

The legacy of a prophetic moment:

A socio-theological study of the reception and response to the *Kairos Document* amongst churches, faith-communities and individuals in South Africa and within the international ecumenical community, focussing on the English-speaking churches in South Africa with special reference to the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa.

by

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ABSTRACT

The *Kairos Document* ('KD' or 'Document') burst onto the socio-political and ecclesiastical scene in South Africa in 1985, presenting to churches, communities-of-faith and individuals the challenge of a *decisive moment* in the history of Christian opposition to Apartheid. The nature and extent of reactions and responses to the document exceeded the authors wildest dreams and most optimistic of expectations.

This study traces the contours and discerns the patterns of reactions against and resonances with the *Document* in South Africa and within the international ecumenical community. The main focus of this research, however, is on the propensity and capacity of the institutionalised churches - and in particular the English-speaking churches in South Africa - to respond positively and constructively to a prophetic challenge, such that which emanated from the *KD* and the subsequent *Kairos* movement.

One of the English-speaking churches, the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA), is singled out in this thesis and subjected to an extended examination and analysis, relative to its response to the challenge of the *Document*. The main reason for this special reference to the UCCSA is that this church denomination had embarked on a major process of ecclesiastical and denominational transformation in its response to the challenge of *Kairos*. It is upon this process of transformation within the UCCSA that I seek to critically reflect and to draw some learnings from the prophetic legacy of the *Document*. The UCCSA also happens to be the church denomination in which I have been nurtured in Christian faith, practice and ministry. The work, worship and witness of this church is therefore the primary frame of reference and ecclesiastical context in which my own

prophetic consciousness has been awakened and shaped. I am, as such, acutely aware that my research on the responses to the *KD* by the UCCSA is being undertaken from the perspectives of an insider and that my passion for and commitment to the prophetic role of the Church makes me no neutral observer. It is my contention, however, that the above factors neither compromise nor diminish the academic credibility and ecumenical significance of this study. On the contrary, my strategic positioning within the UCCSA enables me to undertake such research from a privileged vantage point of first-hand experience, readily accessible data and greater understanding which derives from such close proximity. Needless to say, I shall endeavour to be as rigorous and critical as possible in my appraisal of the UCCSA's response which, in the final analysis, is an integral part of my overall critique of the nature of the churches' responses to the prophetic challenge of the *KD*.

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Secondly, my sincere thanks and appreciation go to the UCCSA who provided not only moral and material support for this venture but also allowed me free and unrestrained access to the use of data relative to the church's response to the *KD*. Much needed financial support for the research has also been forthcoming from the Global Ministries division of the Christian Church - Disciples of Christ and United Church of Christ (USA) and from the Human Sciences Research Council.

Thirdly, the encouragement that came from colleagues within the ecumenical, ecclesiastical and academic circles have contributed in no small way to egging me on. I shall always be indebted, in particular, to the Revd Dr. Steve de Gruchy, who invested much of his own time and energies and shared his insights in assisting me to bring this work to fruition and completion. Fourthly, without the longsuffering support of my family, especially from my wife, Norma, my children, André and Deidré, and my Dad, this undertaking would certainly have floundered along the way.

Finally, there would be something amiss if I did not mention and acknowledge with thanks and appreciation the inspiration I derived from Dr. Albert Nolan and the *Kairos* theologians, the handful of believers who met surreptitiously in the face of great danger during the dark days of Apartheid in 1985, and who began a process which unfolded to give birth to the *KD*.

LIST OF ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

ABRECSA - Alliance of Black Reformed Christian of Southern Africa

AIC's - African Independent/Instituted Churches

ANC - African National Congress

BMC - Black Ministers Consultation

CPSA - Church of the Province of South Africa

CTU's - Contextual Theology Units

CUC - Church Unity Commission

DRC - Dutch Reformed Church

ELCSA - Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa

EMERGENCY - State of Emergency

EPCSA - Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa

FEDSEM - Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa

ICT - Institute for Contextual Theology

KD - Kairos Document

MCSA - Methodist Church of Southern Africa

NIR - National Initiative for Reconciliation

PAC - Pan African Congress

PACSA - Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Action

PCSA - Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa

PPFT - *Pastoral Plan for Transformation in Church and Society*

SACC - South African Council of Churches

SACBC - South African Catholic Bishops' Conference

SACP - South Africa Communist Party

SFT - Standing-for-the-Truth Campaign

UCCSA - United Congregational Church of Southern Africa

UDF - United Democratic Front

WCC - World Council of Churches

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PREFACE

There exists within social institutions, since time immemorial, a deeply rooted tension between traditionalists and modernists, conservatives and radicals, champions of the establishment and bearers of upheaval, protagonists of institutionalism and antagonists of institutional structure and between guardians of the status quo and catalysts of change. From time to time in history a particular event brings this necessary, but largely underlying and potentially creative tension, to the fore. More often than not the pro-establishment forces conspire to contain the tension, to neutralize conflict and to curtail upheaval. However, in the final analysis, the dynamic of this tension remains, submerged for a season, but always biding its time, eventually to emerge again in a new day and in a new way.

The *KD* proved to be an occasion for the emergence of this archetypal tension, presenting to churches and to the faith-community an opportunity to release the synergies of creative tension and to allow the challenge of a prophetic moment to intervene and to break into the moulds of ecclesiastical institutional captivity. In its wake the *KD* exposed, amongst other things, the tensions that exist in the churches between leadership and laity, between ecclesiastical bureaucrats and activists, between official church statements and popular opinion. In the process of its unfolding challenge, the *Document* brought into bold relief the fundamental contradiction between the churches' pronouncements and their praxis, between resolution and action, between word and deed.

This study is also, therefore, about the vagaries and vicissitudes of this time-piece, the *KD*, about laying bare the extent to which it was vindicated and vilified. But above all it is about the source and nature of prophetic Christianity and about the challenge to the churches to reclaim and to re-establish the priority of their prophetic mission within a time of social crisis and historical. This dissertation also reflects something of the faith-journey of the writer who, alongside other pilgrims of faith, seeks to continue dialoguing with the faith narratives of history, to maintain discourse with Contextual theology and, not least, to enable the churches in general and the English-speaking churches in particular to be true to their prophetic heritage. I therefore declare that the thesis as a whole represents the writer's

own work, with the obvious exceptions of specific indications, such as the use of other sources through quotations and appropriate references.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

1. Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are threefold. Firstly, to survey and trace the dominant trajectories of response to the publication of the *Kairos Document*¹ within South Africa and from within the international ecumenical community. Secondly, to focus upon and critically examine the capacity of the 'English-speaking churches'² (ESC's) to respond positively and constructively to the challenge of the *KD*. Thirdly, to extract some learnings from the overall responses to the *Document* and to propose certain ways and means by which the prophetic³ legacies of the *KD* may be kept alive and vibrant within the life, ministries and mission of the ESC's.

2. Motivation for this study and reasons for focussing on the English-speaking churches

My motivation stems, firstly, from my own participation in, concern for and commitment to the prophetic ministry of the ESC's in particular, and of all South African churches in general. Secondly, I am driven by the conviction that the *KD* represents, (I) a unique

¹ *The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church - A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa*, First Edition, Kairos Theologians, Braamfontein, 1985, & Second Revised Edition, Skotaville, Braamfontein, 1986.

² The precise historical origin of this term is obscure. J. de Gruchy suggests that the designation 'English-speaking churches' is one that was imposed by the 'mass media, politicians, other churches, and the populace in general' (*The Church Struggle in South Africa*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979, p.85). Whatever its origin, the appellation 'English-speaking churches' has been current in South African ecclesiastical historiography. See, for example, its consistent use in de Gruchy, *op cit*; J. Cochrane, *Servants of Power: The role of English-speaking Churches 1903 - 1930*, Ravan Press, Braamfontein, 1987; C. Villa Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid: A Socio-theological history of the English-speaking churches of South Africa*, Orbis, Maryknoll, 1988; M. Worsnip, *Between the Two Fires: The Anglican Church and Apartheid - 1948 to 1957*, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1991; P. Walshe, *Prophetic Christianity and the Liberation Movement in South Africa*, Cluster Publications, Pietermaritzburg, 1995.

³ The sense in which I shall be using the term 'prophetic' throughout this thesis is, firstly, loosely based on the notions of Israelite prophecy as embodied especially in the pre-exilic Old Testament prophets and, secondly, that which identifies closely with the meaning given to it within the *KD* itself. The specific emphases and nuances given to the term in relation to Prophetic theology is both implicit and explicit within the body of the text of this dissertation and in *Part Four* in particular.

moment of prophetic charisma and a salutary reminder of the Church's⁴ prophetic calling and, (ii) an ongoing challenge to churches who have become overtly institutionalised to be open and responsive to the prophetic impulses from within and from without. A third and final motivation for embarking on this study is the fact the *Document* set in motion a process of transformation within the church denomination to which I belong, the UCCSA. It is upon the *Kairos* process within this church - in which I have participated intimately in my capacity as UCCSA Mission Enabler⁵ - that I shall be reflecting in depth and detail.

My reasons for focussing on the ESC's in general and on the UCCSA in particular are twofold. Firstly, the churches that comprise of the ESC's, namely, the Church of the Province of South Africa (CPSA), the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA), the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa (PCSA), and the UCCSA all share a common liberal theological tradition. This commonality has, *inter alia*, enabled the ESC's to collaborate in the areas of theological education and ministerial formation⁶. The establishment, for instance, of the Church Unity Commission⁷ by the above churches provided a forum in which matters of doctrinal and liturgical interest could be discussed, debated and processed.

⁴ When referring to the church universal I shall use the uppercase first letter 'C', ie. 'Church' and the lowercase first-letter 'c', ie. 'church' in reference to specific denominations.

⁵ I was ordained to the Christian ministry within the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) in 1982, and appointed to the pastorate of the local church at Kuils River (Cape Town). In 1992 I was seconded to the position of *UCCSA Mission Enabler*, a full-time appointment which mandated me to direct and co-ordinate the UCCSA's *Pastoral Plan for Transformation in Church and Society* - the programme which emerged as a specific consequence of the church's response to the *KD*.

⁶ The founding of the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa (FEDSEM) in 1967, as a joint venture in theological training and ministerial formation, by these churches, represents a notable example of the history of ecumenical witness during the Apartheid era. In 1994, however, the ESC's churches, partly due to the legacies of the past era, and partly in the face of challenges emerging from the new post-Apartheid dispensation, elected to dissolve FEDSEM.

⁷ It is worth noting that the search for church union did not start with the creation of the Church Unity Commission (CUC) in 1968, but that the CUC represented a consolidation of past initiatives towards union and a strategy for the future. (See J. Wing, 'An outline of the Search for Union in South Africa 1968 - 1989', *In Touch: Church Unity Commission News Bulletin*, Vol.2, No.18, March 1990).

The ESC's, secondly, share a common ecumenical heritage and orientation, which is partly due to their geographical and historical origin in Britain. This common root has facilitated a growing together within the ecumenical movement and has nurtured a mutual commitment to ecumenism, an ethos amongst the ESC's which has been instrumental in the ongoing quest for greater Christian unity within Southern Africa and beyond. Moreover, despite major shortcomings - which shall be identified and discussed in this dissertation - the ESC's represented a significant stream in the vanguard of Christian opposition to the policies and practices of Apartheid.

3. Main bibliographical sources

The significant role of The Institute for Contextual Theology⁸ (ICT) as facilitator in the overall *Kairos* process - both prior to and subsequent to the publication of the *KD* - shall become evident in the course of this dissertation. Amongst other things, the ICT archives provided the primary, though by no means exclusive, bibliographical source relative to the range of reactions against and responses to the *Document*. In addition to making use of the ICT archives I shall also be quoting extensively from reports and articles on responses to the *KD* in the secular and religious media.

In relation to my focus on the responses of the ESC's in general, and on the UCCSA in particular, I am relying on archival and current records of church Assemblies, Synods and other denominational forums to provide relevant bibliographical data and information. I shall also be drawing on insights gleaned through personal interviews conducted with certain key role-players within the *Kairos* process.

4. Methodology

Part Two of this dissertation incorporates a broad survey of the initial wave of reactions and short-term responses to the *Document* in South Africa and within the international ecumenical community. Soon after its public release on 28 September 1985, the *KD* elicited a wide range of reactions. Such reactions and responses ranged from the extremes of

⁸ Refer to *Appendix One* for a profile (biographical note) on the Institute of Contextual Theology.

unqualified endorsement on the one hand to outright condemnation on the other. Reactions came from church-denominations, ecumenical movements, para-church agencies, Christian organisations, academic institutions, theologians, biblical scholars, laypersons, clergy, politicians, the print and electronic media, as well as from the ranks of non-Christian organisations.

In the above section of my dissertation I shall make only brief comments on the nature of such responses, allowing maximum space for the respondents to the *KD* to speak for themselves. This section also comprises of a chapter on the content of the *Document* and the processes that led up to its publication. In my attempt to authentically reflect their intentions I shall be making extensive use of quotations extracted from the comments and explanations of the *KD* authors themselves (also referred to as the 'Kairos theologians'⁹).

In *Part Four* I shall attempt to develop my critique on the major theological and ecclesiastical themes gleaned from the survey in *Part Two*, and from the long-term responses and developments within the English-speaking churches, which is discussed in *Part Three*.

5. Locating this study within the debate of the *Kairos Document*

This study locates itself within the overall debate on the *KD* and the *Kairos* movement both within South Africa and in the international ecumenical community, which began soon after the publication of the *Document* in 1985. Although the prevalence of academic debate on the *KD* has diminished during the latter part of the 1990's, certain critical issues relative to contemporary theological discourse and praxis raised by the *Document* in 1985 are still relevant today, notwithstanding the radical change of South African society from an Apartheid state to a social democracy.

This present study examines the nature, role and future of prophetic theology as a legacy of

⁹ The authors of the *KD* came to be known as the 'Kairos theologians'. It is interesting to note that the reference to the authors as 'Kairos theologians' did not originate with this grouping themselves, but from churches and individuals who responded to the *Document*. (Interview with Fr. Albert Nolan; ICT offices, Johannesburg, 4 May 1992).

the *KD*, within church and society in South Africa, with a particular focus on the socio-theological profiles of the ESC's. The research thereby also attempts to reckon with the realities of constant interfacing and intersecting between the forces of history and theology, a dynamic which impacts upon and influences the life, ministry and mission of the Church.

PART TWO: THE GENESIS AND BROAD IMPACT OF THE *KAIROS* DOCUMENT

Chapter One - South Africa on the eve of the *Kairos*

1. 'The State is the Emergency'

'The State is the Emergency'. This statement appeared on a placard which was waived by students of the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 1985. The UCT students were protesting against the imposition of the State of Emergency, declared on 20th July 1985 by the State President of South Africa, Mr P.W. Botha. The State of Emergency, which came into effect in 44 magisterial districts and lasted some 229 days, was eventually lifted on March 7, 1986¹⁰. The placard-caption, i.e. 'The State is the Emergency', epitomised the feelings of most South Africans. For the black majority the only credible solution to the deepening crisis in the country was a change of government itself, and not merely of change of heart on the part of the government¹¹. The imposition of the State of Emergency in 1985 represents a particularly brutal chapter in the Nationalist government's all-to-familiar *kragdadige* (strongarm) retort to the burgeoning popular resistance to Apartheid. The State of Emergency, however, should not be viewed in isolation as it stands in continuity with the nature and pattern of state repression which first reared its ugly head in 1960 with the Sharpeville Massacres and again in 1976 with the Soweto Student Uprisings¹².

¹⁰ *Race Relations Survey*, 1985, South African Institute for Race Relations, Johannesburg, p.455.

¹¹ The April 1994 national all-race elections in South Africa, which inaugurated the new era of democracy, clearly vindicated the fact that the sentiments expressed in 1985 were deeply held by the majority of the people in the country. (For an overview of major events which culminated in the transition of South Africa into a non-racial democracy, refer to *The African National Congress and the Negotiated Settlement in South Africa*, J Rantete, J.L. van Schaik, Pretoria, 1998; and *Mission Impossible: A Piece of the South African Story*, R Rosenthal, David Philip, Cape Town & Johannesburg, 1998).

¹² The extensive range of written records, chronicles and documentation relative to the historic events of the Sharpeville Shootings and the Student Uprisings are too numerous to cite here. For a quick reference, however, see *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid: The Chronicle of a divided society as told through the South African newspapers*, Struik, Cape Town, 1990, pp.50-51 (on Sharpeville); pp.94-95 (on Soweto Uprisings); R.H. Davis (ed.), *Apartheid Unravels*, University of Florida Press: Gainesville, 1991. See also *Annual Survey of Race Relations: 1958-1960* (on Sharpeville) and H Tyler, *Life in the Time of Sharpeville - and harvest seeds of a New South Africa*, Kwela Books, Cape Town, 1995; P Randall, *A Taste of Power: The Final Spro-cas Report*, Raven Press, Johannesburg, 1973; *Race Relations Survey: 1977* (on Soweto Uprisings); S.M. Ndlovu, *The Soweto Uprisings: counter-memories of June 1976*, Raven Press: Johannesburg, 1998; J Kane-Berman, *Soweto: Black Revolt, White Reaction*, Raven

Paradoxically, these two events cited, in which the state acted with such a heavy hand, represent major turning point in the history of black people's struggle against Apartheid. For the purposes of this research, however, we shall broadly identify the period of September 1984 to September 1985 as the *eve of the Kairos* and briefly reflect upon the major socio-political events which preceded the publication of the *KD*.

2. The New Constitution

On the 3rd September 1984, the Nationalist government, despite widespread opposition, pressed on with its Apartheid reforms in general and with the introduction of a New Constitution¹³ in particular. Apart from the widespread opposition to the New Constitution from within the ranks of civic bodies, ecumenical movements and student organisations the government's decision to establish and enforce black-run councils for many of the urban townships met with new waves of protest and resistance in the black communities. The councils were an essential part of the state's Total Strategy¹⁴, intended to give certain black people the privilege of councillor status in order to set them as a buffer against grassroots unrest.

The New Constitution also sparked a massive work-stayaway in October 1984 by an estimated 800 000 workers, crippling key parastatal industries such as the oil-from-coal corporation, SASOL, and the steel mills at ISCOR. Such actions represented the emergence of a more militant and vocal black trade union movement which had been brewing since the official recognition of black trade unions following the recommendation of the Wiehahn

Press, Johannesburg, 1979.

¹³ The basic thrust of the New Constitution was the incorporation of 'Coloureds' and Indians, but excluding Africans, into a new tricameral Parliament structure (For more information refer to *Race Relations Survey*, 1984, p.128; 1985, pp.50ff.).

¹⁴ 'Total Strategy' represented a plan conceived by the Afrikaner capitalists and their military allies, with a twofold aim; (i) of expanding an African Middle class as a counter to the activists in the townships, and (ii) the removal of the African National Congress from the South African borders by creating a constellation of southern African states, including the former 'Homelands' to replace the diminished buffer of colonial powers (*Race Relations Survey*, 1985, p.108).

Commission in 1979¹⁵. The increasing strength of the black trade unions led to calls for greater worker unity, and consequently two trade unions were established in the wake of the 1979 legislation. These were the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), whose estimated 120 000 members included many whites and the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA), an exclusively black organisation. By 1985 the pressure for united action amongst workers resulted in the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)¹⁶. COSATU brought together more than 30 non-racial unions, absorbing FOSATU and including such major unions as the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). The new umbrella organisation, COSATU, with NUM leader Elijah Barayi as president and Jay Naidoo as General Secretary, represented an estimated half-a-million workers. COSATU's founding rally, occurring under the shadow of the State of Emergency, signalled again the workers determination to challenge the Nationalist government on one of the most hated pieces of Apartheid legislation, namely the Pass Laws. It is significant that protest against the Pass Laws also occasioned the proclamation of the first State of Emergency in the country in the wake of the 1960 Sharpeville shootings. Barayi told the people at COSATU's founding rally:

If they (the government) don't abolish the Pass laws within six months, we'll burn our Pass books¹⁷.

3. Formation of the United Democratic Front

With the resurgence of popular resistance to the state's Apartheid reforms in 1984, a new movement had come into being, calling itself the United Democratic Front (UDF)¹⁸. The UDF, which was launched at a mass rally in Mitchell's Plain, Cape Town, on August 1983, represented some 575 organisations. The delegates came from community and civic bodies,

¹⁵ In 1977 the government appointed Professor N Wiehahn to head a commission of enquiry into industrial relations (*Illustrated History of South Africa*, Reader's Digest Association South Africa: Cape Town, 1988 pp.454-45; See also *Survey of Race Relations*, 1977, pp. 298, 301-2).

¹⁶ *Illustrated History*, p.475.

¹⁷ *Op cit.*, p.476.

¹⁸ See 'Formation of the UDF' in P. Walshe, *Prophetic Christianity and the Liberation Movement in South Africa*, pp.88-90 and 'United Democratic Front (UDF)', in *Race Relations Survey*, 1983, pp.57-61.

trade unions, sporting bodies, women's and youth organisations. The UDF launch received maximum publicity despite the state's clampdown on opposition movements and the media.

With Dr Allan Boesak, Mr Nelson Mandela, and Ms Helen Joseph as patrons, and veteran activist Archie Gumede, Albertina Sisulu and trade unionist Oscar Mpheta as its three first elected presidents, the UDF emerged as by far the most significant non-racial popular movement within the country to mount a substantial challenge against the perpetuation of the Apartheid regime. The UDF pledged to organise community organisations, and to present a united front of opposition to Apartheid's reforms in general, and to the state's introduction of the 'Koornhof Bills'¹⁹ in particular. Almost from its inception the UDF attracted the support of hundreds of political, unionist and social groupings across the country. Among unions supporting the UDF were the Council of Unions of South Africa, the General and Allied Workers Union, the South African Allied Workers Union, and the Motor Assemblies and Component Workers Union. The UDF's first major protest was its 'Million Signatures Campaign' against the new constitution and a campaign to dissuade voters from participating in the 'Coloured' and Indian elections.

Realising that it faced a formidable opponent it faced in the UDF, the government moved swiftly to try and suppress the movement. UDF offices were raided, meetings banned and leaders detained under the state's Internal Security Act. But such repressive measures served merely to enhance the reputation of the UDF amongst the vast majority of South Africans, and the UDF's support base increased even as leaders were being imprisoned. At its first annual conference on 7 and 8 April 1994, at which about 400 delegates were present, the UDF signalled its intentions to intensify the struggle against the state's Apartheid reforms, by adopting the following demands:

1. The immediate scrapping of the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts and the Group Areas Act of 1966, and an end to all forced removals;
2. The dissolution of the homelands and the ending of the migrant labour system;
3. The scrapping of the tricameral parliamentary system and all

¹⁹ The Bills were dubbed the 'Koornhof Bills' because they were associated with the name of Dr. Piet Koornhof, the Minister of Co-Operation and Development.

- bodies created under the Black Local Authorities Act of 1982;
4. The establishment of a unified and democratic education system;
 5. The repeal of the pass laws and all other restrictions on freedom of movement;
 6. The right of workers to organise freely in trade unions, to bargain collectively, to strike without being penalised, and to security of employment, housing, social welfare, pensions, and maternity benefits;
 7. The release of all political prisoners, the lifting of bans on individuals and organisations, the return of exiles, and the lifting of all restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly;
 8. The disbanding of the South African Defence Force (SADF), the South African Police (SAP), and all other 'repressive apparatuses';
 9. The scrapping of all security laws²⁰.

It soon became apparent that the South African state security establishment regarded the UDF as the greatest single internal threat to the maintenance of the Apartheid status quo, as affiliates to the UDF responded to the defiance campaigns in 1985. For example, widespread consumer boycotts were organised in response to UDF campaigns in the provinces of Transvaal, Natal and especially in the Eastern Cape²¹. The predictable response of the state to the growing threat of the UDF was to brand the movement as 'communist inspired'²². The Minister of Law and Order, Mr Louis Le Grange, alleged that the UDF had the same aims and objectives as the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), adding that one of the main objectives of was 'to make South Africa ungovernable'²³.

The above and other similar statements by the Head of State and the Ministry of Law and order were, amongst other things, intended to serve as justification for a major clampdown on the UDF which was soon to follow. By August 1985 at least 45 of the 80 executive members of the UDF, nationally and regionally, were either in detention, awaiting trial, or

²⁰ *Race Relations Survey*, 1985, p.40.

²¹ The effectiveness of the consumer boycotts varied from region to region, depending largely on such factors as the people's ability to organize, the kind of businesses targeted, etc. It appears that the boycotts were most effective in parts of the eastern Cape, where in Adelaide, for example, the boycott lasted up to six months. (*Op cit.*, p.559).

²² *Op cit.*, p.40.

²³ *Op cit.*, p.41.

been assassinated²⁴. By October 1985 meetings of the UDF were banned in eight magisterial districts affected by the State of Emergency in the Western Cape and Boland alone²⁵.

4. Countdown to the *Kairos*

An ominous tone was set for the year of 1985 when, on the 17th March 1985, 20 people were shot dead and 27 injured when police opened fire on a funeral procession in the township of Langa, Uitenhage²⁶. The tragic incident occurred when police opened fire on a large procession of people on their way to a memorial service for those who lost their lives in the Sharpeville Massacre exactly 25 years ago. This bizarre co-incidence, occurring on the very day many black and some white people over the country were commemorating the 1961 Sharpeville massacre gave the Langa incident major media prominence. The shootings at Langa, however, was just one of a series of socio-political upheavals which were triggered off by the government's introduction of a New Constitution in September 1984. Even official statistics given in parliament in early May 1985 by minister Louis le Grange reflected the dramatic state of affairs in the country as a whole:

Since September (1984) *more than 10 000* have been arrested in connection with the unrest. A total 217 people have been killed and 751 injured with casualty all growing each day...Damage of more than R28 million has been caused to buildings²⁷.

The response of the state, as we have observed, was merely to intensify its measures of repression which culminated in the declaration of the State of Emergency, on the 20th July 1985.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Op cit.*, p.559

²⁶ In breaking the news to parliament on the same day, i.e. 17th March, the Minister of Law and Order, Mr Louis le Grange, said that the police had been forced to fire on a marching crowd of 3000 to 4000 people. The Minister justified the police action by claiming that the marchers were armed and that they had ignored instructions to disband. The state-appointed judicial enquiry exonerated the police from any blame. (*Op cit.*, pp.489-492).

²⁷ *The Cape Times*, 1 May 1985. Such official figures were, as a rule, always disputed by extra-parliamentary and community organizations such as Lawyers for Human Rights, The Black Sash, The Dependents Conference, etc.

5. Reactions to the State of Emergency

5.1 National and international condemnation

In the face of widespread national²⁸ and international²⁹ condemnation of the State of Emergency, the Foreign Minister, Mr Pik Botha promised the world that on August 15, 1985 - at the National Party congress - the State President would be announcing the dawn of a new area of radical reform. The President's subsequent 'crossing of the Rubicon'³⁰ speech turned out to be major disappointment for the vast audience of national and international press and broadcasting services. Instead of an announcement signalling a new era, a bellicose Mr. Botha berated those who, in his view, dared to prescribe to him how he should run the affairs of this country. They also heard him declare his intention to continue the reform initiatives already begun and that his government would tolerate no interference in this process.

Disappointment ran high in South Africa and abroad. The Rand plunged from its already low 52 cents to the dollar (USA). An alarmed South African government shut down the money markets and the stock exchange for a full week, the Minister of Finance declared a

²⁸ Within parliament, the leader of the Progressive Federal Party (PFP), Dr. F van Zyl Slabbert, for example, criticized the State of Emergency as a failure on the part of the government and a 'devastating comment' on the outcome of the November 1983 referendum result. Dr Slabbert observed that what was supposed to 'herald an era of negotiation and consensus politics has precipitated a state of siege'. (*Eastern Province Herald*, 22 July 1985). Extra-parliamentary condemnation was more widespread and vehement. For instance, Mr Murphy Morope of the UDF, described the Emergency declaration as 'an admission by the government that its fraudulent "reform" scheme had failed'. Morope added, 'Apartheid, for as long as it exists, can only be maintained by sheer brute force' (*The Star*, 23 July 1985).

²⁹ The Commonwealth Secretary General, Sir Shridath Ramphal, for instance, described the State of Emergency as 'a new dimension of the systematic oppression that is Apartheid' (*The Citizen*, 23 July 1985). Both the Dutch and the French governments condemned the move, the latter recalling its ambassador and suspending all new investments in South Africa (*The Sowetan*, 25 July 1985). America and Britain, however, were less severe in their criticism of the Emergency (*The Citizen*, 22 July 1985).

³⁰ In anticipation that Mr Botha would signal a radical change of the direction by the government, from which there would be no turning back, the South African and overseas media characterized Mr Botha's speech as 'the crossing of the Rubicon', in an obvious allusion to the historical event when Julius Caesar, having agonized over the decision, made up his mind to cross the river Rubicon in northern Italy. (*Illustrated History of South Africa*, p.378).

moratorium on foreign debt payments and the United States of America imposed limited economic sanctions on South Africa. Economically, socially and politically the country was plunged into a crisis of major proportions as resistance to Apartheid began to intensify, with the state further resorting to policies and practices of repression under the State of Emergency.

The brunt of the new repressive measures, in the wake of the Emergency, was felt in many of the major black townships, particularly so in the Western Cape, the Eastern Cape, in the greater Durban area, and on the Witwatersrand. These areas in particular became cauldrons of conflict, by and large between State security forces (and their surrogates) and those groupings and individuals vehemently opposed to the Apartheid regime.

5.2 Reactions from the English-speaking churches

In response to the growing country-wide situation of socio-political upheaval, even prior to the declaration of the Emergency in July 1985, the South African Council of Churches (SACC) called for a national *Day of Prayer* to be observed on June 16, the date of the anniversary of the Soweto uprisings. In preparation for the *Day of Prayer* a liturgy was produced for use on June 16, 1985 by a group whose members came from different Christian communities throughout the country. The liturgy which featured a 'Theological Rationale and a Call to Prayer for the end to unjust rule' was prefaced by the following statement:

We have prayed for the government to change its policies. Now we pray for a change of government so that the justice of God's Kingdom may prevail and his people be liberated to live in peace³¹.

The call to observe the *Day of Prayer* was a radical challenge to churches in particular and to Christians in general, to move away from the position of merely calling for fundamental reform on the part of a government, to that of aligning themselves with those forces seeking the replacement of the nationalist rulers with a democratically elected government.

³¹ *June 16 Memorial Service Liturgy*, Western Province Council of Churches. (D. van der Water, Private Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg. All further references to the Kairos Files, located at the private archives of D. van der Water, Johannesburg, South Africa, shall be similarly referenced).

Given the history of the churches' inability, hesitancy or reluctance to move beyond mere protest to effective resistance against the state, the Call to Prayer did not receive significant support from church-leaders. It also failed to strike a significantly responsive chord within the church communities at large. What the Call to Prayer did achieve, however, was to highlight the incongruity between the churches' statements and actions. Charles Villa-Vicencio notes that the Call to Prayer and the *KD*, in particular, brought this internal contradiction within the ESC's into 'bold relief':

These events present the internal contradiction within the English-speaking churches in bold relief, witnessing to the reluctant and hesitant response of these churches to what they themselves have identified as the gross violations of justice perpetrated by the state³².

It was therefore, by and large, left up to the ecumenical agencies such the SACC, ICT, and the Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in Southern Africa (ABRECSA), to lead the Christian charge of resistance to Apartheid in general and to the State of Emergency in particular. The SACC, for example, expressed its grave concern to the government about police conduct in the black townships and the violence between opposing black political groups³³. True to form the state president, Mr. P.W. Botha, responded to such overtures with contempt, underlining the nationalist government's stubborn refusal to heed cautions from any quarter, be they forthcoming from religious or any other organisation or grouping opposed to Apartheid. Mr Botha, instead, charged that the SACC had no mandate to instruct the government on how to act in the interests of South Africa and that by expressing what the state considered to be irresponsible opinions under the cloak of religion the SACC was playing into the hands of the country's enemies³⁴. The SACC General Secretary, Dr. Beyers Naude, in turn, rejected Mr. Botha's accusations and stated, *inter alia*, that:

We are convinced that it is the policy of Apartheid which contributes more than anything else to such enmity towards South

³² C. Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid: A Socio-Theological History of the English-Speaking Churches*, Orbis, New York, 1988, p.152.

³³ *The Citizen*, 25 June 1985.

³⁴ *The Citizen*, 2 July 1985.

Africa³⁵.

Dr Naude, while attending an inter-regional meeting of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Harare during July 1985, is further reported to have said that although all churches in South Africa continued to advocate non-violence, the SACC no longer condemned those who had decided to enter into the violent struggle because of their convictions³⁶.

The above statement clearly indicated that a radically new note and tone had been introduced into the SACC's position *vis-à-vis* the armed struggle against Apartheid. This new stance adopted by the SACC was, however, not endorsed by the churches. As far as their overall responses to the widespread deterioration of the social fabric in the country was concerned, the ESC's churches, though highly critical of the state's stubborn refusal to break with the policies and practices of Apartheid, stopped short of aligning themselves, *qua* churches, with the SACC position relative to the armed struggle. The official positions of the above churches in relation to the Apartheid state in general, and the growing socio-political crisis in particular, did not differ radically from that in the years prior to 1985. Resolutions and not active defiance of the state still defined the dominant response of the ESC's.

The South African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC), for its part, re-committed itself to the objectives of liberation theology and expressed its deep concern over the suffering in the country's black townships and in Namibia³⁷. In a statement issued to the press during August 1985 the SACBC and the Southern Africa Council for Catholic Laity urged the government to lift the State of Emergency and declare itself willing to talk with the authentic leaders of the people, including those in prison and exile, so that a lasting peace might be found³⁸. But as with the ESC's the Roman Catholic Church also could not bring

³⁵ *The Star*, 27 September 1985.

³⁶ *The Star*, 11 September 1985.

³⁷ *Inter Nos*, January/February 1985. (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

³⁸ *Inter Nos*, October 1985. (D van der Water, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

itself to the point of supporting the SACC's stance *vis-à-vis* the armed struggle against Apartheid. What cannot be denied, though, is that the major events of socio-political crisis in the country, such as the Sharpeville shootings (1960), the Soweto uprisings (1976) and the resurgence of popular resistance to Apartheid in the 1980's brought the ESC's and other churches closer to facing up to the serious weaknesses of their witness against Apartheid. In this regard, James Cochrane suggested that one may discern a changing pattern in the nature of the churches' and of Christian opposition to the state, and that this pattern corresponds roughly with the events of major socio-political crisis in the country³⁹. In the final analyses, however, the dominant line taken by the churches opposed to Apartheid was the option of least resistance. The standard challenge from churches and church-leaders in response to the growing crisis in the country in general, and in the face of the State of Emergency in particular, was still a mere call - albeit more urgent in tone - for Apartheid to be abolished and for the calling of a national convention⁴⁰. The declaration of the State of Emergency, therefore, elicited a widespread chorus of protest from most church-leaders and church denominations, but again, - as in the past - it was by and large a case of a protest without resistance.

The first stirrings of civil disobedience from within the ranks of church-leaders, clergy and church members did, however, begin to emerge in the wake of mounting resistance by the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) against the state and the governments' Apartheid reforms⁴¹. The hitherto unfamiliar sight of church-leaders and clergy joining with the masses in protest marches represented a new dimension in popular Christian opposition to the state. On numerous occasions, for example, such street marches were led by church-leaders

³⁹ See J. Cochrane, 'Christian Resistance to Apartheid: Periodisation, Prognosis', in *Christianity in South Africa*, edited by M. Prozesky, Southern Book Publishers, Bergville, 1990, pp. 81-100.

⁴⁰ *Dimension*, April 1985. (D van der Water, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

⁴¹ In July 1989 this new movement which came to be known as the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), which was a broad alliance of anti-Apartheid organizations and groupings, signaled its intention to engage in a defiance campaign. The campaign was defined as a 'peaceful programme of non-violent mass action directed against Apartheid laws and addressing the immediate demands of our people' (*New Nation*, 11 August 1989). The MDM launched its campaign on August 2, 1989 by challenging segregation in hospitals. In the same month, ie. August, church-leaders such as Desmond Tutu, Allan Boesak and Frank Chikane announced that they would embark on a peaceful and non-violent defiance campaign in solidarity with the MDM (*The Cape Times*, 16 August 1989).

themselves, an action which represented, in a way as never before, an attitude of defiance in the face of the bannings and restrictions imposed by the state⁴². While such acts of defiance and civil disobedience on the part of certain church-leaders and Christians were not reflective of where the majority of the churches' membership were, these actions by leading clergy heralded a new dawn in the ongoing saga of conflict between church and state in South Africa.

The Call to Prayer, for its part, did not elicit the kind of popular support its authors hoped for. However, the controversy surrounding this call amongst church-leaders generated significant interest and debate within the ESC's churches and within the ranks of theologians. The Call to Prayer had the spin-off, for instance, of placing on the theological agendas of the churches the issue of the legitimacy of the South African government, an issue which had been anticipated by the Declaration of Apartheid as Heresy⁴³. The question of legitimacy therefore initially arose by way of the Declaration although the issue at Ottawa was still the legitimacy of any theological defence of Apartheid. It was only a matter of time, however, before the theological dimension spilled over into ethical considerations of the legitimacy of the state itself. Developments such as these were largely responsible for further loosening and fertilizing the theological and ecclesiastical soil in which the *KD* and the *Kairos* movement was born. The specific period that we have identified as the *eve of the Kairos*, namely September 1984 to September 1985, was a time in which military raids into neighbouring states⁴⁴, clampdowns on the media, bannings and restrictions of organisations and individuals, and detention had become the stock-in-trade of the state's repressive

⁴² See 'The Church Marched with the People', *Standing for the Truth*, pp. 29-30 (Unpublished & undated booklet). In Cape Town, for example, protesters led by Dr Beyers Naude and Dr Allan Boesak marched to parliament to deliver a petition. Similar marches were also held in Johannesburg led by Bishop Desmond Tutu and in Durban by the Most Rev Denis Hurley.

⁴³ In 1982, The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) meeting in Ottawa, under the leadership and influence of Dr. Boesak and other church-leaders, resolved to declare Apartheid 'a heresy'. (J. de Gruchy & C. Villavicencio, *Apartheid is a Heresy*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1983, pp.160-161).

⁴⁴ The most infamous of such raids in 1985 was the pre-dawn raid by the South African defense Force (SADF) into Gaborone, Botswana on 14 June 1985, in which 12 people were killed, 6 people wounded and much property destroyed. (*The Raid on Gaborone: June 14, 1985 - A Memorial*, L Nyelele & E Drake, 1986).

response to the resurgence of popular resistance⁴⁵. When the *KD* was published in September 1985, the challenge to the churches was were faced with a defining moment and a challenge which they could not trivialise, ignore or easily dismiss.

⁴⁵ During 1985 extensive use was made of Section 46 of the Internal Security Act. This Act empowered the Minister of Law and Order or a magistrate to ban or impose restrictions on gatherings. (*Race Relations Survey 1985*, p.434). According to the Minister of Law and Order, Mr Louis Le Grange, a total of 7986 people were detained from 21 July 1986 to 7 March 1986 under the Emergency regulations. (*Op cit.*, p.485). The above figure, however, was disputed by the *Detainees Support Committee (DPSC)* who estimated that the total number of people detained for the above period was much higher, and stood at approximately 11750. (*DPSC Review of 1985*, 31 January 1986).

Chapter Two - The making and the message of the *Kairos Document*

1. The *Kairos* process

The *KD* itself, both the first edition (published in September 1985) and the second revised edition (published in September 1986) represented the crystallizing of a consultative and collaborative process of contextual theologising, which in effect did not cease when the *Document* was published in 1985 and again in 1986⁴⁶. The first micro-impulses which led to the kind of critical theological and ecclesiastical statements which appears in the *Document* can probably be traced back to the year 1948 when the Nationalist Party came to power and proceeded to entrench the ideology of Apartheid⁴⁷. It was, however, only in 1957 when the ESC's, affiliated to the Christian Council, strongly criticized the intentions of a Nationalist government to implement a much more rigid segregationist policy that the voice of opposition from within the churches became audible. The churches were particularly affected by the promulgation of Clause 29c of the Native Amendment Act which in effect barred black people from attending worship services in white areas. This particular Act, which appears to have touched the raw nerve of ecclesiastical sensitivity, aroused the hitherto muffled voice of protest from within the ranks of the ESC's and the ecumenical movement. Peter Walshe comments on this unique moment in the history of Christian opposition to Apartheid as follows:

Archbishop Geoffrey Clayton and Archbishop Denis Hurley rose to the occasion in 1957 when they led the one effective instance of ecumenical opposition to the state. In this case they threatened to defy a bill designed to give the Minister of Interior power to bar Africans from attending churches in white areas⁴⁸.

It was, however, not until such dramatic socio-political events such as the 1960 Sharpeville

⁴⁶ With the exception of the chapter on 'Prophetic Theology', (which was completely re-written) the Second Edition the *KD* maintained the basic thrust and substance of the First Edition (For further comment on this matter refer to Preface to the Revised Second Edition in the 1986 *Document*).

⁴⁷ This is not to suggest that events prior to 1948 were of little consequence, as segregation based on race did not arrive, for the first time, when the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948.

⁴⁸ P Walshe, *Prophetic Christianity and the Liberation Movement in South Africa*, p.48.

shootings, the Soweto school uprisings in 1976, and the wide-scale state repression during the 1980's that the churches were faced with an increasing challenge, firstly, from the perpetuation of the Apartheid state and, secondly, from greater expressions of disillusionment and dissatisfaction about their effectiveness in the struggle against Apartheid. Once such occasion was ICT's 1985 Annual Conference, held in Johannesburg from May 30 - June 2. It was at the above conference that the feelings of frustration felt by those Christians and churchpeople more actively involved in the struggle against Apartheid, most clearly and audibly came to the fore. With state repression reaching unparalleled levels, Christian activists became increasingly impatient with the institutionalised churches and church-leaders for their apparent inability or unwillingness to confront the Apartheid regime in a definitive way. The ICT Conference proved to be the catalyst not only for the production and publication for *KD* itself, but also for a movement around the socio-political, theological and ethical issues addressed by the *Document*.

