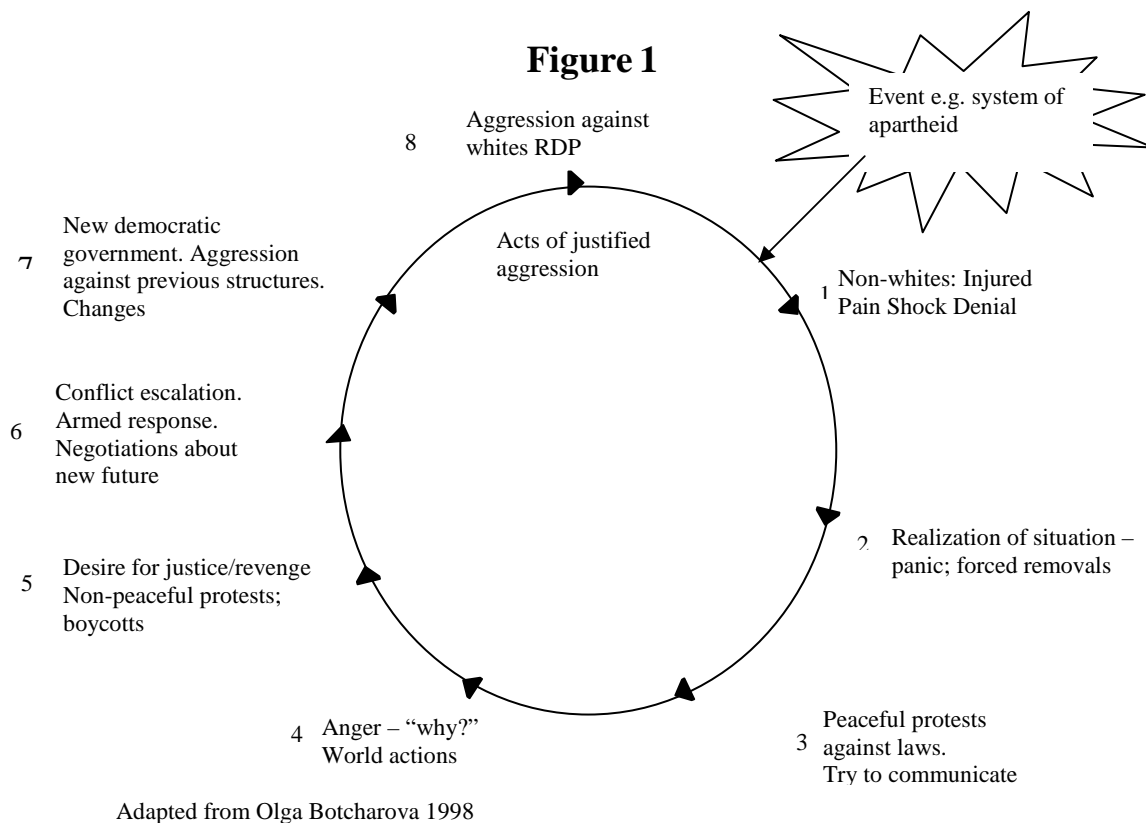
During the late 1990’s and early 2000’s, the researcher was, amongst other things, a lecturer at a Mission organisation’s Bible School. One day during a counselling period, and this was after the work of the TRC has been completed, one of the black students, a man of 27, told the class that he was part of a group who were involved in throwing stones at people who had been ‘necklaced’. The student group was small and he used this method of allowing each one to mention something from the Apartheid period as they remembered it. He was astounded to experience something of the pain in those students. Scenes of violence, midnight raids on houses, etc. were deeply engraved in the minds of those young men. How is it possible to ignore the hurts and pain against one’s family and

ethnic group? May be this is the reason why white South Africans shy away from opportunities to hear these and other stories? Is this the reason why so few white people attended the hearings of the TRC? He believes we, as white people do not want to be confronted with our own fears and pain. We believe we can ‘cope’ – until someone “cracks”, and then we want to apply some ointment.

It is important that participants understand the origin of the fear and hurts they carry with them. These will emerge from their drawings and it may be handled in the group or individually, as the case may be. It is therapeutic to talk about it, but then it must be dealt with, and my experience is to lead people by bringing all their fears, hurts, pain, and personal sin in prayer to Christ. He not only became sin (2 Corinthians 5:21) and died for the sin of the world, but 1 Peter 2:24 told us that we were also healed by His wounds. (Cf. Isaiah 53:5). There are different ways to make this experience something to remember: some people nail all the papers with hurts and sins written on them, to a wooden cross; others put them in a bucket and burn them, etc. The researcher suggests that a person should have two lists with him (if necessary) one with personal sins and the other with personal fears and pain. Take the ‘sin-list’ and let the people confess these one by one to the Lord. As an act of accepting His forgiveness, write across the list the words of either 1 John 1:7b “...and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies me from all sin.” or 1 John 1:9: “If I confess my sin, He is faithful and just and will forgive me my sins and purify me from all unrighteousness”. (Underlining words make it more personal).

Another suggestion is that notice be taken of the work of Olga Botcharova, who has a good reputation for solving conflict- and reconciliation problems amongst former enemies. It can help us to understand not only what is going on inside me, but also in the other person who seeks reconciliation. In two articles, *Implementation of Track Two Diplomacy: Developing a Model of Forgiveness* (Botcharova, 2001:279-304) and *At the Fork in the Road: Trauma healing*, by Nancy G. Sider (Conciliation Quarterly, Spring 2001; Vol. 20, No 2. Internet Services), it is pointed out that one of the important features of success with this program, is the fact that it has to do with unofficial interaction between people from different groups to help them to develop a process of healing and

reconciliation. (See Addendum 26 for the outline). The researcher finds it useful to take note of the diagram that was developed to demonstrate how natural human responses to being hurt and to injustices might motivate people to move from being victims to becoming perpetrators. This cycle illustrates the victim's suffering on the one hand but on the other it signifies the dangerous progression to violence where the victim becomes the perpetrator. The researcher has adapted, with gratitude, the two diagrams that Botcharova uses as illustrations, for use in his own model. Eight steps are recognised in this diagram (Figure 1) which, to a certain extent, are similar to those identified by Kübler-Ross, as noted previously.

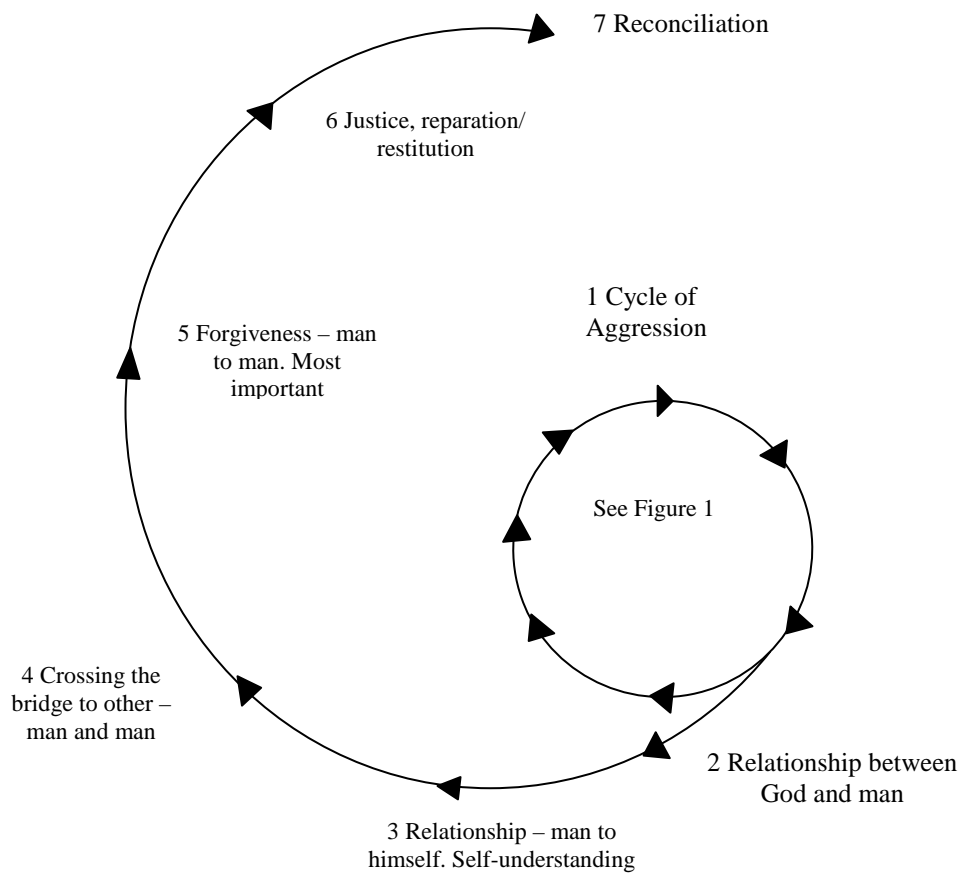


Circle to show natural human responses to hurt.

This closed circle is a reflection of typical reactions in the life of a victim (in this case ethnic groups in South Africa) in the ‘journey’ to become the victimiser/perpetrator. It should, however, be understood that not all victims would become aggressors and that not all conflicts turn into violence. Participants are challenged to help break this cycle. It is suggested that participants reflect silently on the choices they have made as victims of

conflict. This can be a time of deep inner conflict and remorse as well as an aid on the road to true forgiveness and healing, which leads to reconciliation. This is shown in Figure 2 where the closed circle, as seen in Fig 1, may lead towards a natural revenge journey, while the open circle (spiral) portrays the way out of the vicious cycle towards a road of reconciliation.

Figure 2



(Adapted from Olga Botcharova 1998)

Closed and open circles to show the fork in the road.

Some general guidelines as we consider the two circles:

1. *Trauma/Conflict healing is both a decision and a process.* The initial choice involves the decision to either move toward healing or stay in the react/revenge closed circle. It is also a process, in that it entails our being patient with ourselves (and others, where a whole community is traumatised) as we go through this journey.
2. *Trauma healing is not one directional.* It is clearly not as linear as a person's simple time-line. A person alternates, rather than follows a tidy progression from one stage to the next. It is possible that some people can move to the open circle and then find themselves back in the closed circle, again having a desire for revenge.
3. *The key is to know that a choice is available.* If you are in the trauma experience it is difficult to heal if you stay in the closed circle of trauma, anger and wanting to engage in violence. You have a choice to remain in the closed circle or to move out to the open circle – a choice to possibly becoming a healthy individual again.

Some of the questions that can emerge during this time are: Why must one let go and move to the outer circle? Why forgive or even think about it? How do we remember and tell our story so as not to be re-traumatised? What lessons can be learned – what should be taught to young people growing up in a world that has known, and still produces incomprehensible patterns of violence and torture? Would it be better to shield young people from those patterns until they grow up? What about the young people of South Africa, where you still have the vulture of racism hovering above? What about the escalating violence and the ever widening gap between rich and poor?

These, and others, are difficult questions that don't have simple answers. It is therefore absolutely vital for faith communities, and especially the Christian church, to get out of the ditches and create opportunities for people to grapple with their past and past atrocities. White people especially must be assisted to understand their own role in the situation in South Africa.

The concept of forgiveness is at the core of the model and is seen as the culmination of a healing process that makes it possible for the parties in conflict to move forward to

reconciliation. Without it there is little hope for a sustainable peace, but achieving it is a huge challenge. When you come to the Fork in the Road, what are you going to do? Take the wrong turn and keep on travelling in an inner, suffocating circle, or take the turn onto the divergent road to healing and to be set free in a reconciled society?

The researcher believes that it would be good if the participants could, as a symbol of their understanding of reconciliation and their new found willingness to reconcile with one another, partake in a short ceremony, perhaps lighting a candle or having Holy Communion together. The most important thing however is to have a commitment from everyone to go out and live a life that speaks of being a new person with new values and a new vigour to reach out to others around them.

5. *Reconciliation between man and nature/environment:* When one considers this topic, it is not so easy to assert what is meant by ‘nature’. Many concepts have been used in the past, and are still used today, to express what is meant by it. Concepts like ‘environment’, ‘ecology’, ‘the earth’ and ‘creation’ have been used and it is not always easy to determine what is meant by each one (Conradie, 2002: 181). Since the whole concept of environmental ethics has become very important, especially when looking at ‘global warming’, different kinds of pollution, more and more waste dumped in waterways, etc. it is also necessary to look at the Afrikaans Church’s action to help members understand and to do something meaningful to work against the decline of living conditions, not only in our country, but also in the world around us, because the whole world has become a ‘global village’.

The idea with this topic is not to develop a comprehensive seminar on reconciliation between man and environment, but just to make church members aware again of the time bomb on which the world is sitting. The researcher believes that many Afrikaans church members don’t pay much, if any, attention to the exploitation of nature or environment because we have become so used to the situation where the big corporations and whole countries search for more of what nature can present. It is imperative that churches send out a strong message of damage to the environment and try to propose ways that can be followed in our own living space to make the world a better place for the future.

Larry L. Rasmussen's (1996:4) quote of Sophocles' *Antigone* made an impact on the researcher as it conveys something of the "disaster" that is looming over the earth on which we live:

*Many the wonders but nothing more wondrous than man,
This thing crosses the sea in the winter's storm,
making his path through the roaring waves.
And she, the greatest of gods, the Earth –
deathless she is, and unwearied – he wears her away
as the ploughs go up and down from year to year
and his mules turn up soil.*

Yes, earth is amazingly resilient. But no, earth is not indefatigable. Nature, never spent, can be. She can be overwhelmed. One particularly powerful and errant species is overwhelming her.

Some of the problems that are posing a hazard for the environment are:

- the depletion of the ozone layer and global warming.
- air pollution due to gasses discharged from factories, motorcars, etc.
- acid rain as a result of moisture in the air combining with polluting gasses
- the dumping of nuclear waste and other toxic forms of waste
- clear felling the forests of the world, the source of life giving oxygen, for short term agricultural exploitation.
- soil erosion where good quality topsoil is removed due to overgrazing, deforestation, etc.
- water pollution from human, industrial and agricultural effluent.

Conradie stated that people who are living in urban townships "are often the victims of environmental degradation, caused elsewhere. Most of the problems people experience daily is environmental problems – even though these are usually not recognised as such". He went on to say that the people who are normally the most affected by the poisoning

and pollution are those in the poorer communities and those who are marginalised. (It is important to know that some kinds of pollution and disease know no boundary – just sniff the air during winter for example in Sandton-R) He showed that the following are some of the hazards with which people have to live:

- health hazards caused by air pollution – either through nearby industries or through braziers, the burning of coal;
- the pollution of water supplies;
- high population density with inadequate sanitation
- a high incidence of contagious diseases
- the visual ugliness of pollution, leading to a lack of basic human dignity;
- regular flooding or landslides (consider the Cape Flats, Gugulethu etc during the winter rains).
- the lack of basic infrastructure and
- cutting of trees for firewood in the neighbourhood; the struggle for political control over ever scarcer resources.

(Conradie, 2002: 188)

The haunting question, with which governments all over the globe are wrestling, is: What can be done regarding these looming disasters? There are no clear-cut answers. To look to the Bible to find a solution is the ultimate answer, because it is the Source book of life for the Christian, but as Conradie pointed out the usual Scripture references that are used for this, each has its own interpretation problem. The researcher personally believes that we can use references such as Genesis 1:27-28 and Genesis 2:15, but we must stress the notion of stewardship. We are stewards of that which God has endowed to us and we must be responsible for that, by setting the example in our own homes, by refraining from moans and groans about small issues.

Since the question is about reconciliation between man and environment, the researcher agrees with Conradie as he points out “three important dimensions of a Christian call to become involved in caring for the environment:

1. The earth is a *sacred gift* from God. The *beauty* of the earth proclaims the glory of the Creator.
2. The whole cosmos is the object of *God's continuous, creative, loving and nurturing care*.... In Christ the whole creation is reconciled with God (2 Corinthians 5:19). As followers of Jesus Christ we are called to treat others, including nature, with the same loving, nurturing care and respect.
3. The Christian hope is that the *Holy Spirit will renew the whole of creation*, that God will establish a new heaven and a new earth, that our own bodies, together with the rest of creation will finally be taken up into God's presence. To destroy creation is to turn away from this promise of God."

(Conradie, 2002:194, 196)

Thus the Afrikaans Churches can make an extremely important contribution if every member will trust the Holy Spirit to empower him or her to make a difference where he or she lives and works. It would be good if participants in this seminar/workshop can have the time to walk a few street blocks near the seminar facility and see what they can do practically to make it look better. They can visit a nearby township, just to see what the conditions are and become involved in an organisation that works there, or may even be the catalyst to bring such an organisation into being. This will help people to win back their dignity, especially when they work hand in hand with other ethnic groups. It must no longer be said, á la Bosch, that our most terrible guilt is that of which we were unaware. By becoming involved in our surrounding communities and getting our hands dirty, we can become free from being prisoners of our history and be challenged to become prisoners of hope.

The researcher believes that this model will help congregations to become ministers of reconciliation. It should be remembered that no human being can work in the heart of another – it is only the Holy Spirit that can do that. In this whole process of

reconciliation, of which confession of guilt and repentance, and the giving and receiving of forgiveness are part, we must remember that it is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

For a core PowerPoint presentation of own reconciliation model/workshop see Addendum 27.

This chapter started with some church leaders' views on hope. It is believed that this developed model can help congregations to get an overall idea of what reconciliation entails, and if they want to go further along the road to deeper healing, they can make use of one of the other models that have been shown.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1 it was stated that the aim of the study is to evaluate the contributions of the Afrikaans Churches to the process of reconciliation in South Africa. Four research problems have been identified and from this a hypothesis was generated. In the study the hypothesis has been researched.

7.2 RESEARCH PROBLEMS

Problem 1: How can churches develop a clear picture of reconciliation and their role in the process?

Problem 2: How can congregants of the Afrikaans Churches be empowered to become involved in reconciliation? Who must take responsibility for that?

Problem 3: Why do the Afrikaans Churches struggle with efforts of reconciliation? Are there any valid reasons for not continuing with the task? What needs to be done to have a greater percentage of people (congregants) taking responsibility for reconciliation in South Africa?

Problem 4: How can the process of church unity – the so-called ‘acid test’ for reconciliation – on Synodical and local level be enhanced? What should the role of the local congregation be?

7.3 HYPOTHESIS

During the Apartheid years (1961 – 1994) the Afrikaans Churches were often reluctant to exercise their prophetic calling to publicly warn against the system of Apartheid, that violated the rights of the majority of the citizens of South Africa. Many reasons can be offered for their reluctance:

- the churches didn't have a clear picture of what reconciliation entails and what their role is in the process.
- division within the Afrikaans Churches.
- misunderstanding of the essential message of the gospel of Christ.
- the inherent racism that dogged race relations in the community at large, were reflected in the churches.
- ecumenical isolation - both nationally and internationally.
- negligence of church leaders (ministers) to convey the decisions of synodical meetings to congregants and to help them to understand the whole issue of reconciliation and to empower them to become involved in it at local level.
- the struggle in the DRC family of churches to unite is the test of how motivated they are in the process of reconciliation.

The reluctance of some of the Afrikaans Churches to testify before the TRC had a negative influence on church members and Afrikaners in general. Also leadership in congregations has not paid enough attention or assisted their members to understand and implement the challenges of the TRC on the role of faith communities in South Africa. However, if the church does rise to the occasion it can become one of the major role players and the champion of healing and reconciliation in South Africa.

7.3.1 The history of the Afrikaans Churches

The history of the Afrikaans Churches goes back to 1652 when Jan van Riebeeck landed at the Cape with the Reformed Religion. For the first one-and-a-half-century the Reformed Church was situated in the Western- and Eastern Cape. Ministers from the Netherlands as well as from Scotland made the Cape their home. When the Voortrekkers moved from the Cape into the interior, they actually left the church behind and the DRC was not really interested in them. From time to time a minister would visit them, but there was no link with the Cape Synod of the DRC.

During the 1850s the Voortrekkers had settled in the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR), the Transvaal, and they called a minister Rev. Dirk van der Hoff from the Netherlands to be their minister – the beginnings of the NHK. During the same period a schism occurred when Paul Kruger and some Doppers couldn't cope with the liberalism of van der Hoff and they formed, with Rev. Dirk Postma, the Gereformeerde Kerk (currently the RCSA).

So in the second half of the nineteenth century there were three churches with the same confessional basis in the Transvaal and already there was tension amongst them. The NHK was known as *Die Volkskerk* (State Church) with no inkling of doing missionary work. In 1858 a decision was taken that the NHK will be the church for white people only. This later became the notorious Article III, which was eventually changed in 1996. In the 1880s there was unification between the DRC and the NHK to form the NH of G Kerk, but it was short lived and in the 1890s there were again three churches namely the NHK, RCSA and the NH of G Kerk. Through the years there were attempts to come closer but it was only in 1939 that the DRC and the RCSA came together. In 1943 the NHK joined the other two to form the Inter Church Commission (ICC) (Tussenkerklike Kommissie) where mutual issues were discussed. In 2003 the name had been changed to the Inter Church Council (Tussenkerklike Raad). Through the years these discussions regarded: The viewpoint of the different churches on Scripture and Confession; the relation between Scripture and Confession; study of the Belgic Confession; areas where the churches can work together and the question regarding unification of the three “sister churches”. One of the churches, the NHK has not consented to unity because it worked with concepts like plurality in unity while the DRC and RCSA worked with concepts like sinful separation and structural unity. As each of the churches had its own ethos, which was precious to their members, unification is a very emotional issue.

