

CHAPTER SIX - CRUCIAL ISSUES IN THE ESTABLISHMENT AND LIFE OF THE RCA

Prior to the establishment of the Reformed Church in Africa, the mission of the DRC among the Indian People of South Africa was called 'Indiërsending or Indian Mission'. The first congregation formed on 6 April, 1957 in Pietermaritzburg was called the *Indian Reformed Church* in South Africa (*Dutch Reformed Church Connection*) or simply *Indian Reformed Church*. The latter name for the Church was used up to the formal establishment of the RCA in 1968 in Pietermaritzburg.

The change of the name from Indian Reformed Church to Reformed Church of Africa was a unanimous decision taken by the Synod of 27 August 1968 in Pietermaritzburg. It was argued that the connotation 'Indian' would turn the church into a church only for Indians. Such a racial connotation would be unacceptable and damaging to the work of the RCA. With the change of the name, a new dispensation had arrived, and the RCA found its own place within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches – indeed in the wider church community in South Africa and abroad.

In the relatively brief history of its existence, the RCA had to contend with many issues that related to its own membership, as well as its relationship with the 'mother church,' the DRC, as well as fellow churches in the DRC family. Being a small church with limited resources, wanting to be true to its missionary calling in a very complex community, raised many challenges. The following crucial issues surfaced time and again:

6.1 The relationship between the 'mother' and the 'daughter'

The relationship between the DRC and the RCA (the mother and daughter church) was arranged according to the mission policy of the DRC. In accordance with this policy the work among the Indian people would eventually develop into a 'daughter' church in her own right.



Indian guests with their hosts of the Hendrina NGK yesterday. The Indians are from the Reformed Church, Durban, an NGK sister church.

NGK carries a little goodwill

Staff Reporter

CURRY and rice was served for lunch in Hendrina yesterday — in honour of the Indian guests of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk congregation.

Residents of the small Eastern Transvaal town, which has been "Indian free" for more than 60 years, had threatened a boycott of church services if the Indians took part.

But the 10am service yesterday was packed, and the group took communion with the rest of the congregation. They sang two hymns and the benediction from the choir gallery.

The group of Indians, led by Ds Perold de Beer, were invited by Ds Dawie Pypers of the NGK in Hendrina. They are from the Reformed Church in Durban, a sister church of the NGK.

Ds De Beer preached the sermon yesterday. The congregation sat quiet and attentive in the cool church during the two-hour service.

Ds Pypers did mission work in Durban, converting Indians of

Islamic and Hindu faiths to Christianity, for several years before coming to Hendrina.

The women of his congregation became interested in mission work earlier this year, and he approached his Church Council about inviting a group from Durban.

Ds De Beer said as far as he knew the council had agreed without hesitation. He said he had brought only a small group of nine Indians with him, because "we had to leave on Friday, and it isn't easy for Indians to get off work without being fired".

After the service yesterday morning, the Indians and members of the Hendrina congregation mingled freely at an informal luncheon served in the courtyard of a farmhouse near Hendrina.

The Durban group were accommodated in another farmhouse for the weekend, and Ds De Beer said they had shared facilities with a white family living on the neighbouring farm.

Ds Pypers said: "Here we are all children of God — there is no difference between us in His eyes."

22 August 1980

The DRC provided financial assistance for the missionaries sent out to spread the Gospel among the Indian people. The first evangelists were also supported. The later option of a tent-making ministry was seen by some as the only way the DRC could achieve independence to become part and parcel of the RCA. The downside of this option, however, was that the full-time ministry had to make way for a part-time ministry. The motive for entering the tent-making ministry was to avoid the connotation with apartheid and apartheid money received from the DRC. For others this argument did not add up as government contributions from the University could be seen in the same light. This action furthermore brought serious tension among the white ministers. If they opposed financial independence they would be regarded as racist. The Indian Ministers and Evangelists were placed in the same dilemma. They were also supported by the DRC and having given their lives in this sacrificial ministry they must now hear that they too were racist! Furthermore they were not trained to obtain a chair at the University as some of their white brothers did enjoy.

6.2 Growing from a receiver to a spreader of the gospel

Efforts to encourage RCA congregations to become missionary minded and spreaders of the Gospel were met with limited success. On the positive side of the situation, there were those who gave themselves to the ministry on account of the great work of salvation experienced in their own lives. Some believers would spend all their time in reaching out and sharing their new found faith. The converts were the backbone of the outreach to their people. The new converts could not keep quiet about their faith and would spontaneously share it with family and friends – even if persecution followed.

6.2.1 A comprehensive view of mission

As was the case with evaluating the mission of the IRC in the previous chapter, the missionary work of the RCA in the past decades needs to be tested in the light of a comprehensive mission definition. The RCA had to learn the implications of both the *missio dei* and *missiones ecclesiae* for the church. That the mission was primarily in God's hands was readily accepted. But the church needed to join Him, as ambassador of His Kingdom.

Care was taken during the past decades to assist members to move away from the narrow view of mission, focusing exclusively on the salvation of the sinner, to the more comprehensive view of mission as encompassing the whole reality of human life. For the RCA, being a *mission* church, the leading of Hindus and Muslims to a saving relationship in Christ was, however, first and foremost. In later years the church understood more clearly that the vertical and the horizontal aspects of mission cannot be separated. The heart of the approach must be the love of Christ that constrains us. (11 Cor 5:14). An example of this horizontal approach was when some of the members began to offer garden services free of charge in Laudium; others assisted the sick or provided in the many needs of the bereaved.

Harry Boer (1961:175) advocates this view when he writes. In 'considering the place of the Church in and her message for the world, of course it will, be folly not to take seriously the social, political, economical, cultural and religious milieu in which the Church in a given situation or with a given missionary task

find herself.' To these men and women the Church must proclaim the Gospel in such a manner that she would help them to be the salt of the earth at that time and place in which they found themselves.

According to Voetius, the immediate aim of missions is the conversion of the 'Gentiles,' subordinate to a second goal, the planting of the church; and the ultimate goal, to which both these are subordinate, the glory and manifestation of God's divine grace. This formulation of the goal of mission is, according to Bosch (1991:256), unparalleled. Recognizing the glory and manifestation of God's grace as our deepest missionary commitment and our highest missionary goal therefore has had specific consequences for our involvement in the world (:2).

We in the RCA agree that true missionary involvement should not only be born from a desire to *win* souls for the Lamb, or from a grim sense of legalistic obedience, but in the discovery of the glory and grace of God. (:2, 3) Such graceful involvement will complement the Gospel we preach.

Recognizing the glory and manifestation of God's grace as our deepest missionary commitment and our highest missionary goal therefore has very specific consequences for our involvement in the world (:2). The followers of Jesus Christ, who live out of this magnificent grace, can never satisfy themselves with passive justice, acceptance of injustice and oppression, or be satisfied merely to provide charity to the victims (:3). From time to time prophetic witness is needed.

Looking back over the development of the RCA it may be said that the preaching of the salvation in Christ Jesus took centre stage. Those who met Christ became new persons. Their lives were strangely warmed by the presence of Christ. They began spontaneously to share their new-found faith in Christ. Many were impassioned to assist the poor, the sick and those in distress.

Yet many were also adamant about their condemnation of the policy of apartheid. However, they regarded the eternal salvation of those around them as of utmost importance. How else could you face life with all its challenges and

heartache other than through a saving knowledge of Christ Jesus? To know Jesus was first prize – second prize was to see justice flowing through our land.

A comprehensive definition of missions, as many missiologists have come to agree upon in the latter half of the 20th century, rests upon four pillars: *kerugma* (the proclamation of the Gospel), *koinonia* (planting and nurturing churches and the communion of believers), *diakonia* (charitable service, demonstrating the love of Christ in various ways) and *leitourgia* (praising and worshipping the Lord through our missionary endeavours). Therefore, as was the case in Chapter Five, the mission of the RCA needs to be seen, through the fourfold lens of *kerugma*, *koinonia*, *diakonia* and *leitourgia*.

6.2.2 Kerugma in the ministry of the RCA

The Reformed Church in Africa regards the *kerugma* or proclamation of God's Word as the most important dimension in mission and church planting.

The Reformed Church in Africa on the whole did not lose her missionary drive. The involvement of the membership in mission and evangelism is a given for all congregations. Living in a non-Christian environment makes it absolutely vital for churches and their membership to reach out in the area where they are placed.

