

**Perspectives on Ethnic and Racial
Conflict in South Africa:
A Critical Assessment of the Churches
Response from 1960 to the Present.
by Dr. B.C Goba**

Introduction

I have chosen this particular topic because of my ongoing interest in the debate around the issue of religion and politics. This topic is at the centre of many debates that are going on today. This is especially true in the South African context. The focus of this paper is not so much on the secular debates around the issue of ethnic and racial conflict in South Africa, a topic that has been well documented.¹ Rather, my interest is on the response of mainline Protestant churches reflected in their significant statements that address especially the problem of Apartheid in South Africa. I want to pay special attention to the following: (a) the ideological perspectives reflected in these statements, (b) theological vision, especially relating to the nature of the Christian faith and the role of the church, (c) how the issue of religion and politics is handled in these statements.

As I explore these issues I hope to examine especially the political context, events that have had a significant impact on the life of the churches.

The problem of Apartheid has been addressed by churches for a very long time, even prior to the Nationalist regime coming into power in 1948. But what is unique about 1948 is that racism became institutionalized under the policy of Apartheid. From this period on churches were faced with a serious challenge of denouncing Apartheid. What made this task rather difficult was the role of the Afrikaans speaking churches, particularly the Dutch Reformed Church's support of Apartheid. This determination to denounce Apartheid we see in the statement which was made by the English speaking churches in a conference which was held at Rosettenville in 1949.

We affirm that the fundamental truths we shall neglect at our peril include:

1. God has created all men in His/Her image. Consequently, beyond all differences remains the essential unity.
2. Individuals who have progressed from a primitive social structure to one more advanced should share in the responsibility and rights of their new status.

3. The real need of South Africa is not Apartheid but Eendrag (i.e. unity through teamwork).
4. Citizenship involves participation in responsible government. The Franchise should be accorded to all capable of exercising it.
5. Every child should have the opportunity of securing the best education that the community can give, and for which the child has capacity.
6. Every man has the right to work in the sphere in which he can make the best use of his abilities for the common good.²

Whilst this statement did not represent strong criticism of Apartheid,³ it sets a tone for churches to change attitudes and actions to be explored later.

But what is important is to understand the political context prior to the period of the sixties. I believe the events prior to the sixties had tremendous impact on the church's response. I want to suggest that the period of 1950 to 1958 represented the implementation of the Apartheid ideology particularly in a legal sense. This implementation we see in all the legislation which sought to enforce racial laws. One of the first efforts by the nationalist regime was to end black representation through the Separate Representation of Voters bill of 1951. This meant blacks, that is Africans and coloureds, could no longer have whites representing them in parliament.

The second important piece of legislation introduced by the Nationalist party in the same period was the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951. This legal act in many ways became the cornerstone of the Bantustan policy, whose impact was to institutionalize tribal authorities under the chiefs and to deprive the African majority of the South African citizenship. This legislation was a forerunner of the Promotion of Self Government Act of 1959.

The other important pieces of legislation which are really the foundations of the Apartheid system, which were passed prior to the two I have mentioned, are the Population Registration Act of 1950⁴ and the Immorality Act of 1950. The Group Areas Act of 1950 is particularly significant for our purpose, for it laid the foundations for racial and ethnic tensions in South Africa. But we must also add other pieces of legislation related to this one, and those are the Resettlement of Natives Act of 1954 and the Native Urban Areas Amendment Act of 1955. Both these acts were responsible for the mass removal of thousands of Africans. Two more pieces of legislation to add are the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953 and the Bantu Education Act of 1953.

One can cite other Apartheid laws, but these are mentioned here to indicate the serious extent of the racial formation⁵ of the South African political context, one that is the result of the profound conflict that exists between the various racial groups today. These laws were challenged by the black majority and the resistance took many different forms. But one that has had the most significant attention is the Defiance Campaign of 1952. What was very unique about this particular expression of resistance was its mass-based organizational impact. This observation is also made by the American Friends: The first nationwide campaign of resistance, the Defiance Against Unjust Laws Campaign, was planned in 1951 and launched in 1952 with remarkable success during its first four months. The campaign was organized by the ANC, with the Indian Congress participating.⁶ This mass organized resistance was a response to the repressive legislation such as the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 and the Group Areas Act of the same year.