Because of the division it was not possible for these churches to let their prophetic voice be heard by the government, especially as regards race relations. It happened, however, that each of the churches individually had discussions with the government or with individual Ministers of portfolios. During the 1980s the DRC and RCSA came to a point where they could say that there cannot be discriminated against anybody according to race or colour, because such attitude of a person, church or state is contrary to the Word

of God. The NHK, however, because of Article III, carried on supporting the government's policy. Thus there was not only confusion amongst the Afrikaners, but also despondency by those who wanted change but didn't have the "voice". Individuals in these churches, like Beyers Naudé, Ben Marais, Ben Keet, Albert Geysers, M J Redelinghuis, and others, who did not go along with church policy, were released from their duties and in some instances their membership. In such a way the prophetic voice of some of the churches were stilled.

7.3.2 The National Party in Government

When the National Party became the new government of South Africa in 1948, the policy of Apartheid was already in place and the DRC especially gave legitimisation for it as well as scriptural grounds for the policy. Although the other two churches have not openly endorsed it, they never tried to oppose Apartheid as not scriptural. Because the NHK and the RCSA are relatively small churches their members are part of the same bigger Afrikaner community as the members of the DRC are. This is an important fact because when certain events made headlines in the DRC, the members of the other two churches were in the same community, but there was a difference. The NHK is the most conservative of the three and any event that has to do with racism was criticised as against the government.

Because the Afrikaner and his church were for many years inseparable it is not surprising to find that racism in society was also reflected in the churches. In the DRC it had begun with the decision in 1857 that, because of the weakness of some (Afrikaners), it was not possible to have other races as church members. This has been the proverbial splinter in the eye of the DRC up until now. During 1986 the DRC's policy changed with the acceptance of *Church and Society* in which it was clearly stated that the DRC is open. Although it was church policy, there was actually very little of it seen in practice. The racism that dogged race relations in the community, were alive and well in the churches. It was the same in the other two sister churches, as well as the white section of the AFM and it is even truer of the APK. It seems today that racism is still alive and well, although

there are people talking about reverse racism. This influences the Afrikaners and it has resulted in many breaking their bond with the church.

7.3.3 The DRC from 1960 onward

Since the 1960s events followed one after the other in the DRC. Cottesloe, Human Relations in View of Scripture, the Reformed Day Witness, the Open Letter, Church and Society, the General Synod of 1990, the Rustenburg Consultation, Vereeniging Consultation, the release of Nelson Mandela and the ANC government, the 1994 Synod of Reconciliation, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. All these things happened because of people in the DRC, leaders and members, who were not satisfied with the policy of Apartheid of the National government. Because of the size of the other Afrikaans Churches, these things have also had an effect on them, but as Bosch stated in 1985 that in inter-human communication people are usually more aware of the sin of others than their own sins. The average church member in the Afrikaans Churches was apathetic towards the broad policy and tends to trust the leaders and especially the minister.

What happened to the prophetic voice of the church? Research has shown that every time a voice was raised against Apartheid and the violations of human rights from somebody in the DRC, or the other two churches, (which happened very rarely, if ever), the official church leadership said the same thing: ‘Stay calm’. They then tried, in meeting after meeting, to explain to the people what was actually meant by what was said. There is one sentence that is repeatedly heard, like a silver thread through these years, when it came to conflict situations in the church, namely “*The executive urgently call up the members of the Church to remain calm in these difficult times when so many onslaughts are launched against the Dutch Reformed Church.*” These words sound familiar, because during the 1980s the people of South Africa heard time and again about the “total communistic onslaught” on the country. Congregants had not been led to see things in the perspective of the Word of God, but it was linked with the official policy of the government. After the formation of the APK in 1987, the DRC was very cautious not to say anything that

could upset more members. As late as during the General Synod of the DRC in 2004 it was said, when the unification of the DRC and URCSA were discussed, that

“It is our conviction that in the event of re-unification of the churches, we must avoid church schism at all costs... We would like to handle the process in such a way that all ministers, congregations and members of the churches will be united in the way.” (Acta Synodi, 2004:428)

It is this researcher’s conviction that if, at this late stage in the history of the Afrikaans Churches in South Africa, people want to leave the church because of any race related issue, they must do so by all means. We can no longer obey men more than God.

7.3.4 Biggest problem of Reconciliation

During this study it became clear that one of the biggest problems of *reconciliation* in South Africa, is the definition of the concept. During the late 1980’s more and more people asked about the role of the church in the situation. It seems as if there had been some misunderstanding of the essential message of the gospel of Jesus Christ and, therefore, churches couldn’t convert the theory of reconciliation into practical terms. Conferences on reconciliation were organised all over the country and churches were invited to attend. Conferences such as the National Initiative for Reconciliation (1985) in Pietermaritzburg, from which followed the Christian Initiative for Reconciliation (1986) in Potchefstroom, and the conference about reconciliation which was organised by the DRC for April 1986.

At one such conference, at the University of Western Cape, Prof. Dirkie Smit made the statement that it seems to him that in the current ideological struggle in South Africa the symbol of reconciliation does not seem to have the necessary power to transform society. He went on to elaborate, saying that the concept of reconciliation does not have the emotional value for the struggling groups in South Africa. Reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ and, therefore, it is linked with concepts like love, justice, peace and holiness (Smit, 1986: 85ff).

The difference in meaning became quite clear during the work of the TRC. The Commissioners, amongst themselves, could not readily come to grips with the meaning

of reconciliation. Archbishop Tutu used it in its biblical meaning, and this has led to the problem of people complaining that the hearings were too “Christian”. But as reconciliation is actually a biblical concept, this is the concept that the Christian churches should use when talking about reconciliation. From the New Testament it becomes clear that:

- Reconciliation is an act of God. God reconciled people to himself through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-19; Romans 5:1-11)
- Reconciliation has to do with the creation of a new humanity. (Ephesians 2:14-18)
- God reconciled the whole world with Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19)
- God reconciled the cosmic powers with Himself and with each other (Colossians 1:20)

It boils down to the idea that there are four relationships that need reconciliation: Between God and man; between man and man; between man and nature and man with himself. It is this message that didn't come through to people on ground level and therefore it was not possible to let a prophetic voice be heard as regards Apartheid and the accompanying violence in the country.

7.3.5 Isolation of the Afrikaans Churches

Since 1960 the Afrikaans Churches (especially the three ‘sister’ churches) became more and more isolated both nationally and internationally. This was because of their support of the government’s policy of Apartheid. The fact of the matter is that both the DRC and the NHC were members of the World Council of Churches but after the Cottesloe Consultation, they both resigned. In 1982 both these churches’ membership of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches were suspended. The NHC decided to resign from this ecumenical body. It became more difficult for other churches to have relationships with the Afrikaans speaking churches because there was fear on their part that this would hamper their relationships with churches worldwide. Since 1994, however, things have started to change. Firstly, because of the DRC’s attitude since 1986 when *Church and*

Society was adopted as policy document, as well as the numerous times this church confessed about its wrongs as regards Apartheid in the past. The NHK decided to get rid of Article III, which has made it impossible for people of colour to become members of the church. The RCSA was never a member of the WCC, the SACC or the WARC, so they didn't have to take up relationships again like the other two churches. The Afrikaans Protestantse Kerk (APK) was never a member of any ecumenical body although, over the past few years, they started to make contact with other churches, especially in the country.

7.3.6 Ignorance of DRC Congregants

Since 1974, with the adoption of *Human Relations in View of Scripture*, members of the DRC were actually kept in the dark regarding what was going on in the church. This problem became more acute with the Reformed Day Witness in 1980, the Open Letter in 1982, Church and Society in 1986, the General Synod of 1990, the Rustenburg Consultation in 1990, the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990 and the ANC government from 1994, the Synod of Reconciliation in 1994 and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission 1996-1998.

The members of the Afrikaans Churches were in dire straits because of the fact that very few ministers really provided enough information to their members, because of fear that members will leave the church. This has happened, especially after 1987 when the APK was formed. The demands of obedience to the Word of God were not stressed and this has led to the trustworthiness of the church coming under suspicion, together with the trustworthiness of some of the leaders of the church. A good example was the confession of Prof. Willie Jonker at Rustenburg in November 1990. This was the statement that had to be explained to church members at numerous meetings where people were asked to stay calm. Although it seemed as if the DRC had found its prophetic voice, in general the pulpits were quiet and church members were not strengthened for their witness in the work place and towards other groups. Prof. Adrio König was asked, during an interview: *Do you think our "church people" are strong enough (after all the years of being "in church") to testify/confess towards other groups?* His answer? "No, they were not made

strong to do it. They may be strong in other areas. There is in the DRC no general conviction that we did wrong and that we must confess”.

Maybe one of the biggest problems as regards this whole issue is the fact that many of the ministers in congregations didn't understand some of these things themselves and, therefore, could not explain it to their members. When the concept of reconciliation became the “in” thing, most of the people hadn't any idea of what was actually meant by it, especially when it was linked to the TRC.

7.3.7 DRC Synod of 1994

Something happened in the DRC during the Synod of 1994 when Mr Mandela had the chance to address the Synod. Not only did he extend a hand of reconciliation to the church but also the church itself extended a hand of reconciliation to its own prophets, who, through the years, warned the church about the road it had taken. A new impetus came into the church but the forces against reconciliation of ethnic groups were working very hard, as was seen later during that year when the legislation was tabled for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission for South Africa.

When the TRC took up its work in 1996, there was a cloud of negativity against it from the corner of the Afrikaners. Many saw it as nothing other than a witch-hunt and a type of Nuremberg trail. Right from the start the leadership of the DRC made it clear that the church would pray for the commission and its work, but there was a reluctance to promote the work and to lead members to a more positive attitude. Even though the TRC, and especially Desmond Tutu, in his capacity as chairman, went out of their way to accommodate the faith communities and by name the Christian churches. More than once it was said that if reconciliation and unity were to become a reality in South Africa, the energy and commitment of its entire people would be required. Dr Brigalia Bam said that President Mandela had, on several occasions, said to her that it is not possible to talk about reconciliation in South Africa without involving the DRC, because they have a strong following, are influential and the DRC members are worshippers who look to the church for guidance (Bam, 2003:27).

How is it possible that the Afrikaners could withdraw from the whole situation while there was such a high opinion of them? Maybe Dr Bam had the answer when she remarked that it seems that the churches are running away from the new issues that they have to face; especially real reconciliation instead of spending energy on survival. One thing that the church must understand is that in order to assist the world in dealing with reconciliation it must first deal with it in the church. Therefore it is of the utmost importance that the Dutch Reformed Church Family must unite as soon as possible.

7.3.8 Unification of Churches in DRC family

One of the biggest struggles for the DRC through the years has been the unification of the churches in the DRC family – the “acid test” as it is called in DRC circles. Since discussions began again in the 1980’s it happened so many times that the churches were on the brink of a breakthrough, just to be stopped in their tracks by one or other “power”. Both Rev. Freek Swanepoel and Rev. James Buys mentioned it in the interviews as stated in paragraph 5.5.1. For both the DRC and the URCSA it was not possible to talk about reconciliation while in their own ranks there were still divisions

As has been shown in Ch 5, it seems that the General Synods of both churches have at last come to a point where unification is of the highest priority for both. The meeting of the two Moderaments during June 2006 and the discussions and decisions, which were taken, show one thing: unification cannot wait any longer. God is still in control!

7.3.9 Faith Communities in South Africa

Faith communities enjoy a unique and privileged position in South African society. They are widely respected and have far-reaching moral influence. As such, they should play a key role in healing and reconciliation initiatives. (TRC Report Volume 5: 316) The further we move away from the era of the TRC, the more the Afrikaans Churches come to realise that they can’t be spectators on the periphery, otherwise they will be shunted aside and will no longer have credibility in society. Some are already experiencing it. The

final report of the TRC stated that: The vital importance of the multi-layered healing of human relationships in post-Apartheid South Africa is underlined. Relationships of individuals with themselves; relationships between victims; relationships between survivors and perpetrators; relationships within families, between neighbours and within and between communities; relationships within different institutions, between different generations, between racial and ethnic groups, between workers and management and, above all, between the beneficiaries of Apartheid and those who have been disadvantaged by it.

But it was not like that when the TRC started its work in 1996. Many voices were raised in the Afrikaans Churches to the effect that the TRC will be another “Nuremberg trail”. At the start the DRC leadership was very positive and pledged to pray for the TRC, but as time went on and more and more atrocities were made known, the negativity grew amongst the Afrikaners. Today, in 2007, there is another upsurge amongst the Afrikaners, because of the fact that some of the members of the previous government, like Mr Adriaan Vlok and Gen. Van der Merwe, are being brought before court because of things they would have been guilty of during the Apartheid years. The word “Nuremberg” is heard more and more. Most of the ministers in the churches were also very negative and this didn’t help to heal the wounds of perpetrators and victims, who were sometimes members of these congregations. When the final report was handed over to the State President, many thought that everything was over and done with and that they could carry on with their lives. But what about the proposals of the TRC addressed to the faith communities, and specifically the Christian churches? Many churches haven’t taken notice of these proposals, let alone tried to begin a process to help with the need in society. The greatest challenge today for the Afrikaans speaking churches is to roll up their sleeves and get on with the work!

Archbishop Tutu said: “*Confession, forgiveness and reconciliation in the lives of nations are not just airy-fairy religious and spiritual things, nebulous and unrealistic. They are the stuff of practical politics*” (TRC Report Vol. 5: 350).

There were enough opportunities to break free from the shackles of Apartheid; enough prophetic voices in the Church; enough opportunities for the Church to say “*Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.*” (Acts 4: 19 NKJV), but because of the interference of political leaders in the affairs of the church as well as “strong” church-leaders, the ordinary white church member was pacified that everything was under control although the country was under siege by a “total onslaught”..

7.3.10 Suggested Models

The researcher believes that the models that have been suggested to help the church in starting a process of healing and reconciliation will be of help for members to empower themselves to go out and be bridges of reconciliation in their communities.

7.3.11 All working for the good

The researcher believes that South Africa is going through a difficult time in its history, but there are enough positive powers at work in the lives of the majority of its people that a solution will be found. The current leadership struggle in the governing party, the fact that there are no strong leaders amongst the other ethnic groups, all of this will work for the good, because then the Christians in South Africa can, with renewed vigour proclaim: “*I lift my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.*” (Psalm 121:1 NIV) and: “*We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making this appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.* (2 Corinthians 5:20 NIV)

ADDENDA:

ADDENDUM 1:

Interview with Dr I Burger, President of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa.

Question 1:

What was your first reaction when the announcement came regarding the constitution of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission? Did a change occur in your mind during the work of the commission? In what way?

Response:

The TRC started its work in February 1996. It was the same year that our church structurally became one in April 1996. At that stage we were still not one, but a white division and a black division. I was the president of the white division. When you ask me about my reaction, I think I felt like the average Afrikaner at that stage. I wanted to wait and see. As the process went on, one felt that this would be a process of endless probing into the past and digging up and making public the sin of the white population. It was a time one felt ashamed and embarrassed over the things that were unveiled. But as the process went on, I experienced that it became more trustworthy. I think it was especially the role Archbishop Desmond Tutu played in the commission. I met him during the organising of the Rustenburg Consultation, when we were on the steering committee. His involvement and the way he communicated through the media brought great peace in my mind. As regards the church leadership, especially those of the white division, their feelings were about the same as mine.

When the time came for the faith communities to appear before the commission, one of the people who convinced me was my media liaison-officer, who was also a mentor of mine. We realised that we will just have this one opportunity in history, and we didn't want our children to look back, in the future, and say that we didn't do anything. At the hearings we as AFM had already been united for more than a year and we had learned a

lot of things. Many of the fears that the white people had were shown to be misplaced fears. It was not difficult for me to be convinced that we must go and testify.

The day of our conference when we united, April 5, 1996, I felt convinced in my spirit that I must publicly, on behalf of the white division of our church, ask Frank Chikane as the representative of the black and brown division, to forgive us. This had tremendous results in the church. It became one of the greatest moments in the history of our church. So, in our church we had already experienced something of what we are striving for in our country. Even today brown and black members testify that it was a moment of liberation for them.

So it was not difficult for me to come to witness. On TV I asked people for forgiveness and that was from my heart. There was healing in our church. So, to some extent we have already experienced something in our church of that which the TRC was trying to reach. With what the TRC did, it was to some extent easier to come to truth, but as to reconciliation, it was not able to really bring people to that point and the church had to show them what it actually meant.

One of the things that makes it easier for me to do what I've done, was that in a Pentecostal-Charismatic church, it is not necessary to take anything to a synod and then to the congregations to get permission to do something. I could, as leader of the church, driven and convinced by and through the Holy Spirit, do what I know was right. When I went to our leadership and told them about what I think we must do, they unanimously accepted it.

Question 2:

When the TRC started with its work in February 1996, what was the “climate” in the church? Specifically among the Afrikaans speaking members?

Response:

To some extent I've answered this already. We had an advantage in that we had already become one. The week before our uniting conference in 1996, there was some tension. As the leadership we travelled through the country because there were rumours that whole regions were going to leave the church. There was fear of what would happen. But

today, I wonder if you will find more that two hands full of people who would say that it was a mistake. We can just thank God that we did the right thing. There were no grounds for the fear people had.

Question 3:

Were there things that happened in the AFM that caused members to be traumatised in the wake of the coming elections in February 1994 and the TRC in 1996? (Example: In the DRC there were things like the Open Letter, Stormkompas, Rustenburg, etc)

Response:

We must make no mistake. The profile of the members of the AFM is exactly the same as that of the other churches. They are working and living in the same society and have the same social and economical challenges. There are people who fear that if their daughters are in church and there are black or brown boys, there will be relationships, or that there will be problems with pension funds, etc. The one difference between the road to unity in the DRC and the AFM is that the DRC has a Belhar, where we have a Frank Chikane. The same emotions, which are created by Belhar, are also with us regarding Frank Chikane. You must remember that 70% of our members are black and brown, and the chances were almost 100% that he would be the president. So we had the same hurdles and problems that had to be overcome. I cannot say that the AFM members were all of one mind and that there were no problems. But mercifully, at that stage, I was already president for 8 years and the people trusted me.

Question 4:

Some time ago I read this statement: "At the heart of the TRC's work, is psychological change." Would you say that the fact that an individual or church who stood before the TRC and made a submission could bring a psychological change in that individual or group?

Response:

Let me tell you a story of what happened. I had the document that I presented to the TRC. When I finished, I asked the Chairperson if I could show a short clip from the video that was made of the conference during the uniting of the church. It was the part where Frank Chikane and I were hugging each other. The cameras roamed over the people. You could see tears streaming from the eyes of black and white. What a psychological impact! People hugged each other. One black man came running up the stage and hugged me. Last Saturday a brown member told me that that day he was liberated from the racial hatred that he had had in his heart. Spiritually and psychologically, that moment was the culminating point in our church - the moment of reconciliation between the black and white divisions of our church. When we finished, Archbishop Tutu stood up and made the comment that they were on holy ground. He started to sing a spiritual hymn in which Jesus was glorified – and that in front of the Muslims, Hindu's etc.

Question 5:

The TRC put a challenge to the faith communities:

- to seek ways to communicate with one another as a basis for eliminating religious conflict and promoting inter-religious understanding
- to seek ways to incorporate marginalised groups into their communities
- to promote a culture of tolerance and peaceful co-existence
- to inspire their members to work together in a peace corps to help communities in need
- to organise reconciliation ceremonies, creating liturgies to heal and to celebrate the reconciliation that we experience in this country
- and, finally, to develop theologies designed to promote reconciliation and a true sense of community in the nation. (TRC Report, 1998:316ff)

Would you say that the AFM have been trying to work on this. Especially at ground level in the congregations?

Response:

On National level we, as AFM, are active on every forum where the church can make a difference. We believe in the exclusivity of the gospel. I myself was on the first religious board of the SABC from 1994. There are so many values that are common to us in this country, so it is important to join hands where we can and work together. Some situations are difficult e.g. to share the same platform with other religions, but on national level it is not impossible.

Concerning congregations, it is difficult for me to say what is going on in each one, because I don't know the situation in which each one is operating. But on national level, we are there to do our part.

Question 6:

Do you have hope that reconciliation will eventually be possible in our country?

Response:

As regards our country, I am a bit worried. There are escalating polarisations in our country because of certain things that are happening e.g. young people who do not get jobs. The ongoing RDP makes things very difficult in our country. At a meeting I told President Mbeki that they have to look at it. I believe that the majority white people do not have a problem with racism, but you still have individuals whose skins are very thin. Hope? Yes and no. We have come a long way. I think that the problem in the future will not be the tension between black and white, but between revolutionary- and moderate factions. The opposition party of the future will not be a mainly white party, but a revolutionary black party.

I have hope. I don't have a 1% option to leave the country. But I see things that I'm worried about. But when we look at the church, I have hope, although I don't see growth in the white churches. But the church is growing in leaps and bounds amongst the black and brown citizens of our country. The church has a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate reconciliation and it is the one place that can be a window to show how reconciliation can and must take place.

ADDENDUM 2:

Interview with Prof. I Brink of the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk (APK).

Question 1:

The Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk (APK) is eighteen years old. Would you say that the church has lived out its testimony as part of the population of South Africa in a significant way?

Response:

The message that the APK is bringing to its members, is a purely Biblical message. People view us as having a stigma of politics around us, but I am not worried about that, because we know what we do and what we convey to the people. If we carry out the message of the Word of God, then we trust that they will carry this message out and that it will touch the whole population of South Africa. So, I think, yes, we are doing it but according to the working of the church of the Lord Jesus. We are not doing it by making statements, especially not written statements, because the media does not love us very much except when it is sensational. We do not have the channels to carry out our message, except through our members.

Question 2:

What was your first reaction when the announcement came regarding the inauguration of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission? Did a change occur in your mind during the work of the commission? In what way?