The Revd Dr. B Goba, who acted as chairperson of the 1985 ICT Conference, summed up the feelings and perceptions of delegates in the following ten points which, in terms of their importance in the *Kairos* process, merits being quoted in full:

1. That Christians who were involved in the struggle were on the 'periphery of the Church'.
2. That the various attempts by groupings such as Ministers United for Christian Co-responsibility (MUCCOR), Christian Action Movement (CAM), Diakonia, and others exposed the limitations of the institutional Church, (i) in its theological bankruptcy, (ii) its 'impressionistic' styles of leadership which are based on individuals rather than on where the people were.
3. That the very existence of resistance models from the above-named groups represent a critique of the theological formulations of Theological Seminaries.
4. That there is a definite crisis of leadership in the Churches at all levels of Church hierarchies.
5. That the need exists for a deeper social analysis instead of resorting to mere 'biblical positivism'.
6. That key areas of the struggle need to be identified in order to provide more focus for those involved in the struggle.
7. That there is a need to become the 'Church of the periphery by moving away from elitist bourgeois language' of the institutional Church.
8. That ICT could bring people interested parties together to facilitate a more co-ordinated effort on the part of Christians involved in the struggle.
9. That there exists a need for a 'critical book on Church

movements'. 10. That the stories of people at grassroots level need to be told and theological formulations be done on the basis of such experiences⁴⁹.

The significance of the above-quoted statements becomes apparent when one examines the letter and spirit of the *KD*. It is highly probable that the statement by Dr. Goba sowed the decisive seeds, firstly, for the creation of the *Document* itself, and secondly, for the sharply critical tone of the *KD*. Goba went on to suggest that Christians involved the struggle 'may have to undermine the institutional Churches'⁵⁰ in order to galvanise the Church into addressing the crisis in the country in a more meaningful way, articulating a sentiment that was strongly felt amongst Christian activists but had never been voiced in such a direct way.

Even at this critical point, with the socio-political crisis in the country reaching major proportions, the Conference could not anticipate the drastic turn of events during the months of June and July 1985, when further state atrocities, such as South African Defence Force (SADF) devastating air raid in Botswana on June 14, 1985, galvanised Christian activists into action. Then on July 20, 1985 came the declaration of the State of Emergency. Historically, at this juncture, the *Kairos* process proper began, when on July 28, 1985 a 'crisis meeting' was convened by ICT staff. The small group of churchpeople and theologians, comprising of the Revd F. Chikane (ICT General Secretary), Fr. A. Nolan, the Revd Dr. B. Goba, Sister B. Ncube, Mr M. Tsele and Fr. C. Langefeld met secretly at the Ipelegeng Community Centre in Soweto. This group defined their aim as that of stating 'the present crisis theologically and to forge appropriate responses that Churches and theologians may adopt'⁵¹.

The following points, made randomly at the July 28, 1985 meeting, underlined the growing conviction that a process was urgently needed which would be qualitatively different from

⁴⁹ Report of the Annual Conference of the Institute for Contextual Theology, May 30 - June 2, 1985, Johannesburg. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg. This and all further references to the *Kairos* files, located at ICT, denote *KD*-related files in the archives of the Institute for Contextual Theology, Johannesburg, South Africa).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Minutes of ICT Theological Crisis Meeting, Ipelegeng Community Centre, Soweto, 28 July 1985. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

the usual run-of-the-mill statements and resolutions made by churches and church-leaders:

From the way Church-leaders responded to the crisis it is clear that they lack political analysis. Their eagerness to talk over the crisis with the State President shows that they do not see the political interests of the government... There is crisis in communication. The leaders do not have contact with grassroots. Most of them are inaccessible. There is no solidarity even between Church-leaders themselves. An example is the split on the June 16 Prayer controversy... What impact on the life of the Church as theologians of the periphery can we make? How can we influence the leadership and not discredit and antagonize them? We need to draft a statement that is critical of the Church and self-critical⁵².

The meeting resolved that prior to the drafting of such a critical statement, the views of political organisations be sought. Such views would then feed into a workshop organised by the ICT group, out of which a theological statement would be formulated. This statement would, *inter alia*, critique the churches on their positions and declarations about violence and peace in the country. Also, the workshop statement should articulate what participants saw as the way forward in South Africa in such a time of growing crisis.

At this stage of the process, however, the meeting had no intention at all to produce what eventually crystallised as the *KD* and the subsequent *Kairos* movement. In so far as anything was to be committed to paper and for publication, the idea was mooted that after a series of discussion sessions a special edition of the *ICT Newsletter* would be published containing a statement of theological reflection on the situation of crisis in the country. The *Kairos* concept did, however, emerge as one of the themes for a working paper at the July 28, 1985 meeting. The other themes suggested were: 'State, Church and Theology', 'Church and People Movements', and 'Perspective for the Future'. It is notable that the section on the theme of *Kairos*, written by Fr. A. Nolan at the request of the meeting, eventually came to constitute *Chapter One* of the *Document* itself, with the initial text not undergoing much change in content throughout the processes of feedback and discussion. The following opening paragraphs of the initial text written by Fr. Nolan, entitled 'Emergency - The Moment of Truth', epitomised the letter and spirit both of the *Kairos* movement started by

⁵² *Ibid.*

this process and the message of the *KD* itself:

The time has come. The moment of truth has arrived. South Africa has been plunged into a crisis that is shaking the foundations and there is every indication that the crisis has only just begun and that it will deepen and become even more threatening in the months to come. It is the *Kairos* or moment of truth not only for the Apartheid but also for the Church. We as a group of theologians have been trying to understand the theological significance of this moment in our history. It is serious, very serious. For the Church and for Christians in general this is our *Kairos*, the moment of grace and opportunity, the favourable time in which God is challenging us to decisive action. It is a dangerous time for, if we miss the opportunity and let it pass us by, the loss for the Church, and for the gospel and for all the people of South Africa will be immeasurable. Jesus wept over Jerusalem. He wept over the tragedy of the destruction of the city and the massacre of people that was imminent, 'and all because you did not recognise your opportunity (*Kairos*) when God offered it'(Lk.19:44)⁵³.

The July 28 meeting mandated others present to write sections on the selected themes. Given the urgency of the situation it was agreed that the written sections should be ready by August 5, 1985. These papers were to be compiled by ICT and then 'circulated for comments'⁵⁴. The meeting resolved to convene a follow-up meeting on August 10, 1985 and to extend invitations to other interested people to attend. It soon became evident to ICT staff that there was a growing interest amongst a greater number of theologians and churchpeople in the theological discussions and reflections on the crisis in the country.

The working papers on the suggested themes were duly compiled and at subsequent meeting of the *Kairos*-initiating group a decision was taken that the 'draft theological statement'⁵⁵ be sent to a number of theologians for study and comment. The following covering letter, sent out with the theological statement and an invitation to attend a follow-up meeting on August

⁵³ Nolan's draft text was submitted and accepted fully at a subsequent ICT Crisis meeting, held on August 30, 1985. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

⁵⁴ Minutes of ICT *Theological Crisis Meeting*, Ipelegeng Community Centre, Soweto, 28 July 1985.

⁵⁵ Minutes of Theological Crisis Meeting, ICT Offices, 30 August 1985, Braamfontein. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

30, 1985, by the General Secretary of ICT summed up both the urgency of the situation as well as the nature of the emerging *Kairos* process:

THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS IN SOUTH AFRICA

For the last few weeks a number of theologians have been meeting in small groups to organise about the crisis in the country and what our response as a Church should be. Out of these discussions a draft theological statement (copy enclosed) has been produced for your consideration. You are requested to study the document, critique it and make your suggestions and pass them over to the ICT office by not later than 28th August 1985. (It is a state of emergency!)

Invitations

You are hereby invited to a meeting which will be held on the 30th August 1985 from 9am - 2pm at the ICT offices to discuss the final form of this theological document and to work out strategies of how we communicate it to the whole body of Christ and to all concerned persons/groups in South Africa and elsewhere to translate these words into action. We shall be pleased to be with you at this crucial meeting⁵⁶.

The people listed for participation in the above meeting were: Fr. B. Thlagale, M. Mothasi, T. Mofekeng, Dr. S. Maimela, the Revd. E. Tema, Fr. S. Mkhatswa, Dr. B. Goba, D. Masoma, S. Masemola, Fr. L. Sebidi, Fr. C. Langefeldt, Bishop D. Tutu, Dr. B. Naude, Dr. W. Kistner, the Revd. F. Chikane, Bishop M Buthelezi⁵⁷.

It is clear from the above letter that the initiators of the *Kairos*-process envisaged that the whole undertaking would continue as a collective and collaborative group effort, despite the need for urgency and the hazardous nature of the task undertaken. It was hoped that ultimately the churches and the Christian community at large would become fully engaged in the process. However, under the prevailing circumstances, especially the constraints imposed by the State of Emergency and the urgency of the crisis, the *Kairos*-process had to move swiftly and surreptitiously. Such conditions made the entire *Kairos*-process difficult and dangerous. Adequate consultation and communication amongst interested and affected

⁵⁶ Letter from ICT General Secretary, The Revd F Chikane, dated 23 August 1985. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

⁵⁷ Minutes of Theological Crisis Meeting, ICT Offices, 20 August 1985, Braamfontein. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

parties was therefore impossible to achieve.

From this point onwards ideas had progressed from calling the formulation merely a '*theological statement on the crisis*' to the *KD*. The next major step in the making of the *Document* was that of enlisting a number of signatories. Signatories were to be sought from amongst rank and file churchpeople as well as from church-leaders. The sole criteria for signatories was that they should 'be people who in some way have a formal interest in theology and some background'⁵⁸.

The process of seeking signatories which represented most of the leadership of churches, a cross-section of clergy and laity amongst the church denominations, and a fair geographical spread proved to be most risky and difficult of all the *Kairos*-related processes. Due to time pressure and the threat of disruption by security agents of the state, certain areas and therefore sought-after signatories could not be secured. For example, before draft copies of the *KD* could be distributed to interested people in the Eastern Cape for their consideration and signatures, the group of persons in possession of the copies were stopped at a Security Police roadblock, a batch of *KD*'s were seized and confiscated⁵⁹. The attempt to secure signatures also came under pressure from certain church quarters. For instance, the Revd Peter Storey of the MCSA, when approached to be a signatory, complained that 'he was not being given enough time to study a *Document* which they as a church were being asked to support'⁶⁰.

Throughout the entire *Kairos*-process the offices of ICT served as basis for most of the co-ordination with Fr. Albert Nolan operating as editor-in-chief of the *Document*. In keeping with clandestine nature of the operations a strict embargo was placed on the *KD* until its release to the Press on September 25, 1985. The intention of the *Kairos* theologians to broaden the process of consultation is reflected in the following directive given to

⁵⁸ Notes on *Kairos Document*, *Kairos* theologians (undated). (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

⁵⁹ This information was gathered in an interview with Fr. Albert Nolan on 4 May 1992. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

prospective signatories and others interested persons:

NB: PLEASE DO NOT LEAK THIS DOCUMENT TO THE PRESS BEFORE PUBLICATION, OR TO ANYONE WHO MIGHT HARM ITS PUBLICATION.

1. The document was drawn up over several stages in Johannesburg by a group of about 45 people.
2. It will be released to a Press Conference on Wednesday, September 25th.
3. The group is now wanting to collect signatories (names) from all those it can reach before Wednesday 18th at 6pm in support of the basic thrust of the document.
4. As a composite document of a wide-ranging group of theologians, the document must not be seen as a final product or nicely true to any one denominational tradition.
5. The document is meant to make a major input to put onto the Church's agenda the issues it deals with, by virtue of its challenge to fondly held tenets and positions.
6. It is desired that it should be followed up, after the Press Conference, by regional groupings of signatories, at least in the way of further strengthening of its arguments, by debate study and dissemination⁶¹.

It was also envisaged that the *Document* would be published in three forms. Firstly, as a pamphlet containing the full text, secondly, in a one-page summary sheets in English, Sesotho & seZulu. Thirdly, the full text together with a 'technical apparatus, that is, tight theological and biblical argument to back it (ie. the *Document*) up'⁶². The *Kairos* theologians decided that prior to its publication church-leaders should be contacted separately about the *KD*, with the view to eliciting their comments and criticisms and, above all, to enlist their support⁶³.

The press release of the *KD* took place as planned on September 25, 1985 at the offices of the SACC in Johannesburg. At this press conference the full text of the *Document* was, for the first time, released to the public. A statement outlining the motivation for and message of the *KD* was read by Dr. B. Goba, who chaired a panel consisting of the Revd. F.

⁶¹ Notes on *Kairos Document*.

⁶² *Ibid*.

⁶³ *Ibid*.

Chikane, Fr. B. Thlagale, the Revd. F. Calkin and Fr. A. Nolan. Dr. Goba declared that they were speaking simply as 'Christian theologians'⁶⁴. The intention to take the process beyond the publication of first edition of the *KD* was evident in the planning of regional seminars, workshops and forums on the *Document* with the view to:

...allowing further maximum participation to test the Document and accommodate contributions from those who had no chance to do so. Church-leaders and Church theological commission/committees shall be invited to respond to the Document⁶⁵.

It was envisaged by the *Kairos* theologians that this exercise was to have been completed by mid-December 1985 and that the second edition of the *KD*, having had the benefit of further responses, would then be published during January 1986. As things turned out, the enormous interest in and activity around the release of the first edition⁶⁶ of the *Document* resulted in the *Second Edition* only being published by September 1986. The rapidly growing interest in the *KD* was clearly reflected in reports received at a National *Kairos* Meeting on 21 February 1986, in Johannesburg. This meeting was attended by some 32 people, representing some seven regions in the country, namely the Southern Transvaal, Northern Transvaal, Western Cape, Northern Orange Free State, Pietermaritzburg, Cape Midlands and the West Coast. The meeting adopted the following resolutions:

1. That the Kairos Document be seen as a tool for Christians struggling for liberation at all levels - a servant to that struggle and not a master;
2. That this be assisted by coordinating groups of Christians in local and regional areas, and by a national coordinating office, in order to facilitate and catalyse the Kairos which people are already experiencing;
3. That this not be formalised in any organisation or bureaucracy;

⁶⁴ Public statement given by Kairos theologians during press conference, Khotso House, 25 September 1985. Refer to *Appendix Two* for the full text of press statement. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

⁶⁵ ICT Quarterly Report, July - September 1985. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

⁶⁶ It was estimated that by the end of September 1985, at least 5000 copies of the *Document* had been distributed. Plans were therefore underway to have another 5000 sent to churches, Christian groups and individuals, by the second week of October 1985. (*ibid.*)

4. That representatives from regions and groups be asked to set up operations in accordance with this approach⁶⁷.

The reports at the National Meeting also brought to the fore some of the common obstacles faced by those engaged in broadening the process. One such obstacle was the fear amongst many churchpeople who wanted to come on board the *Kairos*-process, but fearing to expose themselves to being harassed by the state security forces. Another problem was the public condemnations of the *Document* and its authors by Right Wing religious groups. Despite such obstacles, however, it was more than evident from regional reports that *Kairos* activities were gaining momentum, especially amongst ecumenical groupings. The medium and long-term *Kairos* developments amongst the churches and ecumenical movements is the subject of examination in *Part Two* and *Part Three* of this thesis.

2. The message of the *Kairos Document* - A 'challenge to the churches'

In the *Preface* to the first and second editions of the *KD*, the *Kairos* theologians defined the *Document* as 'a Christian, biblical and theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa today'⁶⁸. Being in essence a 'biblical and theological' treatise, the *KD* and its message was therefore directed firstly and foremostly to churches and to Christians, calling them to 'reflect on the situation and to determine what response by the Church and by all Christians would be most appropriate'⁶⁹. However, it is important to point out that though the *Document* was directed to the churches, it was not produced by the churches, in the sense of being commissioned by church denominational bodies either individually or collectively. With two exceptions⁷⁰, the *KD* was also never officially adopted by any of the

⁶⁷ Notes on National Kairos Meeting, 21 February 1986, Johannesburg. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

⁶⁸ *KD*, p.1.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ The first exception is the UCCSA, who identified the *KD* as a 'clear and unequivocal word of prophecy' and a 'cry of the oppressed'. The UCCSA subsequently appointed a denominational Task Force, and commissioned the Task Force to 'review the mission, ministry and structures of the UCCSA in the light of the *Kairos* challenge' (UCCSA Assembly Minute 86/A/67, George, 1986) (D van der Water Archives, Kairos File No.2, Johannesburg). (See *Part Three* of this dissertation for a full account of UCCSA's response to the *KD*). The second exception was the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa (EPCSA). The EPCSA adopted the *KD* at their 1985 annual Synod.

churches to which it was primarily directed.

The *Kairos* theologians, however, clearly recognised that the churches in South Africa had a major role to play in the dismantling of Apartheid and in the reconstruction of a social order established on the principles of justice, democracy and peace. Therefore the salutary nature of the *KD* lay, firstly, in the challenge directed to the churches and, secondly, in the urgency of the challenge faced by the churches. It was the urgency of a challenge which, according to the *Kairos* theologians, the churches could no longer ignore or pretend did not exist. Hence the opening paragraph in *Chapter One* of the *Document*, which is entitled 'The Moment of Truth', makes an immediate and direct reference to the church:

The time has come. The moment of truth has arrived. South Africa has been plunged into a crisis that is shaking the foundations and there is every indication that the crisis has only just begun and that it will deepen and become even more threatening in the months to come. It is the *Kairos* or moment of truth not only for Apartheid but also for the Church and all other faiths and religions⁷¹.

The *KD* therefore located the crisis not only in the socio-political arena, but also within the churches themselves. Moreover, the churches which are addressed directly by the *Kairos* theologians are those churches known to have a long-standing opposition to Apartheid. The *Document* does not explicitly exclude other churches and religious groupings from its 'challenge' but the thrust of its message, was clearly aimed at the ESC's and at other ecumenically-oriented in South Africa. It is evident that the above intention on the part of the *Kairos* theologians arose out of their concern that despite the consistent criticisms of Apartheid over many years, and particularly in the face of the prevailing crisis, the response of the churches and church-leaders lacked the necessary urgency and effectiveness. Hence the following criticism from the *Kairos* theologians:

Church statements over the last few years made it clear that they were not only too mild and too vague, but that they were simply not bringing the full power and challenge of the gospel to Jesus Christ to

⁷¹ The *KD*, p.1.

bear on our present crisis⁷².

Such ineffectiveness was, according to the *KD*, to a large degree due to the existing theological suppositions that informed and governed the churches' responses. These theological suppositions, firstly, lacked any real semblance of 'social analysis'⁷³, and secondly, was devoid of 'an adequate understanding of politics and political strategy'⁷⁴.

The reasons for such fundamental inadequacies evident in what the *Document* calls 'Church Theology'⁷⁵ was to be found in the 'type of faith and spirituality that has dominated church life for centuries'⁷⁶. The *KD* characterises this kind of faith and spirituality that undergirds 'Church theology as 'other-worldly':

As we all know, spirituality has tended to be an other-worldly affair that has very little, if anything at all to do with affairs of this world. Social and political matters were seen as worldly affairs that have nothing to do with the spiritual concerns of the Church...finally the spirituality we inherit tends to rely upon God to intervene in God's own good time to put right what is wrong in the world. That leaves very little for human beings to do except to pray for God's intervention⁷⁷.

The *KD* goes on to suggest that it was the about kind of 'other-worldly' faith and spirituality that lay at the root of the false and inadequate theological formulations perpetuated by the churches. As a consequence the churches tended to resort to the use of 'stock ideas'⁷⁸ such as 'reconciliation', 'justice' and 'non-violence'⁷⁹ to respond to the prevailing crisis in the country.

⁷² *The Kairos Document: Its Origins and Concerns*, Kairos theologians, Article (unpublished and undated). (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

⁷³ *KD*, p.15.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Op cit.*, p.9.

⁷⁶ *Op cit.*, p.16.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Op cit.*, p.9.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

The *Document* criticised, firstly, the churches' use of the word 'reconciliation', noting that many people, including Christians, have pointed out that there can be no true reconciliation while socio-political injustice continues unabated⁸⁰. The *KD* suggests that churches were guilty of calling for reconciliation at all costs, making it into an 'absolute principle that must be applied in all cases of conflict and dissension'⁸¹. Therefore the insistence upon reconciliation and peace before the existing injustices were removed was tantamount to being 'unChristian'⁸².

Secondly, the *Document* raised a serious question about the meaning intended when churches called for 'justice':

...the question we need to ask here, the very serious theological question is: What kind of justice? An examination of Church statements and pronouncements gives the distinct impression that the justice that is envisaged is the justice of reform, that is to say, a justice that is determined by the oppressor, by the white minority and that is offered to the people as a kind of concession⁸³.

The *Kairos* theologians concluded that the justice called for by the churches was not the 'radical justice that comes from below and is determined by the people of South Africa'⁸⁴.

'Non-violence' is the third 'stock idea' used by the church which came under sharp criticism in the *Document*. The call for non-violent actions was almost always directed at black people in the townships caught up in the cauldron of conflict, and not firstly directed to the oppressive violence of the state. The *KD* points out that throughout the Bible the word 'violence' is used to describe everything that is done by a wicked oppressor, and never used to describe the activities of Israelite armies in attempting to liberate themselves or to resist

⁸⁰ The *KD* was published just two weeks after the September 1998 Conference of the National Initiative for Reconciliation (NIR). Without specifically citing the NIR, the *KD*'s criticism of the use of and appeal to reconciliation is clearly also aimed at, amongst other things, the premise of the NIR in its pursuance of an absolute principle of reconciliation which superceded the demand for justice by the black majority in South Africa.

⁸¹ *KD*, p.10.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Op cit.*, p.11.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

aggression.

In the final analysis, the *Document's* critique of 'Church theology' challenged the churches to embark on a major paradigm shift towards 'Prophetic theology', and to the corollary of action for change in society, which in the context of South Africa, meant effective action against the policies and practices of Apartheid. If the critique of 'Church theology' represents the *KD's* point of reference for announcing a *Kairos* for the churches, its critique of 'State theology'⁸⁵ signalled the inevitability of a *Kairos* for Apartheid. In the words of the *Document*, 'the time has come' and 'the moment of truth has arrived'⁸⁶ for the church as well as for the Apartheid state. The critical question was thereby raised as to whether Christians could realistically stand on both sides of the conflict in a situation of serious confrontation:

There we sit in the same church while outside Christian policemen and soldiers are beating up and killing Christian children or torturing Christian prisoners to death while yet other Christians stand by and weakly plead for peace⁸⁷.

From the point of view of the *Document*, the option facing Christians was therefore clear, namely that there was no space for neutrality. Striking at what the *Kairos* theologians saw as the root cause of the problem, the *KD* exposes what it deemed to be false theologies. In the case of 'State theology', the claim is explicit. This brand of theology was merely a theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism and totalitarianism. While 'State theology' claimed to be based on Romans 13:1-7, the *Document* pointed out that the experience of the majority of South Africans was of a state that had not been acting like a servant of God for the benefit of all people. Citing to Revelation 13 the *KD* suggests that within the South African context the contrary was in fact the case:

If we wish to search the Bible for guidance in a situation where the State that is supposed to be 'the servant of God' betrays that calling and begins to serve Satan instead, then we can study chapter 13 of

⁸⁵ *Op cit.*, p.3.

⁸⁶ *Op cit.*, p.4.

⁸⁷ *Op cit.*, p.2.

the Book of Revelation. Here the Roman State becomes the servant of the dragon (the devil) and takes on the appearance of a horrible beast⁸⁸.

'State Theology' furthermore claimed to undergird the principle and practice of law and order in the country. In reality, according to the *KD* critique, 'this *law* is the unjust and discriminatory laws of Apartheid and this *order* is the organised and institutionalised disorder of oppression'⁸⁹. The *Kairos* theologians further argued that the branding of all those who opposed the Apartheid state as 'communists', and therefore by implication as atheists ran adrift on the simple fact that most of the South Africans who have been active against Apartheid were not atheistic, but are rooted very firmly in the church and in African religious traditions. The claim by in the preamble of the Apartheid constitution, by its authors to be guided 'in humble submission to Almighty God'⁹⁰, was therefore denounced by the *Kairos* theologians as blasphemous:

This god is an idol. It is as mischievous, sinister and evil as any of the idols that the prophets of Israel had to contend with...It is a god of superior weapons who conquered those who were armed within nothing but spears. It is the god of caspirs and hippos, the god of teargas, rubber bullets...the god of the South African State is not merely an idol or false god, it is the devil disguised as Almighty God - the antichrist⁹¹.

Having exposed what they considered to be theologically heretical and blasphemous formulations, the *Kairos* theologians directed their challenge to the churches to critically examine or re-examine their theological foundations. Firstly, in relation to their theological self-understandings as churches, and secondly, the theological suppositions which were being used by the state and its supporters to justify, maintain and perpetuate Apartheid. It is noteworthy that in its critique of 'State theology' the *KD* goes much further than earlier documents on Apartheid (eg. *The Message to the Peoples of South Africa* [1968]) in denouncing the South African regime as tyrannical and illegitimate.

⁸⁸ *Op cit.*, p.5.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Op cit.*, p.7.

⁹¹ *Op cit.*, p.8.

The critique of 'Church theology' and 'State theology' sets the stage for a proposal on a new theological way forward. The chapter in the *Document* entitled, 'Toward a Prophetic Theology'⁹² suggests that given the serious flaws and severe limitations of 'Church theology' and 'State Theology' the need existed for the formulation of new models and more Contextual theological paradigms. The shift to such theological paradigms would need to take seriously, amongst other things, the role of social and political analysis, or a 'reading of the signs of the times':

...a prophetic response and a prophetic theology would include *a reading of the signs of the times*. This is what the great Biblical prophets did in their times and this is what Jesus tells us to do. When the Pharisees and Sadducees ask for a sign from heaven, he tells them to 'read the signs of the times' (Mt.16:3) or to 'interpret the *Kairos*' (Lk.12:56)⁹³.

According to the *Kairos* theologians, integral to the 'reading of the signs of the times' was the task of discerning the root causes of the present conflict. For example, the *KD* points out that to portray the prevailing conflict merely as a 'racial war'⁹⁴ was misleading, as it suggested that two equal partners stood in opposition to each other. While there can be no denying the very real racial component within the conflict, the situation was essentially one whereby the two opposing groups were the 'oppressor and the oppressed'⁹⁵. This meant that the starting point for a 'Prophetic theology' was of necessity the experience of the people as that of oppression and tyranny. It was precisely this experience of oppression and tyranny that constituted the prevailing *Kairos*. It was important to identify the parties as the 'oppressors and the oppressed', according to the *Document*, because the situation of tyranny was no accident of history, but integral to the social structure of South African society:

What we are dealing with here, in the Bible or in South Africa today, is a social structure. The oppressors are the people who knowingly or unknowingly represent a sinful *cause* and unjust

⁹² *Op cit.*, p.17.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Op cit.*, p.20.

⁹⁵ *Op cit.*, p.21.

interests. The oppressed are people who knowingly or unknowingly represent the opposite *cause* and *interests*, the cause of justice and freedom. Structurally in our society these two causes are in conflict⁹⁶.

If 'Prophetic theology' identified the situation from a biblical perspective as 'oppression', it also discerned in such oppression an expectation that is directed towards God:

'Throughout the Bible God appears as the liberator of the oppressed. 'For the plundered poor, for the needy who groan, now I will act', says Yahweh (Ps.12:5) God is not neutral. He does not attempt to reconcile Moses and Pharaoh, to reconcile the Jewish people with any of their later oppressors⁹⁷.

Whenever 'Prophetic theology' thus identified the oppressors, it cannot avoid confronting them, guided through the Christian tradition. The implication, according to the *Document*, is clear. The churches had no option but to side with the poor and oppressed, who are God's special concern. It is to this kind of theology and praxis and to the unambiguity thereof - that the *KD* challenged the churches. The *Kairos* theologians were at pains to point out, however, that at the heart of the prophetic faith there is the Christian message of hope:

Jesus has taught us to speak of this hope as the coming of God's kingdom. We believe that God is at work in our world turning hopeless and evil situations to good so that God's kingdom may come and God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven⁹⁸.

The hope of the people, however, needed affirmation. The call for a 'Prophetic theology' therefore insisted that what was needed in the prevailing context of crisis in South Africa, was not a theology which merely rehashes or repeats generalised Christian principles. Rather, what was called for, as a matter of urgency, was a theology which responded to the particular historical context in which people live, and suffer and die at the hands of an oppressive regime. The 'Prophetic theology' to which the churches were being challenged therefore in the *Document* did not allow Christians and the churches the luxury of taking a

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Op cit.*, p.25.

⁹⁸ *Op cit.*, p.92.

neutral stance.

The subsequent section and final chapter in the *KD*, entitled 'Challenge to Action'⁹⁹ could perhaps be regarded as one of the most important sections in the *Document*, as it dealt with the most immediate and urgent problem faced, namely the need for the endemic violence in the country to be stopped. The message of the *Document* was unambiguous on this score. It was not enough merely for Christians and churches to condemn Apartheid, or even the violence that the system engenders. It was also not acceptable for churches to try and remain neutral or seek to mediate between opposing groups. The *KD* called for both Christians and the churches to cross over to the other side and to be united in faith and action with those who are oppressed. One of the tangible ways in which solidarity could be demonstrated was, in the opinion of the *Kairos* theologians, for the churches and Christians to engage in acts of 'civil disobedience':

In the first place *the Church cannot collaborate with tyranny...* Secondly, the Church should not only pray for a change in government, it should also mobilise its members in every parish to begin to think and work and plan for a change of government... And finally the moral legitimacy of the Apartheid regime means that the Church will have to be involved at times in *civil disobedience*. A Church that takes its responsibilities seriously in these circumstances will sometimes have to confront and to disobey the State in order to obey God¹⁰⁰.

If the actions of civil disobedience would represent the outward witness of churches in defiance of Apartheid, the *Document* also called for a transformation of 'inward' activities, such as services of worship, eucharist services, baptisms, Sunday school activities, funerals, etc. The *KD* called for such 'specific activities' of the church to be 'reshaped to be more fully consistent with a prophetic faith related to the *Kairos* that God is offering us today'¹⁰¹.

The thrust of the challenge to the church in this regard was that of making much more conscious connections between the rituals of religion and the everyday experience of the

⁹⁹ *Op cit.*, p.28.

¹⁰⁰ *Op cit.*, p.30.

¹⁰¹ *Op cit.*, p.29.

people on the streets, in the market place, in the unemployment queues, and faced with the wrath of an oppressive regime. For example, the evil forces that are alluded to in the Christian ceremony of baptism should become more explicit, and the unity Christians profess in the eucharist should be demonstrated in acts of solidarity outside of the Church walls. A further dimension of the *KD* challenge, which had to do with the churches' internal life, was that of the continued racial divisions within the churches in South Africa. The *Kairos* theologians put it plainly:

What the present crisis shows up, although many of us have known it all along, is that *the Church is divided*. More and more people are now saying that there are in fact two Churches in South Africa - a White Church and a Black Church. Even within the same denomination there are in fact two Churches¹⁰².

The prevailing crisis had therefore, according to the *KD*, harshly exposed the ongoing racial divisions within the churches. The churches, therefore, no less than society, were faced with their respective *kairoi*. The message of the *Document* to the churches in this respect was not merely that the churches lacked the integrity of an internal coherent entity as the Body of Christ, but that such division was the consequence of diverse socio-political persuasions and actions amongst church members, split along racial lines.

The *Kairos* process and message of the *KD* came in for criticism and condemnation from certain quarters. The full range of reactions and short-term responses to *Document* - both negative and positive - is the subject of *Part Three* of this dissertation. In *Part Four* we critically discuss the significance of such responses for theology and praxis in South Africa.

3. Reflections on the content and process of the *Kairos Document*

3.1 Soweto - the hermeneutical starting point

The first point that clearly emerges from the foregoing outline of the *Kairos* process as a whole¹⁰³ is that the *KD* itself and the *Kairos* movement that ensued was born out of a *context*

¹⁰² *Op cit.*, p.1.

¹⁰³ Refer to Appendix Three for the full statement on the *Kairos* process, as described by the authors of the *KD* themselves.

of crisis. The immediate crisis was that of increasing social and political turmoil in the country at large, and the escalation of violence which arose largely out of conflict between the state actions and opposition forces within the black townships in particular. This context therefore represents the essential *hermeneutical starting point* for an understanding of method and the message of the *KD*. The decisive event that galvanised the initially small group theologians and churchpeople into *Kairos action* was the government's declaration of the State of Emergency, and the frightening scenario that the Emergency represented. In the words of the *Kairos* theologians:

Oppression and injustice had been there for a long time - the institutionalised violence of Apartheid. But the fierceness and brutality, the vindictiveness and provocation of the police and the army in the townships especially after the declaration of the state of emergency constituted an unprecedented crisis¹⁰⁴.

In terms of its theological methodology the *Document* therefore represents a mode of contextual theologising, which has its roots in the soul and in the soil of Soweto, one of the black townships which had bore the brunt of the crisis. The *KD*'s authenticity as a *genre* of Contextual theology lies in its *conscious* attempt to speak a prophetic word in a time and within a specific context of a major socio-political crisis. The *Document* came into being through a process of urgent reflection on the crisis, and this fact alone is part of its significance. In this sense the theology of the *KD*, as has become known, '*Kairos* theology', is a second discourse to praxis, in the manner and pattern of other Contextual theologies such as Liberation theology, Black theology, Minjung theology and Feminist/Womanist theology¹⁰⁵.

3.2 The prophetic capacity of the institutional churches

It is significant that such a prophetic word in the *KD* was spoken by a number of people who did not represent any one denominational church or theological tradition. On the one

¹⁰⁴ *The Kairos Document: Its Origins and Concerns.*

¹⁰⁵ Refer to Part Four of this thesis for a discussion on the nature, purpose and future relevance of *Kairos* theology and other Contextual theologies in the formation of an ongoing prophetic critique of Church and society.

hand this is indicative of the ecumenical nature of the project and on the other hand it raises a fundamental question about the nature and witness of the institutionalised denominational churches. The question is about the extent to which the churches are able to be prophetic. This question is central to this study as a whole and will as such be raised again in *Part Three* of this dissertation, in the light of our examination of the medium and long-term *Kairos* developments, and followed through by way of critical reflection in *Part Four*.

3.3 The *Kairos* process - a democratisation of theology

The JNL Response - a democratisation of the church
The process by which the *KD* was produced could be characterised as a genuine attempt at the democratisation of theology, not that the *Kairos* theologians set out to achieve this particular purpose. However, the fact that the method and process by which the *Document* came into being was subject to sharp criticism from certain church and academic quarters¹⁰⁶ reveals an underlying tension about the proprietorship of theological discourse. Suffice it to say, at this juncture, that those critics who attempted to cast dubious aspersions on the theological *bona fides* and competence of the *Kairos* theologians appear to have missed a fundamental point, namely that the theological discourse is authenticated and not discredited when arising from within a context whereby the activists are also the theological interpreters.

It is undeniable that the *Kairos* process succeeded to achieve many of its objectives, by virtue of its engagement of a theological grouping in the task of writing the *Document*; by securing the support from strategic signatories; and by eliciting the widespread resonance from a diverse constituency of people inside and outside of the churches. Given the severe constraints that the State of Emergency placed on such a process at the time, the *Kairos* theologians made a courageous attempt to engage as many rank and file churchpeople. The fact that church-leaders were not the first role-players to be approached in the formulation of a theological statement addressing the prevailing crisis was an intentional move. It is no secret that it was the perceived ineffectiveness of church-leaders which in fact was one of the crucial factors which brought the *Kairos* theologians together to articulate a theological

¹⁰⁶ See *Part Two (Chapter Three)* for the source and nature of such criticisms.

statement on the political crisis. The *Kairos* process which began to unfold is characterised by Albert Nolan as follows:

The *Kairos Document* developed, or perhaps one should say mushroomed, out of a small meeting of theologians and ministers in Soweto in August 1985. Eventually hundreds of Churchpeople throughout the country were involved in the research, writing and amending of a *Document* that was released to the press on September 25th. It has proved to be the most exciting and for some the most controversial theological statement that has ever been published in South Africa¹⁰⁷.

By virtue of the consultative process, the *Kairos* theologians, with some justification, make the bold claim that the *Document* is reflective of an authentic people's theology, not in the sense that it was produced by the masses, but in that it represented the voice of the people:

What the research revealed was that many, many Christians in South Africa and especially in the townships had already begun to develop what one might call a people's theology. The *Kairos Document* is not much more than a first attempt to articulate and systematize the people's understanding of their faith and their criticisms of what is so often thought to be the appropriate Christian response to our present crisis¹⁰⁸.

The *Document*, therefore, represents the first serious attempt to express - in theological terms - what a great many Christians and churchpeople in the townships were experiencing and feeling for some time, and especially in the face of the prevailing crisis. The widespread positive response from such quarters to the message of the *Kairos* is indicative of the resonance felt amongst many ordinary people whose support of the *KD* affirmed rather than called into question the legitimate right of the *Kairos* theologians to speak on their behalf. The questioning therefore, implicit and explicit in the reactions to the *Document* amongst church-leaders, of the *authority* of the *Kairos* theologians is, ironically a reflection on the sensitiveness of the church-leaders themselves. This issue is picked and discussed in *Part Four* of this dissertation.

¹⁰⁷ 'A Brief history of the Kairos Document', *Crisis News*, January 1986. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

Chapter Three - Reactions and Responses to the *Kairos Document* in South Africa

1. Immediate Reactions

The publication of *KD* on September 25, 1985 elicited a range of reactions and responses way beyond the expectations of its authors. In this chapter, I shall be surveying the reactions and responses to the *Document* within South Africa covering the period September 1985 - July 1987, and internationally covering the period September 1985 - December 1987. It is necessary to cover such extended periods due to the fact that the second revised edition of the *KD* was published in September 1986, a year after the first edition, bringing with it new responses and fresh debates which are relevant to the overall survey.

The listing of the categories of respondents hereunder are not arranged in a strict chronological order as the nature and pattern of responses to the *Document* makes precise dating difficult to ascertain¹⁰⁹. I have nevertheless attempted to arrange the survey in such a way that a coherent pattern of responses becomes discernable.

1.1 Newspapers

The most immediate reaction to the publication of the *Document* came from the print media. On the day following the publication of the *KD*, *The Star* (26 September 1985), a Johannesburg-based English-language daily newspaper, led with an article on the *Document* entitled, 'Place of the Church is with the oppressed'. This newspaper declared that the *KD* was 'arguably the most provocative statement to emanate from South African theologians in decades'. *The Star* then followed up on its initial interest in the *Document* on very next day, ie. 27 September 1985, by presenting a two-page summary of the contents of the *KD* under the heading, 'Churches face moment of truth'. The newspaper made the point that the *Kairos* theologians highlighted a disturbing feature of the church in South Africa, namely that the church remained deeply divided:

They (*the Kairos theologians*) portray the schism in the Church in the starkest of terms... There we sit in the same church while outside

¹⁰⁹ For example, many of the letters directed to the *Kairos* theologians in response to the *KD* were undated, and in some instances responses (both verbal and written) only reached the offices after a considerable time-lapse.

Christian policemen and soldiers are beating up and killing Christian children or torturing Christian prisoners while other Christians stand by and weakly plead for peace.

On the weekend immediately following the publication of the *Document*, *The Saturday Star* (28 September 1985) devoted its editorial comment to the *KD*, characterising its contents as 'Theology of the people'. This newspaper observed that the *Document* contained both 'good news' and 'bad news':

The good news is that the signatories believe 'the ideal way of resolving the crisis is a peaceful one'. The bad news is that 'Church theology', despite its moral stance, is found wanting.

The Sunday Star (29 September 1985), for its part, focussed on the fact that most of the church-leaders' names did not appear among the signatories of the *Document*, in view of its criticism of the church establishment. The newspaper noted that it was therefore 'no surprise' that such names as Archbishop Denis Hurley, Archbishop Philip Russell, the Rev Peter Storey, and the Rev Allan Maker - leaders respectively in the Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches - were absent from the list of signatories.

In 1986 *The Star* (10 February 1986) again reported on developments within church circles in the wake of the *Document*, quoting General Secretary of the SACC as saying that 1986 may prove to be a decisive year for the church:

We have to face the fact of growing conflict between black and white, including black and white Christians. My impression is that 1986 may turn out to be a year of crisis for the church.

The report in *The Star* went on to observe that the *KD* 'was supported mainly by black church-leaders, while white clergymen adopted a very cautious approach'. Another Johannesburg-based English-language daily newspaper, *The Citizen* (27 September 1985) refrained from making any comment or criticism about the *Document*, but reported briefly on a statement made by Dr. Beyers Naude at a press conference in Switzerland. According to *The Citizen*, Dr. Naude had said that the 'Document will stir all'. Picking up again on the subject in 1986 *The Citizen* (6 February 1986) elected to focus on a statement made by Mr J.W. Meiring, a Nationalist government spokesperson, who labelled the *Document* 'a call to

revolution, murder and high treason':

The Kairos Document on liberation theology signed by the general secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), Dr Beyers Naude, was a call to revolution, murder and high treason,... the Document, released last year, had been compiled by seven nameless theologians and financed by the SACC... The Document made God into a political God and talked of salvation in terms of freedom from political repression, not in terms of what we know it as, a personal thing.

The *KD* apparently so outraged Mr. P.W. Botha, that the state president is reported to have said that he will not speak to any religious or political leader who supported the *Document*¹¹⁰. The *KD* also met with a hostile reception from the leader of another political party, namely Chief Mangosothu Buthelezi of *Inkatha*. Buthelezi charged that the *KD* was taking 'a particular brand of organised Black political activity and calls them the campaigns of the people'¹¹¹ and accused the authors of the *Document* of being 'blind to the reality of ordinary people's contribution to the process of change'¹¹².

The Sowetan (26 September 1985), the largest of the English-language daily newspapers in the country, and one which is most popular with readers from the black communities in and around Soweto, saw the *KD* as calling on the State to enter into a 'cease-fire agreement' with its opponents:

The State would have to guarantee that it will not use violence against its opponents by signing a cease-fire agreement, especially

¹¹⁰ Interview with Fr. Albert Nolan on the *KD* on 4 May 1992. Nolan acknowledged, however, that it is difficult to confirm whether the state president actually made the remark, as nobody is able to identify the time and context in which he made it. It would appear, according to Nolan, that the state president's remarks were passed on by word of mouth by those who heard it, reaching the ears of people at ICT. However, whether or not Mr Botha made the actual remark, it could not be denied that such an expression would have been consonant with his sentiments about the *Document*. (D. van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹¹¹ Memorandum by Chief M Buthelezi to 'representatives of the Evangelical and the Roman Catholic Church in Germany'. See letter, dated 12 March 1986, by Dr. R.R. Steenwijk, representative of Buthelezi in Amsterdam. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹¹² *Ibid.*

with the ANC, according to a theological document released in Johannesburg this week...The document says that the church would have to "confront the Apartheid regime" and would even have to advocate civil disobedience to bring about a change of government.