This resistance in spite of its subsequent failure was to become an important precedent for things to come. But it also provided a unique challenge not only to secular political organizations but posed new challenges to the churches to respond from a theological perspective. What was unique about this response is that it compelled churches to come to terms with the contradictions in their professed official statements of faith as we will see in the following sections of this paper.

An Exploration of the Churches' Response

One of the political ironies of the South African situation is that churches, and especially the Dutch Reformed Church, have played an important role in promoting the ideology of Apartheid. Therefore there is a sense in which racial and ethnic tensions are of special theological significance to the churches. I believe this is reflected in the definition offered of Apartheid by the American Friends Service Committee: "Apartheid is South Africa's economic, political, and social system which is based on race. It is buttressed by a complex legal structure, security system, and theology that consolidates South Africa's wealth, power and privilege in the hands of a white minority."⁷ What is important about this definition is that it lifts up the theological dimension that is missing in many definitions of Apartheid. It also points to the deliberate influence of Christianity in legitimizing this pervasive racial ideology. To appreciate this, let me examine briefly some of the statements on race made particularly by some of the Afrikaans and English speaking churches in South Africa.

One of the most significant statements on race to be produced by the Dutch Reformed Church was produced in 1956. The importance

about this statement is that its impact continues to influence the church's attitude to this day. One of the central issues that has confronted this church since its inception in 1652 was to determine its attitude towards the so-called baptized slaves and nonwhite members accepted as members.⁸ This issue initiated serious debates about the church's attitude to other races especially blacks, in regard to membership. There is a sense in which debates about Apartheid began in the life of the church. The document opens with the following words in the section dealing with doctrine.

The Dutch Reformed Church can by no means associate itself unreservedly with the general cry for equality and unity in the world today. The motives and aims in this connection can certainly not always be regarded as purely Christian. It is mostly a surrogate unity and brotherhood that men seek to realise without Christ in a world disrupted by sin. It is a futile attempt, because true unity among men can only be realized in Christ.⁹

What is rather peculiar about this statement is well reflected in the other statements. Whilst the concept of unity is necessary in the context of Christian belief, it is not achievable because of sin. It is for this reason that the church opts for the following policy on race relations: "The Dutch Reformed Church accepts the unity of the human race, which is not annulled by its diversity. At the same time the Dutch Reformed Church accepts the national diversity of the human race which is not annulled by its unity."¹⁰ The document goes on to state:

"Starting from the unity of the Church of Christ as circumscribed above, and taking the specific racial situation in South Africa into careful consideration, the Dutch Reformed Church maintains the following standpoint as its policy.

- (a) That the founding and development of indigenous churches for the purpose of evangelising the nonwhite races of South Africa was both necessary and in accordance with our understanding of the nature of the church of the Lord Jesus on earth and has been richly blessed in many years that have passed.
- (b) That since, under the pressure of circumstances, the historical development in the missionary sphere throughout the centuries showed tendencies of unchristian exclusiveness, thus impeding the realization of the true Christian Fellowship between believers, this has happened not through ill-will toward the non whites, nor with the approval of the leadership of the church, but must be seen as the result of uncontrollable circumstances of general human weakness.