Response:

The fact that they started their work didn't bother me. It was upsetting to hear some of the things. I think every child of God should be upset about it. But if all the things happened as it was said, is difficult to say, because many of the testimonies were not tested. That these things had an influence on me personally? No, not at all. One heard it, but it did not give us as church another message suddenly. We didn't have guilt feelings,

because it is the more conservative Afrikaner that has no problems with his workers etc. I personally think that the commission was there to lash out against the Afrikaner and not always to investigate.

Question 3:

- (a) Would it not have carried more weight amongst the Afrikaners if more individual believers had testified before the commission?
- (b) Do you think that the “church people” of today are strong enough to go out and live a life of reconciliation?

Response:

(a) I don't think it would have made any difference, especially if during that time somebody of the APK would have testified. I remember the negotiations during 1994 and 1995 and whatever we said, somebody would see the negative. Where we were, the TV cameras spotted us to see if we did or said something wrong. Was it possible to bring change? I don't know. It is only the Spirit of God that can bring about change.

(b) If we look in general to the average “church person” then I'm inclined to say “no”. In our country the message of the church carries less and less weight. If we look at statistics, it is shocking when you see the drop in attendance figures. People just don't go to church anymore. In our church we don't have such a big problem, because we are a much smaller church and smaller numbers are easier to regulate.

But let me say this. When we talk about the church of Jesus Christ, then it is strong enough to overcome anything that comes in its way and will be able to carry its message. It is the Spirit of the Lord and not man that actually carries the message. The person that lives under control of the Spirit will be able to live his testimony.

Question 4:

How did you experience the situation in the church where you worship, before and during the work of the TRC? Was something special done by church leaders to accompany people during this difficult time?

Response:

In the congregation where I served at that stage, I didn't have such problems. It was a congregation in the countryside. There was nobody who had such a problem. From there I moved to Pretoria-West and even there I didn't encounter problems. Those people don't worry about anything – they don't even read the papers. I know about colleagues who visited perpetrators in prison and tried to comfort them and their families.

Question 5:

The TRC put a challenge to the faith communities:

- to seek ways to communicate with one another as a basis for eliminating religious conflict and promoting inter-religious understanding
- to seek ways to incorporate marginalised groups into their communities
- to promote a culture of tolerance and peaceful co-existence
- to inspire their members to work together in a peace corps to help communities in need
- to organise reconciliation ceremonies, creating liturgies to heal and to celebrate the reconciliation that we experience in this country
- and, finally, to develop theologies designed to promote reconciliation and a true sense of community in the nation. (TRC Report, 1998:316ff)

Were you aware of this challenge? Would you say that the APK is working on these things, especially in the congregations?

Response:

I was aware of it, because we received all these things, but we don't do anything about it. It is not my task.

Question 6:

Do you have hope that reconciliation will eventually be possible in our country?
Especially at ground level, in the congregations where people live and work?

Response:

Do you mean reconciliation between people? (Yes)

In our church I am involved in situations where there is a need for people to reconcile with each other.

Regarding reconciliation between churches, we are not fighting with anybody. We ask our congregations to normalise relationships. We experience more and more that invitations to local communities come our way. It becomes easier and in some places there is even an exchanging of pulpits between churches.

When we talk about reconciliation between people, then we must remember that there will never be reconciliation between light and darkness and I don't think the Lord asks that of us. The Lord made it very clear that He didn't come to bring peace between light and darkness. Because of that, I think it is an illusion to think that everybody in this country can live together as reconciled people.

(Q: *So you have no hope?*) I have absolutely no hope, because this is not what the Lord asked of us. Reconciliation between believers and tolerance, yes that is something else. Tolerance we propagate as far as we go, but I don't think it is the task of the church to reconcile people with one another in the first place. Yes, reconciliation with God and then that reconciliation will work through according to the second table of the Ten Commandments. It does not mean that the church must not officially say that it wants it. This we will do but with the absolute knowledge that I don't think reconciliation between people is possible.

ADDENDUM 3:

Interview with Prof. Amie van Wyk of the Gereformeerde Kerk.

Question 1:

- (a) What was your first reaction on the announcement of the inauguration of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) for South Africa? And that of your church leaders?
- (b) Was there a shift in your mind as the TRC went on with its work? How?

Response:

(a) My first reaction was positive, because it was one of the first efforts in the world of a divided society where an official attempt was made to bridge the gap, to bring about peace and to work for reconciliation in society as far as possible. Later on there was criticism, as to the way the TRC went about its work, but the effort in itself, I personally appraised.

It is not so easy to talk about the reaction of the church leadership of the Gereformeerde Kerk. Unless somebody put it on the table it was not in the agenda of a church board, or classis, or regional synod, or the national synod. It is true of any church. How do you get such a thing on the agenda of any meeting? The TRC didn't do it, because they didn't send a letter to all the churches. So, because it was not on the agenda, it is very difficult to know what the church leadership thought about it.

- (c) All the disclosures of what happened, the abuse, the deaths, all these things touched one and you couldn't think something like this could have happened, and then not only on the Government's part, but also in the ANC camps. If these things brought about a shift in my mind? It is very difficult to determine this. It did touch me, because you couldn't understand that a situation could develop where Christians were involved in such things e.g. Vlakplaas, etc. I think my mind was changed already in as far as I made it clear for myself, that it is impossible to carry on with Apartheid. In my confession I said that Apartheid was a big mistake.

Question 2:

When the TRC started with its work in February 1996, what was the “climate” in the Gereformeerde Kerk?

Response:

It is difficult to say, because it is entwined with the past and how the churches thought about Apartheid on the one hand and on the other hand how they thought about the contents of reconciliation. Apartheid became so much part of the system of people and caused so much blinding of people, that it is difficult to say whether it was a climate of accepting, a climate of expectation, a new openness to the future. Reconciliation is not something that you can establish overnight. Reconciliation is a growth process and a person’s eyes must open to see from Scripture that reconciliation is basically to do with the relationship between God and man in Christ and that this has consequences for society. It has this mainly vertical dimension, but also the horizontal, and with this churches struggle in general. Even the English speaking churches struggle with this.

Question 3:

Were there in the Reformed church “voices” that were heard and did things happen that were traumatic for the members in the preamble to the 1994 elections and the work of the TRC in 1996? (Example: In the DRC there were things like the Open letter, Stormkompas, Rustenburg Conference, etc.)

Response:

The whole question of race relations was on the table in the Reformed Church since the 1950’s. The Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES) helped us a lot and thus protected us from one-sidedness. So, our Synod accepted in the 1980’s that the ideology of Apartheid is sin and the theological justification thereof a mistake. Whether it was realised in all congregations is another question, but the Synod accepted the resolution.

From time to time we made decisions and the most important decisions came, because we accepted the advice of the RES, who was more critical towards the social and church relations in South Africa.

In 1977 there was the “Koinonia Declaration” which came from reformed members of the church. This caused some stirrings in the church.

The ACB (Afrikaanse Calvinistiese Beweging) also made some critical statements, which caused some stirrings amongst members. The ACB held a conference on Justice in South Africa in Potchefstroom in 1976. This also caused stirrings. But then, once again it was not from within the church itself, but was initiated by Reformed people.

Question 4:

(a) Somebody made the following statement: “At the heart of the TRC’s work, is psychological change.” Would you say that the submission of a church/pastor at the TRC has psychological value for the church/individual?

(b) What did it mean for you and the other individuals to bring your individual submission to the TRC?

Response:

(a) I don’t want to say that it did not have value, but I would say that if such a submission could take place in the context of a Synod or a church setting, where, for example a white Synod sent a delegation to a black Synod to confess regarding Apartheid, etc. and ask for forgiveness, and that confession is accepted and forgiveness granted, it would have been of much more value. Then it could spill over into society and have an effect on society. Not that the work of the TRC did not have psychological value, but if you at least could start in the framework of the church.

(b) I drew up the concept of the confession, and the others helped to finalise it. In the end only two of us could present it at the TRC. The writing of that confession had undoubtedly had an effect on me. It was something of a cry of distress, and when *Beeld* heard that something was coming, they wanted to publish it immediately, although we wanted it published first of all in *Woord en Daad*. In the end it was done as we asked.

Question 5:

The TRC put a challenge to the faith communities:

- to seek ways to communicate with one another as a basis for eliminating religious conflict and promoting inter-religious understanding
- to seek ways to incorporate marginalised groups into their communities
- to promote a culture of tolerance and peaceful co-existence
- to inspire their members to work together in a peace corps to help communities in need
- to organise reconciliation ceremonies, creating liturgies to heal and to celebrate the reconciliation that we experience in this country
- and, finally to develop theologies designed to promote reconciliation and a true sense of community in the nation. (TRC Report 1998:316ff)

Would you say that the Gereformeerde Kerke has been trying to work on this. Especially at ground level in the congregations?

Response:

These things didn't come from the TRC onto the table of the church. The Reformed church sees these things as part of the gospel, as part of the things that the church must do. In the first place the church is not listening what the TRC says, but what the Word of God says. What must I do to open up communication, to incorporate marginalised groups, to promote tolerance and peaceful co-existence, to work together, etc? These things have to do with the being of the church, the church that is in its being a reconciled society and a reconciling society. The church has to be a model for society as to how one should live.

The reformed church hasn't tried to work on these because of the challenge of the TRC, but has tried to give answers from the gospel of Jesus Christ. With that I don't say that all congregations lived out these challenges, because of the diversity in the congregations. For example you will find in Potchefstroom a much more open society than in the

country, because of the integration of our theological training. As you know, the training of black pastors doesn't take place at Hammanskraal any more, but also in Potchefstroom. This resulted in more integrated congregations, etc.

An important question has to do with this point: *“to organise reconciliation ceremonies, creating liturgies to heal and to celebrate the reconciliation that we do experience in the country.”* I think in the DRC and the reformed churches you have a more open situation where a non-white person can become a member of a white congregation. But you also have black and brown congregations. And the question is whether we must not try to get these congregations closer to one another, and I think this is what the TRC had in mind. At least we must have mutual visits to one another, let a black or brown pastor preach in a white church and vice versa. I am worried that all the ASC, on average, doesn't pass this test.

Question 6:

Do you have hope that reconciliation will eventually be possible in our country?
Especially at ground level, in the congregations there where people live and work?

Response:

It depends on what one understands under reconciliation. When you look at it theologically, it is reconciliation with God, through Jesus Christ. But it also has social implications. If it is, as Paul says, that you have peace with God, and reconciliation and peace have nearly identical meaning, then this peace with God must also spill over to your neighbour and the community.

Do I have hope? Reconciliation is not something cheap. It has its price. Bonhoeffer wrote about it. With nearly 80% Christians in this country, there should be hope. But now, we have the same situation as before 1994, and we had Apartheid. With this I want to say that man is a sinner although he is a redeemed sinner, but with this I don't want to say that you must give more weight to sin than to redemption. I want to say that this reconciliation is expensive and it is a process, and in our country there is still a lot of racism. And racism is the counter pole of reconciliation. There is still a lot of work to be done. If you just think about the gap between the ASC and the English speaking

churches. A question that came up from time to time is why did the English churches not confess about what happened in the Anglo-Boer War?

Do I have hope? Yes, where there is faith, there is always hope. But it is a hope and an expectation for which one must work. It is not a cheap reconciliation. The church is primarily the agent for reconciliation in the community. The church is the community of reconciled people that God gave to a society. It must be the model for those outside the church. But the problem with the church is the division in the church. Those outside the church want to know how the church can propagate reconciliation, as there cannot be unity within the church. There is an appeal to the churches to move closer to one another, but it is also an appeal to the local church, to treasure unity and reconciliation and to live it out. Yes, I have hope, but we must know that we live in a society where there is still a lot of tension as well as issues like poverty, unemployment, AIDS, etc. The reconciliation task of the church is unlimited. But something nearly as important is the question: What is your calling in this situation? Otherwise you must move to Australia, etc. But as long as you are here, and the Lord wants to use you to be an agent for hope and reconciliation, then you must do what you must do.

ADDENDUM 4:

Interview with Dr Willem Nicol of N G Kerk Universiteits-oord, Pretoria.

Question 1:

Dr Nicol, you have been a minister in this congregation for many years. You are working mainly with the student-body of the congregation. During your time here, many things have happened in the DRC that upset members of the church e.g. Church and Society was published, the Rustenburg Consultation, change of government, etc.

- a.) How did you and your colleagues handle these issues amongst yourselves? Were you one in heart or did you differ on it?
- b.) I believe there was also uneasiness amongst members of this congregation. How did you handle it? Did any members leave the congregation?

Response:

a.) Well, I can say that I was very lucky, because, although we differ intensely from one another and wrestle with one another over these issues, especially during our weekly meeting, the whole situation never got out of hand. We didn't have any backbiters amongst us. There was a great difference of opinion and my colleagues have openly and in secret tried to persuade me to give up on my view that Apartheid is wrong. Luckily it did not become more intense than this. I am thankful that the pressure that they, and the rest of the church, put on me, and us as the anti-Apartheid group, didn't lead to a toning down of my view point. I was thankful that I could speak more clearly, up to the end of 1989, because in 1990 the National Party and the DRC, at its General Synod, gave way to the idea of Apartheid.

b.) I was lucky that I have been the minister to students. I had a few calls to "ordinary" congregations, but I turned those down, because I realised that in such a congregation it was not possible for me to continue in my view on Apartheid, without hurting the congregation. The more established part of our congregation felt that I have a wrong standpoint but that I was not actually their minister. The students, well, I didn't bother too much about talking to them about Apartheid, because I thought they were children and didn't know so much about the debating that's going on in the church

regarding these things. So I don't think too much damage was done in my ward of the congregation and the students for whom I was responsible. The most difficult years were during the-mid eighties and it is not possible to say that the congregation struggled more than at any other time in its history.

Question 2:

You were, for many years, known in the DRC as one of the younger *dominees* (*Reverends*) who struggled against Apartheid and you published and also spoke a great deal about reconciliation. How did you experience the antagonism against you, and has there been a change after the so-called "Synod of reconciliation" in 1994?

Response:

When one looks at the bigger picture, it was very painful for me, because the DRC as a whole, and other Afrikaners, not only made sure that you understood that you have a wrong standpoint. No, they go further and make you understand that you were disloyal because we Afrikaners have to '*trek laager*' (close ranks) against the total onslaught. You not only have a wrong viewpoint, but there is something wrong with yourself. Actually, you are not a "good" person. They not only differ from you, but you are an outcast. Later on, I felt that this was not good for me, because one is dependent on your primary group. They have to encourage you to go on. Luckily, the small group that we had around David Bosch, Eddie Bruwer, Willie Cilliers, Piet Meiring, and others, we tried to stick together and that helped to strengthen one. They were difficult times.

After 1990 they were sort of ambivalent, because now they knew that I actually was right. Only one said that to me, but the others didn't say anything. They felt that I was correct, but I was disloyal. And maybe it is still like that. There was a kind of bitterness, because FW and Roelf were sell-outs and you will see that it won't work and that in the end we were right. In 1994, they made an apology to Beyers Naudé and Ben Marais, but they never said anything to me. At one stage I wanted to go to the Moderator of the Synod and just tell him that I feel I am cast out like a leper and now I am just left like that. But gradually the tide changed and I think at this stage the "bad smell" I had is actually gone. This is how I experienced it, because they didn't talk to me.

Question 3:

What was your first reaction towards the announcement of the inauguration of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) for South Africa? Was there a shift in your mind as the TRC went on with its work and things were unearthed which came as a shock to us? How did you and your colleagues accompany the congregation in this?

Response:

I thought it was a good thing, because I believe in opening up and talking about things. But when the things started to be revealed, it was a time when I didn't feel like "pushing" the Afrikaners any more. I thought that we have pushed them to a point where the National Party and the General Synod said, ok, let's leave Apartheid. At that stage I felt that our people were the underdogs in this country. RDP came and our people have lost power. So they were bleeding and when the things the TRC revealed became known, the people were unhappy about it and I was not eager to make a study of what was happening. So, I'm afraid that we as ministers, with respect to the TRC, didn't really accompany our people. Later on, I wondered if this was the right thing. Now with hindsight, I must say that it had been the right thing to do. But at one stage I thought it was adding insult to injury on the Afrikaners.

Question 4:

During the time since 1994, and especially the time of the TRC, did you as ministers deliberately make an effort to lead the congregation to an understanding of and a practical living out of reconciliation?

Response:

You must remember that our congregation consists of sturdy Afrikaners. This is "old" Pretoria. The students are a diverse group, because many of them come from the country. The situation here is sensitive. I must tell you that, through the nineties, we just went on to preach neighbourly love and the other things. I felt that the role of the church is to let

the people feel they are here in this country and they can be here, it is your country, we believe in the Lord. But we didn't really talk to them about these things.

Question 5:

The TRC put a challenge to the faith communities

- to seek ways to communicate with one another as a basis for eliminating religious conflict and promoting inter-religious understanding
- to seek ways to incorporate marginalised groups into their communities
- to promote a culture of tolerance and peaceful co-existence
- to inspire their members to work together in a peace corps to help communities in need
- to organise reconciliation ceremonies, creating liturgies to heal and to celebrate the reconciliation that we experience in this country
- and, finally to develop theologies designed to promote reconciliation and a true sense of community in the nation. (TRC Report, 1998:316ff).

Were you as ministers aware of this challenge of the TRC? If so, how did you think of leading the congregation to a practical implementation there of?

Response:

To be quite honest with you, we didn't even know about this challenge. Maybe we heard about it somewhere, but we didn't talk about it. Are we involved with reconciliation at this moment? Yes, on a large scale. Here we don't talk about it, here things must happen, especially in the hostels. Here the students share the same bathrooms, the same corridors, etc. It is more difficult than just working together somewhere in an office. All of the 20 odd hostels of the University of Pretoria are integrated with \pm 40% black students in each hostel. It is not always easy, but it is going relatively well. The students know that the motto of our congregation is to live the normal Christian life everywhere.

To a very great extent reconciliation does not come through words. You can adapt to situations and we see it in the congregation.

Question 6:

Do you have hope that reconciliation will eventually be possible in our country?
Especially at ground level, in the congregations, where people live and work?

Response:

I think we are very much blessed. I perceive these issues in very definite categories. I was afraid of right wing terrorism and I think the reason it didn't manifest, is because the Afrikaner had a proper upbringing. There are too few terrorists amongst the Afrikaners so that you can't get the snowball effect. When we look at our society in general and you notice what is going on in Zimbabwe, you realise they had too many wars. When people are warring too much, they become wild. In our society people know that they must stick together because of bread and butter issues. I don't think the powers that would like to break this country, are strong enough and the powers that keep us together are too strong. The immense poverty in our country is linked to the whole world economy, which is in dire straits during this time. For things to get better there must be some significant economical growth in the whole world. I do not think we continue to employ so few people in the mainstream economy. These are the difficult macro economical questions, and I don't know how much hope I have for this.

Deep in my heart, I think man is a wonderful creature. There will be plans. Although the mainstream economy can only provide for half of the people, the others will find that they must stop putting their hope on jobs. They must plant their own carrots on their own plot.

Question 7

So large a percentage of people indicated that they are Christians. Don't you think that the Christian hope can carry through this whole quest for reconciliation?



Response:

There are things going on and, because of our Christian upbringing, we must love our neighbour as ourselves, there are more and more congregations that are doing things that can be catalysts to help the poor to help themselves. I think the basic Christianity of people will make a difference in the end.

ADDENDUM 5

Conversation/Interview with Mrs Marinda van Schalkwyk, minister's wife of the Ned Geref Kerk Lynnwoodrif, Pretoria.

Question 1:

Mrs Van Schalkwyk, thank you very much for the opportunity to talk to you. I understand that there are wonderful things going on in this congregation as regards reconciliation. Can you tell me about this “Month of Reconciliation” which you are working on at the moment?

Response:

I would like to say that this is a personal passion that I have. There are also quite a number of the congregants who see this as a commission from God to reach out to others. We know how important church unity, as well as the importance of relationships is. We started about 4 years ago to work on relationships with the Uniting Reformed Church (URC) of Mamelodi, Pagameng. They have a ward here, called Stansa Bopapi. We decided to meet people on an equal level, that is leaders and professional people, and so we invited them for a multi-cultural meal in this café. It was a wonderful, blessed evening. We just visited together around these small tables, in mixed groups, and we shared with one another regarding those things from the past, which caused pain, as well as positive things. It went very well according to the reports we received from the various groups. This was about three years ago.

The next year we did it again and decided to have a short program, like gumboot dancing, an item from the University of Pretoria and one of our own children and ended the evening with Nkosi Sikileli in English. This was a wonderful evening and we had the feeling that we began to know one another. Up to now they haven't invited us to their area for a joint project.

A subsequent project that came our way, for the women of the congregation, was to facilitate a South African Women and Dialogue (SAWD) event. Mrs. Mbeki is the patroness of the initiative. The initiative for this came from the AIDS ministry in the congregation. We have a very enthusiastic AIDS ministry and we are working together

with a mission organisation. One of the women in this ministry serves on the committee of Mrs. Mbeki's and we saw it as a wonderful opportunity to have them here. Mrs. Mbeki also visited us on a Saturday. The SAWD is an interfaith venture. We went through a stressful period, because we had to have 50 white women together. We advertised but we couldn't get enough white women, so we also invited women from Stansa Bopapi and Kagameng. In the end it was a moving experience to share stories and tears together. Some time later they came back and asked whether we could not organise a SAWD program for the whole country – an event of between 800 and 900 women. We gave a quotation but the University of Pretoria was cheaper and they have the hostels, etc. The chair of our AIDS ministry and I were asked to be speakers at this meeting. I must tell you, that we were approximately 11 white women amongst the ± 900 black women. I experienced no class prejudice amongst the women – from Mrs. Mbeki, the newly elected Vice-President and other women Ministers of Cabinet. I delivered my speech in Afrikaans, because there was interpreting services. For me, it was a wonderful and touching experience to feel the warmth and goodwill amongst all these women. (Some of these women were from the rural areas with their blankets around them.)