In the RCA this mission is perceived as the proclamation of the Gospel *kerugma* to a people's group, the Indian people, yet not excluding black, coloured or white people living in the area. Apart from the preaching in homes and in the outdoors evangelistic campaigns, supplemented with the use of colour slides and Christian films, the eventual building of churches provided for a more disciplined church gathering. The Church architecture reflected the proclamation of the Word with the pulpit in the centre.

Tent campaigns were all along, but especially in the early days, the heart of the ministry. Preaching and evangelism went hand in hand. These meetings were followed with visitation and a call to attend the Church meetings. We referred earlier to the debates with Muslims. These meetings opened doors to their homes but were in our opinion of little value as a tool for evangelism. Dialogue

at homes was more fruitful. Few Muslims turned to the Lord. Those who did suffered life-threatening.

6.2.3 *Koinonia* in the ministry of the RCA

The *koinonia* or ministry of fellowship, especially in the small groups, known in the RCA as cottage meetings or house fellowships, is possibly the most rewarding ministry in the RCA. Living and working in a non-Christian environment, the *koinonia* of prayer groups provided a huge stimulus for Christian nurture. The life of the church is in the beauty of the small groups where their lively worship and genuine prayers touched the hearts of those who were not yet believers. Often unbelievers stood outside, listening and sometimes joining the fellowship.

Those meetings were of the most important building blocks of the local congregations. Those who feared persecution if they attended services at the Church, could now in the privacy of their homes hear the Gospel. When the church was later established the small groups continued as part of the church and of her outreach. These meetings were so meaningful that a family in Phoenix built a beautiful pulpit in their lounge for the use of the minister whenever a cottage meeting was held in their home!

Most of the congregations had regular prayer meetings in the church building. Some congregations would however opt for either a prayer meeting or a cottage meeting. Most believers would participate in prayer at both these meetings.

The message at cottage meetings usually had an evangelistic content and a call for a response at the end of the meeting. On other occasions when no unbelievers attended, it would take the form of another prayer meeting.

These small meetings were indeed the seed of the Church. At such congenial gatherings people opened themselves up to the Gospel. It also enabled those who could not go freely to a Church Building for fear of persecution, to hear the Word of God.

These meetings built lasting relationships that opened the way for the Gospel to reach the homes of unbelievers.

The meetings coupled with intensive house visitation were the seed of the Church. They prepared the way for the planting of the Church in a given area.

The conversion of new believers was at all times a heart-moving experience for the whole church and a moment of celebration.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was the high point for every member of the church, after which the congregants would be sent out into the world to minister to the lost.

Some congregations supplied invitation cards to the hosts to enable them to invite family and friends to these cottage meetings.

Ministers' fraternal meetings were held in all areas. The renowned Pastor J F Rowlands of the Full Gospel Church sought to bring Protestant churches labouring among the Indian people together in a ministers' fraternal. Most of the RCA congregations participated in similar gatherings for the purpose of fellowship.

6.2.4 *Diakonia* in the ministry of the RCA

The *diakonia* ministry in the RCA developed around the specific needs of those interested in the Gospel, as well as people living in the wider community and who were victims of poverty, social upheaval and injustice.

As is common to most missionary situations, the plight of the poorest of the poor had to be addressed. Dealing with these situations called for much wisdom. Many were the lessons learnt. Borrowing money from the Church Council or from the members seemed to cause more difficulties than solutions. Loans were often regarded as gifts, causing disruption in the borrower's relationship with the Church Council. The wise Church Council, therefore, would give where the need warranted it, and not lend. A Church Council which played the role of a bank without the rules of a bank, was bound to lose not

only the money, but also the respect of the membership. The golden rule learnt was 'give, don't lend'. Many congregations had to deal with the problem of poverty and they learned to attend wisely and support where support was warranted.

The Church had another formidable duty and that was to genuinely care for the suffering and hurt of her people. A person, who truly cared, would give without expecting anything in return. The ministry of giving must function without any strings attached, knowing that God would reward those giving freely.

With reference to the wider area of projects and the ministry of love and care for those who suffered, the church and her membership had the privilege to care not only for one another but also for those outside the church. The Church must embody compassion. The Church could not remain quiet or act blind amidst the suffering of people in the church and outside. This required helping people to help themselves. It also called for a stand against any form of injustice, a call to align ourselves with those suffering in many different ways. No congregation could close their eyes to the suffering of their people. For the poor provision would be made; for those without work attempts were made to find work; food would be available at the church for the hungry. Invitations for members to attend white churches and *visa versa* were wonderful opportunities to build relationships between Indian and White and in some small way contribute towards a just dispensation. Few if any of the ministers supported the policy of apartheid.

The following incident illustrates the support offered by the clergy: A husband and his wife had a quarrel because she was unfaithful to him. One eventful night when she returned from her lover, her husband waited for her and killed her. During the court case that followed, I was called upon to testify. I explained to the court that he was driven to this act because of her unfaithfulness over a long period of time. The court accepted the testimony and he was set free.

In the congregations great care was taken of the poor, the sick and the bereaved. Some of the most moving experiences were typical Christian funerals.

The loving care shown to the bereaved was beyond anything I've experienced in the white community.

The RCA clearly voiced her indignation with apartheid and worked towards the dismantling of apartheid. The emphasis of the RCA on evangelization was never allowed to blind her to the need of those suffering and calling for justice. Any political structure that deprived men and women of justice, it was believed, had to be addressed - yet the way in which it was done might never go against the spirit of Christ. This is stated clearly in the Laudium Declaration (see 7.5).

6.2.5 *Leitourgia* in the ministry of the RCA

In the RCA, we praise God by obeying his Missionary Command, and participate in the *Missio Dei*.

Mission in itself is an act of worship. By our obedience to Jesus' command, by participating in the *missio dei*, we glorify His Name.

All of this however needs to be reflected in the *leitourgia*, in the congregation, when believers meet to worship, to listen to the word, to pray, and to partake in the sacraments of the Lord. In order to do so, the liturgy of the congregation should be contextual – it needs to reflect the context and the culture, as well as the deepest beliefs, of the congregation.

In the RCA special attention was given to the singing of hymns and spiritual songs as well as to the celebrating of the sacraments. Concerning the sacraments, the RCA followed the rulings of the IRC (5.11.10/5.11.11).

Prior to the establishment of the Reformed Church in Africa and before missionaries from the Dutch Reformed Church began to reach out to the Hindus and Moslems of South Africa, there were those individuals who felt a calling to reach out to the Indian people of South Africa. (See Chapter 5, par 5.11.9) The form of their outreach varied from house visitation, Sunday school classes, youth meetings, Bible studies, prayer meetings and cottage meetings. Singing and praying formed an important part of these meetings. The very first hymn books were either hymn sheets or choruses from 'Redemption Songs'. In some of the

smaller towns of South Africa, where Indian people could speak and understand Afrikaans, such as Middelburg (Transvaal), Afrikaans songs could also be used. Songs in the vernacular were often sung, mostly in Tamil, but also in Telegu, Hindi and Gujerati. English, however, was the language most often used.

Initially there was little contact between the Dutch Reformed ministries in the various provinces of the country. Each group (of the Dutch Reformed Church), whether young or old, sang the songs that they felt comfortable with.

The first Indian evangelists played a major role in promoting the use of songs in the vernacular. The Tamil, Hindi and Gujerati songs were enjoyed thoroughly. Those who knew the language would first translate the words for the benefit of those who did not understand the language - quite a learning experience for the Whites! But also for the Indians who had lost their mother tongue.

The joy of the new-found faith was particularly expressed through gospel singing. The first hymns sung in Pietermaritzburg were those composed during the revivals by Sankey, Wesley, Moody and others. During the Christmas season carols by candlelight became an annual outreach event.

The first meetings were evangelistic open-air meetings with lively singing and a style of preaching that called people to conversion. At that time the so-called Wayside Sunday Schools held in homes were popular. Tent campaigns were often held and the experience of seeing people coming to the Lord inspired congregations to sing with escalating enthusiasm.

The struggle for survival, with so many odds facing the fledgeling church in a Hindu and Muslim environment, caused the church to focus. One of the songs that were sung during those early days expressed this victorious attitude:

He is Lord! He is Lord!
He has risen from the dead
And He is Lord!
Every knee shall bow
Every tongue confess
That Jesus Christ is Lord!

The first hymn-book used in the young church was 'Redemption Songs' (Pickering and Inglis). Bethesda Full Gospel Church, the largest Christian Church among Indian people in South Africa, also used this hymn-book officially. The opening page calls it 'a choice collection of one thousand hymns and choruses for evangelistic meetings, soloists, choirs and the home'.