- (c) That in each congregation both mother- and the indigenous daughter-churches reserve the right to regulate their membership according to the realistic demand of circumstances and in accordance with the Spirit of Christ; but at the same time it is also the Christian duty of the above mentioned churches to educate their members for and the practice of a healthy communion of believers, avoiding, however, any evil motives or annoying and willful demonstration.”¹¹

When we examine this statement and the subsequent ones especially the one of 1974. “Ras, Volk en Nasie en Volkereverhouding in die lig van die Skrif,”¹² we see a determination on the part of the Dutch Reformed Church to give theological justification to the ideology of Apartheid. However, this was challenged in the meeting of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Ottawa in 1982. The statement of the Dutch Reformed Church on Human Relations and the South African Scene in the Light of Scripture states categorically that ethnic diversity is the will of God and does not in any way contradict the notion of the equality of all people. What we see in the statements of the Sendingkerk (Mission Church) is a clear repudiation of the theological justification of Apartheid.

With the growing polarization within the main Dutch Reformed Church and its so-called daughter churches, the Sendingkerk and the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Africa because of the deteriorating political situation since the sixties to the present. The Dutch Reformed Church’s theological position has been challenged. One of the most significant challenges has come from the Sendingkerk inspired by the leadership of Dr. Allan Boesak. The statement of the Sendingkerk of 1982 (Statement on Apartheid and a Confession of Faith) declares in no uncertain terms its opposition to that of the Dutch Reformed Church.

Apartheid is a system within which people are separated from one another. The possibility that these groups can be brought together and that peaceful co-existence can replace tension and conflict is ruled out as a matter of principle. Therefore, ethnic groups, to the extent that this is possible, must be compelled, by law if necessary, to remain separate from one another, because the bringing of these groups of people together will necessarily result in conflict and mutual threatening of one another.¹³

The statement goes on to make this conclusion:

“Because the secular Gospel of Apartheid threatens in the deepest possible way the witness of reconciliation in Jesus Christ and the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ in its very essence, the NG Mission Church in South Africa declares that this constitutes a Status

Confession for the church of Jesus Christ.... We declare that Apartheid (separate development) is a sin, that the moral and theological justification of it makes a mockery of the gospel, and that its consistent disobedience to the Word of God is a theological heresy."¹⁴

What is significant about these serious theological differences within the Dutch Reformed Church family as a whole are the profound ideological interests over the political context in South Africa and especially over the issue of Apartheid. These statements are presented here to reveal the profound contradictions within the church, especially between black and white Christians.¹⁵ These differences will be explored later in my concluding remarks. The important observation to make here is that Apartheid as an ideology has not only divided the South African society, but has and continues to divide the entire Christian community.

But, in order to give a broader picture of the ecclesiastical scene, we must also examine closely the statements of the mainline English-speaking churches in South Africa. This will not just reveal a contrast, but will indicate the serious differences amongst churches in South Africa.¹⁶ Apart from the brief statement at the beginning of this paper, the English speaking churches have passed numerous resolutions opposing Apartheid. These statements are important if we are to understand the role of the churches in the current political situation.

One of the most significant documents to address the political situation in South Africa, especially after the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, was the statement from the Cottesloe Consultation called by the World Council of Churches in 1960.¹⁷ This statement was important in that it was the first attempt after Sharpeville by the churches in response to the worsening racial political situation in South Africa. There is no doubt that Joost de Blank, the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town at the time, played a major role in exposing this worsening racial situation to the world. He was also very instrumental in urging the World Council of Churches to hold this consultation. It is also important to note the issue of racial and ethnic tension was an important item on the agenda of the WCC meeting held in Evanston in 1954.¹⁸ One of the observations to be made by this meeting was that racial and ethnic tension are more than social problems, but they constitute sin against God.

The Cottesloe Consultation made the following observations about the South African situation.

"1. We recognize that all racial groups who permanently inhabit our country are a part of our total population and we regard them

as indigenous. Members of all these groups have an equal right to make their contributions towards the enrichment of the life of their country and to share in the ensuing responsibilities, rewards and privileges.

