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ANALYSING TRANSITION NARRATIVES:

CHRISTIAN LEADERS IN PUBLIC LIFE IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

by

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GTMELI001

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Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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DATE 11 February 2004

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ABSTRACT

The dynamic discourse between religion and public life is illustrated in South Africa in both the pre- and post – apartheid eras. Specifically, this relationship is manifested in the lives of a number of individuals who straddled both facets of society. This thesis centres on a social analysis of the journeys undertaken by thirteen men and women who held Christian faith and political commitment in each hand as the New South Africa emerged from the Old. In-depth interviews were conducted with all subjects using qualitative research methods based on an oral history approach. Subjects were asked to consider their faith identities and the ways in which their faith directed their involvement in the public arena. They also considered the ways in which their faith had developed and changed, both pre- and post-apartheid as well as their relationship with formal religious institutions. Finally they considered their public identities and the ways in which their involvements impacted on their faith. Recorded interviews were transcribed and then checked with the subjects before being analysed in terms of the major themes that emerged. A basic form of social analysis which proceeds from engagement with the subject to an emerging analysis, in turn leading to theological reflection and the construction of a call and model for action, as exemplified in the studies of the Circle for Concerned African Women Theologians, was used. The primary material was analysed in conjunction with secondary literature spanning both the subjects themselves (e.g. biographies) as well as the broader theological concepts and context. Major findings were: that there was generally a continuity between subjects' faith and work experiences, but that the way they expressed it varied and changed; that faith had been and continued to be an important motivating factor; and that despite the transition to a plural society, there continues to be a significant relationship between religion and public life in SA.

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PREFACE

This is a book about faith, not about me, but you have to know a bit about me because belief is nurtured through believers. It is not a body of preconceived religious truths which is inherited, but an experience in living to be evaluated. To 'prove the existence of the realities that at present remain unseen' (Heb. 11.1) faith is constantly reminding itself, smashing the treasured representations which arose in a previous age and remolding them into words and images of current experience as a potter reworks unovened clay. Jesus did it, and so must we.

Christian faith has its masterpieces, but it does not rest on duplicating once off conversions like Paul's, or midnight chats like Nicodemus knew, out-facing Popes like Luther, facing fascist stranglers like Bonhoeffer, or conquering poverty like Mother Teresa. 'This is your life' is where your faith has its beginning.

Faith is not a replica, but an original personal experience that arises in the actual ordinary life of ordinary people, and because a down to earth life with ordinary people has brought great change and growth to my faith, it may help to give you courage to face your own reality.

- Cedric Mayson¹

The anti-apartheid struggle and its leaders captured my imagination when my family first visited South Africa during the mid-1980s. There was something about the unashamed use of Christian language and the consequent actions taken that caught my attention and made me reconsider faith in the context of social justice. Many of the individuals whom I encountered seemed to possess a profound integrity that fuelled their commitment to ending the injustice of apartheid. They bore witness to the power of prayer and worship that were naturally integrated into daily life. This early visit to South Africa changed the course of my life irrevocably. I had found a cause I could believe in and hoped I could find faith as well. It was more than ten years before I did return, married to a South African. In the intervening years I had begun a faith journey of my own that prepared me for some of what I would encounter in the New South Africa.

I must confess at the outset that I was intimidated by this project. I had recently become a mother and felt that, academically speaking, I no longer had much to offer in terms of time, energy or creative thinking. Thankfully, my boss and friend, Professor Jim Cochrane, encouraged me to reconsider. I could not have even begun this work without his steadfast insistence that I was capable. His belief in me along with the grant that he secured for me from the National Research Foundation made this work possible.

¹ Cedric Mayson, *A Certain Sound: The Struggle for Liberation in South Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 9-10.

The organisational aspect of the project grew out of the Multi-Event 99 on Religion in Public Life. It began to take on a life of its own as my interview subjects were so forthcoming with positive responses and a willingness to participate. In the course of countless discussions, Professor Jim Cochrane helped me to hammer out the questions. Then all thirteen interviews were conducted between January and March 2001. The transcription process was the longest phase as there was an unavoidable hiatus. My work was disrupted by a temporary move to Edinburgh in March 2001. During a visit to Edinburgh, Professor John de Gruchy helped to give new shape and vitality to the dormant idea. While I was casting about looking for external inspiration and framework, he was insistent that the primary material should take precedence and that a methodology would emerge.

Listening to the taped interviews again and sifting through the transcripts was an inspiring experience. I am extremely grateful for the way so many of the subjects opened their lives to me. These individuals are not saints and I do not seek to idealise them. But I sincerely hope that this thesis can offer them some small tribute. It has been an enormous privilege working on it. I hope that it does honour to the subjects' lives and the lives of countless other activists who have been involved in the work of transformation in South Africa.

University of Cape Town

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- My husband, Jonny Burns, for his steadfast love and encouragement.
- And finally our sons, Noah and Aidan Jesse, for being children of the new South Africa.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AME	African Methodist Episcopal
ANC	African National Congress
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
CCAWT	Circle for Concerned African Women Theologians
CCLT	Church Community Leadership Trust
CCR	Centre for Conflict Resolution
CI	Christian Institute
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church (usually used in reference to the NGK)
DTT	Detention Treatment Team
ICT	Institute for Contextual Theology, Johannesburg
IDT	Independent Development Trust
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
ME99	Multi-Event 1999 Conference on Religion in Public Life
MRM	Moral Regeneration Movement
NEC	National Executive Committee
NGK	Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NP	National Party
OMG	Oppression Monitoring Group
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
RICSA	Research Institute on Christianity in South Africa
SABC	South African Broadcasting Organisation
SACBC	Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference
SACC	South African Council of Churches, Johannesburg
SAHWSO	South African Health Workers Organisation
SASO	South African Students' Organisation
TEASA	Trust for Educational Advancement in South Africa
TEC	Transitional Executive Committee
TNDT	Transitional National Development Trust
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDF	United Democratic Front
UWC	University of the Western Cape
WCC	World Council of Churches, Geneva, Switzerland
WCRP	World Conference on Religion and Peace
WPCC	Western Province Council of Churches
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION:

A Preparation for Listening

1.1: Background and Aims

During 1998/1999 I was actively engaged in working for the Research Institute on Christianity in South Africa (RICSA) as coordinator of a programme of events, including community based research, workshops and a major international conference, on "religion in public life." This process was called the "Multi-Event 1999," and was directed by Professor James R. Cochrane, director of RICSA. The full working title was: "Transforming Public Life: Religion in the Making of Public Policy and Cultural Values". The intention of the process was to encourage debate and activity around the issue of how faith based communities might continue to engage in public life as the South African nation considered future directions and policies:

It sought to address three interrelated areas: The task of constituting a civil public, the work of forming the cultural bases of a civil public, and the responsibility for shaping public policy. Its emphasis was on religious experiences, phenomena and institutions which might provide particular perspectives upon the transformation of public life and the making of public policy. But it sought to pursue its objectives by bringing together as wide a range of role players as possible.¹

Built into the planning of the event was a consciousness about the necessity of engaging with a variety of 'voices', of which the following three were strongly represented: "Those of local religious and political leaders, those of intellectuals engaged in dealing with the concrete realities of ordinary people, and those of community based organisations and NGOs."² There was also important participation from 'ordinary' South Africans and international delegates. There was an emphasis on encouraging 'synergy' and avoiding competition. The view of the organisers was that building on existing strengths and focusing on cooperation between individuals and organisations was the most useful way forward.

In the process of organizing this Multi-Event, it became increasingly clear that this once-off gathering could not possibly explore the range and wealth of knowledge and experience of the participants, many of whom have been key to the process of transformation and continued healing of the New South Africa. The Multi-Event 99 conference was, therefore, the original source of inspiration and background work used for this research project. Many of the specific leaders who were later interviewed participated in this conference. Much of the groundwork was laid out in the papers and speeches presented there. The published conference proceedings were an important reference.

¹ James R. Cochrane, ed., *Multi-Event 1999 on Religion in Public Life, Conference Proceedings* (Cape Town: RICSA, 1999), 7.

² Ibid.

My own research focuses on the faith journeys of thirteen Christian “struggle-era”³ church leaders and activists. This thesis aims to explore the continuing interface between these individuals’ Christian faith and their involvement in public life. What are the conflicts inherent in this tension if religion is the domain of conviction and politics is the business of compromise? Do the individuals concerned find their faith undergirding or in conflict with their new professional capacities? Have they become disillusioned, even to the point perhaps of losing their faith, since the period of initial euphoria that characterized the transition of power in South Africa? Or conversely, have they found their sense of commitment and conviction increased? What might this tell us about the role and influence of religion in public life, including its possibilities and limitations?

These questions are raised in light of “the struggle” and subsequent transformation on these individuals’ professional lives and faith experiences. It is by no means a definitive work. But it is a story of collective and individual transformation and growth. It explores continuities and discontinuities between past and present (the interviews took place in 2001) as people reshape their identities in a new context. It is a story of hope and doubt, of despair and new departures. It is a story, like any, that both reveals and conceals.

1.2 Methodology

It is well recognised that theology is a second order discipline. This thesis, therefore, uses qualitative research to examine the theological implications of the faith and the work experiences of the chosen subjects. The research begins with the subjects themselves and involves critical listening. A narrative approach such as is found in oral history enables access to the interviewees’ theological foundations and understandings. The social analysis perspective derives from the work and publications of the interfaith Circle for Concerned African Women Theologians (CCAWT). The books that they have published offered guidance in “doing theology” differently.⁴ My involvement with the Cape Town Circle gave me both a template and the courage to engage with the interview material outside of a traditional academic framework. Mercy Amba Oduyoye explains the process by which their studies are created: “The Circle itself represents an attempt to listen for women’s voices as they contribute and continue to contribute to theological reflection and draw attention to issues, which faith communities have ignored. [...] The stories are told in a way that includes analysis, reflection and a call to action.”⁵

This is a form of basic social analysis, which proceeds from engagement with the subject to an emerging analysis, in turn leading to theological reflection and constructing a call and model for action. Social analysis helps to clarify what has happened and continues to happen in South Africa. James R. Cochrane, John W. de Gruchy and Robin Petersen make clear the relationship between theology and social analysis in their book *In Word and Deed*:

³ “The struggle” was the broad front of apartheid resistance located both within and without South Africa that culminated in the democratic transition in 1994.

⁴ Nyambura J. Njoroge, “The Missing Voice: African Women Doing Theology,” in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* Number 99 (November 1997): 77-83.

See also: *Groaning in Faith: African Women in the Household of God* (1996), *Claiming Our Footprints: South African Women Reflect on Context, Identity and Spirituality* (2000), & *Her-stories: Hidden Histories of Women of Faith in Africa* (2002).

⁵ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, “Preface: Naming Our Mothers” in *Her-stories: Hidden Histories of Women of Faith in Africa*, ed by I. A. Phiri, D. K. Govinden & S. Nadar (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2002), xi.

Towards a Practical Theology for Social Transformation. They defend a history of such an interface in Christian tradition and explain that for Christians the critical use of intelligence regarding both the interpretation of the Bible and faith is essential for a more profound understanding of what is taking place in the world. In their view, social analysis informs theology, and likewise our faith. They quote Albert Nolan who says, "Social analysis is the instrument or tool we use to clear away the lies, the blindness, the confusion and propaganda, so that faith can discern the movement of the Spirit and indeed the forces of evil in our world today."⁶

Active Listening to Oral History

Social analysis begins in engagement with the subject. My engagement with the subjects of this study initially was in immediate interviews. For both the interview process and subsequent analysis of the transcripts, I relied primarily upon methods proposed by Steinar Kvale in his book *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*.⁷ He sees the qualitative research interview as a "construction site of knowledge" and offers a valuable theoretical framework and practical suggestions for how to build on such a site.⁸ He explains the usefulness of this process thus:

With the breakdown of the universal meta-narratives of legitimation, there is an emphasis on the local context, on the social and linguistic construction of a perspectival reality where knowledge is validated through practice. There is an openness to qualitative diversity, to the multiplicity of meanings in local context; knowledge is perspectival, dependant on the viewpoint and values of the investigator. Human reality is understood as conversation and action, where knowledge becomes the ability to perform effective actions. Today, the legitimation question of whether a study is scientific tends to be replaced by the pragmatic question of whether it provides useful knowledge.⁹

I was also guided by Paul Thompson's *The Voice of the Past*, which looks at the oral history process and theory.¹⁰ Oral history strives to offer a broader perspective on human experience and interpretation. Because the narratives (or "texts" or "data") on which this project is based were gleaned through a taped interview process, I have closely considered the importance of oral history in the construction of this work. This project has been very much a product of multiple voices. Supporting the validity of oral sources, Alessandro Portelli explains the value and richness of this approach to history:

Oral history has no unified subject; it is told from a multitude of points of view, and the impartiality traditionally claimed by historians is replaced by the partiality of the narrator. 'Partiality' here stands for both 'unfinishedness' and for 'taking sides': oral history can never be told without taking sides, since the 'sides' exist inside the telling. And, no matter what their personal histories and beliefs may be, historians

⁶ James R. Cochrane, John W. de Gruchy and Robin Petersen, *In Word and Deed: Towards a Practical Theology for Social Transformation* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1991), 35.

⁷ Steinar Kvale, *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* (London: Sage Publications, 1996).

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.42.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, third ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

and 'sources' are hardly ever on the same 'side'. The confrontation of their different partialities – confrontation as 'conflict', and confrontation as 'search for unity' – is one of the things which make oral history interesting.¹¹

One of the partialities is, of course, that of the researcher. I could not be academically detached from the processes of interviewing and interpreting and writing. This is understood as one of the valuable assets of the oral history approach. It is a subject-centred method that can make research livelier and potentially more relevant as it broadens the field of experts and increases cooperation. Ideally, it can break down social and generational barriers and provide "a sense of belonging to a place or in time" and make "for fuller human beings."¹² "Equally," says Thompson, "oral history offers a challenge to the accepted myth of history, to the authoritarian judgement inherent in its tradition. It provides a means for a radical transformation of the social meaning of history."¹³ This is increasingly apparent, as oral history has gained prominence and legitimacy in the post-World War II era.

The subjects selected for this project each possess a valuable perspective on the history that they have both lived through and helped to make. In order to discern that history, Thompson explains that there are "essential qualities which the successful interviewer must possess." These are "an interest and respect for people as individuals, and flexibility in response to them; an ability to show understanding and sympathy for their point of view; and above all, a willingness to sit quietly and listen."¹⁴

A technique of 'interactive interviewing' "gives more explicit weight to the interviewer's contribution and explicitly sees interviews as co-constructed."¹⁵ Thus the interviews were shaped by a fixed set of prior questions derived both from materials and expertise on religion in public life, and governed by my specific research focus on the interface between Christian faith and a changing involvement in public life. There is then a synergy between the interview and the context and the analysis that goes beyond the sum of its parts in that they constitute something further reaching than a subjective record of the thoughts and experiences of the interviewees.

Reflecting on Subjective Truth

Some might question the credibility of the information that is offered by individuals in a recorded interview. This brings us to the question of "truth" and telling "the truth". Perhaps the more appropriate question is whether or not "the (historical) truth" is the central issue at stake in this context. Portelli states:

[T]here are no 'false' oral sources. Once we have checked their factual credibility with all the established criteria of historical philological criticism that apply to every document, the diversity of oral history lies in

¹¹ Alessandro Portelli, "What makes oral history different" in *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998), 73.

¹² Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, third ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 24.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 222.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 222.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 228.

the fact that 'untrue' statements are still psychologically 'true', and that these previous errors sometimes reveal more than factually accurate accounts...¹⁶

Listening to the oral histories of the lived experiences of the subjects who were actively engaged in resistance and justice work expands our understanding of the "truth" of apartheid and of faith journeys undertaken in that historical period. The interview questions themselves were geared towards the subjects' own lives as well as on wider historical events precisely because while the latter could be found in books, their own interpretations of events through their own life stories could offer a more textured, lived experience of these years. A different kind of insight is possible with oral history:

For each of us, our way of life, our personality, our consciousness, our knowledge are directly built out of our past life experience. Our lives are cumulations of our own pasts, continuous and indivisible. And it would be purely fanciful to suggest that the typical life-story could be largely invented. Convincing invention requires a quite exceptional imaginative talent. The historian should confront such direct witness neither with blind faith, nor with arrogant scepticism, but with an understanding of the subtle processes through which all of us perceive, and remember, the world around us and our own part in it. It is only in such a sensitive spirit that we can hope to learn the most from what is told to us.¹⁷

As the interviews that are the ground of this thesis unfolded, both the interviewees and the interviewer engaged in analysis. As the interviewer, I brought to this work in progress both my academic background to the listening/analysis work as well as my own faith experience.

Steinar Kvale defends the use of qualitative research as a mode of understanding that "involves alternative conceptions of social knowledge, of meaning, reality, and truth in social science research. The basic subject matter is no longer objective data to be quantified, but meaningful relations to be interpreted."¹⁸ Clearly, this kind of interpretation and analysis is not an exact and wholly objective science that constructs neat paradigms, but rather an organic uncovering that opens up new vistas. Precisely because of the complexity of truth, the understandings presented here are open-ended. Cochrane has explored concepts of truth in the context of Christian tradition through the experience of a "base ecclesial community" in South Africa. He noted that: "the truth discovered through this communicative practice, that which is recorded in tradition, is neither the whole truth nor the only truth. As something is revealed, much is concealed. Ambiguity and uncertainty remain, no matter how dogmatic claims to truth may be."¹⁹

Through this subjective, interactive understanding, however, I was able to see certain themes emerging that then informed my theological reflection. This relates to the "grounded theory" of research, in which the theory emerges

¹⁶ Ibid., 161.

¹⁷ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, Third edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 171-172.

¹⁸ Steinar Kvale, *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* (London: Sage Publications, 1996) 10-11.

¹⁹ James R. Cochrane, *Circles of Dignity: Community Wisdom and Theological Reflection* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1999) 43.

out of the research process itself rather than being something determined a priori.²⁰ However, it is “weak” grounded theory that is more relevant for the analysis and interpretation of my data than the massive data collecting enterprise for which the theory was originally intended. It has been useful for my purposes to consider three stages of Glaser and Strauss’s original theory that have been identified by Silverman.²¹ Firstly, it enabled the identification and development of themes (or categories) that illuminated the data. Secondly, it helped in the application of data to these categories in as many cases as possible to demonstrate their relevance (or alternatively to discover negative instances). Thirdly, it assisted in developing the categories towards a more general analytical framework that could be applied outside of the original setting.

Given these perspectives, although the thirteen subjects were interviewed in a semi-structured fashion (they were each asked the same questions – see appendix), I entered the process without a clear hypothesis. Themes for this study thus emerged from the case studies rather than being imposed at the outset. Constant comparative methods were used so that the categories were continually checked during the analysis phase in order to discover emerging themes.

Speaking for Themselves

The taped interviews were conducted in early 2001. I obtained the written consent of all of the subjects to record the interviews and to use the material in this thesis. Each meeting lasted between forty-five minutes and two hours in length. While I had assistance with the tape-to-text transcription, I personally did a careful editing to ensure that the written transcripts were an accurate record of the dialogues. As the transcripts were produced, I reinitiated contact with the subjects in order to enable them to reflect on and confirm their statements. Their on-going input and support via email for the project was invaluable. As I repeatedly listened to the tapes and sifted through the transcripts, the central themes became evident. I began to feel compelled to find a way to let the voices speak for themselves, setting them off against each other. The primary material is powerful and articulate and simple paraphrasing of the dialogue would risk distorting the intrinsic views of the subjects.

The subjects’ remarks are published here for the first time. In this sense, we are dealing with original work drawn from a number of high profile public individuals in most cases, and this record alone is worth making public. The interview “conversations” are part of a larger story that I would like to eventually publish as a book that will offer a more thorough account than it is possible to present here. This too will not tell the whole story. As cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz says, “Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes, the less complete it is.”²² This research, in the end, however, is less a record of the views and experiences of a few individuals, no matter their status, than inherently an exploration into the symbolic and the social aspects of Christian activism. But the objective is not to gain some detached perspective that is the final answer on the subject. Geertz’ approach suggests an alternative possibility:

²⁰ Barney G. Glaser & Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Chicago: Aldine, 1967).

²¹ David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data* (London: Sage Publications, Ltd, 1995), 46.

²² Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 29.

To look at the symbolic dimensions of social action—art, religion, ideology, science, law, morality, common sense—is not to turn away from the existential dilemmas of life for some empty realm of de-emotionalized forms; it is to plunge into the midst of them. The essential vocation of interpretive anthropology is not to answer our deepest questions, but to make available to us answers that others, guarding other sheep in other valleys, have given, and thus to include them in the consultable record of what man has said.²³

In both the interviews and the analysis I have considered particular faith journeys and the specific impact of these individuals' faith on their participation in public life. My intention has been to let the "actors" speak for themselves as much as possible. "If speaking *for* someone else seems to be a mysterious process," Stanley Cavell has remarked, "that may be because speaking *to* someone else does not seem mysterious enough."²⁴ The process of speaking to subjects is both mysterious and revealing. I am seeking in this project to compare, interpret and analyse their statements while simultaneously allowing the statements to speak for themselves.

As we cannot escape our context, we cannot escape ourselves. In any articulation of truth, social analysis and personal analysis walk hand in hand. This thesis will demonstrate that the interviews revealed a high degree of informed reflection about both.

The following chapters will rely heavily on the interview transcripts. Many of the interview questions addressed similar issues and themes from different angles. Comparing the responses to each question systematically was impossible as the themes and the explanations were often interwoven throughout the interview. A careful review of the transcript material and consideration of wider material on the subject was necessary to discern the themes that are laid out in the body of the thesis as section headings. They are "Faith as a Motivating Factor in Activism", "Sustaining/Questioning Faith", "Relationships with the Institutional Churches", "Living Faith – The Liturgy after the Liturgy", "Religious Language – Discourse and Identity", "Relationship between Religion and Public Life in South Africa." As explained above, these themes were not predetermined, but rather evolved through the emphasis that the subjects accorded to them, and likewise, through what most captured my own imagination and interest. The questions themselves are presented in the appendix. All subject quotes come directly from the interviews unless otherwise indicated.

²³ Ibid., 30.

²⁴ Ibid, 13.

CHAPTER 2: LOCATING THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL

2.1: Setting The Scene

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to give a detailed history of the complicated relationship between the various churches with the apartheid state. That is brilliantly done in a number of other important works. These include James R. Cochrane's work, *The Servants of Power: The Role of the English-Speaking Churches, 1903-1930*²⁵ and the RICS report for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on Faith Communities and Apartheid, the published report of which can be found in *Facing the Truth: South African faith communities and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*.²⁶ Tristan Anne Borer's contribution to the debate, *Challenging the State: Churches as Political Actors in South Africa 1980-1984*, is the most thorough recent interdisciplinary case study of the religious activism of the South African Churches and subsequent political change.²⁷

The period in history that concerns this research begins in 1976 with the Soweto Uprising and continues through to 2001 when the interviews were conducted. During the 1980s in South Africa, the apartheid government had a stranglehold on the opposition. Military force was being used to crush any dissenting voices and there was a growing fear that the stand-off would end in a blood bath. Because most of the political opposition leaders from the African National Congress (ANC), the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), and the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) were in prison or in exile, a number of church leaders made a deliberate decision to take up the mantle of the liberation cause. Both the liberation movement and the participating churches were radically transformed by this engagement. The interdenominational (and interfaith) aspect of the movement created a common purpose and vision. And the moral authority that the faith community leadership brought to the cause gave it an additional legitimacy and strength. Although this was not new, during the eighties there was an increasingly urgent articulation of the theological basis for liberation coming out of certain church groups. These include *A Message to the People of South Africa* (1968), *The Belhar Confession of Faith* (1982), *The Kairos Document* (1985), *The Evangelical Witness in South Africa* (1986), and *The Road to Damascus* (1989).

There are many published accounts of the ways in which some of the churches bravely opposed the apartheid regime. There has also been a great deal of reflection about the role of the church in struggle politics. These works include *The Church Struggle in South Africa* by John de Gruchy,²⁸ *Trapped in Apartheid* by Charles Villa-Vicencio,²⁹ *God in South Africa* by Albert Nolan,³⁰ *Church Versus State in South Africa: The Case of the Christian*

²⁵ James Cochrane, *Servants of Power: The Role of the English-Speaking Churches, 1903-1930* (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1987).

²⁶ James Cochrane, John de Gruchy & Stephen Martin, eds., *Facing the Truth: South African Faith Communities and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1999).

²⁷ Tristan Anne Borer, *Challenging the State: Churches as Political Actors in South Africa, 1980-1994* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998)

²⁸ John W. de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979).

²⁹ Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid: A Socio-Theological History of the English-Speaking Churches* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988).

³⁰ Albert Nolan, *God in South Africa: The Challenge of the Gospel* (Claremont: David Philip, Publisher (Pty), 1988).

Institute by Peter Walshe,³¹ *Christianity amidst Apartheid* edited by Martin Prozesky (noting particularly an essay "Periodizing Christian Resistance" by James Cochrane),³² and *Apartheid and the Church: Report of the Spro-Cas Church Commission* edited by Peter Randall.³³

The student uprising in Soweto in 1976 was a pivotal event for church engagement in the anti-apartheid movement. It was an important reference point for many of the subjects during their interviews. Some of the main events that followed and some of the key players are enumerated as follows. In 1977 the government banned both the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and the Christian Institute (CI). This led to an increased level of ecumenical leadership in "the struggle" provided by the South African Council of Churches (SACC), to which then Bishop Desmond Tutu was appointed General Secretary in 1978. An important partner in struggle leadership was the Roman Catholic Church through the auspices of the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC). The SACC played an important role in spearheading the churches in their participation in "the struggle" and assisting the victims of apartheid.

Many South African theologians firmly believe that the Christian churches made an important contribution to "the struggle" to end apartheid. The irony, of course, was that Christian activists and the progressive elements within the churches were battling a government that was nominally Christian. The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) was actively supporting apartheid. This is what certain South African theologians were referring to when they declared apartheid a "heresy".³⁴ It is important to note that some DRC ministers and congregants left their church and sided with those who were engaged in "the struggle" to end apartheid.

When the United Democratic Front (UDF) was launched in 1982, there was a new wave of resistance. The UDF united a broad coalition of anti-apartheid organisations and effectively played the role of the internal wing of the banned ANC (that was flourishing in exile). It had the support of many Christian activists around the country. Any prominent Christians, both within the DRC and in wider church circles, who opposed the regime were viciously attacked by then President Botha and vilified, banned, and/or detained. They were declared "unChristian" by the state and often branded as "communists". To choose to stand against the government was not a decision to be taken lightly. This risk reinforces the moral poignancy of *The Kairos Document* that issued a strong and uncompromising statement by church leaders and theologians:

Our present Kairos calls for a response from Christians that is biblical, spiritual, pastoral and above all, prophetic. It is not enough in these circumstances to repeat generalized Christian principles. We need a bold and incisive response that is prophetic because it speaks to the particular circumstances of this

³¹ Peter Walshe, *Church Versus State in South Africa: The Case of the Christian Institute* (London: C Hurst and Co. Ltd., 1983).

³² Martin Prozesky, ed., *Christianity amidst Apartheid: Selected Perspectives on the Church in South Africa* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1990).

³³ Peter Randall, ed., *Apartheid and the Church: Report of the Church Commission of the Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society* (Johannesburg: SPRO-CAS Publication Number 8, 1972).

³⁴ John W de Gruchy & Charles Villa-Vicencio, eds. *Apartheid Is a Heresy* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1983). And *The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church: A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa*, rev. 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1985).

crisis, a response that does not give the impression of sitting on the fence but is clearly and unambiguously taking a stand.³⁵

While *The Kairos Document* actively encouraged individual Christians to support "the political organizations that are struggling for justice and liberation" it also clearly stated that the church must not act as a political organization "or subject itself to the dictates of any political party". It offered a vision for how the church ought to engage in the anti-apartheid struggle:

The Church has its own motivation, its own inspiration for participation in the struggle for justice and peace. The Church has its own beliefs and its own values that impel it to become involved, alongside other organizations, in God's cause of liberation for the oppressed. The Church will have its own way of operating and may sometimes have its own special programmes and campaigns but it does not have, and it cannot have, its own political blueprint for the future, its own political policy, because the Church is not a political party. It has another role to play in the world. The individual Christian, therefore, is both a member of the Church and a member of society, and on both accounts, Christians should be involved with doing what is right and just.³⁶

Albert Nolan reiterates this approach concerning the relationship between the church and politics in his book *God in South Africa*:

The Church is not a political organisation and it should not try to play the role of a political organisation or party. That would be a disaster both for the Church and for politics. It has happened before in history and it is happening again today – whether the politics concerned are progressive or conservative. The only result is that the Church ceases to be the Church, the gospel is no longer preached and politics becomes confused.³⁷

He makes the distinction between the institutional church and the people who make the church a living body. While the institution has a responsibility to preach the gospel in order to actively show the relevance of God in the world which, of course, "has far reaching political consequences, but that does not make the Church (as an institution) into a political organisation." In his view, mobilisation and policy-making is not the responsibility of the church. He goes on to explain that although the institutional church can certainly take an important role in supporting a political organisation or party that is working for justice, "the aim of the Church as an institution is not to contest an election or take its place in a new parliament or share in any way in the governing of the country." This is where a distinction, but not a contradiction, between church as institution and church as members comes into play. Nolan is adamant that because the church members are also members of society, they have a responsibility to strive for justice through political activity. But "[t]he role of the Church is to comment on political

³⁵ *The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church: A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa*, rev. 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1985), 17.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 35

³⁷ Albert Nolan, *God in South Africa: The Challenge of the Gospel* (Claremont: David Philip, Publisher (Pty), 1988), 216.

policies, to name the sin and the salvation, to criticise what is wrong, to praise what is right, to pray for salvation, to praise God for what is good, to support, to protest and even to propose new ways of acting, but not to formulate political or economic policies."³⁸

The publication of *The Kairos Document* and subsequent protest literature that addressed the churches and their members directly provided and encouraged prophetic voices that demanded confession and a costly reconciliation based on justice. Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Dr Beyers Naudé were central to this call, but there were many others of less high profile who were involved in the movement. Cochrane et al describe the growing Christian activism witnessed at this time:

[T]he nature of political resistance since 1983 has led to an increased participation by certain sectors of the Church in active resistance to the State. Not only have thousands of Christians been engaged in struggles in the schools, communities, factory floor and in the liberation armies themselves as students, residents, workers and guerrillas, but church-based organizations or individuals have participated in various resistance actions consciously identified as Christians. The sight of clergy-led protest marches became a common feature of resistance tactics, especially during 1985, and the role played by ministers at the largest and most prominent political gatherings of the period—the political funerals—has been well publicized.³⁹

The declaration of a state of emergency in 1986 was partially an attempt to silence church leaders who had picked up the mantle of political leadership to fill the void left by those who were in prison and in exile. This tactic had the inverse effect to the one intended by the government (i.e. demoralising the movement). In fact it served to galvanise the power and determination of grassroots people of faith who were working for change at lower profile. Despite the hardships that they faced, many Christians took huge risks to work for the end of apartheid. Perhaps they were heeding a call to service that leads to new life. In a similar context Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, "The Bible directs us to God's powerlessness and suffering; only the suffering God can help."⁴⁰

Many would claim that the suffering God did ultimately come to the assistance of those who were battling against apartheid. All the years of struggle and witness came to fruition with unexpected rapidity. When liberation finally came, no one, not least those within the church, was properly prepared for it or for what would follow. On 2 February 1990, the apartheid government unbanned the liberation movements. When Nelson Mandela was released from prison after twenty-seven years it was certain that genuine change was taking place. A "negotiated revolution" was to follow, although not without some violent conflict. "An immediate consequence was that church leaders who had been at the forefront of "the struggle" became less prominent. Some, like Archbishop Tutu, were the first to recognize that they were no longer the political representatives of the oppressed."⁴¹ In the aftermath of so much change, it was important for the churches to begin to rethink their public role. Two important ecumenical

³⁸ Ibid., 216-217

³⁹ James R Cochrane et al., *In Word and Deed: Toward a Practical Theology for Social Transformation* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1991), 98.

⁴⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, the Enlarged Edition, ed. by Eberhard Bethge (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1971), 361.

⁴¹ John de Gruchy, *Christianity and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 211.

conferences were organised to this effect: the Rustenburg Conference (1991) and a gathering in Cape Town of the South African members of the World Council of Churches. These "helped church leadership to redefine the prophetic and pastoral responsibilities of the church in a transitional situation that was proving to be far more violent than anticipated."⁴² Church leaders subsequently played an important peacekeeping and mediation role during the first democratic elections.

An important reflection on the churches' understanding of their role during this entire period in history is encapsulated by the report compiled by the Research Institute on Christianity in South Africa on the TRC faith hearings. "The RICSA report describes and analyses "in a nutshell" how faith communities understood themselves in relation to apartheid, and what they hope to do in future to contribute to truth and reconciliation."⁴³ It is made clear in this work that "faith communities and their members helped to shape the consciousness within which the idea of the TRC was nurtured."⁴⁴ This report supports the position that the churches did in fact play a critical role in the liberation and transformation of South Africa. And if the institutional churches had an important role to play, so also did the individual members.

Now that the context has been established, I shall move forward with an introduction of the subjects who participated in the creation of this thesis through their interviews with me.

⁴² Ibid., 213-214.

⁴³ James Cochrane, John de Gruchy & Stephen Martin, eds., *Facing the Truth: South African Faith Communities and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1999), 5.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 4

2.2: Introducing the Subjects: A Tapestry of Lives

My primary material for this section was the interviews and various works by and about the subjects themselves. I also conducted extensive library searches (both at the University of Cape Town and the University of Edinburgh) and Internet searches. Once the subjects were located in terms of their particular contexts (for example, their denominational affiliation and their political engagement) it seemed natural to relate them to each other. Their lives have overlapped in many ways. Some of them have worked together. Others are close personal friends. Others simply walked parallel roads. The interplay between political engagement or commitment and faith (and in many instances, vocation) is evident in the text. Their varied responses to the same questions have been compared and contrasted at length. I reflect this in the presentation of their biographies (and subsequently their responses to the interview questions) in an interwoven fashion.

I have listed the thirteen subjects in alphabetical order below in the form of a table and noted their church affiliation and their past and current (at the time of the interviews) public or professional role.

University of Cape Town

SUBJECT	DENOMINATION	ROLE IN STRUGGLE	CURRENT ROLE
CHRIS AHREND S	raised in the Anglican Church, ordained, later resigned from fulltime parish employment	Priest and Activist, Chaplain to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Sub-Dean of St George's Cathedral, Cape Town	Executive Director of the Desmond Tutu Peace Centre and Priest
BRIGALIA NTOMBEMHLOPE BAM	raised in the Anglican Church, active lay member	Activist in exile, worked for the World Council of Churches and the Workers' Union, General Secretary of the SACC	Director of the Independent Electoral Campaign (IEC)
MARY BURTON	raised in the Anglican Church, active lay member	Activist and President of the Black Sash	Social Activist (previously a Commissioner on the TRC)
FRANK CHIKANE	raised in the Pentecostal Church, ordained in his branch (Apostolic Faith Mission)	Pastor and Activist, first General Secretary of the Institute for Contextual Theology, General Secretary of the SACC, imprisoned for political activity	Pastor and Director General to President Mbeki
COLIN JONES	raised in the Anglican Church, ordained, later resigned from fulltime parish employment	Priest (Dean at St George's Cathedral, Cape Town) and Activist,	Writer and Inactive Priest
MICHAEL LAPSLEY	raised in the Anglican Church, ordained and joined the Society of the Sacred Mission	Priest and Activist, Chaplain to the ANC in exile	Priest and Director of the Institute for the Healing of Memories
LIONEL LOUW	raised in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, ordained in the AME, later left to start an independent church (Community of Faith)	Pastor, Activist and Academic (Department of Social Work, UCT)	Pastor, Activist, Academic and Mediator at the Centre for Conflict Resolution based at UCT

CEDRIC MAYSON	raised in the Methodist Church, ordained, later resigned from the ministry	Pastor and Activist (predominantly in exile), senior staff member of the Christian Institute, imprisoned for political activity	National Co-ordinator of the ANC Commission on Religious Affairs and Inactive Pastor
SMANGALISO MKHATSHWA	raised in the Catholic Church, ordained	Priest and Activist, Secretary General of the SACBC, Secretary General of the Institute for Contextual Theology, imprisoned for political activity	Priest and Mayor of Tshwane (formerly Deputy Minister of Education)
MMUTLANYANE STANLEY MOGOBA	raised in the Methodist Church, ordained	Pastor and Activist, Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, imprisoned for political activity	Pastor and Leader of the PAC
CARL NIEHAUS	raised in the Dutch Reformed Church, joined the DRC in Africa, inactive lay member	Activist, Theological Student, imprisoned member of the ANC	Director of Strategic Communications, Deloitte Human Capital Corporation (formerly ANC MP and ambassador to both the Netherlands and the World Court at the Hague)
CHARLES VILLA-VICENCIO	raised in the Methodist Church, ordained, later resigned	Academic Theologian, Pastor and Activist	Director of the Institute for Reconciliation and Justice (formerly the director of research for the TRC) and Inactive Pastor
GLENDA WILDSCHUT	raised in the Baptist Church, later joined the Anglican Church, active lay member	Activist and Psychiatric Nurse, Member of the Detention Treatment Team, imprisoned for political activity	Director of the Desmond Tutu Peace Centre (formerly a Commissioner on the TRC)

The selection process involved a clear targeting process of prominent figures of faith, well known for their public witness and action both inside SA and out, who have in most cases made equally prominent moves into leadership in secular positions (business, government, NGOs). The selection precluded an inherent and deliberate variety in the denominational affiliations of those concerned and in the public positions they occupy now. The initial list stemmed primarily from participants' previous involvement with the Multi-Event 99 Conference. Most of the subjects were based in Cape Town simply because that was where I also lived and worked and therefore had access to certain circles. My criteria required that the subjects be Christian residents of South Africa who had been engaged in the anti-apartheid liberation struggle and continued to be (or had recently been) involved (in some way) in politics and public life. Originally, I had considered interviewing only church leaders, but then quickly realised that this would limit my scope too much. I wanted to include some women's perspectives and experiences in my research and there were few ordained women leading churches in that era and fewer still to whom I had access. It was important that the subjects be theologically articulate, but I wanted to move beyond the confines of strictly academic or institutional theology. So I approached a collection of Christian activists, many of whom I had known personally for many years. None were completely unfamiliar to me either because of my father's involvement in South Africa or through my own work with Professor Jim Cochrane and RICSA at the University of Cape Town. The final group was ultimately determined by potential subjects' availability, interest in the project and willingness to share their individual stories.