This book was loved by the Indian Reformed Church and played an important role in maintaining a strong spiritual and evangelical church. In later years when the Reformed Church in Africa faced her own theological crisis, she went back to her evangelical roots as formulated in the Laudium Declaration (Acts Synod 1990: 59 - 61). The first hymn book of the RCA reflected her evangelical character.

As early as 1959 the *Psalter Hymnal* (of the Christian Reformed Church Michigan) was used. This choice expressed the desire of the church to remain Reformed, but Evangelical as well. For the ministers the *Psalter Hymnal* provided the required documents for Baptism, the Lord's Supper, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dordt, the Ecumenical Creeds, discipline, ordination, etc.

During the first meeting of the Synod of the Indian Reformed Church in August 1968, it was resolved that Synod should compile its own Hymnal. This task together with the study material from the different congregations was referred to a permanent committee of Synod. This was indeed a watershed resolution.

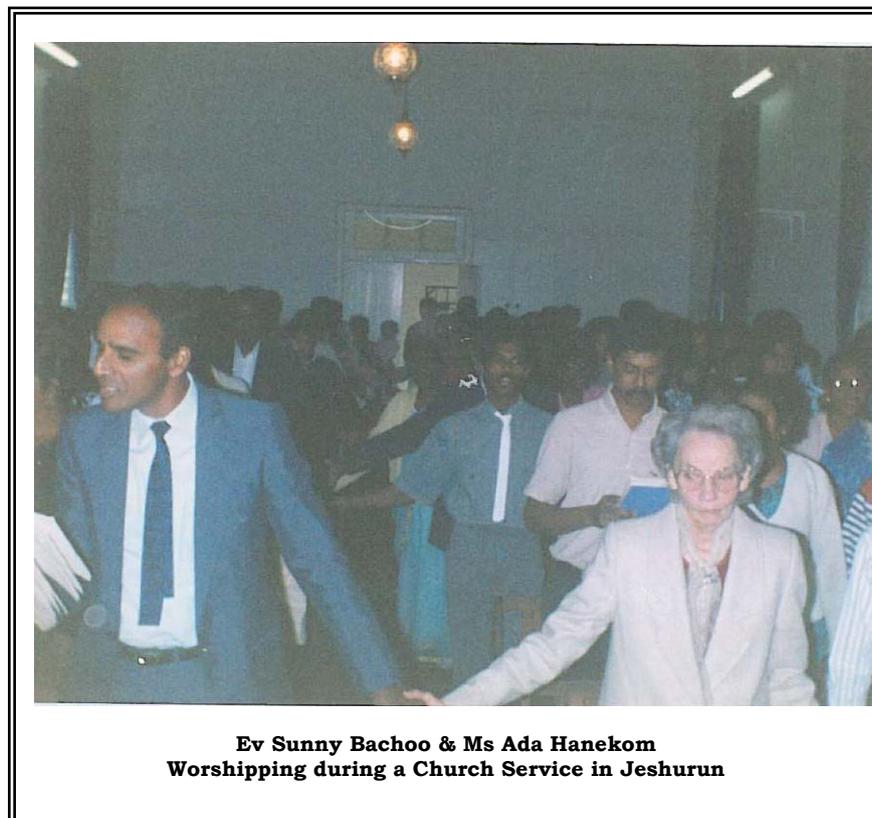
Furthermore, it was decided that the congregation be encouraged, where possible, to test the draft Hymnal presented to Synod by the Church Council of Transvaal and to send criticisms and suggestions to the committee concerned.

It was agreed to use typical reformed hymns as well as other hymns which were to the honour of God, according to scripture and Christ centred. The possibility of using hymns and lyrics in the vernacular was emphasised.

The committee concerned had to report on the need of including hymns in Afrikaans; to consult with the English congregations of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk; and to investigate the necessity of procuring copyright for all hymns to be included in the final approved Hymnal (Acta: First Synod of the Indian Reformed Church; 1968:102).

The RCA Hymnal contains 200 psalms and hymns, 293 spiritual songs and choruses and 55 various songs. To this was added a section with additional songs and choruses in different languages. The following languages other than English are included: Tamil (23), Hindi (6), Zulu (4), Sotho (10), Northern Sotho (1), Tshwane (2) and Afrikaans (13). The hymn book includes a detailed topical index.

This Hymn book is still used in a limited way in the RCA. However with the advent of the Charismatic Movement in South Africa, some of the congregations opted for the inclusion of charismatic songs. In most of the congregations the organ or piano made way for the guitar. Eventually some of the congregations developed a music team that worked and planned in conjunction with the minister. In others the music team took charge of the worship. The introduction of drums in the church was met with some resistance. Rev K Moodley, previously RCA Moderator and Minister of the Congregation of Emmanuel in Durban, took strong exception to the use of drums in the church. In Emmanuel, drums were taboo.



In the RCA the composing of original hymns developed rather slowly. Elder Sunny Bachoo of the RCA Jeshurun in Durban composed many songs with guitar accompaniment in English and in the vernacular. These songs are of a deep devotional nature and were particularly popular at the local house fellowships and prayer meetings.

In 1998 at the meeting of the 8th Synod of the RCA in Durban, the matter of worship was discussed in depth (Acts 8th Synod 1998). Congregations were requested to scrutinise the songs and hymns and if any errors were found these had to be referred to the Committee for Creed and Doctrine (:99).

The meeting took note of a selection of scriptural verses to accompany the hymns and songs of the present hymn book that was provided by the committee of RCA Calvary (:131 - 134) but decided that by the end of March 1999 (target date) congregations could provide scripture references to the Committee of Creed and Doctrine (:99). This included the provision of chords for 700 songs (:87, 88).

The target for completion of the revised hymn book was set for 28 February 1999 (:203). The finalising of the printing, the number of copies to be ordered and the encouragement of congregations to acquire copies of the Hymnal, was referred to the Temporary Committee for Current Affairs (Ninth Synod Minutes, 2002:33). The cost per hymn book would be between R22.50 to R25.00 (Agenda 2002 Synod: 41).

The Committee, having scrutinised the sample copy of the Hymnal found the quality of the product unsuitable. It was therefore agreed that the Christian Literature Fund be approached for the publishing of the Hymnal. The time frame for the finished product was extended to September 2003. The Committee would also investigate the matter of copyright (Synod Minutes 2002:89). A Hymnal Committee with Rev Bennett Shunmugan as convenor was appointed in the interim (:115). The problem regarding copyright was amicably solved when the Synod agreed to pay R1,873.00 per annum as the annual license fee (:73), to Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) with which the RCA was now fully registered.



Rev Bennett Shunmugan: Current Moderator of RCA

At the Tenth Synod Meeting at Malabar (Port Elizabeth) in 2006, the convenor of the Hymnal Committee, Rev B Shunmugan reported that due to financial constraints, the Hymnal Committee could not meet during the interim. In his report he proposed that in view of the cost of production and the constant upgrading of new songs, it would be more practical for each congregation to produce little booklets which could be easily updated for use in cell meetings. Reformed standards were to be taken into account when songs were selected. (Agenda Synod 2006:51).

Synod decided at this meeting to make the hymnal available in electronic form.

The author of this thesis, however, is of the opinion that the electronic mode alone will not answer the needs of the church. All along the members of most congregations kept their hymn books as a treasure in their homes. In *Laudium*, I was always moved by the singing from these hymn books during home prayer

meetings, and especially as part of their private worship at home. The personal Bible and hymn book belong together. Imagine having a Bible only in an electronic medium.

6.3 The Ministry of Deliverance

6.3.1 The reality of the occult in the RCA's ministry

Initially in the ministry of the white ministers the issue of the occult was de-emphasized. Though aware of strange phenomena when Hindus were prayed for, most of the white ministers could not explain them, and simply ignored such occurrences.

It was the Indian workers, such as Ev E Murugan from Pietermaritzburg and Rev Kisten Moodley from Durban North who made the white ministers aware of the phenomenon. It was in Pietermaritzburg that the importance of dealing with occultism among Hindus surfaced. Through the ministry of evangelist Albert Murugan, first Evangelist appointed in 1951 to work among the Indians, precious lessons concerning Hindu outreach were learnt. Upon the conversion and deliverance of Charles Rajah from the power of the spirit of *Dropathi*, a whole family came to Christ. This resulted in family members of evangelist Murugan writing to Rev Pretorius to enquire whether he would require the evangelist's services (Pretorius, 1976:7, 15). Evangelist Murugan was duly called. He accepted and subsequently played an important role in helping new converts.