2. The present tension in South Africa is the result of a long historical development and all groups bear responsibility for it. This must also be seen in relation to events in other parts of the world. The South African scene is radically affected by the decline of the power of the West and by the desire for self-determination among the peoples of the African continent.”¹⁹

Unlike the other statements we will be examining briefly, this one is rather paternalistic and conciliatory in tone. For example in one section, it deplors the incorporation of tribal customs within the Christian faith and lifts Western civilization as a Christian ideal to be honored by all practicing Christians. This paternalism comes out particularly in the following section of the statement:

- “9. Our discussions have revealed that there is not sufficient consultation and communication between various racial groups which make up our population. There is a special need that a more effective consultation between the government and leaders accepted by the non-white people of South Africa should be devised. The segregation of racial groups carried through without effective consultation and involving discrimination leads to hardship for members of the group affected.
10. There is no scriptural grounds for the prohibition of mixed marriages. The well being of the community and pastoral responsibility require, however, that due consideration should be given to certain factors which may make such marriages inadvisable.”²⁰

The statement goes on to challenge the migrant labour system and raises issues about low wages and the Job Reservation Act which ensured that certain jobs are available only for whites. The statement also goes on to mention the issue of the black ownership of land. Having raised these issues, the statement does not call for any radical change but pleads with those in authority to address these problems.

“Opportunities must be provided for the inhabitants of the Bantu areas to live in conformity with human dignity. It is our conviction that the right to own land wherever he is domiciled, and to participate in the government of his country, is part of the dignity of the adult man, and for this reason a policy which permanently denies to non-white people the right of collaboration in the government of the country of which they are citizens cannot be justified.

- (a) It is our conviction that there can be no objection in principle to the direct representation of coloured people in Parliament.
- (b) We express the hope that consideration will be given to the application of this principle in the foreseeable future.’²¹

Whilst this statement is critical of the Apartheid ideology, it accommodates certain aspects of the policy such as separate political arrangements for certain specific groups. It also reflects the liberal paternalism of those who drafted it. We will return to this point later. It must also be stated that there is also a sense in which this statement reflects the compromise between the white members of both the Dutch Reformed churches and members of the English speaking churches who participated in the Cottesloe Consultation. What is also important to remember is that when this statement was published it was endorsed by the majority of the English speaking churches, but was rejected by the Afrikaans speaking churches.

This paper cannot go into the events that followed the Cottesloe Consultation — especially the emergence of the Christian Institute under the powerful leadership of Dr. Beyers Naude, former member of the Broederbond, later to become the most controversial General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches. These events are captured very well elsewhere.²² But the impact of Cottesloe was extremely significant in that it compelled the Christians to be more involved and aggressive in addressing the issue of racism in South Africa. One of the important outcomes was the launching later of the study project of Christianity in an Apartheid Society under the auspices of the Christian Institute and the South African Council of Churches. But before the launching of this project, there was another significant statement made by English-speaking churches in 1968 about the worsening racial political situation in South Africa, that is “The Message to the People of South Africa.”

This statement, unlike others, did not come from conference or consultation but was drafted by a theological commission of the South African Council of Churches. It is a statement which became the major focus not only for the churches but for the South African Apartheid state as well. This statement had its origin in the biennial meeting of the South African Council of Churches in 1966. A resolution was adopted at this meeting, to consider what obedience to God required of the Church in the South African contest.

The statement begins with a theological declaration: “We are under the obligation to confess anew our commitment to the universal faith of Christians, the eternal Gospel of Salvation and security in Christ alone.”²³ The statement goes on:

“...In South Africa, at this time, we find ourselves in a situation where a policy of racial separation is being deliberately implemented with increasing rigidity. The doctrine of racial separation is being seen by many not merely as a temporary political policy but as a necessary and permanent expression of the will of God, and as the genuine form of Christian obedience for this country. It is holding out to men a security built not on Christ but on the theory of separation and the preservation of racial identity; it is presenting the separate development of our race groups as the way for the people of South Africa to save themselves. And this claim is being made to us in the name of Christianity.