On October 2, 1985 *The Sowetan* followed up on its earlier comments on the *KD* by publishing a feature article, entitled 'Moment of Truth for State, Church in SA':

The already strained church/state relationship could plummet to an all-time low following the recent publication of Kairos - a document giving a critical analysis of the political situation in South Africa. The document, produced by 151 theologians and ministers, could be the most radical document produced by the church in this country. It challenges the legitimacy of the South African Government because of its Apartheid policies and labels it as the enemy of the people. It advocates confrontation, disobedience and the promotion of justice - by the church - even at the cost of creating "conflict, disunity and dissension" along the way.

Some five days before the release of the *KD*, *The Sowetan* (20 September 1985) warned that "collision looms for State, Church in the wake of a 'stayaway' called for by church-leaders" on October 9, 1985, during the launching of the National Initiative for Reconciliation (NIR):

Four hundred black and white church-leaders representing 47 denominations made the call during the launching of the National Initiative for Reconciliation (NIR) held in Maritzburg on September 12. The stayaway will be unique in that it is the first to be called by the Church. It will also have far-reaching implications for South Africa and for relations - which have not been particularly good - between the Church and the State.

Another English-language daily newspaper with a wide distribution amongst black readers in and around the greater Johannesburg metropolitan area, *The City Press* (29 September 1985), also picked up on the issue of a 'cease-fire' which, in the view of the newspaper, was being called for by the *KD*:

Leading churchmen have called on the Government to enter into a "cease-fire" with the African National Congress and to release Nelson Mandela before any talks are held on South Africa's future. The call, made by 150 leading theologians from churches in South

Africa, is contained in the Kairos document, which was released to the Press in Johannesburg this week.

It is evident therefore that popular English-language daily and weekly newspapers in South Africa, especially those based in the greater Johannesburg area, generally welcomed the publication of the *Document*. Amongst the ranks of the Afrikaans-language newspapers it appears that only *Die Beeld*, a Johannesburg-based daily newspaper, and *Die Burger*, in the western Cape, gave any measure of coverage to the publication of the *KD*. In an article entitled '*Skerp Kerkdokument teen sagte kritiek*', *Die Beeld* (26 September 1985) noted that the *Document* had major implications for the '*onderhandelingspolitiek*' (politics of negotiation) in South Africa:

'N Dokument met ingrypende implikasies vir ekumeniese samesprekinge en Engelsprekende kerke self en wat die moontlikheid van onderhandelingspolitiek in Suid Afrika ernstig kan raak, is gister aan die pers beskikbaar gestel.

Die Beeld (23 April 1986) followed up its initial interest in the *Document* by focussing on sharp criticisms levelled against the *Kairos* message by an American-based organisation calling itself 'The Christian Anti-Communism Crusade' (CACC). *Die Beeld* reports on a conference held by the CACC in which the *Document* was condemned because of its Marxist-Leninist principles:

Skerp kritiek op die bevrydingsteologie en in die besonder die Kairos-dokument is deur drie lede van die vereniging Christian Anti-Communism Crusade (CACC), wat sy basis in Amerika het, op 'n konferensie in Johannesburg uitgespreek... Sowel dr. Colbert as dr. Whitehall het daarop gewys dat the Kairos-dokument as grondslag die Marxisties-Leninistiese stelling het dat verandering in Suid-Afrika alleen deur 'n geweldadige klasse-oorlog teweeggebring kan word.

Die Burger, for its part, refrained from making any immediate and direct comment following the release of the *Document*. Instead, this newspaper picked up on commentary in *Die Ligdraer* - the official organ of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, in three separate newspaper editions, namely 10, 11 and 12 September 1986. In its article on September 11, *Die Burger* highlighted the fact that *Die Ligdraer* criticised the *KD* for its apparent lack of

consistency with Scripture, stating: '*Kairos klop nie oral met die Skrif*'. *Die Burger* (12 September 1986) furthermore observed that *Die Ligdraer* suggested that the *KD* was not radical enough: '*Kairos-dokument is nie radikaal genoeg*', because it misses the radical nature of Scripture itself:

Hy (Kairos dokument) beroep hom op die Bybel, maar mis die radikalisme van die Skrif.

Beyond the borders of the Transvaal province, press coverage of the *KD* in daily newspapers appear to have been limited to the Western Cape and the Natal province. The Cape-Town based English-language daily newspaper, *The Argus* (26 September 1985) characterised the *Document* as an 'urgent call to churches to minister in SA's struggle':

An urgent call to churches to seize creatively the present social crisis and to minister "in the struggle for liberation by supporting and encouraging campaigns and actions of the people" has been made by more than 150 theologians and ministers.

Some three months after the publication of the *KD* another Cape Town-based English-language newspaper, *The Cape Times* (30 January 1986), focussed on the *Document's* questioning of the church's traditional stance *vis-à-vis* violence:

The Kairos document questions the church's blanket condemnation of violence... "Is it legitimate, especially in our circumstances, to use the same word violence in a blanket condemnation to cover ruthless and repressive activities of the state and the desperate attempts of people to defend themselves?"

The popular national English-language weekly newspaper, *The Sunday Times* (29 September 1985), whose average circulation figures are probably the highest in the country for a weekly newspaper, observed that the *Document* was greeted with condemnation on the part of some church-leaders and theologians but strongly supported by others:

Fierly condemnation greeted the publication this week of a document calling on Christians to disobey the State. Shocking, un-Christian and reprehensible were some of the views of eminent theologians on the controversial Kairos document. But others strongly supported the theologians' defence of boycotts, stayaways and civil disobedience as a way of confronting the Apartheid State.

Another English-language weekly newspaper, *The Weekly Mail* (4 October 1985), hailed the *Document* as a 'Challenge to churches to break their silence'. The article in *The Weekly Mail* picked up on crucial issues raised by the *Kairos* theologians such as the legitimacy of the state. This newspaper saw the *KD* as:

...a far-reaching document which questions traditional concepts of violence. It also questions the traditional picture of a church led from the top down to the people, as opposed to a church which responds at leadership level to movement from the grassroots. It strives to demonstrate that the South African government has no moral legitimacy.

A year later, after the publication of the revised second edition of the *KD*, *The Weekly Mail* (7 December 1986), in dramatic fashion, observed that the 'Damned document lives on'. This newspaper proceeded to make the point that while in certain quarters the *Document* was being vilified, elsewhere it was growing in impact and acceptance:

While the *Kairos* document is damned in Parliament, one of the largest churches in the country is poised to embrace many of its ideals. The Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC) said after its annual meeting in Pretoria last week that it "sees no choice but to envisage forms of non-violent action such as passive resistance, boycotts and economic pressure to move our country away from its present state of racial conflict and set it firmly on the road to justice".

It would be no exaggeration to state that the impact of the *KD*, both in South Africa and abroad, was in no small measure due to the high media profile it received in the print and electronic media. From the above survey it is abundantly clear that the major trend amongst regional and national English language newspapers in the country was one of positive response and supportive commentary. This development itself probably contributed much to the fact that churches and Christians, who at first sight may have been negative or dismissive of the *Document*, were persuaded to have a second look.

1.2 Theologians and biblical scholars

The Sunday Times in particular was quick to note and to highlight the differences of opinion amongst theologians in South Africa, especially in their initial reactions to the *Document*.

For example, outright rejection and condemnation of the *KD* was expressed in no uncertain terms by certain theologians, and not only those hailing from the traditionally pro-Apartheid Afrikaner institutions. Notable in this regard was the almost hysterical denunciation of the *Document* by Professor Ben Engelbrecht, head of Religious Studies at the University of Witwatersrand (Wits). Prof. Engelbrecht publicly described the *KD* as 'ghastly', adding that it was a writ which 'all serious Christians should reject' (*The Sunday Times*, 29 September 1985).

Among theologians from traditionally Afrikaans-language universities, none was more explicit in his public condemnation than the late Professor Johan Heyns, who is reported to have said that the *Document* was for him 'a very shocking experience and that if the Church is going to play that role, then it is no longer a Church' (*The Sunday Times*, 29 September 1985). Such extreme views from prominent academic theologians resulted in a quick rebuttal by others. Theologians who came out strongly in public support of the *KD*, at the time when knee-jerk condemnations came fast and furious were. Amongst others, Professor J.W. de Gruchy, of the University of Cape Town (UCT). Professor de Gruchy responded to criticism of the *Document* by stating:

To say that the churches could not become involved in civil disobedience was to go against the whole thrust of Christian tradition. (*The Sunday Times*, 29 September 1985).

De Gruchy again picked up on the significance of the immediate responses to the *Document* in an editorial comment of *The Journal of Theology for Southern Africa (JTSA)*:

The immediate response to the *Document* was significant. One hundred and fifty theologians, pastors and lay persons, black and white, from around the country immediately signed, and many are basically committed to its thrust have offered positive critique. This is important, for again, one of the differences between the Kairos *Document* and other statements is its provisional character. It does not claim to be complete or beyond criticism, on the contrary, it is intentionally open-ended, a basis for on-going discussion arising out of action, analysis and reflection. (*JTSA*, December 1985, No. 53).

The *KD* also elicited responses from those theologians who were critical of its contents - some severely so - but who nevertheless felt that its message merited serious attention.

Under this category of responses was that of Bishop Godfrey Ashby, an Anglican church leader and former Old Testament lecturer at Rhodes University. Bishop Ashby suggested that there were major theological flaws in the case presented by the *Kairos* theologians. For example, he characterised the third section of the *KD* (i.e. 'Towards a Prophetic Theology') as 'a new heresy...a new worldly-wise plan'. (*Seek*, November 1985). Ashby, however, conceded that the *Document* had 'great merit' and that 'it reaches great heights':

The great merit of this document is that it is forged on the anvil of a burning concern for all, particularly for those who suffer most in South Africa now. It is good that this challenge has come. It is also good that it should be taken seriously and criticised seriously. It reaches great heights, particularly when it is examining Scripture. In fact it can only claim to be Christian theology when it is doing just that - examining Scripture in the present situation. (*Seek*, November 1985).

The Revd Douglas Bax, a theologian and minister of the PCSA, acknowledged that the *KD* needed to be heard, especially by white Christians in the country:

...(The *Document*) says many profound and true things about our situation and that every white Christian especially needs to get hold of a copy, study it and meditate on it¹¹³.

Bax, however, took issue with what he considered to be a hardline attitude towards forgiveness in the *Document* which was, in his opinion, inconsistent with the overall view of the Bible. He went on to state that such an attitude leads to 'self-righteous fanaticism which regards ones enemies as God's enemies, so that any measure against them are justified'¹¹⁴. In similar vein, the Revd James Massey, an Old Testament scholar and minister of the MCSA came out in qualified support of the *Document*, criticizing especially what he considered to be its heavy reliance on a class-struggle ideology. Massey concluded his commentary on the *KD* in both positive and negative terms:

1. *KD* has dealt with its context very seriously. This is the reason for its power and appeal. However, it has neglected to analyse several

¹¹³ Paper (undated & unpublished) by the Revd D Bax. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

crucial aspects of the South Africa context, presumably because its dominant pretext excluded consideration of these aspects.

2. KD took as its pretext both the Biblical heritage and the class-struggle ideology. In the first four chapters the ideology is dominant and produces severe distortion of certain central Biblical categories.

3. In its *Challenge to Action*, KD uses the phrases of the ideology but actually recommends programmes which are non-violent¹¹⁵.

The *KD* elicited a spate of vigorous debate amongst theologians and biblical scholars hailing from the more traditionally liberal English-language universities in the country. Most of the responses from such quarters tended to give qualified support of the *Document*, with varying degrees of criticism. The response of Professor Brian Gaybba, of the University of South Africa's (UNISA) Department of Systematic Theology, for example, is one of many such responses. Gaybba offered a number of substantial criticisms of the *KD*, but prefaced his comments with the following introduction in his paper:

An important challenge to the Church has been issued recently in the form of a theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa today. Both the purpose and the contents of the "Kairos Document", as it is called..., warrant the serious attention of all Christians, and most especially of professional theologians¹¹⁶.

Gaybba, however, also suggested the *Document* was seriously lacking as a 'theological statement', being in his opinion more of 'hotch-potch of criticisms of other positions':

I find K(Kairos Document) very disappointing as a theological analysis, a theological statement. And that, above all, is what it claims to be. It lacks a strong theological base. Certainly there are the odd references to the Bible and Christian tradition. But as any theologian knows, that does not create theology. Certainly too, it is quite clear that K's own theological stance would fall under what is known as "liberation theology". But K is itself a rather weak example of such, being more of a hotch-potch of criticism of other positions, than a rivetting challenging statement of its own¹¹⁷.

¹¹⁵ Paper (undated & unpublished) by the Revd J Massey. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹¹⁶ Paper (undated & unpublished) by Prof. B Gaybba. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Likewise, Professor Cunter Wittenberg, from the University of Natal's (Pietermaritzburg) Department of Religious Studies, stated that he was 'in general agreement with the basic thrust of the Kairos Document and wants to be part of the movement'¹¹⁸. Wittenberg, however, made the following observations in his criticism of the *Document*:

1. According to the New Testament forgiveness is always unconditional. This is the essence of the gospel. God has justified and forgiven us while we were still enemies and sinners.(Rom.5). Repentance therefore cannot be made a condition of forgiveness. The whole life of Christ and his death on the cross is a demonstration of this fact. When Christ calls his disciples to love their enemies he only exhorts them to follow his example. A clearer distinction between sinful people and sinful structures would be useful. The Christian is not called to be reconciled with sin but with sinners (Cf. also Martin Luther King).
2. I have problems with the direct identification of the State with the anti-Christ. The Kairos Document is right to be critical of state theology and 'church theology' but it is not critical enough to recognise that sin is also on the side of those opposing the government. When Jesus rebuked Peter he showed that even disciples are not free from the temptations of Satan. By identifying the State with the antichrist the Kairos Document is in danger of becoming itself an ideology, something which it rightly criticised in the other two positions¹¹⁹.

The debate on the *KD* amongst theologians and biblical scholars in South Africa featured prominently in subsequent editions (especially during the latter part of 1986) of the *JTSA*. One of the first of such articles were from Professor G. Thom, the Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Fort Hare. Thom stated that he welcomed and endorsed the *KD*'s 'rejection of a subservient status quo theology, its call for a prophetic theology and its professed identification with the poor'¹²⁰ but expressed serious reservations about that which he perceived to be the *Document*'s intention, namely 'to justify and encourage anarchy'¹²¹.

¹¹⁸ Letter to *Kairos* theologians by G Wittenberg, dated 21 March 1986. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Letter to *Kairos* theologians from Prof. G. Thom, dated 24 October 1985. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg). Refer also to 'An Opportunity or a Temptation?' by Thom in *JTSA*, June 1986, No.55, p.46ff.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

Thom stated his criticism as follows:

The argument is that the SA government is not only fundamentally unjust, but irreparably tyrannical (p.18). It passes a final judgement on the government and declares it to be morally illegitimate (p.17). Repentance is impossible as the government is in principle the "enemy of the people" (p.19). The Document declares that the country is in a state of civil war and it makes no attempt to discourage the revolution which has already started (p.16). It openly and honestly encourages the revolution (p.21). According to this argument SA is morally in a state of anarchy. The present government is morally illegitimate, but there is no alternate government which would be able to take control of the country. The call for absolute opposition and resistance (p.24) is therefore clearly, on the basis of their analysis of the situation, open encouragement of anarchy¹²².

Entering the debate 'with reluctance', Charles Villa-Vicencio made the point that the proliferation of written responses to the *KD* actually underlined one of the major problems within the churches that the *Kairos* theologians attempted to address, namely the churches' lack of effective action in response to the growing crisis in the country. Villa-Vicencio explained why his was a reluctant response:

Those (responses) from university academics are mostly cautious and usually pedantic, liberals raise the questions liberals are supposed to raise, churches are defensive of the church, and religious reactionaries make their own panoply of noises. And theological dissidents? They too reveal their colours, although not many appear to deem it necessary to defend the Document in print. So many words! And further comment *must* be reluctant. The Document is actually calling for action!¹²³.

Bonganjalo Goba, who was intimately involved in the *Kairos* process from its inception, picked up on the issue of the use of Scripture in the *KD*. He affirmed that the *Document* was, *inter alia*, nothing less than 'a biblical response to the current political crisis in South

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ C Villa-Vicencio, 'A reluctant response: Has the challenge been heard?', in *JTSA*, June 1986, No.55, p.56ff.

Africa'¹²⁴. Goba defended the use of the Bible in the *KD* from the perspective of Juan Luis Segundo's hermeneutic circle:

In the Kairos Document this hermeneutic circle is reflected in the prophetic stance which the *Kairos* theologians seek to lift from the Bible in their attempt to respond to the situation of death and conflict. Because they are suspicious of the prevailing interpretations of the Bible, particularly by the dominant white and black church-leaders who are committed to their respective way of to state and church theologies, these theologians attempt to interpret the significance of the *Kairos* by engaging in social analysis of the South African situation¹²⁵.

Amongst those who contested the above perspective was the New Testament scholar, Professor John Suggit, of Rhodes University's Department of Divinity. Suggit's view was precisely that the *KD* was seriously flawed in the way that it used Scripture, conceding, however, that the challenge of the *Document* should be taken seriously:

The challenge of The Kairos document is so important that it cannot be made to depend on a few selected biblical texts. Since however it needs to be backed by biblical evidence it may be more satisfactory and more honest to proceed in a different way¹²⁶.

Suggit went on to propose the following alternate biblical and theological guidelines as hermeneutic:

It is not that God is presenting us with a *unique* opportunity today. Rather the present context of disunity and strife, of lies and violence, in this land of South Africa reminds us that every moment is God's moment and a call to decision, and that if no adequate response is made now, not only may the Christian church suffer the fate of Jerusalem, but our whole understanding of our humanity, our being human, will be in danger of disappearing. We shall fail to see ourselves as belonging to God and to others, and so shall fail to recognise that our wholeness (what the Bible calls "salvation") are

¹²⁴ B Goba, 'The use of Scripture in the *Kairos Document*: A Biblical-Ethical perspective', *JTSA*, September 1986, No.56, p.61.

¹²⁵ *Op cit.*, p.64.

¹²⁶ J Suggit, 'Kairos: The Wrong Way on the Right Road', *JTSA*, March 1987, No.58, pp.70-74.

tied up with the well-being of others¹²⁷.

In response to Suggit's criticisms about the *KD*'s use of Scripture, Drs. James Cochrane and Jonathan Draper, from the University of Natal's (Pietermaritzburg) Department of Religious Studies remarked that 'the net result of this critique, despite Prof. Suggit's acknowledgement of the importance of the Kairos document, is to make the document harmless and ultimately unimportant'¹²⁸. Cochrane and Draper concluded that the *Document* is not the 'wrong way on the right road', as Suggit suggested, but rather that the *KD* was revealing that 'there is a split, a fork in the road, a parting of ways, and that this split gives rise to a conflict in interpretations as well'¹²⁹.

Representing a feminist perspective on the *Document*, Dr Denise Ackerman of UNISA's Department of Practical Theology observed that the 'simplistic dualisms in the Kairos document... make it difficult to "weave" a feminist perspective into it'¹³⁰. These dualistic categories were, according to Ackerman, those of 'heaven/hell, good/evil, oppressed/oppressor, clergy/laity, and sacred/ secular'¹³¹. Elaborating on the nature of the problem, Ackerman stated:

People and systems are dialectically related to one another. People create systems and systems in turn create people or at least shape and determine their lives. Feminist liberation praxis would recognise this but would hold that people cannot be equated with systems. What is sought is a new humanity, generated by God and established by Jesus during his ministry. This new humanity is what is meant by "ruling in life" being enslaved to justice (Rom. 6:18-22). What is sought therefore is a holistic view on humanity - this I think is feminist theology's real contribution. Such a view cannot bed down with dualisms¹³².

¹²⁷ *Op cit.*, p.72.

¹²⁸ J.R. Cochrane and J.A. Draper, 'The Parting of the Ways', *JTSA*, July 1987, No.59, p.66.

¹²⁹ *Op cit.*, p.71.

¹³⁰ Letter to Fr A. Nolan from Dr D. Ackerman, dated 29 April 1986. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

Given the nature and extent of the debate amongst academic theologians the *KD* clearly succeeded in generating significant interest amongst a constituency whose influence in the churches cannot be trivialised or underestimated. However, the *Document* had a much more urgent intention, namely, that of calling on churches and Christians to respond with effective action in hastening the end of the Apartheid state, which had brought about a situation of endemic violence in the country. In the final analyses, the value of the debate amongst academic theologians would have to be assessed in relation to the contribution it had made in, firstly, influencing the churches towards embracing the challenge of Prophetic theology and, secondly, in providing further impetus in the struggle for a democratic, just and peaceful social order.

1.3 Ecumenical bodies, church organisations and para-church agencies

Apart from the English-language newspapers another constituency whose support for the *KD* was immediate and unambiguous was that of ecumenical bodies and movements and from para-church organisations. Typical of such decisive support for the *Document* came, for instance from ABRECSA, who immediately set in motion a process whereby its membership were requested to work through 'Study Guides based on the Kairos Document'¹³³. The SACC also accorded priority to the *KD*, commissioning one of its officers, the Revd Sol Jacob, to study the *Document* and to make comment on the message and challenge of the *Kairos*¹³⁴.

The *KD* emerged swiftly as the major focus point at seminars, conferences and annual general meetings of many other ecumenical and para-church organisations. The Durban-based ecumenical body, *Diakonia*, for instance, held a workshop on November 30, 1985, merely two months after the publication of the *Document*, with the following as their aims and objectives:

1. To motivate participants to read, study and think about the Kairos

¹³³ Letter to Kairos theologians from Dr. F Bill, Organizing Secretary of ABRECSA, dated 31 October 1985. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹³⁴ 'Comments and Suggestions on the Kairos Document', the Revd S Jacob (SACC) (undated article). (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

Document.

2. To provide an opportunity for participants to discuss the Document and make comments which can be sent to the authors.
3. To enable participants to look at the implications of the Document and how it can be used.
4. To decide about possible follow-up¹³⁵.

The 40-odd participants at the *Diakonia* workshop were drawn from many of the ecumenically-oriented church denominations, and from other movements such as The Black Sash, *Die Belydende Kring*, and the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA). PACSA convened a workshop on the *KD* with the view 'to enable participants to discuss the *Document*, to consider its implications and to define possible follow-up programmes'¹³⁶. Approximately 90 theologians, lay church members and students attended the workshop, facilitated by a panel consisting of Professor Willem Saayman (Department of Mission - University of South Africa), the Revd Dr Cecil Ngcokovane (Lecturer at the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa), Fr. Theo Kneifel and Ms. Dina Cormick. The workshop 'unanimously' adopted the following statement:

The overwhelming feeling of the meeting is of support for the Kairos Document. In accord with the intention of the Document questions about some aspects were raised and discussed. Serious note was taken of the implications of the Document for the churches and individuals with respect to fundamental change in our country. The meeting endorsed its commitment to the Kairos Document and its urgent practical implementation and encouraged the further dissemination of the Document¹³⁷.

Another ecumenical body, the Churches' Urban Planning Commission (CUPC), based in Cape Town, adopted as theme for their April 1986 Annual General Meeting the following: 'Focussing on the Kairos document'¹³⁸. Positive and affirming responses also came from lesser known ecumenical and community agencies such as Crisis Care, an organisation who

¹³⁵ Report on Kairos Document workshop (Durban), *Diakonia*, dated 30 November 1985. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg)

¹³⁶ PACSA Newsletter, Easter 1986. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Churches Urban Planning Commission Newsletter, April 8, 1986. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg)

identified themselves as 'An Inter-Denominational Community based Organisation'¹³⁹. Crisis Care, who is based in Chatsworth (Natal), made the point that the *KD* articulated that which others have been attempting to say for some time:

We give our full support and stand on the Kairos document. We believe that we as Christians need to be clear, uncompromising and faithful to our calling if we claim to have a prophetic ministry to this country. This confession has well articulated our views which we for years have been attempting to say in a very fragmented way. For a number of years we have been through several documents but these things were just verbal language which means little to the oppressed and voiceless of this land...¹⁴⁰.

Further afield, overall support for the *Document* came from groups and movements within ecumenical church denominations, such as the South Africa Council of Priests (SACP) of the Roman Catholic Church. Although the SACP took issue with the *Kairos* theologians over what it saw as 'defects of oversimplification...and generalisations'¹⁴¹ in the *Document*, the SACP nevertheless declared themselves fully in support of the overall aim and intention of the *KD*:

In spite of this (ie. defects), the SACP Executive welcomes the Document as a starting-point and challenge, and finds itself in agreement with many aspects of the Document as a whole¹⁴².

Apart from responses to the *Document* by ecumenical groupings who share the same basic theological ethos of the *Kairos* theologians, a remarkable development, in the wake of the *Kairos* movement, emerged from within the ranks of mainly black Evangelical Christians and churches in the country. In July 1986 a booklet entitled *Evangelical Witness in South Africa* was published, with the sub-title, *Evangelicals Critique their own Theology and*

¹³⁹ Letter to Kairos theologians from Director of Crisis Care, dated 18 October 1985. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ The Kairos Document: A reaction from the Executive Committee of the South African Council of Priests, Hammanskraal, 4 November 1985. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

*Practice*¹⁴³. This document, which in style and structure resembled the *KD* was, according to its authors, inspired by the challenge that the *Kairos* (when the *KD* was still in draft form) presented to themselves, as evangelicals. Instead of responding to the *Document* from an evangelical perspective, the initiators and authors of *Evangelical Witness in South Africa* elected to address themselves to the 'Kairos (moment of truth, crisis) evangelical Christians were going through in the country'¹⁴⁴. The authors outlined their basic motivation for producing their own document as follows:

Having realized that there was something wrong with the practice and theology of evangelicals in this country we felt God's calling to us to rectify this situation for the sake of the gospel of the Lord. We felt that we as evangelicals had the responsibility of sweeping our house before we try to sweep other people's houses. The text of Matt.7:3-5 impressed itself heavily on us even in terms of trying to critique the Kairos Document. We felt that we could not even attempt to remove the speck in our brothers' and sisters' eyes, before we dealt with the log in our own eyes. We have undertaken therefore to critique our own theology and practice, not to disparage our faith, but to turn it into an effective evangelical witness in South Africa today¹⁴⁵.

The overwhelmingly positive response to the challenge of the *KD* amongst ecumenical bodies and movements in South Africa is not surprising if one considers that the *Document* had its origin from within the ranks of an ecumenical organisation, namely the ICT. More significantly, the fact that such a prophetic challenge as the *KD* did not originate from processes within the life and work of the churches, but rather from an ecumenical movement, re-iterates question we have raised earlier, i.e. about the prophetic capacity of the institutionalised church. This question will be fully discussed in *Part Four* of this dissertation.

1.4 Ecumenical churches and church-leaders

¹⁴³ *Evangelical Witness in South Africa: Evangelicals Critique their own Theology and Practice*, Concerned Evangelicals, Dobsonville, May 1986.

¹⁴⁴ *Op cit.*, p.2.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

The nature of responses to the challenge of *KD* from the leaders of ecumenical churches¹⁴⁶ in South Africa on the whole - either in their capacities as President, General Secretary, Chairperson, Bishop, Archbishop, or Moderator - ranged from expressions of strong criticism, to statements of qualified acceptance, to the adopting of a wait-and-see stance. Representing an initial response to the *KD* by the MCSA, the Revd Peter Storey, as immediate past president of the Methodist Conference, expressed his church's disquiet about the *Kairos* process, and especially about the way in which the *Document* was made public. In a letter to the *Kairos* theologians, dated 22 November 1985, Storey stated:

I have a very real question about whether theology is made through the medium of press conferences, and am wondering why the request for Church response should come after the document has been published rather than before. It would seem to me that if serious consideration had been given to this document by the Churches, then on its release it would not have to be referred to as an unfinished work. I need to be convinced about the sense of responsibility involved in distributing world-wide a document which acknowledges that it is incomplete¹⁴⁷.

Also from within the ranks of the MCSA, the Black Ministers' Consultation (BMC), who were asked by the *Kairos* theologians to submit their comments and criticisms, seemed to have felt that they were being rushed into taking a stand, responding therefore by stating that they needed time to study the *Document*:

Kairos document received and being studied by BMC. Cannot respond until we have had time to study the *Document*¹⁴⁸.

¹⁴⁶ I am using the term 'ecumenical churches' or 'ecumenically-oriented churches' somewhat loosely here to refer to those churches who have historically forged a close ecumenical relationship as churches and also as part of the ecumenical movement in South Africa, and who have rallied together especially in their opposition to Apartheid. (For a basic overview on the history of the ecumenical movement and the nature of the role of churches in this movement in South Africa, refer to D Thomas, *Councils in the Ecumenical Movement South Africa, 1904-75*, SACC, Johannesburg, 1979; and B Spong & C Mayson, *Come Celebrate: Twenty-five years of work and witness of The South African Council of Churches*, SACC, Johannesburg, 1993).

¹⁴⁷ Letter to *Kairos* theologians from the Revd P Storey, dated 22 November 1985. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁴⁸ Telegram sent to ICT from Black Ministers' Consultation. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

However, there is no record of any follow-up on the above and therefore no official response from the BMC at any later stage.

From the CPSA, the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Phillip Russel, reacted very sharply to what he perceived was a 'getting at' by the *Kairos* theologians of church-leaders:

To begin with, there is a fundamental problem: who are you getting at (you, naturally the authors of the document) particularly in the section on "church theology"? I find it hard not to believe that you are referring to me¹⁴⁹.

Russel proceeded in some detail, in his letter to the *Kairos* theologians, to defend his own integrity as a church leader who was involved in initiatives to oppose Apartheid. He cited, for instance, 'having talks with Mr. P.W. Botha'¹⁵⁰, noting that the visit to the State President was made following a request 'arising from a decision taken by the (largely black) Synod of the CPSA'¹⁵¹. As to the overall thrust of the *Document* the Archbishop expressed strong criticism over a 'no-win positions taken by the document'¹⁵². However, Russel ended his letter with a brief note of commendation:

Might I end by saying (and I hope that this does not sound gratuitous) that I am glad that you have done what you have done if it results in increased study, conference, discussion and the obedience to whatever action in fact God is calling us to¹⁵³.

Reaction to *Document* from within the Anglican Church was not limited to the CPSA's provincial leadership. For example, the Right Revd John Ruston, Suffragan Bishop of Pretoria, responded by writing a 10-page exposition and coming to the conclusion that although the *KD* issued a challenge which merited serious consideration, its authors tended to overstate their case:

¹⁴⁹ Letter to *Kairos* theologians from Phillip Russell, dated 22 November 1985. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

Well, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ,...I do feel that the Kairos Document while it has much that is good and truly challenges us, has its case spoilt by being over-stated in some degree, and there is a certain one-sidedness about it - which does not mean that one should be two-sided in the sense of approving Apartheid, for one cannot approve of what is evil and against the will of God, but one can be one-sided in the sense of suggesting that once Apartheid has gone, everything in the garden will be lovely,...¹⁵⁴

Also from within CPSA leadership ranks, the Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg, Desmond Tutu, gave his response to the *KD* during a six-day trip in Britain where he joined other Anglican leaders in preparing for the 1988 Lambeth Conference. Interviewed by *The Catholic Herald* (11 October 1985) in London, Tutu gave qualified support to the *Document*, stating that he was 'in agreement with the basic thrust of that *Document*'. Tutu, however, felt that the *KD* had unfairly dismissed the white leadership and that it would have to be revised 'because it may alienate some people who should be behind us', but added that he found it 'odd that after lauding the resistance movement of the second World War and having made Dietrich Bonhoeffer a hero of modern times, suddenly the Western Church has woken up and become pacifist'.

From the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC), the president of the SACBC, Archbishop Denis Hurley, described the *KD* as an important document Hurley added that the 'obviously angry' statement was addressed to church-leaders, 'calling on them to speak words of hope to the oppressed'¹⁵⁵. The SACBC outlined the Roman Catholic Church's official position *vis-à-vis* the *Document* in an article entitled, 'An initial response to the Kairos Document'. The gist of this church's response is summed up in the following conclusion of the article:

Despite the shortcomings...we recognise the essential message of the Kairos Document as urging us to address ourselves more forcefully and clearly to the Black population of South Africa, to

¹⁵⁴ Letter to Kairos theologians by Bishop J Ruston, 11 February 1986. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁵⁵ SACBC Board Publication, 1 November 1985. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

spell out the justice of the cause in the struggle for liberation and to indicate how we see that struggle in the light of the gospel, to indicate too that we are in solidarity with the oppressed while bringing to all the people of our country a vision of how justice can be achieved in a spirit of love and, through justice, reconciliation - in short a vision of Christian hope¹⁵⁶.

Similar sentiments as those quoted above were expressed by the editorial of *The Southern Cross* (3 November 1985), the official newspaper of the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa:

Catholic tradition, the message of our Lord, cannot be reduced to what is clearly taught in the New Testament books; and it recognises the legitimacy, when all else fails, of resorting to minimal force or violence in defence of rights long and gravely violated. Certainly Jesus commends those who do not resort to it,... But it would be difficult and futile for the most innocent white South African today to urge non-violence or pacifism on black South Africans; it could only look like contemptible self-interest.

The SACBC followed up on their initial response to the *Document* by commissioning its Administrative Board to do a 'pastoral reflection on certain issues raised by the Kairos Document'¹⁵⁷. The Administrative Board stated their conclusions, on behalf of the SACBC, as follows, focussing especially on the nature of and need for conversion within the South African context:

If we are to build a future in which everyone in this country will be secure, there is need for a genuine political conversion on the part of all South Africans... Political conversion is an essential element of Christian conversion... The same conversion will show itself in a preferential option for the oppressed; for it is impossible to defend the rights and dignity of all people without giving particular support to those who have been defrauded of their rights and stripped of their dignity¹⁵⁸.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Pastoral Reflection on Certain Issues Raised by the Kairos Document*, Report by the SACBC Administrative Board, 1 May 1986. (Mariannhill, Natal). (ICT Archives, Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

From the family of Reformed churches in South Africa, the PCSA responded in a way which did not commit the church to necessarily either supporting or opposing the *Document*¹⁵⁹. The General Secretary of the PCSA, the Revd I.C. Aitken, in replying to an invitation from ICT for any comments and criticisms on the part of the PCSA, stated that his church had taken certain steps to consider the challenge of the *KD*. These steps were that a copy of the *Document* had been sent to each of their ministers, inviting study and comment, and that the PCSA Church and Nation (SA) Committee had been asked to make a study thereof¹⁶⁰. The committee, for its part, attempted without much apparent success, to set in motion a process whereby a 'consensus theological position' of the church in relation to the *Document* could be formulated¹⁶¹.

The UCCSA adopted a less ambiguous stance in their initial response to the challenge of the *KD*. The General Secretary of the UCCSA, the Revd. Joseph Wing, gave a strong lead to his church in relation to the *Document* by taking a clear and definite stand. The Revd Wing took the position that the appearance of the *KD* should be welcomed by the churches as a challenge, and that UCCSA regions and synods be urged to engage in critical reflection on the message of the *Kairos*. The spirit of this church's initial response to the *Document* is summed up in the following letter of correspondence, dated 12 March 1986, directed to the *Kairos* theologians, in which the UCCSA General Secretary stated:

The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa is anxious to remain in dialogue with the *Kairos* Theologians and we would like to be part of the ongoing process of discovering an authentic way in which to respond to the crisis in our land, at this time¹⁶².

In subsequent correspondence with the *Kairos* theologians, the Revd Wing outlined the position *vis-à-vis* the challenge of the *Document*, as far as the UCCSA as a denomination

¹⁵⁹ Letter to *Kairos* theologians from PCSA General Secretary, dated 4 November 1985. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Letter to *Kairos* theologians from Dr. M.P. Moore, Convener of PCSA Church and Nation Committee, dated 20 November 1985. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁶² Letter to the *Kairos* theologians from the Revd J Wing, dated 12 March 1986. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

was concerned:

The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa has given considerable thought to the Kairos Document and we have prepared a study guide to enable our people to give detailed consideration to it. This means that the Challenge to the Church presented by Kairos will be an ongoing thing in the UCCSA...The Church and Society Department of the UCCSA, recognises that the Kairos Document is not a final or a static statement of the Challenge to the Church. In view of the fact that the Church must always be responding to contemporary challenges, there is no challenge which can be regarded as final or completely definitive. On the other hand, when Churches are responding to a particular challenge, like the Kairos Document, the content of that particular Document should not be altered¹⁶³.

The medium and long-term responses of the UCCSA to the challenge of the *KD* forms a major part of this dissertation, and is dealt with extensively in *Part Three* of this study.

Another church-leader from the Reformed Church family in Southern Africa, the Revd. Dr. Jean-Francois Bill, the moderator of the EPCSA, also responded positively to the *KD*. Dr. Bill guided his church's annual Synod, held on 25-29 October 1985, to a point of adopting the *Document*, and recommending that its contents be studied and commented on by local Church councils within the EPCSA. To facilitate this process a summary of the *KD* was immediately translated into Tsonga, which is the dominant language in the EPCSA, and distributed to Church councils together with copies of the full English text¹⁶⁴.

The General Secretary of the ELCSA, Pastor Mervyn D Assur, reflected his church's position in a letter to the *Kairos* theologians, in which he expressed the ELCSA's qualified support for the *KD*:

The ELCSA Church Council commends the fact that this document highlights certain problems which have to be addressed, eg. violence and the quest for reconciliation. It however feels that it

¹⁶³ Letter to Kairos theologians from the Revd J Wing, dated 14 August 1986. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁶⁴ Letter to the Kairos theologians from the Revd. Dr. J. Francious-Bill, dated 4 November 1985. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

cannot fully align itself with it as it is still incomplete¹⁶⁵.

On the face of it, the *KD* therefore enjoyed a mixed reception from leaders within the ecumenical churches. By and large, however, church-leaders from this grouping were not favourably disposed toward the *Document*, especially at the time of its publication. It is evident though that much of the initial negative re-actions related to the *Kairos process*. This factor is clearly illustrated, for instance, by the expression of dissatisfaction, from Bishop Peter Storey of the MCSA, for example, who felt that there had been a fundamental lack of consultation with official church-leadership by the authors of the *Document*.

However, while it is apparent from the above survey that ecumenical churches on the whole did not close the door on further engagement with the *Kairos* process, the overall pattern of response suggests that these churches failed to take seriously the *Kairos* challenge in the medium and long terms. This fundamental criticism of the churches' response to the *KD*, particularly in relation to the ESC's, is again raised in *Part Three* and developed in *Part Four* of this study.

1.5 Other churches

As a direct result of the high public profile given to the *KD* by the media, church denominations who were hitherto unheard of in ecumenical circles came forward with urgent requests for copies and further information on the *Document*. A notable example hereof is an enquiry from the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), who signalled their intention to engage in discussion with the signatories of the *KD* in the Western Cape:

I enclose a copy of the January 1986 resolution of South Africa Yearly Meeting on the Kairos Document. We are at present considering this Document in the Cape Western Monthly Meeting and would welcome discussion with signatories of the *Document* in the Western Cape. We are therefore inviting you to an informal discussion which will take place after our weekly meeting for

¹⁶⁵ Letter to *Kairos* theologians from Mervyn Assur, General Secretary of the ELCSA, dated 3 December 1985. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

worship on Sunday, 22 June 1986¹⁶⁶.

The resolution referred to above declared that:

We welcome in the Kairos Document, the recognition that the whole of life is both secular and sacred. This then gives to the oppressed people of South Africa, God's sanction in their demand for dignity, justice and free participation in the political and economic institutions of our country. The Document, even in its title, draws attention to the fact that the present crisis is a critical time of opportunity, requiring radical new approaches¹⁶⁷.

A number of enquiries about the *KD* were received by the *Kairos* theologians from such unexpected quarters as the Revd E.S. Faas of the *Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika* (Transkei), whose interest in the *Document* was aroused from reading about it in *The Natal Witness* of 21 December 1985¹⁶⁸ and from the Rt. Revd. C.D.M. Nkosinkulu of the Apostolic Jerusalem Church in Zion of South Africa, who expressed his support for the *Document* by declaring that he 'wants to be the signatory of the Kairos document'¹⁶⁹. The Revd Nkosinkulu proceeded in his letter to outline his ecclesiastical credentials:

Now don't forget I am the General Secretary of our Christian movement called The South African Qwaqwa Apostolic Ministers Association (SAQAMA). I am the full officer to represent so many churches. I believe next month here in our area headquarters of this association I will be elected as senior President of this Christian movement¹⁷⁰.

While the challenge of the *KD* was positively received from unexpected church-quarters, the *Document* was also criticised by other churches, such as the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). *Die Kerkbode* (21 May 1986), the official organ of the DRC, reported that the

¹⁶⁶ Letter from Valerie Loudon (Clerk of Quakers, Cape Western Monthly Meeting) to the Revd. Dr. J. Cochrane, dated 27 May 1986. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁶⁷ January 1986 Resolution on the Kairos Document, Quakers South Africa, Yearly Meeting. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁶⁸ Letter from NG Kerk in Afrika (Transkei), dated 21 December 1985. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁶⁹ Letter from the 'Chief Minister' of the Apostolic Jerusalem Church in Zion of Africa, dated 6 June 1986. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

moderation of the DRC subjected the *KD* to study and came to the conclusion that the *Document* was nothing more than a stimulus for violence and polarisation:

Die dokument is niks meer as 'n onrusbarende stimulus vir voortgesette oversetlike polarisering en geweld.