The missionaries and evangelists eventually became aware of the important role of the occult and that to ignore the existence of Hindu spirits and gods would be tantamount to adding Christ to the Hindu pantheon. They came to recognize the fierce reaction of the spirits to the Word of God and the prayer of the believers.

During services in Phoenix (Durban) we often experienced the reaction of these spirits, trying to disrupt the preaching of the Word. The elders understood what was happening and quietly took the suffering person outside so that the service could continue without disruption and the person might be set free.



Church leaders of the Jeshurun Congregation

On one occasion, during the Pentecost week, I was conducting a service at the church in Avoca. A white lady in a sari belonging to the Hare Krishna movement, attended. I experienced the service as one of the most difficult meetings. I felt that I was preaching against a wall. After the service we prayed for her and took her back to the Hare Krishna Centre. Later we received a letter from her, thanking us for the hospitality and sharing with us that she had found Christ!

In the ministry of the RCA we never used the term 'exorcism', but rather the positive expression 'deliverance'.

I agree with Deneyschen in his Diploma Theology (Pretoria University) thesis, *Bearbeiding van Hindoes in Suid-Afrika* (1979) that it was only when we dealt with this phenomenon in a positive way that we made a breakthrough which enabled us to reach the hearts of the Hindus. In my personal ministry I have witnessed phenomenal growth in the Church in terms of both quantity and quality.

Deneyschen writes as follows regarding deliverance from demons: demonism.

Dit was slegs nadat ons as Christene, nie alleen kennis geneem het van hierdie fenomeen nie, maar ook daadwerklik daarmee rekening gehou het, dat die ware deurbraak tot die Hindoe gemaak is. Na afloop van my navorsing het die volgende aan die lig gekom: (i) Die trae verloop van die evangelie het dit te danke aan die kru en direkte teenstand van die duiwel en sy engele. (ii) Die snel en spoedige deurbreek van die koninkryk van God word bewerkstellig wanneer die Kerk van Christus aggressief en triomfantelik opstaan teen die demoniese owerhede en magte wat die heidene bind (1979: Voorwoord).

As stated above, one of the first evangelists of the RCA, Albert Murugan of Pietermaritzburg, was aware of the influence of evil powers and demons and did not only deal with this phenomenon but also inspired positive growth in that congregation (1979: 87). Rev D J Pypers worked day and night to help people find Christ and be delivered. His work in Avoca (Durban) and in Rylands (Cape) was blessed and many were delivered.

Rev Kisten Moodley's work in Durban also saw many delivered and set free. In fact, most of the Indian ministers were aware of the need for a deliverance ministry, and assisted the white ministers in becoming more effective in their ministry.

I saw the positive results of this ministry in Durban and subsequently in Pretoria. I realized that this ministry requires not only a close walk with Christ but also the desire to pray through for those in bondage.

6.3.2 Dealing with the occult: a Reformed perspective

Dealing with the occult is a problem that has to be faced by all churches ministering to the Hindu community. In the Roman Catholic Church special prayers are said for people who are in need of deliverance. According to Rev (Prof) Barney Pityana from the Anglican Church - one of the denominations that have many Indian members - the same approach is followed by the Anglicans (interview, October 11, 2009).

In Reformed Theology (and Missiology) some attention has been given to the problem of dealing with the occult as well. Huisamen, in his thesis '*Magte van die Duisternis*' wrote extensively on demonism and Satanism in the Bible. Professor H C van Zyl (from the Faculty of Theology, Bloemfontein offered a good concise explanation.

In the time of the Reformation, dealing with the occult was an important issue. Calvin was acutely aware of witchcraft, sorcery, magic, etc. In his *Institute* (1.14.19) Calvin accepts the existence of demons and the punishment that the devils will face especially at the resurrection. He maintains that God provides the weapons to stand against Satan (cf. Ouweneel 1990:252). In their studies on the subject, Ouweneel and C F C Coetzee follow closely in the footsteps of Calvin.

In South Africa, in recent years, the issues of the occult and of deliverance from evil powers have been brought to the fore – also because it has become evident that not only in Indian communities, but also in white, black and coloured communities satanism and demonism have become a major concern.

The last word on the subject has not been spoken. The discussions will continue. Not only Biblical scholars, but also practical theologians and missionaries will have to involve themselves in the process. Systematic theologians have a role to play as well. Moller summarizes the debate as follows:

One cannot speak of Christ and his work of salvation or of man and his struggle against evil and sin without paying attention to the devil and his angels. In any case, if the Bible says a lot about evil angels, these pronouncements must also be dealt with in dogmatics (Moller 1995: 102, 3).

6.4 Developing a Church Order

One of the most important issues to be tackled was the development of a Church Order. The RCA needed to establish its own identity and its standing within the DRC family. The relationship between the ‘mother church’, the DRC and ‘the daughter church’, the RCA, required much attention.

The resolution of the first General Synod of the DRC (1962) to take the responsibility for the work among the Indian People countrywide required careful consideration.

Die Hoogerwaarde Sinode besluit om die Sendingwerk onder die Indiërs in die hele Republiek van Suid-Afrika as deel van sy Sendingaksie te aanvaar en dra dit aan sy Algemene Sinodale Sendingkommissie op om weë en middele te vind om die nodige masjinerie daar te stel vir die behoorlike nakoming van al die verpligtinge in verband met die tans bestaande werk en die uitbreiding daarvan.

(Minutes 1962: 137, 212, 270).

In 1966 when the General Synod met again it was decided to review the 1962 decision. In future the ASSK (General Synodical Missions Committee) would, on behalf of the General Synod, take responsibility for the general supervision and policy of the Indian Mission. Synods were requested to support the work, annually, with a fixed amount.

The General Synod also adopted the ‘Draft Church Order’ as proposed by the sub-committee for Indian Missions ‘in principle’ and approved of the Indian congregations of Transvaal and the Cape Province being connected with the Indian congregations of Natal.

The advice of the Standing Committee for Law and Order of the General Synod was obtained concerning the following issues: the express desire of the church councils to be united; the credentials of delegates to constitute as a Synod; provisional acceptance of the Church Order as basis of constitution and obtaining the approval of the relevant institutions of the Mother Church. On 27 August 1968, at Raisethorpe

delegates from the four congregations (Pietermaritzburg, Transvaal, Durban South and Cape Province) convened to formalise the establishment of the Indian Reformed Church, with a total of 391 communicant members, 68 Sunday schools (served by 140 teachers, attended by 1,758 children), with 6 missionaries, 7 evangelists and 2 trainee evangelists. Rev J Pretorius was elected the first chair of the convention.

The process of developing a Church Order for the IRC – later to be renamed the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA) – took place over many years. The Church Order which initially was, in many respects, a mirror image of that of the DRC, had to be developed and adapted to suit the needs of the younger church. The final Church Order was adopted in 1976, and dealt with many issues: the membership of DRC members who served in the ministry of the RCA, the delegation of elders and deacons to presbyteries and synod, the possibility of electing elders to chair church council meetings, relations with other churches within the DRC Family, et cetera. From time to time the Church Order was amended. In 1980 Synod opened the door for a tent-makers' ministry, enabling ministers to take up another occupation as a means of maintenance.

6.5 A self-sustaining Church? Financial dependence in the RCA

The beginnings of the RCA were the missionary endeavour of NGK members. All the early missionaries and evangelists were financially supported by the NGK. The disappearance of the evangelists lessened the dependence on financial support from the NGK. Contributions towards the salaries of ministers however remained. Some Indian congregations paid a growing percentage of their own ministers' salaries. Most of the congregations were financially unable to fully support their minister.

Where the relationship with the NG Kerk (the DRC) became strained - usually on account of the N G Kerk's support of apartheid - some ministers, the then Rev J N J Kritzinger and G J A Lubbe felt obligated as a matter of principle, not to accept financial support from the NG Kerk. The solution was to enter into a tent-makers' ministry. It was hard on their congregations who had to be satisfied with a part-time ministry. The positive consequence of this situation,

however, was that the local elders were encouraged and empowered to take more responsibility for the ministry in the different churches.

The full-time ministry, on the other hand, had the potential for greater expansion and consequently better remuneration for the minister.

CHAPTER SEVEN - CRISES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LIFE OF A YOUNG CHURCH

In the previous chapters the story of the Reformed Church in Africa is told against the background of the life and experience of the Indian Christian community in South Africa. It is the story of a small church that had to grapple with the realities of the country she lived in: 'apartheid South Africa'. As in the case of other denominations, the socio-practical context made an imprint on the life of the church, forcing the RCA to once again define its theological identity.