The following introduction to the thirteen subjects interviewed for this project is more a broad sketch of who they are than an in-depth analysis. The purpose of this sub-chapter is to help to provide some context for the thoughts that the interviews elucidated. The subjects are similar in many respects, not least in their commitment to the New South Africa. But they are also vastly different. It is the nature of these similarities and differences that help to illuminate this investigation of faith and public life.

I had access to varying degrees of background information about the thirteen subjects, which inevitably influenced how they are presented here. This is not intended to be the authoritative biography for any of these individuals, though I am well aware of, and have utilized materials that do cover their lives biographically or autobiographically. These include the following: Frank Chikane's autobiography *No Life of My Own*, published in 1988; Cedric Mayson's *A Certain Sound: The Struggle for Liberation in South Africa* (1984) which uses the framework of his own life and experience; and Carl Niehaus' own story *Om te Veg vir Hoop*, published in 1993 and translated into English as *Fighting for Hope*. A biography of Michael Lapsley called *Priest and Partisan* was written by Michael Worsnip and published in 1996 and Mmutlanyane Stanley Mogoba wrote *Tears of Hope* and *Convicted by Hope*: Both express the conviction that our faith must be challenged and stretched in order for hope to be kept alive. Charles Villa-Vicencio, though he has published extensively, predominantly works of academic theology, has not written about his own life. Smangaliso Mkhathshwa has also published several books, Colin Jones has been in the process of writing his own book, and Brigalia Ntombemhlope Bam's niece and nephew were busy interviewing her with the intention of producing a biography in the future. I draw on many of the above works on the one hand, and rely on the personal histories conveyed to me through the interviews on the other.

There is a commonality between the subjects that is revealed in their life stories. To my mind, the selected subjects are people who have tried, to the best of their abilities, to live lives of integrity despite the complexities and dangers of apartheid South Africa. In a similar context Dietrich Bonhoeffer observed the dire necessity for people of integrity:

Who stands fast? Only the man whose final standard is not his reason, his principles, his conscience, his freedom, or his virtue, but who is ready to sacrifice all this when he is called to obedient and responsible action in faith and in exclusive allegiance to God—the responsible man, who tries to make his whole life an answer to the question and call of God. Where are these responsible people?⁴⁵

All of the subjects interviewed were social activists engaged in “the struggle” to end apartheid and could therefore be described as akin to the “responsible people” Bonhoeffer sought in Nazi Germany. They were involved to varying degrees and in a range of different ways. But all found their beliefs and their actions to be closely linked in a way that matches Kathryn Tanner’s comments on such a fusion in *The Politics of God: Christian Theologies and Social Justice*:

One is not a Christian and then an interested social agent, or a social agent and then a Christian, but a Christian inevitably engaged in social action from a particular social location. In the concrete circumstances of life, actions and interests do not exist per se isolated from the beliefs one holds; nor do beliefs exist per se isolated from one’s actions and interests with reference to others.⁴⁶

What then are the particular social locations of these subjects? Most were born in South Africa. For some, the simple event of being born into a context of oppression meant exposure to injustice and to protest against it from an early age. Brigalia Ntombemhlope Bam, Frank Chikane, Smangalis Mkhathshwa and Mmutlanyane Stanley Mogoba were all involved in the anti-apartheid political movement by the time they were in their final year of school. One of the Coloured subjects, Lionel Louw, shared this experience with the Africans interviewed. Many found examples of protest within their faith communities and inherent in the way in which they read and understood the gospel message of the Bible. They experienced and witnessed the poverty and humiliation of their own family members and communities to varying degrees and actively sought opportunities to challenge “the system.”

There was regular reference to “the system” both in the interviews and the wider research material and this term needs to be “unpacked” in the South African context. Albert Nolan explains this key point in his book *God in South Africa*:

[W]hen we speak of apartheid we are not referring only to those laws and policies that discriminate against people of colour; we are referring to the whole system with its security laws, press curbs and states of emergency and with its consumerism, moneymaking, labour laws and class conflicts. We call

⁴⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Enlarged Edition, edited by Eberhard Bethge, SCM Press LTD, London, 1971), 5.

⁴⁶ Kathryn Tanner, *The Politics of God: Christian Theologies and Social Justice* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 9.

the whole system apartheid because its dominant characteristic is racial or ethnic discrimination. Some people now prefer to call it racial capitalism.⁴⁷

Clearly "the system" impacted to varying degrees on the lives of all those who lived in South Africa, though some were more conscious of this than others.

Chris Ahrends was also brought up to oppose apartheid even though he did not suffer injustice directly. Because his father was a German Jew who had converted to Christianity, there was "a high degree of sensitivity towards racial discrimination" present in his immediate family ethos. For others conscientisation to the wider reality and implications of apartheid came later as their own more privileged communities (not necessarily white ones) did not actively oppose it. Carl Niehaus, Glenda Wildschut, Colin Jones, and Charles Villa-Vicencio would be included in this category. Niehaus was raised by a traditional Afrikaans family in the Dutch Reformed Church that encouraged the belief that apartheid was ordained by God. Breaking free of this attitude meant radically rejecting and betraying his community. Fortunately, he benefited from the constant love, if not always the understanding, of his parents. Wildschut was from a Cape Coloured community where her family and Baptist Church simply did not raise the issue of apartheid. Similarly, Jones' Anglican family, also Coloured, did not discuss politics or address the injustices that were ever present in their lives. These individuals were exposed to injustice at school and later at university and at work. They began to ask the questions that their parents would not face. The contradictions of the apartheid government and in their own lives became inescapable. Jones' experience as the only non-white student at a drama school in a class of white affluent students forced him "to appreciate for the very first time that there were major chasms between my reality and the reality of my fellow students." Shortly thereafter, employed in the 'personnel department' of a major construction company, he witnessed firsthand the gross injustices of the system as he was working directly with the migrant workers from the Transkei and Ciskei. Villa-Vicencio had a comfortable status quo Methodist upbringing in a white neighbourhood in Cape Town. He took his position of privilege very much for granted until he began to grapple, as a student of theology, with a gospel that demands social justice.

Another sub-group of subjects were not originally from South Africa and did not encounter apartheid before they arrived as young adults. Mary Burton was born in South America and came to Cape Town as a young bride. Michael Lapsley and Cedric Mayson came as missionaries from New Zealand and Britain, respectively. Lapsley had been deeply marked at an early age when he read Trevor Huddleston's book *Naught for Your Comfort*. This was his first theoretical exposure to the evil of apartheid. He arrived as a young Anglican chaplain, ready to oppose injustice. Mayson was sent as an aspirant Methodist minister who was warned by his church to avoid political engagement. But as he worked with the desperately poor and oppressed, he found that he could not separate the spiritual from the political; this would later lead to his exile. Mary Burton found the apartheid system of privilege abhorrent and unacceptable. She became politically active with the Black Sash, a predominantly white liberal/progressive women's activist organisation that publicly protested against apartheid. What is fascinating about these three foreigners is that they made South Africa their home and committed themselves wholeheartedly

⁴⁷ Albert Nolan, *God in South Africa: The Challenge of the Gospel* (Claremont: David Philip, Publisher (Pty), 1988), 68-69.

to "the struggle." They did not shirk responsibility on the grounds that their political loyalties should be placed in their countries of origin. They confronted injustice in the situations within which they found themselves.

All of the subjects interviewed had the privilege of receiving higher education. They are all intelligent and articulate people who recognise the power and the responsibility that knowledge brings. The men researched for this project each engaged in theological study. Niehaus was the only one of them who did not pursue ordination. He did his first degree in industrial sociology, and like him, most of those interviewed also studied a wide variety of other subjects. Jones had been passionately involved in the arts and had studied both music and drama. Chikane was a mathematics and physical science teacher and an aspiring physicist as well as a practicing pastor. Mogoba was a science and history teacher at the outset. Ahrends did his first degree in psychology. Burton trained as a journalist. Wildschut is a qualified nursing sister. Louw is a dual-professional pastor and social worker. Bam has a formal educational background in teaching, social work, communications and management.

It is critically important to note that for many of the subjects, their time of study was deeply affected by their political engagements. Chikane was forced to terminate his studies at the University of the North after intense involvement with a student political movement that led to a mental breakdown. Niehaus was expelled from Rand Afrikaans University for political activity. He had been found guilty of displaying posters on campus that called for equal non-racial education and Nelson Mandela's release from prison. Wildschut was also expelled from the University of the Western Cape for her involvement with the student anti-apartheid movement. Despite pressure to put aside political activity, it was impossible for any of them to ignore what was happening around them in order to focus wholeheartedly in the academic arena. These set-backs did not however prevent most of these individuals from qualifying in their fields at other institutions or by correspondence. Notably, Niehaus engaged in lengthy academic pursuits while incarcerated.

Most of the subjects also had the enormous privilege of going to study abroad for a time. This offered them relief from the pressures of both the government repression and the intense focus of involvement with the anti-apartheid movement. It also gave them exposure to wider religious and political ideas and practices, such as liberation theology and the civil rights movement. Many of them went to the United States. Louw, Jones, and Villa-Vicencio all received placements at a variety of institutions there to further their theological training. Mkhathshwa had a similar experience in Catholic seminaries in Europe. Bam was able to pursue her studies in the United States and in Geneva while in exile. Mayson also spent a significant number of years in exile in Europe furthering the anti-apartheid cause. All of these individuals had the option to stay and make a very different life for themselves elsewhere, but each of them chose to return to South Africa. Louw spoke very explicitly about the offers that he received to remain in the United States and his own determination to go home to be involved in "the struggle." In contrast, Jones spoke of the wrenching experience of being sent to the United States at very short notice and under cover of darkness to avoid arrest. Perhaps they experienced that same existential understanding that they belonged in South Africa that Dietrich Bonhoeffer had known when he wrestled with a decision to leave the safety of the United States in order to return to Nazi Germany. He wrote at that time:

We ought to be found only where He is. We can no longer, in fact be anywhere else than where He is. Whether it is you working over there or I working in America, we are all only where He is. He takes us with him. Or have I, after all, avoided the place where He is? The place where He is for me?⁴⁸

Marriage was an option for some but not all of the subjects. Those who had chosen to join certain religious orders could not marry: Lapsley is a member of the Anglican order of the Society of the Sacred Mission, Mkhathswa a Roman Catholic priest. Chikane, Mogoba, Louw, Jones, Villa Vicencio, Ahrends and Mayson were all ordained in denominations that permit marriage by clergy and all have married. Burton and Niehaus are both non-clergy with spouses. Wildschut and Bam are unmarried. Only Mkhathswa, Lapsley and Bam have not had the experience of parenthood. And yet all have had to engage in the juggling act that comes with the package of having a family. For Mkhathswa and Bam this is because of the obligations that African community members have to their extended families. For Lapsley this is due to his commitment to a religious order that lives in community. So for each of the subjects there was the awareness that their own life decisions would impact directly on others. The families of the interviewees bore enormous stresses and strains while providing an enormous source of solace and support to the individuals in question.

Many of the subjects had a strong sense of vocation to the ministry. For some this call came when they were very young. Chikane's father was a pastor in the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. He himself preached for the first time at the age of eight and was already involved with ministry during his secondary school days both through his church and with the student Christian movement. He spent several years in training, but was already working as a pastor, an evangelist, and in mission work before his church finally ordained him. Louw followed a similar path in that his father was also a pastor (in this case in the African Methodist Episcopal Church). This particular denomination has a long history of struggle against discrimination. Louw therefore "grew up understanding that kind of message and liberatory ethos within that church." He went on to say that "it certainly had a tremendous influence in my life to understand that there is that possibility based on faith - that protest can be made against discrimination." It was a natural progression that he also should be ordained in his church. Lapsley came from a family of devout Anglicans and entered the Society of the Sacred Mission at the age of seventeen. He came to Durban at the age of twenty-four to act as chaplain at the University of Natal where he was also pursuing his studies. Mkhathswa came from a very devout Catholic family who took the daily discipline of prayer very seriously. This early training stayed with him his whole life. It was reinforced by the value-based education that he received in Catholic schools. He went on to study for the priesthood at St. Peter's Seminary at the time when it was undergoing integration and was subsequently ordained. Although Jones also had what he calls a "very hectic church upbringing" and as a boy he was a chorister, a server and a young member of his Anglican parish council, his vocation was less apparent to him at the outset. During his interview he told the story of having been recruited by his priest when he went to him for counsel when he was wrestling with the injustices he was witnessing:

I realised that I was somewhere caught in the middle, and I realised the extraordinary extremes and how apartheid had in fact divided us in terms of social reality and awareness and consciousness. And in the midst of that sort of confusion, absolute confusion, I went and saw my priest which is the worst thing one

⁴⁸ Renate Wind, *A Spoke in the Wheel: The Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1991), 95.

can do, I'm afraid, in those circumstances because he was out head hunting for ordinands and he said, "God is calling you."

Mayson started out very much a traditional Methodist from a long line of "Mr. Wesley's preachers". He felt called to be ordained in the Methodist Church at an early age, but from the time of his theological studies he wrestled with the institution's attempts at separating religion from reality. He understood the Bible to be inherently political and that drove him to challenge oppression wherever he saw it. He writes in *A Certain Sound*, "All my early years in the church were spent seeking structural change."⁴⁹ Villa-Vicencio was one who never expected in his youth to find himself professionally involved with the church. Then he had an experience of "being born again" and this completely redirected his life as he began to study vocational theology. Mogoba, always a conscientiously practicing Christian, also in the Methodist Church, speaks of receiving his call to the ministry "directly" from Jesus Christ while he was in solitary confinement during a four-year prison sentence on Robben Island. Mogoba had been meditating on the passage about the rich young man and although he had been convinced that the text did not apply to him due to his circumstances, he was troubled by a profound sense of sadness. In the course of a conversation that he experienced with Jesus Christ, he became convinced that he was being called to become a fulltime pastor. He recalled the moment of surrender during his interview:

Now the remarkable thing is that that sadness immediately stopped. Immediately. And in its place I had such joy, as I had never experienced before. And this is the thing that made me feel that I am here in a confrontation with the living Jesus. And that he wants me to do his work. And my life from that moment on changed.

Ordination invariably changed the lives of all those who followed that path. But it did not confine these ministers and pastors and priests to parish life. In Mogoba's case, while he was to become the Presiding Bishop (for eight years) of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and later still the head of the political opposition party, the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), he began as a schoolteacher. As referred to above, his arrest for political activity and subsequent incarceration on Robben Island led to his call to the ordained ministry. But even before that, he was very involved with his local Methodist church as a preacher. During his time in prison he often led services and acted as a mediator. He prides himself on his capacity to find a way through situations of conflict, in particular "mediation including involvement with the peace accord just before the elections, the settlement of the new dispensation." In this instance he helped to initiate negotiations with the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) that was resisting peaceful participation in the first democratic elections. He even came out of retirement to try to help to "reconcile the various groups within my political party". He still sees his role as one "of exercising ministry to political leaders" although he recognises the constraints on him.

Mogoba has also taught as a lecturer and later as an Associate in Theology at the Federal Theological Seminary. He was a Fellow of Westminster College, Oxford. He was closely involved for many years with the World Council of Churches and acted on the Executive Committee of the South African Council of Churches. As a public figure

⁴⁹ Cedric Mayson, *A Certain Sound: The Struggle for Liberation in South Africa* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1984), p.34.

he has been Chairperson of the Board of Africa Enterprise, President of the South African Institute of Race Relations, Co-chairperson of the National Peace Committee, and Chancellor of the Medical University of South Africa. He has also been closely involved with the Independent Development Trust (IDT), the Trust for Educational Advancement in SA (TEASA), the Transitional National Development Trust (TNDT), and the Church Community Leadership Trust (CCLT). All of this activity was accomplished whilst continuously practising as a church leader.

Mkhatshwa rose in a similar fashion through the Catholic Church hierarchy and ended up squarely in the ANC government. In 2001, after a period as the Deputy Minister of Education, he became the first executive mayor of the new city of Tshwane, formerly known as Pretoria. He has been called "a product of the black theology movement".⁵⁰ The question has also been raised about why he was never appointed a bishop despite his obvious qualifications. The response is that he was probably seen as too radical and that the church authorities were attempting to keep him in check. So while he did become General Secretary of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC), he was prevented from being "part of the decision-making process."⁵¹ Later he would replace Chikane as the second General Secretary of the Institute of Contextual Theology (ICT). For Mkhatshwa there was a natural affiliation between faith and life. During his interview he said, "I may not have provided the best possible [leadership], but I certainly saw myself as someone playing that role, helping to mobilise people, helping to restore faith in themselves, but above all I suppose being a Christian myself trying as much as possible to ensure that the people remained united, and people upheld the values of justice, democracy of love or care for one another."

He was arrested for the first time in 1976 following the Soweto riots. Numerous other arrests and bannings were to follow. History was made when he became the first detainee to be interviewed on television as a means of dispelling rumours that he had been killed in custody. His progressive affiliations did not flag despite the severe restrictions imposed upon him and he championed Black theology and contextual theology (which was a form of liberation theology in South Africa). Later he was elected a patron of the United Democratic Front. During the state of emergency, Mkhatshwa was one of many detainees. This imprisonment was more brutal than his past experiences as he was tortured for thirty hours by members of the South African military. Upon his release he sued the government and won. Never before had the South African government been forced to compensate a political prisoner.

During the first democratic elections in 1994 he was elected to the South African parliament as an ANC member of the House of Representatives. This caused uproar amongst some of the Catholic bishops since clergy are prohibited from participation in party politics. In the end, he received special dispensation from Rome to continue with his political activities and retain his licence to officiate. He has worked ever since as a fulltime politician, but remains active as a priest as well.

Chikane also married parish work with political involvement. While working full-time now as the Director General of the President's office, he still is one of the pastors of his congregation in Naledi and worships with them as often

⁵⁰ Tristan Anne Borer, *Challenging the State: Churches as Political Actors in South Africa, 1980-1994*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 125.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 160.

as he can. From the outset his understanding of Christianity was linked to decisions to act in accordance with his convictions. He realised that Christianity had been much misrepresented and that the Bible had been terribly misused. He made it his mission to re-appropriate the Bible and to turn the reinterpretation against the oppressors. He had already begun working as a pastor under supervision in his own congregation when the events of 16 June 1976 wracked the country. His community was not exempt from violence and police brutality and Chikane took legal action on behalf of his community that led to his first horrific experience of detention and torture. In his absence, the church hierarchy attempted to strip him of his pastoral responsibility, but Chikane's congregation refused to accept this and upon his release they welcomed him back. Later the institution suspended him for his political involvements.

Clearly, Chikane represented a threat to many of the older pastors and to the establishment itself. He was approached by some of his supporters to start another church that would be more relevant, but Chikane was determined not to act in anger and bitterness by rejecting his church affiliation. At this time, he became involved with the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) where he was able to engage in critical practical research and became the first General Secretary. Here, he was able to "systematise and develop my theological understanding of my Christian pastoral praxis."⁵² He read extensively and was exposed to black theology, African theology, liberation theology and even Asian theology. He joined the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians which led to his involvement with international conferences and meetings. He was involved with the production of *The Kairos Document*. In 1983 he became a regional vice-president of the United Democratic Front.

Chikane was arrested in February 1985 and charged with high treason. But this time he was not alone. He had the benefit of being imprisoned with many of the future leaders of the yet unborn democratic South Africa. They were able to meet and plan for the future. Chikane acted as a pastor to them during their incarceration. Upon his release, his life was constantly under threat. His family lived in constant fear and Chikane himself suffered from bouts of depression, but he never wavered in his conviction to work for justice. In 1987 Chikane was appointed General Secretary of the SACC. He continued to be closely involved with the United Democratic Front. In 1989, there was an attempt on his life, almost successful, by the apartheid security establishment by impregnating his clothes with hi-tech poisons. But this did not deter him from his political involvements. In 1993 he joined RICSA. This same year he was appointed to the Independent Electoral Commission to help to deliver the first non-racial democratic elections. He left the SACC after the elections, and in 1995 Chikane spent a year at the J F Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in order to obtain a Masters Degree in Public Administration. He was soon recalled to work in then Deputy President Mbeki's office where he remains as Director General to, now, President Mbeki. He has also retained his position as a pastor in his church.

Michael Lapsley's career path was greatly influenced by the atrocities that he observed being committed by the government shortly after his arrival in South Africa. He explained that "the events of 1976 convinced me that in our context armed struggle had become morally necessary and legitimately justified." The following year he was expelled for political reasons from South Africa by the apartheid government. But Lapsley did not return to his native New Zealand. He remained based in Lesotho and in Zimbabwe for the duration of the 1980s. His official

⁵² Frank Chikane, *No Life of My Own* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1988), 81.

positions included being chaplain at the National University of Lesotho, warden at the Anglican seminary in Lesotho, and later a parish priest in Zimbabwe. He also completed a Masters degree at the University of Zimbabwe and worked as a theological consultant for the Lutheran World Federation. He was a member of the ANC and one of their chaplains in exile. Lapsley was a very public figure, leading anti-apartheid protests and demonstrations. He also had a number of confrontations with public figures that lent him a reputation for being controversial.

After he survived a brutal assassination attempt in 1990 perpetrated by the Civil Cooperation Bureau (a sinister branch of the apartheid government), Lapsley began a long road of healing. The identity that was imposed upon him by the bombing changed him and changed the way the world perceived him forever. But it did not stop Lapsley from continuing with the work that he felt that he was called more than ever to do:

I think that my particular case, the fact that I survived the assassination attempt with major injuries set me off on a journey from being a freedom fighter to being a healer. And I suppose in a sense whilst I would say that I would accept the view that says, "the struggle continues," the content of that struggle is not the same as it was in the 1980s. And so I would say that the kind of role that I play now is consistent with the kind of transformation of what the goals of the society are. Where there was a primary goal to end apartheid in the 1980s, there's a primary goal to rebuild a nation and to heal its wounds. So in that sense the work that I do is very central to the strategic objectives of the country - as I would see them - which involve both creating a different society and dealing with the legacy and healing the wounds of the past.

After a time of recovery in New Zealand, Lapsley returned to South Africa where he worked for a time at the Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence and Torture in Cape Town. This organisation supported and assisted those who were involved with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission before whom he presented his own case. Lapsley is currently the director of the Institute for the Healing of Memories, which he helped to found in 1998. The small Cape Town based institute is a direct descendant from the Healing of Memories Chaplaincy Project that Lapsley ran at the Trauma Centre. The TRC process uncovered a great need amongst the people of South Africa to find ways to deal with their pain. The individual, communal and national need for healing from the dark legacy of apartheid is the institute's primary concern. The workshop models they have developed focus on dealing with the negative feelings about the past so that people experience reconciliation, forgiveness and healing within themselves. The institute has also done effective work internationally as well.

Lapsley is still an Anglican priest, although he is seconded by the Anglican diocese of Cape Town to the Institute. He continues to be a member of the Anglican order, the Society of the Sacred Mission. His work leads him both inside and outside the church. His current engagement is inherently pastoral because it is focused on the ministry of healing. It is work that he finds profoundly spiritual and profoundly moving.

Chris Ahrends was already involved in political activity from the outset of his parish work in poor suburbs even before he was ordained. His regular participation in marches led to his arrest when he was charged with defeating

the aims of justice and subsequently spent a week in solitary confinement in Pollsmoor Prison. But he is quick to insist that he doesn't consider himself a "leading sort of activist." He was "just a concerned South African Christian [with] political sympathies which one tried to live out as best one could." Following his ordination, he worked as an assistant priest in both an urban and a rural setting. From 1986 to 1989 he was chaplain to Archbishop Tutu. These were critical years for "the struggle." It was during this time as Archbishop Tutu's chaplain that, in terms of his own engagement with "the struggle" he says that, "the focus became clear." Although he was asked to join the ANC, it was deemed that this would compromise his work and the church too much at that stage.

Early in 1990, Ahrends returned to St George's Cathedral to take up the position of sub-dean. He and Colin Jones (then Dean) shared a common vision (grounded in historical continuity) for what the Cathedral could be. They worked closely for the next five years and formed a lasting friendship. Upon Jones' resignation, Ahrends temporarily became Acting Dean. Once the new Dean was appointed, Ahrends was released from responsibility to the Sunday parish and became the full-time director of the St George's Cathedral Foundation which cared for the wider non-parish community. Already he was feeling the pull towards more secular involvement. Ahrends was determined that in order for the Church to survive and thrive, "clergy should rub shoulders more with the reality in which people live."

His next move, therefore, was not so surprising. Ahrends understands his decision to resign from full-time ministry as predominantly circumstantial. He accepted his "dream job" of executive director at the Desmond Tutu Peace Centre where he has learned valuable business and social entrepreneurship skills. He appreciates the wider social benefits of the project with which he is involved. He still has permission to officiate in the Anglican Church, but Ahrends feels that he no longer fits comfortably within the walls of orthodoxy. As far as having a sense of continuity with his former role, Ahrends says, "This job is a nice break from being in the ordinary, formal church, but it's not that different. It's moving tangentially away, but still involved with community issues and the application and creation of community and so on." Although he does miss the ritual and the persona attached to parish work and he is still licensed to "hatch, match and dispatch", he clearly states that he could not easily return to church employment.

Prior to his theological studies, Colin Jones was sent as an ordinand to a poor rural coastal town to experience full-time work in a parish. It was here that he learned how to speak Afrikaans and how to fish. The following year he started his training at Federal Theological Seminary in Alice with the Community of the Resurrection. He joined the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). He also started reading all the Latin American theologians with great excitement and they were to influence him profoundly. In his own words, "Liberation Theology seemed to me to be the key which made sense of all of the systematic stuff" in that it enabled application. He was ordained to the diaconate in June 1975 and then got married shortly thereafter. He was ordained a priest on 13 June 1976 and was the celebrant at communion for the very first time three days later, on Soweto Day. The years that followed were full of conflict and violence and Jones was in the thick of it as he moved from one "hotbed of political activity" to the next. His church was one of a number that provided sanctuary to the squatters whose homes had been demolished in Bellville. He says about that time in his

ministry, "[I]t was as if I didn't have to think about my theology - one just had to live it out - and it was very coalface stuff."

His next placement was in a rural town called Hopefield in the Northern Cape where he was exposed to the enormous diversity of South Africa. He says that he underwent "something of a conversion experience" there as he was confronted with good, struggling Afrikaners. He was then appointed chaplain to the University of the Western Cape (UWC). It was a dramatic time as student boycotts were continuous and there were "confrontations with police, stone throwing, bullets flying, tear gas wafting all over the place." It was remarkable that he was allowed and encouraged by the leadership in the university to exercise a ministry that far exceeded his pastoral mandate to the Anglican students. He was often asked to address student meetings and was called into various tense situations to act as a mediator between students and police. When the UDF was founded in 1984, Jones quickly became involved with that and his "visibility as an activist priest began." His experience of mediation at UWC was put to much use during the years to come as the clergy were regularly sent in to diffuse confrontations between police and/or "vigilantes and comrades." Jones experienced the conflict of trying to maintain a position of neutrality while wrestling with the sense that while God was on the side of the poor, it was necessary to remain open to the other side. "Those issues had to be worked out, not through discussions, but by making decisions as to where one had to be - and doing it on the basis of one's faith."

In 1986 Jones was sent by Archbishop Tutu quickly and quietly to the United States to protect him from arrest. The next two years in Oregon were a time of recovery and expansion for the Jones family. Then the call came from the Archbishop to return on short notice to take up the position of Dean of Cape Town. In the years that followed he said, "the cathedral became very much the kind of centre for the people's protest in the city and the sort of rallying point." Many protest meetings took place there. Jones remembers those exciting years of working closely with Archbishop Tutu as "a great privilege." Jones played a key role in the defiance campaign and many major marches that culminated in the unbanning of the ANC and Mandela's release. Following the first democratic elections, Archbishop Tutu was planning to retire. There was pressure on Jones to take his place. But instead of accepting the promotion, Jones made a difficult decision to resign as a full-time priest. His departure was not an impetuous rejection. It was a well-reflected act of honesty and courage in order to build an alternative life outside of the church hierarchy.

Jones received a number of job offers, including one from then President Mandela's office. But he took a position with the Independent Development Trust (IDT). Two years later he was invited to be the "lord of the manor" at Spier wine estate where he was among other things, in charge of the arts programme. He left Spier in order to try and write a book. Since his last full-time job he has tried his hand at a number of things including running a men's only cigar bar, modelling, standing for local elections, and involvements with both government and NGO's. He also has written extensively. He has little contact with the church.

Lionel Louw studied theology in the United States of America and was hugely inspired by the civil rights movement and the teaching of James Cone. Despite a number of tempting professional invitations to remain in the USA, he chose to return to South Africa in 1975. Thus began an exciting involvement with the church movement in the anti-

apartheid struggle. It must be said that Louw was not well received upon his return by the leadership of his church. His youth, education and wider exposure were perceived to be quite threatening. Obviously, this was a tremendous disappointment to him. But the sense of alienation from the church hierarchy prompted him to become more engaged with the ecumenical movement. It also influenced his decision to accept employment outside of the institution, namely with the Department of Social Work at the University of Cape Town. He became the national AME church representative to the South African Council of Churches and the provincial representative to the Western Province Council of Churches. Later he chaired the WPCC and was on the executive of the SACC. This engagement led to a variety of interfaith and community movement links.

When the UDF emerged in 1984 Louw quickly and easily found a home there as well. In the mid-1980s he participated in organising the campaign to pray for the end of unjust rule. He attended countless marches and peaceful protests and helped to influence the SACC position with regard to the movement. This eventually led to a brief time in detention. Fortunately, the organisations with which he was involved, along with the leadership at the University of Cape Town, exerted a tremendous amount of pressure on the South African government to release him. While he had good support, it was a profound source of sadness that his own church did not support his involvement in "the struggle" and at the time of his detention called him an "embarrassment to the ministry of the AME Church".

When transition happened Louw shared the euphoria of his comrades, but he was not eager to move further into the public eye. In 1994 there was pressure on him to accept a position in government and some people find it surprising and unfair that he was not adequately rewarded for his contribution to "the struggle." Louw's motives for his engagement had little to do with rewards and he feels that he has an important role to play outside of government. Instead he found himself on the other side of the table interviewing applicants for positions in the provincial government. He is still an active member of the ANC. He does some consultancy work for the government and is a trustee for the IDT. In 1999, Deputy President Mbeki personally phoned him to ask him to stand as the ANC premier candidate in the Western Cape. At that stage he chose not to put himself forward. But he is aware that there may be a need in the future to reconsider his position.

Louw is still attached to the school of social work at the University of Cape Town. His main fields of academic interest are community development, and spirituality and social work. Extending beyond his teaching and pastoral responsibilities, Louw is still a registered social worker and he has published widely. He is also the current President of the Social Services Professions. At the time of the interview he was on an extended leave of absence from the university in order to work full time at the Centre for Conflict Resolution. This involvement has given him new tools and new opportunities to practise mediation and nation building. In recent years Louw found that he could no longer tolerate the power games that the AME church has always played. He resigned and helped to found the Community of Faith, an independent church in Elsie's River, a suburb of Cape Town that faces considerable poverty on a daily basis. He is one of two pastors and chairs the church council. He ideally wishes that he could take early retirement and focus on his work within the parish.

Mayson was less consistently involved with parish life. When he first moved to South Africa, he worked as a pastor in several rural African parishes. He began to write copiously as an anti-apartheid activist and he engaged in "the struggle" in practical ways. Mayson's emphasis was on empowerment at a grassroots level. His church authorities warned him not to get involved with issues of race and politics, and when he ignored this, it became clear that he could not honestly continue within church structures. Under pressure to conform, he offered his resignation. In 1973 he took up employment with the Christian Institute where he became the editor of *Pro Veritate* and developed links with the ANC. The CI provided an important information link for people within the country and for supportive church groups overseas. But his own church was not supportive of him or of his work.

Mayson was banned in 1977 and his illegal political activities eventually led to his arrest. He spent fifteen months in detention, four in solitary confinement. During the time in prison Mayson often led morning prayers and acted as a pastor. While out on bail awaiting trial for the charge of High Treason, he slipped through the net and escaped into exile in Britain. From the time of his banning and then throughout the years in exile Mayson had no formal employment. This left him free to be involved full-time in "the struggle." During his ten years in exile, he never stopped working for liberation in South Africa. He was constantly writing, speaking and running workshops in order to promote the anti-apartheid campaign and the ANC. Later he was involved with promoting *The Kairos Document* and Kairos Theology. He also helped to start the ANC Religious Commission in exile. He travelled extensively through Britain, Europe and Canada. When the transition finally happened, Mayson went straight back to his adopted home.

Currently, although he is not directly involved with government, he works within a political context. He is the national co-ordinator of the ANC Commission on Religious Affairs, and he has been very active in the South African chapter of the interfaith World Conference on Religion and Peace. He also worked for a couple of years as a television talk show host on SABC on religion and faith. He perceives that the shift in his career happened when he resigned from church leadership and joined the Christian Institute. He no longer sees church structures as useful sites of revolution as, in his opinion, they seem far too preoccupied with their own power. Since that initial shift, he has experienced his professional developments as being in continuity. It is simply the context that has changed. He continues to write prolifically. Since our interview in February 2001 he has become increasingly involved with initiating the Moral Regeneration Movement (MRM).

Charles Villa-Vicencio was another ordained clergy person who moved outside the ambit of the parish. In his case, he found a niche in the academic world. After a time in District Six at the Inner City Mission at the Methodist Church on Buitenkant Street, he began his academic career. The University of South Africa offered him his first post in the Department of Theology where he would spend six years. He began to write copiously. Later the University of Cape Town recruited him into the Department of Religious Studies where he and a committed group of progressive theologians found critical ways to contribute to "the struggle." They used the power of their pens to fight the injustices that the apartheid government was inflicting on the majority of the South African population. He says, "I wrote extensively in those days, and I suppose it would not be an exaggeration to say that more than ninety percent of my publications were related to the political situation." Concurrently, Villa-Vicencio had joined a number of committees that supported "the struggle." Over and above the several Methodist committees with which

he was as a minister automatically affiliated, he served on the South African Council of Churches and the Western Province Council of Churches. The ecumenical agenda made sense to him and he strongly supported that movement. He also was involved in the inter-faith movement through the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) and assisted with the defiance campaign. Within church circles, Villa-Vicencio saw himself as a liberation theologian. He sought to both provoke and conscientise the church in terms of social action from the inside.

Over the years Villa-Vicencio found that he was more at ease in the academic world and in activist circles than he was in the church context. His pastoral involvements were increasingly limited. When he eventually resigned as a Methodist minister, it was simply formalising something that had happened already in his own understanding of his identity and his relationship with the church. After a sabbatical in the United States, he returned home to take up the role of National Research Director of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Following this he returned briefly to the University of Cape Town before launching his Institute for Justice and Reconciliation as an offshoot of the Truth and Reconciliation process. He is currently its executive director. He writes constantly and runs workshops and courses and is regularly invited to speak both nationally and internationally about the challenge and the necessity of combining reconciliation and justice. He also played a significant role in the Home for All campaign.

As shown above, the parish was not always the most effective location for struggle activism. It follows that laypeople could also make significant contributions to the anti-apartheid movement and to the on-going transformation. A case in point is Carl Niehaus who spent most of the 1980s as a political prisoner. In July 1980 he joined the African National Congress and began to engage in underground activity inside South Africa. His political involvement followed on his faith conviction that apartheid was an abomination and a distortion of God's word and will. According to Niehaus, "In most of my involvement in the ANC [my faith] continued to be a central expression of that commitment and was in religious terms, was in my own religious conviction, that apartheid was absolutely and fundamentally wrong." He and his partner were arrested for ANC activities and found guilty of High Treason. Niehaus served seven and a half of his fifteen-year sentence. In 1991 the recently unbanned African National Congress negotiated an agreement for the release of political prisoners with the previous National Party (NP) government. This prompted his release.

Niehaus easily could have been ordained in the African Dutch Reformed Church in Africa but instead he made a conscious decision to take his theological training with him into political life. He had high hopes that the church and its commitment to social justice as witnessed during "the struggle" could bring a vital contribution to the reconstruction of the New South Africa. He accepted the position of media liaison spokesperson for the ANC. The following year he became head of the ANC's media liaison unit. After the first democratic general election in April 1994 he was appointed a Member of Parliament in the National Assembly. He also served on the Regional Executive Council of the ANC in Gauteng and was elected to the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the ANC. Notably, he chaired the NEC's Commission on Religious Affairs. Subsequently, he accepted an ambassadorial post to the Netherlands and the World Court at The Hague for several years. When he returned to South Africa he made the shift into the private sector as director of Deloitte and Touche, South Africa, but

continues to be an active member of the ANC. Niehaus was also one of the founders of the Home for All Campaign. At the time of the interview he was not involved with a worshipping community.

Another layperson interviewed was Glenda Wildschut who found both a worshipping community and in-depth involvement with "the struggle" at St George's Anglican Cathedral in Cape Town. She helped to found an organisation called the Repression Monitoring Group that was a voluntary advocacy group based in a small office in the attic of Church House (the cathedral office). "We would work day and night monitoring people who had phoned in to say so and so has been detained and then activate a network." They produced weekly bulletins and monitored the repression of the detainees under the State of Emergency Act. They sent out information and were a conduit for advocacy. They were involved with advocacy groups outside of the country like Amnesty International who in turn would work for the release of the prisoners. As she puts it, "the cathedral was [...] a spiritual home for some of the activists. And I spent a lot of time there and I could see the role that the church was playing, and liked it, enjoyed it." Her political activity in turn strengthened her faith.

In the early 1980s she joined the South African Health Workers Organisation (SAHWSO). They were involved in working with detainees, political prisoners and then later with returning exiles and prisoners who were being released from political captivity. She explained that she was responsible for coordinating "a national group of health workers who were involved in work with political prisoners and lobbying against issues of torture, captivity, torture methods and detention." Wildschut was also part of a small group of health workers called the Detention Treatment Team (DTT) who identified international trends and types of torture methods and supported detainees and their families in facing and surviving torture and detention, often prior to their arrests. Wildschut herself was eventually arrested and tortured.