According to *Die Kerkbode*, the DRC moderation totally disassociated itself with the *Kairos* theologians' use of Scripture. Moreover, the moderation dismissed with scorn the *Document's* claim to any theological credibility. With reference in particular of the *KD's* notion of the term '*kairos*', *Die Kerkbode* noted that the moderation viewed the use of this term in the *Document* as incompatible with Scripture, and that the overall brand of theology propagated therein does not even, according to the moderation, constitute the basis for sound Liberation theology:

Met hul verwysing na Luk.19:44...wys die Bree Moderatuur daarop dat presies dieselfde opstellers van die Kairos-dokument van toepassing is. Die waarheid van die kritieke tydstip om te antwoord op Jesus Christus wat mense van hul sonde verlos - geld vir almal in die hele wereld, dus ook alle mense in Suid-Afrika. In die dokument word die kritieke oomblik egter van die verlossing in Jesus Christus na 'n politieke verlossing verskuif. Met hierdie bedenkbare Skrifgebruik kan die Bree Moderatuur hom hoegenaamd nie vereenselwig nie. As samevatting geld die Kairos-dokument selfs nie eers 'n indrukwekkende weergawe van die bevrydingsteologie nie.

Such strong anti-*KD* sentiments of the DRC, expressed above, were however not representative of the majority of non-ecumenical churches who responded to the challenge of the *Document*.

1.6 Local churches, parishes and societies, clergy and laypeople

Notable interest in and grassroots support for the *Document* came from the ranks of local churches, parishes and societies, clergy and laypeople who responded in their own capacities. It is significant that many of the resonances with the *KD* from such quarters came even before the official response from their denominational synods and assemblies, perhaps anticipating a negative or delayed reaction from official denominational spokespersons. Typical of this kind of prompt and positive response is the following,

coming from the Revd Errol Narain, parish priest in Northdale (Pietermaritzburg) of St. Paul's Anglican Church:

The Kairos document has become part of the educational programme of the Parish. Various organisations in the Parish are grappling with the issues dealt with in the document. It will be printed in our newsletter in the New Year. The summary is posted on our noticeboard¹⁷¹.

Noteworthy also was the positive response of the DRC Stellenbosch-Central Church Council. This local DRC Church Council's initiative *vis-a-vis* the *KD* was diametrically opposed to that of their denominational leaders who strongly opposed the *Document*. While the official stance of the DRC toward the *Document* was one of sharp criticism and even condemnation, the Stellenbosch-Central Church Council DRC took seriously the challenge of the *Kairos*, committing themselves to engaging in discussion on the *Document*:

The Church Council has noted the contents of the Kairos document. It has studied and discussed the document at length and penetratingly. Various responses to, criticisms of and comments offered on the Kairos document have also been noted...Although several serious theological objections can be raised against the Kairos document we do not wish to make these objections our point of departure. We wish as brothers and sisters, to begin by entering into discussion with the persons who compiled the document and who support it. We sincerely trust that this attempt by our Council will contribute meaningfully to the kairos debate¹⁷².

A group of Anglican clergy from East London, who felt that they had been inundated with negative criticism of the *KD* by the state-supported media and by Right Wing propaganda, sent a letter to ICT, requesting to hear also from the other side:

The Anglican clergy of East London will begin studying 'The Kairos Document' in the near future. We have had much comment from organisations such as the Gospel Defence League, Signposts,

¹⁷¹ Letter from the Revd E.L. Narian to *Kairos* theologians, dated 2 November 1985. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁷² Letter to the *Kairos* theologians from the Church Secretary of the DRC Stellenbosch-Sentral local church, dated 15 September 1986. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg). The full text of the above church's response is published in the *JTSA*, 1986, No.57, pp.65-68.

etc,... and I would like to get some positive material as well... I write therefore to ask whether you could possibly let me have any background material and other relevant comment¹⁷³.

The degree of support and enthusiasm for the *Kairos* challenge amongst individuals is also illustrated by the vast number of letters that came in from Christians and churchpeople of all church denominations, and from all over South Africa. From Giyani, in the northern Transvaal, for example, the Revd Dr Theo Schneider, a Bible Translator in the EPCSA, and his wife, Mrs C Schneider, declared their wholehearted support for the *KD* in a letter to the *Kairos* theologians:

My wife and I wish to declare our complete adhesion to the remarkable document which you have recently published. Furthermore, we would like, if possible, to add our names to the list of signatories, in any further edition of the text¹⁷⁴.

Interest in the *KD* also came from local churches and Christians whose denominations had no historical association with ecumenical bodies such as the ICT and SACC. For instance, from such churches as the Howick Baptist Church (Natal), enthusiasm for the *Document* was expressed from the pastor of the congregation who identified himself as 'a pastor of a multi-racial church deeply interested and concerned to have a copy of this document'¹⁷⁵. An enquiry from a certain S. Sakati who signed him/herself as a 'Born Again Christian'¹⁷⁶ further illustrates that interest in the *Document* was also forthcoming from Christians and church members from theologically conservative denominations. Sakati, who hails from Florida in the Transvaal, wrote:

Sir, can you please supply me with the following book called

¹⁷³ Letter (undated), from Fr. N.S. Mayall to Kairos theologians. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁷⁴ Letter from the Revd. Dr. and Mrs. T. Schneider to the *Kairos* theologians, dated 26 October 1985. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁷⁵ Letter from the Howick Baptist Church (Natal) to the *Kairos* theologians, dated 21 January 1986. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁷⁶ Letter from S. Sakati to the *Kairos* theologians, dated 16 December 1986. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH. Can you please tell me who wrote the Kairos document¹⁷⁷.

In certain black township church communities, either due to the direction of their leadership or the publicity given to the *KD*, a distinct groundswell of local church and community interest in and support for the *Document* became evident. For example, the local priest of the Kristo Nkosi Catholic Church (Kwa-Thema, Transvaal) wrote of his intention to the *Kairos* theologians, namely, to popularise the message of the *KD* amongst a potentially receptive grassroots audience:

I have studied the Kairos Document and have no doubt that it is the direction in which God is leading us at this moment. I am committed to this "prophetic form of theology" and I am also determined to use the Document to "challenge, inspire and motivate" my brothers and sisters in my community of Kwa Thema - plus/minus 60 000 persons. I would consider it a great privilege to be included in your list of signatories in future editions¹⁷⁸.

Apart from the support for the *Document* on the part of clergy and other local church-leadership, many Christians and churchpeople appear to have embarked on their own initiatives, whether to gain more information about the *KD*, or to secure a copy, or to become a signatory. For example, a certain Miss Buyiswe Msizi from a small rural town in the southern Cape, wrote as follows to the *Kairos* theologians:

Greetings in His Precious Name! I am one that is committed to Lordship of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,...I have heard about the Kairos document and not being clear about what it is all about exactly I wondered if you could be of help in briefing me on what you feel the Lord is saying through this media...¹⁷⁹.

In a somewhat different vein, but again reflecting the bubbling excitement that the *KD* elicited, the Revd Brian Wilkinson from Springs, in the Transvaal, expressed his thoughts

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Letter from Kristo Nkosi Catholic Church (Kwa-Thema) to *Kairos* theologians, dated 8 December 1985. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁷⁹ Letter from Miss Msizi to *Kairos* theologians, dated 30 September 1986. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

as follows:

Congratulations! You're getting us going. We need you. Please let me know what the cost of subscribing to Institute for Contextual Theology will be. Mail me all literature on our situation, but especially anything in the evolvment of *Kairos*... Reconciliation. It is not the sin of reconciling of evil with good, God and the devil... What is naive and problematic of the church is in the hope that those who are bound to evil should ever be released from this while the structures of evil still exist... The section on Church Theology and justice is fantastic!¹⁸⁰.

Letters from individual Christians and churchpeople expressing interest in, or support for the *Document*, came from all over South Africa¹⁸¹. The bulk of written responses, however, came from within the province of Transvaal, a factor which was probably due to the fact that the *KD* was published and released in Johannesburg. It is noteworthy that the interest within this province does not appear to be concentrated in the larger cities and urban areas. For example, letters of support were received from outlying areas such as Schweizer-Reineke¹⁸² and Rustenburg¹⁸³.

An interesting variation in the theme and nature of responses to the *KD* was that from a lawyer, who suggested that the *Document* sharply raised the issue of the Nationalist government's legitimacy. This respondent suggested that, from a purely legal perspective, the state's legitimacy is open to question, given the preamble to the South African constitution:

In a limited sense a lawyer is able to say that there are major provisions of the South African legal system which are complete

¹⁸⁰ Letter from B. Wilkenson to *Kairos* theologians, dated 2 February 1986. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁸¹ For example, letters of support for the *Kairos* theologians were received from such diverse geographical areas as Eerste River, Cape Province, (ie. from M. Lee), Bloemfontein, Orange Free State (ie. from P. Motlhaola and from Kwazakhela, Port Elizabeth, (ie. from M. Funde). (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁸² Letter from Miss J Cavalleneas to *Kairos* theologians, dated 7 December 1986. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁸³ Letter from S.C. Vorster to *Kairos* Theologians, dated 2 June 1986. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

contradictions to the imminent morality of the system. This is thrown into sharp relief by contrasting the preamble to the constitution with the Group Areas Act, the Population registration Act and detention without trial to name but a few laws¹⁸⁴.

Although the vast majority of Christians and churches who responded to the *Document* in their individual capacities expressed support there were nevertheless those individuals who also made known their outright rejection of the *KD*'s message and their vociferous condemnation of the *Kairos* theologians. One such response was from an individual by the name of Errol Davison, from Messina (Transvaal), who declared:

As a Christian I find the Kairos document totally communist, anti-Christ, blasphemous, anti-capitalism, and pro-marxist. It denies the basic and real cause of all earths problems and sorrow - SIN. The authors of this document are heading directly to HELL... So theologians repent of your SINS and expose your selves to the world and admit you are wrong in claiming this *Document* is Christian¹⁸⁵.

Similar sentiments were expressed by a *dominee* (minister) of a local DRC in Naboomspruit. The *dominee* noted that he could not support the *Document* because the methods called for by the *Kairos* authors were those of '*die duiwel*' (the devil):

*Op grond van God se Woord kan en sal ek u oproep nie steun nie - ek sal dit hand en tand beveg as metodes en werktuie van die duiwel. Mag God u oe oopmaak - voordat dit te laat is, voordat u Kairos voor die groot Regter aanbreek, I Korinthiers 14:24, 25 en II Kor.5:10*¹⁸⁶.

Other individual respondents opposed to the *KD* accused the *Kairos* theologians of propagating outright revolution and the violent overthrow of the state. For instance, Jim Wigley of East London wrote:

You are committed to force. Also you make the Church subordinate to politicians. Experience says you are wrong, and so do you. Ever

¹⁸⁴ 'A Lawyer looks at the Kairos document and Legitimacy'. Article (undated and Unnamed). (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁸⁵ Letter to *Kairos* theologians from Mr E Davison, dated 14 April 1986. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁸⁶ Letter to the *Kairos* theologians from Ds. P.G.L. van der Walt, dated 2 September 1986. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

since Adam first took the wrong turn, no politician has ever taken the right turn in the sense of permanently liberating the oppressed¹⁸⁷.

The foregoing survey of respondents clearly show a trend of growing interest in the *KD* which was, in no small measure, the result of the negative publicity given to the *Document* within the state-controlled media. After its publication the nation-wide coverage given to the *KD* by the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) television service¹⁸⁸ - which was aimed at discrediting the *Document* - had the unexpected and ironic result of generating widespread interest. Furthermore as a consequence of the critical tone from within official church-leadership circles, interest in and support for the message of the *Document* increased amongst laity. Significantly, much of the resonances with the message of the *KD* came from individuals and groupings not representing the centre or mainstream of ecclesiastical authority and power, but very much from the margins and the peripheries of the institutionalised churches.

1.7 Non-Church organisations and other faiths

Interest in and positive responses to the *Document*, outside of the ecclesiastical circles, also came from a number of institutions, organisations and groupings across the country. For example, requests for copies of the *KD* were received from a Nursery School¹⁸⁹, the Johannesburg Public Library¹⁹⁰, a Printing Works¹⁹¹, and a university Linguistics

¹⁸⁷ Letter to Kairos theologians from J Wigley, dated 2 December 1985. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁸⁸ The SABC's television coverage of the *KD* included the following: An interview with Archbishop P Russell on 26 September 1985; the SABC 'Network' programme on Liberation Theology and the Kairos Document on 13 April 1986; an interview with certain conservative evangelical theologians which was featured on the News bulletins, on 21 April 1986. (SABC Archives, Auckland Park, Johannesburg).

¹⁸⁹ Letter to Kairos theologians from The Sungarden Nursery School, dated 27 February 1986. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁹⁰ Letter to the Kairos theologians from the Director of Johannesburg Library & Museum Services, dated 7 October 1987. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁹¹ Letter to Kairos theologians from Angelus Printing (Windhoek), dated 8 April 1986. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

Department¹⁹². Unequivocal support for the *Document* was also expressed by such organisations as The National Medical and Dental Association (NAMDA), who noted that the *KD* constituted an important 'social statement':

May we offer our support for an excellent document and social statement - the Kairos document. It is our considered view that all concerned persons need to go far beyond this document (which we see as a minimum starting point) and to translate it into a concrete programme of action. It is through such a process of struggle that it will be refined and become a living document¹⁹³.

Although the *KD* addressed its challenge mainly to the churches and to Christians, its message resonated beyond the boundaries of the Christian faith, striking a responsive chord, for instance, within the ranks of the Islamic community. The Director of the Muslim Assembly's Madrassah Teachers' Training Institute, who read about the *KD* in *The Cape Times*, noted:

I am running an Islamic Seminary and we do a lot of reading on comparative studies of religions especially within the South African context. Your document appears to have a relevance in our work and we would consider it a privilege if you would kindly oblige¹⁹⁴.

Mulana Faried Esack, of the Muslim Judicial Council in South Africa, described the *KD* as 'one of the most profound and meaningful documents that I have come across'¹⁹⁵. The Maulana proceeded to share some further reflections on the *Document*, especially in regard to what he deemed to be the universality thereof:

Kairos is not only a challenge to the state or to those in the church hierarchy. It is a challenge to all people of faith. The fact that a

¹⁹² Letter to Kairos theologians from the Rhodes University Linguistics department (Grahamstown), dated 28 December 1986. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁹³ Letter to the Kairos theologians from the National Medical and Dental Association, dated 9 October 1985. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁹⁴ Letter to Kairos theologians from The Muslim Assembly Madrassah Teachers' Training Institute, dated 30 December 1985. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁹⁵ Newsletter of the World Conference on Religion and Peace: South African Chapter, Vol.3, No.1, April 1986.

group of Christian theologians can produce this intensely honest critique of the role of their faith, discover a new liberating role for faith and become so obsessed with justice is disturbing. It is disturbing because I've all along been taught that we - Muslims - are the sole possessors of a liberating faith and an obsession with justice. To find all that one has discovered in the Quran, that one has struggled all ones life to live alongside and that one has come to cherish as your own - so beautifully elucidated on is exhilarating - but also disturbing¹⁹⁶.

It is to the credit of the *Kairos* theologians that the *KD* resonated with audiences from diverse community and organisational contexts. It is evident therefore that part of the appeal of the *Document* was the non-parochial vision of its authors whose overriding concern was that of addressing the greater socio-political crisis that prevailed in the country at large, and in the black communities in particular.

1.8 Right Wing religious groups

The most vociferous condemnation of both the *Kairos* theologians and of the *Document* itself came from within the ranks of Right Wing religious groupings. The Gospel Defence League (GDL), for example, a Right Wing religious agency which is noted for its attacks on churches, theologians and Christians opposed to Apartheid, re-acted true to form when the *KD* was published. The December 1985 GDL *Newsletter* denounced the *KD* in language and terms similar to that expressed by a Nationalist Party member in Parliament, calling it a 'treasonable paper':

The Kairos document is an open call to rebellion, revolution, violence and possible assassination... The Kairos document is a treasonable paper, and I am not surprised that its author(s) prefer(s) to remain anonymous. It is a massive onslaught against biblical Christianity and God's law and order, and that both Church and State should view it in an extremely serious light. In fact both Church and State should take disciplinary steps against the Kairos authors, and forbid the distribution and discussion of the Kairos document.

The denouncing of the *KD* became a regular feature of the GDL's monthly newsletters

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

during 1986, culminating in August of that year with an invitation to 5000 individuals and organisations to sign a declaration, entitled, 'Declaration of rejection of the Kairos document'. The declaration stated:

Since it is claimed overseas that the majority of Christians in South Africa affirms the Kairos document, this is an opportunity for you (and your friends) to register your disapproval by signing below: On the grounds of Holy Scripture and the doctrinal principles of my Church I disassociate myself from the idea and intentions of the Kairos document. (GDL Newsletter, August 1986)

Another Right Wing religious newsletter, *Signposts*, devoted an entire edition, i.e. Vol.5, No.1 - 1986, to discrediting the *Document*, declaring that its message was based on Marxist/Leninist ideological concepts. In a section entitled 'Is the Kairos Document based on Marxist Ideology', *Signposts* concluded as follows:

Because of the close approximation between the basic concepts of Marxism and those laid down by the Kairos Document, Christians have the right to demand that Kairos outlines clearly how its teaching differs from that of Marxism. Until this happened, we are forced to conclude that it is in fact Marxist because it lacks a clear alternative analysis of society, the causes of oppression in it and an alternative solution to its problems (*Signposts*, Vol.5, No.1, 1986).

From within the camp of the so-called charismatic church groupings, a denomination identifying itself as 'The Members in Christ Assemblies of the Republic of South Africa' (MICA) wrote a lengthy letter in which they castigated the authors of the *Document* for, amongst other things, 'meddling in politics':

It is NOT our Christian duty to meddle in politics or to hold 'special campaigns' or to encourage civil disobedience. There is NO Scripture for it; only AGAINST it! Therefore, we as a Church want to DISTANTIATE us fully, totally, as well as totally REJECT this obnoxious Document, which we clearly interpret as MARXIST-inspired (by terminology), only being veiled in Scriptural cloth. Truly Satan has indeed changed himself into an Angel of Light through the publication of this Document¹⁹⁷.

¹⁹⁷ Letter to Kairos Theologians from the General Secretary of the Executive Council of the Members in Christ Assemblies of the Republic of South Africa (MICA), dated 5 June 1986. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

Futhermore, the director of a organisation calling itself 'The Anti-Liberation Theology Church Movement', Mr Gunnar Wiebalck, echoed the sentiments of other Right Wing religious groups by also condemning the *KD* as 'an inroad of Marxism into the South African Christian Church'¹⁹⁸.

The responses from Right Wing religious groupings to the *Document* was to a large extent predictable. The rhetoric from the GDL, for example, represented a logical development within this Right Wing religious grouping which came into existence with the very purpose of contradicting Christian and church opposition to the Apartheid state. In reacting to the publication of the *KD*, however, the denunciations often reached almost hysterical proportions.

2. Further Developments

In the wake of the *KD* and the subsequent *Kairos* movement, further developments ensued in South Africa and within the international community that either directly or indirectly stood in continuity with the challenge of the *KD*. For the purposes of this chapter I will briefly focus on four developments in South Africa to show that although the authors of the *Document* did not set up a mechanism to ensure structural continuity of the *Kairos* process, a momentum had been generated which extended over a number of years after the publication of the *KD*. These developments were: The 'Standing for the Truth' Campaign, The New *Kairos*, The Rustenburg Declaration and *Kairos* 95: At the Threshold of Jubilee.

2.1 The 'Standing for the Truth' campaign

The Standing for the Truth (SFT) campaign was an initiative launched by the ecumenical churches at a convocation held in Johannesburg on May 30, 1988. Although the *KD* is not specifically mentioned in a booklet¹⁹⁹ which outlines the origin and history of the SFT, the concerns raised by the *Document* are the same concerns the SFT campaign sought to

¹⁹⁸ Letter (undated) to *Kairos* theologians from Mr Gunner. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

¹⁹⁹ This booklet, which contains no biographical details at all, is merely entitled, *Standing for the Truth*. For the sake of referencing I will refer to it as such, i.e. *Standing for the Truth* (SFT) booklet. (D. Van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

address. Furthermore, the context of socio-political crisis which gave birth to the *KD* was still very much the prevailing environment in which the SFT emerged. The socio-historical context of the SFT campaign is described as follows:

The Standing for the Truth campaign emerged from a turbulent history of church/state conflict...Since 1985 the resistance of the people has reached unprecedented levels, while the repressive machinery of the State grew ever more intense and brutal...The church - body of Christ - felt with its members the pain this brought and was called to respond²⁰⁰.

Describing itself as 'a Prophetic Movement', a 'National Movement' and 'an Ecumenical Movement'²⁰¹, the SFT campaign presented ecumenical church-leaders and laypeople with an appropriate vehicle to publicly express their continued opposition to Apartheid. The convocation, which was attended by representatives from para-church organisations, ecumenical movements and the ecumenical churches in the country outlined the overall aim of the campaign as follows:

The aim of this campaign is by means of non-violent effective actions to pressurise the government to abandon Apartheid and to participate in a negotiated settlement to establish a just, non-racial and democratic South Africa... We need to make our stand; a stand that will reflect the truth because it was Christ who said in John 8:31, "You shall know the truth and truth shall set you free"²⁰².

The thrust of the campaign therefore was to engage churches and Christians in acts of defiance, such as 'opposing unjust laws', 'showing compassionate solidarity', and 'working towards the end of Apartheid'²⁰³. A national Committee of Twelve was appointed to steer the campaign, consisting of 'three people elected from the convocation, three from the SACC, three from the SACBC, and three church-leaders'²⁰⁴.

²⁰⁰ SFT booklet, p.3.

²⁰¹ *Op cit.*, pp.33 - 35.

²⁰² Pamphlet (undated) on the SFT campaign. Issued by the SFT Committee, SACC, Johannesburg. (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ SFT booklet, p.6.

It appears as if all the ecumenical churches in the country gave their initial support to the SFT campaign but without backing up such support by, for example, channelling human and financial resources into the campaign. The SFT initiative was therefore left largely to operate on the strength of those churchpeople who were fully committed to the campaign. In some areas, such as Cape Town and Pietermaritzburg, SFT activities enjoyed a high profile while in other less politically volatile regions the SFT campaign made little or no impact at all.

However, in the tradition of the *Kairos* movement, the SFT campaign presented Christian activists in particular and ordinary churchpeople in general with opportunities which they were not finding in their churches, to engage publicly in the ongoing struggle against Apartheid. The SFT, in particular, presented opportunities for engagement in mass acts of public protests, such as street marches, defiance of discriminatory laws at hospitals, beaches, etc. While it is clear that the SFT campaign clearly had a character, a momentum and an integrity of its own, it is evident that this development within the ecumenical scene stood in direct continuity with the processes that emerged as a consequence of the challenge of the *KD*.

2.2 The New Kairos

In September 1990, some five years after the publication of the *Document*, ICT published another document entitled, *Violence: The New Kairos - Challenge to the Church*. As the title suggests, the problem of violence, which had reached of 'horrific proportions', constituted a new crisis in South Africa. The new document outlined its premise as follows:

The Kairos Document was published on 25 September 1985. Today, exactly five years later, with violence of horrific proportions and the real possibility of even more violence to come if the perpetrators are not exposed soon, we face a crisis, a moment of truth, that is even more of a kairos than 1985²⁰⁵.

Clearly *The New Kairos* stood in direct continuity with the publication of the *KD*, firstly in terms of attempting to address the escalating socio-political crisis, and secondly, insofar as

²⁰⁵ *Violence: The New Kairos - Challenge to the Churches*, ICT, Braamfontein, 1990, p.1.

it sought to continue challenging the churches to be prophetic in the face of growing violence:

A strong, clear **prophetic word** is needed. The sins of the wicked must be exposed and condemned...The Church must continue to take action, inside and outside of the Church itself, against any form of racism, discrimination or injustice, and find ways and means of healing and repairing the damage that has been done to all people of South Africa by Apartheid²⁰⁶.

This 1990 document, however, did not have a fraction of the impact on the churches and on society that the *KD* made when published in 1985. But the issue of violence, - the causes, the effects and the perpetuation thereof - that *The New Kairos* focussed on was very much a major concern for churches, for ecumenical groupings and for the country at large. One such significant expression of concern from within the ecumenical context came from the Soweto-based ministers fraternal, Ministers United for Christian Co-Responsibility (MUCCOR). In response to the deteriorating situation in black townships across the country in general, and to developments in Soweto in particular, MUCCOR issued an eleven-page 'Pastoral Letter on Violence'. In this letter MUCCOR analysed the causes of the violence, depicting the seriousness of the prevailing situation, and attempted to articulate the specific challenge to the churches at the time. The Pastoral Letter makes reference to the challenge to churches outlined in *The New Kairos*, concluding with a word of hope and a challenge of their own to Christians in Soweto to respond to the crisis:

We know that hope will grow if we are able to stand for the truth at all times, to organise ourselves without fear, and to trust the word of Jesus, the Son of God²⁰⁷.

It is evident from the above sentiments, articulated by MUCCOR, that the major concerns expressed in the *KD*, and echoed some five years later in *The New Kairos*, were still present, especially within the black townships where people felt the brunt of the ongoing repression. Clearly, even in 1990, a socio-political crisis was still very much present and

²⁰⁶ *Op cit.*, pp.13-14.

²⁰⁷ 'A Pastoral Letter on Violence', MUCCOR, Kwa Xuma, 1991, p.11. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

churches were faced yet again with an opportunity to rise to the challenge of the times.

2.3 The Rustenburg Conference

The gathering of some '230 representatives of 80 denominations and 40 organisations'²⁰⁸ in Rustenburg, in November 1990, represented a church-summit for reconciliation South Africa. This Conference, coming in the wake of the unbanning of the ANC, the PAC and the SACP, and the release of Mr Nelson Mandela from prison in February 1990, capitalised on the euphoria generated by the promise of a new socio-political dispensation in the country. Clearly the socio-political context had changed quite dramatically since 1985 when the *KD*. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, one of the speakers at the Rustenberg Conference, characterised the dramatic change as follows:

The God of surprises was at work. He worked to inspire the State President to act in an unexpectedly courageous manner. Many of us could not believe our ears as we heard him announce his bold initiatives on 2 February 1990. But the God of surprises had not finished. For on 11 February 1990, Nelson Mandela walked out of the Victor Verster Prison and a totally unexpected era seemed about to be born²⁰⁹.

The question emerges, however, as to whether legitimate connections between the Rustenburg Declaration and the ongoing *Kairos* challenge could be made? For one thing, South Africa was still in a state of socio-political crisis, notwithstanding the major events of political change. This acknowledgement is reflected in the following Conference statement about the prevailing context:

The conference has met at a critical time of transition in our country. We thank God that we are already in a period of gestation with the hope of a democratic, peaceful and just dispensation emerging for our nation. Yet many people are continuing to suffer immensely under ongoing structures of injustice. Recent months have also seen the upsurge of violence in many areas and much

²⁰⁸ The Rustenburg Declaration, (unpublished) November 1990 (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

²⁰⁹ D Tutu, 'Opening Worship', in *Road to Rustenburg: The Church looking forward to a new South Africa*, L Alberts & F Chikane (eds.), Struik, Cape Town, 1991, p.19.

brutalising of innocent people...All this is leading to the social and economic disintegration of our society²¹⁰.

Apart from the ongoing context of crisis, another feature of the Conference pointed towards a clear strand of continuity with the *KD*, namely the focus on the issue of reconciliation. John de Gruchy noted that the influence of the *Document* was evident in the tone of the Conference's addressing of the question of reconciliation:

The crux of the critique (*in the KD*) was the problem of cheap reconciliation, a form of reconciliation which demanded little by way of fundamental change or justice. When you examine the Rustenburg Declaration it soon becomes clear that this critique was a central element in the debate. The confession of guilt immediately led on to the question of restitution and reparation. The latter became the touchstone for the authenticity of the confession and the genuineness of the professed reconciliation²¹¹.

The Rustenburg Conference, nevertheless, had a character and purpose of its own and an overall aim defined by Frank Chikane, as 'an attempt to work towards a united Christian witness in a changing South Africa'²¹². In terms of its character the Conference was clearly one of the most representative of the Christian constituencies in the country, with estimates, according to Chikane, 'of more than 90 percent of the Christian community'²¹³

However, while the Conference was hailed as a breakthrough by prominent church-leaders, other observers, like Mike Worsnip for instance, were far less convinced of its value. Worsnip observed that the major beneficiary of the gathering was in fact the state:

The truth of the matter is that we got to Rustenburg primarily at the initiative of the state. The work which was done there and the positions arrived at were to the benefit, far more, of the state than of the reign of God...Worse still, the killing and the maiming and the despair continues. But the whole lot could bow their heads and

²¹⁰ The Rustenburg Declaration.

²¹¹ J. de Gruchy, 'The Rustenburg Conference in Historical Perspective', *JTSA*, No.74, March 1991, p.29.

²¹² F. Chikane, *The Road to Rustenburg: The Church looking forward to a new South Africa*, L Alberts & F Chikane (eds.), Struik, Cape Town, 1991, p.10.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

pray and forgive each other in the name of a God of sentimentality and choruses²¹⁴.

The above criticism of the Rustenburg Conference sharply illustrates the point of the persistence of and even escalation of the socio-political crisis in South Africa well beyond 1990. In this sense a *Kairos* was still very much present and the challenges presented by the *KD* were still relevant. The extent to which this Conference would have enabled the churches and Christians to respond more effectively to the challenge of the *Kairos* is another question, and one which falls outside of the scope of this investigation.

2.4 *Kairos 95: At the threshold of Jubilee*

The 10th Anniversary Celebrations of the *KD*, held in Johannesburg on September 23-35, 1995, was a remarkable event, firstly in terms of the wide representation from South Africa, southern and eastern Africa as well as participants from the international ecumenical community²¹⁵. Secondly, the conference was remarkable because of the enthusiasm and interest which was evident during workshops sessions. Wesley Mabuza, ICT General Secretary, summed up the spirit of the Conference as follows:

The event itself was just an unbelievable moment of joy, expectation, and, at times, anxiety about the future. This is a typical disposition of all periods as ours is. The historic significance of this occasion of 22-25 September 1995, was best expressed not only in its ability to attract so many participants from diverse backgrounds, but in their unity and thorough participation²¹⁶.

The Conference, which was organised under the auspices of ICT, expressed its aim as 'commemorating the first *Kairos Document* and to reflect upon the possibility of

²¹⁴ M Worsnip, 'How the hell did we manage to get from Damascus to Rustenburg?', Paper, unpublished and undated. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

²¹⁵ Whereas only 150 delegates in total were expected at the Conference, a total number of 225 attended. From within South Africa representation was particularly strong from the regional Contextual Theology Units, and these included a number of people from the African Independent/Instituted Churches. Other African countries represented were Namibia, Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe. From overseas there were participants from the WCC, Norway, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, America and Brazil (*Kairos 95: At the Threshold of Jubilee - A Conference Report*, ICT, Johannesburg, 1996, p.9).

²¹⁶ W Mabuza, *op cit.*, p.7.

another'²¹⁷. It was singularly appropriate that ten years after the publication of the *KD*, which had turned out to be a major landmark in the socio-theological history of the country, its birth should have been commemorated and celebrated in such a fitting manner. It is remarkable that, in the absence of any structural continuity of the *Kairos* process beyond 1985, the momentum that the *Document* generated had not dissipated, and participants at the Conference showed distinct signs of wanting to pick up and weave together the threads. However, amidst the spirit of celebration, a serious mood also prevailed during discussions at the Conference, Albert Nolan, for example, observed that there seemed to be a general feeling amongst people that the country was in crisis again in 1995, particularly with the soaring crime rate and the fact that most of the country's inhabitants were still poor even under the new political dispensation:

People are frustrated by the non-delivery of a better way of life under the post Apartheid government, and are asking why churches are not being effective in responding to our present crisis, such as poverty and violence²¹⁸.

As in 1985, the churches were yet again being confronted with the question about their effectiveness in the face of the prevailing challenge. Whether or not a *new Kairos* was before - in the manner and scope of the 1985 crisis - then the need for an ongoing prophetic critique in South Africa was beyond dispute. *Part Four* of this dissertation considers this matter in some depth.

²¹⁷ *Challenge* magazine, December 1995/January 1996.

²¹⁸ Ecumenical News International, October 3, 1995. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

Chapter Four - Reactions and responses to the *Kairos Document* from within the international ecumenical community

1. Immediate reactions

1.1 Newspapers and religious journals

Reactions to the *KD* in the international community were overwhelmingly positive, especially from within the ecclesiastical press. The London based *Catholic Herald* (4 October 1985), for example, devoted three pages of commentary to the *Document*, characterising it as 'the South African version of liberation theology'. The *Catholic Herald* noted:

The *Document* does not simply represent the views of professional theologians. Grassroots Christian groups of all denominations discussed the issues and contributed to the critique, which is intended as an open-ended statement and a basis for further examination by Christians in South Africa.

Ecumenical journals overseas were also largely affirming in their responses to what many perceived as a break-through *Document*. For instance, *The Ecumenist* (Vol. 24, No.3/ March-April, 1986) which characterises its mission as 'A Journal for promoting Christian Unity' cited an article from *Christianity and Crisis*, which stated that the *KD* had gone beyond the Barmen Declaration. *The Ecumenist* went on to note:

The title *Kairos* points to the perception of the ecumenical church-leaders who signed the report that the current crisis represents a moment of truth, not only for Apartheid but also for the church, dangerously divided into white and black churches and internally split within the white churches over the question of Apartheid.

The above journal concluded by posing questions about the challenge of the *Document* to those beyond the borders of South Africa, and answered by declaring boldly that the *Kairos* challenge represented a 'moment of truth for the churches elsewhere':

What of the rest of us who are not South African? How are we to react to the message of the *Kairos*? Do we merely look over the shoulders of the signatories to admire their Christian witness, courage and compassion?... Do we take heart as members of a world church and pray or give alms in support of our brothers and

sisters...in their struggles? Yes to all of these, but there is more for us who do not live in South Africa...In many ways, the moment of truth for the churches in South Africa is, as well, a moment of truth for the churches elsewhere.

From the United States of America (USA), the *National Catholic Reporter* (1 October 1985) observed that the *KD* was asking of the church in South Africa to alter its 'inadequate, irrelevant and ineffective' theology:

The most serious theological comment ever to emerge from South Africa, the *Document* calls the church to rethink its 'inadequate, irrelevant and ineffective' theology, to move beyond an 'ambulance ministry' and take action, 'even advocate civil disobedience and special resistance campaigns'.

Christianity and Crisis (11 November 1985) made the point that the *KD* moved beyond the confines of the religious sphere in that it calls for a confession which is an explicitly 'political act':

The Kairos document goes far beyond Barmen in its clarity that *confession is a political act*. Without histrionics, the Apartheid regime is called a tyranny that 'can only be replaced by another government'. 'The most loving thing we can do...is to eliminate the oppression, remove the tyrants from power, and establish a just government for the common good of *all the people*'. In the long Christian tradition of teaching about tyranny, is there another communal church *Document* that has spoken so clearly as this?

Reactions to the *Document* from the non-religious press, in London especially, were also extremely positive. *The London Times* (28 October 1985), for example, headed its article on the *KD*, 'Apartheid seen as the Antichrist', and noted that:

The sustained force of the argument, so uncharacteristic even of radical social theology, has brought the Kairos Document immediate international attention.

Another London-based tabloid, *The Guardian* (18 October 1985), hailed the *Document* as a major blow to Apartheid, and a significant boost to the proponents of Liberation theology in South Africa and the world:

Liberation theology has taken a giant stride in South Africa,

promising to deprive Apartheid of its already threadbare religious prop, and to put fresh vigour into the movements in other continents...The Kairos ("moment of truth") Document is the toughest, most uncompromising gospel of liberation theology yet published. It argues that South African Christians must resist, support rebellion, take part in civil disobedience, and treat violence by blacks "with understanding".

The brief survey above of press responses to the *KD* is clearly indicative of a significant measure of international recognition and support for the message of the *Document*. This factor impacted on the status and profile of the *KD* within the religious communities both within South Africa and internationally. It is conceivable, for instance, that without the kind of high-profile publicity and support given by international press the message and the challenge of the *Document* could have had a much more limited impact within South African society at large, and within ecclesiastical circles in particular.

1.2 Theologians and theological students

Resonance with the *KD* was particularly forthcoming from theologians and theological institutions overseas. From Germany, the University of Hamburg's Department of Theology, for example, noted that the *Document* had a local relevance in that the *Kairos* presented a challenge also to themselves within their own context, insofar as they were, directly or indirectly beneficiaries from the system Apartheid:

We read the 'Kairos Document' and discussed it intensively. Today we want to say 'Thank you' for your courageous paper...We thank you for the prophetic view and interpretation of the Gospel. We got a new the consciousness that we are living in a system, which sustains suppression and exploitation in South Africa and Namibia and that we have advantages of it. We have heard your appeal for repentance and change. We have to change ourselves and the way we live together. And we will have to bear the political and economic changes...We therefore founded a group in which we want to learn what "Christian resistance against the demonic strongholds of death in racism, sexism, economic exploitation, militarism and the abuse in science and technology means" for us in

the Federal Republic of Germany²¹⁹.

From across the English channel, Professor James B Torrance, of the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, observed that the *KD* represented a genuine example of 'a people's Document', which articulated the experiences of the 'poor, the powerless and the oppressed':

The Kairos Document is a deeply moving document to be taken very seriously - 'a people's document' - the voice of the poor, the powerless and the oppressed. It is for us to listen and learn rather than to offer any quick or slick criticisms...The document is significant in that it is an attempt to speak a theological word in the name of the Gospel - in the belief that it is God's concern to give all their humanity in Christ...The document is a cry for humanity from those who have seen the dignity of their black humanity restored to them in Christ - where it has been so often denied to them by 'Christians'. The document has to be welcomed as offering a theological critique, and not just an economic or sociological analyses, important as it sees such to be²²⁰.

Torrance further suggested that the *Document* was particularly helpful also as a challenge to the Church of Scotland, at the very least in assisting them to move beyond merely supporting the Declaration of Apartheid as Heresy to some meaningful action. Also from the United Kingdom, Fr. Robert Butterworth, SJ, a Jesuit theologian from England, observed that the *KD* had 'real force, relevance and a thoroughly Christian outlook on a situation which is clearly worsening'²²¹.

From the United States of America, Dr. Clifford Green, the Director of the Public Policy Centre at Hartford Theological Seminary in Connecticut, responded to the challenge of the *KD* by focussing on the themes of 'christology' and 'tyranny'. On the issue of tyranny, Green stated that:

²¹⁹ Letter to Kairos theologians from a 'Group of theologians' at the University of Hamburg, dated 10 January 1986. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

²²⁰ J.B. Torrance, 'Listening to its challenge', *JTSA*, No. 55, June 1986, p.42.

²²¹ R. Butterworth, SJ, 'Challenge to the Church - Some brief comments' (Article, undated and unpublished). (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

It is not surprising that the Document refers to this teaching about legitimate rebellion against oppression. What is remarkable is that it *applies* it. The government of south Africa is named a tyranny...the Kairos Document is striking in this respect in the history of the modern church²²².

With regard to the question of the role of christology in the *Document*, Green observed:

Crucial to the Kairos Document is its critique of idolatry, false concepts of God, in both State Theology and Church Theology...The section on 'The god of the State' is clear in rejecting a god who legitimates oppressive power, exploitation and death. This is the 'god who exalts the proud and humbles the poor' (p.7). This god, as the new constitution unwittingly reveals in the sentence quoted, is in fact a cosmic projection of colonial will, the deification of white settler power. Over against this is set 'the God of the Bible' and specific scriptural passages such as the Magnificat²²³.

Dr. Joachim F. Pfaffe, representing a voice from the Latin America context, suggested that the *KD* had implications not only for Contextual theology but for Contextual pedagogy as well. Pfaffe concluded his eight-point hypothesis on the *Document* by stating:

Contextual Pedagogics describe its main task as an educational counterpoise to state and state theological propaganda, thus socializing the educand both politically and theologically according to contextual basics²²⁴.

Professor Miquez Bonino, from the Department of Theology at the University of Buenos Aires, commented that the *Document* went further than most political theologies of the West, and did so because it was willing to assume an explicit political commitment. Although Apartheid had come under heavy criticism from ecumenical bodies throughout the West, even to the point of denouncing Apartheid as heresy, such bodies had stopped short of entering the arena of ideological and therefore political engagement. Bonino elaborated as follows:

²²² C. Green, 'Christology and Tyranny', *JTSA*, June 1986, No.55, p.50.

²²³ *Op cit.*, p.52.

²²⁴ J. F. Pfaffe, 'Fundamental thesis on Contextual Pedagogics'. (Article, undated and unpublished). (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

They (i.e. the West) seem to think that a political decision belongs to another discipline, possibly that of 'political ethics'. The implication of our Document is that such distinction is questionable both from a theological and from a pastoral point of view. Theologically, it seems to introduce between faith and obedience a wedge hardly justifiable in biblical terms. Pastorally, it leaves the 'believer' in the air, an easy prey to despair, indifference or passivity²²⁵.

A swift response to the *KD* was also forthcoming from a number of theological and biblical students studying in Europe. Anne P Hall, a theological student from France, for instance, requested a copy of the *Document* which she read about in the press reports, as early as 13 December 1985 - a mere two months after its publication. In her letter to the *Kairos* theologians, Hall indicated that her interest stemmed especially from the fact that she was interested in Liberation theology, about which, to date her reading had been limited to Latin American liberation theology²²⁶.

Jenny Nichol from Norfolk in England expressed her 'joy' at finding out about the existence of the *Document*, which she declared would help her in 'investigating a theology on South Africa':

How excited I was to read in an article, sent me by my family of your *Kairos* theology. Although I now live in England, my heart is very much in South Africa, where I grew up. Feeling as strongly as I do that the present setup...I had intended to spend some time this year, investigating a theology on SA, using my understanding of the Bible to do so, and now I find, to my joy, that someone has been there before me...I am so deeply concerned with what is going on in SA, and I shall help you in my prayers. I am so sure that the Lord could change SA into the beautiful place it should be for everyone, if only there is faith & vision to see²²⁷.

Claudia Rigbe from West-Germany noted that she was studying theology in Munster and

²²⁵ M. Bonino, in WCC - PCR Information and Background Papers (Special Issue), November 1985, p.56. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

²²⁶ Letter to ICT from A.P. Hall, dated 13 December 1985. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

²²⁷ Letter to *Kairos* theologians from Jenny Nichol, dated 20 January 1986. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

was preparing to sit for her final examinations. In her studies she had incorporated the *KD*, having written to the *Kairos* theologians to request copies of the first and second editions²²⁸. Michael Agyemam, who studies theology in Europe but hails from Ghana, observed that the *Document* struck not only at Apartheid but also at Christianity itself:

I personally have respect for this new piece of writing, because it tackles the Apartheid regime in the concept of Christianity. It emphasises the Church's undeclared positions in this entire struggle, to combat this policy. It is obvious that the Church knows the difference between right and wrong but yet fails to point out, for fear of the government and the consequences of their reaction. Last but not least it gives the youth the encouragement and a backbone for a successful future in the toil of today²²⁹.