7.1 Living in Apartheid South Africa

When Ev James Naidoo was called to Port Elizabeth his residential permit was initially refused. (Minutes Synodical Committee: p6). This matter was taken care of by the Synodical Committee. The Department of Indian Affairs replied through Mr H A Prinsloo that a Temporary Residential Permit was granted to Evangelist J K Naidoo to proceed and reside temporarily in Port Elizabeth. The Synodical Committee was informed that 'before submitting such applications the body concerned should satisfy itself that having regarded for the law of the land, inter-provincial movement of the person concerned is necessary.' (Minutes IRC Synodical Committee 5.2.1970). Mr Bean from the Department indicated that Ev Naidoo's permit had been refused because of objections laid by members of the church who were not lay members. It was resolved that an earnest appeal be made to Mr H A Prinsloo and the Department of Indian Affairs to humbly forward to the Synodical Committee the names of the persons who objected. Dr C du P le Roux asked that it be recorded that he was not in favour of such a request.



The emblem of the RCA was developed by Rev J C van der Spuy, from an original design by Gregory Kahn of Durban. The RCA emblem proclaims and acknowledges that God leads his Church by his Spirit and through his Word.



In 1972 at the 9th Meeting of the Indian Reformed Church it was noted that the Synodical Committee's request that residential permits for Indian Workers be extended for a period of three years, could not be acceded to by the Secretary of Indian Affairs.

The Synodical Committee discussed various problems and hardships that the Indian Community was facing. The Liaison Committee was notified regarding:

- (i) The carrying of permits for travelling.
- (ii) Treatment by government officials.

7.1.1 Barred from entering a Public Area

All the ministers of the DRC, also those coming from the white community, were forced to face the realities of apartheid South Africa on a continual basis. I would like to quote from my own experience:

On a hot summer's day I happened to be at an airport in Durban with an Indian friend of mine. Whilst there, I asked this friend to accompany me to the Aero-club restaurant for a cold drink – to which he replied, 'Do you think they will allow me in here?' The reality of the situation struck me like a bolt of lightning. My friend, who had become a brother to me, was not allowed to enter certain places which were familiar territory to me. He later remarked that he found it strange that he was considered good enough to prepare food for white people (he was a chef), but that he was not allowed to enjoy a meal in a restaurant with Whites. He was however encouraged by the fact that as he had met the Lord his Saviour, he was certain that one day he would be with the Lord, in spite of the colour of his skin.

7.1.2 Fear to enter a white church

Entering a white church was for many Indian Christians an uncomfortable experience:

Recently I met a man who grew up as a Hindu. His parents did everything a Hindu was required Hindu to do. The whole family took part in all kinds of Hindu festivals, prayers, offerings etc. In 1989 a friend of his father's, who was a Christian, invited the whole family to the Billy Graham Crusade in Durban. At the crusade the whole family was deeply touched by the message of Billy Graham and realized that they were lost without Christ. That day they met Christ. What a wonderful day it was! He told me that he

worked in Durban but was later transferred to Pretoria. He found a home in Pretoria East where there were many Afrikaans Churches. He felt a desire to attend church to enable him to grow spiritually, but the churches in the area were mostly Afrikaans speaking. He wondered whether he would be accepted in a white church.

Then one day somebody at work told him that he would find Indian churches in Laudium. One Sunday morning early he decided to take a drive to Laudium (about 40 kilometres away). In the poorer part of Laudium he found a church which, he was told, only started at nine. He decided to familiarize himself with the area and soon saw another church. The name on the board was Reformed Church Charisma and the starting time was 9 am. He decided that since he now knew that this church started at 9, he would stay and attend the service. He was deeply touched by the message and since that day he would return for worship almost every Sunday.

I had the privilege to have a conversation with him recently. He told me personally that he was scared to enter a white church because of the race issue. He didn't know what to expect and therefore he would rather travel a distance to go to a church where he would feel welcome.

This same person recently met a white woman at work and they fell in love. Even before he declared his love, she knew that she, too, had lost her heart. He eventually dated her, and their relationship developed into an engagement. They are planning to get married early next year.

As the couple are from different races, the parents from both sides have obviously raised questions. The woman's mother and the grandparents who have raised her are still very upset. In their opinion God did not intend people from different races to marry.

His parents approach the relationship differently. His father said, 'Son, I don't want to interfere with your life, you must decide who you want to marry, but you must promise me only one thing, and that is, that you will

marry a woman who loves the Lord Jesus Christ. If you do that, you will be blessed! Go in peace.'

They recently attended the annual camp organized by the Church and were deeply touched by the message on spiritual warfare. Both came forward to commit their lives anew to Christ.

7.2 Strained relations within the DRC family

On 20 May 1976 representatives of the four NGK Churches met in Pretoria and agreed that the present unity structure of the churches, the so-called Federal Council of Dutch Reformed Churches was not effective in carrying out the aims of the four different NGK Churches and no longer embodied any structural unity. What was needed was an overarching Synod, constituted in such a way as to give a fair representation to all the constituent churches. With the possible representation of two delegates from each Presbytery the Synod would be constituted as follows:

DRC (NGK)	-	256	delegates
DRCA (NGKA)	-	122	delegates
DRMC (NGSK)	-	58	delegates
RCA	-	6	delegates
Total Numbers	-	442	delegates

(IRC Synodical Committee: 95)

Earlier, in 1970, the Synod of the RCA decided to request Federal Council to consider becoming one Synod, thus implying that the RCA had already indicated its desire for church union in 1970 and sought the modus for such union via the Federal Council (RCA Synodical Committee Minutes: 118). In May 1977 all church councils of the RCA expressed themselves in favour of church union (:118). The Synodical Committee of the RCA went a step further in pursuance of the search for unity by inviting the other three members of the DRC family to meet. The RCA and the NG Sendingkerk were represented by their Synodical Committees whereas the NGKA sent observers. The NGK did not attend. (:118).

The 1978 the recommendation of the Federal Council for the formation of an overarching Synod to replace the current Federal Council was rejected in the following statement by the NGK 'Breë Moderatuur : Any attempt to create a super-structure from above and to dictate a policy apart from the Synods, which is not the policy of the church, must be rejected as not substantiated by Reformed Church polity.' (:119)

The way forward was now to work towards the union of the NGKA, NGSK and RCA.

Three commissions were proposed:

1. Commission of Finance, Property, Administration.
2. Commission of Ecumenical Relations, Government and Society.
3. Commission of Theological Education. (:134)

At the meeting of the Synodical Committee of 28 November 1979 the view was expressed that consideration be given to the cessation of Synod, because of the serious financial and other burdens which the present Synodical structure had brought about. Further discussion ensued and pointed to general dissatisfaction with the present structure, the necessity to modify it, as well as the fact that it reinforced and perpetuated the separateness of the RCA. It was felt that the following were alternatives to the present structure:

1. To dismantle Synod and revert to the pre - 1968 situation.
2. To limit synodical activities to one single steering committee with church union as its priority.
3. To approach another church within the DRC family to absorb the RCA. (:131)

From the writer's point of view it seems as if the failure to relieve the RCA of her separate existence eventually led to a negative attitude towards her continuing existence.

Various attempts through the years towards church union failed. The result was a feeling of disillusionment. The RCA Synod of 1990 affirmed their desire for one Reformed Church of Southern Africa. Synod was however saddened by the fact that only two members of the DRC family of churches (the DRCA and DRMC) had bilaterally decided to form the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa. Synod resolved to continue with multi-lateral talks on Church Union (RCA Acts of Sixth Synod 1990) with the new Uniting Reformed Church and the NG Kerk.

7.3 Appealing to government

On 30 April 1979 the Synodical Committee of the RCA had an interview with the Prime Minister of South Africa, Mr P W Botha, during which a memorandum was tabled containing the church's view concerning the Law on Mixed Marriages and the Immorality Act, the Group Areas Act, the New Constitutional Proposals, Detention without Trial and Indian Housing (Minutes Synodical Committee 25.06.1980:4). Mr Botha pointed out to the committee that the Government was not set on a rigid policy, but that changes were and would be made from time to time. The committee was assured of a sympathetic hearing if the FRC family approached the Government with one voice on these issues.