We believe that this doctrine of separation is a false faith, a novel gospel: it inevitably is in conflict with the gospel of Jesus Christ, which offers salvation, both individual and social through faith in Christ alone.’²⁴

The statement goes on:

“...This belief in the supreme importance of racial identity amounts to a denial of the central statements of the Christian gospel. In practice, it severely restricts the ability of Christian brothers (sisters) to serve and know each other, even to give each other simple hospitality; it limits the ability of a person to obey Christ’s command to love his neighbour as himself.’²⁵

Again this statement did not go far enough, but what it succeeded to do was to raise the theological contradiction inherent in the policy of Apartheid and to challenge Christians to be faithful to the imperatives of the gospel. Apart from that it reflected the basic assumptions of those who drafted it. No where does it expose the plight of the oppressed masses or call for radical change. The statement challenges the Christian to uphold the tenets of the Christian faith without calling Christians to challenge or resist the policy of Apartheid. Nevertheless its impact was tremendous judging from the attention it received from the Prime Minister of the time, Mr. B.J. Vorster, the media, as well responses from the Dutch Reformed Church.²⁶ John de Gruchy commenting on the impact of the statement makes the following observation:

“The message had some serious consequences. It made dialogue between the English speaking churches and the DRC extremely difficult, for in effect the SACC statement condemned those who were prepared to justify separate development on theological grounds. The Baptists did not attempt this, but the DRC did. The message also ushered in a new and more intense phase in the relationship between the State and the churches belonging to the SACC,

and, of course, between the state and the Council itself. But the message also raised basic questions about the life and witness of churches and individuals who had responded positively to it.’²⁷

The period of the seventies was very significant, especially for the churches in South Africa. One of the critical developments during this time was the growth of the Black Consciousness movement and especially Black Theology. Unlike the dominant liberal theology of the mainline English speaking churches, Black Theology compelled the churches to address the political plight of the oppressed by focusing on the socio-political realities of the South African society.²⁸ The significance of Black Consciousness and the Black Theology movement is that it provided the churches with a more aggressive black leadership — leaders like Bishop Tutu, Alan Boesak, and Frank Chikane. It was during the 70s and early 80s that there was a growing tension between the South African state and especially the English speaking churches, one of the dramatic results was the Eloff Commission²⁹ which was set up by the state to examine the affairs of the South African Council of Churches. It was also during this period that the Christian Institute under the leadership of Beyers Naude was banned because of its political activities. These events are mentioned here to highlight the growing tension between the State and the churches. On the other hand, for the Dutch Reformed churches this was a period of political accommodation to the initiatives of the State (cf. *Ras Volk en Nasie en Volkereverhouding in die lig van die Skrif*, 1974).

The introduction of the new Apartheid Constitution in 1983, which for the first time brought in Indians and coloureds in the process of political decision-making, created an explosive political situation.³⁰ Although the coloureds and Indians were brought in as junior partners in the Apartheid system, the exclusion of the African majority posed a very serious challenge to the entire political system. As a result two important political organizations came into existence, the United Democratic Front and the National Forum. The main purpose of both these movements was to challenge the new constitution and to mobilize the masses against what came to be known as the Koornhof Bills. The impact especially of the United Democratic Front was so profound in organizing the masses that the Nationalist regime declared the state of emergency.

As usual, the churches found themselves confronted with a new situation that demanded an immediate response. That response came with the publication of *The Kairos Document*, a theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa, in June 1985. The statement begins by lifting up the deep political crisis facing South Africa:

“The time has come. The moment of truth has arrived. South Africa has been plunged into a crisis that is shaking the foundations and there is every indication that this crisis has only just begun and that it will deepen and become even more threatening in the months to come. It is the kairos or moment of truth, not only for Apartheid but also for the church and all other faiths and religions.”³¹

The statement goes on to state:

“What the present crisis shows up, although many of us have known it all along, is that the church is divided. More and more people are now saying that there were in fact two churches in South Africa — a White Church and a Black Church. Even within the same denomination there are in fact two churches. In the life and death conflict between different social forces that has come to a head in South Africa today, there are Christians on both sides of the conflict — and some who are trying to sit on the fence.”³²