D Mohan Cinan Dhas, a student from India studying in Europe, viewed the *KD* as a critical response by some Christians to take seriously both the political situation and the demands of faith within the situation of crisis:

A theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa is a result of taking seriously, by a few concerned Christians (church workers) the political system in South Africa and the Christian faith or the biblical faith to serve some kind of response to a grave situation. The Kairos Document challenges the church to be freed from idolatry of false gods and to start searching for a relevant and contextual theology. A church truly prophetic, has to keep challenging the government as well as the people. It is undesirable and unfortunate that the church in South Africa took a passive reconciliatory role trying to bridge the evil and the good²³⁰.

As in South Africa, theological institutions overseas proved to be fertile ground for discussions and reflections on the challenge of the *KD*. Discussion and debate on theological issues is, of course, the stock-in-trade of theological institutions. However, the significance of the nature of reflections on the *Document* within the international theological arena lay in, amongst other things, the recognition that the thrust of the *KD* was, firstly,

²²⁸ Letter (undated) to *Kairos* theologians from Claudia Rigbe. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

²²⁹ M. Agyemam, 'Comments by Students', December 1985, Norway SCM Conference. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

²³⁰ D Mohan Cinana, *Op cit.*

towards orthopraxis rather than orthodoxy and, secondly, to reflect on the challenges from within their own contexts.

1.3 Churches, church-leaders and church organisations

Reactions and responses from churches *qua* churches, beyond the borders of South Africa, were generally less forthcoming, and much less decisive in their support for the *KD* than the responses from ecumenical groupings and para-church organisations. In Africa, for example, the initial interest generated by the *Document* amongst churches appears to have been limited. For example, the request from the Roman Catholic Bishop of Swaziland²³¹ for copies of the *KD* represents an exception amongst churches in Africa who showed interest and support.

From other continents responses to *KD* amongst church denominations were also minute compared to the enthusiasm generated by the challenge of the *Document* amongst ecumenical bodies. In most instances it seems that churches delegated the responsibility of responding to the *KD* - if they deemed response to be necessary at all - to a department or organisation within their church denominations. For instance, solidarity with the message of the *Document* was expressed from within the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), by the UCCP Co-ordinator for Education, *Documentation* and Publications (Human Rights Desk), in the following letter addressed to the *Kairos* theologians:

In keeping with your invitation to 'all Committed Christians to discuss, debate, reflect and pray' on the issues which you discussed in the Kairos Document may we request permission from you for us to reprint the said Document in a limited number (550 copies) for circulation to our church workers: pastors, deaconesses, lay leaders and officers? As you know, the Philippines is a predominantly Christian country but ironically, it is governed by a repressive regime backed up by a foreign colonial power. It is in this context that the struggle of the Filipino people for dignity and human rights are waged. The clarification of the issues in theology that you presented will be of great help and as we both hoped, 'will lead to

²³¹ Letter to *Kairos* theologians from the Bishop of Swaziland, dated 30 December 1985. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

action'²³².

Churches in Europe who responded to the *KD* appear to have been concentrated in Germany and the Netherlands. For example, the Revd Dr. W.O. Deutsch of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland wrote to express their support and appreciation for the *Document*, and to acknowledge and confess their co-responsibility in bringing about and sustaining the Apartheid structures of oppression, and pledging to throw their weight behind measures to hasten the end of the Apartheid regime:

We know that we as Germans are historically, politically and economically co-responsible for the present structures of your oppression. That is why it disturbed us particularly that repeated ecumenical resolutions condemning Apartheid as sin and heresy have led only to half-hearted reactions on our part and that of our churches. Your resolute witness humbles us. But it also encourages us to overcome our own indecisiveness...We want to let you know today that in remembrance of our own 'Confessing Church' (1934 - 1945) from whose mistakes and weaknesses you have learned we want to stand beside you in prayer, word and deed. For that reason, we have resolved to join the Covenant Project of the SACC in order to show our solidarity...In addition, we commit ourselves to advocating those sanctions which the SACC, and UDF and, most recently, Bishop Tutu have been demanding²³³.

In the Netherlands a *Werkgroep Kairos* (Kairos Working Group), representative of progressive groupings within mainline church denominations, observed that the *Document* was a new challenge to churches in the Netherlands, to examine again, *inter alia*, the extent to which Holland was supporting the South African *onwettige regering* (illegitimate government) through economic ties:

Ook christenen en kerken in Nederland worden voor een uitdaging gesteld. Opnieuw beseffen wij dat onze sameleving steun geeft aan de onderdrukkende structuur in uw land, ondermeer door onze economische banden. Ook theologische denkpatronen, waaraan in Zuid-Afrika de Apartheidsideologie ontleend werd, zijn vanuit

²³² Letter to ICT from the Revd E.V. Guèrrero, dated 26 November 1985. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

²³³ Letter (undated) to Kairos theologians from Dr W Otto Deutsch of the Synod of Saarbrücken Circuit (Evangelical Church of Rhineland). (ICT Archives, Kairos file No.3.2.3, Johannesburg).

*Nederland 'geimporteer'*²³⁴.

Dr Joachim Wietzke, of the Protestant Association for World Mission - a Mission body based in the then divided West Berlin wrote to Dr. Beyers Naude, to reflect something of the growing interest amongst churches in the then Federal Republic of Germany in the *KD*:

Please find enclosed the English translation of this paper drafted by a working group of the *Evangelische Bekenntnisgemeinschaft* within the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Wuerttemberg. This is another indication of the great interest the Kairos document has found in the churches of the Federal Republic of Germany. In regard to the EMW 'Letter to the authors of the Kairos document' sent to you on 4th April there is a constant flow of additional signatures coming in and I shall send you a copy of them in due time²³⁵.

The Working Group referred to in the above letter studied the *Document* in some depth, and in a detailed statement on the came to the conclusion that the oppressive state in South Africa left Christians with no option other than that of having the obligation to resist:

What else should one call the ruthless self-seeking which robs one section of the South African population of their dignity and discriminates against them in almost all spheres of life?...we have no option but to conclude it is that this kind of oppressive state which the Christian faith gives us the obligation to resist. We think, as you do, that physical force can only be considered 'as the very last resort and only as the lesser of the two evils', or, as Bonhoeffer put it, 'the lesser of the two guilts'. We do not know what will be the outcome of your struggle, but we pray that God will enable you to see it through in righteousness²³⁶.

A small number of local churches and parishes overseas also expressed their desire to enter the *Kairos* process in one way or another. Typical of such letters of interest in, support for and solidarity with the *Kairos* theologians from local church quarters was the following,

²³⁴ *Giro*, 55 45 017, 1986.

²³⁵ Letter to Dr B Naude from Dr J Wietzke of the Protestant Association for World Mission (West Berlin), dated 4 June 1986. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

²³⁶ Statement by the *Evangelium und Kirche* Working Group of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Wuerttemberg, dated 21 March 1986. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

from the Revd D. Trembly, pastor of the Faith Baptist Church, Germantown, USA:

The enclosed cheque is a token of our support and esteem...We are a tiny mission congregation of Black and White Christians, very far from you in terms of distance and very aware of our inability to ease your struggle. But we can and do pray for you, Brothers and Sisters. And we yearn for that day when God's righteousness will have had its own way - in South Africa, in the United States, and with all the creation²³⁷.

The limited church interest in and enthusiasm for the *KD* internationally could be explained, firstly, on the basis of recognising that the *Document* was specifically aimed at the South African churches and not at churches internationally. However, there seems to be a second and more significant reason, which applies to churches universally, namely the question of whether the churches, as socially entrenched institutions, were in fact able to embrace the prophetic challenge in a decisive way. This question is raised again both in *Part Three* and *Part Four* of this study.

1.4 Ecumenical bodies

As early as October 1985, a month after its publication, the news of the *KD* had reached ecumenical organisations in countries beyond the border of South Africa. Typical of the swift enquiries received by the *Kairos* theologians was the following letter from Richard P MacBride, of *The Transformation Resource Centre*, an ecumenical organisation based in Lesotho:

We are very impressed with the things you have been writing lately, and we hope that your messages are reaching a large audience of people who need to hear what you have to say. In the last issue of *Work for Justice*, we tried to extend your audience by reprinting for our 4000 readers a part of your paper, 'What is Contextual theology?' This is an extremely important article of yours. It shows a way out of the present pain. Recently you surpassed that by an even more important publication, *Challenge to the Church : The Kairos Document*. Since reading this document we have been telling people about it. We could use more copies to give people in the region and overseas, encouraging them to use it in study groups and

²³⁷ Letter to the *Kairos* theologians from The Faith Baptist Church, dated 7 March 1986. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

even to write reviews of it. Could you send us, say, 25 - 50 copies in order that we could distribute them locally and overseas?²³⁸.

The *Document* impacted widely in ecumenical circles in Europe, and especially in the Netherlands and in Germany. The *Evangelische Akademie* in Bad Boll, near Stuttgart, for instance adopted the *KD* and its message as basis for their annual Pentecost Rally from 17 - 19 June 1986. The Revd Wolfgang Schafer, of the Academy's Ecumenical Department, intimated to the *Kairos* theologians that in preparation for the Rally the *Document* was translated into German, and was being widely distributed and discussed in the Federal Republic²³⁹.

At the Academy of Mission in Hamburg a 49-strong ecumenical group of theologians and church-leaders, known as *Mainzer Arbeitskreis Sudliches Africa (MAKSA)* from Germany and surrounding European states came together to participate in a *Kairos* seminar. This group met together from 16 - 20 June 1986, and out of their deliberations forwarded the following statement of resolutions to the authors of the *KD*, a statement which in its comprehensiveness merits quoting in full:

We, the participants at the *Kairos*-Seminar held at the Academy of Mission in Hamburg/FRG, 16th-20th June, 1986, having studied the *Kairos* document, and having heard extensive reports regarding the current situation in South Africa,

1. AFFIRM our solidarity and commitment with the people in South Africa who refuse to be oppressed by the nefarious Botha regime and who choose death daily in their struggle for a liberated South Africa;
2. EXPRESS our consensus with other Christians that the hour of liberation for South Africa is NOW;
3. FEEL extremely challenged by your fresh approach to a gravely violent situation and REGRET certain evasive and paternalistic responses emanating from European church circles;
4. REALISE with conviction that your Immanuel is the God who has opted decidedly for the overthrow of your tyrants and who

²³⁸ Letter to *Kairos* theologians from the Transformation Resource Centre, Maseru, Lesotho, dated 11 October 1985. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

²³⁹ Letter to the *Kairos* theologians from the *Evangelische Akademie* (Bad Boll), Stuttgart, dated 2 February 1986. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

cannot be the God of your oppressions;

5. BELIEVE that the escalation of violence in South Africa to be inevitable in the process leading to liberation and therefore, PLEDGE our support to the liberation movements in their attempts to make justice and freedom a reality for all;

6. CALL upon European Christians to demand economic sanctions from their governments NOW and URGE them to pressurize their churches to commit themselves to these strategies for change;

7. PROMISE to demonstrate our solidarity with you in hoping and working for the new South Africa not only by our prayers, but by actively engaging ourselves in decisive forms of ACTION²⁴⁰.

The Netherlands Council of Churches (NECC), having arranged a Consultation on South Africa in Amersfoort on the 28 - 30 November, 1985 found the publication of the *Document* to be striking and challenging. The theme of the consultation, namely 'The Moment of Truth' reflected the NECC's deliberate focus on the *Kairos* concept. Writing on behalf of the NECC, the moderator expressed their interest and solidarity, and pledged themselves 'to deal with your document at all levels of our churches in the Netherlands'²⁴¹.

Further afield interest in the *KD* was evident in ecclesiastical and ecumenical circles within France, Brussels and Spain. For example, the Project Department of *Comité Catholique contre la Faim et pour le Développement (CCFD)*, writing to ICT from Paris reflects such interest:

Our General Secretary has expressed a solidarity forward for this issue (ie. the *Kairos* Document). We have handed it to our dioceses and committees in France and we shall diffuse it according to our discussion in Brussels²⁴².

From Spain, the 'White Fathers' - also known as the 'Missionaries of Africa', from the *Centro de Informacion y Documentation Africanas (C.I.D.AF.)* in Madrid, expressed their

²⁴⁰ Letter to *Kairos* theologians from Dr M Bruan, on behalf of MAKSA participants, dated 27 June 1986. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

²⁴¹ Letter to *Kairos* theologians from D.C. Mulder (Moderator) and Veronica Berkhof de Lange (Secretary) of the Netherlands Council of Churches, dated 30 November 1985. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

²⁴² Letter to ICT from the *Comité Catholique contre la Faim et pour le Développement (CCFD)*, dated 6 February 1986. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

'extreme interest' in receiving copies of the *Document*²⁴³.

The WCC indicated their high regard for the importance of the *KD* by devoting an entire journal publication of the WCC Programme Unit on Justice and Service to focussing and commenting on the *Document*. The November 1985 issue featured a range of articles on the *Document* by theologians and churchpeople from the international ecumenical community, such as Dr. John Pobee (Director of the WCC Programme on Theological Education), Professor Bert Hoedemaker (Professor of Theology at the University of Groningen, Holland), Professor Jose Miquez Bonino (Methodist Church pastor and Professor of Theology at the University of Buenos Aires) and the Revd. Allan A Brockway (WCC Programme Secretary for Christian-Muslim Relations). The co-editor of the WCC journal and Unit director, Anwar M Barkat, introduced the series on the *Document* by noting that 'the *Kairos* document is one of the most significant theological documents to come out of the present crisis in South Africa'²⁴⁴. Barkat goes on to state that:

...(the *KD*) is bound to affect not only the self-understanding of the church within South Africa but will also have a broad theological impact on the thinking and actions of the churches in the Ecumenical movement in relation to South Africa²⁴⁵.

According to the Revd Allan A Brockway, the *KD* 'is a theological comment with a difference that cannot fail to call to mind the 1934 Barmen Confession of the German Confessing Church'²⁴⁶. Brockway further notes:

While Barmen rejected the heresy and apostasy of the Nazis and the "German Christians", "Challenge" (i.e. the *KD*) proceeds to enunciate an appropriate strategy for Christians in South Africa on the basis of its social and theological analyses...The strategy is expressed without mincing words: "there is only one way forward to Church unity and that is for those Christians who find themselves on

²⁴³ Letter to ICT from JR Echeverría of the C.I.D.AF, dated 29 January 1986. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg)

²⁴⁴ AM Barkat, 'Comments on the *Kairos* Document', in WCC PCR Information, reports and background papers. (Special Issue), November 1985. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ A.R. Brockway, *op cit*, p.44.

the side of the oppressor or sitting on the fence to cross over to be united in faith and action with those who are oppressed"²⁴⁷.

The value of comparison between the *KD* and the Barmen declaration was also a subject of interest to Wolfgang Hüber, Professor of Theology at the University of Hamburg. Hüber highlighted the difference in emphasis between these two documents, and states that 'ecumenical Christianity of our day can learn from both these documents in a specific way'²⁴⁸, as both the *KD* and the Barmen declaration 'can help to identify the specific responsibility of Christians and of churches institutions of crisis and transition'²⁴⁹. The essential difference between the *KD* and the Barmen confession is outlined by Hüber as follows:

In confronting the situation, the *Kairos* Document as opposed to the Barmen declaration, does not use the language of doctrinal confessions but the language of contextual theology...Whereas the Barmen confession is characterised by an extraordinary measure of theological concentration and clarity but by a lack of social analysis and political clarity, the *Kairos* Document is characterised by a high degree of prophetic reading of the signs of the time but by a certain ambiguity of its central theological concept²⁵⁰.

In his contribution to the discussion on the challenge of the *Document* in the WCC special edition, Professor Hoedemaker observed that the *Document* brought into bold relief a 'tension which divides the Church more deeply than mere disagreement about doctrine':

The crucial point in the struggle of the Church is not the tension between black and white as such, but the tension between an oppressed majority and a privileged minority. It is a tension between two mutually exclusive projects: changing the political order, and maintaining the political order. It is, moreover, the tension between two mutually exclusive sets of moral and theological arguments. It is a tension which divides the Church more deeply than mere

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ W. Hüber, 'The Barmen declaration and the Kairos Document. On the Relationship between Confession and Politics', *JTSA*, June 1991, No.75, p.55.

²⁴⁹ *Op cit.*, p.56.

²⁵⁰ *Op cit.*, pp.55-56.

disagreement about doctrine²⁵¹.

From New Zealand, the Revd Bob Scott, Secretary of the National Council of Churches (NCC) Programme on Racism, observed that the *Document* should prove to be 'extremely useful in providing a clear statement of the realities present in South Africa'²⁵². Assuring the *Kairos* theologians of their prayers and constant support and that he intended distributing the *KD* widely in New Zealand and elsewhere, Scott also felt it necessary to alert the authors of the *Document* to the following matter of concern:

You may be interested to know that, in response to the news that increasing numbers of white South Africans are applying to emigrate to New Zealand, the national Council of Churches is preparing a "Discussion Paper" pointing to the dangers of 'importing' white racism and urging the government to be careful in its screening processes. Its publication, in a few weeks time, is expected to cause a community storm - for an appreciable number of New Zealanders have relatives in South Africa and the "kith and kin" argument for support of the Botha government is very strong in this country²⁵³.

Not surprising, ecumenical groups overseas provided the *KD* with its greatest source of international support, given the fact that many of these groups movements and organisations, such as the WCC, have historically been involved in and committed to the dismantling of Apartheid. However, the impact of the *Document* was such that its message enlisted expressions of solidarity from hitherto unknown groupings as well. The spin-offs from the responses to the *KD* from ecumenical groupings were, firstly, that it served to strengthen the international ecumenical solidarity movement, and secondly, that it gave rise to an international *Kairos* movement.

2. Further developments

For the purposes of this section I shall briefly focus on five *Kairos*-related developments which, in varying degrees, bear testimony to the significant impact of the *KD* on the

²⁵¹ B Hoedemaker, *op cit.*, p.52.

²⁵² Letter to the *Kairos* theologians from B Scott (NECC Programme on Racism), dated 4 November 1985. (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

international ecumenical scene. These are: *The Road to Damascus*, *Kairos Africa*, *Kairos Europa*, 1992: *Kairos/USA* and *Kairos Latin America*.

2.1 *The Road to Damascus*

*The Road to Damascus: Kairos and Conversion*²⁵⁴, a 36-page booklet which in style and format resembled the 1985 *KD* was published as a successor to the *Document*. In contrast to the latter, however, *The Road to Damascus* met with muted reaction and minimal response. Apart from brief comments mainly in the English-language newspapers (i.e. *The Weekly Mail* and *The Citizen*), *The Road to Damascus* aroused little interest amongst theological institutions²⁵⁵ and the churches in South Africa and in the other countries who were part of the project, namely Namibia, South Korea, Philippines, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala.

One of the main objectives of *The Road to Damascus* was to create a forum in which theologians and churchpeople from so-called third-world countries could work on common strategies, aimed not only against oppressive governments but also against the surrogate forces used by such governments, especially that of Right Wing Christianity. In this sense *The Road to Damascus* was a product of research from theologians from different contexts whose common experiences of crisis bonded them together in an effort to respond on a broader front to the perceived *Kairos*, as well as extending the challenge to churches and Christians in their respective countries.

However, as an international document the publication fell far short of expectations. Whereas the *KD*, for instance, went into several reprints, sold thousands of copies, and was translated into numerous local and international languages, numerous copies of *The Road to Damascus* are 'sitting piled high in some dusty storeroom of an increasingly irritated

²⁵⁴ Johannesburg, Skotaville, 1989.

²⁵⁵ As far as I am aware the only exception are; (i) the production of a series of Bible Studies on *The Road to Damascus*, by the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa, and (ii) a Bible Study publication in 1992, 'Repentance and Conversion', by the Institute for the Study of the Bible, (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

publisher'²⁵⁶. In South Africa certainly, part of the reason for this indifference amongst churches and Christians was the fact that the South African state media by and large ignored *The Road to Damascus*, apparently having learnt the lesson of their previously paranoid reaction to the *KD* in 1985, which generated such widespread free national and international publicity.

Another possible reason why *The Road to Damascus* failed to elicit popular interest and support may be the fact that it is theologically weightier document than the *KD*, and therefore less easy for theologically untrained people to interpret and apply, particularly as the thrust of its message was aimed not so much at the obvious enemies, ie. the oppressive states, but more so at the opponents within. Other reasons have been suggested²⁵⁷ but the main reason why *The Road to Damascus* fell woefully short of the impact made by the *KD* is quite simply that the latter was a document whose time had come²⁵⁸.

2.2 *Kairos* in the African continent

Although the socio-political context which gave rise to the *KD* was that of the socio-political crisis in South Africa, the ramifications of the South African situation under the Apartheid regime was widely felt, especially in frontline African states. The challenge of the *Document* therefore applied, in one way or another, also to churches and Christians in other African countries. The response to the *KD* by the UCCSA, whose constituencies are located in four other southern African countries apart from South Africa, is a case in point. The above-mentioned church clearly accepted that the challenge of the *Kairos* applied to the UCCSA as a whole, and not only to the church in South Africa.

²⁵⁶ M Worsnip, 'How the hell did we manage to get from Damascus to Rustenburg?'.

²⁵⁷ See, for example, M Prozesky, 'Can the True Exodus stop at Damascus?', *Reality*, November 1989, Vol.21, No.6, pp.19f; W Kistner, 'Notes on Distribution and reception of *The Road to Damascus* document', Johannesburg, undated typescript; J Gay, 'Personal Comments on *The Road to Damascus*', unpublished manuscript, Maseru, 1990; J Kinghorn, 'Damascus - An Interpretation from a Western Perspective', unpublished paper, 1990. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

²⁵⁸ Refer to Chapter Five of this section for a brief discussion on this point.

Over and above the instance cited above, it appears however that the impact of the *KD* in the medium and long terms amongst other church constituencies in Africa, excluding South Africa, has been minimal. Part of the problem in establishing the nature and extent of African responses to the *Document* from Christians and churches is that there is a paucity of documentation relative the *KD* and *Kairos*-related developments beyond South Africa. The noteworthy exception from within the ecumenical world is a significant development which took place in 1989, when ICT and the Ecumenical Documentation and Information Centre for Eastern and Southern Africa (EDICESA) collaborated to convene a conference on the theme, '*Kairos* in Africa'²⁵⁹. The conference, which was held in Harare (Zimbabwe) from September 19-21, 1989 was attended by some 40 theologians and politicians from Zimbabwe, Namibia, Kenya, Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi, Tanzania and South Africa, The conference declared its major objectives as the following:

...to provide an opportunity to engage in theological discussion on the *KD* and the *Road to Damascus*; to interpret the relevance of the methodology engaged in for Southern and Eastern Africa as a whole; to create and opportunity for broadening the base of theological debate; to encourage continued meetings between National Christian Councils and Christians from different countries in the hope that it will provide a platform for planning how we do theology in the region²⁶⁰.

From the papers presented and group discussions at the conference it soon became apparent to participants that the questions of economic and social injustice, the abuse political power and the role of religion to re-enforce the abuse (echoing the point made in the *Road to Damascus*), were the major underlying issues common to the African sub-continent. The conference affirmed therefore that the challenge of the *KD* and the *Road to Damascus* was pertinent not only to South Africa, both in terms of the issues to be addressed and the processes to be followed. The conference therefore resolved that in terms of responding to the situation, a strategy along the following lines was to be adopted by the countries and the churches concerned:

²⁵⁹ *Kairos in Africa: Documentation 1989*, Ecumenical Documentation and Information Centre for Eastern and Southern Africa (EDICESA), Harare.

²⁶⁰ *Op cit.*, p.4.

...to acquire the social and analytical tasks we need to help us move from a welfarist Church approach where we substitute counselling for addressing the root causes of social ills that face us in each of our countries; to research Church-state relationships in independent Africa; to replicate the process and methodology of the Kairos Document and the Road to Damascus in Africa to address our own situations²⁶¹.

Insofar as identifying the crucial issues and mapping out the way forward the conference succeeded in its task. However, no evidence exists which suggests that the intended strategies have been implemented at all, or at the very least implemented with limited success. Part of the reason why nothing significant materialised is the failure of the conference to set up a structural framework and a mechanism whereby the idea of a *Kairos* Africa movement could have developed and perhaps even flourished.

2.3 The *Kairos* movement in Europe

2.3.1 The birth of *Kairos Europa*

The *Kairos Europa* movement represents the European response to the challenge of the *KD*. This initiative was taken, according to the national organiser for *Kairos Europa*, Theo Kniefel, by 'two European networks within the conciliar movement for Justice Peace and the Integrity of Creation'²⁶². The two networks are identified as follows:

- (i) the 23 groups who organised the ecumenical hearing on 'The International Finance System and the Responsibility of the Churches' at the occasion of the Conference of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in Berlin during 1988,
- and (ii) the 'Western European Network on Work, Unemployment and the Churches' (WEN) that in 1988 had begun to concentrate its work on the completion of the Western European Common Market and its consequences for workers and marginalised groups in the

²⁶¹ *Op cit.*, p.11.

²⁶² Information gathered during an interview between D van der Water and Theo Kniefel on 10 October 1995 in Johannesburg. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

continent²⁶³.

At the Ecumenical Assembly in Basel the above-mentioned networks decided, together with other 30 networks, to convene a meeting in Monteforte (Italy) for Pentecost 1989. At this gathering of representatives from 120 networks and groups *Kairos Europa* was born. This initiative found favour with churches and national ecumenical councils in Europe, notably with the WCC. The constituencies from Europe who responded to the challenge of the *KD*, in contrast, for example, to those from America, did not regard the publication of their own version of a *KD* as essential or even necessary. The gist of the nature of the European response to their own *Kairos* is summed up in following declaration:

Now is the time for us to repent in Western Europe and to set credible signs of conversion, signs of justice and reparation: cancelling the debts of the poor and sharing our accumulated wealth²⁶⁴.

The *Kairos Europa* movement therefore set itself the task of uniting, networking and mobilising the poor and marginalised peoples in Europe against the establishments which practised and perpetuated economic oppression in western Europe. The extent to which this movement resonated positively is borne out by the fact that by the year 1992 about 250 networks, organisations and groups, mainly from the countries of the European Community participated in the *Kairos* initiative²⁶⁵. Most of these were ecumenical groups committed to the conciliar process. Also present though were groups representing marginalised people in Europe, such as migrants, immigrants, unemployed, blacks, and the homeless.

2.3.2 Structures of *Kairos Europa*

In terms of its structures of *Kairos Europa* constituted itself on the principle of being a 'network, process and platform'²⁶⁶ in four European regions, namely the southern region

²⁶³ *An Invitation to Participate: Informations 1992*, Commission on Churches' Participation in Development [CCPD], World Council of Churches, September 1991. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

(Portugal, Spain, Southern France, Italy and Greece), with its co-ordinating office in Madrid, the English-speaking region in Liverpool, the German-speaking region in Berlin and the French speaking region in Strasbourg, with plans also to establish an Eastern European and a Scandinavian region.

Apart from its partner *Kairos* movements in South Africa²⁶⁷ and the Americas, *Kairos Europa* is further linked up with The International Coordinating Committee (ICC), whose major function it is to determine policy for the *Kairos* movement internationally. The ICC in turn is made up of 'about 40 representatives from the various national co-ordinations and European networks'²⁶⁸. A Steering Committee of 12 people, which convenes at least annually, ensures that continuity between ICC meetings is maintained.

2.3.3 *Kairos* developments within the European regions

The event which took place in Strasbourg in 1992 represents the most significant *Kairos* development within the European regions in the early 1990's. The Strasbourg event was set to co-incide with and to protest against: (i) the celebration of 5000 Years of colonial expansionism, and (ii) the neo-colonialism of the European Common Market. On June 5 - 10, 1992 therefore, the date set for the European Parliament session, *Kairos* groups consisting of approximately 800 participants - children, women and men from all continents, from many peoples, cultures, languages came together to constitute an alternative 'people's parliament'²⁶⁹. For the *Kairos* movement the 'people's parliament' represented the 'voice of excluded people in a Europe of concentrated power and unaccountable institutions'²⁷⁰. The *Kairos* theme was adopted for the entire 'people's parliament' programme, and the week-long event of group-meetings, street protests, worship, cultural celebrations and political lobbying re-enforced the sense of solidarity

²⁶⁷ This partnership was demonstrated, for example, when *Kairos Europa* movement was fully represented in terms of people and interests at the *Kairos* 10th Anniversary Celebrations/Conference, held in Johannesburg in September 1995.

²⁶⁸ *An Invitation to Participate: Informations 1992*.

²⁶⁹ *Op cit.*, p.15.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

amongst *Kairos* groupings across Europe. One of the clear messages conveyed by this protest event was a prophetic critique of the new Europe which, as conceived by the politicians, simply did not care about the interests and needs of the poor.

The above sentiments were expressed, firstly, in a direct letter addressed to the President of the European Parliament, and secondly, in a declaration by the final plenary session of the 'people's parliament' whereby the *Kairos* groupings resolved to continue badgering those in power and to make the voice of the poor heard. The essence of the protest is summed up in the following statement:

It is our *Kairos* to make you see and hear how many people are shouting out; We want justice, we want work, we want an income, we want participation in decision-making and control over our lives, we want fulfilment and pleasure in life!...We Europeans must give up our tradition of conquering others, dictating to them and trying to convert them. Alongside those of you from Latin America, Africa and Asia, therefore, we say:
No to a Fortress Europe
perpetuating the old colonial claims to domination
Yes to a Europe of Justice
with borders open to all continents
as part of a humane society worldwide²⁷¹.

Reflecting on the overall process of the Strasbourg event, Theo Kneifel acknowledged that the *Kairos* movement in Europe still had much to learn about effective political lobbying, but nevertheless saw the event as a distinct catalyst within the ongoing quest for justice²⁷². Kneifel concluded his report by locating the event within the broader framework of the ongoing international struggle of and solidarity with the oppressed:

The Strasbourg Event was a rally point within an ongoing process. This process is animated by the deep conviction that the way to a "Europe for justice" can be found only in a true "solidarity with the oppressed" in Europe and the victims of colonial Europe in the countries of the Third World, but above all that "solidarity with the

²⁷¹ *Kairos Europa: Peoples' Parliament* booklet, Strasbourg, 1992. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* files, Johannesburg).

²⁷² *Kairos Europa Progress Report* (Undated). (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

oppressed" must increasingly be rooted in and directed by a "solidarity of the oppressed"²⁷³

The *Kairos Europa* network has been kept intact with regular communications especially the print medium of a quarterly *Kairos Europa News bulletin* and a bi-monthly *Kairos Europa International Newsletter*. Furthermore, campaigns such as the 'Brussels Actions Days' (26 - 28 June 1994)²⁷⁴ continued to strengthen the *Kairos* movement in Europe and to keep it alive with ever new and challenging initiatives in the quest for socio-political freedom and economic justice in the interests of the poor and marginalised.

2.4 The *Kairos* movement in the United States of America

2.4.1 The birth of 1992:*Kairos*/USA.

The origins of 1992:*Kairos*/USA are located within the context of the 1990 WCC Convocation on Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation. The birth process of 1992:*Kairos*/ USA is described as follows:

A number of representatives of peace and justice movements in the United States were delegates to the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation convocation in Seoul, Korea, in March 1990. In Seoul they attended meetings with delegates from other regions, at which plans for faithful response to the Columbus quincentenary were presented and discussed. Upon return from Korea, this group of movement representatives formed a steering committee to develop plans for response to the quincentenary in the United States. The name given to this project was 1992: *Kairos*/USA²⁷⁵.

The composition of the USA group attending the convocation were 'largely people of color' who asked themselves the following question:

'Wouldn't the quincentenary, with its official celebration of imperial history, be the very occasion to recognize and name this decisive

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ *Kairos Europa News bulletin*, No.1, November 1994. (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

²⁷⁵ *An Invitation to Participate*, Informations 1992, p.31.

Kairos moment for people of faith in the United States?'²⁷⁶

The above question proved to be an appropriate rallying call to action. The quincentenary, and everything that it represented, therefore constituted a moment of truth, a *Kairos* for justice and peace groups in the USA.

2.4.2 Structure, strategy and goals of 1992:*Kairos*/USA

During 1990, a 25-person steering committee, composed of representatives from the various faith-based peace and justice organisations and religious groupings in the USA, the National Council of Churches and its member denominations, worked on the details of organisational structure, funding base, and action plans for the movement. As the name 1992:*Kairos*/ USA implies, the year 1992 was seen as the particular *moment* of *kairos*. However the objectives of the project was not meant to be limited to that year. Under the themes of 'Remember, Repent and Renew', the goals of the 1992:*Kairos*/ USA were therefore outlined by the committee as follows:

1. To encourage and facilitate a theological process of study, action and reflection and discernment which will result in a *Kairos* document for the United States;
2. To develop educational materials and to help facilitate a network for their distribution and use;
3. To provide congregations and communities with liturgical resources based on liturgical calendars, which can be used in sanctuary and streets, to counter the 'imperial liturgy';
4. To encourage local and national political solidarity and action, in support of issues facing Native Americans such as treaty rights and religious freedom, as well as supporting confrontation of systems of colonial oppression;
5. To help plan and coordinate local and national events, particularly in the fall of 1992, in which participants of multicultural faith-based communities can gather to remember and celebrate 500 years of resistance, and to mobilize around current issues of justice²⁷⁷.

2.4.3 The publication of a USA *Kairos* Document

²⁷⁶ 'On the Way: From *Kairos* to Jubilee', *Kairos/USA*, Chicago, 1994, p.1.

²⁷⁷ *An Invitation to Participate*, p.33.

Unlike the *Kairos Europa* movement, 1992:*Kairos/USA*, taking its cue from the success of the South African *KD*, saw the need for the production and publication of a *Kairos* document in the USA. The USA *Kairos* movement therefore identified as one of their key objectives the publication of their own document. This objective was realised in 1994, the document being entitled, *On The Way: From Kairos to Jubilee*. It is worth noting that the methodology by which the text of the USA document was written followed a similar consultative process by which the South African *KD* was produced. A draft copy of the USA *Kairos* document was written by an elected committee, and then circulated for comments and criticisms amongst *Kairos* groupings. The final document was produced at a 'gathering of *Kairos* participants'²⁷⁸ in Washington, DC, in November 1993. The USA *Kairos* Document outlined the challenge to people of faith in the USA as follows:

It is our common task
to identify and interpret the signs
to name the moment
to make choices for ourselves and our communities
to challenge the institutions of which we are part
to apply the Scriptural Jubilee to every dimension of our lives
to proclaim the year of God's favor.
Life and faith depend on it²⁷⁹.

2.4.4 Networking

Some 125 groups are listed in the USA *Kairos* Document as having participated in the *Kairos* USA process in one way or another. The USA movement also links up with *Kairos* movements in Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe and South Africa²⁸⁰. Communication and news-sharing within the USA and abroad is maintained largely through a regular New York-based *Kairos* USA newsletter. Although the publication of the USA *Kairos* Document had a limited impact and influence in that country the significance of the *Kairos* movement could well be underestimated, given the formidable challenge of attracting media attention in a country such as the USA. However, the full extent to which *Kairos*-related

²⁷⁸ *Op cit.*, p.2.

²⁷⁹ *Op cit.*, p.4.

²⁸⁰ Like *Kairos Europa*, the *Kairos/USA* movement was a fully represented at the 10th Anniversary of the *Kairos* celebrations in South Africa in 1995.

developments impacted nationally in church and society in the USA is a matter beyond the scope of this research.

2.5 *Kairos* in South America

The international *Kairos* movement extended its influence beyond Europe and the USA. Another continent in which the challenge of the *KD* found a significant resonance is South America. Partly because documentation about the *Kairos* movement within the Latin American continent appears mostly in Spanish, and partly because of the logistical difficulties in communication with people from Latin America²⁸¹, first-hand knowledge about *Kairos* developments there are sketchy. What is known however, is firstly, that in response to the South African *KD*, a *Kairos* Document for Central America had been produced which was entitled, *Centroamerican Kairos Document (CKD)*. This document was made public in Managua, Nicaragua on April 3, 1988. Secondly, Christians from El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala were part of the group who collaborated to produce the international sequel to the *KD*, namely *The Road to Damascus*, which was published in 1989.

Thirdly, Fr. Jose Maria Virgil, a Jesuit priest in Nicaragua, who has been the driving force and co-ordinator of the *Kairos* movement in Central America edited a collection of essays on the *Kairos* theme which were written as a further development to the *CKD*. Contributions to this volume, entitled *El Kairos en Centroamerica*²⁸², came from a wide range of authors representing the South African *Kairos* movement (i.e. A Nolan, F Chikane & A Bhiman), the Salvadoran Ecclesiastical Base Communities (ie. Pablo Richard), the Guatemala Conference of Evangelical Churches (ie. Iglesias de Darien), Churches of

²⁸¹ For example, after having written to Fr. Jose Maria Vigil to enquire about information and material on the *Kairos* movement in Latin America I received a reply only some six months after. The difficulties of communication and correspondence, notwithstanding, Fr. Vigil has maintained an ongoing interest in socio-political developments in South Africa. Prior to the 1994 general elections in this country, he wrote the following poem, in which the *Kairos* theme emerges very strongly: 'With South Africa we all vote, we all die in the violence of her streets, we all dance in her popular protests, we all desire to elect fraternal Liberty... it is the Hour of the elections, of choice, of option, of crossroads... It is, once again, brothers and sisters, the *Kairos* of God and the South African People' (Published in *Theological Exchange Programme Update*, Vol.7, No.2, p.12).

²⁸² Ediciones, Nicorua, 1990. (This volume is available only in Spanish).

Panama (Kuna Yala y Colon) and others. The wide range of contributors from the Latin American context suggests that interest in the *Kairos* movement had certainly grown particularly since the translation and publication, in Spanish, of the South African *KD*, and that the *Kairos* movement in this continent was being kept alive.

3. Conclusions

It is evident from the survey in this chapter that the initial interest in and enthusiasm around the *KD*, although losing some momentum in later years, did not dissipate within the international ecumenical scene. Perhaps the single most significant factor which emerges from a reflection on the *Kairos* developments abroad is that each international *Kairos* movement, although closely associated with the South African *KD*, identified their own respective *Kairos* or *kairoi* and proceeded to address their own contextual situations of crisis. The full extent to which the international *Kairos* movements impacted on church and society in the continents in which the movements have been operative has yet be assessed. Such an evaluation, however, is an exercise which falls outside of the scope of this enquiry.

Chapter Five - Observations

1. The *KD*: a document whose time had come

The nature, scope and intensity of responses to the *KD*, both in South Africa and abroad, exceeded even the most optimistic of expectation on the part of the *Kairos* theologians. The relatively small group of people who initiated the *Kairos* movement found themselves inadvertently engaged in a process which unfolded to assume national and international proportions²⁸³. The implicit and sometimes explicit claim, on the part of the *Kairos* theologians, to God's direct intervention in the sequence of *Kairos* events therefore is a claim which cannot be easily dismissed.

The turning point in the *Kairos* process clearly came when the *Document* was thrust into the public arena of debate and controversy. Immediately after its release on September 25, 1985 the *KD* became the subject of public vilification by the state media and its surrogates. The unambiguous intention of the Apartheid state-controlled television network was to grossly discredit the *Document* with the hope that it would be banished to obscurity. In the event the television coverage of the *KD* had the exact opposite effect, receiving the highest possible profile and publicity, as shown by the surveys above.

Such coverage only served to generate unprecedented interest and enthusiasm amongst newspapers, theologians, politicians, churches, christians and members of the public at large. The extent and intensity of reactions against, responses to and interest in the *KD* bears testimony to the fact that this was a document and a movement *whose time had come*. The country was in a state of growing socio-political crisis. The State of Emergency merely exacerbated the crisis, and it was into this crucible that the *KD* was plunged and presented both church and society with a momentous challenge. In a most profound sense it was *Kairos*!

²⁸³ Speaking at the 10th Anniversary celebrations of the publication of the *KD*, the Revd Frank Chikane reflected on the beginnings of the *Kairos* process some 10 years ago, and made the point that at the time the small group of theologians and churchpeople participating were 'involved in something that they did not even fully understand'. (Proceedings of ICT's 10th Anniversary *Kairos* Celebrations, Johannesburg, September 23-25, 1995). (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

2. The categories of respondents

The following three broad categories of respondents to the *KD* could be discerned:

1. Those who hailed the *Document* as an authentic prophetic word for the times and accepted its message as a serious challenge to the churches;
2. Those who recognised the validity of the *Kairos* challenge, who expressed varying degrees of criticisms and reservations, both in relation to the process which led up to publication of the *Document* and the content thereof;
3. Those who outrightly condemned the *Kairos* theologians and totally rejected the message of the *KD*.

The first category of respondents included a small number of theologians drawn mainly from the liberal English-language universities, most of the liberal English-language newspapers, religious journals and periodicals, ecumenical and para-church groups, community-based Christian and non-Christian organisations, local churches, clergy and laity. Within this category, the newspapers in South Africa and abroad who ran favourable articles on the *KD*, were highly influential through their coverage in effectively promoting the message and challenge of the *Document*.

With the publication and press release of the *KD* happening in Johannesburg, it was inevitable that, geographically, most of the newspapers reporting on the *Document* were based in and around Johannesburg, namely *The Star*, *The Citizen*, *The Sowetan*, *The City Press*, *Die Beeld*, *The Weekly Mail & The Sunday Times*, with Cape Town (*The Cape Times & The Argus*) and Pietermaritzburg (*The Natal Witness*) being the only other major centre in South Africa where newspapers ran articles on the *Document*. This feature clearly shows that, as far as newspapers in the country were concerned, the English-language liberal daily and weekly newspapers were most positive and affirming of the *Document*, and of the *KD* challenge to church and state as far as South Africa was concerned. From within the international community, reactions in 'secular' newspapers were remarkably swift to appear in two London-based tabloids, namely *The Guardian* (18 October 1985) and *The London Times* (28 October 1985). Elsewhere in the world favourable responses to the *Document* were more gradual in coming, and concentrated largely in religious press

newspapers and journals in the United Kingdom and in the United States of America.