The outcome of this initiative was a meeting, comprising the Moderamen of the DRC in Africa, the Moderamen of the DR Mission Church, the Synodical Committee of the RCA and the Moderamen of the Dutch Reformed Church, to draft a joint memorandum to government. The meeting took place on 11 March 1980 under the chairmanship of Dr E P J Kleynhans (Moderator of the General Synod of the NGK). It was a difficult meeting. The delegates from the different churches did not see eye to eye. The meeting agreed that a press statement be drafted by Dr Geldenhuys, the DRC's Director for Ecumenical Relations and that no additional statements would be made to the media. This however was ignored by Dr Kleynhans, who did make a statement to the press, much to the chagrin of the rest of the delegates. Relations between the families of churches became quite strained. Subsequently the RCA Synodical Committee received an invitation to attend a new round of talks on 11 September 1980.

The Synodical Committee of the RCA reiterated their standpoint that all further meetings would be fruitless until the Broad Moderamen of the DRC repudiated Dr Kleynhans and once again subscribed to the original statement. The Swiss Federation of Protestant Churches offered assistance to mediate between the Churches, but was informed that it was the conviction of the RCA that the South African Churches themselves should attempt to reach reconciliation within the church and that no need for mediation from churches outside the country was envisaged in the immediate future. (Minutes Synodical Committee 12.9.1981: 20, 21).

The RCA continued to appeal to government on matters such as the position of ministers in the RCA, as well as the issue of detention without trial. The decision adopted by Synod in 1980 was conveyed to the respective State Departments. The following response was received, concerning the position of ministers.

1. White ministers would be allowed to reside in an Indian area: however it was not possible to grant a general concession and individual applications would be considered on merit (:22).
2. Restrictions on the appointment of non-white Marriage Officers in terms of which they were authorized to solemnize marriages of non-white persons only, were lifted. Marriage Officers with such restrictions would be furnished with fresh letters of appointment (:23).

On the government's actions to detain opponents of apartheid without trial, the RCA made a strong statement referring to the fact that 768 South Africans were in detention. The RCA endorsed the standpoint of the Pretoria Consultation of Churches stating that justice is a gift of God in which His glory and the liberated wholeness of all people are central.

The standpoint of the Pretoria Consultation of Churches (March 1979) was accepted and endorsed by Synod in 1980: 'Justice is a gift of God in which his glory and the liberated wholeness of all people are central'.

The standpoint of the RCA regarding detention without trial, which was submitted to the Prime Minister in 1979 and endorsed by Synod 1980, reads as follows:

1. We acknowledge the right of the State, as an institution of God, to promulgate such legislation as is necessary for the maintenance of law and order within its borders.
2. We are furthermore convinced that no country or state, especially in our day, can be without efficient security legislation in order to maintain law and order and to safeguard the country from outside threats.
3. We do however also submit that the state, being in the end answerable to God from whom it received its authority, must protect and uphold the dignity and rights of its people.
4. We therefore believe that to detain people, and at the same time deny them a first and fair trial, is a drastic inroad into the accepted principle that a person should lose his freedom only through the administration of justice.
5. Restrictive laws such as those providing for detentions, banning and imprisonments without trial are in our opinion forms of violence against the freedom of the individual and upon the dignity of man, and leads to counter-violence against the State imposing such laws.

The submission ended with a strong appeal:

1. That the internal security amendment bill of 1971 be amended or repealed insofar as it is offensive to the dignity of all persons in our country.
2. That all people who are detained under this law should be brought to trial by a Court of Law and convicted if found guilty, or be released immediately.

(Acta Fourth Synod RCA Durban: 128 - 9)

7.4 Ottawa: *Status Confessionis*

The differences in the DRC family spilled over into the international ecumenical arena.

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches meeting at Ottawa (1982) declared a ‘*status confessionis*’ in respect of apartheid. For the members of the DRC Family attending the meeting, it constituted a crisis. The *mother church* was in the dock – how would the *younger churches* react? The delegates from the DRCA and the DRMC agreed with the decision, to the point of refusing to celebrate communion with the *heretical* DRC. Rev Manikkam, who led the RCA delegation, joined ranks with them, much to the chagrin of his DRC colleagues. At home, the press had a field day: the DRC Family was being torn apart! Some RCA delegates to Ottawa returned home with the perception that the DRC was indeed a heretical church, guilty of classical heresy. They took the matter to its logical conclusion by severing ties with the DRC - without taking this serious, painful matter to Synod before they acted. The RCA acknowledged that the WARC *suspended* the membership of the DRC, but did not ‘excommunicate’ the DRC from the Alliance. They argued that the DRC did not stand accused of classical heresy; the action of the meeting was merely a ‘disciplinary measure’ to force the DRC to abstain from justifying apartheid theologically.

The RCA refrained from calling apartheid a ‘heresy’ (because of their understanding of heresy as the rejection or denial of the central and essential doctrines of the Bible e.g the inspiration of scriptures and the divinity of Christ, etc) but supported, Ottawa’s strong rejection of the theological justification and moral defence of apartheid.

Because it was fundamental to the recognition of a “*status confessionis*’ that apartheid was to be declared a heresy, the RCA Synod, meeting in Cape Town (1994) did not align itself with the Ottawa decision (RCA, Seventh Synod Cape Town 1994:200, 201).

7.5 Defining the Church’s theological identity: the Laudium Declaration

During these difficult times, the RCA was forced to re-evaluate its own theological identity.

Initially, long before the RCA was established, the missionary involvement among the Indians came from various sources. There were devoted believers from the

NGK – both old and young - who were called to reach out to the Indian people in South Africa, in their neighbourhood. They had a passion for missions. History tells us that it took them some time to realize that they had a mission field right upon their doorstep. Racial attitudes and the stumbling block of the English language and its negative connotations with the Anglo-Boer War were impediments. Negative political attitudes in connection with repatriation to India completed the picture.

In Natal the situation was even more negative. The sugar cane farmers needed the Indians' labour but nothing more. They were regarded as a labour force, not as a people of South Africa. Sharing the Gospel was by and large not in their thoughts.

Those that God stirred to care for them were deeply moved by their plight. Sharing the Gospel is not only the preaching of the Word but a deep and loving involvement with those less privileged. Out of this crucible God raised men and women who were prepared to give themselves for this ministry. The Reformed history of missions to the Indian people of South Africa was therefore not only a history of sharing the Gospel but also a willingness to share life with them.

This required great sacrifice. The story of the RCA is the story of steering between the Scylla of the sharing of the Gospel and the Charybdis of sharing a life. And this story was indeed a walk on a tight rope between the preaching of the Gospel and living the life, between sharing the faith and offering the life.

Looking back over the history of this church it becomes evident that the battle for the hearts of the Indian folk of South Africa was nothing less than an all-encompassing commitment to Christ and his love for the people He gave his life for. One could not share the Gospel without coming to grips with the need and the plight of the people. Apartheid in all its ramifications had to be addressed without losing the passion for the uppermost need of salvation in Christ Jesus. Here Mother Theresa and her involvement in India remains a shining example in our time of what God can do through a life totally committed to Christ and the people He died for. Some would argue that such commitment in South Africa and its political realities would hardly be feasible. It may just be that she relates to our situation in South Africa in an unprecedented manner. 'It is not by might nor by power but by my spirit saith the Lord' (Zach 4:6).

This battle, this crisis, was continuously experienced in the life of the RCA. There were those who, as the saying goes, were ‘so heavenly minded that they were of little earthly use, and others so earthly minded that they were of little heavenly use.’

The crisis in the church precipitated the birth of the Laudium Declaration that was tabled in October 1990 during the meeting of the 6th Synod in Laudium, Pretoria. The declaration was born from the resolution of the RCA in 1986 to maintain her stand as an Evangelical Reformed Church.

The initiative came from Rev Perold de Beer. Prior to the Synod he became aware of the importance of finding the proper niche and ministry of the RCA. He considered the fact that the RCA was a young church but also an evangelical church. People of other religions would not simply leave their religion for another religion. They had to discover who Christ was. This would entail not only preaching the Word but also living the life. De Beer spent some time reading the documents of the evangelical movement, such as the Manila Manifesto with its 21 affirmations, the Berlin Declaration of 1974 on ‘Freedom and fellowship in Christ’ and several other papers of the Evangelical Movement.

De Beer became aware that, on account of her missionary nature, the RCA was in essence evangelical, yet on account of church politics it had moved towards a more activist position and was gradually losing the fervour of those initial years when preaching the Word and living the life had pride of place. The unhappy political situation in South Africa had admittedly shifted the goal posts. During the Sixth Synod of the RCA that was held at Charisma, Laudium, the writer drafted the text of a declaration, and brought it to the meeting. Synod unanimously adopted the document, later to be known as the Laudium Declaration, for consideration by the congregations of the RCA and finalization by the Synodical Committee of the RCA. The Declaration was subsequently finalized, unchanged, by the Synodical Committee and adopted by Synod in 1994. The Laudium Declaration became the hallmark of the Reformed Church in Africa.