This year we also had the multi-cultural choir festival in our congregation, but it was only a “sit and listen” experience.

We are excited about our Arts and Decoration ministry (A&D) and we decided to present an Art and Reconciliation Festival. We got the idea from Prof. Piet Meiring's Art and Reconciliation festival at the beginning of the year. We also attended a presentation of Dr Danie du Toit of Ned Geref Kerk Waterkloof, who spoke about Art and Reconciliation through the ages. So our A&D ministry decided to work on something and invited the same URC congregations and people from Eersterus and the RCA of Laudium. We have a sponsor, so we will organise transport for the people from Mamelodi, Laudium, etc. The RCA congregation of Laudium will cater for the evening.

So our program for the weekend of 28-30 October 2005 will be: Friday evening – some items and the presentation of Dr Danie du Toit and then the meal, where we sit around tables. I have again this fear in my heart and I have prayed about it: How many of our own people will turn up? On the Saturday morning we have an Art workshop and again we get the people from the different congregations. They have to make paintings in the

theme: How do you make friends? On Sunday morning we will have Holy Communion where one of our ministers will lead the service and we have a minister from the URC who will do the preaching. Afterwards we will have tea together.

Something else that came our way that makes me so excited is to get involved in schools in Eersterus. Gangsters are a big problem in the schools. So one of our missionaries can present the Cross Roads program and we will start early next year with that in one of the schools of Eersterus. We also helped with a building team to repair one of the classrooms at a school. We have spoken too much, now we must start doing things.

Question 2:

As I'm listening to you, I gather that you have a lot of hope for the future?

Response:

Absolutely, although it is a slow process. I'm concerned about our own people. They tell me that some pupils in our high schools are really ultra right-wing orientated. We must understand that, because they are the children who don't get jobs.

ADDENDUM 6

Interview with Prof. T Dreyer of the Ned Herv Kerk van Afrika

Question 1:

- a.) What was your first reaction towards the announcement of the inauguration of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) for South Africa? And that of your church leaders?
- b.) Was there a shift in your mind as the TRC went on with its work? How?

Response:

a.) It was a stressful time, not only for the NHK, but also for all the churches. It was a stressful time for the members of the church, because the country was in era of transition and they didn't know what to expect. Suddenly the Afrikaner, his church and his history were seen as a caricature. It's not really possible to give an answer without looking at the context in which we were. In the church we tried to accompany our members to get some direction through this difficult time.

I think in the beginning the TRC was viewed negatively, not because we didn't believe in reconciliation, but because the whole concept of reconciliation was drawn into the political arena. We had so many times felt floored by the blows, that we became hyper-sensitive about becoming politically involved. We had the idea that this whole thing surrounding the TRC was a political thing to legitimise the new political dispensation.

b.) Yes, in the sense what we saw and the reports on the hearings have brought the realities of things that we didn't know about, to the surface. We, as ministers and members of the churches, trusted the Party and so it was a great shock when we heard all the things that had happened without our really knowing about it. We were disillusioned and came to realise that here are a lot of things to think through. Everything was not as kosher as we thought it was.

I must tell you that in the NHK we had never tried to justify Apartheid from Scripture although we had, in our Constitution, the well known Clause 3, which specifically excludes black people from membership. When you read the Constitution, you would see that it was because of practical reasons to make it possible for our missionary work and

the Commission of going and making disciples. Therefore we chose a method of work by establishing a church for each sector of the population. But the moment we found ourselves in a new situation where you have a society that is no longer classified on the basis of race, we realised that we have to change that clause, because it is not necessary anymore. In 1998 we have adopted a new Constitution in which Clause 3 was deleted. In this way, the TRC have brought realities into the open. We realised that the church is in a new reality and we must operate in this new reality. You must be church where you are.

Question 2:

When the TRC started with its work in February 1996, what was the “climate” in the Ned Herv. Kerk?

Response:

I think I’ve actually answered this question already.

Question 3:

Were there in the Ned Herv Kerk church “voices” that were heard and did things happen that were traumatic for the members in the preamble to the 1994 elections and the work of the TRC in 1996? (Example: In the DRC there were things like the Open letter, Stormkompas, Rustenburg Conference, etc.)

Response:

I think this was also answered.

Question 4:

According to the TRC, the NHK haven’t acted on their invitation to make a submission before them. What would you say was the reason for not partaking in the process?

Response:

This is correct. The Moderature of the General Church Assembly discussed this at length when we received the invitation. Maybe I must first give a few reasons why we decided not to react, neither ‘yes’ nor ‘no’. The moment you saw the composition of the TRC, you could see that it was already prejudiced, because the political parties, like the ANC and others, already had supremacy. The Afrikaner and the Afrikaans churches exist only on paper. So you could see that this thing was going to be driven in a certain direction. We didn’t want to be part of this ‘play’, because whatever you were going to say would have made no difference because the outcomes were already clear. The second reason was because the idea was propagated that there would be testifying and the moment you do that, you are involved in a juridical process and testimonies had to be tested. And it didn’t take long to realise that this was not going to be the case. People just came and told their stories and the media blew these stories up as if it were the truth. The moment you testify, you are part of a process where there were no tested testimonies. The question came up: what is the truth if witnesses didn’t come under cross-examination? Then you cannot claim that truth has been spoken. The third reason was that because the whole idea of reconciliation had already received a political flavour, we said to ourselves that it is important that reconciliation should take place. But reconciliation is in the first place an issue of faith, a church issue and thus we must use the church to bring people to reconciliation. In the political arena, the word reconciliation has a different meaning than in the church. We see reconciliation in the first place as between Christians, because of their relationship with God in Jesus Christ. This is a thing that must come spontaneously from faith.

If we would have said ‘yes’ and we went to the TRC, then one would have been in the whirlpool of political prejudice and one couldn’t loosen oneself from that.

If we would have said ‘no’, then the media would have made such a fuss about the NHK refusing to work with the TRC, with the implication that the NHK didn’t want reconciliation. So we decided to take notice of the invitation, because by saying ‘yes’ or ‘no’ you would have hurt the church.

But in 1998 we made a decision on confession of guilt. In the first place it had to do with confession of guilt before God and the church called all those who had had to do with

practices in the past, which could violate human rights, to confess their guilt before God and neighbour. How could you as church confess for all the people, because so many didn't even know what was going on. The church as a whole also said that, we must confess if there was something that we did wrong, which we couldn't think of at that stage.

Question 5:

The TRC put a challenge to the faith communities:

- to seek ways to communicate with one another as a basis for eliminating religious conflict and promoting inter-religious understanding
- to seek ways to incorporate marginalised groups into their communities
- to promote a culture of tolerance and peaceful co-existence
- to inspire their members to work together in a peace corps to help communities in need
- to organise reconciliation ceremonies, creating liturgies to heal and to celebrate the reconciliation that we experience in this country
- and, finally to develop theologies designed to promote reconciliation and a true sense of community in the nation. (TRC Report, 1998:316ff)

Did the NHK take notice of this challenge of the TRC? Would you say that the church is paying attention to it especially in the congregations?

Response:

If I look at the last two points, it is so typical of what I tried to say. This is a political reconciliation, which the church has to celebrate. But the question is: did reconciliation with God take place? You can only organise reconciliation ceremonies for people who are in a relationship with God. It is something different when churches thank God for the peace and stability which came in the country and to this end we called on our congregations to pray for the government. To qualify all this as that reconciliation took

place in a theological sense is to live in an illusion. I don't think, even up until today, that reconciliation has taken place. From either side. We see it from the government's side, from the black people's side. We only have reversed racism. Reconciliation in theological sense has not yet taken place. This makes it very difficult for the church to be part of such a process.

And furthermore the church must develop a theology of reconciliation. We say that the Bible has a theology of reconciliation; we don't have to develop one. It is there and we must just live it.

We must ask ourselves the question whether we acted responsibly in the situation and according to the light we had then? It is easy to look back and, with the knowledge that we have now, to say how we should have done things. But then we did things according to the light we had.

Question 6:

Do you have hope that reconciliation will take place in our country especially at ground level - in the congregations?

Response:

I'm careful of the word 'reconciliation' or to say there must be reconciliation in the country. I cannot think about reconciliation other than as a theological reconciliation. Then I must say 'no', because then we must come to a point where we say that all people in Africa have been reconciled with God, and that I think is an illusion. I would rather say: the hope that there will be 'peace' or 'stability' in our country. Then I would say 'yes'. I just try to give another connotation, away from the theological idea of reconciliation.

You know our church to be politically conservative but if I look at what happened in the church over the past ten years, I must tell you it is not just a leap, but a quantum-leap. The attitude towards people outside the church, towards other faith communities and even our own missionary work, etc. has changed a lot. But it's because the reality outside the church has changed and people view it differently. Because we are at school together,

we work together we suddenly realise that our attitude must change. I have hope that we will have stability and peace and a more tranquil atmosphere in our country. That there will be a climate of acceptance and mutual respect for one another. I think this is what is happening at the moment.

ADDENDUM 7:

Interview with Rev. JSP Uys of the Ned Geref Kerk Roodekrans, Roodepoort.

Question 1:

Rev. Uys, you have been one of the co-pastors of this congregation for many years. During your ministry many things must have happened that made the members of the DRC “uneasy” like Church and Society, Rustenburg Conference, etc.

- a.) How did you and your colleagues handle such issues amongst yourselves? Were you of one accord or did you differ about it?
- b.) I believe there was uneasiness amongst your congregants. How did you handle it? Have you lost members during that time?

Response:

- a.) There was a definite agreement amongst us as ministers. We were lucky, in that we agreed about issues like Church and Society, etc.
- b.) In the suburban congregation where I ministered uneasiness about these issues were minimal. To tell you the truth, even the “big” issues were never prominent or demanded much attention. Here and there we had one-on-one discussions with congregants.

Question 2:

How did you personally feel when the government announced the constitution of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission? Was there a change of mind after the TRC started its work and all the shocking things were unearthed? How did you, as ministers, accompany the congregation through this?

Response:

The whole issue passed me by without making big ripples. I was aware of the process and could see the necessity for the healing of our country. I sometimes had the feeling that they focused too much on the past and whom must be “taken out”. I was shocked by all

the atrocities that came out. But I still felt that there was a one-sided feel to the whole process.

This whole issue was not actually discussed in the congregation.

Question3:

During the time from 1994 onwards and especially in the time of the TRC, did you, as ministers, make a deliberate effort to lead the congregation to an understanding of and a practical living out of reconciliation?

Response:

The whole issue about reconciliation and the practical implication in the everyday life was and still is a high priority for us as ministers and we have given ample time for that in the preaching. It is still on going.

Question 4:

The TRC put a challenge to the faith communities

- to seek ways to communicate with one another as a basis for eliminating religious conflict and promoting inter-religious understanding
- to seek ways to incorporate marginalised groups into their communities
- to promote a culture of tolerance and peaceful co-existence
- to inspire their members to work together in a peace corps to help communities in need
- to organise reconciliation ceremonies, creating liturgies to heal and to celebrate the reconciliation that we experience in this country
- and, finally to develop theologies designed to promote reconciliation and a true sense of community in the nation. (TRC Report, 1998:316ff)

Did you as ministers take notice of this challenge of the TRC? How did you plan to help the congregation in this? Would you say that the congregation is paying attention to it at the moment?

Response:

I do not think this issue received enough attention in our congregation. As said in Q 3, the priority of reconciliation is high on the agenda of the congregation. When one looks at the funds that are coming in for, and being spent on, outreaches in the congregation, you realise that there are signs of efforts towards reconciliation.

Although these efforts are not structured in the way the challenges of the TRC are, the attitude is right and practical implementation continues.

Outreaches to squatter camps in the vicinity of the church, other outreaches and invitation to local government officials to church functions, are examples of practical efforts in connection with this.

Question 5:

Do you have hope that there will be reconciliation in our country not only in the higher circles but also in the congregations?

Response:

Positively! I just realise that I as minister of the congregation must work more diligently in that direction.

ADDENDUM 8:

Interview with Prof. Adrio König, Professor-emeritus, University of South Africa.

Question 1:

- a.) What was your first reaction towards the announcement of the inauguration of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) for South Africa?
- b.) Was there a shift in your mind as the TRC went on with its work? In what sense?

Response:

Well I thought it was a good thing. For so many years we fought for justice, but some of the things that were revealed were disturbing.

I don't think that there was a change.

Question 2:

For many years your voice was heard in the DRC against Apartheid, violation of human rights, etc. You were not very popular in many circles. Was there a change towards you since the so-called "Synod of Reconciliation" in 1994?

Response:

I cannot give a specific example, but it could be so. You see the official church leaders of that time are not there anymore and those who are there act as if they have never endorsed Apartheid or maybe they really haven't endorsed it. You have a new generation in the church that is probably more at ease with these things. I have never felt specifically that there was discrimination against me. Not everybody was always very enthusiastic about me.

Question 3:

In my research I have worked through all the old Kerkbodes from the late 1970s, and often there were sharp reactions to what you said regarding a specific situation or issue. Has anybody ever asked you for forgiveness afterwards for what they said, sometimes about you as person?

Response:

There is no tradition amongst Afrikaners to say 'I'm sorry'. We keep quiet and say nothing. We are like the Roman Catholics. They never say we have made a mistake in the past and we must do it differently. They just move on in quietness.

Question 4:

How did you experience the situation in the congregation where you worshipped during the time when the work of the TRC was done? Did the church leaders make a special effort to accompany the congregants during this difficult time?

Response:

Where I was the issues regarding the TRC had never been handled.

Question 5:

- a.) Why, would you say, was it so difficult for the DRC to come to a decision on giving a submission to the TRC?
- b.) Don't you think it would have carried more weight amongst the Afrikaners if more individual believers had testified before the TRC?
- c.) Do you think our "church people" are strong enough (after all the years of being "in church") to testify/confess towards other groups?

Response:

- a.) At that stage the leaders of the DRC were not even convinced that Apartheid was wrong so why an investigation. As a church the DRC had not really given a witness of remorse. The fact that we cannot accept Belhar at this stage says, simply, that the DRC hasn't got remorse. And that doesn't help with reconciliation. The DRC is simply part of the problem of reconciliation in our country.
- b.) Nothing would have carried any weight, because the TRC played no role in the Afrikaans community. Individuals went and witnessed but the community itself was not

involved. Very few really read the papers and when the TV broadcasted it they just switched it off. Those things didn't play a role in the community.

c.) No, they were not made strong to do it. They may be strong in other areas. There is in the DRC no general conviction that we did wrong and that we must confess.

Question 6:

The TRC put a challenge to the faith communities

- to seek ways to communicate with one another as a basis for eliminating religious conflict and promoting inter-religious understanding
- to seek ways to incorporate marginalised groups into their communities
- to promote a culture of tolerance and peaceful co-existence
- to inspire their members to work together in a peace corps to help communities in need
- to organise reconciliation ceremonies, creating liturgies to heal and to celebrate the reconciliation that we experience in this country
- and, finally to develop theologies designed to promote reconciliation and a true sense of community in the nation. (TRC Report, 1998:316ff)

Would you say that the DRC took notice of this challenge of the TRC? Would you say that the church is paying attention to it, especially in the congregations?

Response:

The TRC played no role in the DRC. Regarding the specific challenges? No.

Question 7:

Do you have hope that there will be reconciliation in our country, not only in the higher circles but also in the congregations?

Response:

This is a very general question. Reconciliation between whom? Where?

There are different levels of reconciliation. Where we work together and rub shoulders?

In the church, in our congregation there will be a person of colour once or twice a year in a worship service. People are not interested to go to a DRC service.

From the church leaders you will not find anything, because the DRC is a church that tries to survive.

ADDENDUM 9:

Interview with Dr Kobus Gerber, General Secretary, DRC.

This interview took the form of a discussion and not so much as a question and answer situation.

KG: So often we talk about reconciliation as if it is something in an ivory tower, whereas there are so many things happening in the local churches. There is somebody in the Methodist Church, Bill Schutz, who is an engineer and he is active in a lot of things as regards reconciliation. From the DRC, because of our involvement in the ecumenical bodies, South African Council of Churches (SACC) and The Evangelical Alliance of Southern Africa (TEASA), we are involved boots and all in what is going on, on a larger scale.

With respect to reconciliation I want to say the following:

It is not something that is hanging in the air. We will have to focus at local levels/communities and guide people to journey with one another in a process. It has different aspects to it. The one important issue is *Reparation*.

Reparation: I believe that we can talk about reconciliation in South Africa until we are blue in the face, if there is not one or other form of reparation. It is much more than material issues. If churches are going to focus only on money, we are going to be unjust towards our country. The country must be repaired! Together with all the role players, as we have discussed at SACLA, we want to address the issues of HIV/Aids, poverty, crime and violence, morality, a deeply rooted atmosphere of human rights, etc.

The whole issue of land reform is also included in this. In an African and post-Colonial context we can never talk about reconciliation aloof from the land debate, because when you talk about land in an African context, it is something else than in a colonial context. I believe that we must think and move towards a Reparation Fund. There are certain things that fall under the jurisdiction of government, but we think that the ecumenical church must manage it. Some business people attached to our church have indicated that they will contribute, with the provision that the churches manage it. I think that as part of

reparation, the church must make available its skills, sources/buildings and human potential, to make a difference in local communities. One of the beautiful things that is happening in this regard concerns a congregation in Northern-Cape which made half of its Sunday School classrooms available to NGO's, free of charge, and also made an accountant and auditor available to them. These types of things are happening more and more and we as a church want to make things available to our country and its people, because we know that the Lord asks this of us. Then we do it more with the attitude of "feet-washing" than because we have to do it.

The DRC is not sure that a system of a once-off wealth tax on South African business and industry, as the TRC recommended, will be the right thing to do.

When we look at the work of the TRC at this moment, it is difficult to understand that they have a "closed list" policy.

(Researcher: The above statement arises from the following):

36. The commission, anxious not to impose a huge burden on the government, adopted a 'closed list' policy. Effectively this limited the payment of reparation only to those victims who made statements to the Commission before 15 December 1997. In the period between December 1997 and January 2002, victims' groups confirmed to the Commission that they had collected more than 8000 statements from victims who, for a variety of reasons, were unable to access the Commission. The consequence of ignoring this group of people has potentially dangerous implications for South Africa, as communities may become divided if some receive reparation that is not accessible to others who have had similar experiences.

37. The Commission is of view that the 'closed list' policy should be reviewed by government, in order to ensure justice and equity. It needs to be noted that, in many other countries which have gone through similar processes, victims have been able to access reparation many years after the truth commission process has been completed. (TRC Recommendations: TRC V 6, Sec5, Ch 7, p 732))

Another important aspect is:

A National Program of Action: The DRC, as part of this country and nation, wants to be involved in the establishing of a program that deals with racism, sexism, discrimination, intolerance, etc. In the schools there are already something like this in the curricula, but the church will have to implement it in its catechism curriculum and its preaching. In my studies I came to the conclusion that before 1994, things like Apartheid, reconciliation, etc were reflected nowhere in our materials. After 1994 we couldn't understand why we

were struggling with these issues. We made things difficult for ourselves. Such a National Program of Action includes that from a theological angle we can start discussing these things at the point where it makes sense, that is our children and youth. In the 2002 Statement, this church declared that it wants to be involved with this country and its people.

R: What about the training of our ministers? Do the curricula of the Seminaries make room for a changing environment, an environment of reconciliation, reparation, etc?

KG: I don't know about the other places, but here in Pretoria where Prof. Piet Meiring is involved, these issues are likely to be touched on. But we must say that our training is still to produce ministers for middle-class suburban congregations. We are geared for a certain segment of the population and when we talk about reconciliation in such an environment, it just becomes some program to work through and our members don't get the opportunity to live and breath reconciliation.

Another thing that we must look at is how we understand reconciliation. You remember a few years ago we had the big action during the Year of Hope in the DRC. That was a program where good things happened, but you're not really accomplishing something through programs. It must become part of people's lives. It must become the blood in their veins.

R: During the past few years the DRC has taken initiative and introduced the Year of Hope, The Family Year and now it is the Season of Listening. To what extent do these "programs" really work in the congregations? Isn't it just something that is decided on in a Synod and then the poor ministers must see to it that it is done at ground level?

KG: A number of the previous efforts had a strong program element in it and because of the diversity of congregations it was difficult to work on it. The Season of Listening is different. It will be a time of listening: to God, to one another, to the world and the moment that you listen to the world for example, there in a squatter camp, then your listening is different. I believe this Season of Listening is going to open windows that we haven't reached yet.

Two things of importance happened since 2000 in the DRC. First came the Statement of Commitment and then the seven priorities the church wants to focus upon. This changed the agenda on the table of the DRC.

Another thing that is necessary to think about regarding the recommendations of the TRC, is:

Healing of memories: We must listen to the pain of others. At the Synod of the URCSA an important decision was taken with regards to this. They asked that in the Family of churches such a process must come into being. This can be a facilitated reconciliation exercise. Part of the problem that the churches face is that from government the initiative was taken for the TRC, but the churches amongst themselves haven't gone through this exercise. For example, there are things that we did against the Roman Catholic Church and they against us that must be talked about. Our members still experience the SACC as an enemy. This type of "story-telling" must become part of the reconciliation process.

The pain in peoples' lives must become words.

But also in the outside world there is an enormous amount of pain. A lot of things have been revealed through the TRC process but not everything has been handled. In the DRC there is a large contingent of trained social workers that can be used in such a situation. We must start looking in congregations for people who were part of the security-forces, etc. who actually felt that they have been dropped. Who is working with them? Who is helping those who, even after a submission at the TRC, still have hatred and pain to cope with? I believe we as church can be of great help in this venture. In this process the memories must be kept alive so that something like this will not happen again. We must make it possible for congregants to get involved in this.