Amongst the first category of respondents, ecumenical and para-church groups in South Africa and abroad is another grouping that come out most strongly in support of the *KD* and of its aims. This trend is certainly in line with a historical pattern in of Christian resistance to Apartheid. In addition, this category also includes a relatively small but not insignificant number of local churches, clergy, church members and non-church organisations who came out in chorus of support for the *Kairos* process. It is noteworthy that most of these expressions of solidarity with the *Document* emerged from people and parties who took up the initiative on behalf of themselves or their group, without first waiting for signals and direction from leaders or official quarters.

The second category of respondents, namely, those who recognised the validity of the *Kairos* challenge but who expressed varying degrees of criticisms and reservations both in relation to the processing and content of the *Document*, appear to constitute the largest category of respondents within South Africa. In this regard, however, the *KD* achieved part of what it set out to do, namely to engage interested parties in dialogue and debate around the critical issues raised, albeit criticisms being unfair, unfounded and exaggerated in many instances.

The reaction of certain church-leaders at the time who were more critical of the process than of the content of the *Document* was not at all surprising. Given the nature of the circumstances that brought into the being the *KD*, South African church-leaders and church positions *vis-a-vis* the crisis constituted part of the problem, in the opinion of the *Kairos* theologians. Predictably, when such church-leaders, from the ESC's especially, were then approached to be signatories to the *Document* prior to its release, their responses - with a few exceptions, were altogether negative.

Understandably, the radical nature of the *KD* and its harsh condemnation of the Apartheid regime, its supporters and beneficiaries, and the *Document's* sharply critical tone of the established churches and church-leaders rendered the chances of its adoption and its owning by the churches virtually nil. A telling feature of this category of respondents, prevalent

especially amongst church-leaders, was the adoption either of a deliberately ambivalent stance or a wait-and-see attitude *vis-a-vis* the *KD*.

A distinct grouping within the above category is that of white theologians in South Africa who accepted the basic thrust of the *Document* but levelled strong points of criticism, particularly in relation to the *KD*'s position *vis-a-vis* the question of reconciliation.

Thirdly, the category of respondents who were totally dismissive of the *KD* comprised of a predictable grouping, namely, politicians from the Nationalist party and Inkatha, Right wing religious movements, and conservative christian groupings both in South Africa and beyond the borders of this country. The Right Wing religious groupings' denunciation of the *Kairos* process, in particular, was entirely to be expected as this kind of response followed a well-trodden path of vilification and condemnation from such quarters of those engaged in resistance against Apartheid.

3. The 'silences' *vis-à-vis* the *Kairos Document*

Among certain constituencies there appears to have been a remarkable lack of expressed response to the *Document*. A notable example is the silence, in the face of the *Kairos* challenge, on the part of Black theologians in South Africa. Although certain church-leaders from the black communities registered their overall support for the message and challenge of the *KD*²⁸⁴, the collective voice of black ministerial leadership was at best subdued. When approached for comment on the *Document* by the *Kairos* theologians, the Black Ministers Consultation (BMC) of the MCSA, for instance, withheld comment, declaring that they needed more time to study the contents of the *KD*. It is evident, however, no official statement was forthcoming from this group at the time or even at a later stage.

More significantly, the voice of Black theologians, with the exception of certain individuals such as the Revd Frank Chikane and Dr. Bonganjalo Goba - who were intimately involved in the *Kairos* process anyway - have also been remarkably mute at the time of the

²⁸⁴ A factor recognized and commented on, for example, by *The City Press* newspaper (29 September 1985).

publication of the *Document*. Furthermore, when the *Kairos* debate began in earnest it was by and large non-black theologians who engaged themselves in the discussions. The reasons for this distance from or silence about the challenge of the *KD* by Black theologians and Black theology are not easy to discern or establish²⁸⁵. Dr. Goba offers the following explanation:

...the fundamental problem in the South Africa conflict situation was defined in the *Kairos* document not in terms of the racist foundations of Apartheid, but in terms of social oppression. I believe it was the reason that a number of leading black theologians did not give their enthusiastic support to the *Kairos* document, a tension that remains even to the present day²⁸⁶.

Another plausible reason could be that, given the 1985 socio-political context with the fundamental ideological differences between such groupings as the Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo) and the United Democratic Front, the allegiance of Black theologians was naturally with the Black Consciousness camp, represented by Azapo. The *KD*, by virtue of the involvement of participants from across racial groupings, could therefore not escape the hermeneutical suspicions of most Black theologians.

There were, however, positive soundings about the value of the *Kairos* challenge some years after its publication from other advocates of Black theology such as Drs Cecil Ngcokovane and Simon Miamela. Dr. Ngcokovane made reference to the value of the *Document* in relation to the quest for a 'people's theology':

In South Africa, for example, 'people's theology' must include the following elements: A clinical examination and critique of traditional Western theology in the light of the issues addressed by

²⁸⁵ It is worth noting that there is a remarkable lack of written material, in such appropriate publications as the *Journal of Black Theology in South Africa*, which deals in any substantial way with a critique of the *KD* from the perspective of Black Theology.

²⁸⁶ B Goba, 'The Role of Religion in Promoting Democratic Values in the Post-Apartheid Era: A Personal Reflection', *Journal of Constructive Theology*, Vol.1, No.1, 1995, p.18.

the *Kairos* document and contextual theologies that have emerged.²⁸⁷

In similar vein were the observations of Dr. Maimela:

I wish to refer to a group of churchpeople in South Africa who work very, very hard to bring about change. They are among others the *Kairos* theologians who have been on the cutting edge of change. By pressing for a fundamental realignment in society, they have denied the South African government the legitimacy it has always enjoyed²⁸⁸.

Both Maimela and Ngcokovane's comments reflect authentic soundings from the camp of Black theology. However, the definitive position of black theology *vis-a-vis* the *KD* and the *Kairos* process is probably represented by the views of Professor Itumeleng Mosala, who has been regarded as one of the most foremost exponents of Black theology in South Africa. Mosala made the following observation, some five years after the advent of the *KD*:

The real hope of black theology in South Africa/Azania may well lie in the fact that it has never been co-opted by the Establishment. No church has ever officially affirmed black theology as a legitimate and correct way of doing theology in South Africa...This did not happen and the situation was exacerbated by the *Kairos* document's total neglect of black and African theologies. In fact, many of us were incensed by the fact that this potentially empowering document was careful not to mention the word "black" once - despite its Sowetan origins²⁸⁹.

Whether the above perception about the ideological intentions of the *Kairos* theologians were accurate or not, the fact remains that Black theologians as a significant theological grouping did not lend their weight to the *Kairos* process. The influence of the *KD* notwithstanding, the absence of support from Black theology detracts from the overall

²⁸⁷ C Ngcokovane, 'The Socio-Cultural Analysis of the Origins and Development of Black Theology', in *We Are One Voice*, ed. by S S Maimela and D N Hopkins, Skotaville, Braamfontein, 1989, p.49.

²⁸⁸ S Maimela, 'Present Socio-Political-Economic Movements for Change', *op cit.*, p.87.

²⁸⁹ I.J. Mosala, 'Spirituality and Struggle: African and Black Theologies', in *Many Cultures, One nation: A Festschrift for Beyers Naude*, ed. by C Villa-Vicencio and C Niehaus, Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, 1995, p.81.

impact of what Mosala himself recognised as a 'potentially empowering document',²⁹⁰.

4. Ten years after the challenge of the *Kairos*

The fact that since 1990 South African society had undergone such dramatic structural and socio-political changes raises the question as to the part played in this change by the *KD* and the *Kairos* process. In order to answer such a question in an adequate way, one would have to embark on extensive research, the subject of which is not the focus of this particular dissertation. However, certain brief observations relative to this question are appropriate.

Firstly, the *Document* unambiguously called for the Apartheid government to be replaced by a legitimate regime whose political leaders were democratically elected by all the people in the country. The April 1994 democratic elections, and the setting in place of a new government by the people irrespective of race, colour or creed, vindicated the challenge of the *KD* in this regard. Secondly, the *Document* was born within a context of major socio-political crisis. The *KD* charged that the prevailing political turmoil was the direct and indirect consequence of an oppressive regime resisting legitimate opposition from the majority of the country's citizens. The *Kairos* theologians called for sustained pressure from all quarters to bring an end to a situation of intolerable suffering, which was a direct result of the escalating political violence. Ten years after the advent of the *Document*, the nature and incidence of political violence in South Africa has radically diminished.

Thirdly, although the major objective of the *KD* was a transformed South African society, the thrust of its message was a challenge to the churches in the country. The *Document* challenged the churches, both in terms of theology and its praxis. In *Part Three* of this dissertation I will be examining, in some detail, the extent to which the ESC's were able to embrace the *Kairos* challenge on a medium and long-term basis. Suffice it to say, at this juncture, that with the change in South Africa's social order, churches are, of necessity, having to re-examine and to re-position themselves *vis-a-vis* the state in particular and society in general.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

5. International *Kairos* solidarity

If the *Kairos* theologians were pleasantly surprised by the measure of support received for the *Document* in South Africa, they were overwhelmed by the enormous interest and enthusiasm generated elsewhere in the world. To its credit, the *KD* brought into being a *Kairos* movement of people and groupings internationally who have found in the *Kairos* symbol a cause to rally around, and a common vision which has sustained itself since the inception of the *Document*.

PART THREE: MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM KAIROS-RELATED DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA.

Chapter One - Three of the English-speaking churches

1. The Church of the Province of South Africa

From the records of the Synod of the CPSA it is evident that the *KD* does not feature at all as an agenda item on either the 1985 or 1989 CPSA Provincial meetings. This is so despite the initial flurry of reactions to the *Document* amongst leaders within the Anglican church, eg. by Archbishop Phillip Russel and Bishop Desmond Tutu. According to the CPSA's provincial executive officer, the Revd Rowan Smith, 'neither Synod of 1985 nor 1989 make direct mention of the document.'²⁹¹ Smith added though, that 'it appears that the ideas of the *Kairos* document became subsumed in the preparation for and the subsequent Partners-in-Mission consultation'²⁹². However, a mid-term review of the CPSA's Partners-in-Mission²⁹³ programme, undertaken by the Anglican Mission Institute in October 1994, shows little evidence of an conscious connection within the Anglican dioceses between the *KD* and this project within the church²⁹⁴.

What should be acknowledged though is that critical issues raised by the *Document* were also issues of increasing concern within the CPSA, especially in the wake of the State of Emergency in 1985. Once such area of major concern was that of the ongoing violence in the country which, in both the opinion of the *KD* and CPSA leadership especially, was being engendered by the enforcement of Apartheid laws and policies. The Anglican

²⁹¹ Letter by Canon Rowan Q. Smith (dated 13 January 1995) to D. van der Water, in reply to the latter's inquiry about *KD*-related developments within the CPSA. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ The Partners-in-Mission programme represented the CPSA's response to the 1988 Anglican Lambeth Conference's challenge to Anglicans worldwide, namely that of observing 1991 - 2000 as the Decade of Evangelism.

²⁹⁴ For further information on this matter refer to *The Decade of Evangelism: a mid-term review - Responses to a questionnaire circulated to the dioceses of the CPSA in July 1994*, Anglican Mission Institute, Cape Town, October 1994.

Church, together with its ecumenical partners, saw the declaration of the State of Emergency by the state as a measure which greatly exacerbated the situation rather than bringing a resolution to the socio-political crisis. This view was clearly vindicated by the fact that in the ensuing years the crisis in South Africa merely worsened. In 1990, for instance, an estimated 800 people died in two months during an outbreak of violence in the Transvaal black townships. This state of affairs prompted Bishop Tutu to cut short a visit to Canada on August 17, 1990. Explaining his action, Tutu remarked:

I am not going back (to S.A.) hoping that I will be able to do anything particularly dramatic...(but) because I am a pastor and I can't be away from our people at a time such as this²⁹⁵.

During the next six weeks the Anglican primate²⁹⁶, together with some of his fellow bishops²⁹⁷ and other church-leaders visited the violence-torn black townships of Thokoza and Katlehong on the East Rand, Soweto, Kagiso on the West Rand, and Sebokeng in the Vaal Triangle. The CPSA bishops made pastoral visits especially to families who had been driven from their homes by the violence.

The efforts of Tutu and his fellow bishops to address the crisis clearly reflects their church's serious concern about the prevailing situation. However, in terms of the CPSA's overall response to the *KD* since 1985 when the churches were confronted with challenge of the *Document*, the conclusion can hardly be avoided that this *KD* did not have a major initial impact or long-term influence on the theology, ecclesiology and practice of the Anglican Church as a denomination. Such a conclusion, however, cannot discount the possibility that the challenge of the *Document* may well have made a distinct impression on a significant number of Anglicans (both clergy and laity) within local parishes and dioceses,

²⁹⁵ *Bishopscourt Update: News and Documentation from the Office of Archbishop Desmond Tutu of Cape Town*, October 18, 1990, No.9/1990, p.1. (D. van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

²⁹⁶ Desmond Tutu was elected Archbishop of the Anglican Communion in South Africa in 1987, succeeding Phillip Russell.

²⁹⁷ See also *Statement Issued by Bishops of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa*, Kempton Park, March 22, 1988. This statement was issued by the Anglican bishops in the wake of the South African government's 'recent attacks that have been made on church-leaders, including our Metropolitan and Archbishop, the Most Reverend Desmond Tutu'. (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

and which may have resulted in *Kairos*-related initiatives for social and ecclesial transformation. An evaluation of the nature and extent of such *Kairos* developments within the CPSA's parishes and dioceses, however, falls outside the scope of this investigation.

On the basis of the above survey, the fundamental question posed in this study comes into focus again: To what extent does the CPSA, as one of the ESC's churches have the propensity and the capacity to embrace a prophetic challenge as that which was presented to the churches by the *KD* and the *Kairos* movement? Variations of this question will be posed throughout this chapter in relation to the other ESC's churches examined. In *Part Four* I will attempt to unpack the question and develop some of the critical issues raised.

2. The Methodist Church of Southern Africa

The efforts of the MCSA to elicit widespread discussion and ongoing debate on the *KD* within its denominational ranks appears to have ran aground on two counts. Firstly, apathy and lack of interest seems to have prevailed amongst the Methodist Church's societies and districts *vis-à-vis* the publication of the *Document*. This is apparent from the lack of responses by the church's local and regional constituencies to an invitation in 1986 by the MCSA's Doctrine Committee, for critical comments on the content of the *KD*. In the words of the Doctrine Committee, the responses of districts and societies 'have been few'²⁹⁸, despite the efforts of this committee to get discussion going by sending their paper entitled 'Initial Response' to all of the church's constituencies.

Secondly, the fragile *Kairos*-process within the church was dealt a blow when the 1986 MCSA Conference requested the church's Doctrine Committee to revise the text of its initial critique on the *Document* 'in such a way as to make it clear that it is not an official response of the Methodist Church'²⁹⁹. The unfortunate effect of this statement by Conference was to further relegate the importance of the *Kairos* challenge within the

²⁹⁸ A Further Reflection on the *Kairos Document*, submitted by the Doctrine Committee to the 1987 MCSA Conference. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

²⁹⁹ Minutes of the 1986 MCSA Conference, Pietermaritzburg, October 1986. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

Methodist Church at large, whether this was so intended or not³⁰⁰. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the Doctrine Committee presented its revised critique of the *KD* at the 1987 MCSA Conference on the basis of minimal input from the church's constituencies, clearly signalling that debate on the *Document* within the MCSA at denominational level had all but fizzled out. The brief minute of the 1987 Conference reflected this waning interest:

Conference receives the document, *A further reflection on the Kairos Document*, submitted by the Doctrine Committee as a contribution to the debate. Conference believes that priority must be given to an action response to the crisis referred to in the *Kairos Document* and instructs the Doctrine Committee to reflect upon the theological significance of that response and to report to the Conference of 1989³⁰¹.

Although the 1987 Conference, by making the above resolution, sought to encourage the church's constituencies to embrace the *Kairos* process, it is clear from subsequent Conference records that the *KD* as an agenda-item no longer featured as a denominational concern. The 1989 Minutes of Conference, for instance, at which a follow-up report of the *Kairos* process within the MCSA was expected to be tabled, contains no reference to the *Document* at all.

Nevertheless, the Methodist Church, and for that matter, the other churches examined in this chapter, could not avoid confronting major issues of national concern, such as the growing socio-political crisis in the country, a feature which the *KD* strongly urged churches and church-leaders to confront with greater urgency and effectiveness. At the MCSA's 1986 Conference, for example, the Methodist Church adopted a proposal whereby the Conference would consult with its constituencies with the view to having itself declared

³⁰⁰ In certain of the church's synods, e.g. the Synod of the Cape of Good Hope District, the *KD* was seen as a critical challenge to the MCSA which had to be embraced 'as a basis for debate and study in the process of discerning the Church's role in the situation in SA'. *Notice of Motion* adopted by the Synod of the Cape of Good Hope District, 1986 (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg). It is evident, however, that the above proposal represents the exception rather than the rule in relation to the MCSA's response to the *Document*.

³⁰¹ Minutes of the 1987 MCSA Conference, Benoni, October 1987.

a 'Peace Church'³⁰². The 'Peace Church' initiative represented an attempt by the denomination to signal to its membership in particular and to the country at large that the MCSA was committed to the 'practice of forms of non-violent action as a positive substitute for the violence of war'³⁰³. The indications are, however, that this initiative never really got off the ground, again due to lack of support from the church's districts, societies and membership at large.

A more significant development in subsequent years within the MCSA, which appears to have pursued a conscious connection with the challenge of the *KD*, was the church's *Ubulungisa Programme*. This programme which was adopted by the 1990 MCSA Conference is characterised 'as a process of Bible study and social analyses'³⁰⁴. Making the connection between the *Ubulungisa Programme* and the *Document* in regard to the issue of national reconciliation in South Africa, the editor of the church's *Christian Citizenship Department LINK* observed that:

With the establishment of the Convention on a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) it appears as if the long-awaited negotiations on the future of South Africa have begun...However, while the importance of CODESA must not be underestimated, it is imperative that Christians keep these 'negotiations' in perspective. Using the Ubulungisa Process of Biblical reflection and social analysis, we are led to ask several questions. Why are negotiations happening? What might result from them? Can they really contribute to reconciliation in South African society? In answering these questions, it is pertinent that we should re-examine one of the most important documents in 20th Century South African Christianity, The *Kairos* document. Although originally drafted in 1985, its statement on 'reconciliation' seems relevant to us in 1992, as we consider the prospects of negotiations³⁰⁵.

However, the extent to which the sentiments expressed above, particularly about the

³⁰² Minutes to the 1986 MCSA Conference, Pietermaritzburg, October 1986.

³⁰³ *Should we Become a Peace Church?*, Study document (undated), MCSA Christian Citizenship Department. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

³⁰⁴ *Christian Citizenship Department LINK*, Methodist Church of Southern Africa, February 1992, Vol.VI, No.1, pp.6-7.

³⁰⁵ *Op cit.*, p.6.

importance of the *KD* for the emerging process of reconciliation, were shared by a many of leaders and laity within the church is open to question, and a matter which can only be determined by further investigation. Suffice it to say that it is conceivable that *Kairos*-inspired seeds may have fallen on fertile Methodist soil within the societies and districts.

At denominational level, however, one would have to say that the MCSA simply did not regard the *Document* and the challenge that it presented, especially at the time of its publication and in the socio-political circumstances that prevailed, to have been a catalyst and therefore crucial to the life and mission of this church. The question therefore again emerges: Is the MCSA, and other ESC's churches like the CPSA, not hamstrung by the bureaucracy and institutionalism in general, and by the presumptions of their ecclesiastical leadership in particular? Are these factors not at the heart of the reason why these churches were not able and willing to rise to the prophetic challenge as presented by the *KD*? We will return to this question following an examination of the medium and long-term responses to the *Document* by two churches of the Reformed tradition, ie. the PCSA and the UCCSA.

3. The Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa

The gist of the PCSA's response to the challenge of the *KD*, in the medium and long terms, can perhaps best be described as ambiguous. This ambiguity is not immediately obvious as the PCSA, at its 1986 General Assembly sent out a positive signal *vis-à-vis* the *Document*, declaring that the church:

...welcomed the (*Kairos*) initiative taken by theologians, mainly black, to bring about a theological debate on issues arising for the Church in the South Africa situation³⁰⁶.

Furthermore the 1986 PCSA Assembly endorsed the *KD*'s 'exposure of the injustice of the South African situation, and the polarisation of its peoples; and in its warning of a growing rift between the white and black sections of the Church'³⁰⁷. However, in the same breath

³⁰⁶ Minutes of the 1986 Assembly of the PCSA. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* files, Johannesburg).

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

the Assembly also expressed its concern at what it perceived to be the *Document*'s 'failure to provide a Biblical doctrine of Reconciliation'³⁰⁸. The PCSA furthermore declared that as a church it 'cannot endorse the call for uncritical solidarity with the liberation movements contained in Chapter 5 of the *Kairos* document'³⁰⁹.

The ambiguity does not arise from the fact that the PCSA Assembly found it necessary both to commend and to criticise the *KD* but in that it was then left up to Presbyteries and local church-leaders to follow up and follow through on the PCSA's response to the *Document*³¹⁰. There appears to be no evidence that the PCSA, as a denomination, made any subsequent effort to follow through on the process initiated at the 1986 Assembly, at any of the PCSA's subsequent Assemblies³¹¹, or through any other appropriate forum of the church. In this way the PCSA as a denomination, by passing the buck to the ministers and leaders of local churches³¹², avoided dealing with the practical implications of the *Kairos* challenge, such as shift in theological paradigm from a 'Church theology' to a 'Prophetic theology'. According to the Revd. Mamabolo Raphesu, the church's Co-ordinator of the Justice and Social Responsibility department, in the final analysis, the *Document* was 'dismissed lightly by the PCSA'³¹³.

In relation to the overall challenge of the *KD*, it is therefore reasonably clear that the initial and medium-term response of the PCSA fell far short of expectations, from the point of view of the *Kairos* theologians. Moreover, the *Document* was challenging churches not only to engage in theological reflections but also to embark on actions which would have a long-

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

³¹⁰ The Assembly urged the ministers of the church 'to form study groups to give further examination to the aspects of the *Kairos Document*' (*ibid.*)

³¹¹ For example, there is no reference at all to the *Kairos Document* in the 1987 PCSA Assembly Minutes.

³¹² This is not to suggest that local churches should not also have dealt fully with the challenge of the *KD* for themselves, as directed by PCSA Assembly. But the local church context was only one level of the church's collective response to the *Document*.

³¹³ Letter by Mamabolo Raphesu, dated 10 August 1994, to D van der Water, re: inquiry about the nature of the PCSA's response to the *KD* (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

term transforming effect on both church and society in the country. It would be misleading, however, to create the impression that the PCSA was any less concerned than of the other ESC's surveyed here, about the issues of justice and peace raised by the *Document*. But in the final analysis, as with the CPSA and the MCSA, it would have to be said that the *KD* did not have any significant impact on the theology or praxis of the PCSA in the short, medium or long-term. The critical question, therefore, raised in relation to the capacities of the CPSA and the MCSA to respond positively to the challenge of the *KD*, also applies equally to the PCSA.

It remains now for us to turn our attention to the UCCSA, the church in which the *KD* appears to have been regarded with the greatest degree of seriousness amongst the ESC's³¹⁴. In response to the challenge of the *Document* the UCCSA embarked on a far-reaching process aimed at the 'transformation of church and society in the light of the *Kairos* challenge'³¹⁵. Whether this church denomination in fact succeeded, firstly, in terms of the challenge of the *KD* to the UCCSA to transform *itself*, and secondly, in terms of its mission to society is a matter that will be fully considered hereunder.

³¹⁴ See especially Charles Villa-Vicencio's comparative survey of responses to the *KD* by the 'English-speaking and other liberal churches' in *Trapped in Apartheid: A Socio-Theological History of the English-Speaking Churches*, pp. 158ff.

³¹⁵ UCCSA Assembly, Minute 86/A/28, George, 1986. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos Files*, Johannesburg).

Chapter Two - The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa

1. The UCCSA on the *eve of the Kairos*

During the years 1983 and 1984 political developments in the country had presented the UCCSA, and other churches opposed to Apartheid, with an acute *internal* challenge. The Nationalist government, despite overwhelming opposition to its Apartheid reforms, stubbornly persisted to press ahead with the introduction of the Tri-cameral Parliament and the New Constitution³¹⁶, a move on the part of the state which sought to entrench racial separation.

The government succeeded in wooing a handful, but nonetheless prominent contingent, of UCCSA ministers into collaborating with the state by participating in the Tri-cameral Parliament. Amongst the ranks of UCCSA ministers who opted for collaboration were two former chairpersons of the denomination, namely the Revds. Andrew Julies and Allan Hendrickse. As a direct consequence the UCCSA found itself, as a church denomination, in danger of being associated with a racially-based political party, namely the 'coloured' Labour Party, and by implication with a political dispensation which perpetuated division along racial lines. At the church's 1984 General Assembly³¹⁷, the UCCSA therefore resolved to clarify where it stood in relation to the Apartheid reforms, and what the options were that faced ministers of the denomination who collaborated with the government of the day, especially in relation to the Tri-cameral Parliament and the system of Black homeland governments. The relevant resolution stated the church's position as follows:

³¹⁶ Under the 1983 Constitution Act, the South African Parliament consisted of three legislative houses: the House of assembly for Whites, the House of Representatives for 'Coloureds', and the House of Delegates for Asians. There was no house for African people, who were expected to exercise their political rights within the 'homelands'. The objective of the New Constitution, according to the Minister of Constitutional Affairs, Mr C. Heunis, was to 'accommodate coloured people and Indians without detracting from the self-determination of the whites'. (*Illustrated History of South Africa: The Real Story*, p.467. See also *Survey of Race Relations*, 1983, p.82).

³¹⁷ The General Assembly of the UCCSA is, according to the church's Constitution, 'the governing body of the Church and its highest court' (*Manual of Constitutions and Procedures of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa*, Clause 6[f], p.13, Braamfontein, 1986. Refer to Appendix Four for UCCSA Organnogramme).

Assembly records its deep consternation at the blatant collaboration of some of its ministers with the implementation of the New Constitution of South Africa, an action which has publicly identified the UCCSA with a political party, and more importantly, with the system of Apartheid. As the 'status confessionis' is here at stake, Assembly further resolves:

- (I) to publicly dissociate itself from the actions of these ministers;
- (ii) to urge these ministers to resign from the ministry of the UCCSA³¹⁸.

The above resolution received overwhelming support by the Assembly delegates, with only a 5% vote against. On the issue of the Black 'homelands', the church further resolved:

Assembly records its concern at the collaboration of some of its ministers with the implementation of Apartheid in accepting public office in government or semi-government structures in the Black homelands and so-called independent states. Assembly, therefore, resolves:

- (I) to dissociate itself from the action of such ministers;
- (ii) to urge such ministers to resign from the ministry of the UCCSA³¹⁹.

The UCCSA ministers who were participating in the Apartheid government structures and were given this ultimatum chose to ignore the church's ruling, thus forfeiting their ministerial accreditation with the UCCSA. The church felt it had no option but to act against those ministers who defied the UCCSA constitution and assembly resolutions on this matter. This action by the UCCSA communicated an unambiguous message, firstly, to its own constituencies, and secondly, to its ecumenical partners, about where the UCCSA officially stood in relation to the New Constitution of South Africa. Thirdly, the church effectively avoided being tagged with the label of being 'the Labour Party at prayer'³²⁰.

Furthermore, in its report to the 1985 Assembly, the UCCSA Church and Society Department declared that the existing crisis which had showed no sign of abating was in

³¹⁸ UCCSA Assembly, Minute 84/A/43, East London, 1984. (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ This tag would have been analogous to the white Dutch Reformed Churches label of being 'the National Party at prayer'.

fact triggered off by the imposition of the New Constitution. The report pointed out that a particularly abhorrent feature of the New Constitution was the introduction of the 'The House of Representatives' (for 'Coloureds') and 'The House of Delegates' (for Indians) in parliament³²¹. According to the UCCSA therefore the growing dilemma was one which was created and perpetuated by the Apartheid state, namely the structure and system of racial discrimination. The following statement, affirmed by the 1985 Assembly, reflects clearly where the UCCSA stood in relation to the New Constitution:

The Church has maintained consistently that any system of Government which is based on race cannot resolve South Africa's dilemma. Consequently the New Constitution, although it appears to have broadened the base of Government by providing representation on the basis of race for Coloureds and Indians, cannot deal with the real dilemma because it perpetuates that which created the dilemma, namely racial discrimination³²².

The UCCSA, therefore, through its Church and Society report called for a complete scrapping of a socio-political dispensation founded along racial lines. Along with other ESC's and ecumenical churches the UCCSA re-iterated that any solution to the socio-political crisis in the country had no chance of success unless the principles and practices of Apartheid were fundamentally abolished. The 1985 Assembly deliberated on and agonised over the many crisis-events that profoundly affected its life and mission as a church during the year in review, and none more directly so than the State of Emergency, proclaimed by the State President in July 1985.

The effects of the Emergency was clearly felt within large sections of the constituencies of the church. The report of the UCCSA Church and Society department identified the following as some of the major areas and events directly related to the State of Emergency:

The areas most affected by the unrest are long-established centres of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa like Uitenhage, Graaff-Reinet, Fort Beaufort, Port Elizabeth and Steytlerville. It is in these areas, where our ministers have shown

³²¹ Report of the Church and Society Department to the UCCSA Assembly, Gaborone, 1985. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

³²² *Ibid.*

great courage and have exercised a healing ministry in broken and torn communities, that the Reverends Fred Hufkie, Martin MacCabe and Cyril Hartland have been taken into detention. It was at Uitenhage that a child was shot in the yard of one of our churches. It was at Steylerville that two young members of our Church died as the result of police violence. Our churches in the Transvaal and the Northern Cape have also been affected. In Pretoria, the son of a minister was charged with public violence and when the police did not find the boy concerned in the manse they took his younger brother as a hostage. The state of emergency has not ended the violence and the counter violence. It cannot because it does not address the issues which are the basic cause of the unrest³²³.

In the wake of the State of the Emergency, the UCCSA called yet again on the government to enter into consultation with the recognised political leaders of the majority of South Africans. The church also again emphasised that the cause of the unrest stemmed from the unwillingness of black people, on the whole, (i) to allow the Apartheid status quo to continue - albeit in new guises, and (ii) to accept an inadequate reform programme, prescribed by the Government within the framework of the Apartheid structure³²⁴. The UCCSA repeated its earlier calls to the State President to meet with the 'recognised representatives of the people, including those in prison and detention, to discuss a form of participatory government for a united South Africa'³²⁵.

The 1985 Assembly also addressed itself, amongst others, to the issues of detention without trial, poverty and hunger, refugees, the South African Defence Force raid into Botswana, conscientious objection and the call for disinvestment in South Africa. On the latter, the UCCSA, in supporting economic sanctions against South Africa, resolved:

1. To remain in dialogue with our sister Churches in the United Kingdom and the United States which have opted for economic pressure to be exerted on South Africa, with a view to using that pressure to achieve justice and peace in South Africa by non-violent means.
2. To urge the church's regional councils and local churches to

³²³ *Ibid.*

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

consider the issue involved in the imposition of economic sanctions and their possible effects on the political, social and economic structures of South Africa.

3. To appoint a task force to examine the whole question of economic justice as well as the issues of disinvestment and economic sanctions and to work in conjunction with similar groups in other Churches and the SACC³²⁶.

To a large extent the UCCSA's swift action of publicly denouncing and disassociating itself, as a church, from the government's New Constitution rescued the denomination from becoming identified as a collaborator with the Nationalist government. As such the potential threat to the ecclesiastical unity and political integrity of the UCCSA had been staved off, for the time being any way, and the church emerged from this particular internal crisis without significant damage. However, the tensions within the UCCSA which were triggered off by such issues as the Tricameral Parliament and homeland governments were symptomatic of serious underlying problems which the challenge of *KD* was to identify and bring to the fore in a manner that the UCCSA, and other churches concerned, could no longer minimise, bypass or ignore. The UCCSA would later come to recognise the *Document* was, amongst others, presenting it with a *Kairos* of its own, an *internal* challenge that it simply had to confront.

At another level, the determination of the Nationalist government to continue along the Apartheid path, as demonstrated by the State of Emergency in particular, presented the UCCSA with an equal, if not greater *external* challenge, in regard to its overall mission in society, and especially in relation to the growing socio-political crisis in the land. It was this socio-political crisis which was brought into bold relief by the message and challenge of the *KD*. The question now emerges as to the nature and extent of the UCCSA's medium and long-term response both the internal and external challenges posed by the *Document* and it is to that question which we now turn our attention.

2. Reception of and long-term responses to the *Kairos Document*

2.1 Reception and resonance

³²⁶ UCCSA Assembly, Minute 85/A/73, Gaborone, 1985. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

The nature of the initial reception of the *Document* by the UCCSA was, to all intentions and purposes, affirming and supportive. This positive reaction by the church was, to a large extent, due to the involvement and commitment of certain prominent UCCSA leaders in the *Kairos* process, from its inception. Bonganjalo Goba, for example, the 1995-1997 chairperson of the denomination, was one of the initiators of the *Document*. Also closely connected to the *KD*, especially during the initial stages, was the James Cochrane, another prominent theologian and minister of the church³²⁷. When the *Document* was made public at the press conference in September 1985, with criticisms and condemnations of the *KD* coming thick and fast from theologians, churchpeople and politicians, a minister and former chairperson of the UCCSA, John de Gruchy, came out in open defence of the *Document* in the face of some severe denunciations both of its method and message³²⁸. The three above-mentioned Congregationalists were also signatories to the *KD*³²⁹.

The unambiguous expressions of support for the *Document* by theological leadership within the UCCSA played a significant role in that it cleared the way for a positive reception of the *KD*. In addition to such guidance, the Revd Joseph Wing, General Secretary of the UCCSA, added his unambiguous support for both the *Document* and the *Kairos* process. It was probably this gesture of patronage and backing from the church's General Secretary which proved decisive in positioning the UCCSA towards a resonance which culminated in the church's initiation of a denominational programme of transformation in response to the challenge of the *KD* to the churches. The Revd Wing, on the strength of his personal commitment to the struggle against Apartheid, firstly, made clear his endorsement of the *Kairos* process itself, and secondly, in an official capacity expressed on behalf of the UCCSA a strong desire to be involved in and to remain in dialogue with the *Kairos* theologians. This proposed dialogue with the *Kairos* theologians by the UCCSA

³²⁷ Both Drs. Goba and Cochrane engaged in debates on the *KD* which ensued in the months and years after its release. (See, for example, B Goba, *The Use of Scripture in the Kairos Document: A Biblical Ethical Perspective*, in JTSA, September 1986, No.56, and J Cochrane & J Draper, *The Parting of Ways*, in JTSA, July 1987, No.59).

³²⁸ Refer to *The Sunday Times*, 29 September 1985.

³²⁹ Other UCCSA signatories to the *KD* were Dr. C Wannamaker, the Revds. S Titus, C Martin, D Loff, R Petersen, and B Theron, Mssrs. H Petersen, S de Gruchy and D Patta, and Mr P Moll.

materialised in various modes of contact and correspondence undertaken by the Revd. Wing, in his capacity as General Secretary of the UCCSA. As a direct consequence of such significant groundwork done by the leadership, therefore, the stage was set for the church as a whole to continue in that vein in response to challenge of the *Document*.

The next major step within the UCCSA was, as such, that of requesting one of its key denominational committees, namely, the UCCSA Theological Commission, to study the *KD* and to make recommendations on the basis of its findings. Due to certain logistical problems³³⁰, however, the Theological Commission was not able to meet within the given time-frame, so the task of examining and considering the implications of the *Document* for the church was passed on to another denominational committee, namely the UCCSA Church and Society General Purposes Committee (GPC). The GPC set about its task by engaging a cross-section of the church's ministerial leadership in critical reflection on the contents of the *KD*. The committee, amongst other things, invited five UCCSA ministers³³¹ to study various chapters of the *Document* in some depth and to submit their comments and criticisms as input for further consideration by the GPC. Simultaneously, another process was set in motion within the church at large by the UCCSA General Secretary, whereby a copy of the *KD* was sent out to all ministers and to every local church within the denomination, requesting 'that it (*KD*) be studied and acted upon, as a challenge to the Church'³³².

It is significant that already at this relatively early stage of the *Kairos* process within the UCCSA a call was made to all local church-leadership (both lay and ordained) to *study and*

³³⁰ The UCCSA Theological Commission had not been able to meet as scheduled, as two of its members, B Goba and J de Gruchy were overseas at the time.

³³¹ The GPC requested the following UCCSA ministers to submit comments and criticisms on the *KD*: The Revd J. Wing (to give comments of the Introduction and Chapter One of the *Document*), the Revd D. Bax (on Chapter two), the Revd S Titus (on Chapters Three & Four), the Revds B.G. Mongwaketse & R Robertson (on Chapter Five). (Refer to Appendix Five for the full texts of 'Comments on the Kairos Document by UCCSA ministers').

³³² Report of the Church and Society Department to the UCCSA Executive Meeting, Johannesburg, March 1986. (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

act upon the challenge of the Document. This meant that local churches could take up the challenge of for themselves, without necessarily having to wait for official responses and directives from the denomination.

The initial reception of and response to the *KD* by the UCCSA was therefore clearly, in essence, a positive and progressive one. Notable, in this regard, is that the *Kairos* process within the church was set in motion almost as an immediate response, whereas the church could have chosen the route of waiting until its Executive Committee³³³ or Assembly convened, before taking any official position and action on the *Document*. In terms of this relatively swift response to the *KD*, the report of the GPC was received and tabled at the March 1986 meeting of the UCCSA Executive Committee. This meeting which, as a rule, is attended by officers³³⁴ of all the church's thirteen regions and synods across southern Africa, received the above report favourably. A resolution was subsequently adopted whereby the comments and criticisms by the five ministers be sent along together with a *UCCSA Study Guide on the Kairos Document*³³⁵ to all local churches, regional councils and synods. The rationale of this decision by the Executive Committee was that the *Kairos*-process 'on the ground' would benefit from some in-depth critical reflections undertaken by one of the church's denominational committees.

In its official response to the *Kairos* theologians the UCCSA, through the office of the General Secretary, submitted the full text of the comments on the *Document*, which had been approved by the March 1986 UCCSA Executive Committee Meeting³³⁶. Again the intention of the church was clear, namely to continue in dialogue with authors of the *KD*

³³³ The church's Executive Committee normally meets twice annually, ie. in March and at the time of the Assembly, ie. September.

³³⁴ Every UCCSA region and synod is represented on the Executive Committee by two officers of the regional and synodical secretariat, ie. the chairperson, secretary and treasurer.

³³⁵ This 13-page booklet, which was produced by the UCCSA Christian Education Department, contains expositions on the content of the *KD* which was aimed at helping study-groups within the UCCSA constituency at large to interpret and act upon the challenge of the *Document*. (D. van der Water Archives, *Kairos Files*, Johannesburg).

³³⁶ Minutes of UCCSA Executive Committee Meeting, March 1986, Johannesburg (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos Files*, Johannesburg).

and with those who initiated the *Kairos* movement.

The above processes within the UCCSA clearly reflected a serious intention, on the part of the church, firstly, to engage itself in an exercise of self-examination, in the light of the criticism levelled by the *KD*, namely that 'Church theology' constituted the basis of theological discourse with the ESC's. Secondly, on the strength of its initial positive response, the UCCSA was in effect saying that, as a church denomination, it had clearly heard the challenge of the *Document*, which was calling the churches to embark on a course of more decisive action in the quest for a just, peaceful and democratic social order³³⁷. The process outlined above reflects the good intentions of the church relative to the challenge of the *KD*, namely to engage all its constituencies as fully as possible in the *Kairos*-process. However, the question needs to be asked about the extent to which the UCCSA took advantage of this kick-start to give momentum and substance to this process of transformation within the church in the medium and long terms.

2.2 Medium and long-term responses by the church

In line with the UCCSA's commitment to remain in dialogue with the *Kairos* theologians the church welcomed the process undertaken by the *Kairos* theologians to revise the text of the 1985 edition of the *KD*, in the light of the many comments and criticisms received. The UCCSA's overall position *vis-à-vis* the draft revised edition of the *Document* (which was published in September 1986) was that the basic format and content of the *Document* should remain the same:

We respectfully submit that the Kairos Document should remain as it is, and that what flows from it should not be incorporated into a revision of the original, but should be published in the form of the consensus reached on key issues arising from the Kairos Document, comments and recommendations requiring action³³⁸.

Although the overall *Kairos* process within the UCCSA had, by September 1986, begun to build up some momentum, the degree of awareness and response to the challenge of the *KD*

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

within the denomination at large was still relatively low. This was evident by the limited number of responses from local churches to the *Kairos* study materials sent out from the office of the UCCSA General Secretary. However, it was at the 20th Assembly of the church that the *Kairos* challenge was projected onto the centre-stage of denominational agenda and concern. At this Assembly, debate and discussion on the *Document* reached a peak within the church's major forum. The Assembly, which met in George from 24 -29 September, 1986, suspended its normal business sessions and devoted an entire block of time to small-group work and subsequent plenary discussions on the *KD*, and the perceived challenges it presented to the UCCSA.

The eventual outcome of the debate and deliberations was that a far-reaching process was set in motion within the church, aimed at transforming 'the structures, ministry and mission of the UCCSA in the light of the *Kairos* challenge'³³⁹. One of the immediate effects of the *Document* on the Assembly debate was a collective acknowledgement by the UCCSA of its own inadequacies in ministry and its structural weaknesses as an institutionalised church. The most obvious of its structural weakness was that the UCCSA, like other institutionalised churches, existed largely to maintain itself as an organisation rather than being driven by a mission orientation.