The Laudium Declaration pronounces the character of the RCA. It not only establishes the RCA as an evangelical church, but it also expresses the strong missionary character of this church. (Sukdaven, 1996:40).

It was during the early 1980's that the RCA came under tremendous pressure by what was seen by many to be political interference in church polity. Allegations of a liberal theology harboured by some from within its ranks were seen as an attack on the evangelical nature and ministry of the RCA. The intention of this declaration was to restate its position as a Reformed Evangelical church. (1996:35). It clearly defines the character of the RCA. It not only establishes the RCA as an Evangelical church, but it also expresses the strong missionary character of this church.

The text of the Laudium Declaration.

We affirm that the biblical Gospel is God's enduring message to our world, and we determine to defend, proclaim and embody it.

We affirm our commitment to the primacy of Evangelism, of the preaching of the Gospel to every creature. We affirm that Evangelism is not an option but an imperative.

We affirm that religions and ideologies are not alternative paths to God, and there is no other name given among men whereby we can be saved but the name of Jesus.

We reject as derogatory to Christ and the Gospel every kind of syncretism and dialogue which implies that Christ speaks equally through other religions and ideologies. To proclaim Jesus as Saviour of the world is not to affirm that all men are either automatically or ultimately saved.

We affirm that the Holy Spirit's witness is indispensable to Evangelism and that without his supernatural work new birth and new life is not possible and all our endeavours fruitless.

We affirm that we who proclaim the Gospel must exemplify it in a life of holiness and love; otherwise our testimony loses its credibility.

We affirm the constant need for revival and determine to seek God's face constantly for revival in our own lives, in the life of the RCA, and in the church of South Africa at large.

We affirm that nothing commends the Gospel more eloquently than a transformed life and nothing brings it into disrepute so much as personal inconsistency. We determine to live worthy of the Gospel of life.

We affirm that the congregation of believers should turn itself outward to its community in evangelistic witness and compassionate service.

We affirm that God has committed the whole Gospel to the whole world and to every member the task of making Christ known throughout the world. We long to see all lay and ordained persons mobilised and trained for the task. We determine to proclaim the Gospel faithfully, urgently, passionately and sacrificially, until He comes.

We affirm that we must demonstrate God's love visibly by caring for those who are deprived of justice, dignity, food and shelter. Governments, religious bodies and nations will continue to be involved with social responsibilities but should the church fail in her mandate to preach the Gospel no other body will do so.

We affirm our God-given unity at the deepest level with all born-again blood-washed believers. We determine to foster such unity across all denominational barriers. In the immediate circle of our church we will foster structural unity with those who share the same confession provided that such structural unity will not stifle the evangelical witness of the Reformed Church in Africa.

We affirm that we who claim to be members of the Body of Christ must transcend within the church the barriers of race, gender and class. We affirm that racism within the church constitutes a denial of the Gospel and deterrent to evangelistic witness.

We affirm that the proclamation of God's kingdom of justice, peace and holiness demands the denunciation of all injustice, oppression and immorality. We will not shrink from this prophetic witness.

We affirm the freedom in Christ of the church of Jesus Christ and refuse the alignment of the church to any ideology or current political trend, power or movement.

We affirm our solidarity with those who suffer for the Gospel and will seek to prepare ourselves for the same possibility.

We affirm the right of the believer to conscientious objection. In our demonstration and witness against evil we determine not to use carnal weapons but to act in the spirit of Christ and through spiritual warfare and constant prayer to enter into Christ's victory over the principalities and powers of evil.

7.6 Discontent in the ranks of the Church

According to Maniraj Sukdaven, the intention of the Laudium Declaration was to restate the RCA's position as a Reformed Evangelical Church. There was a reason for this. Over a period of time a crisis developed in the RCA, not only about its stance on socio-political matters but on the theology behind it. Paging through the minutes of the Synodical Committee covering the time prior to the adoption of the Laudium Declaration, one senses the deep tensions caused by these matters.

The differences of opinion came to a head in the debates on subsidies from the DRC and on dual membership of both the RCA and DRC, as well as on the ever present issue of racism. Gerrie Lubbe and Klippies Kritzinger, both senior ministers in the RCA, recounted their experiences of the time:

Prof Gerrie Lubbe in an article in *Missionalia*, argued that a real credibility crisis was facing his congregation. The haunting question was how long they could remain credible while accepting the Dutch Reformed Church's money, while severely criticizing the church in public. In November 1980 Lubbe's congregation decided to enter into a tent-making ministry (*Missionalia* Vol 14, 1986:37).

When questions were raised at the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in 1982 regarding the status of ministers serving in the two churches, Rev de Beer and two of his colleagues decided to relinquish their status in the Dutch Reformed Church. It became evident to them that it was untenable to hold the status of minister in both the DRC and the RCA (:39). The DRC, according to Lubbe, subsequently advised the RCA that since the DRC ministers had forfeited their status in the DRC they had also lost their status in the RCA since in the DRC's opinion the former served as foundation for the latter (:39).

According to Acta 1961 of the Dutch Reformed Church of Transvaal, the historic situation of the status of ministers in mission was as follows:

Histories het die Moederkerk deur sy geordende leraars eers plaaslik sendingwerk gedoen, en toe sendelinge opgelei en uitgestuur om binne en buite die grense van die Kerk die heidene te evangeliseer. Sulke sendingleraars is onderhou deur die Moederkerk en het altoos lidmate van die Moederkerk gebly en onder sy tug gestaan! Hierdie sendelinge is verbind aan die Dogterkerk deur beroeping, oefen regeermagte uit in daardie Kerk maar behou nogtans hulle lidmaatskap in die Moederkerk en staan onder die tug van die Moederkerk. Dit moet beskou word as 'n tydelike maatreël gebore uit die behoeftes van 'n oorgangstyd en bestem om weg te val wanneer die inheemse Kerk sy inheemse leraars ten volle kan voorsien, volkome self onderhoudend is en die leraars van die Moederkerk slegs nog in adviserende hoedanigheid benodig is, of glad nie! (DRC Acta 1961: 312).

It became practice in the RCA that ministers from the DRC who became ministers of the RCA enjoyed membership privileges in their former congregations. In fact it was unthinkable not to do so. The unfortunate tensions that developed in relation with the NGK in Transvaal resulted however from the unhappy political situation in the country. In this connection Lubbe writes as follows:

During 1980 with its school boycotts and related events we began to realize that in terms of socio-political understanding we were on a collision course with the Dutch Reformed Church. At the same time we became aware of a real credibility crisis facing us. The haunting question was for how long we

could remain credible while accepting the Dutch Reformed Church's money and yet severely criticizing them in public. The Dutch Reformed Church was informed that their money was no longer required (Missionalia: vol 14, 1986:37).

Prof Klippies Kritzinger writes in his paper *Becoming Aware of Racism in the Church: the story of a personal journey* (Annexure A: 439 - 483) that his soft racism did not have a hard religious superstructure to legitimize it (:237). He started teaching Sunday school in a poor part of Laudium (Pretoria) (:238). He states that it was the maligned narrow Pietist Theology of Missionary Christianity that got him there (:258). In 1974 he received a call to the Transvaal congregation of the Indian Reformed Church (:242). From 1979 to 1986 he was minister of the Charisma Congregation of the IRC in Laudium (:244). He writes how he became aware of the church as a racist institution (:250). In 1981 he decided to become a tentmaker minister to challenge the congregation to take more responsibility for its own affairs (:253). The events preceding and following the elections for the tri-cameral parliament in 1983 - 84 precipitated a serious crisis and were the direct cause of a schism in the RCA. The pastoral letter of the Transvaal Presbytery called on RCA members not to vote in the elections. To vote in these elections would be tantamount to supporting racism (:258). The RCA Synodical Committee then confronted the ministers with the following ultimatum: since the DRC did have funds available for full-time ministry they were compelled to be full-time ministers of their congregations (compare:258).

