

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Relevance

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2 The aim

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

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

1.3 Rationale

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

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

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

1.4 The research question

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.5 Hypothesis

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

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

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

1.6 Research methodology

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

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

1.7 Quantitative research (literary)

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

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

1.8 Qualitative research (empirical)

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

1.9 Researcher as participant-observer

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

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

The researcher agrees with Eckhard Tolle's averment:

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

1.10 Terminology

Afrikaners

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

Apartheid

Ngcokovane describes apartheid as follows:

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

Black Christmas

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

Black Consciousness

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

Blacks

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

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

Distinction between a democratically-elected government and a democratic government

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

Dutch Reformed Church/ Dutch Reformed Family

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

The Kairos Document (KD)

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

South African Council of Churches (SACC)

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

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

South African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC)

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

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

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

The use of “Church” and “church”

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

1.11 Study outline

1.11.1 Chapter One: Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.11.3 Chapter Three: The Kairos Document: Yesterday and Today

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

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

1.11.4 Chapter Four: The Kairos Document: A theological analysis

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

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

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

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

1.11.6 Chapter Six: Conclusion

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

Chapter Two: Church-State relations under the spotlight again

2.1 Introduction

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

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

Responding, Mbeki said:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.2.1 The role of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.2.2 The role of the English-speaking churches

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

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

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

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

Bishop Ambrose Reeves also made the following point:

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

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

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

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

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

2.3 A series of initiatives

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.3.1 Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre (1948)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.3.2 The Cottesloe Consultation (1960)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.3.3 The Christian Institute (1963)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.3.4 Message to the people of South Africa (1968)

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

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

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

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

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

2.3.5 The Institute for Contextual Theology (1981)

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

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

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

2.3.6 The Belhar Confession (1982)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.3.7 The Road to Damascus (1989)

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

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

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

2.3.8 The Rustenburg Declaration (1990)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.5 Church and state relations with reference to power

2.5.1 The Church’s position

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.5.2 The State's position

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.5.3 The Church falters as it aligns itself with the state

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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