All of this political involvement was above and beyond her income generating professional life. Wildschut had specialised in psychiatric nursing with a specific interest in children and adolescents. Later, she went into teaching. She has always been very outspoken in her professional life and engaged vigorously in the debate about the serious anomalies and segregation within professional associations and labour organisations. Her determination led to her advancement and despite the odds she attained a senior position in clinical nursing. Wildschut sees all this as preparation for her involvement with justice work in the new dispensation. She was called by the ANC to be part of the Transitional Executive Council (TEC) with whom she worked until after Mandela's installation. Her position was that of co-chair of the Integration Board for the new military that allied the ANC forces with those of the former government. Following on from this, she was asked to act as a commissioner of the TRC.

She understands her current role at the Desmond Tutu Peace Centre and Leadership Academy to be "totally non-political" in terms of "either activist or party political." But it is a very public role in an organisation that already has an international reputation and a noble national mandate. They are engaged with the essential on-going process of transformation working with upcoming young leaders on an individual level. She is also "often called upon all over the world to talk about our experience here in South Africa of transition." She continues to serve on the World

Council of Churches and the Commission for International Affairs. Her involvement as an active member of the Anglican Church has not flagged.

Mary Burton was an unexpected activist in the South African anti-apartheid movement, not least because she was an outsider and was not heavily involved in the institutional church. She was an ordinary person who felt compelled to take a stand and contribute to change in the ways that she knew how. She immigrated to her South African husband's home in 1961. Burton was shocked and overwhelmed by the policy of apartheid that was being harshly enforced. "At first it was all so new and strange to me, I didn't know how to react," she remembers. "I decided to wait and watch and be silent for a little while to gain a better understanding of all the forces involved. But after a short while I just couldn't sit back any longer." As a housewife and mother of small children, she recognised the importance of attending to people's basic needs. She made huge pots of soup that she took to feed the hungry in the townships. She also began a children's crèche in the church of St Mary Magdalene, Gugulethu. She went on a weekly basis to play with the children there, taking gifts of play-school-type material donated by her own Anglican church, St Thomas' in Rondebosch. But she recognised that these contributions constituted a short-term solution.

Burton's determination to fight the rampant injustice perpetrated by the apartheid state led her to the Black Sash. This organisation was formed in 1955 and its members were predominantly white middle class women who were "opposed to the gross human rights violations practised under apartheid."⁵³ They became known for their silent protest vigils, their visible participation in protest marches and their running of advice offices for the victims of apartheid laws. Nelson Mandela later called the Black Sash "the conscience of white South Africa."⁵⁴ Burton herself saw her involvement in the following way:

I think there was a particular role for white women to play, partly because we had the privilege and protection of being women and white and therefore a double responsibility to do what we could - to do what was possible for us. And I think that sometimes there was space for us to do what other people couldn't do.

Burton became the national president of the Black Sash in 1986. In 1994 she helped to run the elections in the Western Cape. She worked closely with the police and officials from the department of home affairs – people who would have previously considered her to be the enemy. She was nominated against her wishes to sit on the TRC, but is now grateful that she gave in to pressure to accept the appointment. Although she recognises that it was an incomplete process, it has been an initial step towards healing. She has been involved with some of the international extension of the TRC model and has travelled to Columbia and other places in order to offer others the example of the South African experience. She was a founding member of the Home for All Campaign with which she is still involved. At the time of the interview she was trying to discern how to best use her time now that she is seen as a more public figure. She is still an active member of her congregation.

⁵³ www.blacksash.org.za

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Brigalia Ntombemhlope Bam, who is now recognised as a leader in “the struggle” against racism and against sexism, first worked as a teacher in South Africa. She has had to fight against preconceived notions and prejudice all her life. As an unmarried, African, professional woman, she has raised many eyebrows. But she persists in her commitment to causes that she deems worth of her energy. Her political engagements and her involvement with her church have been consistent. She worked for many years for two international religious institutions, namely the YWCA and the World Council of Churches. As she said, “I was just considered as a South African activist who’s very much under the influence of the church.” She campaigned internationally for many years in exile, based in Switzerland and Germany, for justice in South Africa. Bam has worked as a teacher, health educator, served on several boards and trusts, and organized international conferences and consultations. A real mover and shaker, she continues to lecture, to do radio and television interviews, and to be involved with various fund-raising projects.

She has held a variety of posts throughout the world, which have included Africa Regional Secretary and Co-ordinator of the Women Workers’ Programme for the International Food and Allied Workers’ Association; National Executive Secretary of the World Affiliated YWCA of South Africa; and Executive Programme Secretary for the Women’s Department of the World Council of Churches. Bam was the first woman General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches after serving previously as deputy. Her involvement with the SACC spanned from 1988 to 1998. She has served on the Human Rights Commission and was vice-chair of the South African Broadcasting Board. Bam was appointed to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) when it was formed in 1997, initially serving as vice-chair. Bam currently chairs the IEC, appointed by then President Nelson Mandela in February 1999. She was appointed as the fifth Chancellor of the University of Port Elizabeth in 2000. She serves on several public bodies, inter alia as Vice-Chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission. In addition she is Founder and President of the Women’s Development Foundation. Bam is respected for her wisdom, experience and integrity and is often asked to speak concerning human rights, development and truth and reconciliation. At the time of the interview, she was seeking ways to be more involved in church affiliated projects.

Each of the subjects interviewed had in turn come to the conclusion that apartheid was a “heresy” or a “sin against humanity” or an inhumane form of governance. All took a determined stand against the previous government and paid high costs for acting according to their convictions. As described above, many of them were imprisoned by the apartheid regime and some were subjected to torture or solitary confinement. All found their identities bound up in the cause. Their work, formally in some cases and informally in others, was directly political. Now they are committed in various ways to the reconstruction of healthy public life in South Africa.

I would argue that this small sampling represents the multitude of South Africa’s “real theologians” according to Romanian Orthodox theologian Ion Bria’s definition. He states, “The real theologian is the one who prays, who lives in a profound and personal communion with God, in the light of God’s uncreated energies”.⁵⁵ They share a commitment to the creation and maintenance of a democratic South African government and society. Many of

⁵⁵ Ion Bria, *The Liturgy After the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective* (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 1996), 40.

their life choices reflect an integrity, a link between faith and public responsibility, that unites them both in this thesis and in the greater South African project.

Perhaps all of these individuals could have been trapped by the option of seeing themselves as victims of the system or casualties of “the struggle.” Instead most of them have chosen a different path with alternative results, explained beautifully by the Nigerian born writer Ben Okri:

When victims stop seeing themselves as victims and discover the powers of transformations, forces are born on this planet. The possibilities of a new history depend on it. What is done with these possibilities depends on how wisely we love. And ultimately we are bound in fate with whoever the other may be. We are bound in the fact that we have to deal with one another. There's no way round that. The way we see the other is connected with the way we see ourselves. The other is ourselves as the stranger.⁵⁶

The power and the freedom of those who have chosen to be victors and by consequence have become actors of justice and healing and reconciliation is made manifest by daily decisions and actions. These are the stories of some of the midwives of the New South Africa.

My intention in this brief overview has been to illuminate the patterns that have emerged in the biographies of this set of individuals. They are all public figures with varying degrees of visibility who are intelligent articulate individuals who attempt to use their power responsibly. They have each been willing to raise their voices publicly - locally, nationally and internationally. They share a Christian faith, although their backgrounds and upbringings may be very different, and this contributes to a common understanding of justice. All have demonstrated strength of character in adverse circumstances. None of them are isolated from the support of family and/or community. They have been exposed to many of the same progressive ideas and organisations and movements. They are amongst a privileged few in South Africa in that they have all received a higher education that has led them to work that is both challenging and meaningful. They have also had extensive international exposure and experience. It is questionable whether any of them could have achieved a similar level of integration of faith and public action and vocation had they not been so well supported, educated and travelled. But how have they been able to harness these “powers of transformations” of which Okri speaks? This is explored in the next chapter through an analysis of their individual faith journeys.

⁵⁶ Ben Okri, “Leaping out of Shakespeare’s terror: five meditations on Othello”, 1988 as quoted in *Who Do We Think We Are?: Imagining the New Britain*, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 2000), 1.

CHAPTER 3: FAITH JOURNEYS

Through the Struggle and Beyond

Private things – newfound love, family disagreements, and spiritual faith, to name a few – can quickly become banal or irritating when moved into the public arena. But new love, family squabbles, and spirituality are rich ground for literature when they are handled with care. We writers don't avoid them on grounds of privacy; rather, we take it as our duty to draw insights from personal matters and render them universal. Nothing could be more secret, after all, than the inside of another person's mind – and that is just where a novel takes us, usually from page one. No subject is too private for good fiction if it can be made beautiful and enlightening.

- Barbara Kingsolver⁵⁷

This chapter is primarily concerned with the ways in which personal faith can be bound up in political commitment. In the case of these subjects the political cause has been the anti-apartheid movement and the on-going transformation in South Africa. In asking how faith was a motivating factor in the subjects' political engagement, it is essential to consider the origins and evolutions of the faith commitments of these individuals in terms of their own critical insights into what motivated them to participate in the anti-apartheid struggle and how their faith has (or has not) been sustained. The interviews revealed the importance of the experience of wrestling with doubt as an important part of the faith journey.

Regardless of particular denominational affiliation, the subjects share a Christian faith that is linked to an understanding of social justice. The message of the gospel has been the impetus that led most of them to take political action. Whether they learned their theological positions in the pew, or in prison, or at seminary, or through individual Bible study, each of the thirteen subjects came to a point of treating apartheid as a heresy or at the very least a gross violation of human rights.

⁵⁷ Barbara Kingsolver, "Taming the Beast with Two Backs," *Small Wonder* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 2002), 225.

3.1: Faith as a Motivating Factor in Activism

For many individuals the link between personal faith and public life was clearly apparent during the years of the anti-apartheid struggle. Most of the responses in this sub-section are based on the subjects' reflections on whether their faith was a motivating factor in their commitment to the anti-apartheid struggle. Twelve of the thirteen answered in the affirmative to that particular question, but with varying degrees of enthusiasm and ambivalence. The only exception was Mary Burton who could not "claim it really as strongly as that." Most of the subjects were immediately and wholeheartedly affirming of faith being the basis for their engagement, even though they might hold different views on precisely what faith is. Their enthusiastic responses include words like "absolutely" and "the heart" and "central" and "decidedly". Glenda Wildschut said that faith was "an absolute motivater" in her commitment to the anti-apartheid struggle. Carl Niehaus responded:

Yes, absolutely. It was central throughout. And in most of my involvements in the ANC it continued to be a central expression of that commitment, in religious terms. It was my own religious conviction that apartheid was absolutely and fundamentally wrong. So, without that I doubt whether I would have taken the decisions that I have taken.

Smangaliso Mkhathswa similarly found that his belief compelled him to action:

That's really frankly, what motivated me because I didn't see a sharp difference or separation between faith and life. The two for me, in fact, were two sides of one and the same coin. So, therefore, I believed that if someone said he or she loved God, according to Christianity [it] also meant love thy neighbour. And what does love your neighbour mean? You cannot fold your hands when someone is being dehumanised [...]. You cannot, if you're really genuinely a Christian and you are committed to the principle of loving God and loving thy neighbour. You don't just fold your arms and wish them well. You try to do something in whatever small way that you can because for me that becomes a very practical and positive expression of this inner faith.

Cedric Mayson emphasised the "driving force" of his faith conviction as opposed to denomination or doctrine as the fundamental reason for being involved with the anti-apartheid struggle:

I think it was the motivating factor. But you see, faith not so much as a content of belief, but as a driving force within. [...] I don't think that faith works on the basis of saying, well, this is my creed and I follow it. I think faith is a driving force within you which produces both your creed and the reason you must follow it. And in that sense faith was at the heart of the whole thing – and had been from the very, very early years. And when I was trying to answer some of these questions I found myself going way back in my own life. [...] And faith always has been [there], right at the very beginning, faith. And it may have changed and developed but it is, and it was the thrust of faith that directed me.

Lionel Louw spoke of the centrality of his faith in his commitment to social justice in this way:

[It was] absolutely at the heart of it. And it still remains at the heart of who I am and my convictions and my engagements. It remains that. And liberation theology has highlighted that focus on justice. And [...] we could see the practical expression of that through the struggle. It helped to bring out for me (as it did for others) that authentic biblical message of bringing freedom, of working for that fullness and abundant life that Jesus talked about. So the Old Testament prophets came alive. If you read *Comfort and Protest* by Allan Boesak, the Book of Revelation comes alive - the life and ministry of Jesus became live for us through our daily experiences that we were going through in South Africa. So it was an exciting period to just recognise that the Bible and the message of the Bible is alive and we can live in that. And as Desmond Tutu said, "Christians are prisoners of hope". We were at the cutting edge of saying to people that we are not captured by apartheid. It is our faith that inspires us. And just going through those prayer meetings, those services, those rallies - it was fantastic because you were living your faith. So, for me it was very much at the heart of what I was engaged in then. And very much so now.

Mmutlanyane Stanley Mogoba explained that his identity as a Christian was what influenced everything he ever did:

Right from the beginning, I was a Christian. I would say, through all my adult life, I don't remember a time when I was not a Christian. And there are some ironies in my life. One of them was that even as a young teacher, I used to teach biology, science, history, but always from the Christian perspective, such that my students knew that Christianity came first in my life. The reason why I was arrested finally, was because of my faith.

He explained that he had intervened when his students wanted to burn down a Dutch Reformed Church. When they were arrested for a different incident, they named Mogoba as an important influence. This indicated to the police that he had leadership and authority and he was therefore suspected to be a political threat, even though he had prevented the arson attack.

Mogoba seemed to find himself in a role of political leadership almost accidentally. Others took up the dangerous mantle of spiritual and political leadership quite consciously. Colin Jones explained his reasons for being involved in "the struggle" thus:

In terms of social struggle I saw myself very much as part of the oppressed community - identifying with the liberation struggle. And trying to bring to bear my faith experience, my understanding of my faith, which I suppose if one wants to be simplistic, really was one rooted in the liberation theology understanding of faith.

During the interview he related the story of the first time he celebrated mass as a means of explaining how closely linked his experience of being a priest in the church was with the political turmoil of that time in South Africa:

I was ordained priest on June 13th 1976. I celebrated mass as a priest for the very first time on June 16th 1976 - on Soweto Day. This was absolutely- seminal is the word I would use. It was like the moment of rebirth. Because I remember, it was an evening mass at St. Mark's in Athlone and I had just heard the news before going over to say mass that there had been the beginning of the uprising in Soweto and that there had been children shot. I was shattered, devastated by this. I was extremely nervous about saying mass for the first time. And I stood there sort of torn between the stuff in my life on that day. And then the critical moment, it was really, I suppose, a moment of revelation. It's the only word I can use to describe it. As I stood there celebrating mass and saying the words of consecration, "This is my body and this is my blood," I thought of the body and the blood being shot and shed in Soweto. And this is what it's about. This is what my ministry is about.

His ministry was inherently bound up in the drama of the violent struggle. Jones recognised then and did still at the time of the interview that the central Christian ritual went straight to the crux of the crisis in South Africa. The Eucharist was central to "the struggle" because of the identification with the pain and the brokenness of Christ's body. The suffering "body of Christ" as manifested in certain sectors of the Christian community could live in the hope of the Resurrection and therefore act boldly in the world. Charles Villa-Vicencio was another individual who experienced his ministry as being intrinsically bound up in the liberation movement:

[M]y faith in all honesty is what brought me into the political struggle. And as I became more deeply involved in the political struggle so did that political struggle reshape and influence my faith. But I always participated in that political struggle from a theological perspective, undoubtedly.

He explained his understanding of his role as a committed Christian during that era:

My role in that process I suppose was largely at two levels. One, I was a social activist. I was on the streets. I went to jail and those sorts of things. On the other hand I saw myself as a kind of an intellectual. Within church circles as a liberation theologian who was seeking to provoke the church, conscientise the church. Keep the church on its toes with regards to social action - which I understood to be an inherent part of the gospel.

A few of the responses were in the affirmative but quick to qualify that faith commitments are complex and not necessarily so easy to justify or explain. They took into consideration the involvement in "the struggle" of people of no faith, and the opposition of other Christians to "the struggle". They also discussed the impact of broader socio-theological understandings of human rights.

Frank Chikane was concerned about explaining that the motivation to work for justice was not exclusively the property of Christians. He used the example of a private dinner discussion that he had with Joe Slovo (the former Secretary General of the Communist Party and an atheist) shortly after he returned from exile. Slovo agreed with Chikane's assessment that there was "a religious commitment" that drove him "to sacrifice for the cause of justice" inherent in his own political involvement. There is an intriguing irony in this exchange between the "man of faith"

and the apparent atheist. Slovo concedes that his conviction and level of total commitment to the cause is "religious" in its intensity, and yet he maintains his atheistic position. The common ground is, of course, the moral stance, the total embrace of selflessness and a commitment to human liberty and justice. These values are at the core of Christian faith (and indeed at the core of most religious faiths). But Slovo, and many others like him who claim no faith, have placed these same values at the centre of their own lives. Their commitment to human worth and fairness and to a just society forms the cornerstone of their identity.

This raises the philosophical question (which is unanswerable in this context) of what "faith" really means. Are our common assumptions about what constitutes a "personal faith" too narrow? Perhaps Slovo's conviction is actually a form of "religious commitment" and a form of faith. Chikane understood it as such. He then elaborated on his own position and motivation for engagement:

I can explain it based on my faith. And that's how one might have become motivated because it is based on my faith. And maybe because the apartheid system used theology as a basis to justify apartheid, so we had, as Christians, a greater responsibility to take on that system, because it used the name of our God to oppress people. I think that was the real motivation to base your struggle on your faith, because your faith was used to produce the opposite. Whenever I was asked why I am involved, why I take on the government, I said, [It is because of] the way they use the name of my God in the name of apartheid, and against me. I want to, I have to liberate the Bible and the word of God, the name of God from their hands, so that we can delegitimise them and let them stand naked out there and account for their sins rather than use our God for it.

Michael Lapsley needed to explain that although his understanding of the Christian gospel led to his actions, he wrestled with sharing a faith that had room for people who took the opposing political position. Like Chikane, he passionately opposed the misuse of Christianity for the purpose of oppression. For Lapsley, it was not so straightforward to simply declare that faith was what motivated him in "the struggle" because he was deeply confused by the capacity of practicing Christians to do evil:

I suppose the answer would be yes. Having said that, I would say that I came to the conclusion apartheid was an option or a choice for death carried out in the name of the gospel of life. And therefore for me it was an issue of faith to say "no" to apartheid and "yes" to the liberation struggle. So I saw the faith issue as quite central to my own opposition to apartheid. It seemed to me that the Christian gospel had within it the view that all Christians are made in the image or likeness of God and had value from that. And that apartheid was the very opposite of it - that value came from pigmentation. So if I think back to '76, the year that I left South Africa, was expelled from South Africa, the thing that shook my faith was the recognition that those who shot children in 1976, the police and army, were themselves church goers - were themselves people who read the Bible. And I think that shook my faith to its roots.

Chris Ahrends was influenced heavily by his German Jewish origins and his liberal Anglican experience that was "very concerned about creating a humane society." This made it quite natural to accept the anti-discriminatory

message and goal of "the struggle". His role model was the long-term Dean of St George's Cathedral, Ted King, who instilled in Ahrends a humanist faith as opposed to an evangelical or "born again" faith. His "basic framework" readily accepted Archbishop Tutu's message that "we're all born equal in an image of God" and other anti-apartheid catchphrases. His understanding was that his faith was a "growing kind of process of awareness." He explained how his particular origins influenced his spiritual and political position:

I was caught up in the slipstream. [...] I wouldn't consider myself a kind of heavy activist. [...] But] there was a sensitivity in my immediate, in my nuclear family. My father [who had converted from Judaism to Christianity] obviously had a high degree of sensitivity towards racial discrimination. It was a subtext throughout. But he had been fairly battered by the experience [of the Holocaust] so he wasn't an activist; he wasn't out on the street. But clearly his position and emotional opposition to issues of discrimination rubbed off on us, we kind of imbibed those things I suspect as values. And then he got caught up in St. George's Cathedral and I grew up there as a little boy. And obviously was very influenced by the kind of leadership that the cathedral gave. I suspect really the focus of my opposition to apartheid was on the basis of a kind of social, theological understanding of human rights rather than a political, ideological opposition to it.

The final two responses were in the form of double negatives. They indicated that even if the subjects had not been Christian they could not have accepted the injustice of the apartheid system. Faith was not central to, but it was also not excluded from the motivation. Christian principles certainly influenced their understanding of justice. Both respondents were Anglican laywomen, one African and the other South American born. The Anglican tradition, it must be said, is one that allows more room for theological inquiry and even doubt than many of the mainline churches. Brigalia Ntombemhlope Bam wavered in her response to whether faith was a motivating factor in her commitment to the anti-apartheid struggle because she did not want to lose sight of the importance of justice as a motivating factor:

No. Yes, no. Not in a clear way in which I could say no. It was faith and belief in justice. No. Not faith only. I believe [that] even if I had not been brought up in religious home, I would have fought against it, I think, even if I was a non-believer, because it was evil, it was demonic. I don't know what other words to use. But I think that the more that I was working for the church and beginning to respect certain ideas of the church and the beliefs, the more I really felt strongly because I had never thought of these things. And this applies to women as well. When people say people are made in God's image, that's just a statement. We grew up with that statement. But you really don't sit down and begin to think [about the implications of what it would mean] if really we are all made in God's image, women and men. That comes as you as you grow. So I wouldn't say it's because [of faith]. It can't be possible that there are people who are really second-class citizens.

She spoke of the "debates on ordination of women" and how the church still needs to be convinced of the full humanity of women. The anger that she feels about racism and sexism are part of the "driving force" along with faith to strive for justice. She went on to say, "I think the experience of growing up in South Africa and having seen

South Africa and having seen in my own family the humiliation - to see my own parents humiliated." The long years of humiliation and injustice (particularly where people were sent to prison) were "a greater force" for her in terms of motivating her to participate in "the struggle" than "the faith in the general sense."

While Bam emphasised a belief in justice and human rights alongside faith, Mary Burton explained that she was actually distanced from her faith at the time she became involved with the anti-apartheid movement. But even though there were other principles at play that motivated her in "the struggle", she did recognise that faith (or at least her Christian background and ethics) was certainly a factor:

I don't think I can claim really as strongly as that. When I first became involved in politics there was a time in my life when I was full of doubts, in fact, and tending to move away from faith in general and from Christian faith in particular. I explored other options. So I can't really say that it was. I think that in later years, I found doubt to be very debilitating and so I almost consciously put it aside. And felt that the faith that I was born into and married into was there. And since I believe that there are many parts to whatever God needs, it seemed silly to thrash about and rather simply to accept and be gentle with doubts. So it's hard for me to tease out how much any kind of religious belief was a motivating factor. I think it was much more a sense of need in society and of some of the principles that are Christian principles but not only Christian principles of seeing the other person as one's brother or sister, as feeling that we are all part of a common humanity. Those principles more than a formal faith.

All of the subjects interviewed adhere strongly to Christian principles. They believe firmly in human rights and social justice. The gospel message of liberation and their involvement in both religious and political community has encouraged commitment and conviction, and compelled them to take action. This action in turn influenced their faith journeys. Sometimes it has given them hope and confirmed belief – at other times it has filled them with doubt and despair. The following subsection explores how individuals have sustained their faith throughout this era and also how they have grappled with their doubts.

3. 2: Sustaining Faith – And Questioning Faith

“The struggle” years were trying ones in terms of danger and fear and the threat of violence. The personal cost to many was often extremely high. Freedom and even life were on the line and loved ones were potentially at risk. The chaos and insecurity was poignantly experienced in the homes of struggle leaders. Families paid a high price during detentions and underground disappearances, and in exile. Life was totally disrupted. People lived with constant fear and anxiety.

Many people made sense of this trauma in the light of their faith. The disciplines of faith, like prayer (individual and group) and worship in community were cited as important faith sustaining practices. Growing up within faith traditions had an inevitable impact as well. The solidarity with, and inspiration and witness of other believers (and non-believers) who were comrades in “the struggle” were important factors. Ecumenical links with organisations like the World Council of Churches were highly valued. Many respondents shared an understanding that the cause with which they were involved, despite the dangers (or perhaps even because of them) gave meaning and purpose to their lives.

Of course, it is also important to examine the alternative experience of doubt or questioning faith. A case in point would be Frank Chikane's assertion that “heretical questions” were a key to survival during “the struggle era”. For others the more testing times have occurred in the post-liberation confusion. But regardless of the circumstances, all of the subjects have had life experiences that have influenced their faith. Glenda Wildschut articulated this capacity to be open to change in terms of normal and healthy spiritual growth:

If one's faith experience remains static then there is something wrong. I've gone through many, many shifts in where I am with regard to my faith. And that's at a personal level, at a professional level, at a social level.

Several of the interviews revealed a straightforward understanding that personal conviction and faith itself sustain faith. In fact, three of the subjects found the question of what sustained their faith to be in and of itself to be ridiculous since the answer was so obvious to them. There was a general awareness that a change in context influences faith experience. But there was sometimes a contradictory inclination to state that their understanding of faith has been constantly solid and the same. Their off the cuff responses concerning what has sustained and what continues to sustain their faith follow.

Frank Chikane said simply, “It's my conviction and faith.” He elaborated on this declaration by explaining how much staying linked to his congregation helps him to remain faithful to God and his Christian convictions:

That is why I have chosen, and the President accepts this, I have chosen to keep my links to the church. And still be a pastor of a congregation. [...] I chose that I should be rooted there. It's as important as any other thing that I'm doing, so that you won't get completely uprooted. And so that sustains you. I preach once a month on the average. [...] I preach once a month, but as long we are not travelling, I will be with

the congregation. And I sit as part of the congregation, I don't preach. And that makes you to be part of their lives. And I say to them I enjoy being here worshipping with you and preaching. This is part of my sustenance. And when you go there, that's not a middle class congregation. It's not a high flyer. Where I am, it's grassroots, ordinary people. [...] And that sustains me. I tell them. Two Sundays ago I said to them, your music, it's so lovely. You don't know what it does to me. You know, when I am alone, in the most difficult situation, you can hear the echo of that music and the message the preacher said and the music. What you do when I am there sustains me when I'm not there. It's a real blessing.

But "the faith itself" is not a detached entity that is a private spirituality. It is grounded in reality. Chikane is forthright about how much inspiration he draws from community and worship. It is this connectedness that sustains him.

Cedric Mayson, on the other hand, has made a significant move away from the traditional Christian belief system and practice, but continues to consider himself to be very much a person of faith. When asked what sustained him, he replied:

The faith itself. The faith. Faith is an energising component of life. [...] It's the faith itself that sustains you and drives you. [...] It helps if you have a little group who thinks in the same way. We used to do that when we were overseas. We had half a dozen of us and were very, very involved in different things either with the South African struggle or different struggles in Britain. [...] And we used to meet once every couple of months, maybe once a month and have supper. [...] And it was a marvellous group that we could raise anything we liked. But that was a sharing of faith. And the community in which you were helped to sustain it, but it was the faith itself that went on in probing that sort of stuff.

He seemed to indicate that individual faith was strong enough to sustain a person, but Mayson harkened back to a time when he did enjoy the support of like-minded Christian activists. And his understanding of the faith on which he bases his life is a theoretically shared experience. He recognised that some people may find his approach to faith unsettling and unorthodox, but he also implied that he works out his understandings as part of a group of faithful people:

[Faith] is a very empowering sort of thing. And somebody told me some months ago that a certain group found that [...] I was threatening. And we tried to work out why this was. And we felt that in so many cases (it wasn't just me, it was a group of us), we were sustained by faith, by a conviction that was deep inside. And matters of loyalty to a religion or an organisation or a family or an income or anything like that was secondary. And people find that scary because, until they join it. And suddenly find out it's liberating. So that is what people find threatening. They would rather hide in that rock of ages thing and in fact you have to get off the rock and get down into the stream and start swimming and that is what life is all about. That's something they find very threatening until they do it. And then, of course, it's quite wonderful.

Mayson made the vital point about letting go of the self in order to be moved and changed and freed by faith. He emphasised the importance of joining with others who have undertaken the same risk. He experienced meeting with them on a regular basis in order to enact some form of communion (like a shared meal) as meaningful. Although he indicated elsewhere that the experience of church worship was currently missing in his life, he did not appear to be isolated or disillusioned in his faith.

Mmutlanyane Stanley Mogoba spoke of being sustained by his faith that had a very spiritual component. He spoke openly about his relationship with Jesus Christ being the source of strength and power in his life:

I would say that it is faith. I would say that it is faith because going through the sort of things that I went through, only a close experience or close relationship with Jesus Christ gives you a certain power to survive and come out of it stronger. And my conversion or my call to the ministry happened when I was in solitary confinement. [...] It was during this time that I experienced a much closer relationship with Jesus. And even I would say almost a confrontation, a meeting with Jesus Christ where he actually revealed to me that he was actually talking to me. [...] It is this experience which sustained me throughout the very very very difficult phases I went through. This experience of close relationship with Jesus has always given me power.

When asked to consider whether there had been shifts or changes in his faith experience he replied, "I think that in terms of faith, my faith experience has not changed." And yet he indicated that there were certain involvements that had offered him strength previously that he no longer felt were available to him. Since his move into politics, he has experienced that since his move into politics the Methodist Church seems to treat him as "a stranger or a visitor." He no longer experiences the "very closeness" or receives the "close support" that he had previously know within the Christian community. He admitted that:

I miss the support that one gets from the church. Here in the political field, everything is very cold. [...] Even with members of my own party, I don't have the same relationship that I used to have. But even most of all, other churches, other political parties. You have a sense of rejection - that you don't quite belong.

The above responses that took for a starting point that faith in terms of belief and conviction was enough all indicated that in fact community also plays an important role. Additionally, there was a marked emphasis by a wide number of subjects on the power of prayer to deepen faith and to transform life. Many of their responses indicated that prayer could make a difference politically and socially. Mogoba spoke of his own experience and practice of prayer and how that also has changed:

In Black Churches, even moments of prayer teach. And you find that you can't do the things you used to do at the times you used to do them. And you are not where you should be everywhere to do what you want to do. So I want to say that I think, in a sense, my prayer life has been greatly reduced. First of all by not having the sort of space that I want. I do have prayer life - not as regular as it used to be. The

reading of the Bible is not as regular as it used to be. And that does affect me. And I discovered that in the evenings when I get home, the television affects evening family prayer.

His family has begun to consciously stop everything for a full prayer before meals together. But he still acknowledged that his prayer life is "not as it used to be." He also mentioned that he missed the interaction with "prayer partners" and prayer groups.

Smangaliso Mkhathshwa also emphasised the importance of prayer in the maintenance of faith. He came from a tradition that valued prayer very highly:

I had parents who were very, very staunch believers. Every day in the morning, every day in the evening on our knees. Pray! They really had a sense of the real importance of that. But that was the kind of upbringing that one got. And then I think almost throughout all my life I went to Catholic schools. Value based education influenced my thinking, my outlook and so on.

During his time in seminary he began to conscientiously embrace "the challenge of linking my faith to life and the challenges of life." After his ordination as a priest, this ethos continued to play a significant role in his pastoring and preaching. He wanted people who were suffering to know that he was in solidarity with them. This included "real comrades" with whom he himself suffered imprisonment and torture. He recognised that although they did not necessarily share his belief, they had "some inner strength, some spiritual strength." Contact with such people contributed to his "own spiritual growth" and his faith "became stronger." These were important factors, but he returned to the centrality of "prayer, constant prayer." He said, "In the church, with other people in the congregation, and if we happen to be believers when we're together in our cells in prison we could also pray." He also mentioned the need to practise "constant reflection on one's own theological challenges" and the need to read constantly and to relate both of these practices to daily life. But he indicated that it has been prayer that brought discipline and power into his life. It helped to bolster his faith. Once installed in political office, he found that there are practical measures that keep the faith that he brought with him vibrant and strong:

I've brought, if you like, maybe some deposits, if I may put it that way, deposits of faith with me when I left the parish. But also what strengthens my faith is the feeling that I think what I'm doing is making a difference to the lives of the people - the majority of the people. That I'm in a position now to ensure that the hungry are fed. [...] But it is a limited way, to say that together with my fellow colleagues, councillors, fellow politicians that we are putting together a programme that will improve the lives of the people. [...] We're not only preaching certain things, but we are now in a position to make those things happen.

Mkhathshwa expressed a desire to use his political power to offer people happiness, dignity and "faith in themselves" through education and self development. He wants to offer people "a much brighter future" with "more opportunities."

Lionel Louw continues to dedicate much time and effort to nurturing his faith, which again has a focus on prayer. And as with Mkhathshwa's experience, this conscious process of practicing faithfulness seemed to be hugely beneficial to his own life and his capacity to continue to offer himself to others:

I am at the place where I'm going through my own deepening of my faith. And much more challenging of my own personal relationship with God. Yes. [I am] much more challenged at that level. Much more aware of it, that I must live that. I must be in touch with and keep that relationship as a vibrant relationship. And greater dependence on God to undertake (personally and I share this with many in our congregation) a rediscovery of the significance of prayer. And that we need to have a refocusing of that. That we need to bring people back to recognise and experience the power of prayer. The power of our personal faith in making a difference. [...] And there are some activists of the '80s that are disillusioned because those things that we struggled for, those ideals that we articulated then are not being taken as seriously now. So I think that we must also keep in focus the fact that there are segments of our society that have become disillusioned. Rightly or wrongly, legitimately or not, about the lack of progress that has been made. So I'm saying that a deepening of faith and almost a recommitment to its power and influence, for me personally, for us collectively, comes also at the time when we are experiencing this six years after our first democratic elections and a democratic government being put in place. I'm not saying that there's a direct causal relationship for it. I'm simply saying that it's happening under these circumstances within this kind of context.

He differentiated between what was faith sustaining in the present (as explained above) as opposed to the past. Louw explained that in the past his faith was sustained by "that vibrancy in seeing unfolding before our eyes what the scriptures contained." He used the example of preaching about Judas' lucrative betrayal of Jesus:

And I contextualised that in the 1980s, the role that informers were playing. You could do that. [...] It said that this is an exciting, this is an alive, this is a real faith. So in the past that is what sustained me. In the present it is struggling through how we can now actualise what we spoke about then. And how we can make that abundant life become real for people. And also to do it on the basis of faith.

Louw, therefore, emphasised conscious commitment to nurturing a relationship with God. But this personal component of faith was intrinsically related to community and prayer and contextual theology.

Wildschut made it clear that it is not just larger social realities that impact on faith. She spoke of a recent family tragedy that has taught her many "lessons about grace" and "about appreciating the people around me in a much more profound way." She had become increasingly aware of the ways that "people move in and out of your life and need to distance themselves from you or need to be very close" and of the way that her prayer life has changed:

And just understanding that movement, for me that's been amazing faith experience. And it's played out in Jesus' life, how he tells the disciples to stay [behind] because he needed to be alone. But at another

level, [he says,] "Come, we need to be closer to each other." And, so it's not only just geographical distance, but emotional distance between people at different points in time. And that's an amazing faith thing, being sensitive to where people are at in own spiritual life and their own personal life and so on. I've also learnt to pray differently. I think praying for me for a long time was a compulsive repetitive thing. Almost habit. And I don't mean it in a glib way. I think ritual and habit are very important. And there is a place for that. But I appreciate being able to have conversations with God, rather than being demanding. [...] So I find that silence and being, just being is an essential part of my prayer life.

Brigalia Ntombemhlope Bam was yet another subject who emphasised the power and the importance of prayer in her life and faith experience. She spoke particularly of the way that she applies prayer in the context of her secular work:

When everything goes wrong in my office or when I'm absolutely desperate [...], I just get up in the morning and I say, "Good Lord, we have done just about everything. And we are just simply humans and I leave the rest to you." And once I say that now, I genuinely and honestly believe it. And when I say, "I leave this to you God," I mean it in that sense because I don't know what will happen. [...] Funny that I really believe in this, but I do. And I find that my colleagues sometimes try to laugh about it. They also believe in it because when they have problems they say to me (they kind of said it jokingly because people don't want to sound religious and they don't want to sound pious so they try and put it in a light language), they say, "Well, it's left to you to say your prayers." And most of the time they mean it, though they pretend that it's a joke.

Bam also found an important source of strength from her wider Anglican community and the prayers that people invoke for her work and on her behalf. "Contact with people who pray for us, who trust us" was mentioned as something that has been sustaining for her. She spoke of the fact that during the recent elections with which she was so involved there was extensive prayer and even fasting within church circles for a peaceful outcome. She was hugely moved by the Anglican bishops' interest in the elections and their explicit support of her as an individual. They all gathered in George in order to lay their hands on her and bless her and her work. This experience gave her tremendous confidence. She spoke of the ways in which she brings her faith and her natural inclination to pray into her work environment. She said, "I do believe and so for me it's the thing I can hold onto when all lets loose. And I talk about it." She even said, "I find in some circles they expect me to do so." She recounted one such situation in a large group of colleagues:

We were going to do an evaluation and they wanted me to open the meetings. And I said [... to] this big gathering, "I don't know, I hope you won't be too upset. [...] There is no way we can start this meeting off on evaluation without a prayer." And to my greatest amazement half of the room said, "Oh yes, chair, let's have a prayer." I was very encouraged and then I couldn't think, because I hadn't been thinking about a prayer. I was just saying it. I thought there would be people who were going to scream at me and say let's not pray. And it was nice. They all liked that. They all stood up and we prayed. We sang. I

didn't even know some of my colleagues could sing church hymns so nicely. It was very nice, very affirming.

In her experience, prayer and sung praise have been essential components of transformation, in part because of the ways in which they unify people and offer courage and hope. She also was reliant upon community. This said, she had found that moving away from nominally church affiliated work gave her the opportunity to reassess her faith commitment and figure out where she stood:

I think one of the good things, if I could personalise, that has happened in my own life is (after my retirement full time in the church) to work for a secular organisation. Because then I take distance from my faith. Distance in the sense that it's not a job where I work for the church and because of that I then suddenly realise that in fact faith is very [much] in continuity in my life. And I also discovered that (which you don't do if you're working in the church) [...] what I personally anchor on (and I'd never done that analysis). In fact, I do anchor on a single faith.