The motivation of the Synodical Committee at the time was to grant the local congregation full-time ministers in order that the work would expand. The earlier emphasis of missions to the un-evangelized that existed in the initial years of the IRC and later of the RCA was being revived. For this reason the Synodical Committee insisted that full-time ministry and commitment to missions should again have pride of place. Accepting funds from the DRC for missions was in line with the evangelical drive to reach Hindus and Muslims for Christ. The writer is quite positive that no minister in the RCA supported apartheid; however the missionary drive to reach Indian people for Christ was the heart of the ministry of the RCA. It is also significant that the evangelical drive in the RCA grew significantly in these later years. The Laudium Declaration clearly attests to this fact. I fully understand the views of Kritzinger, Lubbe and others that to conduct

missions via a separate or 'apartheid' Church is unacceptable. However I am of the opinion that we had – in spite of political problems - to use whatever opportunity was available to preach the Gospel to reach the Indian community with the message of Christ.

One should not forget the days of small beginnings, and must continue to fulfil our calling to reach Hindus and Muslims for Christ. The missionaries' calling should still take pride of place. To set the political order straight is critical, but the process could not be at the expense of the RCA's call to missions. This is true of missions in many countries of the world. In many instances mission is a forbidden practice because of the politics of those countries. This however has not stopped the church to continue mission against all odds. The position in South Africa with its apartheid policy, should never have been allowed to stifle the spreading of the Gospel. The establishment of the RCA is a token of the power of the Gospel in spite of 'apartheid'. We obviously agree with Kritzinger, Lubbe and others that the apartheid policy in all its ramifications is, from the Christian point of view, totally unacceptable and that the Church should in no way have aligned herself with such practices. But we also maintain that the mission had to continue in spite of all of these odds. The RCA did not want to allow herself to be drawn so deeply into the unacceptable political policies of South Africa that she lost sight of her real task – to bring people bound to sin into the glorious freedom of the Gospel.

Having said this we cannot underestimate the suffering of those who felt called to change the political situation to work for a more humane and just society. This is surely part of the law of God as Christ summarized it. 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And a second is like it. And love your neighbour as yourself' (Mt 22:37, 38). I agree with Kritzinger that our relationship with people of other races should be reflecting the love of Christ; however, you may not compromise the Gospel by over-emphasizing the social needs of people.

What was disconcerting, however, was that Kritzinger seemed to be of the opinion that the socio-political situation in South Africa left little room for the evangelical emphasis. The evangelical character of the message was thus compromised by the socio-political issues of the time. The Laudium Declaration states clearly that

the heart of the matter is the evangelical understanding of the Gospel. The rejection of the apartheid position of the government should therefore not be used to stifle the evangelical message of the church. We had to continue to preach the Gospel, in spite of the socio-political situation in the country.

I further agree with Kritzinger that neutrality is tantamount to taking sides with the aggressor, but I understand a lack of love to be equal to the opposite of love. It can turn into resentment, and exaggeration, it can even become hatred. The work of the church often suffered because of this. When I returned to the RCA Charisma in Laudium after several years of ministry in Durban, I was dismayed to find the walls of the Sunday Schools classrooms cluttered with slogans levelled at the apartheid government, with many cuttings showing trigger happy people. In one of the RCA congregations in Chatsworth Durban, the buildings were used for political purposes. The result was that there were hardly any people left in the Church, and the Presbytery was called upon to restore order. This is not the love of Christ.

The Synodical Committee of the RCA had in the meantime to try and resolve the issue of the status of the ministers serving in the church. A major problem was that the ministers who relinquished their status did not officially inform the appropriate committee of the RCA of their intention to relinquish their status and forfeit all privileges in the NGK and consequently no arrangements were made by any committee of the RCA for their re-legitimation. They lost their status in the RCA by virtue of the withdrawal of the Certificate of Legitimation by the Ned. Geref. Kerk. This became effective from 15 June 1983.

In view of the fact that the RCA Church Order (By-laws and Regulations, 1.14.1) does provide for a person who has lost his status as minister of the Word, to request restoration from Synod, Gerrie Lubbe applied on 16 July 1986 for restoration of status – as tent-making minister. As in the case of Rev J N J Kritzinger, he was informed that because funds for a full-time minister were available, it would be in the interests of the congregation and in agreement with Synod's view on the tent-making ministry, that he should be involved in a full-time capacity in the congregation Lenasia.

Lubbe and Kritzinger, together with Rev Charles Roux however decided not to return to the full-time ministry, and informed the RCA of this. The three ministers published a statement to confirm their decision:

In view of the above, the Presbytery of Transvaal under whose jurisdiction we fall, discussed the matter at its recent meeting, and together with ourselves, resolved that, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, the NG Kerk should be informed that we the undersigned, no longer regard ourselves as ministers of the Word in the NG Kerk, since we are enjoying such status in the Reformed Church in Africa. We therefore now wish to inform you that we herewith resign our status as ministers in the NG Kerk, forfeit all privileges which may accompany same, and regard the matter as closed.

Yours sincerely,

<u>C du P le Roux</u>	2 Krantz Road, Dawnview, Germiston
<u>G J A Lubbe</u>	8 Piet Meyer Street, Mindalore, Krugersdorp
<u>J N J Kritzinger</u>	89 Karee Avenue, Proclamation Hill, Pretoria

Rev G Sooklingam, also from the Transvaal, applied at the time for retention of status. It was granted. The actions of these ministers left Rev Sooklingam in the lurch. According to Rev Moodley it was reported that he wanted to be part of the RCA. He was requested to apply to CTAM for restoration of status. The Synodical Committee arranged for the establishment of the new congregation of Transvaal in 1988, to be named RCA Shanti, with Rev S Sukdaven as minister (Minutes Synodical Committee 13/06/1987).

A further complication arose when, without any arrangement made with the RCA, Gerrie Lubbe approached the DRCA Presbytery for the incorporation of his RCA Congregation in Lenasia, now called Via Christi Community, into the DRCA. He requested status as minister of the DRCA. The Synodical Committee took note with dismay, that the brother was licensed by the DRCA without concern for the RCA's legitimate objections regarding procedure. The NGSK furthermore did not take the trouble to reply to the various points raised in a letter from the RCA (05/11/1993), in spite of the fact that the RCA warned that an insensitive

handling of the matter could lead to the straining of relationships and unity endeavour. The RCA Synodical Committee decided accordingly to suspend all unity talks with the NGSK, and the future URCSA, until the matter had been rectified and to inform the other participating churches accordingly. (Minutes RCA Synodical Committee 11/12/1993:181 - 6)

At a meeting at Belhar between the RCA Moderamen and the URCSA Executive on 8 November 1994, Rev Appollis explained that they had requested Dr G J A Lubbe to sort out his differences with the RCA. The RCA expressed their dismay that they 'never heard a word from him.' Rev Sam Buti of the URCSA remarked that the RCA were using this as an obstacle to avoid unity: 'You're waiting for big mama,' he said. (:183:8). Rev Moodley took serious exception to the remark. Buti explained that he did not intend to insult, but that church unity was the primary issue, and should not be jeopardised. URCSA suggested that the problem could be solved through working towards church unity. The RCA pointed out that one of the main ingredients of unity was love - and mutual respect. URCSA promised to consult with the former clerk in order to redress the situation in terms of Lubbe's reconciliation with the RCA. The issue of the RCA property in Lenasia would be taken up with the local URCSA Presbytery.

As for the position of Rev J N J (Klippiess) Kritzinger, the Synodical Committee on 13 December 1986 pleaded with Rev Kritzinger to return to the full-time ministry as originally requested by the RCA Jeshurun Church Council and later by Synod itself. The meeting pointed out that Rev Kritzinger was at no time given the mandate to arrange the calling of any other minister.

Rev Kritzinger explained that it was his desire to bring the congregation back to normal by providing a full-time minister on the one hand, and by staying on in the tent-making capacity on the other hand. His whole intention was to keep the church together. He could not enter into the full-time ministry, because his conscience would not allow him to take NGK money. The recent decisions of the General Synod did not impress him. He felt that the DRC was still practising apartheid, and he would stand by the decisions of Ottawa until he saw the fruit of repentance on the part of the NGK. He maintained that some members of Charisma knew that he would not be able to choose the full-time ministry, and

therefore insisted upon it in order to oust him from the congregation and thus put the blame upon him. (Minutes Synodical Committee 13.12.1986:143:1, 2)

Kritzinger felt he was willing to compromise in allowing the congregation to accept NGK money for another minister. He was not prepared to enter the full-time ministry himself. The Committee suggested that they issue the deed of ordination to him and then give him six months to arrange to come into full-time work. He insisted that no further time allowed would change his determination not to enter full-time service. In conclusion, it was pointed out to Rev Kritzinger that he had lost his status and should he intend to return to the service of the church, he would have to apply to CTAM. At this point he should tell Charisma that his calling was teaching in the Faculty of Theology at UNISA.