It had therefore become apparent to the UCCSA that the *KD* had presented the church with the challenge of *its own Kairos*. The following resolution, which was adopted by the Assembly at George, epitomised the spirit of the UCCSA's debate on the *Kairos*:

Recognising that the Church in South Africa, and the UCCSA itself, is still divided; that the interests of the poor, oppressed and exploited masses of South Africans have not adequately been represented in our church forums; that our mission, our resources and our training do not fully address our *kairos* and that a clear and unequivocal word of prophecy needs to be heard at this time, a word that brings hope to the oppressed and judgement on the oppression of the oppressor, we therefore resolve:

(a) that Assembly accepts the challenge and message of the *Kairos Document* believing that it prophetically and preceptively represents the cry of the oppressed of our land to which we need to respond,

³³⁹ UCCSA Assembly, Minute 86/A/67, George, 1986.

and

(b) that Assembly, therefore, responds to the call to action of the Kairos Document by appointing a task force to review the mission, ministry and structures of the UCCSA in the light of the Kairos Document³⁴⁰.

The latter part of the above resolution reflected, certainly in intention, the seriousness with which the UCCSA Assembly viewed the challenge of the *Document*, and the need for the church to respond, in a substantial way, to that perceived challenge. The very composition of the 1986 Assembly-appointed 'UCCSA Kairos Task Force', whose membership included the Chairperson, General Secretary and denominational Convenors of all Departments and Committees³⁴¹, reflected this serious intention by the church to undertake a comprehensive and critical analysis of her life, worship and witness, and to subject itself to a process of far-reaching change.

Following up on the above intention, the Assembly requested the UCCSA's Church and Society Department, as a matter of urgency, to do an in-depth analyses of the church life and ministry, and to present its findings as the major source of initial input to the UCCSA *Kairos* Task Force. The following 7-point statement, formulated by the Church and Society Department under the guidance of the General Secretary, presented a deeply honest analysis of the life and witness of the UCCSA. The statement is cited fully hereunder, as it epitomises the spirit in which the Assembly accepted the challenge of the *Document*:

1. The Challenge to the Church contained in the Kairos Document is reminding the Church of the need to move from statements to meaningful action.
2. The time has come for the Church, and particularly the local church, to become involved in action programmes which impinge directly on economic and social conditions. The Church on the whole has an obsession with itself and its own needs. This means that most of the Church's resources, both in terms of money and personnel, are utilised in promoting its own domestic activities.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ i.e. The UCCSA Christian Education Department, the Mission & Evangelism Department, the Church & Society Department, the Youth Department, the Women's Movement, and the Men's Movement within the church, and other co-opted members.

3. In a denomination like the UCCSA, which stresses the centrality of the local church, there needs to be a deeper concern regarding deprivation, oppression and injustice within the context of the life of the local church and the community in which it is set.

4. The Kairos Document is challenging the UCCSA to revise its priorities.

5. The Kairos Document is challenging the UCCSA to examine the differences in Black-White perceptions within the context of its own life and to avoid covering them up with the veneer of occasional Christian fellowship.

6. The Kairos Document is challenging the UCCSA to face up to and not avoid serious political differences in its own ranks, for fear of destroying the peace and unity of the Church.

7. In considering the Kairos Document the following areas have been identified as requiring attention within the context of the Church's life and work:

[a] Ignorance: Nothing undermines legitimate pressure for change more than the half-truths, the innuendos and the smearing which are used by those in power to cover up the real facts, not infrequently through the opinion-forming public media of SABC radio and television.

[b] Sin: The reality of sin in the Southern African situation cannot be minimised and our confession of sin needs to be more specific, and less general.

[c] Prayer. The power of prayer in the South African situation cannot be under-estimated. Prayer is concerned with social realities as well as personal needs and requires a right relationship with other people (Matt.6:12), as well as with God. But prayer for meaningful change in Southern Africa carries with it the obligation to live as we pray.

[d] The Church as model: The Church in Southern Africa does not offer, in its own life at denominational and ecumenical levels, a model based on the standards of the Kingdom of God and his justice. The Church itself is divided at the level of culture, at the level of race, at the level of denominationalism.

[e] Relevance: The grassroots base of the Kairos Document coming as it does out of the conflict of Soweto, provides the key to its widespread appeal and relevance. If the message of the Church, like that of the Church's Lord, is to be INCARNATIONAL then it must relate to the real life, the actual needs, the frustrations and fears, the aspirations and hopes of the people³⁴².

None of the UCCSA's constituencies could challenge or contradict the above outline of

³⁴² Report of UCCSA Church and Society Department to the UCCSA Executive Meeting, March 1987. (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

major issues and problems that faced the church. The only question was about how to address these problems in an effective way. At the subsequent UCCSA General Assembly in 1987, the UCCSA *Kairos* Task Force³⁴³, having engaged in the first year of its commissioning, presented its report which identified *local church-leadership* as the main catalyst for transformation within the church itself and in society at large. Therefore, in pursuance of the development of such leadership, the 1987 Assembly adopted a number of resolutions aimed at facilitating this process. The adopted resolutions included, amongst others, an initiative to train a core-group of lay leaders for ministry and mission within the local church. The focus of such ministry and mission was to be the transformation of the local church in the light of the *Kairos* challenge. Another related resolution, adopted by the Assembly, which called for the UCCSA to organise a denominational Convention for ministers and ministerial students, was to prove far-reaching in terms of the *Kairos* process within the church as a whole³⁴⁴. It is upon this specific development that we now focus.

2.2.1 The UCCSA Pastoral Plan for Transformation in church and society

The UCCSA *Kairos* Task Force was, amongst others, duly commissioned to organise and facilitate the proposed UCCSA ministers Convention. The theme of the Convention, which was subsequently held in Grahamstown from January 20 - 27, 1989, and attended by some 200 UCCSA ministers, probationer-ministers³⁴⁵ and theological students was; 'Called to be Prophets and Pastors Today'³⁴⁶. The selection of this theme pointed to the following threefold emphasis:

1. The prophetic role of UCCSA ministers needed to come to the fore more fully and forcefully;
2. The need for a greater pastoral presence of ministers during this

³⁴³ Refer to Appendix Six for the brief or 'job-description' of the UCCSA *Kairos* Task Force as mandated by the 1987 UCCSA Assembly.

³⁴⁴ 'Some Implications of the *Kairos* Document for the Church', *Op cit.*

³⁴⁵ 'Probationer Ministers' within the UCCSA are those candidates who have completed their theological training but who are required to do a period of two years in-service training (i.e. internship) within a local church before proceeding to ordination.

³⁴⁶ Proceedings of the UCCSA Ministers Convention, January 20-27, 1989, Grahamstown. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

time of crisis was more urgent than ever before;

3. The exercise of the above dimensions of ministers was to be undertaken on the basis of full cognisance of the prevailing socio-political and economic contexts³⁴⁷.

The Convention, which was by and large structured along the lines of small-group work, devoted much time to Bible Studies on the book of Acts. The daily Bible Study sessions at the Convention featured certain sub-themes, chosen also to set the tone for the day's discussions and reflections. These sub-themes were: Kingdom and Power (Acts 1:1-8,28,30-31), Community and Justice (Acts 2:42-47), Healing and Obedience (Acts 4:1-21,5:21-33), Repentance and Transformation (Acts 10 & 11), and Conflict and Suffering (Acts 12:1-25)³⁴⁸.

The highlight of the Convention was an address given by the Revd Joseph Wing, as retiring General Secretary of the church. The Revd Wing's address represented his reflections on the church, based on some 20 years of service as the General Secretary. The two-hour address, mapping out the past faith-journey of the church during the years 1967-1987, concluded with a chapter entitled, 'Kairos for the UCCSA'. In this final part of his address, the Revd Wing challenged the church to 'get on with the job', for the 'KAIROS IS NOW!':

That is why the Kairos is here in Southern Africa. Things are happening, not in the House of Assembly, the Tricameral Parliament and the puppet parliaments of the homelands, but in ordinary people like the Black people of Boksburg. They are not pronouncing doom on the Conservative Party, because their actions speak louder than words. A resolution of the UCCSA condemning petty Apartheid in Boksburg would have no impact on the Town Council at all. But the members of the Reiger Park and Vosloorus Churches not buying in their shops represents a groundswell of the hope and confidence in the victims of Apartheid. They know they're on the winning side! You don't have to be a powerful pressure group to bring about change, you've simply got to believe in the right things and act as if you believe in them. As Congregationalists we have always affirmed that Jesus is Lord in Church and World. If that doesn't give us something to hope for and something to believe in, nothing will. Jesus lived in a time of considerable unrest, but he

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

did not wait until it was over. Instead he announced that the Kingdom of God is here! The UCCSA is in the same liberating business. Let's get on with the job. KAIROS IS NOW!³⁴⁹.

In response to the above and other challenges that emerged from the Convention, the idea of a *Pastoral Plan for Transformation in Church and Society* (*Pastoral Plan*) was born³⁵⁰. This development represented a genuine 'first fruits' of the church's response to the challenge of the *Kairos*. The *Pastoral Plan* was duly launched in May 1990 when some 80 leaders of the UCCSA, both lay and ordained, gathered in Pietermaritzburg to participate in a five-day workshop. All of the 13 regions and synods of the UCCSA were represented at the launch, which focussed on equipping and inspiring participants to take up the challenge of the *Pastoral Plan* within their own regional, synodical and local church contexts.

2.2.2 The objectives of the *Pastoral Plan*

Apart from the UCCSA leaders who had attended the launch of the *Pastoral Plan*, the church's constituencies at large had little or no knowledge and understanding of this major programme within the denomination. The first task was therefore to disseminate information about the programme with the view to bringing all the UCCSA constituencies on board. One of the more successful ways in which the *Pastoral Plan* was popularised within the denomination at large, was by way of an A-4 size pamphlet, printed in the four major languages spoken within UCCSA churches³⁵¹, in which the origin, nature and objectives of this programme were briefly outlined. The illustrated pamphlet, which was initially disseminated throughout the entire UCCSA church constituencies, ie. every region, synod and local church, outlined the intention of the *Pastoral Plan* in theological language and concepts that were easy enough for laypeople to read and understand.

³⁴⁹ Wing, 'An Overview of the First Two Decades of the United Congregational Church', *Op cit*.

³⁵⁰ The concept of a Pastoral Plan was one the UCCSA borrowed from the Roman Catholic Church, who launched its own Pastoral Plan in the early 1980's, with the theme, 'Community Serving Humanity'. (For further information on the Catholic Church's Pastoral Plan programmes refer to *Serving Humanity - A Sabbath Reflection: The Pastoral Plan of the Catholic Church in Southern Africa after Seven Years*, S. C. Bate OMI, Cluster: Pietermaritzburg, 1996.

³⁵¹ English, Afrikaans, Setswana & isiZulu.

In terms of its overall purpose, the pamphlet stated that the *Pastoral Plan* was 'about the mission of the church...to transform our church and society in response to...the challenge of the values of the Kingdom of God: justice, love, equality, freedom and peace.'³⁵² The pamphlet outlined what it is called a 'key strategy' in the implementation of the *Pastoral Plan*, namely the adoption a method known as 'SEE-JUDGE-ACT method', which outlines the following strategy for action and reflection within the UCCSA:

We need to *SEE* the world around us through social analysis and then we need to *JUDGE* it in the light of Scripture. And then we need to *ACT* - because the *Pastoral Plan for Transformation* is all about the mission of the Church³⁵³.

With regard to the origin of this programme the pamphlet clearly identified the *Pastoral Plan* as a significant development within the UCCSA's response to the challenge of the *KD* in 1985. One of the objectives set by the *Pastoral Plan* process, was, according to the pamphlet, to 'train about 5000 people within the UCCSA in the SEE-JUDGE-ACT method, so that they may be agents of transformation'³⁵⁴. These aims and objectives of the *Pastoral Plan* again reflected a serious intention, on the part of the leadership of the church, to engage itself meaningfully in the process of transformation. The theme, adopted for the *Pastoral Plan*, namely, 'Hearing the Bible Today'³⁵⁵ emphasised firstly, the UCCSA's commitment to the hearing and obeying of God's Word, which is heard through study and reflection upon the Bible. Secondly, the word 'today', in the theme, indicates that the church was serious about searching for a contemporary and contextual Word from God, as opposed to merely re-gurgitating outworn and outdated theological formulations of the past.

To further promote and popularise the programme within the church, a poster was also designed to illustrate the *Pastoral Plan* theme. The poster features various clippings from

³⁵² UCCSA *Pastoral Plan for Transformation in Church and Society* pamphlet (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

newspaper reports, as a background, and in the centre of the clippings is found an open page of the Bible. The symbolism of this design attempts to show that the *text of God* (ie. the Holy Scriptures) should always to be read and understood alongside the *texts of life*, (ie. the realities of people's daily existential experiences). Every local church in the UCCSA was provided with its own copy of the colour poster. The *Pastoral Plan* theme also therefore signalled that the UCCSA was serious about a central issue emerging from the challenge of the *KD*, namely the experiences of suffering and struggle of oppressed people trying to hear what God is saying to them in the midst of their plight.

In order to facilitate the process of reading and understanding the *text of God within the texts of life*, the *Pastoral Plan* promoted the *SEE-JUDGE-ACT* method of *social analyses*. This methodology of action and reflection, which was popularised in South Africa through small-group work within the Roman Catholic Church, commended itself greatly to the UCCSA by virtue of its simplicity and its easy application. More importantly, the use of this method signalled the UCCSA's intention to respond to the *Document's* challenge to the churches to engage in meaningful social analysis. In the final analysis, the entire programme as outlined in the *Pastoral Plan*, was about focussing on the *mission* of the UCCSA as a church in the present milieu and within the prevailing social contexts. The *Pastoral Plan* was therefore, from the perspective of the church, a programme of and for transformation both within church and society, a mission to itself as the UCCSA and the church's mission to the world. Insofar as the church itself was to be transformed, the purpose of such transformation was precisely that of being an agent of transformation in society. The question emerges, however, as to what extent this well-intentioned programme touched base and achieved the desired effect within the wide-spread and far-flung UCCSA constituencies across southern Africa. In other words, did the *Pastoral Plan* programmes find acceptance and application within the church at large? We shall now consider these questions by examining the further processes of implementation of this programme within the UCCSA.

2.2.3 The implementation of the *Pastoral Plan*

2.2.3.1 Launching of the *Pastoral Plan*

After the *Pastoral Plan* had been launched at denominational level in May 1990, the next phase of implementation was that of organising similar launches within all the UCCSA synods and regions, in order to get the programme off the ground within all the constituencies of the church. These regional and synodical launching events were structured in the form of three to four-day workshops, which were held mostly over week-ends, and attended by lay and ordained leaders drawn from the local churches and congregations.

This first round of workshops concentrated on introducing the *Pastoral Plan* within the region or synod, as well as setting in place processes aimed at popularising the programme amongst as many local churches and UCCSA members within the bounds of the region or synod. The format and methodology of such workshops allowed for maximum engagement of the participants with the view to in depth reflection on the life and witness of their churches and on the challenges presented by their respective communities. Small-group work characterised most of the training sessions, using the method of SEE-JUDGE-ACT to do social analyses, and to identify their own regional, synodical and local concerns, in the light of the *Kairos* challenge.

This second phase of implementation of the *Pastoral Plan*, namely the launching within UCCSA regions and synods, went off as planned and were generally well supported by the church's constituencies in all of its thirteen regions and synods. Subsequent to these launching events follow-up workshops also took place been in all but one of the UCCSA's regions and synods³⁵⁶. The follow-up events were aimed at consolidating the *Pastoral Plan* process within a region or synod with a particular focus on the development of local church-leadership. Within a small number of local churches *Pastoral Plan* workshops were also held. However, in view of the vast number of local churches in the UCCSA any

³⁵⁶ The *Pastoral Plan* workshops were facilitated by the UCCSA Mission Enabler and by other resource persons within the regions and synods. The following series of workshops took place in the different regions and synods of the church: Botswana Synod - November 1992 & February 1994; Karoo Region - June 1993, Kei Region - May 1993; Mozambique Synod - January 1993, June 1994 & February 1996; Natal Region - September 1991, May 1992 & February 1994; North West Cape Region - August 1992, November 1992, February 1994 & April 1995; Namibia Region - April 1992, August 1994; Outeniqua Region - September 1992, April 1993, October 1993, April 1994 & July 1995; Peninsula Region - October 1992 & March 1994; Transvaal Region - July 1991, February 1993, April 1993, May 1993, June 1993, August 1993, November 1993, May 1994, February 1995, April 1995 & May 1995; Zimbabwe Synod - May 1993 & May 1995.

attempt to reach a cross section would have been a futile exercise, given the limited human and financial resources at the disposal of the church. All considered, it would be fair to say that the launching of the *Pastoral Plan* within the UCCSA at large proceeded according to plan and its reception within the regions and synods held much promise for the further processes of implementation. However, whether the necessary follow-up work was done to ensure that the overall aims and objectives of the *Pastoral Plan* were achieved is a question which must be considered and one to which we shall return in our final assessment of the programme within the UCCSA.

2.2.3.2 Appointment of the UCCSA Mission Enabler

As the *Pastoral Plan* began to feature on the agendas and forums of the UCCSA, the church soon realised that increased human and material resources were needed for effective implementation of its programmes. To this end, the UCCSA found it necessary to appoint at least one person on a full-time basis to spearhead the project and subsequently appointed one of the long-standing members of the Task Force, the Revd Desmond van der Water as UCCSA Mission Enabler, as from July 1, 1992, to co-ordinate and direct the work of the *Pastoral Plan*. The 1991 UCCSA Assembly outlined the Mission Enabler's brief, or job description, as follows:

1. To undertake a comprehensive investigation into the nature and extent of *Pastoral Plan* activities within the UCCSA thus far;
2. To assess the overall progress of the implementation of the *Pastoral Plan*, and to determine priorities both on the basis of our collective denominational vision as well as the differing contextual situations/needs in the regions/synods;
3. To avail himself to enable, assist in, or give momentum to *Pastoral Plan* activities at every level of our Church's life and witness;
4. To meet with all the UCCSA convenors of Departments and set up a 'UCCSA *Pastoral Plan* Implementation Committee';
5. To set up, in consultation with Regional/Synod department convenors the above equivalent within the Regions/Synods;
6. To be given authority to function as a UCCSA Department's Convenor³⁵⁷.

³⁵⁷ UCCSA Assembly, Minute 91/A/67, Keimoes, 1991. (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

The appointment of such a Mission Enabler represented a bold new venture in the life of the UCCSA, a signal by the Assembly to its constituencies that church was intentional in wanting to follow through on the initiatives of the *Pastoral Plan*, by channelling a small but significant measure of its human and material resources into this project. Again the question has to be raised as to whether this move by the UCCSA significantly enhanced the implementation of the *Pastoral Plan* - a question to which I shall return.

2.2.3.3 Re-structuring the UCCSA Assembly and Executive Committee

A third phase of the implementation of the *Pastoral Plan* was that of re-structuring the church's constitutional and administrative bodies in order to further facilitate the processes of transformation. This phase ran concurrently with phase two, namely the implementing of the *Pastoral Plan* in the regions, synods and local churches.

The Assembly, being the UCCSA's most representative and authoritative court, was the obvious place to begin with re-structuring. This process was informed and guided, firstly, on the basis of the overarching vision of the *Pastoral Plan*, namely that of the transformation of church and society. Secondly, such re-structuring was aimed at addressing the major weaknesses in the functioning of the Assembly meetings. Such weaknesses, which were identified by the *Kairos* Task Force as part of its overall analyses on the church, were related to the Assembly business sessions, procedures, and overall lines of communication. These weaknesses were described as follows:

1. Low level of participation by most of the Assembly delegates.
2. Lack of serious Biblical reflection on the major ministry and mission issues.
3. Fundamental misunderstandings amongst delegates of the nature and function of Assembly in the life of the denomination.
4. Confusion of the roles of UCCSA denominational departments within the work and witness of the church³⁵⁸.

The *Kairos* Task Force, subsequently renamed as 'The Task Force on the Challenge to the

³⁵⁸ Supplementary Report of the UCCSA Kairos Task Force to the UCCSA Executive Meeting, March 1988, Johannesburg. (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

Church'³⁵⁹ (TFCC), proposed that as a basis for the re-structuring and re-orientating of Assembly, the church should adopt the method of SEE-JUDGE-ACT as structural framework for the entire Assembly proceedings. The way that this methodology was to be applied to the processes within Assembly was, firstly, that the initial three days of Assembly would focus its discussions sessions on social analysis, using the SEE step of the SEE-JUDGE-ACT method. Through a combination of input at plenary sessions, small-group workshops on various issues, and plenary discussions on the report back from the small group work, the Assembly would then attempt to reach an understanding of the situations and differing contexts in which the church's witness had to take shape. Secondly, under the process of JUDGE, or that of seeking God's will, Assembly delegates are assigned to small groups for bible study, faith reflection and prayer. These groups would meet at least once every day of Assembly. Their reflections were then to be fed into plenary discussions at which all delegates were present. The purpose here was that of the collective discerning of the mind of Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, relative to the major issues addressed. Thirdly, the Assembly would move gradually into the final and perhaps most important stage of devising a plan of action for the church. This represents the ACT part of the SEE-JUDGE-ACT trilogy. The ACT process would culminate in the formulation of a denominational Mission Statement which outlined the priorities and tasks of the denomination for the ensuing two years of denominational life³⁶⁰.

The responsibility of arranging the SEE sessions of the Assembly was that of the UCCSA Church and Society department working in conjunction with the Christian Education department. Their role was to take the Assembly through a process of social analysis in the context of plenary workshops and group discussions. The facilitation of the entire re-orientation and re-structuring was undertaken by the TFCC in conjunction with convenors of all the denominational departments, such as Christian Education, Youth, Church and

³⁵⁹ This change of name was brought in after it had become apparent to members of the Task Force that the political connotation of the existing name, ie. its direct association with the KD resulted in a measure of non-acceptance of the work of the Task Force, especially in mainly White congregations. However, the change of name was merely a tactical move to enable the Task Force to achieve maximum co-operation from the UCCSA constituencies, and is not to be interpreted as a reneging on the vision of the *Document*.

³⁶⁰ Supplementary Report of the UCCSA Kairos Task Force.

Society, and Mission and Evangelism Departments.

The implementation of the above-outlined scheme for re-structuring at the 1990 UCCSA Assembly in Durban proved to be a resounding success. An evaluation done towards the end of Assembly yielded the following results from 148 respondents, which represented 75% of Assembly delegates present: In regard to the new style and structure of *Morning Worship* during Assembly 55% of respondents said it was 'excellent', 44% said it was 'good' and 1% said it was 'poor'. As far as the Assembly *Business Sessions* were concerned, 25% said it was 'excellent', 75% said it was good, and no-one indicated that it was 'poor'. The *Bible Studies* received a 53% 'excellent', a 47% 'good', and a 0% 'poor' return. The new style of *Panel Presentation* of Assembly Reports also went down exceptionally well with most delegates. 22% said it was 'excellent', 73% felt it was 'good', and 5% indicated that it was 'poor'. On a question of how delegates felt about the new *style and structure of Assembly as a whole*, 57% of the delegates said that it was 'excellent', 43% said it was 'good' and no-one indicated that it was 'poor'³⁶¹.

On the evidence of the above evaluation it was therefore abundantly clear to the TFCC that the new structure and orientation of Assembly had struck a responsive chord with the UCCSA membership at large, as they were represented at the Assembly gathering in 1990. It was no surprise therefore that the subsequent March 1991 UCCSA Executive Meeting resolved unanimously that the new structure of Assembly be maintained³⁶².

The second level of re-structuring proposals by the TFCC applied to the UCCSA Executive Committee. Next in line to the General Assembly the Executive Committee meeting is second most authoritative body and representative court of the UCCSA. In effect, the Executive Committee functions, in terms of the UCCSA Constitutions, as 'the Assembly out of Session'³⁶³. Therefore the next step and logical consequence of the re-structuring of

³⁶¹ Evaluation Results of UCCSA Re-structured Assembly, Durban, 1990. (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

³⁶² Minutes of UCCSA Executive Meeting, March 1991, Johannesburg. (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

³⁶³ UCCSA Manual of Constitutions and Procedures, UCCSA: Braamfontein, 1986, Clause 5(1) p.53.

the Assembly was that of re-structuring the meeting format and composition of the UCCSA Executive Committee. In this regard the TFCC made the following recommendations:

1. That an overall evaluation of the Executive be done both in terms of its structure and functions, and that the guiding principle here should be the Executive viewing itself as that group or committee entrusted with overseeing and directing the UCCSA in its entire life and mission.
2. That the format of Executive meetings and business sessions be re-orientated and re-structured along the lines of the new UCCSA Assembly format.
3. That Committee Executive meetings be held in those regions and synods where it is difficult to host UCCSA Assemblies.
4. That the appointment of representatives to the Executive by regions and synods should apply the following criteria and regulations; (i) that such representatives be appointed for at least a period of TWO years, for the sake of continuity, (ii) that only ONE regional and synodical representative be replaced with a new person at a time, (iii) that regions and synods appoint representatives who are able to give the necessary input at Executive meetings, (iv) where necessary the UCCSA Executive co-opts people with certain skills to serve on Executive for specific purposes, and (v) that regional councils and synods be made more accountable to the UCCSA Executive in terms of constitutional and other recommendations which must receive due consideration within the regions and synods³⁶⁴.

The above TFCC proposals for the re-structuring of the Executive Committee were duly adopted by a meeting of the said committee. While the implementation of these proposals proved to be more difficult than anticipated, the enthusiasm generated by the success of the 1990 Assembly kept the momentum going and efforts to follow through on the re-structuring of the Executive were maintained for some time. Since the adoption of the principle of re-structuring within the UCCSA, regions and synods also embarked on their own initiatives for re-structuring the way meetings were conducted, committees were constituted and the manner in which commissions functioned.

The processes of re-structuring within the UCCSA invariably set a positive and tone and a

³⁶⁴ Report of the UCCSA Task Force to the UCCSA Executive Committee Meeting, March 1992, Johannesburg. (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

challenging pattern for the denomination at large. Whether all efforts at re-structuring were effective, in the sense that such initiatives facilitated the vision of the *Pastoral Plan* is, however, a question that will be addressed when the programme as a whole is appraised in the conclusion of this chapter.

2.2.3.4 The adoption of a UCCSA Mission Statement

Pastoral Plan activity and awareness in the church reached a peak during the years 1993 and 1994. This factor emerged clearly at the 1993 UCCSA Assembly, meeting in Graaff-Reinett during the month of September. Annual reports by most of the UCCSA departments, committees, regions and synods, demonstrated that concerted attempts were being made by the church's constituencies to integrate the methods, aims and objectives of the *Pastoral Plan* into their work and concerns. A musical show, performed by a local church Youth group at the Assembly, for example, dramatised the message and challenge of the *Pastoral Plan* in an entertaining and creative way. While on the one hand the musical had the effect of further popularising the message of the *Pastoral Plan* amongst Assembly delegates, the play, entitled *What Would Jesus do?*, signified a growing awareness and acceptance of this UCCSA project amongst the Youth of the UCCSA.

The highlight of 1993 Assembly was the adoption of a Mission Statement by the church, a development which had never occurred before. This feature was directly related to the various initiatives of the *Pastoral Plan* which focussed on leadership development for mission within the work, worship and witness of the UCCSA. Accordingly, the Assembly adopted the following Mission Statement:

We, the UCCSA, commit ourselves in the years 1993 - 1995 to the development, transformation and empowerment of our leadership at all levels of the Church;
to the development of leadership amongst all sectors of the Church, but especially amongst the youth, women and in rural areas,
to the transformation of leadership where existing patterns inhibit our participation in God's mission,
to the empowerment of leadership where burdens of the past have

left us despondent and without vision³⁶⁵.

The overall theme of the above Mission Statement, which was stated as 'Mobilising Leadership for Mission', clearly reflected the church's intention to focus on the areas of leadership development and the objectives of mission by the UCCSA.

2.2.3.5 Leadership Development

Arising out of the UCCSA's Mission Statement a subsequent Leadership Development workshop was held in October 1994, whereby 150 lay and ordained leaders within the church came together for six-days of biblical reflection, prayer and planning and celebration. The theme of the workshop, namely *Training for Transformation*, concentrated on the principles and techniques of empowering local and regional UCCSA leaders for mission. The event, which took place at the Stoney Ridge Conference Centre near Johannesburg from October 2 - 7, 1994, was organised and co-ordinated by the TFCC, and attended by participants from all UCCSA regional, synodical and local churches, with the only exception being that of the UCCSA's Kei region. Resource persons invited to attend and provide input at the workshop included Fr. A. Nolan (from The Institute of Contextual Theology), Mr P. Sadie (from The Roman Catholic Church's Pastoral Plan Co-ordinating Team), the Revd R. Hewitt (the Council for World Mission's Secretary for Education-in-Mission), the Revd R.D. Rakatobe (from The Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar), and the Revd A Bowa (from The United Church of Zambia).

At the workshop, various forums of small-group and plenary sessions applied their minds to charting out the most effective way for the UCCSA as a whole to strengthen and give impetus to the objectives of the UCCSA Mission Statement, namely to *Mobilise Leadership for Mission*. As the workshop progressed from session to session, and from day to day, it became evident that participants saw the need for setting certain mechanisms in place within their local churches, synods and regions, without which effective transformation for mission would not be accomplished. During the closing service participants committed

³⁶⁵ UCCSA Assembly, Minute 93/A/72, Graaff-Reinett, 1993 (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

themselves individually and collectively to acting as 'Mission Enablers'³⁶⁶ within their respective regions, synods and local churches. Such a stated commitment from participants at the workshop underscored an increasing awareness of and concern that the UCCSA should become a church which was mission-driven rather maintenance-oriented. This fundamental rallying call, namely moving from maintenance to mission, reflected a growing consciousness amongst leadership within the church that the UCCSA was entering a new phase of its life, work and witness.

The TFCC therefore continued with its mandate to facilitate leadership development by organising workshops and initiating projects to bring about transformation at regional and local church levels. For example, the TFCC designed, amongst others, a programme aimed specifically for *local churches*, entitled *Hamba! Tsamaya! Beweeg!* This programme, which was launched within local churches during February 1996, consisted of 12 biblically-based modules, which dealt with the following four themes; i.e. (i) Mobilising local church-leadership; (ii) Building a mission consciousness; (iii) Reshaping our local church for Mission; and (iv) Deepening our faith and commitment to the church³⁶⁷. Each module was designed as to facilitate small-group discussion and critical reflection on the theme of leadership for mission.

In addition to the above programme, the TFCC also put forward a proposal to the 1995 Assembly for the appointment of a full-time UCCSA Mission Secretary. The objective of this proposal was that of ensuring that a *mission agenda* would in future be located at the centre of the church's denominational life and work. The implication of this proposal was, amongst others, that the UCCSA would have to make a major financial commitment to supporting such an denominational secretariat. However, when the proposal was debated by delegates at the Assembly, it became evident that the church as a whole was, despite ten years of positive responses to the challenge of the *Kairos*, not as yet ready and willing to

³⁶⁶ *Training for Transformation - Report of the UCCSA Leadership Development Workshop, Stoney Ridge, October 2-7, 1994.* (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

³⁶⁷ *Hamba! Tsamaya! Beweeg! - A 12 Part Programme for 'Reshaping our Local Church for Mission'.* Booklet published by UCCSA, Johannesburg, 1996. (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

embark on a venture which required the UCCSA to 'put its money where its mouth was'.

The debate at the 1995 Assembly on the TFCC proposal for the appointment of a Mission Secretary ended with a resolution to refer the substance of the proposal to UCCSA regions and synods for further discussion³⁶⁸. In the final analysis, this decision at Assembly represented a major setback for the objectives of the *Pastoral Plan*. Reflecting on the 1995 Assembly as a whole, the Revd Dr. S de Gruchy, editor of the UCCSA's quarterly newsletter, *The Chronicle*, observed that the UCCSA seemed to be shifting towards 'a more conservative institutional position':

The Bisho Assembly revealed just how difficult it can be for such an institution (ie. the UCCSA) to change and be transformed. In what was expected to be a great celebration of a new church in a new subcontinent, there was a discernable shift towards a more conservative institutional position...There were those who demanded, in the name of democracy and accountability, that the church's 'grassroots' should lead the way. And there were others who argued that the 'grassroots' in the church were basically nervous and conservative, and that if the church were driven by a sense of mission to the world, it would also have to be accountable to voices outside its walls...The church was having difficulty finding its way in the new political situation in Southern Africa³⁶⁹.

De Gruchy's comment, about 'how difficult it can be for such an institution (ie. the UCCSA) to change and be transformed' points to the crux of the question that I have raised earlier also in relation to the responses of other ESC's to the *Kairos* challenge. This question, i.e. about the capacity and disposition of institutionalised churches to be transformed themselves, and to act as agents of transformation in society, will therefore inform the foregoing appraisal of the UCCSA's overall response to the challenge of the *KD*.

3. Critical appraisal of the UCCSA's response to the *Kairos Document*

3.1 The church's acceptance of the challenge of the *Kairos Document*

³⁶⁸ UCCSA Assembly, Minute 95/A/46, Bisho, 1995 (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

³⁶⁹ *Challenge*, No 35, April/May 1996, p.14.

The UCCSA's positive response to the *KD* was, at one level, a logical consequence of its own historical track record in its opposition to Apartheid. In 1976, for example, at the church's Assembly, certain statements by the UCCSA reflected a sharp awareness of the central issues which, some ten years later, the *Document* was to propel onto the centre stage of ecclesiastical and political concern in southern Africa. One such issue was the nature and extent of the church's involvement in socio-political transformation in the country. The UCCSA had declared unequivocally at the 1976 Assembly, that it had no option but to fulfil its prophetic function 'wherever the Word of God should demand it'³⁷⁰. This awareness of the church's inherent prophetic role, even though not all Congregationalists were comfortable with it or shared the same interpretation of what it implied, was nevertheless etched deeply within the UCCSA's collective consciousness. By facing up to the challenge of the *KD* the church was, in reality, therefore responding both to an 'outside' challenge and to the 'inner' voice of its own conscience.

It is worth noting, however, that the UCCSA's voice of opposition to Apartheid was, in large measure, due to the direction given by the denomination's ecclesiastical, political and theological leadership, especially since 1967 when the different strands of Congregationalism in South Africa became united under the leadership of the Revd Joseph Wing³⁷¹. It was in no small measure due to the Revd Wing's decisive leadership, both in the initial and subsequent stages of the *Kairos* process, that the UCCSA responded in such a positive way to the challenge of the *Document*.

It is to the UCCSA's credit that it sought to pursue its ecclesiastical tradition of socio-political involvement, and in relation to the *KD*, the church had the benefit of receiving an unambiguous signal from its secretarial leadership³⁷². By virtue of the UCCSA's decisive

³⁷⁰ UCCSA Assembly, Minute 76/A/57, Paarl, 1976 (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

³⁷¹ The Revd J Wing had served as the first General Secretary of the newly united Congregational Church since 1967 to 1987. His leadership influence both within the UCCSA and the ecumenical world received wide acclaim upon his death on 28 July 1992. See, for example, 'Joseph Wing: The Passing of a Great Church Leader', *Challenge*, No.9, September 1992, pp 6-7.

³⁷² Without attempting to cast negative aspersions on the leadership of the other ESC's, the survey in *Part Two* of this dissertation nevertheless shows that other church-leaders were ambivalent in their response to the *KD*,

leadership in this regard this church was therefore relatively well positioned towards, firstly, recognising that the urgency and the authenticity of the *KD* challenge to the churches in southern Africa. The UCCSA's motivation for its initial positive reception, and its justification for embarking on a further response arose therefore out of the church's conviction that the *Document* 'prophetically and perceptively represents the cry of the oppressed of our land to which we need to respond'³⁷³. Secondly, the UCCSA also perceived that the *KD*, by declaring that 'it is the *kairos* or moment of truth not only for Apartheid but also for the Church'³⁷⁴, confronted the UCCSA *qua* church with its *very own Kairos*. This church's reception of the *Kairos* challenge was therefore predicated on the clear recognition that, (i) in its 'external' mission the church had to respond more effectively to the 'cry of the oppressed', and (ii) the UCCSA's 'internal' mission was to transform itself in order to be a more effective agent of transformation in society.

A third cluster of reasons why the UCCSA was predisposed towards going further than the other ESC's in its response to the challenge of the *Document* are the following: (i) Of the ESC's, the UCCSA is probably the poorest in terms of human, financial and material resources and, (ii) the degree of resonance within the UCCSA with past challenges such as 'The Message to the Peoples of South Africa', the WCC Programme to Combat Racism, Conscientious Objection, the Declaration of Apartheid as Heresy, and the Call for Economic Sanctions against South Africa. A further noteworthy feature is that the UCCSA recognised that the *KD* challenge, though emerging from the South African socio-political context, was relevant also to all the other countries in which the church was located³⁷⁵. This transnational dimension of the UCCSA's stance in relation to the *Document* added strength and depth to the initiatives of the church in responding to the challenge.

Although the UCCSA's ready acceptance of the challenge of the *KD* was only the first step it was nevertheless a crucial step, in that it set the tone for the subsequent *Kairos*-process

especially in the initial stages.

³⁷³ UCCSA Assembly, Minute 88/A/67, George, 1986.

³⁷⁴ *KD*, p.1.

³⁷⁵ i.e. Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

within the church. The UCCSA therefore distinguished itself amongst ESC's in the nature of its response to the *Document*, a factor clearly recognised by others outside of the UCCSA. Charles Villa-Vicencio, for example, had observed that the official responses of the English-speaking churches to the *Kairos* document, with the exception of the United Congregational Church, have been either restrained or critical³⁷⁶.

The clear signal of the UCCSA's intention to follow up on its initial acceptance of the *KD* challenge was the church's prompt action of setting in motion a *Kairos*-process which culminated in the adoption of the UCCSA *Pastoral Plan*. However, to the extent to which the church was aware at the time of the implications of this acceptance on its structures, ministry and mission, and as such on its theology and praxis, is a question which brings the main thrust of this research into sharper focus. However, before we begin pointing to possible answers to this question it is necessary to briefly reflect upon the impact of two further related steps within the UCCSA *Kairos* process. These are: (i) the establishing of a UCCSA *Kairos* Task Force and, (ii) the full-time appointment of a UCCSA Mission Enabler.

3.2 Appointment of the UCCSA Kairos Task Force and the Mission Enabler

The appointment, by the 1986 Assembly, of the UCCSA *Kairos* Task Force (which was subsequently renamed the Task Force on the Challenge to the Church [TFCC]) was a significant development in the process of the church's overall response to the *KD*. It signified, firstly, that the UCCSA recognised that in terms of its prevailing denominational structures, it was unable to give due attention to a matter of urgency and importance within its life and witness. The very fact of the appointment of the TFCC and the all-embracing nature of its commission lent substance to the church's intention to subject itself to serious ecclesiastical and theological critique.

Secondly, the strategic composition of the members of the TFCC and the authority with which it was vested by the church signified that the UCCSA was prepared to undergo fundamental change in its nature and function, namely in its structure, ministry and

³⁷⁶ Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid*, p.159.

mission. In effect, the mandate given to the TFCC presented the UCCSA with a unique opportunity to be subjected to a process of transformation which was congruent with the prophetic vision of the *KD*. To its credit, the UCCSA went along with the initial changes facilitated by the TFCC. However, when the definitive move was required, ie. the structural re-orientation put the mission agenda at the centre of denominational life, the UCCSA stalled and in effect neutralised much of its earlier gains brought about by the *Kairos*-processes.

The appointment of a UCCSA Mission Enabler was, on the face of it, a bold and progressive move within the church. It re-affirmed the UCCSA's commitment to the effective implementation process of transformation, by the act of setting apart a resource person for the sole purpose of co-ordinating and directing the *Pastoral Plan*. This development clearly demonstrated the church's resolve to give substance to their belief in the credibility of the *Kairos*-process. In the final analysis, however, the impact of Mission Enabler was determined by the extent to which the UCCSA as a whole rallied to the *Pastoral Plan* and implemented its vision at every level of the church's life and work. In effect, the 1995 Assembly decision not to adopt the main recommendations of the TFCC was a major set-back for the *Pastoral Plan* process driven by the TFCC and by the Mission Enabler. Moreover, the UCCSA thereby effectively neutralised the possible growth of a prophetic movement within its ranks. The reasons for the above I shall further explore and discuss in the context of overall critical reflections on the prophetic capacity of the ESC's in *Part Four* of this dissertation. Suffice it to say, at this juncture, that the UCCSA, like the other ESC's, showed itself to be captive to the shackles of conservatism and institutionalism.

I shall now examine the other major ways in which the UCCSA failed to capitalise on its initial positive responses to the *KD* by critically reflecting on the outcome of the church's *mission to itself* and *its mission to society*. It goes without saying that these two dimensions of the UCCSA's ecclesiology are not mutually exclusive. I shall therefore deal with them in a related way, and only separate the issues for the sake of clarity where necessary.

3.3. Racial divisions in the church and within society

The *KD* had declared, amongst others, that the churches in South Africa were overtly and covertly split along racial lines and that 'even within the same denomination there are in fact two Churches'³⁷⁷. In this regard the UCCSA was no exception. Notwithstanding the long-standing tradition of the UCCSA's condemnation of racism in South African society, therefore, strong opposition to the *KD* and to the UCCSA's acceptance thereof was expressed by certain voices within the church. The debate on the *Kairos* within the church's forums came to a head when, at the 1986 UCCSA Assembly, a delegate from the denomination's white constituencies denounced the *KD* as 'a divisive document'³⁷⁸. This denunciation implied that the UCCSA, by accepting the challenge of the *Document*, would be creating division and promote schism within its own denominational ranks along racial lines. In reality the *KD* had merely highlighted the fact that racial divisions that were inherent in South African society under Apartheid were as much in evidence within the churches generally. This factor was ironically demonstrated within the 1986 UCCSA Assembly debate on the *Document* itself, i.e. by the support amongst the vast majority of black Congregationalists and opposition by most white Congregationalists³⁷⁹. In the event, on the strength of the black majority numbers, the Assembly voted overwhelmingly in favour of supporting the *KD*.

However, the acrimonious debate on the *Document* brought to the surface, as never before, a deep and underlying racial division within the UCCSA. With its acceptance of the *Kairos* challenge the denomination could no longer be content with the superficiality of its image as a non-racial church. Consequently, in its analysis of itself in the light of the *KD*, the UCCSA had resolved to 'examine the differences in Black-White perceptions within the context of its own life and to avoid covering them up with the veneer of occasional

³⁷⁷ *KD*, p.1.

³⁷⁸ Proceedings of the 20th UCCSA Assembly, 24-29 September 1986, George. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* files, Johannesburg).