Michael Lapsley is another individual who has shifted from working fulltime in the church, and yet continues to find that his faith is sustained by contact with community and prayer. The trauma that he has experienced in his life and body has also deepened his understanding of faith:

I think the inspiration from the faith of others is very important. And the kind of faith commitment that others show is a source of strength. So one is encouraged in one's own faith by the faith of others. And I think that through the struggle years I was often strengthened, humbled and challenged by the faith of people who were not necessarily themselves religious at all. It challenged me about what was my own faith. [...] I think also in the experience being bombed, it was very much my own experiences of God in that experience, within that experience. But also, again the prayers and love and faith of others and towards me was sustaining as well.

He also explained how his work with broken people, helping them to come to grips with the pain they bear, has a hugely positive influence on his faith experience:

I think the kind of work I do is by its very character often very painful work. But it is when I am a witness to others becoming released from their own shackles or psychological, emotional, spiritual oppression. When you see people who have lived as victims moving beyond survival mode towards victory - in a sense of taking hold of their own lives, [...] it's deeply rewarding but, it's also faith sustaining. And I think when one sees people acting for justice, when you see the commitment of others, you see the compassion of others, I find that that moves me in my own faith, and my own commitment.

Clearly, Lapsley experiences his professional engagement as a ministry that offers meaning and depth to his life. Many of the subjects seemed to share this experience through being involved in the continuing work of

transformation in South Africa. Engagement in “the struggle” offered a certain sustenance in and of itself in that it offered a clear sense of identity and bolstered faith.

In the current era, some are seeking inspiration and support in ways that are not necessarily religious or spiritual. Charles Villa-Vicencio was an example of someone who found that being involved with “the struggle” increased his faith. This was clearly what sustained his faith in the past:

It was essentially a genuine belief that the political struggle was a theological, an ethical, a moral, a spiritual struggle. I believed it. I thought I was promoting my faith and my spirituality by doing those things. That’s what sustained me. Again in retrospect, it was also my space.

But in the present, faith is no longer the *raison d’être* that it used to be for him. When pushed on the subject he gave a fairly general, humanist response:

Oh, hell, I don’t know. What sustains me now? Maybe I’ve got nothing else to do, I don’t know. What keeps me going? A fundamental belief, a fundamental belief that we’re all placed on this earth to try and make it a little better. To build a human community. To promote understanding and reconciliation. That’s what sustains me. And so I don’t use theological language, but I continue to be driven by that belief that my purpose in this life is to try and create a better world. I suppose I’m stubborn enough to say I was part of bringing, trying to contribute towards bringing this new South Africa to a reality. I now mean to make it work, damn it. I’ve just got to do that. I’m not going to die anywhere else. I’m going to be buried here in the shadow of Table Mountain if I can help it. This is my country. This is who I am. This is where my roots are. It’s what I spent fifty years struggling for. I’m now going to make it work. And then at a very personal level it’s what gives me meaning for some strange reason. [...] I get meaning and purpose in life out of this sort of struggle, I really do. So if I read a novel then I read lots of novels. I continually see questions of purpose and meaning in life and struggle, and liberation and identity in those things. It is part of me. So there is continuity, but it’s very different.

Villa-Vicencio was not the only one who seemed to be striving for a conscientiously secular understanding to his current reality. Chris Ahrends was also moving beyond a strictly traditional approach to faith marked by a sense of freedom, fascination and fearlessness. He seemed very open and had profound psychological understandings of what he was doing theologically. He was seeking inspiration and support in ways that are not even necessarily religious or spiritual. But despite his distance from the church, an inclination to “touch the prayer wheel” from time to time remained. At that stage, he was occasionally leading Monday morning Eucharist at St George’s Cathedral. He said quite plainly, “It’s interesting because I don’t think that I’ve really found [what sustains me], every now and then I get glimpses of it.” He listed some of those things that do sustain him in various ways:

[A] ‘feel good’ movie [...] really nourishes me as much as listening to Mozart’s Mass at the cathedral, [or watching] the John Lennon documentary “Imagine” [...]. I think trying to find solitude, to find space for myself. Weekly holiday walking in the mountain or hiking [...]. Family. I think that’s one of the great joys

of not having to work the hours of traditional clergy - because I've got little kids and I can really spend time with them over the weekends [...]. Those are things which nourish me, I think, and a lot of the reading that I do. I think particularly I am trying to read more kind of wider theological stuff. [...] I still find myself listening to something like some of the music from Taizé, which I still find very inspiring.

He had a clearly given some thought to what he needed to do in order to stretch his faith in new ways that would perhaps be more honest and more appropriate to his current context:

What sustains me? Maybe it's also about trying to find some place within me which sustains me. So moving the centre of God away from out there to in here. And maybe that's part of what I've been wrestling with, not only just to put a face to the picture of God, but to try and make God faceless [...]. But also that I'm trying to relocate the centre of God away from out there – which is the great Christian tradition – to the in here. [...] To try and find communion inside yourself rather than communion out there. Communion on the altar, communion in the community.

Carl Niehaus is another individual who has shifted his attention away from activism through the church. While he recognised the importance of his faith in the context of both the past and the present, he did not directly address what sustains it. My impression was that he is not truly sustained either in his faith or his work at present. Yet he stated that faith has always been and continues to be an essential part of his life:

I suppose it's both a personal component and when I'm confronted with a question about my faith I always have to try and ask myself what led to me surviving prison. And without being very spiritual about it, it is really my faith that made me survive prison, if anything. And of course the support of family and so on, but all in the context of my faith. And today it's still my belief in a future which is not just something which you can go and work out in material terms. I believe that there should be, and there will be hope which is also based on justice and a God that is committed to justice. Which is beyond just the kind of hope that we place in human beings. It's very strong.

Not all of the subjects were able to claim such a consistently strong faith experience. In fact, several have wrestled with deep doubt. The experience of living in a socially conscious way during “the struggle” forced people to face horrific situations. This prompted some people to question how God can allow such things to happen. Some found their faith tested to the point of disbelief. Others found that the situation increased their need for faith. This brings us back to Chikane's use of heretical questions as a means of survival during “the struggle era”:

[My faith and conviction are] much more stronger [now]. There were more threats to ones faith during the struggle, than it is now. You see during those days, you also had a question: 'Does God care?' You go and find all these people asking God [for assistance]. And you bury them the next week. You stop and ask, 'Hey, is this God?' [...] I used to talk about asking heretical questions - that unless you asked them, you are not surviving during those days. But now you are not confronted with that type of thing. It's the ability of humanity to make a difference, and one of the ways is solving problems. But it is not

coming close to threatening your faith. So it is a different context all together.

Glenda Wildschut also asked herself some difficult questions that helped to reshape the outward expression of her faith. But she emphasised the fact that even when she was absent from Sunday worship, her faith was never really threatened:

I think of course there have been times of questioning one's faith and questioning the shape and size of it. And how it manifests itself [...]. Where do I best gather with other people my faith, might be one aspect [...]. I didn't worship in the family of Baptists but worshipped in the family of Anglicans. And for a long time not worshipping in a particular place any more. But I never felt that my faith had floundered in that kind of way.

Mary Burton has done much re-evaluation about what exactly it is that she believes. She went as far as to admit that it was her "husband's faith" that sustained her in the past. In fact, she said, "I'm pretty certain about that. I think it would have been very easy for me to just drift away." But she seemed to be in quite a relaxed and comfortable place in terms of her faith at the time of the interview:

I think that since that period [of wrestling with doubt], which is really quite a long time ago and probably goes together with living in a new country and being a young mother and all of those things. [...] [S]ome of the best advice I got then in that seeking time, was just act as if you believed. And it was often very, very good advice. And I think what has happened is I have really, I've become much more comfortable about regular worship. At one stage I stayed away from church altogether. The fact that I may not believe every aspect of the faith as it is laid down doesn't worry me so much. So, yes I think perhaps I'm more accepting and have more a sense of being accepted. But it's a more sort of comfortable settling in than any kind of radical change or shift.

She was no longer arguing with the finer points of what others might think she should believe in order to call herself a Christian. She seemed happy to be part of a community that supports her. When asked what sustains her now, she replied, "I think that kind of comfortable acceptance, in the sense that I've reached a place where I don't need to fight the questions all the time."

Chikane, Wildschut and Burton all seemed calm and secure with their faith perspectives. They did not need to argue or explain or justify their respective positions. There was a self-assurance in their demeanour. Arrogance and anxiety were distinctly absent. Political realities (or their respective parishes' responses to them) may have given them cause to doubt in the past, but in this new era they seemed realistically hopeful and positive.

For a number of my other subjects it seemed that the change in context had the opposite effect. Perhaps these individuals had their doubts in the past, but kept them to themselves. Perhaps the current expression was more about stage of life. Perhaps it was based on their respective arguments with their denominational institutions. But their own accounts indicated an increased level of conscious re-evaluation of faith in the post-liberation era. Colin

Jones was one individual who found that he has been able to raise his questions more openly in the post-apartheid era. He was prepared to admit that he is in a complicated and unsure place as far as his understandings of faith and "the meaning of life" are concerned:

I'm not sure that I'm totally sustained. In fact I know I'm not. And what I need in order to sustain me is a very perplexing issue. What I do think and I'm beginning to become aware of is that simplicity of life is a very critical truth here. And I feel that I do need to simplify. One of the traps of the world, if one was to call it that, as opposed to the church, is the constant quest for security and for comfort. [...] And somehow in the church you don't have those burdens. [...] What I desire is to live a simple life, doing the things that are meaningful, which are quite simple things actually. And I would include fly-fishing and writing and reading and music. And you don't need a hell of a lot to sustain you in order to do that. I'd really love to write and reflect and maybe I do have a story to tell. And to search after beauty, particularly, through the arts. And to search after truth and beauty through science and the arts. And then maybe to discover, rediscover a new place of faith. In a sense I have faith and I have no faith. I call myself a born again agnostic. For the moment for me the only place of integrity is to say I do not know. I do not know. But I want to know. A bit like Augustine, I want to want to know. Even if I don't want to want to know. I want to want to want to want to know.

Of all of the interviewees, he was the furthest removed from both the church and the political scene at the time of the interview. His departure was perhaps the most unsettling, both in terms of his own life and in terms of others' reactions to his decision to leave. He seems, of all the subjects interviewed, the one who is most actively searching for something beyond the church. He also seems to be the most frustrated in terms of career and clear sense of current identity. But there is an undeniable courage in his honesty that risks all security to strive for a truth that is relevant to him. He said:

I think that for the first time I'm beginning to understand what Bonhoeffer has said when he said, 'We need to learn to live with God as if without God'. Maybe that's ultimate faith. I remember Desmond [Tutu], a few months after I had left [the church], invited me over to the offices of the TRC. He asked me to come and celebrate the Eucharist for him. And I hadn't celebrated the Eucharist for three months then, at all. And I told him that. And he asked me, 'Where is your safety net?' And I said, 'You know something, I'm beginning to question whether faith requires one.' And I think that's the difference for me, I'm living without a safety net. Without a safety net of doctrine, dogma, institution. And I'm freefalling, living with God as if without God. And it's both a heaven and a hell.

Jones' detachment from the act of celebrating the Eucharist may indicate a focus on the emptiness of the "empty cross" instead of recognising that Christ (and the work that he calls his followers to do) may be found elsewhere in present day South Africa. Jones struck me as unfulfilled and dissatisfied. Many veterans of conflict experience an idealisation of the past and their role in it. This is not a phenomenon that is unique to the South African situation.

This shifting away from the old tried and tested ways of being faithful leads this discussion onto the subject of questioning the fundamentals of faith itself. Asking questions and raising doubts is not necessarily a faith threatening exercise. On the contrary, it can ultimately prove to be a process that deepens and stretches a personal faith experience. Of course it may also lead into uncharted waters. Not everyone feels the need to go this route. There was by no means a uniform searching amongst the subjects interviewed. However there was enough attention paid to the issue of doubt that it seems worth exploring briefly. According to Jones, doubt is not the opposite of faith. In his view, "the opposite of faith is certainty." Kierkegaard said that the opposite of faith is despair. Hexham's *Concise Dictionary of Religion* supports Jones' position and defines doubt thus: "although often contrasted with faith it really means uncertainty and has traditionally been seen as a means of strengthening faith through the need to search for truth and make moral decisions."⁵⁸ It is interesting to observe that some of the subjects were more conscious of wrestling with their faith during "the struggle" while others have found the post-liberation era more doubt inducing.

Jones felt that it was most honest to admit the doubts with which one wrestles: "I deeply reject certainty masquerading as faith." He went on to say, "I have two favourite biblical characters, one is obviously Thomas, and the other is Jacob who is not afraid to wrestle with God and not afraid to be wounded in the process, and not afraid to limp for the rest of his life with his hip out of joint through his encounter with God." In leaving the church formally, Jones staked out a claim on freedom of thought that he seemed to take very seriously. It was an urgent and essential business to try to understand faith in a larger context. The church no longer offered him what he was searching for so he was looking beyond the safety of the institution:

And I'm afraid that for me what the church has become is ritualistic, dogmatic, without beauty, without the mystery, without the magic. And people miss that. And I think that this quest for spirituality is because that is not part of what the church is about in the modern day. And what faith is about. All the old answers are there. It's not about science in that there's a continual searching, pushing the boundaries, asking the questions. And that's for me, I think, the discontinuity in that now I question everything. And that in a sense, I'm not even trying to find the answers in my faith. I'm trying to find the answers beyond the dogma of my faith. And I believe that there is more to faith, that faith is an ever-evolving thing too. [...] There's more to know. There will come another who will teach you more. And that there is more. And that somehow the spirit is at work beyond the church. And I certainly don't accept that there is faith only within the church. No faith outside of the church. I can't accept that.

Cedric Mayson was also adamant in his refusal to accept the status quo of faith. He too needed something larger and more encompassing than Christian creeds and doctrine and dogma. This began during "the struggle" when he met people of other religious traditions who were also involved in the liberation movement based on faith conviction. This challenged him to begin to question his own faith. He decided that the root of the problem was the Christian claim concerning the divinity of Jesus. He could not accept a triumphalist position that insisted that Jesus was the only route to God and salvation. The "experience of a shared faith and a shared commitment in the struggle" with countless others who did not share his belief system forced him to evaluate his own beliefs. He was

⁵⁸ Hexham, Irving, *Concise Dictionary of Religion*, 67.

motivated to search the scriptures to learn what Jesus himself actually said. What he discovered was "that there's no way in which you can say that Jesus himself said that he was God." Subsequent study of the Qu'ran and the Upanishads and other religious texts led him to see "the reality of an experience of spiritual vision and power that is open to all human beings."

Both of these former church leaders seemed adamant in their position that there was to be no going back. They are both too far removed from a traditional Christian belief system. And yet there was a certain air of loneliness about them that seemed to overshadow the delight of freedom that they both professed. My impression was that they took some enormous risks when they climbed out of their respective boxes. They refused to place rules and worship and doctrine above life and love and chaos. But their responses indicated that they both still longed for understanding of an ultimately incomprehensible God. In faith, metaphor and fact are so enmeshed that it is impossible to separate them entirely. Faith thrives on communities who share common stories. The wandering that both these men must do certainly has Christian precedent. Whether or not they find their way back to a sense of community is not the point. The point is the journey that they each feel called to undertake.

Chris Ahrends has also been on a quest to discover new ways of understanding his faith. But his searching seemed less rejecting and more inclusive. Although he has questioned the primacy of Christianity, he has remained rooted in Christian tradition. He is interested in learning more about what other faith traditions might have to offer:

The best practice of religion has at its heart the practice of a spirituality, not so? But I think that as a clergyman (when one comes into it as a young person ordained at a young age) [...] it's very much the practice of the religion. And the uniforms and all the fancy stuff and the bells and smells which are quite central to it all. And then of course you do the spiritual stuff as well and you pray and you read and you reflect and you pray and you write sermons. I don't believe that you can actually have the spirituality on its own. And that's where I wouldn't live with the new age kind of people [who think] that you can just kind of have the spirituality disconnected with any kind of religion. The great religions of the world have stood the test of time. And let's give them credit for it. I'm not trying to reinvent the wheel and do a kind of eclectic hodgepodge, scrambled egg of religion. A little bit of Stonehenge and a little bit of crystal and a little bit of meditation, little bit of Holy Spirit, and voodoo. [...] That would be very twentieth century. And so I don't think that I've got the answer, but somewhere I suppose I'm trying to say, can I develop some kind of spirituality and if I can, how can I with integrity locate it in the context of a religion, or maybe two religions, or three maybe the great monotheistic religions? I'm not fascinated by Buddhism. I haven't got on a religious journey saying I'm going to become a closet Buddhist and then a practising Hindu and then I'm going to do this. But [...] things like Tai Chi fascinate me [...] and] meditation. Those are the things that I'm trying to develop some kind of understanding of and discipline with and see where that takes me.

Ahrends seemed to express a boldness about searching beyond his specific tradition without alienating himself. There was an openness to new ways of thinking about and practicing spirituality and religion. But in no way did he indicate that Christianity or the church had less to offer him than the alternatives.

Clearly, finding ways of being sustained in faith as in life is a complicated process. This was particularly apparent in the responses of those who are unsure about what sustains them. Those who claim that faith sustains faith and nothing has changed also highlighted the paradox of an unchanging certainty that is constantly undergoing transformation in form and understanding.

As the responses have indicated, these individual faith journeys have not taken place in a vacuum. The subjects have experienced varying degrees of support and conflict with their communities. While community can be helpful, it is not always supportive or present. Likewise, tradition can be reassuring and it can also be stifling. The interviews indicated that some people needed to take space to grow and change outside of strict denominational and doctrinal confinements. This is explored below in a section on the subjects' relationships with their institutional churches.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER 4: THE TWO ALTARS

4.1 Relationships With the Institutional Churches

It is important to examine the subjects' relationships with their particular church institutions and their denominational affiliations in order to contextualise their individual experiences of support from or conflict with their faith communities. Some of their institutions launched or supported political engagement against apartheid, some interfered with or inhibited political activity, and in other cases the subjects acted in defiance of the wishes of their particular institutions. But for good or ill the institutions influenced action.

Individuals' relationships with their institutional churches (as with their particular congregations) can be benchmarks of their faith journeys. Whether or not people worship publicly and where they chose to do so communicates an important message. There have been radical shifts in most of the subjects' respective relationships with their denominational institutions. This is most apparent in the cases of the ordained ministers who have left the church in various ways. But the lay Christians interviewed have also experienced shifts in loyalties and priorities and degrees of involvement. Taking the interview material as a whole, my attention was particularly drawn for the purposes of this chapter towards examining experiences of support and conversely experiences of conflict with the institutional church.

The Meaning of "Church"

It is essential that I first examine briefly the meaning of 'church' in this context. The Greek word *ekklesia* defined the community of early Christians who preached the gospel of Jesus Christ and tried to live according to his teachings in a free and equal assembly. "church" now is understood to be a reference to a wider Christian organisation, but it remains in usage regarding the various denominational groups and individual congregations. It also continues to be understood as the physical place where people gather for worship and the celebration of the Eucharist.

In the interviews, the subjects all seemed to share at one stage or another an understanding of the church as *servant* of the servant Lord. According to the model proposed by liberation theology that was heartily embraced by many Christian activists, "the church is called to be the beginning of the new human life in relationship, solidarity, and friendship beyond all privatism, classism, racism, and sexism."⁵⁹ This diaconal model is promoted by the World Council of Churches, the South African Council of Churches and the ecumenical movement more widely.

According to this view, the church is not primarily an institution whose purpose is survival and expansion, nor an intimate community designed to foster the personal growth of individuals who feel

⁵⁹ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 188-189.

neglected and depersonalized by modern society, nor merely the herald of a message. The church is a servant community called to minister in God's name on behalf of fullness of life for all of God's creatures.

According to this model, the church serves God by serving the world in its struggle for emancipation, justice and peace. Dietrich Bonhoeffer defined the church as the community that exists for others. "The church," he wrote, "must share in the secular problems of ordinary human life, not dominating but helping and serving."⁶⁰

Duncan Forrester takes the position that, "The Christian church is, or ought to be, about empathy with those who suffer, sensitising people with the divine compassion to the needs of their neighbours. And despite the compromises of the centuries, Gustavo Gutierrez was right when he said, 'Justice and right cannot be emptied of the content bestowed on them by the Bible.'⁶¹ All of the subjects were struggling for justice using a biblical perspective on its meaning, all were involved to various degrees with the ecumenical movement and each of their lives has modelled servant leadership.

The various churches and Christian groups that participated in the anti-apartheid movement had a clear sense of purpose and identity for that period in history. But the servant model that had been adopted in a particular context can be vulnerable to certain undermining dynamics:

The church may forget what the basis and goal of its service is, with the result that ecclesiology is reduced to social function. Further, the church that understands itself as servant of the world may tend to subordinate nurture of the spiritual life to zeal for political action. Closely related to this is the ever-present danger of an uncritical identification of the reign of God with a particular program of social and political change. This is frequently accompanied by a loss of self-criticism and openness to reform.⁶²

Perhaps this took place to some extent. Those inside and outside of the church in South Africa came to expect activism and power and purpose from the institution. There was a lot of idealisation and unattainably high expectation. But at the same time, the institution itself, being a human organisation, struggled to change its modus operandi at such short notice. Perhaps it became clear that the church was not as powerful and important as its leaders and its followers alike wanted to believe. But what did people expect from the church? There was practically an expectation that the church could usher in the "Kingdom of God on Earth" following the democratic elections. This was, of course, impossible. What was the church supposed to be now?

[A] favorite motto of ecumenical church leaders in this century has been "Let the Church be the Church!" (John Mackay). Let the Church live and act like the body of Christ, the temple of the Spirit, and the

⁶⁰ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Michigan: Wm. M. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), 196.

⁶¹ Duncan B. Forrester, *Christian Justice and Public Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 59.

⁶² Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Michigan: Wm. M. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), 198.

servant people of God. This is a summons to the church to stop preening itself with all sorts of metaphysical compliments without any corresponding social reality and praxis.⁶³

Clearly the church that has practised intense political engagement risks another kind of backlash. Here individual Christians are confronted with their own questions about the role of and the place for religious authority. Prophetic and visionary church leadership had offered political as well as spiritual guidance. Now many people needed to rethink their job descriptions and their identities.

For individuals who have been intimately connected with the "struggle" focused institution, a new way of relating to the new incarnation of the church must be established. At some stage, it is essential that all who are involved with the institution must differentiate from it and discover who they are and where they stand outside of the "brotherhood" and the identity they found within the church. This can be a terrifying and difficult task to undertake. Sometimes, as this research has indicated, it leads them into primary engagement in other arenas. But the process of differentiation need not be permanently alienating. There has been an evolutionary trend in the nature of the relationships that each of the thirteen subjects in this project has with their particular faith communities and more broadly with the overarching denominational institutions.

Many of the interviews indicated that the institutional church in South Africa has suffered a crisis in terms of identity, personnel and action in the post-liberation era. This was particularly emphasised by several of my Methodist and Anglican subjects. Previously, the ecumenical movement in South Africa was unified by "the struggle" to end apartheid. But in post-apartheid South Africa, many of those who were formerly the church's strongest supporters have become frustrated with the identity crisis that the institution seems to be undergoing. A number of former church leaders have sought a role outside of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Some of these have also experienced an acute sense of "burn-out" or resentment from a faithful but exhausting and over-extended socio-political engagement often at huge personal cost.

The origins of the suggested crisis may be debated. Remembering that many leaders in the church were providing political as well as spiritual leadership, it is hardly surprising that some of them have been welcomed into the new government that was ushered in through their efforts. Nevertheless, some key questions concerning their shifts in occupation must be raised. Was an anti-climax inevitable following an intensive era during which the church was fuelled by the anti-apartheid cause? Did frustration with the church drive clergy out? Or did the departure of clergy undermine the effectiveness of formerly powerful ecclesial institutions? There was evidence in the interviews to suggest that it was a vicious cycle that operated in both directions.

After such a massive effort for change, it was practically inevitable that an anti-climax would occur. For many activists, personal identity and purpose had become bound up in "the struggle". This was apparent in Colin Jones' memory of watching the speech by then President de Klerk on television in the company of Desmond Tutu on the day that Nelson Mandela was released from prison:

⁶³ Ibid., 188.

I remember seeing Desmond [Tutu] absolutely - to use his own word - flabbergasted. And then ecstatic. And he said, "The day has arrived, we've done what we had to do." And I looked at him and thought about that and thought, "Is this it? Is this what it was all about? What do we do now? What do we go back to?" Because I had no knowledge of what we could go back to - because the only experience I had was the struggle, fighting, resistance. And I just wondered what kind of church it would be.

The crisis had been normalised. The lives of the anti-apartheid movement leaders had been geared towards "the struggle". The church that they worked for had been focused on it. There was nothing obvious to go back to. The churches that had unified forces to oppose apartheid were not prepared for liberation. Once the mission was accomplished there was confusion regarding vision and purpose. Lionel Louw quoted the Old Testament proverb that states, "Where there is no vision the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). The retirement of key leaders has left people hungry for prophetic voices from within the church. When former or potential leaders took their strengths, vision and energy elsewhere, they left a vacuum that according to many of the subjects has yet to be adequately filled.

Three Anglican Laywomen

At the time of the interviews none of the subjects was involved primarily with the institutional church any longer. Some of the subjects never had been ordained, but in the cases of Mary Burton, Brigalia Ntombemhlope Bam and Glenda Wildschut, there was a double removal from the category of clergy by nature of being women and being laity. The patriarchal structures that are still strong within the churches have ensured that women have less access to leadership and decision-making within the institution. Laity also tends to have far less power than clergy in this respect. Brigalia Ntombemhlope Bam was employed by the World Council of Churches (and broke new ground when she was appointed as the first woman and the first lay chairperson). Her relationship with the institutional church, therefore, was closer than that of the other two women as she was gainfully employed by a church affiliated organisation. The other two may have been active lay members, but neither their income nor their identity was bound up in church structures. All the same, these three laywomen have an increased distance and perspective in comparison with the clergy interviewed. Their voices therefore provide an essential counterpoint to this discussion.

Mary Burton spent many years wrestling with doubts about what she believed. This may have prevented her from feeling entirely comfortable with practicing Christianity, but she has consistently maintained a relationship with her Anglican church in Rondebosch. Despite any faith issues she may have had, she made the unambiguously positive statement that "the church has always been one of the areas in which I have found it possible to talk about what have mainly been my political concerns." Burton found a sense of community and common cause when she joined the Black Sash. This dovetailed with the stand that the Anglican Church was taking:

In the Black Sash we felt that particularly during the years of the state of emergency when so many other voices were silent we had that protection and therefore the capacity to say what needed to be said. And I have always found the church a strong support and ally in that. In again, it provided both the

nurturing and support in that sense, but also the vehicle for communicating information and for raising issues.

She experienced a certain amount of solidarity from the church in terms of her sense of responsibility to speak out against injustice. At the time of the interview Burton was comfortable about expressing her current involvement with her congregation. She considers herself to be "a person in the pew who has the sense that if I need to raise an issue, if I need to discuss something, there are avenues within the parish, but also much broader than the parish where I can take it." She seemed to feel supported as a lay member. At the time of her involvement with the TRC, her priest made it clear that he was available to her if she needed counselling or other support. She did not express any criticism of her local or institutional church in the context of her interview.

Glenda Wildschut had both criticism and gratitude to voice. She left the politically silent Baptist Church of her childhood because it did not seem to be integrated with the reality that she experienced all around her:

I grew up in the Baptist Church [which was] instrumental in forming me in terms of my faith. But I found a very big gap with the church. I found that I wasn't able to express my political, with a small p, aspirations in the church because the church was very conservative. It didn't see itself playing a role in opposing apartheid or even talking about apartheid [...] The church told me that there's no place for a social gospel, that the church was responsible for teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and that was it. [Much later] I understood that in fact preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ is preaching the social gospel and that Jesus Christ was the greatest activist I know. [...] And so for a very long time even when I was at University I sought a home, a place where I could express myself as a whole person. Not just as somebody who wants to walk the Christian road and live it out in the faith sphere – my prayer life and so on – but also in every other aspect of my life. And so there was a long period when I didn't really have that home. I left the Baptist Church. I didn't go to church anymore.

That was until her love of music led her to join the Anglican Church as a young adult. She spoke of her experience of helping to set up and run the Oppression Monitoring Group (OMG) under the auspices of St. George's Cathedral in Cape Town. They worked long hours to ensure that the information regarding detentions was distributed through the appropriate networks. This was the context in which the church became a spiritual home for her. She understood it to be a hands on community that played an important political role. At the time of the interview Wildschut was still an active member of the cathedral and seemed satisfied with the support she was receiving there.

There was a stronger element of criticism from Brigalia Ntombemhlope Bam. She offered an essential perspective from the African Anglican point of view. The church has a history of injustice that has not yet been rooted out:

You have black and white churches. You have black and white priests. You have different stipends for a white priest in the same church than you have for a black priest. You have all kinds of discriminatory

practices within the church institutions that make it difficult for people out there to say that we are a model. We are not a model in South Africa, at all.

But despite her objections, she manifested strong commitment to her church. Her criticisms, in and of themselves, indicated an engagement rather than a rejection. She seemed to possess a determination to help to effect change from within. She said, "I'm an active person in the church. Sometimes I get quite agitated in church. And I'm not always a good worshipper because I like this enculturation in church. And when I don't see it I'm bored." She used the example of the new free way of singing gospel music. And she spoke of her ideas concerning outreach that she was at that time discussing with her bishop. Her links with the church have been consistently strong. In her own words, "It's been really one of the strengthening things for me, to know that I belong to a bigger community, a community I could fall on." She seemed to be the ultimate activist – determined to make a difference even in the forum of her church.

Dislocation and Disillusionment

The position shared by the laywomen contrasted sharply with some of the other interviews with men who have left the church. Many of the clergy indicated a high level of disappointment both with the factions of the church that previously supported "the struggle" and with the broader institution. Perhaps the moral battleground can elicit the best from the church and its members. Obviously, the institutional church is a human organisation with massive limitations and as Bam has noted, it has yet to eradicate internal hypocrisy on issues like racism, sexism and classism. So there is plenty of work yet to be done.

It is important to address head on some of the interviewees' critiques of the post-liberation institutional church. A number of the subjects were concerned that the church does not have its priorities in order and is subsequently not providing the leadership of which it has proved itself capable in the past. The church was accused of being preoccupied with providing a unified appearance despite deep division within. Some found that its primary aim seemed to be promoting itself and winning converts. And tragically, many found their own churches unable to provide the appropriate support to its clergy in times of crisis. The offshoot of this is that many questioning clergy no longer feel comfortable or accepted within the church hierarchy or "brotherhood". In their experience, the church itself does not necessarily welcome their questions and critiques. Due, in some cases, to deep disappointment and disillusionment, many of the subjects have taken their strengths and energy elsewhere as they feel that they will be more effective outside of the church. Clearly, some of this is circumstantial; some is based on personal reasons that extend beyond frustration with the institution. Nevertheless, that these comments and critiques are voiced is a valuable indicator of the way in which Christians like those interviewed react or respond to their ecclesial institutions.

A number of the subjects expressed sadness and even a sense of betrayal by their churches. There was residual anger and some bitterness. The question of their relationship with the church was often a sore point indicating an unresolved history. Dislocation and disillusionment were reoccurring themes. Lionel Louw articulated this phenomenon when he said, "There are some activists of the '80s that are disillusioned because those things that

we struggled for, those ideals that we articulated then are not being taken as seriously now." This frustration extended to the government as well as the church. Louw explained that "there are segments of our society that have become disillusioned, rightly or wrongly, legitimately or not, about the lack of progress that has been made."

Carl Niehaus provides an additional counterpoint to the clergy perspective in that although he studied theology with the intention of seeking ordination, he never was in fact ordained. This may have been circumstantial due to his extended incarceration or it may have been a clear decision on his part upon release. Regardless, he had expected to see the church continue to take the lead in critical areas. At the time of the interview he had pulled back from much church involvement himself, but clearly felt sadness about that. He said that he missed the sense of community, but struggled to find a place where he felt he belonged. His own denominational leap was radical. He was raised in a formal conservative Dutch Reformed congregation that supported apartheid. As a young man he was part of a group that left the church as an expression of discontent. "[W]e were articulating our disassociation from the church and our position to apartheid very much in the context of our religious framework." He subsequently joined an African mission church. At that stage he experienced the positive socio-political impact that the church was having on people's lives and for many years he maintained a firm hope in its capacities. At the time of the interview he had a very different attitude:

I think that I had a much stronger faith in what the church as institution could do than I have now. I'm actually deeply disappointed with the church as an institution. [...] I was always hopeful that the church in the changed South Africa would be able to play an important role in the kind of challenges that we will face. [...] Helping, for instance, a large part of our community, both on the side of the oppressed and the oppressors to come to grips with the new situation. Organisations such as the South African Council of Churches are almost irrelevant at the moment. And the churches have become very self-engrossed in a kind of vertical relationship with faith, without being able to translate that properly into a horizontal relationship.

He went on to address the post-struggle confusion and the negative effect that the absence of the church's prophetic voice was having:

I find that people who had been part of the liberation struggle, with a few exceptions, have tended to be quite confused about how to behave in the new South Africa. Either they have withdrawn from saying anything. Or some of them have become real lackeys of the new government or find it extremely difficult to criticize the new government. And I think an engagement, which should not be necessarily a disloyal engagement, but a critical engagement with what is happening in South Africa now [is needed]. [...] But none of that is happening. And perhaps the best, but also the worst way of describing what the church is today, is that there's generally confusion, lack of direction. [...] My impression is that many of the people who are really taking the lead in South Africa are not coming from the church and that's a sad situation.

Cedric Mayson is also disappointed with the perceived lack of strong church leadership. His own denominational journey led him to part ways for all intents and purposes with his institution. Although he is still an ordained

Methodist minister (with an expired licence), he described his current involvement with a church as minimal. His position on the ANC Religion Desk keeps him in close contact with church leaders (many of whom are still respected colleagues and friends), but he nevertheless expressed a deep distrust of the institution. In his opinion the church has "let itself be bought out [by] position and power and money." He indicated that he had no time for or patience with church anymore when he stated, "I know one would really relate the driving faith with the spiritual God, with what goes on in the church. I don't say that what goes on in the church isn't valid or viable in some areas. But not in the way that I see faith."

This has not always been the case. He explained that "at one stage I thought that the church was going to be the focus of this transformation and the transforming power that was needed, and therefore it seemed to me that the task was to reform the church." His position has changed radically on this issue to the point that he has come to believe that, on the contrary, "the church is probably going to be [...] the last organisation to be caught and brought kicking and struggling into the Kingdom of God. It certainly isn't the focus of it or the channel of it as it claims to be." His perception was that the church has become increasingly fundamentalist:

Albert Nolan [...] says that the church of today is dominated by the thinking of Scribes and Pharisees just as the Jews were in the time of Jesus. And that the fundamentalists, the people who talk about being born again Christians, are in fact like Nicodemus, the ones who are in desperate need of being born again. And whereas they go around claiming to be the great Christians, in fact they're the very opposite. They're the crucifying agents.

Ecumenism had been a far more helpful tool than denominationalism on his journey towards understanding his own faith. "It was out of the experience of a shared faith and a shared commitment in the struggle that you are forced to evaluate what you actually believe." Christian doctrine and dogma were eventually tossed out in favour of a more multi-faith approach. Faith was still central, but with an increased sensitivity and openness to other faith traditions (or no faith traditions). Mayson began to find a lot of what happens within "normal church structures [...] frustrating or mad-making" or "deeply embarrassing." He has therefore distanced himself from the institution. While he was aware that others might find his statements threatening (or "crazy"), he said he was receiving quite a lot of positive response to his views, and therefore seemed quite secure in his position.

Charles Villa-Vicencio is another non-practicing Methodist minister who has moved on. He had been a professional theologian with a strong voice in the SACC, but nevertheless had some long-standing, serious criticisms of his church. He is well aware that he stayed involved in the church at earlier stages for strategic reasons. Being an ordained minister was bound up in his previous identity:

I was an activist driven by theology, by the gospel. And that was my space. And so I suppose, if a psychologist would have put me on a couch maybe she or he would discover that, maybe I stayed because it was my way in. I would have been out [if I'd left the church] then. I got involved and I stayed involved. And I was recognised as a quote unquote [sic] leader in the situation because of my theological identity. I see that now. But at the time I fundamentally believed. [...] I did go to jail. And

there would have been points where I would have said, 'Now do your damndest, [...] here I stand I can do no other.' It was that strong, which cost me in the church.

About his eventual resignation from the Methodist clergy he said, "I was merely formalising what had already happened in my life." He felt that waiting to resign helped him to come to terms with the anger that he felt towards his institution. This is not to say that these feelings were completely resolved by the time of the interview. In fact, he had stopped going to church almost entirely. That said, he made the point that the liturgy and symbolism of an Anglican service can sometimes speak to him. But he still feels frustration, bitterness and anger in the context of Methodist worship:

You've got these long extemporary prayers. You've got theologically illiterate people preaching at you and screaming at you. I just can't handle it. So I can go to the Anglican Church. I can go to the Catholic Church. I can't handle that Methodist stuff.

This brings up the accessibility of different worship styles for different personalities and different stages of life. Clearly, some of the subjects have felt continuously comfortable in one denomination while others have found that they are better suited to alternative forms. Still others just need some space from formalised religious experience. It is extremely important to note that non-practice does not necessarily mean lack of faith. As Villa-Vicencio so aptly put it:

If somebody said to me, "Are you a practising Christian?", short of getting into a theological debate, the short answer would be "No." But do I still believe? Decidedly yes, I do, in a sense with more depth than I used to. [...] I regard myself as a deeply spiritual person. And I interpret that spirituality in terms of a Christian experience because it is an experience I lived with and nurtured and promoted professionally and otherwise for fifty years of my life. I can't do otherwise.

He spoke of his non-attendance in terms of habit. He has just become accustomed to not going to church. But this also indicates that there is not a worshipping community in which he feels he belongs or with which wants to be involved. He stressed that he does not feel alienated. And although he did not mention this directly, his current work at the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation is a ministry quite parallel in many ways to the one that he practised formerly within the church. He did say that when he was national research director with the TRC, "I scarcely if ever in my official activities used a theological concept or symbol or idea, and yet it was the most theological job I've ever done in my life." He seemed to receive a lot of gratification from his employment and his continued involvement in practical ways with the continued transformation in South Africa.