Unlike the other statements we examined earlier, The Kairos Document declares that the churches are part of the problem. This problem is characterized by The Kairos Document, as the State Theology and Church Theology. As the document puts it:

“State theology is simply the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism and totalitarianism. It blesses injustice, canonises the will of the powerful and reduces the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy.”³³

The statement goes on to say:

In the present crisis and especially during the state of emergency, state theology has tried to re-establish the status quo of orderly discrimination, exploitation and oppression by appealing to the consciences of its citizens of law and order. It tries to make those who reject this law and this order feel that they are ungodly. The state here is not only usurping the right of the church to make judgements about what would be right and just in our circumstances; it is going even further than that and demanding from us, in the name of law and order an obedience that must be reserved for God alone.”³⁴

The state theology is not reflected only in the Constitution and the policy of Apartheid but is supported and given theological justification by the Dutch Reformed Church. The church as well as the state are equally guilty to perpetuating racial and ethnic conflict in South Africa. But the problem is not only with the State and the Dutch Reformed Church; it is also with the English speaking churches. The document accused the churches for their reformist stance by

applying the idea of reconciliation in addressing the explosive racial situation in South Africa. As the document puts it:

“In our situation in South Africa today it would be totally unchristian to plead for reconciliation and peace before the present injustices have been removed. Any such plea plays into the hands of the oppressor by trying to persuade those of us who are oppressed to accept our oppression and to become reconciled to the intolerable crimes that are committed against us. That is not Christian reconciliation, it is sin. It is asking us to become accomplices in our own oppression, to become servants of the devil. No reconciliation is possible in South Africa without justice, without the total dismantling of Apartheid.”³⁵

There is no doubt that The Kairos Document represents a radical shift to the previous statements we have examined. What is even more significant about it is that it identifies Apartheid as a form of tyranny to be removed by the Churches by engaging in acts of civil disobedience and giving moral guidance to the masses as they resist the South African state.³⁶ This approach is to be supported by what The Kairos Document refers to as a prophetic theology. What is also significant about this statement is that it reflects the feelings and mood of the oppressed majority.

Some Critical Observations

When we examine these statements we see that they are reflections of certain ideological orientations that are at the center of some of the debates in South Africa. What I want to suggest is that there is a constant interplay between Christian beliefs and certain ideological orientations. In other words these statements cannot claim a kind of ideological neutrality, given the explosive South African context. To what an extent has Afrikaner nationalism as an ideology had an impact on the churches' thinking is a debatable point. There are those like T. Dunber Moodie³⁷ who have stressed the concept of theologized nationalism. That pervasive sense of divine calling of the Afrikaners as a volk/nation, the chosen race that has shaped their world view. It is this sense of calling which has shaped Afrikaner theology. This sense of calling is behind the determination to lead blacks to salvation. This we see in the constant stress on the concept of natural diversity and therefore the need to establish indigenous churches. There are those like Heribert Adam and Herman Giliomee³⁸ who have used the concept of ethnic mobilization which protects and promotes the interest of a particular group. The Dutch Reformed Church, I would argue, has been a major vehicle of the ethnic mobilization to consolidate Afrikaner power. Its leaders from Dr. Malan to Dr. Treurnicht have used their positions as religious leaders to promote the interests of the Church as well as of the State.

Their basic theological orientation given the racial context in South Africa has and continues to be shaped by this sense of divine calling geared to ethnic mobilization in spite of the new divisions within the Afrikaner community. This, I believe, explains why Afrikaner theology for a very long time has supported the existing political status quo and even gone further, to give a theological justification to it. This theology of separation permeates every aspect of the church. The recent shifts within certain sections of the Dutch Reformed Church show that Apartheid may be seen as a product of embarrassment and openness to the confrontation coming from the so-called daughter churches. According to this theology, the church's role in society is to support the status quo, and the Dutch Reformed Church has held to this view so faithfully all these years. This explains why the Afrikaans speaking churches, especially the Dutch Reformed Church, has distanced itself from many of the political pronouncements from the English speaking churches including The Kairos Document.