R: *Do you have hope for the future? That reconciliation will take place in our country?*

KG: Yes, very much. There are thousands of signs. If you look at what is happening at the moment in the DRC where small congregations are involved in their environments – people driving to squatter camps to help, amongst other things, bed-washing Aids patients. We don't know about all these cases, but it is unbelievable what is happening. We are creating a data-base of all these things.

There are a bigger things happening in the country. Churches of reformed descent have started to talk to each other about uniting. The Calvin-protestant church, the RCSA, the NHK. The question is asked, must we not walk this road together? I think we mustn't become despondent when a first process doesn't produce the results.

ADDENDUM 10

Interview with Rev. Dion van Dyk, former Moderator of DRC in Zimbabwe.

Question 1:

What role did the DRC play in Zimbabwe? Is it still playing a role in the current situation? What about the future?

Response:

We in Zimbabwe experienced our reconciliation phase in the eighties and we scored high points in our attempts during those years.

I came to Zimbabwe (ZB) in 1981. We were all young ministers. From the 14 of us there were 5 who signed the Open Letter and that was a traumatic experience for the church in ZB. At that stage we thought that we had a prophetic calling towards the church in South Africa, but also towards our own society and the other churches. A lot of things happened in those years. In the DRC it was the time of Church and Society, which was a type of watershed happening in the church. The DRC in ZB was the only church in the old Rhodesia that supported the old UDI government of Ian Smith, with a decision in the Synod. So we polarised ourselves and from '81 we thought that we had a point to make.

We were active on quite a few levels:

First of all we applied for membership of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC).

They took so long to make a decision, because of the Apartheid situation. It was not long after the General Synod of 1990 where the DRC confessed, that they started to believe us and then we received full membership. So we were part of the ecumenical picture in ZB before the doors opened again for the DRC in South Africa. We tried very hard to make it work, not only by putting in a lot of energy, but our general secretary did a lot of administrative work for them at our own costs. We did this because we wanted to be part of the bigger church picture.

Secondly each congregation tried to make a difference in the local community. We had the problem that we didn't have easy contact with black churches because the mission projects in Mid-Africa were actually driven from the Cape via Morgenster or from Bloemfontein and Zambia. In many of these things we didn't succeed. We went through

a lot of trouble to be part of an organisation, an ecumenical body, which only applied to the Reformed Churches in Mid-Africa. Our problem was that there was no history of ecumenical ties amongst churches in Africa. So, at one stage it seemed as if the white people wanted to steer the thing and that embarrassed us. But if we didn't do it, it was not working. Therefore, at that stage we decided to 'put on the brakes'.

We asked congregations to reach out in their own communities, like the Harare congregation, who built a shelter for the patients at the hospital. The congregation where I was, was helping with agricultural schemes.

Thirdly, the government was really geared for reconciliation. They invited many groups from South Africa, even a student group to come and see how a democracy works. Today it may sound like a joke, but in those days it was serious. We as a church were always involved if there were Afrikaners. So we felt that we had achieved something and were very proud of ourselves. Long before the South African outreaches started, we were already active. The tragedy is that ours have come to an end, because of a multiple of reasons. The first reason was because of polarisation from the government. From the late nineties the government made more political sounds. The land problem started in the early nineties and it became a kind of shibboleth thing – either you agree or you don't agree. At that stage we were in the farmers' corner, our congregants. Not so much because we agreed with their views, but it was where we were positioned. From that stage the church in ZB was polarised and the DRC was on the way to an economical downfall. It is now a situation of survival and there's no place for luxuries. The church has terminated its membership of the ZCC, not out of principle but because of the practical value – we do not have a role to play anymore. At the moment the Zimbabwean society is so polarised that a black minister cannot be friendly with us, even if he wishes to. Many were bought over with land and if he is friendly with us, he loses his land. This is the reality of ZB.

The reconciliation drive was very strong in ZB during the eighties on the part of the churches and the government. Even in our congregations, although not always with the same success. Today reconciliation with respect to ethnic groups has reached a low ebb from what it was in the eighties. Today it is a luxury to talk about this because everyone tries to survive.

Whether the DRC in ZB still has a role to play? Well, at this stage all the churches are in a fight for survival – economical survival. All the NGO's who did good work previously are now under suspicion. So actually we have sorrow over the failure of reconciliation and not the success.

Some observations: I think the white people had arrogance cloaking them, not because of their race, but because of their input. They thought these people couldn't do without us.

The type of reconciliation that worked was that between us and other churches of Western orientation – white churches. The DRC is the only church that conducts worship services all over the country in English.

Our relationship with the DRC in South Africa was difficult. We were a group of young ministers and we were in a different situation. We tried to open our mouths. But when we were in trouble, there was a lot of goodwill from South Africa.

ADDENDUM 11:

Interview with Rev Freek Swanepoel, former Moderator of the General Synod DRC

Question 1:

You were moderator in a time of transition when a new government took over, Mr Mandela became President, the Synod of Reconciliation, etc. Can you tell me about this time?

Response:

Maybe I can start with the Synod of 1994. I think it was wonderful that we could have the synod so shortly after the change of government had taken place. If it was before the change, we wouldn't have known what it was all about. After the change we experience that the Lord was with us, that there was a spirit of prayer and the people were peaceful. The election of '94 was already a great sign of reconciliation and that our members and other Afrikaners could see that something was going to happen. I stood in the voting queue together with the people who worked in the home, the church and gardens and that also was a wonderful experience.

We must come closer to one another, because, for me, reconciliation is to bring people closer where there was a distance between them. If God had reconciled us with Himself, then we must look for people that we can bring closer to one another.

The synod was, for me, a dynamic Synod. The delegates knew that the situation has changed, we are still here and beautiful things were said regarding reconciliation. One great thing was to give recognition to those who, through the years, warned the church about our direction. Must we give names, or must we not give the names of those people? Before we came to that, we finished the discussions about church unity and by this showed that we as churches want to move closer to one another.

We experienced much criticism over the visit of Mr Mandela to the Synod, but it is protocol that we always invite the top people of the government/city where we assemble. Mr Mandela was in London and could not be with us on the official opening of the Synod, but he said that he would come on the Thursday and that he wanted to say something. In the whole process of reconciliation this was a very important moment,

because for many it was probably the first time they have listened to a Black man, and also the fact that he spoke in Afrikaans. Also for Oom Ben Marais and Oom Beyers Naudé. I think the change in government opened the eyes of many to realise – things have changed. This Synod decided a lot of things which could help with reconciliation in the future. Just think about the decisions about the RDP program.

Now as regards the General Synodical Commission (GSC). This commission is constituted of members of all the different Synods and people speak according to the decision of their Synod. So it happened that a few doors were closed. Thus it happened that the GSC couldn't work with the same speed in the execution of decisions, and also, not with the same commitment. It is easy to take a decision, but when it comes to the execution there is more time to think about it and then one realises that it is not so easy to just implement it. Something else that played an important role was the press and specifically the use of Afrikaans.

Let's talk about the TRC. Right from the beginning the Executive Committee of the GSC decided to work together with the TRC. We are going to evaluate their work; we immediately submitted names to be Commissioners on the commission but they were not accepted. Then Piet Meiring was invited. I personally was very thankful that he could be there. We talked to Desmond Tutu and said that we have certain proposals. We spoke very clearly regarding the existence of the TRC and also regarding the content and the issue of unverified testimonies. Then the question was asked whether we must write something? The submission of the presbytery of Stellenbosch and that of the theologians of Potchefstroom made news, but in our GSC meeting such a proposal was rejected. At the same meeting I gave notice of revision and so we started to write the *Op reis met Apartheid*. At the next meeting we decided that we could go to the TRC. I would go and I have to consult with and write the submission and also submit it to the commission. It had been taken up in the Acta Synodi and Synod took notice of it. That meant that not the whole meeting approved that this step of reconciliation was taken. Many people in the meeting did not know what the difference was between 'to take notice' and 'to approve' of something.

I believe we should have been there. It was a good occasion and you have read about the behaviour of Desmond. I think the DRC, by going to the TRC, said to the people that we are guilty of what happened in the past and we want to help with the building of a new South Africa in the future. I stated quite frankly that I was not representing the whole DRC and because of this the press and especially the English press said that we were the most trustworthy church that had been there.

Question 2:

How did you feel emotionally when you stood there knowing that it is not on behalf of the whole DRC?

Response:

I think I had enough time to prepare myself because it was not the first time that I had to do it. I stood at the South African Council of Churches (SACC), I stood at the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), etc. I was used to standing in front of people as the representative of the church of Apartheid. The fact that I could stand at the TRC said to me that the Lord put me in this country and if I can do something today as an ambassador for the Lord and to His honour and for the blessing of the church, and to help with reconciliation, then I'll do it. But I must admit that it was not nice to stand there alone, with only Willie Botha at my side. Before us Bishop Leghanya was there with a busload of supporters. And there were people from the press who wanted to make it very difficult for us.

Since then, it was actually easier for us to move closer to other churches. Since the Synod there was such openness between us, and churches wanted to be associated with us.

There were some that still wanted to wait as we experienced from the WARC. When we went to Hungary they decided to let us wait a bit longer. Initially it went well with the moving towards church unification, but then something happened which brought the things to a standstill. Actually we stood at the same point where we are now viz. Belhar and how the model for the new church should look. We had said it amongst us those congregations must exist, as is the case that presbyteries continue to exist geographically.

All the years there was no problem with geographically determined presbyteries, but now, since we started talking we must also look at language and other aspects. It is a pity that language became an issue because that has stopped the wagon. The reconciliation process is in a sense steered by ‘voices’ of certain people in the church that are more used the press outside the church. I am sure that reconciliation during that time would have been easier than now. There was a movement closer to us from other churches for which we were very thankful. In reconciliation you can move up to a point on your own, but then you need others around you.

In those four years many things happened. We were not a working Synod, but as Synod we did a lot of things.

Question 3:

We are now about ten years past the TRC. How do you see the situation today? Do you have hope for the future?

Response:

I think the pressure that was on our shoulders to be part of a reconciliation process has lifted. I am very sorry that the report of the TRC, because of politics, has been shifted aside. This had the result that in the church meetings voices were heard that asked why we must do something, because even the government is no longer interested in the TRC and thought it was a mistake. I don’t think it was a mistake. I went and listened to some of the hearings. I saw the reconciliation that was brought about. I think the TRC and even the ‘day of the churches’ had to be there.

In a certain sense I must say that we are further along the road towards reconciliation, although there are certain people who feel otherwise, but they don’t want to be part of the process. I think there has been immense progress during the past ten years.

In congregations things have also become easier, more natural. It is no longer the case that something must be done, that the government asks this or that from us and that the spiritual is more important. So, with a group that stands aloof, there is also a group that is closer and is doing more. I think that our congregants in the new situation are doing their

part as citizens of this country. That the roots of racism are not out of us – when will it be out? That we don't understand the same thing with reconciliation is the other thing.

Justice must also be looked at.

If you ask me what our priorities as regards reconciliation are, I would say that the distance between us and our other churches must be closed. We won't come closer to one another if we are not willing to listen to others.

ADDENDUM 12

Interview with Rev. James Buys, previous Moderator of the URCSA.

Question 1:

How do you see the whole issue regarding reconciliation in our country at the moment?

What is happening? Is there hope for the future?

Response:

To my judgement we often underestimate the wonder of 1994. That people and institutions in this country could establish, without violence and war, a kind of democracy. More so if you look at the effect of transformation since 1994 in government – and societal institutions in general. It's worth mentioning when you consider what happened in the schools and education, the political and work context and services in the new democracy. But one important thing that happened is the choices that people could make around the school context, the work context and business context where they're going to live and with whom they are going to socialise. At the end of the day, after people had worked together and rubbed shoulders with one another, they went, each one to his own place, to sleep and the different living areas still have racist characteristics. This was one dimension of the issue.

Another dimension, as part of the positive effect of the transformation process, is that people have come together much more, work closer with one another and started to build relations which transcend racism. But the one time when this country is the most divided is on a Sunday morning when people are going to church services. There are two reasons why this is still the case and that is the effect of the Group Areas Act and the fact that there are still racial division between the Afrikaans Churches, the DRC, the NHK, the RCSA and the URCSA.

With the TRC a process was introduced that brought a few dimensions to the fore. Firstly, there was the opportunity for people to witness before the commission regarding the period of Apartheid and what can be done to work reconciliation in the country. Together with that were the hearings of persons who applied for amnesty. What was striking about this process were the cases where people who have lost loved ones came

into contact with the perpetrators. Just the knowledge of what happened to the victims, the circumstances and the attitude that was cultivated in the commission, is something that wouldn't have been possible otherwise.

Then there was the responsibility of the country as a whole to bring about, next to the formal processes of the commission, opportunities for reconciliation. For some it meant that in the process of remembering the past and working through it, they could bring into words the full impact of the Apartheid era. Through certain reconciliation programmes that had been worked through, certain communities had been brought together, and things of the past could be put on the table. Through the listening to one another, new friendships and acts of reconciliation came into being.

The one process that was not linked to the TRC process, but which ran parallel to it, was church unification. I think this process has received new impetus after 1994, but soon there were problems because of, for one, the Belhar Confession. But when you look at the context of our country and the history through which our churches came, the problem is also the structure of the re-united church. When you talk about an organic unity with an overall general synod, united regional synods, presbyteries etc., you come across opposition and this has to do with ministry need, language problems and other minor issues. It is interesting to see how the choice for organic unity has had a negative impact on the broad idea of reconciliation. And I'm not even talking about the commission we have from the Lord on the unity of the church. This is my greatest concern. It will be one thing for the churches to say to one another that it is not possible for us to pursue church unity, because of a mutual confession of faith. I think it will be a miserable day that church unity and the way it must come into being will be a continuation in any form of race, language or any other form as we know it currently and in the form that dates from our history.

Question 2:

During the eighties there was much talk about church unity and from time to time it was said: 'Now we are very close. Next year, we will be united', and then something happened that brought everything to a kind of stand still. What was the problem that one moment there was hope, and the next there was despair?

Response:

If I can go back to the period before 1986 and why there was not really a breakthrough, I would think there were forces that worked in the country and which tried to prevent unification. As example take the former N G Sendingkerk (DRMC) and the RCA (Reformed Church in Africa (Indian)). They were on the brink of being united. The result of the prevention of that uniting effort nearly led to the downfall of the RCA. It brought a schism in that church which resulted in the fact that for a time the Synod of the RCA could not function. It took years to work reconciliation between the parties who were involved.

From 1986 the Belhar Confession played a role, as well as the experience of the DRC in the WARC, and the accusation of heresy and idolatry etc. When we talk simply theologically regarding the confessional basis and work with that and reach a solution, it is one dimension. The question is why is there a problem when we talk about the structure of the united church? Why is it that every time we look at a model that would negate the Apartheid history of our churches, new forces came into play to break away and make church unity impossible and re-group in race and language entities? Race plays a role there's no doubt about that. There are different dimensions to it. The Afrikaners went (and are going) through a difficult situation. They lost political power, gave up rights they had in the Apartheid era, then the last bastion they have, where there is still a character and identity and language, is the church. There is literally an anxiety to giving this up. A few things come to mind. One is 16 December, the Day of the Covenant which is currently Reconciliation Day. I must acknowledge that there are differences, that not all the Afrikaners are the same or think the same. There are some who want to go further – the total re-uniting of congregations. Wynberg, not because I'm here, is such an example of a congregation that tried to work with the history of the two congregations of 1881. Here we can say that physically two congregations have united.

The model of the URCSA is a model that serves the practical situation, but it is not the best model as sign of reconciliation. As an example I can use Joubertina where union took place, but after three years there was a schism between the Afrikaans speakers and the Xhosa speakers and you have, once again, two churches.

Something that I can't understand is how a part of the DRCA (Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (black)), which came through the history of Apartheid, can insist, during negotiations regarding unity and reconciliation, on a separate Synod and churches within a united church, because of language and ministry needs. The things that I'm talking about do not only have to do with the DRC but with the weakness of our own model with underlying racial issues which are legitimised in discussions as language and ministry needs.

ADDENDUM 13

Interview with Pastor George Mahlobo, General Secretary of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa.

Question 1:

Would you say that after the work of the TRC, the AFM is currently contributing to the reconciliation process in South Africa?

Response:

As far as the AFM is concerned, you would recall that we also made a submission to the TRC. Of course we did pledge, as leadership of the AFM, to be part of nation building, which includes the whole issue of reconciliation. Subsequent to that, the Executive Board of the AFM decided to come up with a master plan. It was finalised around 2002. This plan has basically six pillars – one of those is the social responsibility of the AFM. Within this social responsibility you have things like unemployment, education, poverty and so on. We also have, as executive, to do something to encourage reconciliation throughout the church. I think it was in 2003 that we had a special 2 to 3 day session on reconciliation. It was facilitated by a minister of the NG Kerk of the Boland (ds Fanie Engelbrecht, Mercy Ministries South Africa) and a lady from Wales who was involved with reconciliation in Central Africa (Dr Rhianon Lloyd, Mercy Ministries Intl.). Now this was at top level. This facilitation dealt with the question of reconciliation in the church. Things like, how do we take this thing forward. We must remember that at that time we were still dealing with issues from the past, but we knew that if we did not bring them back, we cannot deal with the future. What happened there was that we basically came up with a broad document on things that could be done for nation building and reconciliation in the future. It is necessary for our local congregations to consider things like pulpit change – doing things together. The black churches like to put up conferences, but by now the white churches are past that. We encourage our churches to arrange things along anti-racial themes, because we are aware that our local level is still divided along racial lines. At National level there is no problem, but at grassroots it is still like this.

As far as this is concerned, we have seen some regions doing that, but we still need to do a lot to see it happen. We should also encourage our churches to be part of joint events, such as Transformation Tshwane and prayer efforts, because we reasoned that such events expose us to one another. One of the things that became so clear to me is that we really don't know one another. For us to get to know one another, we have to interact. As a matter of fact in the big cities quite a number of ministers have become involved in that, but in the small town and rural areas we are not really succeeding.

One of the things I think that can become a big challenge is the reluctance of the church to engage itself in issues like affirmative action, because we don't discuss the pros and cons of it. In a particular area, some of the white members feel that affirmative action is disadvantageous to them and translate it into race relations. In future we have to say, let's talk about it. How can we make a contribution there as a church? The other things are community programs, in which our churches can put in a joint effort. This is happening at the program-level like the AFM Welfare, etc, but I would say that, at grassroots-level, unity has become a reality. People still don't know one another as they should.

The fact that the leadership championed the cause, especially with what Isak (Burger) did in 1996 during the celebration of unity, when he publicly made an apology to Frank (Chikane) and Frank also asked for forgiveness, has sent a message. It is critical for the leadership to promote reconciliation.

For me it seems there is also a problem in the sense that some white members view the church as a sort of custodian for its cultural institutions. Things like language. That is the challenge in education, in the schools. What remains is the church. In the AFM we welcome all groupings, but the Afrikaans AFM churches are still Afrikaans. But we are moving into a situation where we can have multi-racial congregations. In a city like Pretoria, we have a congregation like Doxa Deo, which is multi-racial, although it is predominantly black. But there are other 111 areas where there are a lot of challenges. Over the next ten years the AFM has to deepen unity and encourage integration, especially at our Theological College. We have to work hard at that. We still have separate theological colleges. In Shoshanguve we have one for training black pastors, at Sarepta in Kuilsrivier we have one for the coloured pastors and then one in Durban, which has merged with the one in Aucklandpark. But we are discussing having one

theological college, which will reflect the composition of the church, both in student body and faculty.

Question 2:

After the TRC, people thought after a year or two we will be reconciled, but we know it is a long process. Do you have hope that in the future, say the next ten years, there will be reconciliation at the grassroots level?

Response:

I do have hope that we will become much, much closer. It seems to me that the macro-church in South Africa indicates a movement in that direction, but we need to face certain realities. Realities of unemployment, poverty, all these type of issues. We also have to see what is happening on a political level. Even President Mbeki shows a tendency for reconciliation like his predecessor, Nelson Mandela. It is critical that after Mbeki, one must get somebody to build on that. If you get it on political level, one hopes that things will happen. But when there is a sudden change at political level and the economic situation of people does not change, that will translate into crime and many other things. Then we will have to work much harder. I think it is important that we begin to work, especially in churches, towards that.

Question 3:

Would you say that the pastors of the local congregations do enough to help their people understand the whole issue of reconciliation?

Response:

We see in the cities that pastors are more inclined to mix with pastors of other race groups. But in the smaller towns, where pastors are dependent on the congregation for their stipend, it is not so easy. But our pastors must do much more to help their congregations. Even in Johannesburg there are white pastors of the AFM who have never been to Soweto. They don't know what is going on there.

Question 4:

At the moment the whole country is talking about the gesture of Adriaan Vlok, washing the feet of Frank Chikane. Newscasts, TV programs, etc. carried the news. Even Pres. Mbeki made a comment about it. What is your view on it?

Response:

Let me start by saying that Pres. Mbeki called it an extraordinary thing, because he started saying that you must bear in mind that Vlok comes from an Afrikaner grouping, remember his culture, remember his previous position.

I think it is a pity that it is only happening now. Can you imagine if somehow it happened immediately after the TRC closure, what kind of impact it would have had? Not everybody would be happy. For me it has indicated one thing. If you don't pursue this question of reconciliation and forgiveness, we will continue to have people in the country who are hurting deeply. I listen to people from both sides. There are those who hailed this as something good to happen, but I think we as a church need to promote this kind of gestures. If something fateful happened in the past you may be able to indicate your emotion of humility by feet washing, but it can be anything else, in different ways. But obviously you can only do so much as a human being. We as a leadership of the AFM have actually expressed support and appreciation to Vlok for this kind of thing.

ADDENDUM 14

Questionnaire and reaction of Dr Frank Chikane, Vice-President of AFM.

The following questions have been asked of Dr Chikane as Vice-President of the AFM. His answers to these questions are given below.