Chris Ahrends has found a parallel ministry in the non-governmental sector that is very gratifying. But he was not by any means rejecting the church or his faith when he left. He admitted that, "organisationally, my involvement is very, very limited at the moment." His commitment to celebrating Monday morning Eucharist at St George's Cathedral was related to his desire to "keep [his] eye on the wheel of faith" and "touch it as well, every now and

then." He explained that his formal departure from the church was actually circumstantial and based on the creation of the job that he now has:

I wanted to do this particular project very badly, and had wanted to do it for many years. So one could say in some ways just speaking practically that this job is a nice break from being in the ordinary, formal church. But it's not that different. It's moving tangentially away, but still involved with community issues and the application and creation of community. But at that point there's also a wonderful opportunity to reflect on my own priesthood. [...] It's been quite a liberation to be able to let go the formal priesthood. Which is something which maybe I would have had to do anyway even if I hadn't taken this job.

His move was also a product of the times. He recognised that the affirmative action that was essential to changing the power dynamics of the institution would prevent ambitious white clergy from rising up through the ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. While he supported this strategy, he was not satisfied with the prospect of staying where he was. Change was the order of the day. Ahrends has taken the opportunity to consciously redefine his identity:

I would still say that what I'm doing is a kind of priestly activity. So there's a continuity of my role as a [priest]. But at another level more personally and privately, I've actually had to shed quite a lot of that priestly role. And reimage myself [and reconsider] what God is all about. And I have found it an enormous liberation to actually stand apart. Something which I never I thought I would do when I went in. I thought that I was going to be a priest from the age of thirteen. I was quite convinced that's what I was going to do. And I would have suspected that I would have retired a priest. And suddenly I realise now that maybe a lot of my original sense of vocation was a whole bunch of psychological neediness which was good for me to let go of.

The other side of the coin of change is the loss of certain aspects of support and nurture that came from involvement in the church. He suggested that "there are many people that are experiencing a kind of breakdown of community support outside of the church now." He also expressed sadness about "the lack of elasticity of the church community to stretch itself to continue to embrace you." He was surprised by the rapid closure of the churches "walls" or "arms" away from former fulltime clergy. He spoke of the dislocation and rejection experienced through being removed from the church. But he was quick to take responsibility for his own decision to leave and not to be involved with Sunday morning parish work. His perspective was that "I haven't left the church, I haven't rejected the church. But I am I think quite outside of the orthodoxy. I just haven't declared that. I don't have a need to." He seemed relieved to be away from the church's apparent preoccupation with itself. He also recognised that self-centredness is a likely attribute of any organisation; "[h]owever, it's sadder in a sense when it comes to the church because the church's [...] vision is to be inclusive and caring." He explained that it should be different from leaving any other large company:

Anglo-American doesn't proclaim to be a family that's going to remember you and care for you. So when you leave Anglo you've left Anglo, period. But when you leave the church you sort of say, well hang on, this is part of my life experience. I've been in this thing for all my life and I've given up myself to it. So it

is quite strange how quickly the sort of brotherhood, and I use that word quite advisedly because it is still very much a brotherhood, closes ranks [...] away from you. Close ranks round themselves really. I think unconsciously, I don't think it's a conscious thing. And then of course what you realise is just how preoccupied it is. And how self-important the church is.

Ahrends noted that during the second half of the 1980s and into the 1990s "the church had a very distinct role to play. [...] It was a very critical phase of the church's life. I think that there was a real sense of purpose and vision and there was an agenda and we were working towards it so I think it probably would have been a bit of a let down anyway after that." But he felt consistently uncomfortable with the notion of building up Anglicanism and winning converts. He said that clergy within the institution "can become quite myopic". Being outside of it has offered him an expanded worldview and he is relieved that he is not expected to "argue the doctrine anymore." But he went on to say that "it's also quite sad and lonely in a sense to be outside and not to belong, as I say, to the arms."

He had a remarkable capacity to hold the conflicting aspects of his decision to leave and his continuing relationship with the church in the same moment. His statements simultaneously expressed the negative and the positive with frustration and affection (perhaps akin to what one might feel for an aging parent). His comments were critical, yet generally quite gentle and compassionate. He often used the pronoun "we" including himself as a member of the church family. And he continued to seek to understand the agenda of the church and to meet the institution where he found it in the present without unrealistic expectations:

We come out of that history where we had the 'struggle agenda,' which was very focused, very clear, and now we want to try and replace that with some other agenda to keep our profile as high. And to keep our sense of self-importance and that we are making a contribution. I think that the contribution now is far more subtle. And that to be a leader of the faith community today requires immense wisdom, to know how to apply the resources of the church in the different strategic areas so as to make the church a lively place for a democratic society now.

Ahrends tried to be realistic and understanding in his reflections. His perspective was quite "psychologised". He voiced frustration, but did not tend to blame. Instead he focused on dealing with his own issues. He did not appear to be wasting a lot of time or energy on negative feelings or the unresolved past. He was busy searching for a way forward that helped and healed.

Colin Jones, on the other hand, did not seem to be able to close the book on the past or let go of the pain or frustration. At the time of his interview his argument with the church was on going. "Peripheral" was the adjective that he used to describe his involvement with the church. He clarified by saying, "I have not accepted any invitations to preach or celebrate Mass and I, in fact, avoid it." Without questioning the legitimacy of his anger or his avoidance, it is a case in point of history and personality leading to vastly different outcomes. He was determined to be true to himself. Had he been willing to suppress his true feelings in order to play the game of appearances, he explained that he might have gone far in the Anglican ecclesiastical hierarchy:

Desmond [Tutu] had indicated that he would be retiring. And there was a fair amount of pressure on me from a number of quarters to seriously consider allowing myself to be put forward as his successor. [...] And the one thing I knew, and my predecessor held the same view, was that Deans and Bishops were from totally different genetic pools, that in order to be a good Dean you should have no aspiration to be a Bishop. As Vicar General I exercised an Episcopal ministry. Though while I didn't mind doing it, I knew that I wouldn't want to do that for the rest of my life. So my choices were, now do I go on being Dean for thirty years (as my predecessor had done). And I didn't think that that would be good for the cathedral to have two long term Deans. Or do I accept an Episcopal appointment, which I knew in my heart of hearts would be a betrayal of myself. It might be good for the church and Desmond often used to argue with me, "It's not what you want but what God wants!" And I thought any God with any self-respect would want a bit of an argument and I was prepared to argue this case. Or ask myself some very hard questions about my future.

Jones' decision to wrestle with God and the church would change his future dramatically. But he simply could not conceive of a God (or of himself) in the box that the church seemed to want to put them in. The pettiness of the institution that he was experiencing did not tie up with Jones' perception of the greater scheme of things:

[A]ll of the debate around the expanding universe, cosmological, the real cosmological arguments - not about God but about life - began to challenge me. And the thought that God could only be concerned about this planet and about humankind seemed to really make God a rather small God. And in my own experience within the church, as very much part of the gate keeping structure of the church, as a senior priest in the church, made me realise that a lot of what church was about - and a lot of what faith was about and religion was about - was about maintaining the institution and all that goes with it, the doctrine and dogma.

Post-struggle the church was no longer the same institution. And although life within the church was all Jones had really known as an adult professional, he found that there was a world beyond the safe walls that he wanted to explore. He had essential questions that needed to be addressed that included: "Is there life beyond the church? Does God exist beyond this church and beyond theology, beyond religion?" He credited Ted King, the former Dean of St George's Cathedral, as the person who gave him courage and inspired him "to think beyond the church." At the time of the interview, Jones was disgruntled and extremely disappointed with the church. He did not see the end of "the struggle" as the exclusive cause for the internal institutional conflict. He blamed stagnation within the church and its incapacity to address critical issues in the real world:

I think the church has gone mute. I think it's lost its voice. I don't think it's solely because of the fact that it had a very distinctive voice and a clear message during the struggle years. I think that, in a sense, the world has overtaken the church. [...] I am concerned about the kind of leadership that the church now has because I don't hear anybody, certainly in this country, speaking about the issues that concern me as a thinking person.

His critique of the church was scathing. There seemed to be no room for doubt in his mind about his decision to leave. He appeared to be thoroughly rejecting it. Yet ironically, he called himself “the prodigal son” (who at the end of the parable does return to his father’s house). He also confessed that he does still go to services at the cathedral “for the music, [...] for the familiarity, and [...] almost out of nostalgia sometimes.” The expression of his current disgust for the institution sharply contrasted with the reverence that he paid to his memories of the church of “the struggle”. Whether it had to do with a sense of responsibility for opting out of the decision making body within the church, or an inner conflict in the quest to reconstruct a new identity, or something else entirely, it was clearly emotionally wrenching to break out of the walls of the church. Additionally, it was no small task from an economic perspective. He explained that this has been a difficult adjustment:

I think at a very mundane level, one of the things about being in the church is that it's a very protected environment. And in a sense you're a kept man. [...] And it's extremely stressful because I left the church with nothing. The church is not a great provider when you leave it - and it's been a hard struggle.

Having cut the financial strings that bought obligation and complicity, and the professional strings that provided identity, Jones found himself without a safety net. But the upshot is that his risky freefall has given him liberty to explore and to speak his mind as never before about the dangerous dichotomy of church and world that he sees perpetuated by the institution. In his opinion, it has not become “the church of the world” and it is bringing about its own destruction.

While on the one hand, it seems essential that informed, perceptive and articulate individuals speak out about the church’s failings, one must also question the origins of the discontentment and frustration. There may be individual psychological issues at play that are being projected onto the institution because they have not been adequately internally analysed. A narcissistic personality could be oversensitive to rejection – or a charismatic type might still long for the limelight and a following. A rebellious spirit might be seeking conflict. A fundamentalist thinker might only understand the world in terms of right and wrong. Conversely, a free or lateral thinker might feel frustrated with the narrowness of the “party line” required by the institution. There is also the reality of changing circumstances that might make it advantageous financially, professionally or otherwise to offer alternative allegiances.

Optimism from Within

Although disillusionment and disappointment were reoccurring themes in many of the interviews, some of the clergymen I interviewed continued to find reason to be optimistic from within the church. Lionel Louw recognised that “there’s been a questioning of the relevance of church as organisation and it’s witness in society.” He noted the retirement of Archbishop Desmond Tutu as a key factor in this along with a departure from the church of other “[k]ey people who were engaged in the struggle in the 1980s, explicitly, on the basis of their faith, professionally and institutionally as people in position within faith structures.” This, inevitably, has led to “questions for people about the church and its role in society.” While acknowledging that there has been a weakening of the church in terms of effective engagement, Louw made the most optimistic comments concerning new initiatives:

I see signs of the re-emergence of church more prominently. There's a group of us who are involved in saying that the religious institutions must be recognised as a distinctive sector that can make a contribution in combating the AIDS pandemic. That it can make a substantive contribution to development initiatives - to the poverty eradication programmes in the country. And the Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane has taken a very clear, public, high profile position on the issue of poverty and the poor. Mvume Dandala as President of the South African Council of Churches is being recognised as a national public religious figure. [...] I think that there are initiatives and efforts being made to create a presence for the church in the public domain. But yes, we've lost some ground in the public domain by virtue of people having moved out of our faith arena. But I see slowly that there's a re-emergence around different roles for the church. And based on our faith convictions, roles that we can play in the present situation.

Having been such a cause orientated institution during "the struggle" the church in South Africa seems to need new causes in order to have a sense of identity and meaning. Some of the subjects indicated that combating the AIDS pandemic and eradicating poverty should rightly be at the top of the agenda.

Louw was not the only individual I spoke with who expressed a desire to be more involved in new ways. Bam said, "I am involved as a worshipper and this is not enough for me, just to go and worship and leave my cheque." She explained that she doesn't feel connected to a faith community currently. Her definition of "faith community" was "a group of people who have the same kind of commitment I have into a service." She was in the process of negotiating possibilities of engagement with her bishop. Instead of just feeling overwhelmed and depressed by the poverty that she was seeing around her, she wanted to do something practical like starting "a group of Christian women who are looking at the gender perspective on the issue of AIDS." She said, "I do wish I was more involved in the work of the South African Council of Churches. [...] That involvement I miss very much - what I call ecumenical activity." Her work and her worship have been strongly influenced by the ecumenical movement. She observed that in the past this approach united the churches "in the name of service." She seemed to believe that this was still possible in the new context:

And that is whether we are talking about justice; [whether] we are talking about poverty; whether we are talking about violence against women, I believe that the church will carry weight effectively if we do it as a collective. And that has been my belief and my way of working.

The question, of course, is how to bring about this unity and how to encourage hopefulness both within and beyond the institutional church. There was a reoccurring suggestion from various interviewees that one's faith was bolstered by political and social engagement that seemed to be making a difference to the local or the national community. This was clearly the case for Michael Lapsley. His work at the Centre for the Healing of Memories has been incredibly gratifying for him as he can observe on a regular basis the powerful effect of transformation in the lives of the people who come for healing. Lapsley was seconded by the Anglican dioceses of Cape Town to work for the non-governmental organisation that he leads. This working inside and outside of the church simultaneously

is nothing new to Lapsley for his experience of working for the Lutheran World Federation was similar. He is not a typical priest with a regular experience of congregational duties. His focus has always been more political so this is not a radical shift for him. He travels extensively and is often engaged with the centre on Sunday mornings. He jokingly said, "My parish is the human family", and qualified that he is able to recognise the reality of that statement. He explained the nature of his relationship with the institution in the following way:

It is ambivalent to some degree and yet I'd say I have a structural relationship to the church, both as a priest and as a member of a religious order. At the same time I think my relationship to the institution is sometimes quite ambivalent. But I, at the same time, feel part of the worldwide faith community.

The Anglican Church was not always supportive of Lapsley's political activities. He would have good reason to have argument with the institution, for he was often perceived as a threat in the past:

[P]eople who were perhaps ambivalent about the struggle [found me] threatening to their position and the very articulation of my position threatened their position, especially people who were not really convinced by their own position, in a sense, and people who were carrying degrees of guilt about their complicity or failure to act would often feel challenged and indicted by the positions that I took or take. So I experienced considerable antipathy and opposition from within the religious order I belonged to, from within the church, as well from those who were sympathetic to the apartheid state.

He could have chosen to maintain and cultivate anger about the ways in which he has been wronged and wounded by the church and others. But Lapsley no longer seemed to carry the burden of past battles. He has chosen the freedom that forgiveness can offer. He also articulated the changed perception that people have of him since he survived the bomb attack:

[I]t's much easier to feel sorry for a victim than it is to stand with those who struggle for justice. And the kinds of things that happened to me evoked a range of emotions from people that were different from the emotions that were evoked when I was a freedom fighter. And of course as far as the church is concerned, speaking of healing is much safer, less threatening ground, than speaking of struggling for justice. And there is a much deeper consensus when one speaks of the language around healing because it's much closer to the church's, relatively speaking, ambit which is pastoral care, compared with its prophetic role where there's much greater ambivalence.

Lapsley may never feel completely comfortable or welcomed in the Anglican hierarchy, but he is very much at home in the church. What is more, he is not afraid to speak his mind and will not back down from a worthwhile argument.

The need to remain actively engaged in church leadership was expressed clearly by Louw's example. His case is exceptional in that he did in fact depart from the African Methodist Episcopal Church in which he was raised and

trained and ordained in order to take up leadership in a new church. This was not an easy decision as he made it very clear that he values his history in the denomination and it was important in shaping his identity:

I need to say that I was born into a family where my father was a minister in the AME Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church. And the history of that church is the history of struggle against discrimination. [...] So by birth into a family where my father was a minister in this church, it meant that I was exposed to and grew up understanding that kind of message and liberatory ethos within that church. And I've respected that and it certainly had a tremendous influence in my life to understand that there is that possibility based on faith. That protest can be made against discrimination

This philosophy influenced Louw's readiness to protest against all forms of injustice. He, therefore, spent many years in conflict with his bishops. This began after his return from seminary in the States. His combination of youth and education constituted a threat to their authority. He managed to survive within the denomination largely due to participation in something larger. During "the struggle" the AME church engaged with the ecumenical movement and Louw was their national representative in the SACC, and the provincial representative in the Western Province Council of Churches. Later, he represented the AME in the United Democratic Front. He said, "my own ecumenical engagement as a person of faith through the church as the primary vehicle for my engagement in the struggle, could find a natural home within the Charterist movement." This went far beyond the kind of engagement that many of his superiors had in mind. He explained:

My colleagues in the ministry did not embrace my involvement in the liberation struggle. There was a very small group of younger ministers who were very actively engaged in the liberation struggle and we were severely criticised by our colleagues. In fact some of them said when I was in detention that I am an embarrassment to the ministry of the AME church.

There had been a long-term power struggle within the denomination based on lack of independence from the American AME Church. Louw spent many years trying to push for change from within to no avail. But instead of rejecting church structures altogether, with the support of his congregation he resigned from the AME Church and helped to establish an independent church called Community of Faith. At the time of his interview, he was intending to take early retirement from his academic post in order to commit himself more fully to the work that they have started.⁶⁴

Community of Faith church is located in an area of greater Cape Town where there is considerable poverty. Louw spoke of his work there as being primarily concerned with "motivating people to understand that their faith is relevant to their daily experiences, but also motivating the congregation to look for ways in which we can practically make a contribution to improving the quality of life of people." Louw is a visionary who has a passion for "looking for ways in which we can break the cycle of poverty." He was also determined "to communicate the message of economic empowerment." At the time of the interview, his congregation was working in practical ways to help young people gain skills that would set them on career paths. The congregation had also resuscitated a

⁶⁴ By 2003 he had still not done so, and is currently Head of the School of Social Development at UCT.

credit union with a capital base of contributions from overseas. They hoped to encourage people to save money and avoid costly higher purchase agreements. There was also a small business training programme designed to help people understand entrepreneurship. This was practical and basic economic empowerment. But Louw understood that there was a larger dimension to this process. He said that it was about helping "people understand the economic dimensions to liberation - the economic dimensions in the expression of their faith as well."

Three Politicians and Pastors

Remarkably, the three high profile politicians interviewed all have maintained strong connections with their home parishes and continue to minister whenever possible. In some respects, they could have been the ones who were most offended or rejected by their institutions. Frank Chikane's licence was revoked at short notice by the Apostolic Faith Mission Church when they wanted to distance themselves from his political stance. There was internal disagreement within the Catholic Church when Smangaliso Mkhathshwa was offered a government appointment. Although his appointment would not have constituted grounds for the loss of his ordination, some were concerned about him leaving the church and whether he should continue to be allowed to function as a priest. Similarly, the Methodist Church hierarchy and membership were not unanimously supportive of Mmutlanyane Stanley Mogoba when he accepted the position of head of the PAC. These three African clergymen of three very different denominations all seemed to be remarkably forgiving of their respective institutions. They all continued to find acceptance and support in their particular congregations. Chikane went as far as to say that his preference would have been to go back to the church full-time, but that Mandela had convinced him not to wash his hands of politics. Mogoba also said that he was pressurised by his party into coming back into the political limelight. In all three cases there is a marked absence of any bitterness or indignation against their institutions.

Frank Chikane's response to the disillusionment and frustration that many Christian activists are currently voicing (particularly where government is concerned) was that "part of the problem is that the theologians, liberation theologians to be explicit, have lost the praxis, so it is judgement from the outside." He never really separated church and state in his thinking or action so does not find his current position as the Deputy General to the President surprising:

I would say that for me, there is continuity in what I am doing. What I am doing is not new. I mean I was part of the [struggle]. I was pastor in my church. I became part of the civic association. I then became a leader. I became part of the Institute for Contextual Theology and became part of the leadership in the United Democratic Front. I became general secretary of the Council of Churches. [...] I was part of it in the organisation and went into the trenches with them and went into prison with them. You see I was part of it. I was not messing about it. [...] And so the comrades would take me as part of their organisation rather than their pastor outside of the organisation. And so there was an integrated approach in my operation. There was never a separated approach. It's a holistic approach. I was not just speaking about that struggle and how it should be conducted and how it should not be conducted. I was

a witness in it and had the impact on it. It's being part of it. So that I am in government is not something strange.

He indicated that the progression of his life and work has been natural and sits well with him. He seemed to feel comfortable in his role. What is more, his work is experienced as an on-going ministry. In his view, there was continuity in his career path because he has never separated his religious life from his political and other involvements:

God is a God of the whole creation and God is concerned about it in its totality. And I've not seen my religiosity as spiritual against the rest. Because there is no such a separation in my understanding. And for me to say this coming from a Pentecostal evangelical (close to fundamentalist) tradition is a very serious statement to make. But that's my understanding. And so I'm here, my witness is by being there with the people.

Although he seemed at ease in his role of Director General of the President's office, he had not ambitiously sought the post. His intention had been to return to fulltime church ministry. This plan changed dramatically after he was called to lunch with Nelson Mandela:

He called me immediately after the new government was put in place, and wanted me to do some things. So I said to him, "Mr. President, as a pastor in the church, there might be difficulties if I did things for yourselves." So he said to me, [...] "My problem about you church leaders is that you don't want to be directly involved, to soil your hands. You want to stand outside and wait for us to make mistakes. And then condemn." And I got the message very clearly. And the second thing he said was, "We worked together to deliver the new society. And now you don't want to work together with us to build the new society. You were in the trenches with us. You worked with us. We have demolished it. But now we must build a new thing. You can't say now, I'm going back to the church to do what is called church thing." And I got that message very clearly. After that lunch I knew that I had no defenses.

Chikane was good-natured about the challenge. He was able to see the irony and the humour of the situation. A number of times during the interview he emphasised that the Apostolic Faith Mission Church to which he belongs is 'very conservative.' So when he took Mandela's message to his church council, he did not know what to expect. This was the same council that had suspended him in 1981 for political activity, and the same council that in 1992 reinstated him unconditionally with an apology. When they heard the story of his conversation with President Mandela and they heard Chikane's request to be allowed to go into fulltime politics, they said that they did not understand. To this Chikane responded, 'I don't understand. I don't understand why God wants me to do this and I have never understood it. And I am not going to try to understand it. I'm going to do it. I'm going to let my God do things.' And although there was no precedent for such a situation, the council unanimously agreed to allow him to go and to engage with government, telling him that "It has been clear throughout your calling that there was something unique about you. And so we are not called in the same way. So leave this parish and we will release you with our blessing to do it." He went on to explain that:

There is nothing like that in my church before. They don't have rules and regulations for it. But they decided they will listen to the Lord in this. And they don't know what the Lord wants but they will let God guide them.

Chikane is still welcome to attend their councils and is an honorary member of the executive council of his church. And as such he feels that he is still very much "part of the life" of that community. He is also involved with worship and teaching and attends services with his congregation as often as possible. This was a case of transformation from within the institution. A knock-on effect is evident here, in that if Chikane had given up on the institution when they initially rejected him, the church never would have made the huge ideological shifts that were obvious during his meeting with the council. He seemed to feel enormously empowered by his continued involvement with his church. He said that there has been no change in his faith experience or practice other than the fact that work often prevented him from worshipping with his congregation on a Sunday morning.

Smangaliso Mkhathshwa also continued to maintain strong links to his parish and to the larger institutional Catholic Church. He never renounced his vocation when he entered politics. Although he recognised the shift from fulfilling the role of full-time pastor to finding ways to incorporate that ministry into his current work, he did not seem bereft of his previous identity. Instead he seemed to possess a larger sense of self and larger sense of capacity. He made it clear that this did not prevent him from practising his clerical duties:

Whenever I find an opportunity to go and help out in the parish, I still do. I still officiate at weddings of people. I still officiate at funerals. And not so long ago I had to baptise again another group of screaming babies.

He also continued to accept invitations to preach. He gave the impression that he took both pride and joy from this continued engagement. He felt comfortable engaging in parish life. But that world was no longer his focus. He wanted to be able to reach more people and make a difference in a greater number of lives. At the time of the interview he was newly in his post of executive mayor of Tshwane and he was exploring ways to make a substantial difference. Clearly his links with the institution of the Catholic Church and likewise with individual Catholics continued to be important:

I was talking [today] to the Secretary General of the Catholic Bishops conference. And we were talking about some of the things that maybe we ought to be doing together – that we can do. So sometimes now the linkages between myself and the church are really based sometimes on practical programmes. Things that have been available in terms of fighting HIV/AIDS. [...] So I have those kinds of contacts. Some [...] are more at a [spiritual] level [...]. But others have a much more very practical almost mundane level.

He explained to me that there was a lot of opposition from his bishops (and many others) when he entered Parliament in 1994. The debate around his decision to enter professional politics reached the level of the Vatican.

Parliament in 1994. The debate around his decision to enter professional politics reached the level of the Vatican. But he said that the passage of time has been a "great healer" and that those who had felt "disappointed and pained" seemed to be coming around to accepting his involvement with the new democratic dispensation. He did not hint at any pain that he himself may or may not have felt during that time of transition. He was convinced that:

It was also important for a Christian faith to be there. More as a kind of witness of the church's readiness and commitment to work with the new leadership in order to change the lives of the people for the better. There was also an opportunity for one to inject, not always very successfully, some real moral values in the legislation, the legislative process and so on. But also to give Christians and even non-Christians an opportunity sometimes to consult one privately for counselling and things like that.

This was another case of transformation from within. Mkhatswha's presence in the Catholic Church has helped to bring it along in terms of being open to new possibilities. Before his move into government, the church could not have imagined a radical leftist priest (who had been branded a "communist" and a "terrorist") in such a position of political power. His belief was that there was a reciprocal relationship between the two spheres of his engagement and that any initial reservations that the people within the hierarchy of the Catholic Church may have had were more than counteracted when they saw him at work:

I think the church also benefited certainly from my participation in government. I remember when I was the Deputy Minister of Education, we worked very close with an association of Catholic schools. [...] I think that must have changed the minds of lots of bishops.

He was also determined to show those within the church who thought that they had lost him that he was still very much on their side. He explained that he did as much as possible to assist church contacts in navigating their way through the bureaucratic obstacles that they might encounter in their dealings with government. He saw this as a very positive contribution to his institution. What is more, his links to the general secretary of the Catholic Bishops' Conference meant that he found himself continually seeking ways to cooperate and work with his old colleagues. He recognised that perhaps people had feared that he would be changed by his high profile position and he is glad to have proved to them that he is still accessible, concerned and involved in appropriate ways. He believes that they see that "he's still a normal priest and he's still helpful to [them] to the best of his ability with all the limited amount of time at his disposal."

While Mkhatswha was experiencing renewed confidence in the Catholic Church's contribution to transformation, he also was aware of the breakdown in the ecumenical movement. He joked that "maybe one of these days some of us would be praying, asking God, 'Please bring back apartheid if only to bring the churches together'." For him there is no contradiction between political engagement and faith: "It's about the challenge of linking my faith to life and the challenges of life". In his eyes, it has been a natural progression to move from grassroots engagement into government. The debate around his political life only highlights for him the existence of a power struggle in the authoritarian Roman Catholic Church. He apparently does not bear the institution any grudges. He did not express any recrimination against his own institution whatsoever during the interview. He did not seem interested in over

sacraments when he is available. He appeared to carry on with a confidence that he is where God has placed him. And his solidarity seems to be with the people on the ground and not with the highfliers in the hierarchy of either church or government.

Mmutlanyane Stanley Mogoba on the contrary had profound issues of sadness and pain where his church was concerned. Ironically, he explained that the PAC had sought him out to help bring about reconciliation and unity within the party. He claims that he would have preferred to stay within the ambit of the church. His impression is that by agreeing to lead the PAC, he brought strife and discord into the Methodist Church and his own personal life. The leadership had not supported his move into fulltime political activity and the rift had not yet healed at the time of the interview. He explained in these terms:

I would say that there was actually a lot of bitterness when I left. Not so much personal, but it was really about the political party I was going to lead. Many people didn't accept it. Many rejected it. Mostly out of lack of knowledge about what it really stood for. [...] I sensed that in the Methodist Church I was accepted and loved. And the Methodists were not prepared to share me with a political party.

He said that "they were very, very unhappy" about his decision to lead the PAC. It seemed also that he was quite surprised by the opposition that he faced and it was therefore all the more painful. To lose the love that has sustained a person is an excruciating experience. He said that "there has been a level of coldness on my part and on the part of the church, but I think that by and large that is changing and there is more and more acceptance of the situation." His diplomatic skills seem to have made a significant contribution towards the healing process that was taking place. He was attempting to be sensitive and careful where other people's feelings were concerned. An example he gave was his decision not to attend the induction of his successor despite his official position of ex-presiding bishop. This was because of the conflicting feelings that many members felt about him. Fortunately he enjoys a "very good relationship" with the current bishop, Mvume Dandala. They are "very close" and this has made it easier to participate in Methodist events and meetings like synod.

Much of the tension and mistrust seemed to come from an idea that his church has about not mixing faith and politics. Many of his fellow Methodists did not seem to believe that it was possible to be a good Christian and a politician simultaneously. He wanted to prove to them that he was still the person they had loved, but this was no easy task. He explained that "funnily enough, if I stay long enough with all of them, then it is okay, the old feelings come back. But you can feel that it was more strong – as if I am no longer quite where I used to be and some of them wonder whether I really am seriously still religious."

He himself seemed to have no question about his on-going religious commitment or his desire to heal the rift with his church. He was still convicted about the power of prayer and other forms of spiritual discipline. He also explained how important it was for him to maintain his connections to his home congregation. He indicated that the role of pastor is still crucial to his identity.

And every end of the year when parliament rises, I go back to my old home in Melville, where

remarkably, I am very well received. And for something like two months I act as their minister. So that I find is a life-giving experience for me. Because not getting a chance to minister normally, I minister in an ad-hoc way. But when I do get home I become a full minister. I do confirmations, baptisms, burials, marriages, I preach on Sundays. And that helps me a great deal.

This annual recharge was essential for him. It appeared that for most of the year he was caught in a double bind. His religious colleagues were reserved about his political involvement and his political colleagues wanted to distance themselves from his religious persona. His comments indicated that he did not feel that he was not being taken seriously by either group and that this was a great source of sadness and frustration. Feelings of isolation and loneliness were cited. But there was no indication of anger. He still valued the connection to the greater Methodist church and with his home church. There appeared to be no risk that he would abandon hope of true and pervasive reconciliation. Whether that would be fully possible as long as he remained in his position of political leadership was unclear.

Closing Thoughts

None of the activists whom I interviewed had a straightforward and uncomplicated relationship with the church. This is not to say that their experiences were overwhelmingly negative, ambivalence and evolutionary change has been part of the package. It is certainly evident that those who did not have leadership roles in the church tended to have less complicated relationships with the institution. But in every case, the context for relationships with the church has changed dramatically. The democratic government in place has been fairly elected. The church is no longer expected to offer political leadership. The process of seeking a new institutional identity and agenda is well underway. And those with political ambitions or disagreement with the new dispensation within the church have needed to broaden their professional horizons.

It seems that although the church structures may have much to answer for, individual issues of identity and belonging have also contributed to the changing face and personality of the various institutional churches in South Africa today.

The metaphor of the marriage relationship comes to mind. The euphoric phase immediately following the peaceful transition of power in South Africa could be characterised as the "honeymoon". But then the reality of the daily chores dawned. There is inevitably a new struggle to understand and accommodate each other's needs and differences, strengths and weaknesses. And even when there is a solid bond, the washing up doesn't go away until someone puts his or her hands in the sink. We need to recognise the importance of addressing the practical tasks at hand in the new South Africa and in the churches as they too move towards a transformed identity.

4.2 Living Faith – “The Liturgy after the Liturgy”

Living faith is about practicing the art of openness to the unknown and being prepared to make radical changes in one's thoughts and actions. The evidence is found in how they engaged in “the struggle” and continue to engage in the transformation of South Africa. There are both continuities and discontinuities in the ways that this living faith is expressed currently in individuals' lives. Despite the fact that many of the subjects' relationships with their denominational institutions have changed (as explored above), generally speaking, faith continues to be a motivating factor in their various engagements. As Cedric Mayson so aptly put it:

I think if you have a living faith which emerges from the reality of daily experience, it obviously changes, it applies, it's context changes, just like the person changes, so you move along with that. And it's not that you sign on the dotted line somewhere when you were fourteen and that lasts you for the rest of your life. It's not like that. It's a driving thing that develops and from that point of view goes on.

Living faith is also about how political engagement has changed the lives of these individuals and their understandings of the meaning of life. Faith takes on political significance in the public arena. Ion Bria calls it “the liturgy after the liturgy”. This idea “emerged in the mid-1970s in ecumenical discussions of how the theology of mission (missiology) and the theology of church (ecclesiology) are related.”⁶⁵ It moves beyond the altar of worship within the church and brings a second altar squarely into the public arena in order to serve the wider community. Bria understands that spiritual life is no way divorced from daily existence. “The eucharistic liturgy is not an escape into an inner realm of prayer, a pious turning away from social realities; rather, it calls and sends the faithful to celebrate “the sacrament of the brother” outside the temple in the public marketplace, where the cries of the poor and the marginalized are heard.”⁶⁶

Nevertheless, there are some very clear discontinuities in people's lives and in the ways that they show their commitment to God and neighbour and country. Even some of those who feel that their engagement is in continuity with the past can admit to massive changes in the way it is made manifest. There have been clear moves out of the church and into government or other forms of secular employment. In some cases, focus has moved from the national level to the local. In others it has been the inverse. In others still the move has been from explicit expression of theological engagement to implicit. There has been a marked shift from liberation to reconstruction. For some this has been a personal liberation. For others it has been a wilderness experience. Sometimes freedom and alienation walk hand in hand. Many people have been required to ask themselves some difficult questions and grow in new ways.

Denise Ackermann's insight into the female experience explains why I was so keen to have some women's voices involved in this project:

⁶⁵ Ion Bria, *The Liturgy After the Liturgy*, 19.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

One thing that women have learnt is that you cannot separate the private from the public sphere. In fact, trying to keep them separate assists in perpetuating domination and control. If religion is relegated to the private sphere it can result in an excessive preoccupation with personal morality at the expense of a social conscience. Women know that the 'small places' of our lives are connected with the social, political, and economic structures in which we live. In other words, what happens at home has political implications and vice versa.⁶⁷

Fortunately, a good number of the men interviewed have learned this lesson as well. As Carl Niehaus expressed it, "For me personally, my religious experience and how I experience that very much influences my public life. And there's really no, there's no gap between that. These things are locked." The seamlessness of the connection between faith and life is evident in some of the stories, decisions and conclusions expressed here. This was what Louw meant about the gospel stories coming alive through experience and what Jones meant by the living out of his theology in a "coalface" way.

Some of the subjects practiced their "living faith" in their gainful employment. But it extends beyond that categorization as well. It is primarily about engagement in the world and commitments that are implicitly based on faith convictions. This is not faith based on dogma, but rather on openness to the changes that life brings. Living faithfully is part of the shared vocation of Christians observed by Migliore:

The vocation of a Christian is not to be confused with having a job by which one earns one's livelihood. Whatever one's job or profession, as a Christian one is called to be a partner in God's mission in the world. Christian life involves inward growth and renewal, but it does not turn in on itself. It participates in a movement outward to others and forward to the future of the completion of God's redemptive activity.⁶⁸

There was a common understanding that they were involved with a movement that was pursuing a greater goal than anything that they could accomplish alone. Community worship and activism were often closely linked. This has ancient parallels in that the very definition of "liturgy" (from the Greek "leitourgia") means "the work of the people" and in its original usage could mean something as mundane as building a public road while "[i]n the ancient vocabulary of Christian worship it refers specifically to the celebration of the eucharist by a local community, under the ministry of a consecrated priest."⁶⁹

Contextualising Theology in Practical Action

During "the struggle era" there were countless examples of living faith in action. These gave a certain theological meaning to the violence and the pain of that era of South African history. Colin Jones articulated this when he reflected on his ministry during those days. Despite the fact that he has currently moved away from the institution, the powerful symbolism of his past experience clearly continued to be meaningful for him. A case in point was a

⁶⁷ Denise Ackermann, "Women, Religion, and a Democratic Society – Putting Ourselves on the Agenda," in *South African Women Today*, ed. by Margaret Lessing, (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman (pty) Ltd, 1994), 286.

⁶⁸ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 183.

⁶⁹ Ion Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy*, 1.

story that he told of a confrontation between students and police during which he had tried to help a critically injured girl:

My intention was to get her through this cordon thrown around Athlone and get her to a hospital where I knew some doctors who I knew would treat her and not report her. So I put her in my car. The mother got into the back seat. The child was lying over the mother's knees on her tummy. The brother was in the seat next to me and we drove and cut across fields and through back streets and tried to get onto the highway, which we eventually did. And this boy was just absolutely rabid with anger. Which he took out on me. [...] He said, "And you, priest, where the fuck is your God? How can your God let this happen?" And I had no words for him. And there was no way in which I could theologise to this fourteen-year-old boy whose sister was dying in the back of my car, or the distraught mother [...], it just didn't make sense. I didn't have the words for it. And as I drove I kept looking back to check whether this child was still alive. And the mother was sitting there rubbing her head. And I had this vision [...]. And I thought my God I've seen this scene before.

And it was the pieta. And I wrote a piece on that afterwards and I called it the "The Pieta in the back of an Opel Kadett". And I realised that this is where God lives. In a funny way somehow I had to make sense of this. That God is with us and God is shot and broken. This is where God is. This is the way God works. I didn't like the thought of it very much because it wasn't very helpful in terms of making things right. And it did make sense to me. For the first time I think I understood what the crucifixion is about. And that somehow owning that and being part of it was critical to an experience of resurrection, if there was to be any kind of resurrection.

He concluded this recollection with a reflection on both the situation in South Africa and his own career as a priest:

And I think as things panned out there was a resurrection. It took a long time in coming after that but it did happen. And so the early years of ministry made sense somehow. And I thought, I'm in the right place. That little recruitment exercise of my parish priest maybe was inspired. And even if he didn't know it and I didn't know it, something was happening. Now that might have been God, it might have just been historical circumstance, I don't know. Maybe that is what God is, historical circumstance.