The English speaking churches in South Africa have always been critical of racism, although without any clear commitment to do anything about it. This in a very interesting way reflects the political position English speaking Christians and white Christians have held in the South African political context. Despite their opposition to racism, in general they have been beneficiaries of the political system of Apartheid. By this I mean they have participated in the sharing of power resources. In other words they have always had a stake in the political system. I believe Charles Villa-Vicencio makes a pertinent point here:

“The tragedy is that the English-speaking churches have failed to be the kind of institutions within which the possibility of moving society from polarized conflict to a higher level of community is possible. In a subtle and therefore complex and menacing way these churches have themselves become trapped within their particular context no less than any other church.”³⁹

This idea of being trapped in their particular socio-political context explains the prevailing paternalism that is so characteristic of the early statements especially that of the Cottesloe Consultation. The other underlying influence has been liberalism especially reflected in colonial missionary policies.⁴⁰ I believe it is this liberal theology of the English speaking church that is being challenged by The Kairos Document, under what it refers to as “Church theology.” One of the main emphases of this theology is individual freedom, thus a strong emphasis of individual piety and reconciliation or rather a privatized faith which fails to address and analyze structural evil. This emphasis we see also in the message to the people of South Africa, especially in the call for individual obedience and a com-

mitment to the imperatives of the gospel.

Apart from this observation one finds in the early statement a commitment to the prevailing political status quo, one could even go further to the free market system. This point, I believe, reflects contradictions within the English speaking church. James Cochrane makes a relevant point here when he observes,

If we take the analysis of the Church's captivity to the dominant structure of the political economy seriously, and if we recognise that characteristic marks of this structure are domination and dependence, exploitation and poverty, then it must be faced that the conflict lies not essentially between Church and State in South Africa, but within the church. The Church is itself a sign of contradiction, at the same time as it proclaims itself, in contemporary terms, the sign of the Kingdom of God.⁴¹

This ideological captivity of the English-speaking church is reflected in their lukewarm theology, one that is prone to criticizing Apartheid, without a clear commitment to dismantling of it. This lukewarm theology reflects the political ambivalence of these churches to join the oppressed in the struggle against this policy of racial genocide. This explains why these churches are under tremendous pressure to participate actively in the resistance against the Apartheid State.

There is no doubt that when we examine especially the statement of the Sendingkerk under the leadership of Alan Boesak and The Kairos Document, we see a clear ideological shift mainly influenced by black consciousness and a Marxist critique of society.⁴² In this particular context this theology has a political role as it reflects the concerns of the oppressed majority. The emphasis is on naming the nature of the structural evil by engaging in social analysis. Theology in this particular context takes sides. This is particularly reflected in what The Kairos Document calls prophetic theology, or as the document puts it, "Thus prophecy is always confrontational. It confronts the evils of the time and speaks out against them in no uncertain terms. Prophetic theology is not afraid to take a state, clearly and unambiguously."⁴³ The statement goes on to say:

"A prophetic theology for our times will focus our attention on the future. What kind of future do the oppressed people of South Africa want? What kind of future do the political organisations of the people want? What kind of future does God want? And how, with God's help are we going to secure that future for ourselves? We must begin to plan the future now but above all we must heed God's call to action to secure God's future for ourselves in South Africa."⁴⁴

What these conflicting responses reveal are the serious ideological divisions within the churches in South Africa. These divisions are rooted in the prevailing ethnic and racial conflict which are the product of the Apartheid system. Apart from that these conflicting perspectives reflect the ongoing struggle over power resources in South Africa. The Church is not immune, but reflects the political interests of the various communities in South Africa. The theological assumptions behind these statements whilst claiming biblical authenticity are rooted in the everyday struggles of the people. They display an interesting interplay of religion and politics, one that is dynamic because of the unpredictable and fluid political context.