Question 1:

The AFM became a united church ± April 1996 and much was made of the celebrations. Did the Afrikaans-speaking members have the same enthusiasm (from your perspective) as the rest of the church?

Response:

As far as I can remember, there were some who were enthusiastic about the unity and enjoyed the celebration. But the majority of them were more concerned with what all this meant for them. I would risk and say that even the leadership of the “white church” went into the unity with deep feelings of anxiety and uncertainty and were under enormous pressures from their constituencies. Like in the political arena, they came into unity with the intention of conserving as much of their past life as possible, as well as ensuring that the leadership remained in the main in “white hands”. In this regard, I would say that the ‘enthusiasm’ would have been more about the above than the unity itself.

Question 2:

Would you say that your submission as a church before the TRC did cause some reconciliation to appear not only in the church but also to the outside world?

Response:

Yes

Question 3:

Are there any signs that the AFM is really working towards reconciliation in the communities?

Reponse:

During our Tenth Anniversary Celebrations last year, there was a strong view or feeling that the unity of the AFM had effect only on the national and regional committee levels rather than at the local levels. There is no discernible expression of unity at community levels. As a result, the church has no impact at community levels, except for the knowledge that now it is no longer a racially divided church.

Question 4:

Do you have hope that we will reach a point in the future where it is possible to speak of a reconciled nation?

Response:

Based on my faith, one has to keep the hope that one day God will favour us with such a 'reconciled nation'. In this regard, the church would have to stop lagging behind the 'world' and move ahead into 'uncharted' grounds and territories as leaders so that the world can learn and hear from them (the church). This is my hope and prayer!

ADDENDUM 15

Foundation and functioning of the Conventus of Reformed Churches in Southern Africa

On the basis of our common faith, confession and Reformed tradition

1. Purpose

- to witness prophetically to our community and, if necessary, to society and the authorities;
- to provide mutual support and assistance where it is requested; and
- to co-ordinate possible co-operation with regard to common interest and responsibilities in society.

2. Church Polity Positioning

The Conventus is an assembly where churches deal with common matters on the basis of their common faith, confession and Reformed tradition, with due regard to the individual nature, ethos and history of each church. The agenda focuses on a Reformed witness in the name of the Conventus. Particular viewpoints of participating churches are not forced upon other participating churches. No church shall dominate another church.

3. Participating Churches

Churches in South and Southern Africa with a Reformed confessional basis that identify themselves with the *Foundation and Functioning of the Conventus of Reformed Churches in Southern Africa*.

4. Nature and Authority

- 4.1 The Conventus differs from major assemblies of churches and from existing ecumenical assemblies. It is an assembly aimed at giving a united witness in the South African society, and possibly in the Southern African society and to the respective authorities, without having to give account to one another or question the bona fides of the other churches with regard to their expression of the confession.
- 4.2 The nature of the Conventus is to bear witness.
- 4.3 Official assemblies of participating churches retain their authority to take an independent stand on decisions of the Conventus.
- 4.4 Decisions in respect of the purpose of the meeting should as far as possible be taken by consensus and witness should be given on the basis of Scripture and the Reformed confession.

5. Composition, administration and procedure

- 5.1 The Conventus assembles at least once a year.
- 5.2 Each participating church will be represented by 5 delegates. No restriction is placed on the number of observers.
- 5.3 Each Conventus appoints a host church on a rotational basis.
- 5.4 Each participating church nominates one representative on the Interim Committee at every conventus. The appointed host church nominates two representatives who serve as Chairperson and Secretary of the Interim Committee.
- 5.4 Each Conventus appoints/re-appoints a General Secretary who is responsible for the safekeeping of documents and overall arrangement of meetings.
- 5.6 The Interim Committee meets at least once a year, convened by the host church, to expedite the decisions of the previous Conventus and convene the next Conventus, dealing with all necessary administration and coordination thereof.
- 5.7 The host church determines and administrates the cost for each participating church at the next Conventus and is responsible for the reception, leading and minuting of the meeting.
- 5.8 The agenda of the Conventus is drawn up by the Interim Committee and proposed in accordance with any motion forwarded by a participating church.
- 5.9 The procedure with regard to 5.8 is as follows:
 - 5.9.1 In the light of the ecclesiastic nature and composition of the Conventus, the meeting focuses on matters pertaining to the nature and calling of the church.
 - 5.9.2 Participating churches notify the Interim Committee in writing of matters to be dealt with by the Conventus.
 - 5.9.3 Matters for the agenda must be submitted in writing to the Interim Committee four weeks before the meeting of the Conventus. The Interim Committee makes the agenda available to participating churches three weeks before the meeting.

6. Amendments to the Foundation and Functioning of the Conventus

Amendments are approved by a two-thirds majority vote after being circulated to all participating churches at least three weeks before the meeting.

ADDENDUM 16:

Submission of the Apostolic Faith Mission before the TRC.

“The AFM and the System:

Within our church, as explained earlier, we have sought and by His great mercy have been granted reconciliation. But that is not the end of the road.

For we realise that many of our members have been deeply hurt by those who propped up the previous government. And we know of cases where brethren within the AFM caused great affliction to fellow members of the AFM.

We are trying today as hard as we can to bring about healing and reconciliation in our own ranks. We are not only trying to help and assist the physically injured and spiritually hurt to overcome and forgive their tormentors, but we are also trying to help those who were used as tools of a system to come to grips with their past.

We uphold the principle that forgiveness and reparation are inter-linked. *But that is within the AFM.* (Researcher’s Italics)

What the AFM cannot deny, is that thousands of its members were employed in the structures of the former government. Many of our members held top positions in the former government organisations. The Police alone employed tens of thousands of our people, Black, White, Coloured and Indian. All our white young men were called up for military duty. We do not know how many committed evil deeds – and probably will never know.

But we say in our defence that those who had transgressed were never encouraged by the AFM to do so.

But physical harm caused is only a part of the saga.

What we have to admit is that many of our members worked in structures where they may never have foreseen the misery and hardship caused by the executors of the policies they helped to formulate. In short, we have to admit that the AFM, like all other churches, operated within a system that today stands condemned.

Why this paper?

Many of us had sought answers during those dark days. But bear in mind that many a time we asked for an explanation, that explanation was given us by fellow Christians, even members of the AFM. And we accepted those answers.

A plethora of laws made it impossible for the ordinary man to delve any deeper. We are today deeply hurt as we become aware of the injustices of the past as they are being brought to light by our own Commission, by our Courts and the media. We are baffled, stunned and confused.

In the AFM there is not a section that did not in some way assist the old system to flourish and there is not a section that did not harm fellow believers.

As the past is uncovered we hear of Indian, White, Coloured and Blacks that committed excesses, be it members of the forces or out of sheer frustration with the order of the day. For many of us, living in a comfort zone of privilege, it was also convenient to ignore the cries of our fellow believers.

What we would like to state unequivocally today is that the AFM failed in its duty to question the system more, especially in the light of its continual preaching from the pulpit the message of love, charity, hope, justice and peace. We missed the boat in the sense that we were blinded to so many evils.

For that we need to sincerely apologise to all those out there who suffered. We can never get to each one of them ourselves. We are thankful for a forum through which we can express our sorrow.

We also owe it to them to plead with each member of the AFM to search himself/herself and to put right personally anything that has to be put right. We owe it to them to become more faithful watchdogs of what is happening in this country and to ensure our past history is never repeated and that future generations never be allowed to forget our past and perhaps stand accused of even worse transgressions than we had committed.

In conclusion, we would like to reach out to those whom we can assist to overcome the hurt of the past. The AFM's doors will never be closed to them.

Signed: IS Burger DD President. “

ADDENDUM 17

Submission of the four theologians from Potchefstroom before the TRC.

A Public Confession from Potchefstroom.

The undersigned hereby make a public confession of guilt over their share in and neglect with regard to Apartheid. The dictates of their conscience have urged them, more and more, to do this.

1. Confession of guilt.

- 1.1 We hereby confess before God and our neighbour that we failed, in word and in action, in church and society, privately and publicly to testify adequately and unambiguously against the embodiment and execution of the ideology of Apartheid which had an invidious and even ruinous effect on the lives of so many of our fellow-believers and fellow-citizens. With Daniel (9:5) we confess in the sight of the Lord that:
“we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws” (NIV)
- 1.2 We confess that we were not courageous enough to testify, that we did not pray faithfully enough, did not believe actively enough, did not love fervently enough and did not have enough empathy in the context of individual and social injustice in which our country was plunged for four decades and more. We acknowledge in great humility that we were guilty of the violation of fundamental human rights and we acknowledge that we had a share in the directionless movement of our country during times of crisis.
- 1.3 We confess that we are deeply guilty in the sight of God and our fellowmen and that this gross neglect and reluctance from our part can only be removed with mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation.
- 1.4 We seek forgiveness from God in the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ (1 John 1:9), but we also plead for forgiveness from our deprived and wronged fellow-believers and fellow-citizens for what we did to them. On our part we undertake, as far as is humanly possible, to make amends, in word and action, for the damage which we did to them through the unfair discriminatory system.

2. Justification.

- 2.1 There is no doubt that the ideology of Apartheid should be regarded as a sin, and the Biblical justification of it as heresy (*Proceedings of the Synod of the Reformed Churches in South Africa, 1991:160/169*). Apartheid, after all, was a system of legitimised domination, discrimination and social injustice, which caused enormous suffering, humiliation and even death. The question is therefore relevant as to what should be done with the above acknowledgement of sin and heresy.



- 2.2 To our minds, there is only one thing that can be done about sin, and that is to confess the sin before God (Ps 51:6; Matt 6:12; James 4:8-10) and our neighbour (James 5:16; Matt 6:12) and then to refrain from sinning again. We feel that there are clear Scriptural grounds for such an approach. We find examples of such public confession of sin in the actions of Ezra (10:1), Nehemiah (1:6;9:2) and Daniel (9:5,20). Such an approach is also part of our Reformational heritage. Calvin is of the opinion that, when a nation has made itself guilty of some or other general sin, an ordinary confession should occur in the church (Institutes 3.4.11). We therefore underline the view that 'Christians should be urged to acknowledge their shared involvement in guilt together with a world torn apart by sinful schisms and attitudes; and they should be enjoined to confess their own sins in this regard and to effect restitution by following Christ on the course of love' (*Proceedings of the synod of the reformed Churches in South Africa, 1970:63*).
- 2.3 The question may be asked why this confession is not being made before the TRC. The choice of an alternative method does not obviate the essential work being done by the TRC. What is being denied is that such confessions should only have meaning when they are expressed to the TRC. Confession of guilt can and should, to our minds, be done in many ways, such as during private devotions, in public prayer, at meetings of the congregation, at synodical sessions, during public (political) meetings and also via the media. Nevertheless, this document is also being forwarded to the TRC
- This confession of guilt is not intended to isolate the Afrikaner and the Christian Afrikaner for guilt. In solidarity with Afrikaners and Afrikaner Christians we testify against the guilt of (especially) the Afrikaner. In so doing we choose for their liberation, healing and for the welfare of the Afrikaner and all citizens of this country.
- 2.4 This confession does not deny that there are great areas of concern in the country at present. We share in the concern of many citizens of the country about, for example, the unchecked environmental pollution, increasing crime and the high incidence of corruption. Yet we feel that the wrongful deeds of the present should not be seen as justification for the abuses of the past not being confessed. We would like, in fact, to express the hope that we will never again in South Africa experience any form of excessive nationalism and abuse of power.
- 2.5 This confession is not made because of the external pressure or requests from outside, but because of inner conviction. For the sake of clarity we would like to state that the first draft of this document had already been completed when the Open letter to all Ministers of the Ecumenical Advisory Bureau in Braamfontein reached us.
- 2.6 With this confession of guilt an attempt is made to serve the cause of the Kingdom of God in South Africa. We are convinced that confession of guilt encourages forgiveness, promotes reconciliation and therefore contributes to personal, ecclesiastical and social healing (Ps 32)."

Alwyn du Plessis
Amie van Wyk

Bennie van der Walt
Ponti Venter.

ADDENDUM 18:

Submission of the Dutch Reformed Church before the TRC.

“I am thankful to the TRC for the invitation to take part in these faith community hearings. I truly believe that this will strengthen the essential process of reconciliation firstly between faith communities and thereafter also in the broader community.

I am also thankful for the General Synodical Commission of the Dutch Reformed Church for sending me to witness to the TRC and all the people of this country that this church is called to reconciliation between all people.

I would like to describe our commitment with two words namely reformation and transformation. As a reformed denomination, we believe that we must always be open for renewed reformation by Scripture. The process of renewing our stance on practical affairs is an ongoing process. And in time of change and transformation we are also called to transform our structures and services in the community. To be relevant in the South Africa of today, the DRC also need to give high priority to reformation and transformation. In the past we were part of the problem, now we want to be part of the resolution.

Mr Chairman, my witness can be summarised as follows:

1. The DRC are committed to reconciliation.
2. We need other religious communities in this process.
3. How do we see the practical implications of reconciliation?
4. The past and the future.

He continued his submission in Afrikaans. He also said that he does not speak on behalf of all the members of the church, because there are sometimes different groups in a church, those who are pro and those who oppose an issue. But he believes that the group who are positive, are in the majority. Then he continues:

We are committed to reconciliation

The members of the DRC are part of the people of South Africa... We are part of the history and the negative and positive of the past, but we want to commit ourselves to a future of reconciliation and prosperity between all people... During these changing times, the DRC wants to think in a different way about herself and wants to play a servile-role, according to the example of our Lord.

As redeemed people, we have the calling of reconciliation between people. That means that we want to listen to the stories of people; we want to see the pain and the need and to work together to heal society and give solutions to problems. In this, we are called to see our own weakness and to forgive unconditionally. The activities of the DRC are strongly determined by decisions taken by Synods. In the past very good decisions have been made on reconciliation, love for neighbours and involvement in the need of people. Our goal is now to put these words into deeds. This must find its place in own circle as well as the broader community.

We want to do it together with others

We were used to deciding for ourselves what is right and then we did things on our own or not at all. Therefore we want to confess that we need to hear from other churches and to learn from them. I am thankful for they way the DRC was again admitted in forums. As a church we have a theological responsibility to evaluate all spheres of life in a critical-solidarity way. In the past we handled this independently. Therefore we realise that we must do it with more collaboration with other churches and in this way to be a Christian conscience in society.

The DRC admit the role of other faith communities in reconciliation and the bringing about of a peaceful community. Thus it follows logically that, for mutual spiritual goals, there must be co-operation without prejudice of each religion's spiritual standpoints.

Practical implications of reconciliation

Building up of people

Reconciliation on a horizontal level is always between people. Therefore in reconciliation there is always a personal element. For the DRC reconciliation starts with the building up of man and therefore the preaching of the gospel will always be up front. There is a great need for the spiritual building up of people with regard to human dignity, co-existence and neighbourly love. People must learn values like acceptance, longsuffering, respect, honesty, etc.

Development

Reconciliation also requires the development of the environment in which man lives, as well as his living conditions. Already during the General Synod of 1994, the DRC acknowledged that South Africa needed a program for the upliftment of communities and decided to enrol in the RDP program.

Poverty

The DRC acknowledge the problem and extent of poverty in a large sector of our population. The church is worried about that sector of the population where it seems there is no change in the situation.

The past and the future

It is impossible to build a strong future without bringing the past to a close. The problems of the present like corruption, violence, lawlessness and senseless killings of people cannot be bridged if past and future are not rightfully evaluated. It can be expected from the DRC to talk honestly about the past if its contributions towards reconciliation are accepted. This will open the door for forgiveness and mutual acceptance.

I want to testify to the struggle the DRC had to reject Apartheid. The DRC stands by its confession in 1986 that the church had made a mistake when they tried to give a Biblical foundation for the forced separation of people groups. In 1990 this decision was followed by the confession that the DRC should have distanced itself earlier from that view.

At the conference of churches at Rustenburg, the delegation from the DRC identified themselves wholeheartedly with the confession of guilt by Prof. Willie Jonker, as well as

personal responsibility for the political, social, economical and structural injustices in this country.

In 1994 the General Synod acknowledged those members, office bearers and church meetings which let a loud and clear voice be heard against Apartheid.

The church also acknowledged that its rejection of Apartheid had also been influenced by meetings and discussion with brothers and sisters of the family of Dutch reformed Churches. Perseverance to this standpoint, has led from time to time to the loss of members and office bearers.

I can also testify to a spirit of reconciliation that started to work in many congregations. Honest attempts have been made to close the testimony of the past and to tread into a new future. A good example was the GCOWE-consultation of 1997 in Pretoria. This worldwide conference was attended by ±180 ministers of the DRC. At the end of the conference they publicly delivered a written testimony. In this they confessed regarding wrong attitudes and deeds of the past and committed themselves to work together with other churches for salvation, unity and justice. The movement for reconciliation is growing.

The church has also continuously looked with compassion to the great numbers of people who have been aggrieved during the time of Apartheid, as well as with their poverty and suffering. Reluctance, disobedience and a lack of insight on the part of members and officials into the needs of society have also been confessed before the Lord. The DRC asks for forgiveness from these people and acknowledge that its voice of protest and compassion had been too small.

It is therefore the wish of the DRC that work must be done in a dynamic way to bring about a radical change for the better in the living conditions and future opportunities of people that for so many years were without it.

Closing

The church lives in the hope that the Almighty Lord will bless our country with true peace, liberty and diligence. We dream of a country in which people accept one another and every person makes his or her contribution towards peaceful co-existence. As a church we would like to be guided by God's Word: 'Try to be at peace with everyone' (Hebrews 12:14)."

Signed: Rev. Freek Swanepoel

ADDENDUM 19:

Submission of Rev. Beyers Naudé and Prof. Nico Smith before the TRC

“An Open letter to pastors of all churches in South Africa.

To us, as preachers of the Word of God, the responsibility is entrusted to proclaim at all times the gospel of reconciliation with God and our fellow human beings in Christ. This responsibility entails the prophetic denouncement of all forms of injustice, oppression and violence committed against any human being.

As we read and hear what happened in South Africa during the years of Nationalist Party rule, we as preachers of God’s Word are confronted with the question: How could it possibly have happened while we as preachers of reconciliation, justice and peace, were preaching this message from our pulpits every Sunday?

But the question, which disturbs us even more, is this: How was it possible that those who intentionally committed murders and sabotage against fellow citizens could have been, as is now becoming evident, members of churches and even regular churchgoers? Was there *nothing* in our preaching, liturgies and sacraments that disturbed the conscience of those who were directly involved in the evil deeds committed?

Therefore we have indeed more than enough reason to feel deeply guilty for having spiritualised and even gagged the gospel to such an extent that those in government and those responsible to execute government policy did not feel confronted by our preaching. We are guilty of having allowed the rules to execute the ideology of forced separation for the sake of the so-called law and order, without offering united resistance as preachers of justice and peace. We admit and confess that we too were blinded by an ideology, which represented itself as justifiable from the Bible. We lacked the gift of discerning the spirits, because we had no real desire to receive this gift.

In the light of the above, we want to confess publicly that we as preachers were co-responsible for what happened in South Africa. In fact, our guilt should be considered as more serious than that of any other person or institution. We who were supposed to be the conscience of the nation, did not succeed in preventing the most serious forms of abuse of the human conscience. As a result of this, the criminal violation of people’s human dignity and even the destruction of human life continued for too long.

But this confession of guilt is not intended to be vague and general. We confess our guilt by mentioning specific examples of our failure to be faithful to the gospel. We first of all acknowledge and confess that for many of us, especially those in the white community, life was very convenient and comfortable under the National Party rule. Many of us therefore could not and would not see the oppression and violation of millions of people in our country, hear their cries for justice and failed to take action.

We furthermore acknowledge and confess that when we sometimes *did* feel uncomfortable about the way the government and other institutions persisted in its abuse of power, we did nothing because of fear. We thereby allowed evil (with the co-operation of Christians) to continue its devastating work against the people of God.

In the same breath, we commit ourselves to call upon Christians to be careful in their support of political leaders and their policies. We furthermore commit ourselves to challenge Christians about their political and socio-economic responsibilities.

We also want to make amends for neglecting the needs of the poor and oppressed. Therefore we commit ourselves to the task of guiding God's people towards involvement in actions to eliminate the socio-economic inequalities of our country. We have evaded this responsibility for too long.

We furthermore commit ourselves to the task of encouraging people with the gospel of hope – especially in these days when many have lost hope and are despairing of the future of our country. This we will do by replacing the longing for the previous so-called better days by dreams of an even better future. The same gospel therefore also urges us to commit ourselves to engage in the reconstruction of our society.

Although we recognise that some ministers have stood bravely in the struggle for justice, it is our hope that every church minister who reads this document will recognise the challenge facing us all, which we dare not push aside. We are compelled to make a choice: either we confess our guilt in order to be set free for greater and more faithful service to the gospel of Jesus Christ, or we ignore this challenge to confess our guilt and thus declare ourselves not guilty of what happened in our country. If you are willing to identify with this document, and commit yourself to a process of unified action in a process of healing and rebuilding our nation, send your reply before the end of June, to the following address:

(Address given)

This document with the signatures will be submitted to the TRC and we express the hope that it would serve as an unified response from ministers. We hereby also wish to extend this invitation to spiritual leaders of other regions to participate in this submission. Thereafter a national conference of all those who have signed this document will be arranged in order to discuss the implications of our confession.

Drafted and signed by: Beyers Naudé, Nico Smith, Cornel du Toit, Tinyiko Malukele, Moss Nthla, Nico Botha, etc.” (Du Toit 1998: 9-11).

ADDENDUM 20:

Submission of the URCSA before the TRC.

The amalgamation of the two churches represents a watershed in the history of the DRMC and the DRCA. This union represents a kairos moment in the life of the church in which it departs from Apartheid and contradicts the justification of racially divided churches. The event of unification furthermore had great symbolic value in view of the historical context in which it took place, namely 10 days before the first free and democratic elections in SA. ...