This poignant story exemplifies contextual and practical theology. Christian activists attempted to understand the horrendous events that were occurring in those days in the light of the gospel message. Glenda Wildschut explained how her engagement with "the struggle" was both practical and pastoral. Her Christianity was not a separate spiritualised component of her life. Although she was not a church leader, she embraced the responsibility of caring for people in need. She was not on the front line. But she, with countless others, was behind the scenes doing what had to be done in order to maintain morale and attend to practical logistics:

[W]e worked with people who were in detention, and particularly with their families: supporting their families, organising transport for the women to go to visit prisons, forming support groups. These women in the kombies would sing and pray and do all kinds of things en route to prison. I often visited Mrs

Manuel (Trevor Manuel's mother) when he was in prison just to spend time with [the family] and just supporting them and seeing what they needed and so on. There was a lot of practical support that we tried to give people who were in prison like operating their banking accounts and making sure that they were okay in that way. [...] It was practical and pastoral. And often many people, in an interesting way, didn't see themselves as being Christian [in a] denominational sense, but would see themselves as spiritual and needing that spiritual attention as well. [...] That was the way I saw my faith being played out. I don't think that I ever, except maybe once or twice, pushed the faith line. But saw that in the way in which I worked with people and interacted with people that they would have a sense that I'm a Christian. And that's the way I expressed my faith. I expressed my Christianity in that way.

Wildschut is not the only one whose faith is made apparent through action. For many of the activists interviewed, their commitments during "the struggle" and those of the present are on a continuum. It is an ongoing quest for liberation, but it is played out in different ways in changing contexts with the benefit of new insights and understandings. In Frank Chikane's words, "It's a holistic approach." Colin Jones sees the common factor as the ongoing quest for truth. For Michael Lapsey, what remains constant is "the relationship between the issues of worship and issues of social justice, [and] the relationship between faith and social justice." Lionel Louw understood his current engagement as "the concrete, practical manifestation of pursuing those ideals that we struggled for". The continuity of life blurs boundaries between past and present incarnations. These individuals are the same people, in the same skins they have always worn, carrying the same personal histories with them on their respective journeys.

Chikane was directly involved with the liberation movement and therefore was accepted as a comrade instead of as an external pastor. He explains:

I was not just speaking about that struggle and how it should be conducted and how it should not be conducted. I was a witness in it and had the impact on it. It's being part of it. So that I am in government is not something strange. [...] God is a God of the whole creation and God is concerned about it in its totality. And I've not seen my religiosity as spiritual against the rest, because there is no such a separation in my understanding. And for me to say this coming from a Pentecostal Evangelical close to Fundamentalist tradition is a very serious statement to make. But that's my understanding. And so I'm here. My witness is by being there with the people.

Lionel Louw also has maintained his role as pastor in an economically challenged community while engaging fully in the public work of on-going transformation. He is still a social worker striving for social justice and has recently been practicing professional mediation through his work at the Centre for Conflict Resolution. He, like Chikane, was experiencing continuity in his life and work:

I see [my current engagement] as the extension of [my former role]. And I look at it as the concrete, practical manifestation of pursuing those ideals that we struggled for and for which we went to jail people were whipped and some people died. No, I can't think of any obvious discontinuities between the past

and now. I think it's up to us (and this is why I think that civil society remains important), it's up to us to hold government to its responsibility. But also at the same time to make possible what we can make possible from within our own ranks. Through our own resources as well.

For Michael Lapsley there was a strong sense of continuity of commitment and the practical manifestation of it. He is still an active member of the Anglican order of the Sacred Mission and remains visibly involved with public life. While there have been certain major shifts in his life and his identity, the core understanding of what he is working towards has not changed:

[E]ven before I came to South Africa in 1973, I had already seen the relationship between the issues of worship and issues of social justice, of the relationship between faith and social justice. So that remained a common theme right through the period from the eighties until the nineties into the new millennium. I think there was a major shift [...] - essentially that before 1976 I would have been a complete pacifist. And then the events of 1976 convinced me that in our context, armed struggle had become morally necessary and legitimately justified. And I think that was a major shift. I think also a major shift comes with the letter bomb and surviving it. And having a life that's changed forever through the loss of limbs. And having to confront permanently on a daily basis the issues of major disability. And so I have become much more conscious of this relationship between faith and healing. For me I mean I think healing has always been part of the faith community's agenda. But it was not so high up in my own agenda in the same kind of way. I think there's a common theme that stretches through, however, and that [is] really the theme [of] liberation because, my understanding of healing is very much in liberatory terms. So I think that's the kind of commonality or common overarching theme - is that of liberation - throughout. But certainly in the 1980s I would never have used the term "the healing of the memories". But it was really out of my own reflection, upon my own experience and what I perceived to be happening in the country that brought me to see the importance of healing of memories. So in a sense, that healing of memories is now quite central to the kind of emphasis, or even preoccupation, that my faith journey has both for myself and for my interaction in South Africa and internationally.

Brigalia Ntombemhlope Bam also has remained firmly rooted in her original understanding of her political commitment. She articulated some of the main pursuits common to both "the struggle" and the continued transformation of South Africa while indicating that there are major differences because now leaders operate in partnership with government instead of in opposition:

[There] is continuity in terms of the ultimate goal of justice, fairness, of participation. All those are general values that we all aspire to. But it also on that road takes a different turn - that you reach those values through the systems of democracy and through systems of governance. And I think that is the difference.

Bam makes it clear that in her mind, her work is bound up in her faith and that her appointment as the Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission is also a vocation for her. She is not afraid to use power responsibly for

the benefit of the people. It is an opportunity to be a role model as a woman and as a person of faith. She refuses, therefore, to separate her faith from her work:

I think also people who know that we have tried with the limitations we have to say to people [...] that you cannot separate life, politics from one's faith. And I think that it does help some people to see that we are still doing what is considered political work but we are also people of belief and faith. And that I hope people don't think it's a contradiction. But for me and for many of us it's perfectly fine that this is a ministry. And I say to people, I say my job is a ministry. To manage these elections the best possible way and the government that appointed me, the President believes that I will use my values and my experience and where I come from to the best of my ability. And so I feel free and proud that I am recognised, in fact, as a woman of faith doing this work. And I think it makes other women of faith also feel fine that you don't have to be in a corner, in a private way about your faith. Praying in your own little corner and you don't necessarily have to be a known, active member of a Mothers' Union. But you are also where you are, exercising your own ministry. And I think, I hope, it might help all of us in the church to broaden our understanding of the ministry. And also our own responsibilities as people of the church in the public life.

Jones' comments on the subject of the continuity and discontinuity in his work and political engagement seemed to echo Bonhoeffer who says, "God is the beyond in the midst of our life. The God who is with us is the God who forsakes us."⁷⁰ Although Colin Jones did not experience his current incarnation as a ministry, he offered a core conceptual continuity to his understanding of his own personal and professional transition:

I think that if there is any sort of connection, it is about the constant struggle for meaning and understanding and truth. The search for truth beyond religious dogma. And what truth is. And maybe I'm just being Pilate asking, what is truth? I mean maybe that's the ultimate question, what is truth? And maybe like Pilate, I have to see it standing right before me. And you can only discover that if you get out there and put yourself in a place where truth can be encountered. For me, maybe that's what Jesus means today, the seeking to encounter truth incarnate wherever that truth may be, in whatever shape or form it might be. And somewhere, something, somehow to see something of the spirit of Christ in our midst.

Micro or Macro?

Lionel Louw has actively maintained a commitment to discovering and encouraging the spirit of Christ in the midst of his life. He spoke of the ways in which he has moved out of the public eye in order to offer more attention to his local community. While he deeply values and continues to draw on his past experience, and he is in no way ignoring or opting out of the larger picture, he has chosen to be more present to his congregation and to address both their material and spiritual needs:

⁷⁰ As quoted in Renate Wind, *A Spoke in the Wheel*, 116.

I am beginning to develop more of a focus on the micro level. And on those activities that I can influence much more directly. In the past it was at provincial level, at national level, as part of the team of people. Being dependent on those kinds of structures. Mass mobilisation. I think that will always be there. But in a way what I would say is, yes, I have been there, done that. [...] What can we do in Elsie's River? What can we do through our congregation? And how can we bring inspiration and motivation? And also demonstrate a capacity to deliver at that level and to challenge people to deliver at that level. And that's why I think it's so important to have those links and engagement with local government in order to make sure that things happen for people where they are and where it really matters. So while I will always have an interest in and some form participation in activities at mezzo and national level, I think in my faith I want to give more expression at the micro level. So in that sense there's been a shift. There's also just been the affirmation that God is great, God is alive, God is with us. And I need to help people begin to understand that in practical ways, now. And that revolves around the deliverables. In the 1970s and the 1980s it was best brought to life through that struggle for liberation. It now has to be demonstrated around the reconstruction, around the building. So it's sort of the euphoria about coming out of Babylonian captivity or Egyptian slavery into the Promised Land. But then when you get there the walls of Jerusalem have to be rebuilt. The temple had to be rebuilt. And the practices within the walls of the temple had to be recultivated amongst the people. And I think that's where we are.

Smangaliso Mkhathshwa in no way attempts to discourage the Catholic "father" aspect of his identity. But he is using other channels than the church to reach his aims at present. He has shifted from micro to macro in the hope of meeting a larger number of peoples' material needs. He has consciously left the task of meeting their spiritual needs to others. However, he is eager to maintain the core values that he has always cherished and strives to promote these:

I'm not now running a parish as a full time pastor. But the values that I fought for and the creation of a democratic society, the new dispensation with all that it now demands of us, I would say that is the continuation of what we were struggling for. We were struggling for a democracy, we're struggling for freedom. We were struggling for a better life for our children. We're now a democracy, we have the freedom, but we still have millions of poor people, unemployed people. People who are still disadvantaged in many ways. Who are still to some extent excluded. Who are feeling marginalised from the system, from the centre of things and so on. Now I see then my role as to continue the struggle that was started many, many, many years ago. It's a different form of struggle now. At that time the struggle was very crudely against a visible and tangible oppressor and army. The police were vicious and fascist and so on. But now the real enemy is poverty. The real enemy is to see how best we can fight the unemployment of so many people. Our new agenda is reconstruction, development. It's also to identify our own role within the rest of Africa, the rest of the countries of the South. But also to see to what extent we can dialogue with the countries of the North, the rich and wealthy and so on. So it's a new challenge, but it's a different type of challenge. Different from the one that faced us during the days of the real struggle before democracy.

A New Kind of Ministry

As director of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, Charles Villa-Vicencio is committed to working behind the scenes and in partnership with government in the on-going process of reconstruction. He does not use the word vocation and yet there are elements of ministry that are apparent in what he does in terms of reflecting, teaching, reconciling and encouraging. Although he is completely removed from any form of church leadership, his role is still pastoral in many ways and he recognises the theological dimension:

I see myself as engaging in a process seeking to promote, seeking to facilitate, [...] seeking to share with others in facilitating a humanising process in the country. Promoting justice, promoting reconciliation. Those values which I've also understood to be inherent to the gospel. So what I'm doing today is a secular job, it's decidedly a secular job. I say this self-consciously. I say this with determination. I work secularly. I work in a political level. I work at a social level. I work at a cultural level. But throughout all of that it is a theological dimension, very often unarticulated. You can get the boy out of the church you can't get the church out of the boy. It's there. It's there. I taught theology for over twenty years. You can't walk away from that. It's part of my identity. I think that way. But it's more at an implicit level whereas in the eighties it was at an overt, an explicit level. So that's the shift.

Villa-Vicencio is very deliberate in avoiding calling attention to his Christian faith. Strategically speaking, he finds it much more effective in his work to play down faith differences. In many respects, it seems to be a great relief to him to be in a secular job without the obvious expectations involved in explicitly Christian employment. This makes sense in the light of his official departure from Methodist church structures.

Chris Ahrends' case is similar. The main difference is that he is still involved with church leadership on an ad hoc basis. He has not chosen to completely distance himself from that arena. He is happy to have an opportunity to work in the secular world. But while his position as executive director of the Desmond Tutu Peace Centre is unaffiliated with the church, it is not totally removed from the spiritual dimension. Ahrends articulates this mix of continuity and discontinuity thus:

I think that whilst this particular job that I'm doing has a social impact and wants to have some social impact, and is a spiritual project in some ways, it's not a faith project, not a denominational project. But it's got spiritual values and therefore there is something about this Tutu Centre that we want to do which is kind of consistent with the great vision of the church. So you could say there is a certain kind of continuity of a role. But I think personally what I'm trying to say is that I have made quite a clear step out of the priestly role. And I don't know whether I could easily go back into that. And if this job came to an end, [...] I couldn't go back into the parish. [...] And that's the area which I think has been quite illuminating for me. It's my opportunity to reflect on what I really do believe in personally. What is my spirituality? What is my faith? What do I really believe? To what church do I want to belong? And it's one of the things which we who have grown up imbibing our faith with our mother's milk have to come to, I think, at some critical point. It's not a bad thing, it might be a very liberating thing to say, "Okay this is the

faith which has nurtured me to this point, now how do I make it my own?" And you often need some kind of break or social dislocation from formal institution to make you come to that point. And I think it's been very eye opening for me.

Ahrends articulates what many of these subjects have been experiencing as they move away from church work and into a more secular arena. This kind of critical reflection seems to be an important aspect of developing a more mature and perhaps more integrated faith approach. It is unsettling to ask these questions of oneself without the defence of the larger institution to bolster one's position. But if one can face the challenge and come to a secure place within oneself concerning belief and commitment, this may serve as a more solid example of Christian witness in wider circles of influence. So in fact, the churches' loss of internal leadership may be to the benefit of the greater common good.

Participating in the Home for All Campaign and the TRC

In the past, there was a clear moral agenda and there was massive need. There was no shortage of immediate tasks at hand. Activists could always find ways to be of use. When the longed for "liberation" occurred in the form of a transition to a democratic government, it revealed new issues and confusions. Faithful activists continued to seek ways to engage in the ongoing process of transformation. Mary Burton has wisely recognised "the South African transition as having been a long and painful road with a lot of hurt involved, and with a lot of hurt probably still to come." A case in point has been the Home for All campaign that Mary Burton, Charles Villa-Vicencio and Carl Niehaus helped to initiate. In brief, the campaign seeks signatories for an apology from white South Africans to their black compatriots for the injustices of the apartheid era. It has elicited much controversy. This experience has been a sobering one for each of them. Ever the academic, Villa-Vicencio had this to say about it:

I knew from the beginning it was going to be a controversial exercise. [...] But I never thought it would produce the kind of venom and the kind of anger that it did produce. [...] It is an intriguing exercise as to how people see the same statement differently. And the baggage they bring and what they affirm and what they deny. It's a theological exercise, although again one will never use a theological word. But that intervention was in fact saying to whites, I suppose in theological language, listen sober up boys and girls. Repent. Acknowledge if not repent. And just turn around and let's start moving forward. Let's start rebuilding our lives. We were saying, theologically, there is a lot of grace out there. Blacks haven't driven us into the sea. They haven't murdered us. They haven't possessed our homes. We need to respond to this grace, to this goodness, to this generosity.

Carl Niehaus shares Villa Vicencio's conviction on this issue. He explained his pragmatic and conscientious involvement in both the campaign and the larger political project thus:

I do think that my religious convictions lead me to particular positions that I'm taking within South Africa. And I feel very strongly that the kind of society that we have in South Africa is one which challenges us not to make cheap statements about reconciliation. Reconciliation is a very complex mission. I've always

believed that although one should try to avoid situations of total polarisation, [one cannot] talk as if the consequences of the apartheid system have disappeared out of the environment in which we live. It's still very much there. And I suppose it is from that kind of perspective that I got involved in this "Home for All" campaign recently. And it's from that perspective that I feel the need for white South Africans to challenge themselves about what they are actually doing in this society at this stage.

Mary Burton suggested that while there is plenty of work to be done, whites should learn to take their cues from the new political leaders:

In the present changing South Africa it's a little more difficult sometimes to work out what one ought to be doing. There is so much need, human need in the society still. And so many hurting people that clearly, there's a great deal of work to be done. And the same time there is a sense that the time for white leadership is not now. And that we need to stand back a little bit and see what other people ask us to do. Rather than rush in, offering answers to all the ills that beset us. So, I think one of the roles really now is to listen and watch and be ready. On the other hand I think it is also important to speak out where one sees the things that are wrong. And so that's often an even more uncomfortable experience than it was in the past but still existing.

Glenda Wildschut, Charles Villa-Vicencio and Mary Burton shared the profoundly moving experience of being involved with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. They found themselves constantly grappling with theological concepts (such as humility, forgiveness, reconciliation, freedom, liberation and miracles, to name a few) in that process. Villa-Vicencio who had moved away professionally from explicit theology found it to be implicitly fundamental to the tasks at hand in contemporary South Africa:

I went into the Truth and Reconciliation Commission partly because I saw it as an extension of that theological work that I was doing in the days of struggle. Having said that during my days in the TRC, where I was national research director, I scarcely if ever in my official activities used a theological concept or symbol or idea. And yet it was the most theological job I've ever done in my life. I discovered in those days, in a real existential sense what one author meant when he spoke about articulating the gospel, proclaiming the gospel in a secular form, in a non-religious way. I understood that, I really do. And so for me that secular engagement was a significant transitional point in my life. Where I saw all that I had done theologically up to that time, as having equipped me in a marvellous way to do that job. And yet I discovered in that process that I, rightly or wrongly, I could divest myself of the theological baggage and affirm the central message which is the gospel message of freedom and liberation.

Wildschut was most impressed with the generosity of spirit of people expressed through genuine repentance and forgiveness that only seemed possible through the grace of God:

[B]eing on the Truth Commission was just the most incredible experience anyone could ever [have] - and just appreciating and sharing that in my prayer life. Appreciating the generosity of spirit of people.

And that's across the board. And very often we look and see examples of blacks being forgiving and so on. But I've also seen examples of whites being very humble and asking for forgiveness and really being contrite and sorry and so on. In a private space mostly. But I've had the privilege of actually witnessing that and experiencing that. And I think that that's the most wonderful aspect which I'm thankful for of this country that we have people who are so generous. And we need to appreciate that as a country.

Burton came to see miracles as "the product of a long process" that involves both God and committed people:

I think perhaps the discourse about miracles and so on did make me think quite a lot that miracles at least in my experience or my belief don't simply come out of the air. That God can only work miracles if there is long foundation laid for that. And that he can use people to bring about miracles. And so what may in one sudden emanation appear to be a miracle is actually the product of a long process. Even if it's been unseen and unknown. And that's made me think about, in some way, miracles in the New Testament. What do they really mean? They are described in one way but where do they really come from? They come from a long process of search and agonising within the hearts of people involved in them. And I think it's probably made me think that that's what I believe about them, anyway [...] the miracle itself may be that transcendent moment, but it requires preparation and follow up afterwards. And so I suppose that I have had a sense of confirmation of the need for people in the world to do God's work if miracles are to happen.

Political Service

I have considered previously the ways in which Chikane, Mogoba and Mkhathshwa juggle political and pastoral commitments. As they wrestle with their changing identities in a new context, each of them clings to hope of the gospel message. Faith continues to play a strong part in their current understandings of what they are doing and how they go about their duties. The "second altar" is apparent in their political service. Mogoba is anxious to continue to do God's work:

I want to believe that God is at work. That he uses us, and that he will use us. And even politically, my party has done very badly in the elections. But that has not discouraged me. And even more so, that has not discouraged members of my party. They are remarkably high in spirits. And I said that one of the reasons that is so is because they, together with myself, feel that we are on the side of the truth. And that it doesn't matter how long it takes, the things that we stand for or that we give witness to will happen.

Mkhathshwa spoke of how his faith has been strengthened through his current capacity:

I probably see things now in much broader perspective than was the case when I was very narrowly confined to a parish. Well, I suppose partly because they always say, "politics is art of the possible". So, therefore whilst you may have principles, whether the principles will be a faith or your life principles and

so on. But when you have to implement certain policies, some of them that are great on paper, then you have got to find ways of [implementing them. ...] And the conditions, the circumstances force you to have to negotiate your way through so many other challenges and so on. And in the process of doing so I really feel that first of all, your understanding of life and the challenges of life and of governance [...] broadens. But your faith also becomes much stronger in order just to survive. Particularly when we are in a position when we have sometimes to take very difficult [or] very sensitive decisions. [...] Your faith grows also in another way, in a sense that you begin to recognise your limitations. You may have powers to do this and that but at the end of the day, you are not God Almighty. That you have the serious limitation that you are a human being. So that kind of recognition seems to me that makes one's faith even stronger.

Chikane gave examples of how his faith still is central to his identity and his work:

I would say that my life has been a life of continuity in terms of my faith and engagement with that reality in which we find ourselves. There are tensions of course. But [...] the interesting thing about this is that people respect me for what I am. They respect my faith. Some people may not have the faith that I have, but they respect it. And when there is something that happens which they know would be in contradiction to my convictions and faith, they will acknowledge that - even before I say it because they acknowledge that. As comrades in the struggle and when you express an opinion they understand that. [... And] the President understands I have a calling, I have a responsibility to the church.

He also explained how he understands and practises his role as a pastor within the context of government:

There will be people who call me or chose to say certain things to me in a particular way, which is more than just dealing with government. That is, it's pastoral. So you play a pastoral role, not in the conventional sense of the words, but in the much more broader sense of pastoral. Even spending time with the president. He will say, "Now, pastor!" type of thing. It's your role as servant of the Lord in the midst of people [...]. So there are different concepts of approaches to mission. And at times it's your presence that matters not what you say, etc. So when you close your mouth, you still have an impact on people.

I have explored above a variety of possibilities of the ways in which personal faith can be bound up in political commitment. In some cases political action was linked to the place of worship or the worshipping community. Both alternatively or additionally, some subjects found a community of comrades and a sense of belonging through the anti-apartheid movement. Personal faith convictions were often connected to a strong sense of justice and a liberatory understanding of the gospel message. This also related to a commitment to human rights in general and a desire to build a humane society through social activism.

It could be said that continued engagement with the real issues of the world is the greatest indicator of their faith. But in the next section I will explore how the use or avoidance of religious language may also be an indicator of

their respective public positions. Then the emphasis will shift from personal experience to the wider South African praxis as these individuals' understandings concerning the nature of the current relationship between religion and public life in South Africa will be examined.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER 5: RELIGION IN PUBLIC LIFE IN SOUTH AFRICA

It is always such a relief to be in company where it doesn't sound stupid to mention God. It is one of the things you discover if you travel Africa. I was told before I went to Uganda last year that you must be prepared to greet everybody with the words Praise God, you must expect to be asked about your spiritual experience and pray before every journey and every meal, and praying before every journey in Uganda is a very good idea.

- Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams⁷¹

South Africa has a long history of religious intervention and presence in public life and politics. A variety of opinions and ideas about the current nature of the relationship between religion and public life were recorded during the interviews. The various positions of the subjects concerning the nature of this relationship were described by such diverse terms as: "unity", "partnership", "witness", "problematic" and "inherently contradictory". For the most part, the responses were very positive and hopeful about the interface between their faith and their political or public involvement. But there were also degrees of frustration and disillusionment noted. The relationship can be a tricky one as the modern world tends to marginalize religion as a private enterprise that might prompt practising Christians to feel mocked or shamed into hiding any religious language or sentiment in public.

Some South African theologians, including John de Gruchy, remained hopeful at the time of transition that South African Christianity would not lose the capacity to maintain simultaneously the religious and the political aspects of its character:

South Africa remains a profoundly religious country, not least because of the underlying holistic character of African culture. The separation of the religious and the political, and the consequent privatisation of piety, so fundamental to modernity, is countered by a very different cultural ethos in South Africa. Christianity will undoubtedly undergo significant changes in the future, but democratisation will not necessarily mean that its public and prophetic role will be lessened.⁷²

The South African experience of democracy will never mirror the original version practiced in the United States of America not least the deeply integrated practice of religion that is shared by so many. Faith is a strong motivator for justice and it can be an important medium for transmitting human values. The subjects have born witness in their lives to the ways in which religion can be harnessed for transformation and reconstruction. But is it possible to examine how the expression of religious conviction might be changing in the new era?

⁷¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2003/02/12/nbish112.xml>

⁷² John W. de Gruchy, *Christianity and Democracy*, 221.

5.1: Religious Language – Discourse and Identity

In preparation for the Multi-Event 1999, an academic workshop was held to discuss core concepts that would shape the conference itself. The summary analysis of the proceedings was published as "Constructing a Language of Religion in Public Life".⁷³ "The aim of the document was to orient people to the languages that are being used to discuss the issues, the way these languages work, and the ambiguities and openness in them."⁷⁴ This discussion influenced my decision to ask the subjects about their own expressions of faith in the public arena. I was interested in whether people felt that faith language was more acceptable in the past or in the present political climate and whether they were inclined to use it. The statements below indicate that there are a variety of approaches to the expression of Christian conviction, and these may or may not be consistent with approaches that were taken in the past.

There still seems to be a public place (and a public need even) for theological language and explanations in South Africa. Faith language is generally quite easily understood and digested by the people of a country that has such a strong religious history and tradition. As explored in the previous chapter, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Home for All Campaign are two examples of secular initiatives that have theological underpinnings. Villa-Vicencio said that being the National Research Director of the TRC was "the most theological job" he had ever done. So use of theological or religious language was not an unconscious or unreflected activity. Villa-Vicencio said that he is happy to use religious language "if I'm talking to religious people". He used the example of a speech that he delivered at a SACC conference shortly before the interview:

I said, "This is a strange sort of homecoming; I haven't been here for fifteen years." And I used biblical, Christian mythology. I would do that, yes, and that would be strategic. The same as if spoke to a group of businessmen, I would try to use ideas and notions that they would understand. And I don't find it offensive. I can understand what I'm saying and I can actually believe what I'm saying.

But Villa-Vicencio no longer has the main objective of articulating his ideas theologically. He explained that certain "buzzwords" have become more widely acceptable: "I'm ready to use words like grace, transformation, liberation, forgiveness, reconciliation. But it's those sorts of theological concepts that I think have clawed their way into secular language in any case." He went on to explain that in his current capacity there is a new emphasis:

I need to talk the language of justice. And transformation and reconciliation. Nation building language. Rather than theological language, but if I'm in a Christian environment I will use Christian language, theological language.

⁷³James Cochrane, Stephen Martin and Gillian Walters, editors, *Constructing a Language of Religion in Public Life* (Cape Town: RICSA) 1998. It can also be found on-line:

http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/ricsa/confer/me99/oth_docs/con_lang.htm

⁷⁴ Ibid.

There is a substantial history of the use of religious language in the anti-apartheid struggle. Brigalia Ntombemhlope Bam recalled the power of the expression "apartheid is a sin against humanity" and spoke of the importance of communicating this concept that is transferable and translatable beyond the faith communities:

And that became a very important message which to me I could relate to when I speak it because even now if you talk of sin against humanity that's language people generally understand in most parts. Even people who don't necessarily practise as Christians [...] understand what sin means. And if you talk of sin against humanity you begin to think of slavery, you think of the holocaust. Even if people don't look at it as a religious concept, it's a concept that says something to their beliefs

"Sin" is one powerfully charged religious word amongst many. Villa-Vicencio indicated above some of the other theological concepts that have been central to the South African experience above. Such theological terms may have entered secular parlance and understanding, but they are still not words to be used lightly. They carry the weight of enormous responsibility. Lapsley has long been aware of the power and implications of language. It was his primary tool for opposing and combating apartheid. Therefore he has always sought for his interventions "to be considered." He continued:

For many years outside the country, I was part of the discipline of the liberation movement, and so spoke from within that discipline. I think that today I have a certain profile in my own right. But one that I would seek to use very, very responsibly.

Lapsley is also careful in the ways that he expresses his faith publicly these days so as not to be alienating to people who do not perhaps believe in the same things or in the same way that he does. Respect for other faith traditions is paramount in a plural society. He said:

I think in terms of expressing my faith, for me it is important that whilst I am publicly seen as an Anglican priest, as a Christian, that my perspective that I want to project is one of a great tolerance between Christians and other great living traditions as well. And for me the projection of that is very important - the projection of an interfaith kind of position as opposed to any sort of triumphalist or Christians exclusivist sort of position.

This interfaith position and respect was widely shared amongst the subjects. At the same time there was widespread self-assurance about embracing one's own faith identity. When asked how her expressions of faith might be different now from what they were during "the struggle" Wildschut said that "it's more upfront." In the past when for example she worked with detainees, she explained that she never offered an initial presentation of herself as a person of faith. In the present her faith is much more integrated into her life and her work:

Nowadays I actually feel very comfortable with that. I've become more bold. Yeah, maybe bold is the word. I hadn't even thought of it as being bold but just more true, more me.

She seemed to feel much freer about expressing herself as a Christian: "In my work and even just generally, even in my play. [...] I don't actually feel bashful about it. It's just who I am, it's an important aspect of who I am." But when she was asked specifically about whether or not she feels comfortable using church language publicly, she changed her tone significantly and spoke much more carefully because she explained that "church language can be quite alienating." This can be the case even inter-denominationally. Wildschut elaborated on how she tries to be inclusive in her approach by using the example of the occasions when she has been invited to preach:

I try to locate that with practical life, where we are at and try not to be too esoteric. I talk about my experience of faith and where I'm at. I try not to use language which is alienating.

There was a clear understanding on the part of the subjects that the changed context brought new requirements. The styles that worked in the past are no longer necessarily appropriate or relevant. This in no way delegitimises past modes of expression, but it is a point about which people are very aware. Niehaus spoke of the phenomena of the changed context that influences modes of expression with some words of caution:

We are in a different stage in the history of this country. And the expression of my faith in a period before I went to prison was far more confrontational. And it was a direct confrontation also with those people who I felt were really making a mockery of what the Christian faith is and should be. And of course I was much younger. So I was an angry young man. Now, I'm not trying to say by that that I for one moment think that one should in any way compromise with what apartheid was. Because it was absolutely evil. Apartheid was a heresy. But I think the way in which I express my faith now is trying to see how one on the one hand can continue to express that total rejection of apartheid but also try to find ways in which you can challenge, but also bring the white community along. And part of it is expression of my faith. And part of it is something which someone who is also not a faithful person would do just in terms of an understanding of the pragmatic needs of what we want. And what we need. What we can't have in this country is a situation [which] leads to an increased polarization. I'm very concerned about it because I think there are some instances where we have been moving backwards. And I think all of us have got a responsibility to try and maintain that combination of not comprising on the apartheid issue, but at the same time trying to bring a process along where people will become part of the new South Africa. Truly. [...] I suppose I'm slightly more careful. I'm very aware of how fragile our community is. And I'm very aware how careful we have to be not to alienate people.

It is indeed a delicate stage in South African history. Pragmatically speaking, inclusion is essential, now more than ever. Niehaus went on to explain how he operates both intellectually and spiritually in terms of engagement in present day South Africa while leaving plenty of room for others to conceptualise and act in their own ways for their own reasons:

I do still express my involvement often in religious terms. In fact for the kind of thinking that got me going on the Home for All campaign was really generated by two speeches that I made. [...] And it really

started off, as in many times in my life, from a theological argument about what the challenges of justice [are] and what the demands are on those who have been the benefactors of illegitimate gains, etc. And it translated there into kind of political action. But [...] once I found a kind of vehicle for the political action, I've never found it necessary to try and bring everyone along, even [those] who support that action, to back the religious thinking that's behind it. I don't think it's essential.

Bam noted the interesting case of an invitation that she and others had received to offer assistance to young Africans in the business world in terms of moral and ethical formation based on their own faith experience. She saw this as a brilliant opportunity to lead by example and model a life of strong Christian values. She emphasized the need for good values that were transcendentally human instead of being focused on the Christian aspect. That said she also thought it was important to be more up front about individual faith positions in public life because of the positive impact that may have. She explained that she is part of a group of religious people who are also leaders in the public sector who had recently been approached by "some young, black business people" in the hope that together they might try to "form a kind of movement or organisation that will support these people in their normal jobs where they have to struggle on a day to day basis with a question of ethics [like] the handling of the money, time management and things like that." She was quite excited about this prospect:

Now I find this is really encouraging that in fact they come to those of us who are of this background to say, Help us because out there it's different. You have to make a lot of decisions. Not decisions based on the constitution but decisions and questions of moral, of ethical things. And I find that a very encouraging thing that people see the need of using people of faith in sustaining the values in the society. Which we are all struggling with, all of us in South Africa in this day. [...] How do we bring back those values that transcend us? They are religious values but not necessarily. They are good values but they transcend culture, colour, class, race. Some people will refer to them as religious values, but some consider them to be good human values. [...] I think that's why when they want to discuss them they always go to those "church types," as they call us. [...] I think that's something we need ourselves who are in public life to be perhaps much more assertive and not be apologetic about faith. I don't mean we should try and go around to try and save everybody and to try and convert people. But I think at some stage we need also to articulate that "this I will [not] do because it contradicts my own faith" [... and] to say it openly because maybe somebody is listening.

While promoting this kind of modeling, she contradicted her own advice when she indicated that her own expressions of faith in the public arena tend to be "more guarded". She said that the way she expresses her faith publicly now is "very different" from the way she used to express it in the past. She attributed this to her own career shift away from working for the church. That previous role had given her a certain mandate. In her experience, when you work in the church "people expect you to be upfront" in expressing your faith. They expect you to take certain positions on issues. She also said that she found it easier to fight injustice ("whether it's racism or sexism or it's poverty") from within the church because of the "firm base" that it offered. She expressed a need to work with the structures of the church and to encourage others to return to the churches for assistance:

I would like to do something and sometimes I wonder what - about poverty and I feel so desperate. You go out, you come home and you think of all those people you saw, you talked to. And you say, what can I do? And you feel helpless really and you say, people go back to the church. [...] You have to go back to somebody because these issues are things you can't tackle alone, single-handed. You have to work through institutions to deal with the structures.

While she still wants to promote the work of the church she is also very concerned about not wanting non-Christians to feel judged by her now that she is working for a secular organisation. She does not want people to get the impression that she thinks that she is superior to them because she is a Christian. She also insisted that religion should not be used "in every case as your entry point or as your entry into activity." She believed that commitment needed to be expressed from other perspectives as well:

I think that when I have time and energy there are things I would like to do in my country with the years I have left. Which I want to do because I think they're important issues. But I will not say to people I'm doing them because I'm a woman of faith. I will do them because I'm a South African citizen who feels strongly about those things.

Chikane was very clear about the arrogance of telling people what they should believe or how they should behave. He explained that leading by example and by simply being present is the only way that he will quietly promote the Christian life. In his experience this is often more powerful and effective than any alternative way. People usually know where he stands because he makes his own convictions clear through his actions and behaviour. He wants his presence to conscientise people without shaming them so they can make their own decisions. He said, "I've never imposed my faith on other people, and I don't make a game of holier than thou attitude. I need people to be convinced [for themselves]." He recounted the story of someone in government who told him, "I am not a committed Christian and I don't think that I can, but I envy you. I'm not about to do it myself, but there is something about your life that makes me feel I wish that I was."

Chikane was concerned about emphasising the fact that his way of being faithful within government was no different from the way it would be anywhere else: "But it's not that because I am here my expressions of my faith get suppressed. It's that I do not normally impose that religion on others." In fact, concerning his expression of faith in the public arena he claimed, "It's the same now as it has been." He used the example of being imprisoned with fourteen other people at the time of the treason trial. Sharing a cell for many months was a unifying experience that built solidarity between inmates of different faith positions. His faith may have differentiated him from the group but he chose not to make an issue of it because he did not wish to "impose" or to become "an irritant" and because of this tactic he won the respect of the others and they would listen to his opinions. He is aware that some people think that he has "modified my approach" because he is now in government. He explained his own perception of the continuity of his position by recalling a critical moment in the past:

When you are where I am there are protocols. But when we were in the struggle, I was involved with the United Democratic Front. I did not stand outside it and condemn it. A good example is something that

happened during the '80s when, you remember the time when there were bombs in the Wimpy bars. It was quite a wild moment. And I was the general secretary of the Council of Churches. [...] I recall saying to President Thabo Mbeki, "A group of church leaders in South Africa want to meet you about this matter as soon as possible." And so we organised a meeting to do that. As the ANC was banned, we went with a contingent of the top leaders of the church to Harare and met the executive of the ANC and expressed our opinion. And I knew because I had met Thabo that he also does not agree with this type of thing. And I felt that by meeting them it would give the ANC the opportunity to state clearly where it stands. Which means that you facilitate, you create moments for people to be able to express what needs to be expressed. It is different from just condemning. You become part of the solution in a sense. And so I would say that when you know more, you approach things differently than when you don't know. If you are outside where things are happening, it is easy to condemn.

He was clear that being in his position gave him access to information that is not available to the general public. He feels an enormous responsibility to act and speak carefully so as not to compromise confidentiality. But in no way does he feel that he has "sold out" or become corrupted by his proximity to power. He is still determined to use his influence to contribute to the "solution". He is concerned about those, particularly church leaders, who condemn the ANC from outside of the praxis. His emphasis on this point indicated that it must pain him that there are so many who appear to condemn him along with government now. Some of his former comrades are not satisfied with the way that the ANC is governing and perhaps they are seeking someone to blame for the perceived failures. He was anxious to convey that he is available to speak to those who no longer understand where he is or what he is doing. He also indicated that he would value the opportunity of working with former colleagues to help them to understand his current position.

While Chikane seemed thoroughly convinced that he is involved with a just government, he is aware that it is a human government that has failings and makes mistakes and compromises:

There are contradictions from time to time. Though, it would be strange if there were no contradictions because we would have been in heaven. It would be very strange. This is the world. This is where the drama/theatre is happening. And this is not a community of transformed humanity which is not uncorrupted. [...] It's mortal. It is not immortal yet. [...] It's very fallible. [...] So my church would say to [me] (because they are very conservative), "How do you live with a government when they make this decision?" And I say, "But why would they make the right decisions all the time? There is no such a thing. They wouldn't be human. It wouldn't be the real reality." There are contradictions. There are tensions. There are conflicts of interest in government at times. It is about mediating conflicting interests. It is not about absolutes, truths and correctness. It is about mediating broken humanity's interests, which are not perfect. [...] Church people, religious people, think that the weakness we must have is about moral issues and therefore they define them as abortion and pornography - the classical things that people think the church is about. [...] My faith can't be just about pornography and abortion. They are important, but why do we need to reduce the church to being concerned [about these issues]? Only

when you talk about abortion do they make a noise. When you deal with the real world, life issues, they think, "No, it is for government, but these ones are for the churches." And I say, "No, that is wrong."