END NOTES

1. See especially Heribert Adam, *Modernizing Racial Discrimination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); also Heribert Adam and Kogila Moodley, *South Africa Without Apartheid, Dismantling Racial Discrimination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).
2. *Christian Citizen in a Multi-racial Society*, Rosettenville Conference, 1949, p.7.
3. See James Cochrane, *Servants of Power: The Role of English Speaking Churches, 1903-1930* (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1987); also Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1988).
4. Oliver F. Williams, *The Apartheid Crisis: How We Can Do Justice in a Land of Violence* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986) esp. the discussion on legal sanctions, pp. 35-39.
5. For the concept of racial formation, see Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States from 1960-1985* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986).
6. See *South Africa: Challenge and Hope*, American Friends Service Committee, ed. Lyle Tetum (Hill and Wang Publishers, revised edition, 1987), p.58.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
8. See especially the essay by Chris Loff, "The History of a Heresy," in *Apartheid is a Heresy*, ed. John de Gruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio (Lond: Lutteworth Press, 1983), pp. 10-23.
9. *Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa: Statements on Race Relations* (INformation Bureau of the Dutch Reformed Church, 1960), p. 7.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.
12. *Human Relations and the South African Scene in the Light of Scripture* (Cape Town: DRC Publishers, 1975); see also John de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle*, esp. pp. 70-80.
13. *Apartheid is Heresy*, pp. 175-176.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

15. See especially the introductory remarks of *The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Churches*, revised second edition (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1986).
16. John de Grunchy provides an excellent introduction on this issue, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979).
17. For an excellent background see Peter Walshe, *Church Versus State in South Africa: The Case of the Christian Institute* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1983), esp. chap. 3.
18. See WCC Statemen/Evanston 1954 in *Braking Down the Walls*, ed. Ans J. van der Bent, WCC publications, Program to Combat Racism.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 20
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.
22. See Peter Walsh, *Church versus State*.
23. *The Message in Perspective: A Book about a Message to the People of South Africa*, ed. J.W. de Grunchy and W.B. de Villiens (South African Council of Churches).
24. *Ibid.*, *The Message*, pp. 12-13.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
26. See *The Message in Perspective*, esp. other critical reflections on the statement.
27. *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, p. 122.
28. See Bonganjalo Goba, *An Agenda for Black Theology, Hermeneutics for Social Change* (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1988).
29. See discussion on this in Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid*, pp. 140-141.
30. See Martin Murray's discussion on this in *South Africa: Time of Agony, Time of Destiny: The Upsurge of Popular Protest*, esp. pp. 109-118.
31. *The Kairos Document*, p.7.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
36. See Bonganjalo Goba, "The Kairos Document and its Implications for Liberation in South Africa,": in *The Journal of Law and Religion*, vol V (9187), pp. 313-325.
37. See T.D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975). See also C. Villa-Vicencio, "Theology in the Service of the State," in *Resistance and Hope*, ed. C. Villa-Vicencio and J.W. de Grunchy (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1985).
38. H. Adam and H. Giliomee, *The Rise of Afrikaner Power* (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1979).

39. Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid*, p. 21.
40. See Richard Elphick, "Mission Christianity and the Interwar Liberalism," in *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa: Its History and Prospect*, ed. Jeffrey Butler, Richard Elphick, and David Welsh (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1987). Also see *Contending Ideologies in South Africa*, ed. James Leat, Theo Kneifel, and Klaus Nurnberger (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1986), esp. chap. 4.
41. James Cochrane, *Servants of Power: The Role of English Speaking Churches in South Africa, 1903-1930* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987).
42. See Ren Coste, *Marxist Analysis and Christian Faith* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1985).
43. *The Kairos Document*, p. 18.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.