The URCSA never condoned but rather sought to criticise the Apartheid government for the violation of rights. In this regard, it can be indicated that the church's decisions and synodical debates (that are not always reflected in minutes) exposed members to persecution. In this sense members became the victims of violations. When, with the benefit of hindsight, we ask ourselves whether the church has done enough to prevent and oppose human rights violations, we emphatically answer: No!

The submission went on to pay attention to the following points of concern:

Group areas and homeland policy; Migrant labour; Mixed marriages; the Apartheid war; Chaplain Services; Apartheid structures.

The URCSA is rooted in the reformed tradition and it relies strongly on the Calvinist doctrine on church-state relationships. This doctrine clearly teaches the responsibility of the church, as an institution and as individual members. Therefore

The failure to denounce, resist and incite to resist Apartheid and its resulting violations of human rights constitutes the failure of the church to live up to its faith convictions.... Many decisions were taken but with no challenge to action of its members followed. In the main the church's voice in this regard was relatively quiet before 1980....

A confession of guilt and a plea for forgiveness were worked into the submission. It stated:

The URCSA ... wishes to use the opportunity

- in view of acts of commission or omission to consequently oppose human rights violations;
- in view of its subtle recognition of the illegitimate Apartheid regime through liaison, representation and negotiation;
- in view of its silence and conscious and unconscious lack clarity in word and deed to confess unreservedly its and, vicariously, its members', guilt.

We herewith plead for the forgiveness of our fellow citizens and the Supreme, Triune God.

As regards the road to reconciliation, the following was submitted:

We are of the opinion that the following actions may contribute to reconciliation in our land:

Church actions with a view to reconciliation

- Pastoral counselling for victims and perpetrators aimed at confession of guilt, forgiveness and reconciliation and bringing the involved parties to public acts of reconciliation;
- Development of reconciliation liturgies transforming worship into acts of reconciliation;
- Reconciliation services for local, regional and national groups;
- Development of rehabilitation programmes holistically seeking the renewal of perpetrators.

Theological/Religious Community Statement, memorial and collective visioning

- The formulation of a profound theological/religious community statement. In addition the Christian denominations/religious community can erect a memorial in remembrance of martyrs and as a reminder that such violations of human rights should never be allowed to happen again.
- The implementation of a process of collective visioning. The aim of such visioning is a broad-based ownership of a vision of a new nation and renewed and transformed community. The vision should inform policy and strategy development and implementation.

An annual national week of reconciliation

An annual national week of reconciliation can be instituted. The following public symbolic acts of reconciliation can be considered:

- the presentation of a report of a civil audit and social comment on the part of, progress in and promotion of human rights by the authorities, followed by a policy declaration (manifesto) of intent by the state;
- vicarious confessions of guilt by political parties and the security forces with symbolic acts of restitution (i.e. the initiation or participation in community projects);
- A national service or meeting in remembrance of human rights violations and public commitment to the promotion and maintenance of human rights;
- Development of symbols of reconciliation as a sign of the will and the taking up of civil responsibility for the promotion and defence of human rights as well as the prevention of and resistance against human rights violations;
- The burning of candles in windows and the wearing or display of national reconciliation symbols.

ADDENDUM 21:

Submission of The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa to TRC in 1996. (TEASA)

In making this submission, TEASA wishes to state that we are a new body in the history of the church in South Africa, having been launched in 1995 as an alliance of thirty-one denominations, with membership of over two million people. This launch brought together previously existing evangelical groupings and churches, which have in their own right made submissions to the TRC.

At its inauguration, TEASA adopted a constitution that states in its preamble:

The alliance recognises the ugly history of Apartheid in South Africa, and the complicity of evangelicals by commission and omission in that history. This history was marked by racism and oppression. Having learned of this, the Alliance is committed to build a community marked by dignity and justice. The founding of the Alliance takes place in the context of transition to a new non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa. This transition is seen as a visitation of the mercies of God, and provides an opportunity for renewal both in the church and society.

This submission of the Alliance therefore takes into account the evangelical practice in the past, and anticipates a future in which evangelical churches hope to fulfil a prophetic role in which they make their contribution in the national search for reconciliation, justice and human dignity.

It is also important to note that the evangelicals were not unanimous in espousing one or other position in respect of policies of the past.

1. Reflecting on gross human rights violation of the past.

With few exceptions, the evangelical community has historically maintained a conservative theology. This is in marked contrast to the history of evangelicalism which, over years, developed a strong social conscience elsewhere in the world, e.g. the antislavery movement in Europe and America.

This conservative theology tended to hold that:

- 1.1 Faith and spirituality are private concerns with little to do directly with social/political and cultural concerns.
The implication of this is that believers abdicated their social and political responsibilities, adopting a stance of neutrality. In the context of the Apartheid conflict of the last few decades, such neutrality would naturally translate into support, at times uncritical, for the status quo. Similarly, because there was little systematic social/political theology, believers who participated in the struggle against Apartheid, would have tended to go with what was pragmatic and effective.
- 1.2 That God Almighty was in control and that in His good time he establishes authorities and replaces them.
The biblical text of Romans 13 is largely interpreted to mean that the Apartheid government was to be supported and defended. This was particularly strengthened by the anti-Communist mood of the times. The liberation movement was aligned to socialism and smacked of communism. To the extent that the evangelical movement is strongly influenced by the West, the anti-Communist posture of the West also became the abiding wisdom and predisposition of the churches.
- 1.3 For those who became involved in the struggle against Apartheid, the theology of liberation as exemplified in the biblical narrative of the Exodus, became the guiding paradigm. God took the corner of the poor. This raised the struggle of the poor to a moral high ground, making even the aberrations within that struggle hard to critique. The notion of “holy war” was not particularly used in Christian circles, although the implication was there that the struggle against Apartheid was a legitimate one.

2. The evangelical contribution – by commission and omission – to the conflict of the past.

By its failure to develop a theology and practice that took adequate stock of social reality, and relying only on private morality to guide people through the complexities of socio-political ideologies and conflicts, the evangelical community virtually made believers easy prey to the

forces of conflict. In effect, believers became socially, politically and culturally incapacitated to act decisively, authentically and with integrity either way.

Conflict was per se not what was wrong about the past, but how people conducted themselves throughout the conflict.

3. Failing to live up to the faith and contributing to human rights violations.

Evangelical believers attempted to justify the system of Apartheid and rationalise their support for it. This led to the embrace of a racist ideology in the values, theology and structures of the church.

- 3.1 Served in the military and police defence of Apartheid.
- 3.2 Opposed and vilified those who worked to end Apartheid.
- 3.3 Embraced Apartheid segregationists' practices in their churches and institutions.

4. Actively opposing gross human-rights violations.

Over the years, evangelicals have made moral submissions to authorities in respect of legislation that undermined the rights of the black community. This was, however, not done vigorously enough.

5. Reflecting on the present and future: The road to reconciliation.

- 5.1 Encourage local churches affiliated to TEASA to adopt victims for the purposes of ongoing assistance and rehabilitation.
- 5.2 Set up a Reparation Fund and receive contributions from member churches to contribute to the process of assisting the victims of human rights abuses.
- 5.3 Run a programme of seminars on reconciliation and break the victim syndrome amongst the survivors of human rights violations.

6. Prevent human rights violations in the future.

The public needs to be empowered to defend human rights. This through:

- 6.1 Making the offices of the Public Protector and Human Rights Commission more available and capable of responding to public concerns.
- 6.2 Bringing the secret services under greater public scrutiny through parliament.

7. Promoting national unity and reconciliation.

The victims of the past need to be reassured that they are not being sacrificed in pursuit of a unity and reconciliation that does not assist them materially. Accordingly the state should:

- 7.1 Underwrite the education of victims of gross human rights violations
- 7.2 Assist those NGOs that work in the area of supporting victims

Signed Pastor Nicolas Mosupi. Chairman – TEASA: Pastor Moss Ntlha. General Secretary – TEASA

ADDENDUM 22:

Statement by the Executive Committees of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, The Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, The Reformed Church in Africa and the Dutch Reformed Church

The Executive Committees of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA), the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA), the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA) and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) met on 16 August 2006 in Bloemfontein to discuss church reunification and the way forward of the four Churches. In our discussions we talked frankly and openly about our road together thus far, and the way ahead.

In a spirit of Christian love the parties apologised to one another for the many wrongs they have committed to one other in the past. These apologies were accepted unconditionally by all the parties.

The four Executive Committees unanimously committed themselves to covenant for the reunification of the Dutch Reformed Family. Reconciliation will be an essential part of the process of reunification between ourselves. We use the term “covenanting” because we want to bring ourselves as well as the reunification process under the authority of the word of God and the will of Christ. We covenant together, not from our own will or under pressure from social and political processes, but because we believe that the Lord, who graciously committed Himself to us, requires this of us.

With regard to the issues on the table, we committed ourselves to be humble, patient with one another, and treasure the bond the Lord has created in our family. Part of this process is that we call on local congregations and all other structures to continue to seek reconciliation, mutual fellowship, mutual support, and co-operation.

As a first step in the process, a meeting of our extended leaderships will be held on 6-8 November 2006. The General Synodical Committees of the four Churches as well as the Executive Committees of the different regional synods will meet. An Interim Committee was formed consisting of the four moderators and the four secretaries of the Churches. The Interim Committee will do all the preparations for the historical meeting in November.

The Executive Committees also decided to establish a Trust Fund for Reunification. A call will be made to all our structures and members, and our friends in Southern Africa and abroad to contribute to this fund to help us realise our dream.

We rejoice in the Lord! We give Him all the honour! Once again He surprised us with His grace and love for this family of Churches.

DRCA: Rev. M Lebone, Rev. J Ramolahlehi, Dr S Corrie and Dr A Hoffman

URCSA: Prof. T Kgatla, Dr A Boesak, Rev. P Makoko, Rev. C Goeiman, Rev. D Malete and Rev. P Moloji

RCA: Rev. V Pillay, Rev. B Shunmugam and Rev. M Sukdaven

DRC: Dr C Burger, Prof. P Strauss, Dr N Niemandt, Rev. E Büchner, Dr K Gerber and Dr H Koornhof

Bloemfontein: 16 August 2006

ADDENDUM 23:

Achterberg Declaration

From November 6-8 (2006), 127 representatives of the Reformed Church in Africa, The Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa and the Dutch Reformed Church met at Achterberg near Krugersdorp to discuss the reunification of the family of DRC churches and how this can be realised.

As a follow-up to a meeting of the four executives at Bloemfontein on 16 August 2006 a broader representation of all four of these churches solemnly committed themselves to the reunification of the DRC family.

The meeting realised anew the importance of their own identities, which include differences in language and practice, for these individual churches. The meeting is convinced that the richness expressed by this diversity should be nurtured in the re-united church and used constructively to the benefit of the church and the Southern African society.

The meeting identified core values for the re-unification process. It appointed ten task teams to work on these different aspects of reunification, in the light of these core values. A follow-up meeting is scheduled for March 2007.

The meeting is convinced that church reunification requires shared faith convictions, mutual trust and respect. Members at the levels of church council, presbytery and synod are encouraged to get to know one another better and to address common challenges together, since the key to a reunited church is local congregations and their acceptance of ownership of this challenge. The meeting gratefully acknowledges the many places where this is already done. The celebration of Pentecost next year presents an excellent opportunity to strengthen relationships.

The meeting acknowledged the specific requirements and procedures of the different churches that need to be complied with in this reunification process. The meeting is part of a process in which the different churches with their congregations should be partners. The meeting is convinced that the unification process is God's way for the DRC family and that God himself will open the doors when people see no obvious way forward. The spirit of unity and enthusiasm at the meeting was encouraging and brought hope.

The meeting acknowledges the common calling of the family of DRC churches in Southern Africa and is bound to this commitment.

ADDENDUM 24

Institute for the Healing of Memories (IHOM): Some elements in the workshop program for a weekend.

1. Icebreaker and ‘getting to know you’.

An appropriate icebreaker must be used because it is necessary to create a safe space in which the participants can come to know one another. In this way a foundation is laid for mutual trust between the participants. Trust and koinonia is important for the correct functioning of the process. It is important that participants will at the end of the ice breaker get the opportunity to say what their expectations of the process are.

It is important that the facilitator of this session will give a good introduction on what can be expected during the process. This gives participants security and also helps to create the safe space.

2. Reflection on the past.

Although the liturgy of the process concentrates on the Apartheid past of our country, the journey can also focus on a specific event. It can be something like the forced removal of people from District Six; or on something else that has happened which caused a lot of trauma/pain.

A drama-group can act a short play to refresh the memories of the participants. If a drama-group is not available, the facilitator can lead this session by giving an introduction about the past and lead discussions on it.

After this, the participants must have the opportunity to reflect on what they have just experienced. The aim of the reflection is to introduce them into the theme of the workshop. Everybody in the group must have the chance to reflect on how he/she experienced it.

3. Focus on the past.

After the reflection, each participant will receive a couple of questions, which will help them to focus on their own experience of the past. The following questions are examples to illustrate how you can focus on the past:

- What effect has South Africa's past had on you, especially the Apartheid years?
- What was it like for you?
- How did it affect your faith?
- What were your most painful and the most wonderful experiences?
- What resources enabled you to survive?
- How did the country's past and your experience change you?
- When you remember the past what feelings/emotions do you experience?
- What part of the past still has an effect on you?
- What are your feelings about your community and South Africa today?
- How do you feel about the future?

The questions will give participants direction to start thinking about their own stories of the past.

4. Creative exercises – drawing.

Each participant receives paper and different coloured crayons. They must come into contact with their own story, draw it and reflect on it.

5. Small- group story telling.

After the drawing exercise participants have the opportunity to tell their stories, with the help of the drawing, to the others in the small-group.

6. Plenary session.

When small-groups are finished, general themes that emerged from the stories are listed in the big group. Some of the themes are suffering, pain, anger, forgiveness and hope.

7. Creative exercise – clay.

Each one receives a piece of clay with which he is to create a peace symbol. This helps the person to handle the past and future in a positive way.

8. Liturgy planning

The small-groups work out a liturgy originating from the themes and questions from the stories. In this way the participants take ownership of their own progress in healing.

9. Liturgy/Celebration service.

Within the context of the journey the liturgy is a symbolic expressing of the general experience and journey of the group. To end on a high note it is necessary to have the Eucharist or love-meal. This brings all the themes and emotions for the Christian together.

ADDENDUM 25:

Mercy Ministries South Africa (MMSA): Elements of a healing/reconciliation workshop.

The process:

- The process starts right at the beginning when the perfect relationship in the Trinity is discussed. This perfect relationship was God's original plan for us. But sin distorted and destroyed all our relationships with God, each other and creation, so that we see one another as a threat and we wound each other instead of honouring one another above ourselves. (Philippians 2:3-4)

God made different ethnic groups (Acts 17:26) and had a specific plan for each group. He put something of His vast Glory in each group, so that all groups together could reflect His full glory (Revelation 21:24-27). However, although we are different, in God's sight we are all equal – nobody is better or higher than the rest. (Acts 10:34-35; Romans 2:11; 10:12)

What is much more important, however, than being part of my ethnic group, is that as a child of God I am a citizen of God's Holy Nation, irrespective of the ethnic group to which I belong (1 Peter 2:9). The consequence is that we are brothers and sisters in the Lord; together we are part of God's family, although we belong to different ethnic groups.

- Another vital part of the process is to help people with pain in their hearts to understand that God is not the Author of their pain. He loves them and suffers with them much more than what they can ever experience. Injustice does not come from God, but from sin of other people who make wrong choices. God loves me and has good plans for me (Jeremiah 29:11). He wants to give me only the best (Matthew 7:11; Romans 8:32). Therefore He wants to take that which the enemy wants to use in my life to steal and kill and destroy (John 10:10) and turn it around. He wants to use that for the good in my life. (Romans 8:28) He wants to redeem my suffering. God is not like my earthly father who makes mistakes and who sometimes fails me or treats me unjustly, He is my heavenly Father who is always there for me and will never leave me (Hebrews 13:5-6).

- When people start to see God in a different light and stop blaming Him for the pain in their lives, but are ready to trust Him with their pain, we can proceed to the next step where we can give our pain to Jesus. He died on the cross not only for our sins but also for our pain (Isaiah 53:4, 5; 1 Peter 2:24) and it can be transferred onto Jesus and be freed from all the baggage of the past. Jesus wants to do the hurting for me. It is also important that I face my pain and talk about it. As long as I suppress the pain in my heart and refuse to talk about it, I cannot find healing. The participants are given time to write down their pain and then share as much as they feel comfortable with in a small group, and then in prayer transfer it onto Jesus. And as a symbolic act they physically nail their papers on a cross. These papers are then burned. This simple symbolic act brings tremendous healing and deliverance to people who may have carried hurts in their hearts for years.

- Only after this healing process can we start to talk of forgiveness and the importance of forgiving and releasing somebody who has hurt me. As long as I have pain in my heart, it is impossible for me to forgive, but when I am healed, it is easier. As long as I do not forgive, I am bound, by my unforgiveness, to the memory of the person who has hurt me, and I am unable to experience the forgiveness that God freely offers me (Matthew 6:14-15). A further consequence of forgiveness is the Bible teaching us to stand in the gap (Ezekiel 22:30). Like Abraham (Genesis 18:23-33), Moses (Exodus 32:32-33), Ezra (Ezra 9), Nehemiah (Nehemiah 9) and Daniel (Daniel 9) we can stand in the gap and, on behalf of our group, ask forgiveness from other groups for the injustices that our group did to them. This does not imply that I was part of the wounding, but I can identify with my group and ask forgiveness on their behalf. This can be done, not only for ethnic groups, but also other groups like fathers, mothers, children, my church, etc. The blessing is that every time God gives me the opportunity to ask forgiveness from someone, I can help that person find healing. And as long as there are people who can get healing, I will keep asking forgiveness. This simple act of identificational repentance brings deep healing to people who have been hurt.

- The last part of the process consists of planning how the reconciled group can make a difference in their community by offering healing, upliftment and change. By the conclusion of the workshop, participants are ready to celebrate their citizenship of the

Holy nation, blessing one another from Scripture and affirming one another. True heart connection is experienced with one another and deep-lasting friendships are being built in which participants can be enriched and blessed by one another.

- Follow-up is also important after a workshop. Participants are challenged to engage in *koinonia meals*. The idea of these meals is to bring participants of the reconciliation workshop together on a regular basis after the workshop, in order to:
 - get to know one another better, to really become friends
 - understand the different cultures better
 - get to know each participant's circumstances so that participants can more often effectively pray for each other
 - keep encouraging one another while having fellowship together
 - live reconciliation so that the community can see the change in their lives.

People who have attended workshops get the opportunity to attend a Training of the Trainer (TOT) workshop where they are trained in how to use the material and techniques in their own situations and be ready to spread the message and live reconciliation.

Together with other South Africans the past is given to Jesus, not by sweeping it under the carpet or just forgetting about it, but by talking about the pain and suffering and bringing it to the cross of Jesus Christ.

ADDENDUM 26:

Track Two Diplomacy-Program (TTD-Program): The model is suggested by Olga Botcharova (1998).

One of the people who have a good reputation for solving conflict and solving reconciliation problems amongst former enemies is Olga Botcharova. Her program is called the TTD-program (Track Two Diplomacy-program). The material in the rest of this addendum is a summary and scheme of the material presented in an article, *Implementation of Track Two Diplomacy: Developing a Model of Forgiveness* (Botcharova, 2001: 279-304), as well as *At the Fork in the Road: Trauma Healing*, by Nancy G. Sider (Conciliation Quarterly, Spring 2001;. Internet Services)

1. Introduction:

All over the world statistics show that more than 50% of international initiatives and negotiations on peace fail. Why is that so? What is wrong with such initiatives? Studies have shown that there are three major factors:

1. *A failure to attend to the need for healing:* When the victims in conflict situations are churches, mosques, hospitals, women, children and old people the tools of official diplomacy are not adequate to handle such conflicts. In the case of South Africa many women and children have deep scars because of what they saw in townships and experienced in their own homes during the Apartheid years. The Researcher lectured at a Bible School and one of the black students, a man of 27, told how he was part of a group who were involved in throwing stones at people who had been “necklaced”. Those scenes are deeply engraved in the minds of people. How is it possible to ignore the hurts and pain against one’s family and ethnic group? During the hearings of the TRC many of the gravest atrocities came to light, but not all the scars and festering wounds are known to outsiders until someone “cracked”. People forced by their leaders to fight one another only yesterday,

cannot readily shake hands today just because their leaders put their signatures on papers drawn up away from the battleground. Only a paper peace can be reached on paper.

2. *Strategies imposing foreign recipes for peace:* So often people from “outside” are trying to help resolving conflict as if the local people don’t have any resources in themselves. Desired changes will only be sustainable if the indigenous people develop a sense of ownership over the peace initiatives. If people from outside are being used, they must work in conjunction with the people living there. In South Africa it is one of the major issues that people from the same city, suburb, township or neighbouring living areas will take responsibility for peacemaking and reconciliation in their areas.
3. *Strategies appealing exclusively to the political hierarchy:* Political leaders have a limited ability to work patiently on subtle issues of non-violent conflict resolutions. Peacemaking is normally seen as trickling from the top down to other levels of the population, but sustainable transformation of conflict calls for more than that. It has to do with reconciliation amongst the common people. Sustainable peace is more about *relationships* than about reconstruction work and the ceasing of conflict. It is only possible through the transformation of people and relationships from below.