His very conservative congregation often asks him whether he has "preached to the President" about certain issues, but he knows that this approach would not be effective. His response to them and others who might think this way is:

If you tried it you'd lose before you start, because it is a stupid way of doing it. [...] I'm no Catholic, but their mission concept is very interesting. They go to an area to be present and reach people by being present. And lots of people became Catholics around the world. Not because people pitched up tents and preached the gospel and had big rallies. They didn't do that. They just arrived and sat down and stayed with people and offered services. So there are different concepts of approaches to mission. And at times it is your presence that matters, not what you say. So when you close your mouth, you still have an impact on people.

Mkhathswa said that his responses to various situations depend a great deal on the context. When there is something that he believes is "totally immoral" or "totally wrong" then he said he would be upfront in his rejection and "wouldn't pull any punches." In other contexts a different approach might be more effective:

[A]s politicians, there are ways in which sometimes you can achieve more through subtle persuasion. I achieve the same goals by using a different strategy. If you look at the government ministers for instance. There are others who are absolutely upfront and tough and they pull no punches at all. Very vocal, and so on, really tough. But you also find other ministers who are very influential, very effective, but they are more diplomatic. So I would say more of the same things about the situation here applies in the sense that it just depends on who [you] are dealing with. For instance it would be very very different or difficult to go to the President or Deputy President and very crudely and bluntly state your views. But you may achieve so much more if you are more subtle, more diplomatic and more persuasive.

Mkhathswa indicated that this was different from how he used to express his faith publicly. He explained this in terms of the changed context, but also in terms of personal growth and development. He said, "One has gained new experiences, and therefore there's no way one can use exactly the same approach as one used to use in the past." He seemed quite relaxed with the change and was grateful for the experience of moving beyond the confines of church life into fulltime politics.

Mogoba, on the other hand, spoke with sadness about the discontinuity that he was experiencing due to his shift in the type of leadership that he exercises. This was particularly difficult for him in terms of prophetic ministry. In the past this was an important part of his mode of expression. In his present capacity it is risky and complicated to employ such authority:

[W]hen you are a church leader you can say "thus says the Lord" anytime and you are quite happy to stand by that. But now when you become a political leader, even when you say that people don't believe you and in a sense, it makes you slowly to stop saying that. Because if people don't take you seriously and believe you, in a sense in the end you stop actually saying "thus says the Lord". And by and large, although I experience this, it is not only true of myself. Even the Christian Church seems to have toned down a great deal on the prophetic ministry. [...] This has been a great problem. So I think that discontinuity is in the area of not being able to do the same things in the same way that I used to do.

He seemed to be at a loss for words in his new capacity. He seemed unsure about his position. It seemed difficult for him to gauge quite what was appropriate and expected of him in his role of leader of an opposition party. He could not simply shed the skin and language of his religious persona. They are too deeply integrated into his identity. He seemed to be wrestling with a lack of legitimacy, which was tragic considering his former strength. While he was open in our dialogue, he seemed quite confused and depressed about where and how he fits into both the political and religious structures. He was not happy about the fact that he had to carefully edit his speech and could not be totally relaxed about saying what he really believed. He had experienced too much mockery of his heart-felt religious zeal and pronouncements.

Louw also indicated that as far as his public expressions of faith are concerned, "in a way, it's guarded." But this was for very different reasons. He believed that it was primarily due to the fact that he is juggling many secular work responsibilities that prevent him from engaging in church work and community on a more fulltime basis. At the time of the interview he was trying to reorganise his life so that he could be more involved with his church and the projects that were happening there. He indicated that his expressions of faith would doubtless "become much more prominent" when he had more time to be present in his church. Nevertheless in the context of both his work environments – as a social worker (practically and academically) and as an employee of Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), through which third party mediation takes place, a non-judgemental approach is essential. He is comfortable with the fact that his presence "conveys a religious ethos" of which others are aware, but he does not "try and proselytise through these activities." It is enough that "there's clearly the religious motivation, and acceptance that there is that religious motivation." For Louw it is a matter of doing the work at hand in the secular institutions where he finds himself and where and when it is "appropriate" the message he communicates is "infused" with a religious but non-judgmental ethos. This said, he is fully aware that in his professional capacity he often grapples with issues "like justice [that] will find expression in some ways and that would come from religious motivation," but he is also aware that "it's not a platform for that purpose."

His work at the CCR has interestingly enough led him back into the religious environment through, among other things, "liasing with the Archbishop and liasing with the ministers in Khayelitsha". His capacity as a church leader has certainly been an important asset. This has been clearly acknowledged and offers him a great deal of legitimacy. He also remains concerned about ways to assist the church in return. At the time of the interview he was exploring a proposal to start "a programme where we can train clergy and lay leaders in conflict resolution." Another example of this was a request from Archbishop Ndungane to the CCR to "help with mediation in conflict situations within the Anglican Church." Louw was the person assigned to help organise and implement this

service. He was the mediator assigned to conflicts and disputes within any religious settings. He was also invited through the CCR to “be an advisor to the group that was doing monitoring of the local government elections as a part of the inter-religious commission on violence.” So he wears both the church leader and other professional hats comfortably simultaneously:

I also understand when I go on a platform representing CCR that it is what I do. And if there is opportunity to introduce a religious aspect into it, I will certainly do that. If not then I won't. But I am there as a person with my particular background. So there's some evangelicals who will have problems with that but that's how I give expression to it. And I think it's appropriate. But that's my own view and I know it's shared but not, of course, across the board in our Christian community.

Burton was not entirely sure how to answer the question about whether her expressions of faith were more upfront or more guarded in the present. She is aware that through her role as a commissioner on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission she has become a more public figure in South Africa. This has increased the number of opportunities that she receives to express herself publicly. But this was not something that she actively sought. In terms of her expressions of faith she concluded that:

I think the only thing that would make them more upfront is precisely that I get asked to speak. And if I get asked to speak to a church audience then obviously there is a sense in which I'm there as part of a Christian community. And I think it's important to fulfil that. But in a sense of my own seeking to be more open, more public, then not at all.

When asked about her modes of expression in the past, particularly during the days of her involvement with and leadership of the Black Sash, she explained that although the Black Sash's founding members “were quite strongly Christian,” it certainly was not meant to be hegemonic. Despite this intention, the attitudes, perceptions and expectations of some of members of this progressive organisation took some challenging. This anecdote clarified Burton's own attitude towards Christo-centric thinking at the time:

[I]t was of great interest but also of great sorrow to me when our first national president who was not Christian was astonished to be elected, and to be elected with acclaim, because she was Jewish. And I was devastated that she should have ever thought that her being Jewish would preclude her from being acceptable as a national president. And I think that's because she was there at the beginning and she wasn't Christian where as I had come to it slightly later and had not thought of the Black Sash as a Christian organisation. Many of its members were motivated by their beliefs but there was no sense of a religious component to it. But there must have been still some of that feeling for her to have expressed that. It was said in private, it wasn't a public statement or anything, but I was quite shaken that she should have thought it.

Although she was more sceptical in the past, Burton found that working on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission probably strengthened her faith and possibly increased her willingness to use religious language. An

example of this was her reflection on the “discourse about miracles” (mentioned previously). Her own experience led her to believe that they “don’t simply come out of the air.” Although, she claimed no great transformation of her own faith expression, this reflection on “miracles” was an example of how Burton has moved not only theologically, but also in terms of her willingness to speak about her faith. That said, it is not her mission to provoke or challenge people too much in terms of their faith positions.

Mayson, on the other hand, was more conscious of a radical shift in his understanding and expression of his faith. He said that his expressions of faith are more upfront now. He thought that perhaps getting older may have something to do with this trend or perhaps his close involvement with the ANC played a part. But he is aware that his own thinking and speaking and writing have changed radically over the years:

I think when I was younger, certainly in the Christian Institute years, one of the dominant things was how could we say something which would move people in the right direction without upsetting them too much. Partly because we didn’t want to, partly because the threat of the security police. And partly because the way other people perceived that threat. And partly because they saw it as a threat to their faith. I think Beyers [Naudé] felt this more than some of us. And I think the element that comes in when you get a bit older, I find it difficult to say [whether] it is because I’m getting older or because I’m, in a sense, a little nearer to the cutting edge of the ANC. But your thinking goes on and crystallises and you put it into speech.

Whether this has been based on stage of life or professional location, he has found that the recent past “has led to much more radical thinking.” He was increasingly ready to voice “conclusions that I really knew a long while ago and didn’t understand.” He has changed his thinking on issues like the “nature of Jesus” and since this shift, he said, “I’ve found following Jesus of Nazareth much [...] simpler. It made a lot more sense since I threw out all the ecclesiastical garbage and all the Creed and that stuff.”

Mayson is very vocal about his frustration with the institutional church. He believes that it “let itself be bought out.” He said that it was “very often a question of position and power and money.” He also believes that academic and church leaders tend to toe the line in order to maintain their positions and therefore “many people have simply lost all faith in academia because these guys are not honest with what they actually believe.” He has found that his ideas bring on conflicting reactions in that “some people are quite horrified, but other people warmed to it enormously.” The positive response that he has received from people has been very important and encouraging to him. Mayson recognises that he has travelled a long journey in terms of his theological thinking and expression. This is largely documented through the sermons and articles that he wrote (many of which were under the auspices of the Christian Institute) that help him to measure how far he has come:

Even thinking about some of them I cringe from what I used to say. But I had to work through (a lot of it was done in the preaching) what I was supposed to believe. [...] There is a progression all the way through. I’ve probably only now got to the place where some people were a generation ago. But I least I got there in the end. [...] And a development has happened as I’ve become more and more involved in a

context. [...] And it is a context if you believe as much in Jesus as I do and as much in this good news of the Baselia that he proclaimed, you see things in terms of that. And I think all I've done is gone stumbling along to find more and more and more of what it meant. Or what it means to believe that God's ruling power is in humanity.

Mayson's faith and willingness to express it are more explicit than ever before. He even had a regular column in the Mail and Guardian newspaper for a while. And although his ideas may offend some more conservative Christians, he has found a path on which he is comfortable and happy to converse with fellow travellers.

Ahrends is also very conscious of a change in his use of religious language and faith expression. He said that they are "much more guarded." Now that he is no longer a fulltime priest he no longer has to "promote a position" which is a huge relief for him. He used the example of questions that people used to ask him concerning things such as baptism:

[A]s a clergyman five or six years ago, you had at one level a much stronger opinion about that maybe. Or you felt obliged to have an opinion. Or because they knew you were a priest, they would expect an opinion. And it's just a lot nicer now to say, Well, what do you want to do? I have an opinion but it's not a doctrinal position, this is what I think. And I'm just part of the general body of opinion which might or might not be taken.

There was a very clear message from nearly all of the subjects that proselytising and evangelising others to convert to Christianity was not their objective. If anything there was a deliberate move away from that kind of thinking and behaviour. Conversion tactics and language were associated with the conservative American Christian Right about which several of the subjects expressed deep suspicion. Although they felt comfortable with their own faith, they did not possess a need to convince others that their position was the only or best one.

Ahrends expressed his opinion on the subject of conversion thus:

I didn't have a desire to convert people. I've never had that. I just never grew up in that kind of world where your secret longing was for another scalp. I didn't ever think that it was my job to convert anybody. Conversion is or it must be at one level the most private thing in all the world. Between you and whoever God is for you. And it wasn't my job as a priest to interfere with that. So I never really had that passion to get out there and preach Jesus. I could never do that. I've never understood the kind of evangelical concern for conversion. Much more [important] was whether the people were finding themselves or were they dealing with their issues? Were they coping with depression? Were they becoming more human or was there some growth?

He was never really happy to be the Christian "salesman" with the objective of putting "Anglican bums on pews". Fortunately, he is totally free from that part of the job description now. His move away from fulltime priesthood seems all the more appropriate as his understanding of his faith has changed radically:

[M]y faith is less Christo-centric or my understanding of my attempt to have faith is much less Christo-centric. Without any disrespect for the person of Jesus Christ, I don't really know enough about Jesus to be able to really promote him anymore. I have great admiration and great longing to know more. But I don't know how it all works anymore.

Niehaus was another who was not at all interested in converting people to share his faith. Although he was never a professional church leader, he had made many critical decisions in his own life based on his faith. Nevertheless, he explained his philosophy of acceptance of others' positions in the unfathomable realm of faith and spirituality:

I don't feel that I have some kind of urge to proselytise. I don't want to convince everyone to become people of faith. It's my faith that influences me. But some of the greatest people that I've met were people who were not religious people. At least not openly. They didn't overtly say that they were religious people; I still think many of them are very spiritual people. And some of the people who have had a huge influence on my life were people who would say they're atheists. So, I think that the kind of expression of one's faith can find comrades who don't necessarily need to have the same faith expression.

Likewise, Villa-Vicencio explained that while Christian language and symbolism is an integral part of his own understandings of his life, he did not in any way wish to impose that on anyone else:

I am motivated, whether I like it or not, I am driven by the theology that I've done all my life. By spirituality, a sense of the divine, a sense of right, a sense of good, a sense of truth that has been communicated to me through the symbols of the Christian gospel. I'm really comfortable with that. But I have positively no desire at all, no motivation whatsoever to ask somebody who is a Jew or a Muslim or a Hindu or an atheist or a Marxist or anything else to buy into that. I have no desire whatsoever. So any sense of evangelism in the sense of turning people from who or what they were into Christians, I mean that I find not only gone, I find it offensive. I really do. So that's why I'm very reluctant to fly the theological, Christian flag. But it's there. It's there, but I needn't fly it. [...] And some may recognise it my back pocket and some may not. And it doesn't matter.

Jones is in the thick of an on-going personal quest for truth and that in no small way relates to his faith and expressions of it. But at the time of the interview this was still quite a private journey. When asked to compare his current silence with his public expressions of faith in the past he explained:

I don't express it publicly. That's the huge shift. And in a way I think my struggle is to really ask whether I should be expressing it publicly. There seems to me an arrogance almost to think that I've got anything meaningful to say. I'm almost ashamed of going back over my sermons again. And all the meaningless inanity I've uttered.

He stated categorically that he did not "want to be anybody's guru."

Closing Thoughts on Religious Language

There is an awareness that people are seeking prophetic utterances of wisdom and hope and healing. This is especially true in a country like South Africa where there is a legacy of so much pain. But the deliberate hesitation of the above men in using certain kinds of religious language does not necessarily indicate a lack of belief or engagement. They are careful so as not to be offensive or misinterpreted. They might agree with John Caputo's emphasis on the primary importance of justice as the basis for action:

What do I love when I love my God? Not the burnt offerings and solemn assemblies, but justice. Is justice then another name for God? Or is God another name for justice? If I serve the neighbour in the name of God, or I serve the neighbour in the name of justice, what difference does it make? If the name of God is a *how*, not a *what*, then the name of God is *effective* even when it is not used.⁷⁵

Ultimately, what does it matter how people do or do not speak about their motivations and their beliefs? The critical factor is that they speak with integrity. When people speak their own truths from their realities we are confronted with the pain and also the beauty of their lives. Ivan J. Kauffman says, "The truth as beauty can only be seen in the spaces where we actually live." He explains with this statement about contextualising truth and language and belief:

That is why there can never be a separate language for belief – words different than the ones we use when we buy groceries, or tell a joke, or argue with our husbands. When that split between the religious and the ordinary occurs, as it so often does, belief inevitably becomes detached from our real lives, moving into a mythical space where a special religious language has an arbitrary relevance, but where no one actually lives.⁷⁶

A reoccurring theme in the interviews was the desire to avoid language that is alienating for people of other faiths and traditions (or no faith). There seemed to be a general tendency away from triumphalism. This is a welcome trend in a plural society. There was no great emphasis on evangelising or converting non-Christians to the faith; in fact many were careful to deliberately avoid proselytising. They were happy to be recognised as Christians, for the most part. But there did seem to be a sense from several subjects that they wanted to ensure that it was understood that they were not only taking certain positions as Christians, but also as concerned citizens and caring human beings. It was indicated that avoiding religious language can be a good strategy for gaining support on certain issues, in certain sectors and in certain situations. It was even suggested that sometimes it is best to say nothing at all.

Religious language is a powerful and sometimes unwieldy tool. But we must remember that theology and religious language are ultimately doomed mediums – because they are human attempts to express the divine. And the divine by nature is inexpressible. Language, like liquid is ever shifting, and constantly capable of changing forms.

⁷⁵ Richard Holloway, *On Forgiveness: How Can We Forgive the Unforgivable?* (Edinburgh, Canongate, 2002), 6.

⁷⁶ Ivan J. Kauffman, *He Was Here: Those Who Knew Jesus Speak* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2000), 13.

We translate the Bible or speak in incomprehensible tongues. We speak our mother tongue and learn to speak (and to subvert) the language of the oppressor.⁷⁷ Words can be used to cover and to convince and convert, sometimes for good, sometimes for ill. Words can be misunderstood or deliberately misinterpreted. It is important to reiterate the subjects' own emphasis on using religious language very responsibly. But it is also essential to look behind the words. In the end, it seems that the best means of religious expression is the example of how people choose to live their lives.

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⁷⁷ James C. Scott examines the way the oppressed find ways (often through subtle use of language) to undermine their oppressors in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

5.2: Reconsidering the Relationship between Religion and Public Life in the New South Africa

The interviews gave testimony to an overwhelming commitment on the part of the majority of the subjects to use their convictions and the dynamism of their faith to work for justice. In the section that follows I explore their various responses to the question of how they understand the relationship between religion and public life in South Africa today. Their opinions and ideas reflect a wide spectrum of positions. Some call for unity between the spheres. Some are keen to see partnerships built. Others are convinced that religious people can offer witness to the public arena. Others still find the relationship either inherently problematic or contradictory. All have strong views on the subject and most are still working out the practical aspects as they go along. It is a dynamic relationship that is yet to be clearly defined.

Mogoba spoke about both the past practical role that the church played in South African history. He also voiced his views on the need for its continued involvement with government and society at large. He personally seemed uncomfortable with the reality of the secular state and the plural society. Yet he was aware that these were undeniable factors. His main concern was that “the church must continue to be the church”. Exactly what this means he did not clarify. But it seemed to indicate that in his opinion people in South Africa needed Christian grounding and community and that this could be fostered through a close relationship between religion and public life. He said:

I think South Africa is a very unique country. I think that it is only in a country like South Africa that the church can claim to have played such a prominent role during the time when there was such intense suffering and the country was actually moving towards a blood bath. Many people believed that it would end up in a blood bath. And it is the church that came in and built a bridge. It is the church that came in and helped to minister to political leaders and to families of people who had suffered. It is the church that when things were really bad actually in this country it was the prophetic ministry that turned the country around. In a very unusual way. It is in this country that when extreme violence broke out, the church came in again to try and help.... And I still think that it is the church that will help this country to get on. Although we are supposed to be a secular state now (which is a problem) which will accommodate other people. But I believe that the church will continue to be the church. Even if there are Muslims and Hindus and Animists. I believe the church must continue to be the church. Otherwise without the church, this country might be lost. I'm worried about the country with the sort of people that are such good people but can't make it [without] God or Christ. So yes, I believe that there should be a close relationship.

Smangaliso Mkhathshwa's opinion was that “really, there is a need for cooperation and interaction in the two spheres of life.” In his view, being in government was an important way to look after people and the earth while we are still on it. While he declared that “lots of people out there, young and old and so on realise that government needs people of faith and vice versa”. He also went on to say that sometimes they could act independently:

There are certain things that the people of faith can do when they don't really need government for it – like in terms of preaching, in terms of sensitising people, spreading moral values, ministering to the spiritual needs – that very narrow sense. You could say, well maybe you don't need the cooperation of government. But government is the one that decides.

Government, in his view, is the partner with more power over earthly matters. He spoke of government using the pronoun “we”. He seemed pleased and proud to be part of it. He seemed to genuinely want to make people's lives better. This has always been his concern, but now he seemed to feel that he could make a material difference in concrete tangible ways. He spoke of how his role has shifted and why both sectors must continue to work together in service to the people:

So there is a way in which I think people who are in public life and private life [...] have to work together because they are serving exactly the same person, but from a different angle. When I was in the parish, I prided myself on looking after the souls of people. And carried them through to the afterlife and so on. And to some extent making their lives reasonably happy. But I did not have the power to look after the physical needs of the people, and at the end of the day, those physical needs also affect [...] in a very direct way what happens spiritually – to the spiritual growth of people. If people are hungry, if they have no job, they've no employment, if they feel rejected, if they feel unprotected. [...] People that become desperate and then they resort to behaviour that certainly does not enhance their own spiritual growth and that's the problem. So the two areas are with each other because we're still here on earth. We're not yet in heaven.

Chikane found the question about the nature of the relationship between religion and public life in South Africa to be “a difficult one”. He recognised that people in South Africa “would hold different views” but as for him, the two spheres were totally united:

There is no differentiation for me between religion and public life. There is no religion outside of public life. Public life, it's life – that is not just the spiritual things you do. The life people think of as public life – it's more government and I also don't make that differentiation because religion is about the totality of life. That's how I understand it. The totality of life. I am living my religion as I sit here. That's the expression of my faith and religion. And I'm constrained or freed by my religion. So it's life. Religion for me is life. And the dichotomy for me between life and religion, material and spiritual, secular and sacred, maybe it doesn't make much sense. It's life.

Life for Chikane is about praxis – which concerns practice as well as theory. He went on to say that in his understanding, “God is not about some theoretical debate that corners him on things”. He does not reduce God to issues of morality. Chikane's understanding is that God is infinitely larger than this. Likewise, he said, “We can't reduce the church to narrow forms of religiosity and theology. It's about the totality of life.” This approach is very liberating and offers Chikane large scope for integrating religion in public life without contradiction.

Wildschut was certain that most people in South Africa would have "some religious connections". She stated clearly, "In this country there's an important relationship between religion and public life." In her view religion in South Africa "ranks very high" in terms of importance and therefore "it does impact on public life." She spoke of a then current debate concerning an arms deal with which the government was involved. She observed herein a "moral underlying agenda which [...] is linked to faith." She mentioned other "issues of morality" including the relationship "between arms and poverty" and abortion and the fact that people do make their views known through various forms of public protest. In her opinion this does affect leaders and decision makers: "You will see parliamentarians and people in public life having to grapple with their own sense of faith and religion in order to make sense of those acts." Finally she stated unequivocally that "there's a false schism if you say that your religious life doesn't impact on your public life because your [religious] life is who you are and it touches on all aspects of one's life." She clarified that she "may have even meant "spiritual life" rather than a religious life which is dogmatic and based on doctrine."⁷⁸ Clearly for Wildschut, religious life cannot be separated from the rest of life.

Bam was another subject who found this particular question to be "very difficult." She reiterated the view that "generally people of South Africa are religious people." She also found that religion in South Africa "is very important". She emphasised two aspects in particular in this relationship. The first aspect was that of values that are fostered in religious communities: "And there are many of us in this country [who] are not even aware that the values we talk about are, in fact, religious values, we call them human values." The other aspect that she wanted to concentrate on in her response concerned "our past":

That public life in South Africa which was governance, which was apartheid, politics, practice, way of life was completely [...] governed by the system of apartheid, of discrimination. And this discrimination in South Africa was practised by every religious person who somehow or another managed to live with those contradictions. And many religious people in our country benefited from this system. It suited them, it was fine, it assured them of their wealth, protection, education, status, skills. And yet I'd imagine they would think maybe there's something strange. So that on the one hand you believe that we are all equal in the religion, there must be justice. And then on a day-to-day life as an individual, in your public life, not your private life, and then you have your divisions that are clear that I am a Christian. I am religious, I go to church, I believe in God. And on Sunday I go and worship. And then on Monday you are another person. On Monday I am another person and I will discriminate and I will oppress and I will exploit, and the two parts of my country will never meet. They are divided.

This kind of schism between religion and real life and real justice is not viable, in her opinion. Because of the horror that was born in the contradiction of the past Bam was determined that "the religious life in South Africa has got (when I say religious life I don't talk of worship, I'm talking of values) has got to be fully integrated into public life, and we must avoid this contradiction we have lived with for many years of our lives." Now that there is an opportunity to build something new that breaks with the past, Bam believes that a focus on values is the best common blueprint:

⁷⁸ Personal correspondence from Glenda Wildschut on March 30th 2003.

And so I think it is important for us as we talk of transformation in South Africa religion and its values [...] has got to find a place, and anchor it, as we transform the society. And we will be a different society that is really based on those values. Religious, important values, which most religions in this country embrace. [...] And I think because religion is so important in our practices, in our lives, in our homes, somehow it must be able also really to help us to function in public life. So we don't continue the separation.

She was quite passionate about this subject because, as she said, "it's too important to me." Because the past in South Africa was so fraught with confusion, contradiction and blatant hypocrisy, the work of integrating religion with life was an all the more an urgent business for her:

Religion in South Africa has got to find a strong place in our lives every day, every minute. If it doesn't, those of us who have will never share with the poor. If we really believe that one of the fundamental things is the sharing, as a religious value which many of us embrace, but in real life, we don't know how to do it. And if you really believe that the value that you all embrace is justice [...] it's important that it has integration. Don't ask me how because I don't know. I think it's not enough for us to just open our schools in prayers. We don't discuss, in the public arena, we don't discuss that on radio and television, this life, the public and private. They are separate. We should do more of that and give opportunity to forums of people in movements everywhere to do that. Our national anthem is a very interesting national anthem. Our national anthem is a prayer. [...] And I think our national anthem should not only be sung to unite us it must have a meaning in our lives for all of us.

But it is not simply a change in context from past to present that influences the impact of religion on public life in South Africa. Ahrends made it clear that he understood that relationship to be changing in ways that were heavily influenced by changes in the wider world:

I suspect that one of the things that we forget in South Africa is that the relationship between a religion, formal, organised religion and communities in the world is changing rapidly all the time. And we measure the church, say for example in South Africa against the role it played in South Africa ten years ago. [But] we're on the world stage now and we should be looking at the nature of religious institutions in the context of the world because then we wouldn't be so horrified or so surprised that there is such a big change. And that the nature of the relationship has changed. I think we can be very lucky [...] that we still have a vibrant faith community in our country. And it's very underdeveloped in some respects. I think the advent of indigenous religion is still in its infancy. The maturation [...] or the arrival of indigenous religions and practices [...] is going to be very exciting to see that as it more and more elbows its way into organised religions of the world. I think that it's an awkward thing but it's a necessary thing that the human rights agenda demands the secularisation of society. That society is, in of itself a secular thing. And that's very complicated. But it's better than allowing a society be dominated by religiosity such as you see happened in this country with Christian nationalism or in Islam, Sharia law and all that. Human

rights really require a very basic constitutional platform which is neutral and universal, upon which you can build the various constituencies of religious practice and about institutional freedoms and so on.

Although the changes are complicated they are described here as basically positive and offering exciting possibilities. Ahrends is a realist with a broad perspective in terms of the impact of both interfaith influences and international relations. He does not seem to be emotionally tied to any particular religious agenda. He is happy to observe and participate where appropriate without imposing his position. However, he also expressed regret that there are not "more older, wiser spiritual people around - more of the Tutu's that are more public, that are more able to influence," because, he said, "I think we miss that." In his opinion, there is a shameful lack of leadership and vision, an "absence of wisdom" from the religious community as a whole (although he is impressed by the current chief rabbi). This silence contrasts with voices in other areas:

I think that there are some great proponents or champions of law for example. And human rights stuff. And [...] in business as well as in the press, there are some great voices. In the arts and culture there's quite a lot of stuff happening. And I don't know whether that's a similar kind of vibrancy. Who's leading the South African Council of Churches at the moment? I mean that's the point, who is there? I don't know. As I sit here, I don't know. What is the SACC doing? What is its vision? What is it going to do?

Ahrends was particularly concerned about how the religious sector is (and how it is not) "reflecting on itself in public." He compared the current situation quite understandably to the scenario that he knew best, which, of course, was the era of the anti-apartheid struggle in which he participated. His comments regarding the current identity of the religious sector in South Africa were strongly critical. He perceived that there was "a leadership issue here." He also noted "a lack of wisdom, apparent, perceived wisdom." This was in contrast to "the struggle" during the 1980s where there was clear and visible leadership. He mentioned Allan Boesak and Frank Chikane as two leaders who were "earthed to the reality." His impression was that this was now lacking and that particularly in the context of globalisation the "erosion maybe of the importance" of religion and religious leadership was, in his opinion, "quite sad and quite dangerous even."

This opinion was directly countered by Lapsley who said that "the leaders of the strong religious traditions have voices when they speak [and] that voice is generally taken pretty seriously by the media when they speak out on different issues." He began his response to my question concerning the nature of the relationship between religion and public life in South Africa by addressing the "unease" that was expressed by many during the transition to a "secular society" without an "established church or established religion". He acknowledged that there is an on-going "debate about what we mean by a secular society". He then discussed the ways in which religion does and does not engage in South African public life:

I suppose it is fair to say that we are a very religious people. And the religious communities are very important in public life. And they have a certain standard. We were in a position pre-1994 where the Christian community was in many ways in a triumphalist position. And all other faiths were not given their place in the sun in public life. That has changed and so we have seen on major national occasions

the participation of all the great living faiths taking place. It also would be fair to say that South Africa, in its most organised form, is the religious communities. Christian is the largest. But no other social formation is as organised week by week as the religious communities are. So that means they're also very, very powerful, not least in their potential in public life. That potential is not always fully realised. It is a potential or incipient not necessarily realised but remains an incredibly important social force.

Lapsley seemed to be indicating positive potential. In his opinion this power, if appropriately harnessed, could be a social force to be reckoned with. As he stands outside of government (and works for a non-governmental organisation) it is hardly surprising that he would take a position that would promote leadership and witness by example from the faith communities to the public forum. This is where Lapsley and Ahrends would be in agreement. They also both stress the importance of giving all the living faiths equal legitimacy and opportunity for expression.

Villa-Vicencio would also share the view that individuals of all faith traditions need room to engage in constructive partnership with government, but he indicated that perhaps it is best not to overemphasise one's religious position: "I don't think people of faith necessarily have to say we are engaging as church, or as mosque or synagogue or temple or anything else. We are just engaging as people, ordinary people." While saying this, Villa-Vicencio recognised the importance of religion in South Africa and therefore answered the question about religion and public life at a number of different levels:

One, culturally, politically, historically, South Africa is an intensely religious country. It certainly was an intensely, overtly, an intensely religious country. I remember talking to people in the United States and they asked me if I were to tell them that we had theological debates breaking out in front of Parliament, they couldn't believe it, that there were major issues in the newspaper around the issues of faith. So that's part of our history, it's part of our identity. You can't get away from that. So when one speaks as a religious person, or speaks religiously overtly or implicitly or covertly about religion, I think the majority of people in South Africa actually hear what you're saying. This is language they can understand. It's a milieu they're familiar with. The majority of people are not alienated by it. So I think historically, politically, culturally, I think the articulation of, or the enquiry of the relationship between religion and public life is a very important exercise. At another level South Africa is becoming increasingly secular very fast for a whole range of reasons. Just because of change. Partly to do with lots of exiles coming back. It's partly to do with people who at one time never felt free to talk of themselves as atheists or agnostics, are now free to do so. [...] And that's a good thing. I think, at that level, the church ought to be just, people of faith ought to be just a little hesitant. And be very careful not to speak too loosely, not to use clichés, not to claim any privilege, but to speak at the level of serious analysis. So I think the biggest contribution the church can make is vis-à-vis economy or education or anything else in life, is to genuinely engage with people who may or may not be of the faith in seeking to find the best, most honest, most decent policy and response which will promote the common good and leave it there.

He was very concerned with respecting difference in terms of varying faith traditions and personal motivations. But he also acknowledged that while he doesn't believe that it always needs overt recognition, faith is often an important underlying force:

At another level, maybe at the deepest level of all, one can do that interesting exercise and ask why people engage, what motivates them, what drives them. And at that point we would recognise it as faith that drives us. Other people would come to the party from a different perspective. And so I just think we've got to be a little careful of that. So in other words what I'm really talking about I suppose is a separation in a sense between the spiritual and the public engagement. Not in wanting to keep the two apart, but in separating them out of, driven by a strategy that says not everybody shares our values, our motivations. Respect. Saying it's not necessary to name this thing as Christian or religious in any way, you needn't fly that flag. Just do the right thing, do what is good. And those things that are right and good and pure, of good repute are in my opinion spiritual values that come from God. In that sense, my theology is rooted in Thomas Aquinas: "That which is true is of God." That it is the truth that will set you free. And if we can find the solutions, to the South African economy or educational system or anything else. [...] Or AIDS. To the extent that we're promoting the healing in that area, the salvation in that area. To that extent are we promoting the gospel? And I don't think God is some neurotic little man or woman sitting in the sky somewhere watching as to whether we fly his or her flag. I don't think that matters. And so for me, what motivates me is a desire to promote the common good.

Louw is another progressive thinker who has been involved with the interfaith movement and has fully endorsed the idea of "a multi-religious society". He does not hold Christianity above the other religions in his response, but he insists upon the need for general upfront and pragmatic religious witness to both government and society at large and he does not hesitate to express this in terms of his own Christian perspective:

I think that religion must remain a partner with government to make a difference to the lives of South African citizens. I think that religion must also continue or rediscover its prophet role that I think it should play in witnessing to government where it is necessary. And it must be courageous enough to do that. And I think that religion must also be vigilant about maintaining the diversity and the recognition that we give to everybody in South Africa. That we maintain our commitment to saying that it's a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-lingual, diverse society that we have. "The Rainbow Nation". And that there is space, there is room for everybody. So and I think that religion must re-emerge as a recognised, high profile, public player in the public domain. I don't buy into its marginalisation, into highly spiritualised activities.

Louw is a practical team player who explained that it is unrealistic to leave all the work to government. He believes "that there can be legitimate expectations based on our faith that we can have of what government must deliver" but that it is also of critical importance to remember "that we can't just leave all of these things to government without making a connection to our faith as well." He is not satisfied with the terminology used by some in government of "the reconstruction and development of the soul". Although he agrees that "we must deal with the

morals in our society" he takes it several steps further into the practical domain of "concrete service delivery". He is clear that "there must be a connection to faith in that sense as well". To sum up, he stated quite clearly:

So for me it's not spiritualising. And marginalising the contribution based on our faith. Only on certain issues and not other issues. And what seems to be emerging is a need for a new kind of prophetic witness that must come into the public domain around what government must do with our tax payers resources in addressing the poverty and the poor in our country. So I go beyond just the RDP of the soul as a role for [...] my faith and the churches and mosques and synagogues and temples to play.

Louw wants to see from within government "recognition of the faith sector as a significant sector that can make a contribution". He was quick to qualify this in terms of (then) recent developments on this front in the United States that were making international news and had become hot topics for debate. He made it clear that his understanding of the faith sector's involvement was worlds apart from the way that the "republican administration and George Bush looks at it in the United States, where it is part of a conservative agenda to have the faith-based organisation co-opted into doing what government should be doing." This kind of conservatism was a worrying trend for a number of the subjects interviewed.

Niehaus was concerned that there were already signs of its emergence in South Africa where he suggested that there were "kernels of that in the United Christian Democratic party." He was convinced that at present "the leadership of the United Christian Democratic Party is far too inept to be able to use, to benefit from [it, but] if you have a very clever politician who can utilise this, there's a huge resource." Niehaus was well aware of the potential dangers of linking conservative religion too closely to government. But when asked about the relationship between religion and public life in South Africa, he was upfront about stating that for himself it is impossible to separate the two:

[F]or me personally my religious experience and how I experience that very much influences my public life. And there's really no gap between that. These things are locked. I'm saddened that formal expression of religion in South Africa is not facing those challenges.

He has observed that as a result of the challenges and tensions in South African society, both whites and blacks tend to seek a more vertical, more spiritual, and more conservative religious experience that he understands to be both escapist and dangerous. He is particularly concerned that the ANC might someday face strong opposition from a movement that would be "right wing, religiously motivated, probably financed from America." His concerns are not unfounded:

I think that there's a huge gap between some of the more progressive leadership between the ANC and the, the grass roots people. And part of that has got to do the way in which people were forced to go into exile and [...] many of the people who are sitting in today's parliament who come from exile are so far removed from what the ordinary South Africans are thinking. I'm saying this with a real concern because I myself would hate to see the situation where we roll back the progressive legislation we put in place on

abortion, on anti-death penalty, etc. But in all of these issues if we had a referendum, we'll lose. And that's a huge danger. And the progressive Christian community in this country is losing that battle. [...] You can see it in rather empty churches. Empty churches are those who were previously supposedly progressive. Where are the full churches? Those more charismatic, conservative communities. And I think that [...] we haven't seen the end of that in terms of the political implications in South Africa. And what I fear is that a part of the white community will make common cause with part of the black conservative community in the future. I don't know how we counter that because I think that the progressive Christians have given up a tremendous amount of space in this community by lack of I don't know what. But they failed. And I include myself, I haven't got a clear answer for it either.

Niehaus mentioned the power and influence that he perceives is currently wielded by the Rhema Church in Randburg. The vast resources to which its leadership has access astounded him. This funding is coming from "the religious, fundamentalist South of the United States". During a recent discussion Niehaus had in a group that included Ray McCauley, he was able to ascertain that to "put it mildly, they're not where I am." He went on to say that he didn't think that it was "coincidental that some of the people from the apartheid leftovers, people like Roelf Meyer, etc. are finding a common cause" with such a conservative movement. Niehaus also noted that it was "sad" that McCauley has "a much more strident voice" than the current General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches.

Mayson was of the opinion that very often one of the main aspects of the relationships between religion and public life is not adequately addressed. He boils it down to "the gut faith of the people on the ground, the people in the townships, the people in the suburbs of the city." In his view:

It was the gut faith of people that produced the liberation struggle in the end. It was all very well for us; we went round and tried to spell it out in marvellous, theological language, political language and that sort of thing. But what we were working on was the gut faith, what I believe was the spiritual power in the people in the ground.

Mayson's impression is that the religious bodies lack interest in what is really important because they are overly concerned with "running their religious industries". His main complaint was "the lack of leadership, the lack of vision in the religious bodies". He used the example of the current perceived leadership crisis in the Anglican Church. He singled out Archbishop Ndungane whom he criticized harshly. Mayson explained that this was "not because what he says is wrong, but because of the way he does it." He went on to say more generally that "when you talk about religion you talk a very complex animal, and I don't think the religions are capable of pulling it together." He places much more hope in terms of creating unity in the capacities of "politicians who become aware of, in one way or other however it's spelt out, aware of what I would call in the old terms this ruling of power in God in society." He seems to have a profound belief concerning the actualisation of transformation that extends far beyond religious commitment that he articulated thus:

When people become aware of a commitment, an ideological commitment to a collective, moral transformation, and they realise that it's within their grasp, it's a human thing that can be done in the human community. And that it can be spelt out in all sorts of different ways but the common factor is that. I think that's what is going to happen. It might be that's wishful thinking, but I think that's what happened. And the fact is that the initiative to do this is coming from the political leaders, it's coming from leaders in the ANC. Not from religious leaders.

Jones was equally pessimistic about the religious bodies' capacity to make a positive contribution. He also referred to the painful and confusing loss of the leadership of Archbishop Tutu. In Jones' frank and cutting opinion, "by and large, public life tolerates religion". He elaborated by giving a rather bleak analysis of the current state of the relationship between religion and public life in South Africa:

We're a very tolerant society in that respect. In terms of the impact of faith on public life [...] I don't think that you have the same moral authority that we had when you had figures like Desmond around the place. And my concern is that Desmond's withdrawal from public life has made it more difficult for any kind of Godly influence there. [...] I think that the best that the church can hope for is to be tolerated. I'm not sure that it quite deserves even that. And tolerance will become whatever the next step down is [...]. And if you're still around and people are trying to ignore you, you become hated. And then the church will feel persecuted.

Jones points to the problematic "dichotomy of church and world" and the unwillingness on the part of the institution to "become the church of the world." In his opinion it is in the process of hastening its own downfall.

While Mary Burton would disagree with the position of rejection that the previous two disillusioned ex-clergymen have put forth, she also indicated that the church does need to take some responsibility for the ways in which very often people have not been offered appropriate guidance in terms of political thinking. This is certainly one of the difficulties that she encountered with religion. While qualifying that she could "really only speak for mainly white people in areas of privilege, although I know at second hand about what religion and their faith mean to the lives of many other people," she explained that the source of her own sadness comes from the fact that the church "has been to a very large extent cut off from political life, or public life, and has not given the kind of guidance and teaching that people should have had." This said, she acknowledged that perhaps people did not want to hear it. She went on to note the exception to this general trend in non-engagement:

But the church's voice has been raised bravely in certain places but not in each parish, except in certain cases and then very often the people who have raised those voices have paid heavily for it. So I suppose that was part of my decision not to attend regular church services at certain stages. On the other hand the church provided the safe haven for the kind of experience people needed it or wanted it to. And there were certainly people within my parish or within my knowledge who would go willingly to churches in other areas or would try to exchange networks with other churches. And I know there are many other churches that have done that too. So these two aspects are happening in tandem in a way

that the white church could sit quite nicely, safely and protectedly [sic] and without being disturbed by what was going on around it. And on the other hand it provided the space and a certain amount of safe space for people who were looking to venture outside. Who knew there was something wrong and wanted to do something about it. So it was like a dual voice really. And there are lots of people who would say that's what the church should do of course. That you meet people where their needs are. Certainly at the time I felt that it should be rousing people to action.

While the relationship between religion and public life in South Africa is clearly fraught with particular complications, it also has particular strengths. Burton noted this quite clearly and offered one explanation for its occurrence in the example of a common comfort in prayer:

On the other hand one of the things I do think about this country is that one of the reasons that change has been less painful than it could easily have been is because there is profound faith in so many sectors of our society. So that people could meet each other at different points. And I remember when, it was a meeting when the first time that the World Council of Churches came into South Africa. The General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. After years and years and years of isolating South Africa. And there was a meeting in Seapoint where church representatives came together and had a meeting. And he was very interested, having been such a critic of South Africa for so long, he said he had never, ever been to any country where prayer was such an integral part of life. And he had met [a senior Afrikaner politician] who had immediately invited him to pray. And then he had gone to a group of very radical students who had immediately invited him to pray. And he said he had simply never, ever experienced that before. And the thought that there were all of these people with a common desire and comfort in prayer and ease in prayer made him realise that here was a potent source for good and for change and for coming together. And I think that is really true.

She seemed to take a position of hopefulness and continued commitment to both the political and religious aspects of her own life and saw the potential for this in the public forum.

Closing Thoughts

There is in many cases an on-going conceptual separation between religion and public life. Clearly, some traditions practise the integration quite naturally while others have been deliberate about teaching boundaries between the two. All of the subjects acknowledged the importance of religion in South Africa and the influence that Christian institutions can have. Yet the "dichotomy of church and world" to which Jones refers, does indeed prevent some, both inside and outside of the church, from recognising the spiritual implications of (for example) politics and economics. During the anti-apartheid struggle there was a sense that certain sectors of the church were appropriately engaged with the political and spiritual issues at hand. At the Multi-Event 99 Conference, its coordinator Professor James Cochrane put forward the position that there seem to be "clear signs in South Africa that the voice of religious thinkers, religious leaders and religious institutions faces a crisis of credibility on several fronts." The purpose of the event was "to face that possibility, to counter it, and to build a new basis of confidence

and sophistication where old clichés will no longer do.”⁷⁹ If, therefore, the institution can move away from out-dated thinking and self-promotion and strive to become a church that engages with relevant issues in the contemporary world, it may find an increased level of respect and commitment from Christians and non-Christians alike.

The issue of how church leadership and Christian activists present themselves is critical. A judgemental or “holier than thou” attitude can be extremely alienating and off-putting. A case in point might be the way Mogoba has often found himself rejected or misunderstood because of assertions of Christian authority. Those who practice openness to difference may earn genuine legitimacy and respect. Chikane has been able to provide Christian witness inside government without a sense of contradiction. Mkhathshwa has promoted cooperation and interaction between government and the institutional church. Louw has encouraged partnership where possible and believes in an approach that promotes upfront and pragmatic witness by Christians to government. Lapsley, likewise, believes that the leadership of the various religious traditions have a responsibility to witness to both government and the public because they are, in his view, an important social force. Bam has been totally upfront in her willingness to be a Christian role-model in a secular world as she believes that religious values should be fully integrated with public practice. For Wildschut, Ahrends, Burton and Villa-Vicencio the best approach seems to have been one of embracing the Christian ethos without promoting the church, per se. Niehaus expressed a need to be cautious about the kind of role that the church should play, and he was not impressed by what he perceived as a current lack of vision and voice. He made an important contribution at the ME99 when he spoke of the ways in which Christian activists might engage appropriately:

We must work in a world community, in solidarity with other moral and concerned people. We must be careful about thinking that we (religious people) *need* to play a central role. Perhaps this is part of the legacy for religious people from the “old era” – the assumption that religious people should play a “leadership role”. Religious organisations may have only a small contribution to make, and that may be nothing more than being part of the process.

We don’t need to provide answers, but rather we need to look at what kind of analysis of society is needed in order to move ahead. The church (or religion generally) does not need to formulate answers. In a post-modern society there is a plurality of perspectives that can help us to move forward. In this context we should not think that we hold all of the knowledge in our hands. We must play a modest and careful role, while expressing our beliefs in our own lives in terms of our own forms of religious expression.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ James R. Cochrane, ed., *Multi-Event 99 Conference Proceedings*, 9.

⁸⁰ Carl Niehaus, “Ethical Challenges of the Present” in *Multi-Event-99 Conference Proceedings*, James Cochrane, ed., 21.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON PERSONAL FAITH IN PUBLIC LIFE: A FOUNDATION FOR ACTION

The theological reflection that I did on the lived experiences and the themes that emerged from my analysis was influenced by an understanding of practical and contextual theology as outlined by James R. Cochrane, John W. de Gruchy and Robin Petersen in their book *In Word and Deed: Toward a Practical Theology for Social Transformation*. My research has elucidated that many people are in the process of rethinking both their engagements and their belief systems in order to bring them up to date. Context, community and prayer all seem to be key factors in sustaining faith and political commitment. There was some reflection about the difference between drawing faith and inspiration from external sources and causes and finding it inside oneself. In a nutshell, the responses indicated that there has been continuity and even an increased experience of faith for most (Burton, Bam, Chikane, Wildschut, Mkhathshwa, Lapsley, Louw). Expressions and understandings of faith, however, have changed. Mogoba contradicted himself, by declaring that it has stayed the same, and then admitting that much of what sustained his faith in the past has changed in reality. Mayson and Niehaus still consider themselves to be sustained by their faith, but they have distanced themselves from worshipping communities. Villa-Vicencio, likewise, was sustained by his involvement with "the struggle" in the past and continues to find that his work gives meaning to his life, but he did not mention any reliance on the traditional disciplines or experiences of faith. Ahrends made clear that he relies on both traditional and new ways of seeking sustenance. Jones took this a step further in declaring that he is not currently sustained, and while he has not "lost faith," he considers himself to be "prodigal".

My work illustrates that personal histories offer creative resources towards uncovering theological perspectives and offering models for faith-based social involvement. The Circle for Concerned African Women Theologians encourages women to write theology from their particular social locations because "[b]y telling our stories and articulating them theologically, we are insisting on our right to be engaged – together with male theologians and the leaders of our religions – in the task of reconstructing the African continent."⁸¹ This strategy is not self-centred because although it begins with the self, it moves outward.

Definition of Terms

The overwhelming majority of the subjects interviewed for this thesis shared the opinion that it is practically impossible to separate one's faith from one's life and work and that social analysis of context is critically important. They all come from Christian backgrounds and still embrace (to varying degrees) the Christian faith. It does not necessarily follow that they are practising Christians. By "practising" I am referring predominantly to active membership and attendance with a worshipping community. Nevertheless, their own personal faith is not a source

⁸¹ Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro and Nyambura J. Njoroge, eds, *Groaning in Faith: African Women in the Household of God* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1996), xv.

of embarrassment to them. Faith is not something that they feel they need to hide in the context of their roles in public life. Nor, generally speaking, is their personal faith something that they seek to highlight or prove.

Within South Africa, and even within my limited sampling of Christians, there are a wide variety of understandings and experiences of Christianity. John de Gruchy offers an important insight into this reality:

Christianity and church are complex phenomena. It is important therefore, not to indulge in sweeping generalizations, nor to assume that there is Christian unanimity on the issues at hand. There are in fact, different Christianities, and different ways in which the gospel is understood and related to the world. Confessional and denominational differences clearly affect the ways in which churches participate in the political arena. We must also avoid claiming too much credit for the churches. Their participation has often been ambivalent, and in some instances even today they have resisted rather than enabled liberation and democratisation. [...] The involvement with churches in the struggle for democracy in the second half of our century has demonstrated that in many places the churches have become virtually indispensable in the process of transition. But is this merely a matter of pragmatic usefulness and perhaps ecclesiastical expediency, or is it something which is more deeply grounded in theological conviction?⁸²

I argue that the activists interviewed for this project have been propelled by their faith. But what is the meaning of Christian faith in this context? Irving Hexham in his *Concise Dictionary of Religion* says the following:

In Christian thought two tendencies concerning faith may be observed: first, faith is regarded as belief or mental assent to the truth; and second, faith is understood as the orientation of the total person best described as trust, confidence or loyalty. The theological system of Thomas Aquinas was based on an intellectualistic model of faith. His teachings are basic to the doctrine of Roman Catholicism in which faith is to be regarded as an act of intellectual assent to supernatural truths based on their divine authority. Luther rejected this view of faith, arguing instead that faith is the response of the total person to the gospel.⁸³

I am inclined to lean more towards Luther's view for the purpose of this thesis. My understanding is that faith is an unprovable transforming belief in an ultimate power that most of the subjects call God, which affects one's life and being in a comprehensive way (not compartmentalized or separated from any dimension of life). This belief can give strength and courage that extends beyond normal human capacity. It is a conviction that inspires. Faith is also a journey. In his important work, *The Theology of Hope*, Jürgen Moltmann states, "To believe does in fact mean to cross and transcend bounds, to be engaged in an exodus."⁸⁴ Discovery and contradiction are inevitable. This thesis attempts to map the winding faith journeys of the subjects. Many of the subjects experience a living faith that is a dynamic inspiration that influences the way they live and the choices they make. This may include

⁸² John W. de Gruchy, *Christianity and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 10.

⁸³ Irving Hexham, *Concise Dictionary of Religion* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 80.

⁸⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (London: SMC Press, LTD, 1967), 19.

individual or communal spiritual disciplines such as worship, prayer, Bible study, fasting, communion, and confession. Likewise, their faith-based decisions are choices made according to moral and spiritual influences and particular theologies.

What is theology?

A relevant and practical definition of theology that is based on a long history of faithful inquiry comes from Daniel L. Migliore in his tome, *Faith Seeking Understanding*. He offers Anselm's classical definition (*fides quaerens intellectum*) that faith makes bold inquiry and raises questions in search of "at least provisional answers."⁸⁵ Migliore believes that "Christian faith invariably prompts questions, sets an inquiry in motion, fights the inclination to accept things as they are, continually calls into question unexamined assumptions about God, ourselves and our world."⁸⁶ He believes that this field of inquiry must not be restricted to church leaders and theologians:

Theology [...] is the continuous process of inquiry that is prompted both by the surprising grace of God and by the distance between God's coming kingdom on the one hand and our experience of the brokenness of life on the other. If the task of theology is properly understood, it will not be seen as an activity that can be abandoned to a cadre of professional theologians in the church. It is an activity in which all members of the community of faith participate in appropriate ways.⁸⁷

This is an understanding of theology that entails engaged responsibility by all Christians in their various contexts. It is a model of social justice. Theology is not just about abstract concepts, but about hands-on, tangible practice. Migliore ties faith and theology together thus: "If faith is the direct response to the hearing of God's word of grace and judgement, theology is second-order reflection on the church's language and practice of faith. And this second order reflection happens at many levels and in many different life contexts."⁸⁸ But theology must be practical and engaged in real life in the real world if it is to make sense. A helpful definition of "praxis" follows:

Praxis, while literally meaning practice, has in critical theory come to mean practice or action which is subject to critical reflection and which is engaged in social transformation towards the human good. This action is not blind or undirected, but action shaped by a particular theory, set of values and goals.⁸⁹

I have chosen such a theological approach to understanding South Africa's recent past because it is a direct route to the heart of the matter of understanding the meaning behind the lives and actions of the chosen subjects. Faith is about both acting and understanding why such action has been chosen. Douglas McGaughey defends the central importance of theology for humanity in his profound work *Strangers and Pilgrims: On the Role of Aporiai in*

⁸⁵ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Michigan: Wm. M. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), 2.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸⁹ James R Cochrane, John de Gruchy and Robin Petersen, *In Word and Deed: Towards a Practical Theology for Social Transformation* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1991), 24-25.

Theology. He offers some conceptual insights through the notion of an aporia that shed light on the decision making process of the subjects in difficult times:

Literally the Greek word aporia means "no crossing," "no ford," or "no way through or over," but its meaning is more adequately expressed with something like "being on the way, but not knowing the way ahead." One may think of its meaning in the sense of being fogged in on a mountain pass and not knowing the way either ahead or back yet having to go on, somehow.⁹⁰

He claims that "[t]heology is first and foremost a living out of, a listening to, and an adjudicating of aporiai in the human odyssey of faith."⁹¹ He also argues that it is "rooted in paradox" in that "theology is concerned with both that pre-reflective living, dependent upon aporiai and that conscious reflection facilitating our asking of those questions and confronting of those paradoxical depths that take us to the core of our lives as individuals thrown into a natural and social environment where one must act always on the basis of one's unknowing."⁹² He reminds us that theology is rooted in the mundane experience of daily life.

Practical Theology

The subjects presented in this thesis have all made radical faith-based decisions during their active involvement in "the struggle". Each undertook a conscious reflection about how best to take action for justice. Each of them have emphasised with their lives and actions the importance of practical theology. McGaughey defines practical theology as "procedural, instructional, prophetic, pastoral, and parenetic." He continues:

Its concern is the interface between the life-world of the church as an institution and Philosophical and Systematic Theology of the tradition of the institution. The goal of Practical Theology is concerned both to prepare the leadership for a particular religious institution and to engage all the issues of praxis associated with a faith community.⁹³

This is a facet of the discipline of theology that was widely expanded upon during the "struggle era." Theology in South Africa has hardly been a peripheral exercise. It therefore more than merits continued attention and reflection. We are deeply indebted to the work of many South African theologians for their reflections on practical theology in the South African context. They recognised that there is no one standard experience for the ways in which it is practised, yet there is a common factor:

Practical theological experience in South Africa is highly differentiated as a result of the variety of cultural, ethnic and social contexts which have shaped its goals and procedures. But whatever else practical theology has been, it remains indelibly marked by a long history of conquest and oppression for

⁹⁰ Douglas R McGaughey, *Strangers and Pilgrims: On the Role of Aporiai in Theology* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1997), 1.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 111.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 507.

the black members of our society; conversely, by a taken-for-granted status of privilege and power on the part of most whites or their representatives in institutions of state, business and society.⁹⁴

The conscientious effort made to define a practical theology for social transformation in South Africa helped to lay the groundwork for reconstruction in the post-apartheid era. The Christian theologians who engaged in this task were upfront about their agenda and their point of departure. As Cochrane et al express it:

No one does theology from a position of theological neutrality. We all approach the task, whether at a crude or sophisticated level, whether poorly or well, from some perspective, from within some commitment or other, and with an agenda - however vague - in mind.

The way of doing practical theology we are describing assumes, in the first place, that the theologian, or the community doing theology, acknowledges and confesses Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ: redeemer, liberator and Lord.

Within the South African context, this confession takes on a particular significance. It is on the basis of this confession that apartheid has been declared a heresy [...]. So, implicit in the point of departure for doing theology as we understand it is both an affirmation of the pivotal element in the Christian tradition of confessing Christ, and, at the same time, a rejection of the ideology of apartheid and any form of its practical implementation. In short, by confessing Christ we imply a faith praxis which engages reality within a particular context (and thus must work with the historical ideas and goals, or ideologies, of a particular society), but which also places any ideological claim under the authority and critique of the gospel.⁹⁵

My own agenda in this project is to convey the on-going importance of theological reflection and input in the context of the political and civic life of the New South Africa. I have sought to explore the interface between the subjects' religious and political commitments using the vehicle of their own reflections. The Christian activists who were interviewed for this thesis offered ample material for an exploration into the reciprocal relationship between their faith and their work in politics or public life. As their responses have testified, there is generally an overlap between belief and action, even when the expression of faith is more implicit than explicit. The anti-apartheid movement offered Christian activists an opportunity to put their beliefs into practice for a political cause. It also offered them a strong sense of identity and powerful links to a community of comrades in "the struggle". Part of the transition that has occurred, both nationally and personally, has involved the creation of new identities, visions and communities. This plays out in the lives of the subjects researched here.

The Centrality of the Eucharist

I would argue that Eucharist remains central to understanding Christianity and to the Christian experience of celebration and community and worship experienced by most of the subjects. This was borne out in many of the interviews. In his book, *Torture and Eucharist*, William Cavanaugh argues, "The Eucharist makes simultaneously

⁹⁴ James R Cochrane et al., *In Word and Deed: Toward a Practical Theology for Social Transformation* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1991), 1.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

present our past and our future destiny in communion by incorporating us into the body of Christ."⁹⁶ He continues by explaining that it is in the persons of the church community that the body of Christ is made visible in the world:

It is the body of Christ's disruption of history that we must keep in focus as we move to an examination of the Eucharist as that performance which makes the body of Christ visible in the present. If the church is to resist disappearance, then it must be publicly visible as the body of Christ in the present time, not secreted away in the souls of believers or relegated to the distant historical past or future. It becomes visible through its disciplined practices, but the church's discipline must not simply mimic that of the state. I will argue that the church's discipline can only be realized as a Eucharistic discipline, and it must therefore assume a conformity to Christ, and therefore an assimilation to Christ's self-sacrifice. Christ in the Eucharist actively disciplines the church. The church does not simply perform the Eucharist; the Eucharist performs the church.⁹⁷

It is striking that two of the subjects who would consider themselves non-practicing Christians still spoke specifically about the Eucharist. Jones was still impressed by the memory of the first time he celebrated communion – on the first Soweto Day. He also was aware of Archbishop Tutu's deep concern that he should continue to celebrate it. Villa-Vicencio spoke of his ease in attending an Anglican Eucharist service. Even Mayson, who seems to pride himself on his distance from the institutional church, spoke with nostalgia about the times when he used to meet regularly with a group of "faithful" friends for a common meal and discussion. This, in my mind, resembled a communion of sorts. Bam, Wildschut and Burton all continue to receive the Eucharist in their local Anglican churches.

Lapsley does still celebrate the Eucharist occasionally, but his understanding is that the sacraments are "part of as opposed to being central to" his ministry. He says, "It's a strand among many other strands whereas I think many priests would say, "Well, this is the heart of the matter," for me it's not the heart of the matter. The heart of the matter is a much broader thing of which this is one of the strands." Lapsley carries the symbol of the Eucharist in his body because of the bombing that he experienced. His presence as a wounded Christian in the arena of reconciliation work is a power reminder of Christ's sacrifice.

Perhaps it has been easier for some of those who did not have the attachment to the liturgy of communion to drift away from shared faith experience. Villa-Vicencio, Mayson (both Methodist) and Niehaus (Dutch Reformed Church) seem to have found it more straightforward to distance themselves from worship, while the Catholic and the Anglican subjects seemed, generally speaking, more rooted in their communities. Mkhatswa continues to celebrate Mass when time permits. Ahrends was keen to continue to celebrate the Eucharist while Jones seemed to indicate that his refusal to do it was quite wrenching. Although Louw, Mogoba and Chikane did not mention it directly, all of their denominations do celebrate communion, and they each continue to officiate. The desire to keep Christ present was evident in most of the subjects' accounts of their lives and practices of worship.

⁹⁶ William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998), 234.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 234-235.

Different metaphors and myths make better sense at different junctures in individual and national transitions. A key example of this is the centrality of the metaphor of the crucified Christ during the "struggle era". People both witnessed and identified with the pain and the passion. But Jesus didn't stay on the cross. Similarly, during the transition in South Africa, something had to die and be buried for a new thing to be born. This inevitably resulted in an empty cross. And perhaps some of the faithful have been left staring at a symbol that no longer is appropriate in terms of offering directive action. The new context requires a new contextualisation. This is a post-exodus and a post-Resurrection era. The destroyed "Temple" needs to be rebuilt and for this a "theology of reconstruction" is helpful.⁹⁸

The Politics of Religion

I would argue that religion is inherently political. This position is explained by Paul Gifford in his introductory chapter to *African Christianity: Its Public Role*:

A religion provides definitions, principles of judgement and criteria of perception. It offers a reading of the world, of history, of society, of time, of space, of power, of authority, of justice and of ultimate truth. Religion limits or increases the conceptual tools available, restricts or enlarges emotional responses, or channels them, and withdraws certain issues from inquiry. It inculcates a particular way of perceiving, experiencing and responding to reality. Religion can legitimise new aspirations, new forms of organisation, new relations and a new social order. Every religion involves struggles to conquer, monopolise or transform the symbolic structures which order reality. All of these are issues for political analysis, and issues that are missed if questions of the political role of religion are asked purely in terms of church versus state.⁹⁹

In his book of case studies of a variety of African churches, Gifford considers recent developments in African Christianity from a perspective of political and social analysis. He distinguishes "three areas in which churches could strengthen civil society: the political, the economic and the cultural".¹⁰⁰ My research has pointed predominantly to the first area, the political, in that the subjects interviewed all seem to provide Christian political witness. De Gruchy helps to understand both the motive and the ideal result of such engagement:

A primary task of Christian political witness is, therefore, to enable those who have previously been excluded from the corridors of power to gain access, and to ensure that power is exercised in such a way that it works for the good of society as a whole. This is fundamental to move from democratic transition to transformation.¹⁰¹

Cochrane, de Gruchy and Petersen have long been wrestling with the implications of political action on the part of Christians. For them, as with many of the subjects interviewed, the approach is integrated:

⁹⁸ Villa-Vicencio, Charles, *A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation-Building and Human Rights*, David Philip Publishers, Claremont, 1992.

⁹⁹ Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 26.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 343.

¹⁰¹ John W. de Gruchy, *Christianity and Democracy*, 268.

The outer circle of the Christian ethical life is our engagement in the *polis*, the arena of political power and decision making. This is the all-encompassing arena that structures our lives on every level. Within our context it is the site of our struggle for our true Christian faith and identity. Our 'kairos' in our response to and our involvement in this arena.

The themes of justice, violence, peace and liberation belong to this arena. They provide the Biblical, theological and practical link between the Church and the State, between faith and politics. In fact, a network of linkages is provided through these themes. They are the link between our theological ethical centre and concrete political praxis, the link between the Biblical text and social reality, and the link between prayer and praxis, worship and politics, service of God and political service, the kingdom of God and our historical engagement and struggle."¹⁰²

The idea of "service" is key to understanding the Christian ethic that compels certain individuals to engage in political activity. One such individual who inspired and mentored my own father was United States Senator Mark O. Hatfield. He in turn was hugely influenced by the life and example of Abraham Lincoln. Both these American statesmen were also committed Christians who understood themselves to be "public servants". In an essay entitled "How Can a Christian be in Politics?" Hatfield speaks to this idea:

True service involves neither condescension nor exploitation. The imagery of the "public servant" is a fundamental part of the Christian-Judaic tradition. From the servant image of Isaiah to the commands of Christ, we are called to serve others – "the public." Our call to service is not because service has been earned, but rather because each man is of divine worth. Christ provides the example for the Christian in public service. "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (Jn. 13:14). One's spiritual life should help to renew daily a personal sense of "servanthood."¹⁰³

Despite the fact that Hatfield comes from a very different context, his approach is similar to what many of the subjects stated or implied. His faith provides both structure and liberation:

My relationship with Christ gives me a base – an absolute – both for my personal and my public life. This is the one constant factor running through all of life. The dynamics of this relationship can give the Christian both an absolute foundation and the freedom to deal with the relativity of the political sphere. There is a perspective, an equilibrium, and a total world view which the Christian can achieve, and this gives him the capacity to deal with relative and changing circumstances.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² James R. Cochrane et al., *In Word and Deed*, 68.

¹⁰³ Mark O. Hatfield, "How Can a Christian Be in Politics?" in *Protest and Politics: Christianity and Contemporary Affairs*, ed. By Robert G. Clouse, Robert D. Linder and Richard V. Pieard (Greenwood, SC: The Attic Press, Inc., 1968), 16.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

Many of the subjects seem to share this foundation and freedom as they engage in their current capacities. As Hatfield so clearly states, "The responsibility of the public servant is not to Christianize the institutions of government, but to bring the influence of Christ to bear upon them."¹⁰⁵ The majority of the subjects researched for this project seem to have come to that same conclusion. Their power and their freedom is related to Christ and to other people. As Bonhoeffer wrote:

[I]n the language of the Bible freedom is not something man has for himself but something he has for others... It is not a possession, a presence, an object... but a relationship and nothing else. In truth, freedom is a relationship between two persons. Being free means 'being free for the other,' because the other has bound me to him. Only in relationship to the other am I free.¹⁰⁶

This is similar to the concept of "ubuntu" that is much discussed in post-apartheid South Africa. The "traditional African conception of community (as expressed in such proverbs as *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* – a person depends on persons to be a person)" is crucial to the reconstruction of a just society.¹⁰⁷ There is a strong emphasis on relationship reflected here that comes into conflict with the European philosophy of individualism, but intersects with the Christian understanding of community.

The Radical Hope

Christianity is also a faith based on a radical hope for a better future. But this hope, as witnessed in the lives of the subjects researched here, is not idle. It strives towards the promise of a "Kingdom yet to come". Moltmann quotes Kierkegaard in *The Theology of Hope* when he explains that hope is a "passion for what is possible".¹⁰⁸ This is far more dynamic than the political manoeuvrings of "the art of the possible". It is not contrived and it is contagious. It is about refusing to compromise and accept things as they are. Moltmann offers a profound understanding of hope and of peace:

[A]ll this must inevitably mean that the man who thus hopes will never be able to reconcile himself with the laws and constraints of this earth, neither with the inevitability of death nor with the evil that constantly bears further evil. The raising of Christ is not merely a consolation to him in a life that is full of distress and doomed to die, but it is also God's contradiction of suffering and death, of humiliation and offence, and of the wickedness of evil. Hope finds in Christ not only a consolation in suffering, but also the protest of the divine promise against suffering. If Paul calls death the 'last enemy' (1Cor. 15:26), then the opposite is also true: that the risen Christ and with him the resurrection hope, must be declared to be the enemy of death and of a world that puts up with death. Faith takes up this contradiction and thus becomes itself a contradiction to the world of death. That is why faith, wherever it develops into hope,

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 18.

¹⁰⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, enlarged edition, ed. by Eberhard Bethge (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1971), 159.

¹⁰⁷ Augustine Shutte, *Philosophy for Africa* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1993; reprint, Milwaukee, WI: Milwaukee University Press, 1995), 8 (page references are to reprint edition).

¹⁰⁸ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (London: SMC Press, LTD, 1967), 20.

causes not rest but unrest, not patience but impatience. It does not calm the inquiet heart, but is itself this inquiet heart in man. Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it to contradict it. Peace with God means conflict with the world, for the goad of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present.¹⁰⁹

Again, I assert that these and many other South African Christian activists who have experienced that leap from faith to hope have transformed their lives and ultimately the course of history. They could not accept life as it was or agree to grumble in private. Their resistance was bold because it was an unwavering public statement for justice. Justice is biblical and it is also political:

Justice is the foundation of Law and Right, the touchstone of political and legal practice. It is the basis of the true state, both historically and theologically. As such it is a term which belongs above all to the political arena. Here it operates on three levels; on the level of the actual day-to-day practice of 'doing justice' or injustice; at an individual or interpersonal level, in the realm of social, political and economic structures which can embody justice or injustice (oppression); and as an ethical and philosophical reflection on these relationships and structures.¹¹⁰

The concept of justice brings us back to "community" as justice is invariably bound up in relationships with others. Tanner says, "The salvation in which we are to participate may amount to something more than social relations of justice; but it can amount to nothing less than them."¹¹¹ While understandings of faith and political action are inextricably bound up in each other, a word of caution must be sounded with regard to their relationship:

Faith and political praxis must not be reduced to the other, politics must not be sacralized and faith must not without remainder be 'secularized'. Politics, and hence the struggle for and maintenance of political and social and economic justice is a human endeavour and engagement. This human struggle must not be totally identified with God's struggle. Similarly God's project cannot be totally reduced to its political orientation. Justification and justice are separate categories.

But in the same breath we must assert that faith cannot be separated from political praxis. Justification cannot be separated from justice. God's command must be incarnate, contextualised in human struggles. In fact we discover in the radical nature of justification an analogy for a radical view of justice as the liberating and revolutionary justice which comes from below, from the solidarity of God with the oppressed in their struggle for true justice.¹¹²

There is an emphasis on cooperation between God and mature Christians who are capable of reflecting on both their faith and the world in which they live. Sara Maitland argues convincingly that God acts in solidarity with all those who accept the invitation to work for justice:

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 21.

¹¹⁰ James R. Cochrane et al., *In Word and Deed*, 69.

¹¹¹ Kathryn Tanner, *The Politics of God*, 226.

¹¹² James R. Cochrane et al., *In Word and Deed*, 71.

God has embraced, apparently joyfully, a “reduction” in power in order to increase ours. God has invited us to be fellow workers – not servants, not employees, but colleagues, partners, members of the Board of Management. Whether we want to be or not, we are necessarily “engaged in creating each other’s humanity,” each other’s personhood and identity.

If we want to go on believing in a creator God, then it has to be one who wants us to take responsibility for this. Relativism has been extensively criticized for blurring moral boundaries, but taken seriously it imposes a very high obligation to work for justice, to think intelligently, and involve ourselves consciously with the world. God has revealed in the fundamental nature of the universe and of human identity that we have no choice – not to act is to act. How we live will create the world in which we live, and which future generations will live.¹¹³

What is to Come?

This is not the end of the story. It would be fascinating to speak to these individuals again in ten years to learn more of where they have gone and what they have learned. This is a continuing journey of transformation. The religious journeys that these subjects are undertaking seem to parallel South Africa’s political journey. But as just as they took action in the past, unhindered by the threat of torture and imprisonment and alienation, they have carried on making decisions and acting according to their own conscience. This is reflected in McGaughey’s central idea of the “aporiai of the spirit” that is grounded in human experience. We must always act based on unknowing Dietrich Bonhoefer offered by his life an example of “theology in the doing”. He understood that all political action and inaction would result in guilt; and therefore one had to press ahead with acting out of love, as Christ would have done:

Jesus is not concerned with the proclamation and realization of new ethical ideals; he is not concerned with himself being good. He is concerned solely with love for the real man, and for that reason he is able to enter into the fellowship of the guilt of men and to take the burden of their guilt upon himself... If any man tries to escape guilt in responsibility he cuts himself off from the redeeming mystery of Christ’s bearing guilt without sin and he has no share in the divine justification which lies upon this event. He sets his own personal innocence above his responsibility for men, and he is blind to the more irredeemable guilt which he incurs precisely in this...¹¹⁴

The distinction between gospel and life blurs when people engage fully in an active theology. Bonhoeffer’s understanding of discipleship to Christ turns ideas of religion on their heads by indicating what God expects from faithful people. He emphatically states, “It is not the religious act that makes the Christian, but participation in the sufferings of God in the secular life... Jesus calls men, not to a new religion, but to life.”¹¹⁵ All of the subjects researched here have embraced, at different stages, that notion of being called to life more fully. This was

¹¹³ Sara Maitland, *A Joyful Theology: Creation, Commitment, and an Awesome God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Books, 2002), 99.

¹¹⁴ As quoted in Renate Wind, *A Spoke in the Wheel*, 100.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

poignantly portrayed in their apartheid era experiences. They lived through a time of trial that has profoundly influenced their experiences of faith.

It is widely hoped that in the post-apartheid era, those who struggled for justice will continue to find new ways to contribute to transformation and reconstruction. Many of the subjects researched here seem to be well grounded in useful and meaningful work and commitment. But the New South Africa is not "heaven on earth". Its present incarnation includes a legacy of pain and violence that, realistically speaking, will probably take several generations to extract. It also faces a disturbingly high degree of other socio-political crises across the spectrum ranging from health to economic issues. It is regrettable but inevitable that there are many South Africans who have become disillusioned and bitter, even to the point of giving up on a future for themselves and their families in the land of their birth. But those who choose to stay and build a better country must, paradoxically, base our hope on realistic political goals and high religious principles, in order to find a way through. As Cedric Mayson reiterates, "The point is simple: our theology must arise out of the context of our lives."¹¹⁶ For many South Africans, this country, with all its problems is the only context that makes sense to them because it is where they belong.

Far from asserting that Christians have the best or the only legitimate approach to political engagement, I would argue with Kathryn Tanner that Christian beliefs about God and the world "do in fact represent the general sort of psychological dispositions necessary for an activist stance."¹¹⁷ She elaborates thus:

Because the self-understanding that informs activist engagement has specifically Christian grounds, the activism that results has a distinctive shape, however: Christian activism is neither cocksure of success nor desperate; it is firmly committed yet humble, uncompromising about the goal of justice yet flexible and free to maneuver [sic] with respect to the means to that end.¹¹⁸

She explains the importance of "nonidolatrous self-esteem as grounds for activism" in that "one must have the humility to accept oneself as not God" and concurrently "one must esteem what one is, as the finite creature of God, encompassed by God's providential and salvific intentions for the world."¹¹⁹ Therefore humility and self-affirmation are both essential elements of an activist stance. Where these are reflected in the attitudes and language and actions of Christian activists, inspiration is inevitable. It is a reminder of what each of us, as Christians who trust that our convictions and our strength come from God, and act out of hope although the outcome is unknowable, is capable.

¹¹⁶ Cedric Mayson, *A Certain Sound*, 127.

¹¹⁷ Kathryn Tanner, *The Politics of God*, 227.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 229.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can we confirm what your formal position was as a religious/political leader during the 1980's?
2. How do you view your role in the struggle against apartheid?
3. Was your faith a motivating factor in your commitment to the struggle against apartheid?
4. How would you describe your current role?
5. Is your current engagement in continuity with your former role? If so, in what way? In what ways is it not?
6. Has a shift taken place in your career? If so, how do you perceive it?
7. Has a shift taken place in your faith experience?
8. Can you speak about any discontinuity that you may be experiencing?
9. What sustained you in terms of your faith in the past?
10. What sustains you now?
11. How would you describe your current involvement with a church/faith community?
12. Do you feel that your expressions of faith in the public arena are more upfront or more guarded?
13. Is this different from how you used to express your faith publicly?
14. What is your experience of how people perceive you with regard to the work that you are currently doing?
15. Would you say that the outside perspectives of you have been continuous or discontinuous over time and during any transitions you have made?
16. How do you see the nature of the relationship between religion and public life in South Africa?

APPENDIX B: AUTHOR'S INTERVIEWS

Ahrends, Chris. Executive Director of the Desmond Tutu Peace Centre. Cape Town, February 20, 2001

Bam, Brigalia Ntombemhlope. Director of the Independent Electoral Commission. Pretoria, February 14, 2001

Burton, Mary. Former Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner and President of the Black Sash. Cape Town, February 27, 2001

Chikane, Frank. Deputy General to President Thabo Mbeki. Cape Town, February 8, 2001

Jones, Colin. Former Dean of St George's Anglican Cathedral. Cape Town, February 6, 2001

Lapsley, Michael. Director of the Centre for the Healing of Memories. Cape Town, March 6, 2001

Louw, Lionel. Head of the Department of Social Work at the University of Cape Town and Mediator at the Centre for Conflict Resolution. Cape Town, February 15, 2001

Mayson, Cedric. National Co-ordinator of the ANC Commission on Religious Affairs. Cape Town, February 12, 2001

Mkhatshwa, Smangaliso. Mayor of Tshwane (former Deputy Minister for Education). Pretoria, February 14, 2001.

Mogoba, Mmutlanyane Stanley. President of the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania. Cape Town, February 1, 2001.

Niehaus, Carl. Director of Strategic Communications, Deloitte Human Capital Corporation (former Ambassador and ANC MP). Pretoria, February 13, 2001.

Villa-Vicencio, Charles. Director of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation. Cape Town, January 23, 2001

Wildschut, Glenda. Director of the Desmond Tutu Leadership Academy and Peace Centre (Former Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner), Cape Town, February 2, 2001

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