2. Track Two Diplomacy- Program:

The Track Two Diplomacy-program (TTD) works *with an unofficial interaction between members of adversarial groups (or nations) to develop strategies, influence public opinion and organise human and material resources in ways that may helping resolving their conflict.*

The most powerful tool of TTD has proven to be a *series of facilitated workshops* that bring together representatives of groups in conflict for dialogues that target relational transformation and the integration of the society. There are examples of faith communities that found themselves in the midst of a struggle after peace has been declared in a situation. In South Africa the same happened with the Afrikaans speaking

churches after the change of government in 1994 and during and after the work of the TRC. The communities are unable to stop blaming and judging one another – maybe covertly, but it is there. The DRC especially is in the spotlight as being one of the “sell-outs” to the Afrikaner. It is indeed a long journey from pointing fingers to sharing responsibility, to confession and repentance, perceived as an integral part of true reconciliation. It was also said in our country that religion possesses the most powerful traditions and tools, not to mention doctrines for peacemaking and reconciliation. The TTD was designed to promote inter-ethnic trust, assist people to move beyond victimisation and to provide tools for indigenous people to resolve their own internal and cross-cultural disputes. The seminars were structured around an experiential approach using group exercises, role-playing, presentations and discussions. Each seminar concluded with a session on future planning, out of which arose a variety of interfaith project initiatives for implementation locally.

The project is successful on several fronts: First, it helps to develop workable relationships amongst leaders and laypersons of different denominations. Second, it helps people to better understand the conflict and its dimensions from the perspective of their adversary. Third, strategies are developed for dealing with conflict as a shared problem, the solution of which lies in co-operative initiatives. Fourth, a great deal is learned about the process of peace building.

The most powerful tool of the workshops is the sharing of stories by individuals from opposite sides of conflict. These stories serve as an initial bond of empathy in rebuilding trust. One of the important things to understand about story-telling is that participants are not open to do it right from the beginning of the seminar, because of fear for being judged for feeling victimised. This is an unspoken need and to help participants to overcome it, a diagram was developed to demonstrate how natural human responses to harm and injustices might move people from being victims to become aggressors.

This cycle (Figure 1) gives full recognition to the victim’s suffering on the one hand, but also to the logical and dangerous progression to escalating violence on the other.

In the diagram seven steps are recognised:

Step 1: *Pain/Injury:*

Victims of aggression (e.g. war, divorce, family conflict, etc) can experience great pain as a result of serious physical, psychological or moral injury. Often the pain is accompanied by shock, denial and sometimes panic. There is an inability to comprehend the reality and respond to it, followed by denial as an attempt to avoid facing the wound.

Step 2: *Realisation of loss:*

As victims begin to realise their loss, they can start to panic when they see the truth of the matter and the future it implies. They can be overwhelmed to imagine life without that which is lost. The more dramatic and sudden the change is, the greater the sense of loss experienced.

Step 3: *Suppression of grief and fears:*

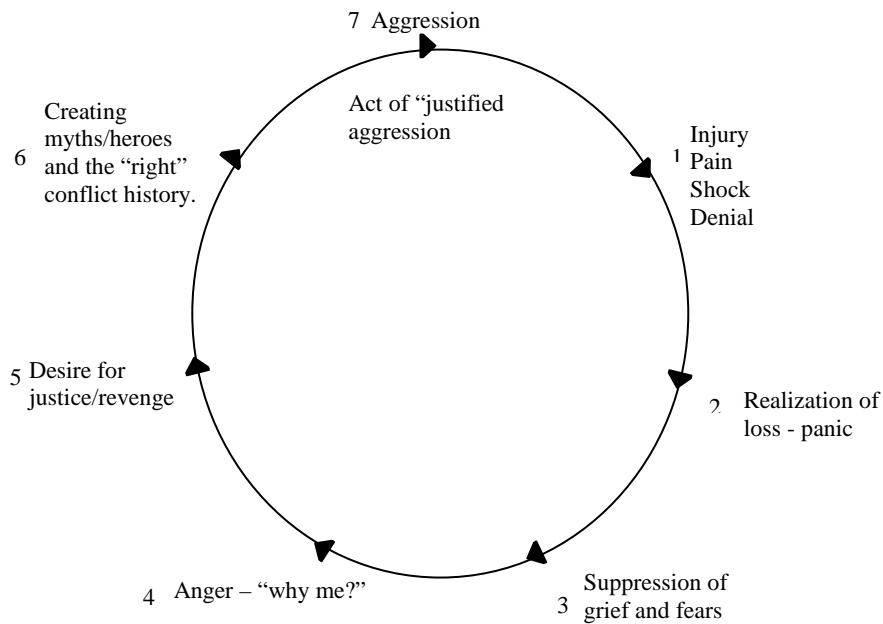
Trauma destroys our sense of security in the world; denial allows us to let in only as much pain as we can tolerate at one time. Denial and suppression are common survival mechanisms, which help us pace ourselves through the process of adjusting to catastrophic loss. In trying to avoid pain, we do everything not to get deeply into the grief or confront the fears of past and future. Suppression of grief also serves as a way of hiding from shame, the most logical, but also the most dangerous progression to escalating violence, the most damaging factor in undermining self-esteem and sense of identity. The reasons for suppression are many, e.g. no time to attend to grief, attention to small children, etc. However justifiable the suppression is, the grief and fears will not disappear.

Step 4: *Anger:*

Allowing oneself to feel the fury of hate and anger, especially when one has been abused, violated or severely wronged, is often a healthy part of the recovery process. Feeling anger toward the perpetrator(s) may be the only resource available that allows some personal respect to be maintained.

The whole world may be seen as hostile and victims often find themselves totally isolated in their anger and this is typically expressed in the question, “Why me?”, or “Did I do something to cause this?”

Figure 1



(Olga Botcharova 1998.)

Step 5: *Revenge/Justice:*

As the anger grows, so too, grows the belief that healing will occur only if the offender, perceived as the source of the pain, is destroyed. And because of the confusion about the true source of the pain, the victim will see revenge, justice, healing, punishment and even problem solving, all as the same.

Step 6: *Creating myths/heroes:*

Executed justice seldom satisfies victims, because it fails to provide the desired healing from the pain of loss. Enraged by the absence of justice, the victim becomes open to and acts out justified aggression. Now the image of the offender is deprived of any possible signs of human goodness, self-pity, blame and demands for justice are reinforced; a history of conflict, with its myths, legends and heroes is created. The blame is placed entirely on the “other” so the victim needs to take no responsibility.

Step 7: *Aggression.*

At this stage a history of genuinely complex relationships is seen and presented as a chain of violent actions by the other side. Thus the victim performs the act of “justified” aggression. Now the cycle of violence is completed, with the roles now reversed. The former offender now feels victimised, seeks revenge and finally, strikes again when the opportunity occurs. And the cycle repeats itself.

Although the above pattern reflects typical tendencies in the development of victim-hood, not all victims are doomed to become aggressors and not all conflicts turn into violence. The challenge for the participants of the workshop is to identify the mechanisms that resist the logic of conflict escalation and help to break the cycle of revenge. The participants are encouraged to *reflect silently* on the choices they have made as victims in conflict, whether those choices were related to individuals or their identity groups. These quiet moments are very important as true transformation takes place in the setting of deep intimacy. The whole process is often accompanied with great inner struggles for overcoming fear, pain, shame and helplessness. Not everyone is able to come to forgiveness within a few days of the seminar, but most begin their journeys with the first steps towards healing.

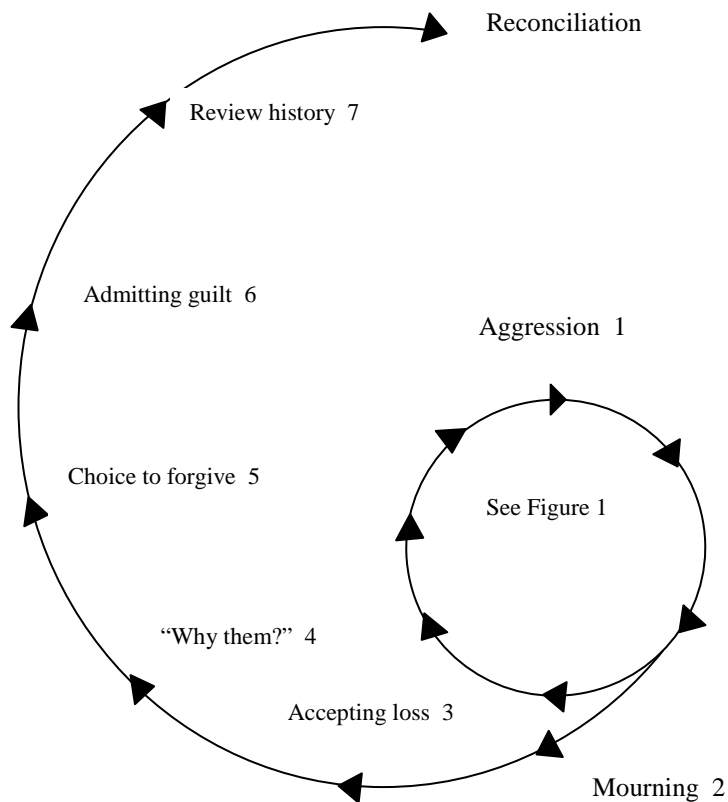
Trauma/Conflict healing entails recognising and reconciling the trauma/conflict. It can be seen as a map of concentric circles. The inner circle, as described above,

may be towards a natural, instinctive revenge journey and the outer circle may follow a journey moving towards reconciliation. The inner circle might describe how to recognise trauma-based conflict and the outer circle would describe how to reconcile trauma-based conflict.

Three general guidelines as we consider the two circles:

1. *Trauma/Conflict healing is both a decision and a process.* The initial choice involves the decision to move toward healing or stay in the react/revenge inner circle. This is also a process, in that it entails being patient with oneself (and others if a whole community is traumatised) as one goes through this journey.
2. *Trauma healing is not one directional.* It is clearly not linear. A person can alternate rather than follow a tidy progression from one stage to the next. Some people may even have moved to the outer circle, only to find themselves back in the inner circle again having a desire for revenge.

Figure 2



3. *The key is, knowing that a choice is available.* If you are in the trauma experience, it is difficult to heal if you stay in the inner circle of trauma, anger and wanting to engage in violence. You have a choice to remain in the inner circle or to move out to the outer circle; a choice to possibly become a healthy individual again.

HOW TO GET OUT OF THE INNER CIRCLE AND INTO THE OUTER CIRCLE. (See figure 2)

Step 1: *Aggression and feeling of loss.*

It is possible to begin to process the suffering as soon as initial realisation of aggression and loss occurs. (See the inner circle Aggression 1)

Step 2: *Mourning and expressing deep grief.*

Participants have to allow themselves to feel the pain. They have to learn to cry instead of hiding their fears. By mourning they are saying goodbye to the past and to whom they were in the past. There comes knowledge that grief experienced does dissolve pain over time.

Step 3: *Accepting loss and confronting fears.*

Survivors need to (a) separate themselves from the events that happened to them; and (b) integrate the events into their lives. Integrating the grief and pain by deciding to heal, believing and understanding what happened and trusting themselves. Confronting the fears of their new reality requires identifying and naming each fear, recognising them one by one. The process takes time and courage, but victims are rewarded with the ability to think of fears as challenges of life, rather than as fatal tragedies.

Step 4: *“Why them?” Re-humanising the enemy.*

Curiosity about how the “other” got involved. (“What made them, these particular people, do it to us?”) Seeing the common humanity in the other; the survivor begins the slow transformation and may even feel the pain of the abuser. Realising that not punishing the “other” does not mean forgetting what happened, but rather recognising that we can never truly get even and that an inner peace comes when we give up trying.

Step 5: *Choice to forgive; Commitment to take risks.*

Ability to transform the impulse for revenge into a search for something larger. Realising that nothing we do to punish another person or group will heal ourselves. Forgiveness relieves the victims from the desperate desire to change the past; it evolves into an acceptance of the present and openness to an unknown future. Forgiveness is the culmination of healing, the most vital need of a victim and a way to freedom from victim-hood. The spiritual power of forgiveness allows the victims to risk vulnerability.

Step 6: *Establishing justice; Admitting guilt.*

Reconciliation is based on two key conditions: forgiveness and justice. Justice focuses on the perpetrator’s admitting guilt. The justice referred to is a restorative

justice that focuses on relationship and restitution. Restoring victims, as well as offenders, to the community must take place. It is necessary to walk through history together, openly examining wounds on all sides, sorting out truth from falsehood and recognising mutual responsibilities.

Step 7: *Moving toward reconciliation and trauma-based conflict transformation.*

It does not imply that I forget what has happened – or condone it in any way. The idea of ‘forgiving and forgetting’ is precisely what has disallowed many from achieving true forgiveness.

Some of the questions that were asked during these workshops were: Why must someone let go and move to the outer circle? Why forgive or even think about it? How do we remember and tell our story so as not to be re-traumatised? What lessons can be learned – what should be taught – to young people growing up in a world that has known, and still produces, incomprehensible patterns of violence and torture? Would it be better to shield young people from the fact of those patterns until they grow up? What about the young people of South Africa where you still have the vulture of racism hovering above? These and other, are difficult questions that do not have simple answers. Therefore it is so absolutely vital for those faith communities and especially the Christian church to get out of the ruts and create opportunities for people to grapple with their past and past atrocities. Especially white people must be helped to understand their own role in the situation in South Africa.

This workshop provides a mechanism to come in contact with yourself and help to understand, but also to do something about those things that are still deep inside you. The concept of forgiveness is at the core of the model and is seen as the culmination of a healing process that makes it possible for the parties in conflict to move forward to reconciliation. Without it there is little hope for a sustainable peace, but achieving it is a big challenge.

When you come to the Fork in the Road, what are you going to do? Take the wrong turn and keep on travelling in an inner, suffocating circle, or take the turn onto the out-moving road to healing and to be set free?

ADDENDUM 27

Power Point summary of researcher's own reconciliation model/workshop (Chapter 6)

A Reconciled Lifestyle!?

Reconciliation

- *What is your understanding of the word "reconciliation"?*
- *What is truth? Are there different kinds of truth?*
- *How do you understand the word "forgiveness"?*
- *How would you describe the terms "restitution/reparation"?*

A Reconciled Lifestyle. . .

- . . .with God
- . . .with myself
- . . .with my fellowmen
- . . .with the environment

Broken relationships

• God and man



• Man with himself



• Man and man



• Man and environment/nature





Biblical background

- Old Testament:
Gen 1:24-28; Ex. 32:31-; Lev 17:11-; 2 Cron 7:14-; Is 53; 61; Micah 6:1; Dan 3:1; . . .
From these it becomes clear that disturbed relations have important social and cosmic implications.
- New testament:
Matt 5:23-24; 18:21-; Rom 3:25; 5:5-15; Ef 2; 2 Kor 5:17-21; Col 1:20; . . .
It becomes clear that sound relations are God's will.

Reconciliation: God and man

• **God:**
Who is God? Can we see Him?
How do we know God exists?

Scripture: 1 Kings 8:27; Ps 147:4,5;
Isa 9:6; John 4:24; Rev 1:8; Col 1:17;
Rom 8:15-17; . . .

Attributes of God?

• MAN:

- # God creates man of his free will - according to his image and his likeness.
- # Why do you think did God make you as you are?
- # How should your life reflects Him?
- # What happened to this very well created being?
- # What do you do/will you do when you make a mistake in front of others?
- # What is your biggest need?


• BROKEN RELATIONSHIP BECAUSE OF THE

SIN

of disobedience

Gen 3:1-24; Rom 1:24; 5:12-21; Gal 5:19-...

• BUT GOD...

JESUS  has worked reconciliation and gave a new identity
2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:1-21.

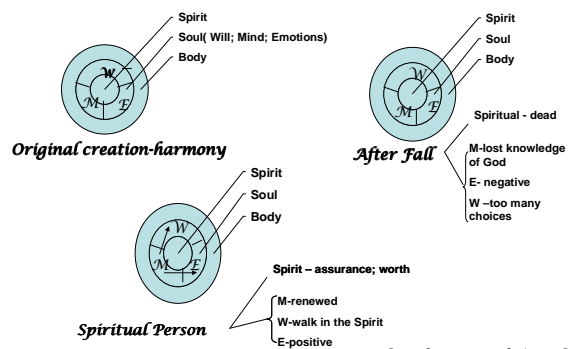
Reconciliation: Man with himself

How do you see and think about yourself?



• Are you satisfied with what you see and think?

DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS CONCERNING IDENTITY





- *Openness and brokenness:*
Ps 139:1,23; Ps 51:17

- *Die to self: (Me-myself-I syndrome)*
Mark 8:35; 10:29-31; Rom 6; 12:1,2;
Ps 3:7-11

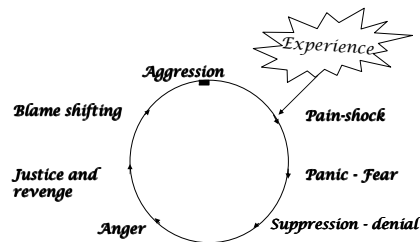
- *Story: Cemetery*

Reconciliation: Man to man

- *Reconciliation in all facets of society: family; church; school; workplace; politics; ethnic; etc.*
- *Drawing: Life story - instances which have to do with conflict(s)*
Share with group.

Dangerous cycle

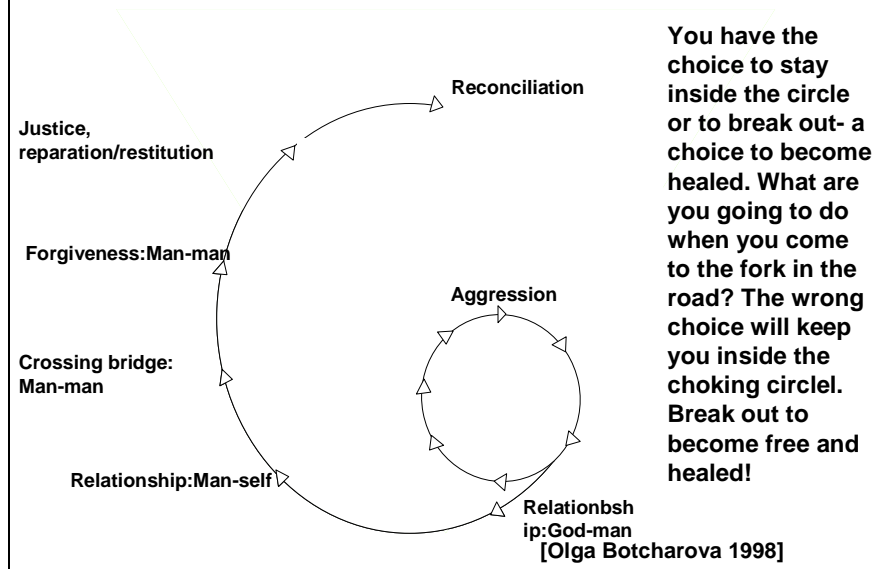
- This figure shows the typical tendency of conflict victims, whatever it may be. It makes the process of healing and reconciliation very difficult if not nearly impossible.



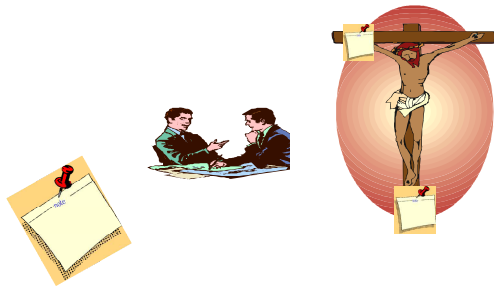
[Olga Botcharova 1998]



The Fork in the Road



What to do with sin and pain??



Forgiveness

- One of the most important concepts on the road to healing and reconciliation.
- To forgive is one of the hardest and most costly things in the world
- The model we have is how God forgave us. Taken up this model in our situation means that someone has to pay the price; take responsibility for sin against humans and the pain inflicted by that.



Forgiveness is not ...

- Denying our feelings of anger, sadness, etc. Ex. Lazarus John 11
- Forgetting or being unable to recall it
- Concealing sin.
- Refusing to co-operate with nation's judicial system Rom 13:5
- Avoiding confrontation if that is necessary. Matt 18:15-17
- Saying it doesn't matter or condoning sin. Ex 34:7

TRUE FORGIVENESS MEANS...

- Forgiving as God forgave us. Eph 4:32
- Forgiving freely from the heart Isa 54:7-8; Mt 18:35
- Stating specific areas where forgiveness is needed.
- Facing the pain and let God do the hurting. Isa 53:4
- Not waiting until forgiveness is "deserved" Luke 23:34
- Refusing to keep remembering the offence. Heb 8:12
- Covering the sins with love 1 Cor 13:7
- Forgiving as a way of life Eph4:2,3;5:1,2

Obstacles

- *Pride*
- *Self pity*
- *Bitterness of spirit*
- *Fear of being vulnerable*
- *Unwillingness to face the pain*
- *A misguided sense of loyalty*

Reconciliation: Man and Nature

- *Nature > ecology, environment, earth, creation*
- *Decline in quality of living - worldwide problem - globalization*
- *Problems: Ozone-layer; air pollution; acid rain; erosion; deforestation; etc.*
- *Urban townships: population density; water pollution; etc.*

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- *Governments have no clear cut solutions.*
- *Biblical solution? Gen 1:27-28; 2:15 - stress issue of stewardship.*
- *Three NB dimensions concerning the Christian's involvement in environment:*
 - *#Earth is God's holy gift*
 - *#In Christ nature is reconciled with God*
 - *#The Christian hope is that the Holy Spirit will renew the whole of creation.*

- *Become involved in the conservation of your environment*
- *Visiting of ethnic townships will help to come acquainted with circumstances*
- *Our greatest guilt is that of which we are unaware of.*
- *Dirty our hands - that will free us of being prisoners of our past and will make us carriers of hope.*

These Power Point slides can be used as a starting point in presenting the workshop. This is only a summary of the main points and it is suggested that the person presenting the workshop must thoroughly prepare him/herself to fill in the "body". It is not necessary to use it in this specific order.

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