³⁷⁹ The debate amongst Congregationalists on other contentious issues, such as Economic Sanctions against South Africa, at the 1985 UCCSA Assembly for instance, had followed the same pattern of debating and voting along racial lines.

Christian fellowship³⁸⁰. Furthermore the church had acknowledged that in relation to the divisions and fragmentation in society, as the UCCSA, it had been guilty of self-deception in this regard:

Our spiritual unity in the Church has often been a facade hiding the division and hurt in our real life outside the Church³⁸¹.

Therefore the UCCSA realised that it had to put its own house in order as a matter of priority. In so doing the church had therefore taken the first and essential step by its acknowledgement, in a way it had not done before, that black and white Congregationalists had radically different experiences and perceptions, and that this factor impacted significantly on the decisions taken regarding the church's life and witness. However, the mere acknowledgement of this factor was one thing. Dealing with the problem effectively was quite another, partly because racism in church and society tends to operate both in overt and covert ways, manifesting itself, for instance, covertly in attitudes and interpersonal relationships and, overtly, in societal and ecclesiastical structures. The former manifestation is, of course, more difficult to address not only within the church, but in society at large. Both manifestations of racism are, of course, intimately related and they feed off one another. In other words, racist attitudes translate into racist structures and systems, and racist systems are re-enforced by racist attitudes.

The UCCSA resorted to tackling the problem from the perspective of its church structures, and did so with some measure of success within the church's Assembly and Executive meeting-formats. We will briefly examine this strategy hereunder.

3.4 The attempt to move from exclusivity to inclusivity

The re-structuring of UCCSA Assembly, ie. the church's governing body and most authoritative forum, appears to have gone some way in addressing the problem of excluding disadvantaged (i.e. black) Congregationalists from the decision and policy-making forums of the church. The UCCSA succeeded in doing so in the following three respects: Firstly,

³⁸⁰ Report of the UCCSA Church and Society Department to the UCCSA Executive Committee meeting, Johannesburg, March 1987.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

by maximising the participation of lay delegates in discussions and debates through small-group work, it was possible for the views of a maximum number of Assembly delegates to be shared and heard. The dynamics of small-group work allowed for delegates to communicate in their own respective languages. In the absence of such a facility in past Assemblies only those delegates who were articulate and confident in the English language (usually white delegates and some black clergy) would speak on any given issue. Under the new Assembly format the views and feelings of these small groups would be crystallised and shared further at plenary sessions, and this input would then form the basis for Assembly policy decisions and resolutions.

Secondly, the greater allocation of time and opportunity at Assembly for communal worship and biblical reflection had the effect of renewed Christian fellowship amongst delegates. Previous Assembly gatherings had been dominated by an over-formal and a strict business-like atmosphere. More importantly, the biblical reflection done in the small groups created the space for all delegates to study the bible, and together engage in the seeking of God's will for the church on issues that the UCCSA had to face and address. This change, whereby the maximum number of delegates were enabled to share more fully in the discerning of God's will, significantly enhanced the esteem of Congregationalists whose experience, in previous Assemblies, was that of being marginalised.

Thirdly, the new method by which Assembly reports were presented during the plenary sessions facilitated more open discussion and a greater depth in debate on any given issue. Under the new style of presentation, reports that were related to each other (ie. the UCCSA Christian Education, Mission and Evangelism departments, etc.) were grouped and presented by a panel of convenors. In the past, individual reports were given in the tedious style of being read and labouriously discussed, and responses to the reports were forthcoming from only a few speakers. However, the re-structuring of Assembly addressed the problem of racial exclusivity at one level only. Another more fundamental problem remained to large extent unaddressed, namely the processes by which UCCSA regional and synodical delegates were selected to attend the church's Assembly. The flaw in the selection process of delegates is that, in most cases, those Congregationalists nominated from regions and synods come from local churches who are able to pay for their travel to the Assembly

venue³⁸². In effect this meant that by and large a certain class (predominantly middle-class) of delegate would attend, and the views and interests of the poorest and most disadvantaged church communities were not being presented on the Assembly floor. Given the prevailing political economies of southern Africa, invariably this meant that UCCSA members from rural African and 'coloured' church communities were unable to be fully represented at the highest decision-making forums of the denomination. In this regard, therefore, the re-structuring of Assembly itself had a limited effect in reversing the past trend whereby disadvantaged groupings within the church were denied the rights and benefits of fuller representation and participation within the life, work and witness of the church.

The re-structuring of the UCCSA Executive achieved its objective in two respects. Firstly, the introduction of a requirement whereby UCCSA regional and synodical representatives serve on the Executive for a minimum period of two years ensured that a reasonable measure of continuity was being maintained in this church forum. Secondly, the decision to convene Executive meetings in different venues annually gives the poorer and more remote regions and synods an opportunity not merely to host, but also to more fully participate in such events of the UCCSA.

However, the flaw identified in respect to the Assembly selection of delegates also applied to the selection by regions and synods of representatives to attend UCCSA Executive meetings. Therefore the problem of excluding certain UCCSA members from the decision-making processes remained a serious problem for the church, as it perpetuated and even re-enforced division amongst Congregationalists on the basis of race and class.

There are other areas within the life and ministry of the UCCSA in which racism still manifested itself both in attitude and in structures. An example of the latter is the system in the UCCSA whereby a minister is 'called' to serve a particular local church, or what is known in Congregational parlance as a 'pastoral charge'. By and large, the practice has been that a local church would extend a call to a minister of their own race or ethnic group.

³⁸² Some of the UCCSA regions and synods have made an attempt to eliminate this flaw by making the financing of delegates travel to Assembly the responsibility of all churches in their bounds. However, this practice currently represents the exception rather than the rule.

The perpetuation of racial divisions as a result of this pattern is obvious, and the *Kairos* challenge in this regard has made no significant impact at all within the UCCSA.

In the final analysis, the problem of racial division within the UCCSA therefore remains a serious ongoing challenge to the church. During the ten year period since UCCSA acknowledged, in its response to the *KD*, that the race issue was a major problem, until the time of the writing of this dissertation, sincere efforts have been made to address this problem within the church. For example, the church has embark on a conscious effort to reverse the pattern of the calling of ministers to a local church³⁸³ which, by and large, is done along racial and ethnic lines, by placing probationer-ministers³⁸⁴ in cross cultural and cross racial pastorates. However, such efforts have fallen far short of expectation. It has been inadequate, firstly, from the point of the UCCSA itself, and secondly, from the point of view of the challenge of *KD*. The impact, therefore, that the UCCSA has been able to make to reverse racial divisions within its own structures and ministry can at best be described as symbolic and at worst of no significant consequence. As far as society was concerned, the UCCSA's efforts to counter racism has made little or no impact at all.

3.5 Shifting from 'Church theology' to 'Prophetic theology'

The second area which merits critical examination is the church's theological orientation. The question is: In terms of the *KD* challenge, to what extent was the UCCSA able and willing to move away from 'Church theology' and to pursue 'Prophetic Theology'? I shall attempt to answer this question by briefly examining the processes whereby the church endeavoured to move away from its maintenance mode towards being mission-driven.

3.5.1 The attempt to move from maintenance to mission

The realisation by the church that its dominant pre-occupation had been with *maintaining*

³⁸³ Under the Congregationalist system a minister is appointed to a local church or congregation after a 'call' (i.e. an invitation to become their minister) has been extended and the minister accepts the 'call'.

³⁸⁴ Probationer ministers are those UCCSA students who have normally completed their theological training and who are placed by the denomination within a local church in order to serve two years of probation, or in-service training, before proceeding to ordination.

itself as an institution, and had not been with its calling to share in God's mission to the world, was not new. However, the challenge of the *Document* made the church acutely aware of this major weakness, which was directly related to the dominant theological paradigm within the UCCSA, and which the *KD* called 'Church theology'. The UCCSA's awareness of being maintenance-oriented informed its *Kairos*-process as a whole, and the *Pastoral Plan* in particular.

The intention, therefore, to move the UCCSA from its pre-occupation with institutional maintenance to a focus on mission to the world became a rallying call which was associated with the *Pastoral Plan*. But to what extent did this denominational rallying call translate into a discernable shift in theological and praxiological paradigms? The key to this answer is precisely in establishing whether the UCCSA took the quantum leap - or at least a significant step away - from its pre-occupation with maintenance towards focussing on mission.

One of the crucial insights that emerged early on in the work of the TFCC was the realisation that the UCCSA had no hope of rising to the challenge of the *KD* unless the *leadership*, at every level of the church's life, were enabled and empowered. This recognition was also not entirely new but it became critical when the TFCC realised that the process of translating the vision of the *Pastoral Plan* into practice was floundering due to a lack of enabled leadership.

3.5.2 The drive to develop leadership for mission

The first significant initiative towards more intentional leadership development within the church at a denominational level was that which took place within the contexts of the re-structured UCCSA Assembly and Executive meetings. For example, the principle of inclusivity as opposed to exclusivity, was by itself, a stimulation and an affirmation of the leadership potential, especially of Congregational laypeople attending such denominational events. But the nature of leadership development that occurred at this level was more implicit than explicit, in the sense that it was left up to the delegates from regions and synods to interpret and apply principles relative to a mission focus that emanated from the

Assembly and Executive processes in their home regions, synod and local churches. In other words, the extent to which regions and synods would benefit from the transformation of Assembly and Executive were left up to chance.

The second level, and more intentional initiatives for leadership development for mission, occurred in the specific leadership training workshops which were conducted throughout the UCCSA's thirteen regions and synods between 1990 and 1995. A feature of these workshops was the presence and participation of laity in comparison with the limited number of clergy. This feature represented both a strength and a weakness in the overall process of leadership empowerment. The obvious strength was the fact that core groups of lay leadership from the UCCSA's constituencies were being directly exposed to and being trained in modes of leadership relative to the vision of the *Pastoral Plan*. The weakness lay in the fact that, in certain regions especially, clergy showed a patent lack of interest in these workshops and as such a low level of commitment to the objectives of the UCCSA *Pastoral Plan* itself. In many instances the leadership initiatives of laypeople had been frustrated by clergy who saw the models of shared-leadership which were being promoted by the *Pastoral Plan* as a threat to their own styles of leadership³⁸⁵.

The resistance of many clergy to the *Pastoral Plan* is symptomatic of a deeper problem within the UCCSA, and within other churches for that matter, namely that of institutionalised ecclesiastical authority. The maintenance-orientation of the institutional church and the autocratic style of clergy leadership in the UCCSA reflect this inadequacy in a particularly sharp way. Although the *KD*'s reference to 'Church theology' does not explicitly connect it to autocratic leadership styles and maintenance-oriented churches, the implication is clear enough. Therefore the opposition shown by clergy in the UCCSA to the *Pastoral Plan* is illustrative of an ecclesiology captive to the kind of models of institutionalised church-leadership, which was precisely being challenged by the *Document*.

The above focus on clergy on the UCCSA does not imply that the laity within the church at

³⁸⁵ The denominational Leadership Development workshop which took place at Stoney Ridge (Johannesburg), during October 1993, clearly identified obstructive UCCSA clergy as one of the major blockages in the effective implementation of the *Pastoral Plan* at local church level. (See *Training for Transformation : Report of the Stoney Ridge Leadership Development Workshop*.)

large function on the basis of a more adequate ecclesiology in regard to leadership. On the contrary, the vast majority of Congregationalists, who in any event would be subject to the teaching and preaching of their ministers are informed by deficient or inadequate models of ecclesiology. The point being made here is that a learning curve certainly occurred amongst those UCCSA lay participants at the *Pastoral Plan* workshops, especially towards being theologically empowered for leadership in mission. Part of the aims and objectives of the *Pastoral Plan*, as outlined earlier, was to train some 5000 Congregationalists in the SEE-JUDGE-ACT methodology. This methodology was seen by the TFCC as laying the essential foundations for enabling Congregationalists, to respond to the challenge of the *Pastoral Plan*, and by implication to the challenge of the *KD*, for themselves within their local church and community contexts. To what extent was this objective achieved?

In terms of numbers, some 1000 lay and clergy were exposed, in varying degrees to training and orientation, to the SEE-JUDGE-ACT method. This number represents only about 20% of the intended number, and as such falls well short of the target. However, it would appear that the target of training approximately 5000 Congregationalists was unrealistic within the time-frame envisaged (i.e. 5 years), especially given the limited human and financial resources available and committed to the project³⁸⁶. The significant feature of the training of about 1000 people is that these Congregationalists represent a core-group of existing and emerging leadership within the church. It would be fair to say, therefore, that a definitive assessment of the impact of the *Pastoral Plan*'s leadership training processes would, at this juncture, be pre-mature. What is reasonably clear, however, is that the responses to and resonances with leadership development for mission within the UCCSA came mainly from the following quarters: the rural areas, the least resourced churches in terms of human and financial resources, women, and the younger generation of lay and ordained Congregationalists.

3.5.3 Mission-consciousness within the church

³⁸⁶ The appointment of a full-time person (i.e. the UCCSA Mission Enabler) in 1992 to bring impetus to the process provided a necessary boost to the *Pastoral Plan*, especially in regard to the leadership development workshops. In the final analysis, however, more human and financial resources were needed to significantly enhance the chances of the process having a major impact in regard to leadership formation for mission.

Probably the clearest sign of a growing awareness, or consciousness, within the church of a need for a shift from maintenance to mission was the UCCSA's adoption at the 1993 Assembly, for the first time in its history, of a Mission Statement. The necessity for a denominational Mission Statement had been suggested some years ago when the TFCC began mapping out the ways in which the UCCSA needed to respond to the challenge of the *KD*. Partly because the church was at that stage not yet orientated towards the philosophy of having a Mission Statement, and partly because the process of conscientization within the church happens very slowly, the adoption of the Mission Statement only materialised at the 1993 Assembly. By 1993 it was clear that the time was ripe for such a development within the church, a development which suggests that the seeds sowed by the earlier work of the TFCC in particular, and by the Pastoral Plan processes in general, were beginning to show signs of germination.

On the one hand, therefore, the very adoption of a Mission Statement by the church at its General Assembly in 1993 was a significant development. On the other hand, the content and message of the Mission Statement was also an indication of the growing influence of the *Pastoral Plan* on the life and future direction of the church. The recognition in the Mission Statement, for example, that youth, women and leadership development in rural areas have been neglected constituencies in leadership development within the church, was, an important acknowledgement by the UCCSA that it was co-responsible with society for this historical neglect. Therefore as a church it needed to embark on a sustained process of ecclesiastical affirmative action to redress this historical imbalance. Furthermore, by acknowledging, in its Mission Statement, that existing patterns within the church tend to inhibit the church's participation in God's mission, the UCCSA identified the need to move from maintenance to mission as a distinct priority.

The extent to which the UCCSA's maintenance-to-mission drive had impacted the life and work of local churches varies from region to region, and synod to synod. It is significant, however, that the poorer and minimally resourced rural regions and synods, such as the UCCSA Orange Free State, the North Western Cape and the Outeniqua regions, the Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Botswana Synods have been most receptive to and have gone

the furthest in the implementation of the *Pastoral Plan*³⁹⁷. By contrast, the UCCSA's urban and wealthier regions, such as the Peninsula, Natal and Transvaal regions, in which human and material resources are more abundant, have been extremely tardy in embracing the programmes of the *Pastoral Plan*³⁹⁸.

4. Conclusions

The long-term effects of the *Kairos*-process within the UCCSA is one that, at this juncture, we cannot anticipate with any degree of authority and accuracy. The very nature of this project within the church has embraced the sowing of seeds, especially amongst the younger generations of Congregationalists, for ecclesiastical and societal transformation in accordance with the vision of the *Pastoral Plan*. The UCCSA itself, recognising that a full and final assessment of this programme within the church would yet to be undertaken at some later stage, have nevertheless commissioned an independent evaluation of the church's responses to the challenge of the *KD*. The conclusion of that evaluation, undertaken by Dr R Petersen in 1996, is stated as follows:

...it is equally clear that the Pastoral Plan and the work of the Task Force as a whole has had a significant impact on the life of the Denomination at all levels. Despite some problems...it has managed to find a very positive grounding in the life of the Denomination. The results of the surveys and the interviews, as well as an analysis of the work of the Task Force and the resources produced by it over the decade, indicate that there is wide knowledge of the Pastoral Plan, that the specifics of it are understood, that its vision is understood and affirmed, and that the training that it has provided

³⁹⁷ The UCCSA Botswana synod, for example, have appointed a person working full-time as Mission-Enabler, to facilitate and co-ordinate the work of mission in the synod.

³⁹⁸ There were, however, local churches in these regions who embarked on their own initiatives for transformation. In the UCCSA Peninsula region, for example, the local churches at Kuils River and Gleemoor made remarkable attempts to integrate the vision of the *Pastoral Plan* within the entire life, worship and witness of their respective churches. Likewise there have been attempts in the regions by local churches to respond to the *Pastoral Plan*, but in relation to the total number of local churches not responding those who have embarked on *Pastoral Plan* activities are a distinct minority.

has reaped positive results³⁸⁹.

The above evaluation notwithstanding, the overall nature of the UCCSA's response to the challenge of the *KD* shows up certain discernable patterns and characteristics. It is appropriate therefore that some concluding comments and observations be made in relation to such patterns and characteristics about the *Kairos* process in the church.

Firstly, in terms of the UCCSA's *mission to itself* as part of its overall response to the challenge of the *KD*, it would be fair to say that in the wake of the *Kairos* process the UCCSA could never be the same again. For example, this church could never go back to the old style of Assembly composition and meeting formats, which marginalised certain delegates in such an overt way. Furthermore, and more importantly, the UCCSA could hardly deny the tentative but clearly discernable impulses for fundamental ecclesiastical transformation from within, and the growing mission consciousness, especially amongst the younger generations of Congregationalists. However, the processes of internal structural transformation, and the concomitant shift in theological paradigm from a Church theology to a Prophetic theology has yet emerge more clearly from beneath the following three layers of blockages and resistance:

- (i) The accumulated baggage of an inherited and perpetuated *model of autocratic leadership*, prevalent at all levels of the church's leadership, ie. denominational, regional and synodical, and most prominent at local church level. This characteristic has been borne out by those Congregationalists who, in trying to implement the vision of the Pastoral Plan, discovered that it was like pouring New Wine into Old UCCSA bureaucratic and autocratic leadership Wineskins.
- (ii) A widespread and persistent preoccupation amongst UCCSA regional, synodical and denominational office-bearers with *institutional maintenance*, at the expense of a moving toward a fundamental mission orientation. The observation therefore by Steve de Gruchy that from within certain constituencies in the church there is even a detectable resurgence towards a conservative institutional position has a disconcerting but true ring about it.

³⁸⁹ 'Assessment of Survey Results', from a report on the *Evaluation of the Task Force on the Challenge to the Church*, of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, Dr R Petersen, University of Western Cape, p.32 (D. van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg). Refer to Appendix Seven for a summary of the report.

(iii) The combination of (i) and (ii) above as well as other less obvious factors have gone a long way towards *incapacitating the UCCSA* in its stated intention to be open, receptive and responsive to an ongoing internal and external prophetic critique, as epitomised by the challenge of the *KD*.

Secondly, the major question, therefore, raised at the beginning of this chapter, namely about the capacity and the will of the UCCSA and, for that matter the other ESC's as well, to rise to the prophetic challenge of the *KD*, leaves us with the following inevitable conclusion: In essence, the capacity and the will of these churches to rise to such a challenge is at best limited and at worst inadequate. The extent to which this is the case and how this matter may be addressed is explored in *Part Four* of this dissertation.

Thirdly, the merit in the UCCSA's response to the *Document*, in comparison to the other churches, lies therefore not in an authentic paradigm shift in its theology and praxis, but in the following developments: (i) in the UCCSA's stated acknowledgement of the need to be ecclesiastically transformed, and (ii) in the bold but unfulfilled initiatives in the church's quest to be an effective agent of social transformation. To be fair to the UCCSA, the *Kairos*-process in general and the *Pastoral Plan* in particular has awakened, conscientised and challenged an emerging constituency, i.e. young leadership and women, to give greater substance to church's mission mandate. However, the refusal of the 1995 Assembly to establish mission structurally at the centre of its denominational life revealed that the UCCSA, as a institution, was not as yet ready or willing, or both, to take a quantum leap of faith on a course on which it declared that it was travelling. In the final analysis therefore the UCCSA, like the MCSA, PCSA and the CPSA, cannot avoid betraying their institutional captivity, a factor clearly demonstrated by their inadequate response to the challenge of the *KD*. This problem of institutional captivity is, amongst others, an issue that I shall pursue and develop fully in *Part Four*.

PART FOUR: THE LEGACY AND THE LEARNINGS OF THE *KAIROS* CHALLENGE - STRATEGIES FOR THE PROPHETIC OPTION WITHIN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CHURCHES

The survey of short-term responses to the *KD* in *Part Two* of this dissertation clearly demonstrates that the letter and spirit of the *Kairos* challenge resonated with a significant number and range of Christian organisations, groups, movements and individuals. However, it is equally evident that the *Document* met with dissonance from certain leaders and spokespersons representing the institutional churches, especially in their initial reactions. *Part Three* reveals that even the UCCSA's positive attempts to effect medium-term and long-term social and ecclesial transformation fell short of the expectations of the *KD*. Moreover the process of transformation within the UCCSA also did not fulfill the objectives that this particular church denomination set for itself.

In the light of the above conclusions this final section of the dissertation, i.e. *Part Four*, sets out to do the following: Firstly, to identify and critically discuss the primary reasons for the failure of the ESC's and their church-leaders to hear, resonate with and respond positively to the prophetic challenges presented by the *Document* and by the *Kairos* movement. Secondly, to propose a strategy for the prophetic option which, (i) draws on and harnesses the prophetic legacy of the *KD*, (ii) outlines a basic framework for churches to establish and enhance their capacities for: [a] nurturing the prophetic impulses which invariably arise from within church denominations and from outside of their institutional boundaries, [b] rescuing the prophetic critique from being submerged under some of the facades of the new democratic dispensation, and [c] embracing a paradigmatic shift³⁹⁰ from 'Church theology' to Prophetic theology, with the concomitant move away a preoccupation with institutional maintenance towards an emphasis on a mission orientation.

³⁹⁰ I have used the term 'paradigm shift' somewhat loosely in this dissertation to refer to a basic methodology or pattern which indicates the way in which something is done or made. A paradigm shift signifies therefore the substitution of a new model for a previous one. Within the context of this discussion we are therefore talking about a shift in theology from a mode which is dominated by discourse to something that by its very nature embraces both action and reflection. (Refer to T.S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd Enlarged Ed., Chicago University Press, 1970. Kuhn first introduced the term 'paradigm' to contemporary philosophical debate. Though used in the context of scientific thought, the term is now widely used to refer to a particular set of beliefs that belong to a coherent framework. See especially chapter 5, 'The Priority of Paradigms').

Chapter One - The churches' failure to meet the challenge of the *Kairos Document*

1. Churches trapped in *institutionalism*

'Trapped in Apartheid!'³⁹¹ is the succinctly-stated conclusion reached by Villa-Vicencio, upon analysing the trajectories within the socio-theological history of the churches presently under discussion. Such a verdict is hard to contradict, as noted for example by Desmond Tutu, who declared that the evidence for such a finding about these churches is 'formidable and almost incontrovertible'³⁹². Notwithstanding the fact that these same churches have historically constituted the most visible and vocal vanguard of ecclesiastical opposition to Apartheid³⁹³, the overall pattern of such opposition has been that of 'protest without resistance'³⁹⁴. Other commentators, such as Peter Walshe for instance, characterises the churches' opposition to Apartheid as having been 'phlegmatic'³⁹⁵.

It is therefore, on the one hand, within a specific socio-theological context of being 'trapped in Apartheid' that one has to understand the reasons for the failure of the churches to take a positive stance *vis-à-vis* the *KD*. On the other hand, however, it is within the broader socio-historical category of *institutionalism*³⁹⁶ that we have to analyse and interpret the incapacity of the churches to embrace a prophetic challenge such that which came from the *Document*. The sense in which I am using this term *institutionalism* identifies closely with the following definition given by Avery Dulles, whereby the church becomes wrapped up within the processes of institutionalisation and *defines* itself in terms of its hierarchical and

³⁹¹ Villa Vicencio, *Trapped In Apartheid*.

³⁹² D Tutu, *op cit.*

³⁹³ See, for example, J. Cochrane, 'Periodisation of Christian Resistance to Apartheid', in *Christianity in South Africa*, pp. 81 - 100, and P. Walshe, *Prophetic Christianity and the Liberation Movement in South Africa*.

³⁹⁴ Villa Vicencio, *op cit.*, p.93.

³⁹⁵ Walshe, *op cit.*, p.107.

³⁹⁶ In the 20th Century the problem of ecclesiastical institutionalism emerged at the inaugural Assembly of the WCC at Amsterdam in 1948. Of particular concern at the time was the question of the meaning of the Church as institution and the effect that institutional factors had on the unity and disunity of the Church (For details refer to the Report on 'Institutionalism and Unity', in *The Old and the New in the Church*, London, SCM Press, 1961; and Ehrenstrom, Nils and Muelder, Walter G., eds., *Institutionalism and Church Unity*, London, SCM Press, 1963).

organisational structures:

By institutionalism we mean a system in which the institutional element is treated as primary. From the point of view of this author, institutionalism is a deformation of the true nature of the Church... and one that remains in every age a real danger to the institutional church³⁹⁷.

Dulles provides the above perspective from within the context of the Roman Catholic Church which, arguably, represents one of the most powerful single institutional entities both within Christendom and in secular society. The dogma of papal infallibility, though nowhere near as prominent in Catholicism today as in previous centuries, is still symbolic of ecclesiastical institutionalism in its most developed form³⁹⁸. Protestantism, however, does not escape the criticism of institutionalism. This is so despite the trend within Protestantism, especially in its earlier stages, to have been inherently suspicious of an institutionalism which equated or identified the mystery of the church with its visible structures. Roger Mehl accurately sums up this dialectic, or ongoing tension, between the 'event' and the institution within the Protestant churches as follows:

In the dialectic of event and institution, it happens that sometimes one feels the need of reinforcing the institution when the event threatens to engender a pure actualism, when 'angelism' makes the church forget that it is and can only be instituted, indissolubly

³⁹⁷ A Dulles, *Models of the Church: A Critical Assessment of the Church in all its Aspects*, Second Edition, Gill and Macmillan, Goldenbridge, 1987, p.35. The reference to the institutional church, or to the church as institution, is obviously associated with that which is historic and visible. However, the debate about the distinction between the invisible and the visible church does not necessarily concern us here. In any event, it has been recognized, by Hans Küng, for example, that 'the old quarrel between the advocates of an *ecclesia invisibilis* and the advocates of an *ecclesia visibilis* is now long out of date', (*The Church*, Search Press, London, 1971, p.34).

³⁹⁸ This is not to deny or minimise the fact that the Roman Catholic Church has, ecclesiologically speaking, undergone a fundamental paradigm shift since Vatican II. The nature of the shift between Vatican I and Vatican II is vividly portrayed as follows by R.M Brown: 'The first Vatican Council (1869-70) ended inside St. Peter's during a fearful thunderstorm, in the midst of which was promulgated the dogma of papal infallibility - the dogma that has separated Roman Catholicism from the rest of Christendom. The second Vatican Council (1962-65) ended outside St. Peter's on a beautiful sunny day, with the church offering itself as the servant of the world - a theme that will increasingly unite Roman Catholicism not only with the rest of Christendom but with all men of goodwill' (*The Ecumenical Revolution*, London, Burns & Oates, 1969, p.155).

invisible and visible. But like a pendulum, these movements call forth counter-movements. In Protestantism, this dialectic assumes considerable importance. It always stirs passions and creates conflict. This is indeed the sign that in its sociological phenomenology, Protestantism is that form of Christianity in which the necessary institution is also felt to be the trap of the event³⁹⁹.

In developing my critique on the nature of institutionalism within the churches being examined, I shall hereunder be drawing on the sociological theories advanced by Max Weber who, after Karl Marx, is still considered to be significantly influential on the questions of social stratification⁴⁰⁰.

2. The nature and problem of institutionalised ecclesiastical authority

The initial wave of responses to challenge of the *KD* by churches and church-leaders is particularly instructive. Their reactions to the *process* by which the *Document* came into being and was made public revealed, amongst other things, a distinct over-sensitiveness amongst church-leaders about their actual or fallacious institutionalised ecclesiastical authority. The following statement, for example, made by one of the church-leaders carries the implication that the *Kairos* theologians had acted with flagrant disregard for the propriety of ecclesiastical authority both in terms of the process of theological discourse and in the manner of their public pronouncements:

I have a very real question about whether theology is made through the medium of press conferences, and am wondering why the request for Church response should come after the *Document* has been published rather than before⁴⁰¹.

Inadvertently the above statement revealed more about the raw nerve of ecclesiastical sensitivity around the issue of authority amongst such church-leaders, than it said about the motives on the part of the *Kairos* theologians. Reflecting on the nature of ecclesiastical

³⁹⁹ R. Mehl, *The Sociology of Protestantism*, translated by J H Farley, SCM Press, London, 1970, p.317.

⁴⁰⁰ See, for example, Berger P.L. & Berger B, *Sociology: A Biographical Approach*, Penguin, Middlesex, 1976, p.3.

⁴⁰¹ Letter to *Kairos* theologians from the Revd P Storey, past-President of the MCSA Conference, dated 22 November 1985 (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

authority within the Roman Catholic church context, Yves Congar concludes that modern Catholic ecclesiology has been marked by the tendency to regard the Church as the 'machinery of hierarchical mediation, of the powers and primacy of the Roman see, in a word, "hierarchology"'⁴⁰². This question of 'hierarchology', or where ultimate authority resides within social institutions, including the church, is one which Max Weber expounds in some length particularly in his analysis of modern bureaucracies⁴⁰³. I shall therefore draw on Weber's sociological analysis insofar as it bears on the question of institutionalised ecclesiastical authority, as well as other related matters raised by the *KD*.

3. Trapped within an 'iron cage of history'

According to Hill, Weber views modern bureaucracies as having the following typical features:

- (1) fixed and official areas of jurisdiction governed by rules; (2) a system of hierarchy in which higher officials supervise lower; (3) the running of the organisation is based on written files and there is a separation between the official and private activity of the official; (4) thorough and expert training of staff is required; (5) official activity is a full-time, not a part time activity; (6) office management is reducible to a set of rules⁴⁰⁴.

The above features are cited here to accentuate Weber's point about the *institutional* aspects of bureaucracies. Reflecting on the nature of bureaucracy within churches of the Reformed tradition in South Africa, H.J.C Pieterse cites the sociological perspective of Yorick Spiegel which views most Protestant churches as bureaucracies since 'they all display the

⁴⁰² Y. Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, Westminster, Newman, 1965, p.45. The doctrine of papal infallibility within the Catholic tradition, more than any other feature, is symbolic of ecclesiastical *institutionalism* in its most developed form.

⁴⁰³ M. Hill, 'They Changed our Thinking: VI. Max Weber (1864-1920)', in *The Expository Times*, Vol. LXXIX, No.8, May 1968, pp.260-265. Refer also to *From Max Weber: Essays In Sociology*, translated & edited by H H Gerth & C W Mills, Oxford, New York, 1966, pp. 77-91, 196 - 252.

⁴⁰⁴ Hill, *op cit.*, p.262.

features first defined by Max Weber⁴⁰⁵. Pieterse observes that it is ironically the need for 'good organization in the church' that results in a 'bureaucratic trend'⁴⁰⁶. With reference to the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) of South Africa Pieterse believes that the problem of bureaucracy could have been minimised if the DRC had, for example, made 'more use of its theologians and ordinary church members to man its commissions...' ⁴⁰⁷. T.D. Verry, who examines the issue of bureaucracy within the Episcopal tradition, like Pieterse, does not take issue with the need for bureaucracy as such in the church. The damage is done by what Verry calls 'deformed democracy' which through the 'misapplication of...power causes frustration and resentment' ⁴⁰⁸.

Weber goes on to posit these features as constituting a model or an ideal type of modern bureaucracy - though not meaning ideal in the way it ought to look in real life, but in the sense of a 'logically coherent and accentuated abstract construction' ⁴⁰⁹. In regard to ideal types of bureaucratic models, Weber postulates three types of legitimate authority within social institutions, namely that of the 'traditional', 'rational-legal' and 'charismatic' ⁴¹⁰. The formulation of the notion of legitimate authority stemmed from Weber's interest in the subjective meaning of different types of relationship to the actors involved. In this regard he noted that in most cases where someone issued a command which was obeyed by another person, that command was seen by both as valid and it was on this basis that obedience was shown. Traditional authority, in Weber's schema, therefore applies where command and compliance is based on mutual acceptance of hereditary right or of some other immemorial precedent. Rational-legal authority is based on the appeal to a set of impersonal rules to which both ruler and subordinate are subject. These rules would not only specify how the ruler was to be appointed but would also set limits on the range of commands which could

⁴⁰⁵ H. Pieterse, 'Bureaucracy in the Reformed Tradition in South Africa', *JTSA*, No.43, June 1983, p.58.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁸ T. Verry, 'Bureaucracy in the Episcopal Tradition in South Africa', *op cit.*, p.46.

⁴⁰⁹ Hill, *op cit.*, p.262.

⁴¹⁰ *Op cit.*, p.263.

be legitimately used. Traditional authority, for example, is present in the form of monarchy, hereditary peerage and in the ritual of most public events. Rational-legal authority, for instance, governs the election of members of parliament, the legislative functions of parliament and the administration of the civil service.

It is the third type, namely that of *charismatic authority*, which is the focus of our concern in this inquiry. Weber saw charismatic authority as a specifically revolutionary force, and a source of new ideas which were crucial to the processes both of constructing social institutions and of their renewal and transformation. The archetypal form of charismatic authority was, according to Weber, found in the case of the Old Testament prophets⁴¹¹. Weber's formulations *vis-à-vis* the nature and function of authority within the bureaucracies of social institutions brings into sharp focus a major issue raised in this dissertation. The question is not whether but to what extent the trap of institutionalism disempowers and incapacitates the churches, leaving them at best making prophetic soundings and at worst woefully lacking in prophetic and transforming action. Before we proceed to elaborate on the above, however, we need to briefly reflect on certain historical precedents.

At the heart of the problem of ecclesiastical institutionalism is the question of the relationship between the Church as event and as institution, a question which has its roots in the New Testament⁴¹². When Christianity assumed the status of a state religion during the era of Constantine with the Church not only developed a greater institutional profile but became institutionally entrenched within the fabric of society at large, the problem of

⁴¹¹ The notion of Old Testament prophecy as a prototype of charismatic authority and leadership has been questioned by T Long, in his essay, 'Prophecy, Charisma, and Politics: Reinterpreting the Weberian Thesis', *Prophetic Religions and Politics: Religion and the Political Order*, Vol. One, J.K. Hadden and A. Shupe, Paragon: New York, pp.3-17. For the purposes of our study the question as to whether or not prophecy could be equated (ie. in the sense of being its purest embodiment) with charismatic authority is not strictly relevant, as Weber's basic thesis about the impact and influence of prophetic-charisma upon social institutions cannot be denied.

⁴¹² See, for example, E. Schweitzer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, SCM Press, London, 1961, p.210; J.L. Leuba, *New Testament Pattern*, London, Lutterworth, 1953, p.140; H Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, Richmond, John Knox Press, 1964, p.53ff; F.W. Dillistone, *The Structure of Divine Society*, London, Lutterworth, 1951.

institutionalism became compounded. The socio-historical entrenchment of the Church as institution led, invariably, to a relationship of mutual dependence with other social institutions, including the state⁴¹³. Paradoxically the institutionalised Church, then and now, both benefits from this mutuality while at the same time finds itself captive to, amongst others, bureaucratic control from within and from without⁴¹⁴.

The trap that the Church has fallen into is, therefore, not that of becoming institutionalised - the process of institutionalisation constitutes a necessary and inevitable development in social stratification⁴¹⁵ - but that of succumbing to institutionalism. The *KD* has exposed, *inter alia*, the socio-theological manifestations of such institutionalism within the ESC's. This uncovering happened by chance rather than by design for the *Document* clearly set out to challenge, firstly and foremostly, the effectiveness of ecclesiastical leadership within these churches in the face of the oppressive Apartheid state. In line with the focus on the ESC's in *Part Three* of this thesis I shall develop my critique with this grouping of ESC's as focal point. This is not to deny that other churches in South Africa are not to a greater or lesser degree institutionally captive as well, such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Dutch Reformed Church, the Lutheran Churches, etc. The critique does, however, not apply - at least not to the same extent - to the churches historically referred to as the 'African Independent Churches' - and more recently also as the 'African Initiated Churches' -

⁴¹³ For a comprehensive and in-depth treatment of the history of church-state relations up until the present time, refer to C. Villa Vicencio, *Between Christ and Caesar: Classic and Contemporary Texts on Church and State*, David Philip, Cape Town; William Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1986.

⁴¹⁴ During the early centuries, for example, the first major tension in church-state relations reared its head with; (i) the issue of who had the right to make the ecclesiastical appointments, ie. the pope or the emperor (ie. Constantine), and; (ii) whether the emperor had the authority to call the Council of Nicea, or whether this should have been on the initiative of the Church. (See, for example, Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*, Penguin Books, London, 1967). An interesting variation of this above theme within the South African context is when, in 1990, president F.W. de Klerk requested the churches to get their act together on the issue of Christian unity. The Rustenburg Conference in 1991 is a direct result of this kind of request.

⁴¹⁵ The normative and regulatory function of social institutions is emphasized in definitions of an institution given by sociologists (See, for example, Berger P.L, *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic perspective*, Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1973, p.104; Steyn A.F & van Rensburg H.C.J, *Sosiologie*, Academia, Pretoria, Cape Town, 1985, p.143; and Berger P.L & Berger B, *Sociology: A Biographical Approach*, Penguin Books: Middlesex, 1976, p.80ff).

(AIC's). The AIC's are, certainly on the face of things, nowhere near as institutionally defined, i.e. in terms of its central control, bureaucracy and infrastructure as the case with the ESC's and the other churches named above. It may be that one of the reasons why the AIC's are not overtly institutionally defined is that they tend to rely on traditional authority.

G.S Wilmore, writing from the context of black North American churches, makes a case for the non-institutional mould and character of the black churches in the USA and the Caribbean:

Blacks in the United States and the Caribbean are...Christians in a way different from what we usually understand by the term. The nonsystematic, ambivalent Christianity of blacks has been understood in terms of evangelicalism and otherworldliness, but it has produced one of the most this-worldly, empirical religious traditions in the New World. Its roots are not in Rome or Geneva, but in Calabar, West Kingston, Jamaica, and the plantation country of North America. We have been deceived into equating it with its subsequent institutionalization in established churches⁴¹⁶.

The most obvious and overt manifestation of institutional entrapment as far as the ESC's were concerned was, as Villa-Vicencio⁴¹⁷ demonstrated, within the all-consuming social stratification of Apartheid. However, while the Apartheid regime imposed social stratifications that were unique, in the final analysis, the bondage which incapacitated the ESC's to respond positively to the prophetic challenges of the *KD* represented merely another variation of an entrapment within the 'iron cage of history'⁴¹⁸. It is my contention here that the slide of the ESC's into the trap of institutionalism also which gives rise to the concomitant problem of ecclesiastical authoritarianism and 'hierarchology', and *vice versa*. The patterns of 'hierarchology', for its part, serve to perpetuate the problem of institutionalism. The question that emerges therefore is whether the above phenomenon can be circumvented or overcome. At the very least, to what extent can the consequences of

⁴¹⁶ Wilmore, 'Survival and Liberation in Black Faith', *We Are One Voice*, eds. S.S. Maimela and D.N. Hopkins, Skotaville, Johannesburg, 1989, p.11.

⁴¹⁷ Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid*.

⁴¹⁸ A Mitzman, *The Iron Cage: An Historical Interpretation of Max Weber*, Knopf Books, New York, 1970, p.5; J Freund, *The Sociology of Max Weber*, London, Allen Lane, 1968, p.26.

problems created by ecclesiastical authoritarianism be minimised?

The basis for a solution to the above must surely be sought in conjunction with an appreciation for and appropriation of the paradoxical nature of the church itself, namely that the church has been constituted and historically sustained by both *charisma* and *institutional structure*. It is the nature of this paradox that we shall now explore in relation to the challenges presented by the *KD* to the churches under discussion.

4. *Charisma* and institutional structure: the paradox of conflict and co-existence

We have acknowledged elsewhere that the profile of the early church is far from being devoid of institutional characteristics. On the other hand the book of Acts also presents a reasonably clear picture of the beginnings of the early church as a *charismatic movement*⁴¹⁹, in which a prophetic dimension was very much in evidence. Partly due to its infant nature, but also as a result of its radical challenge to the established social order, the Early Church militated against a swift slide into ecclesiastical institutionalism. Weber reminds us of this historical feature of the church, ie. that it was first and foremost a movement, or *event*⁴²⁰, before it became institutionalised. J-L Leuba suggests that the question of whether the church is foremostly *event* rather than *institution* has been largely a debate between Protestant and Catholic theologians:

The Catholic position implies the continuity of the Church, its institutional character and the many consequences which result from that fact...The Protestant position stresses, on the other hand, the liberty of the Holy Spirit, the ever renewed initiatives...and the charismatic nature of all forms of the ministry⁴²⁰.

It would, however, be simplistic today to equate Catholic ecclesiology with *institution* and

⁴¹⁹ I am not using this term here in the same sense as that which refers to Christian and church groupings associated with the charismatic or Pentecostal movements of the 20th Century.

⁴²⁰ Leuba, *L'institution et L'événement*, Neuchatel, Delachaux & Niestle, 1950. Translated into English, entitled, *New Testament Pattern*, H. Knight, Lutterworth: London, 1953, p.7. Refer also to J. de Gruchy's unpublished doctoral dissertation, *The Dynamic Structure of the Church*, for an exposition of the creative tension between the church as act and the church as event based on a comparative analyses of the ecclesiologies of Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer (University of South Africa, 1972).

Protestant *ecclesiology* with event. Weber, for his part, acknowledged that all charismatic movements inevitably and invariably became routinised, and that even the most original and creative urges eventually settle down into the familiar routine of everyday, a notion which Weber coined as the 'routinization of charisma'⁴²¹. To his credit, he also recognised that there need not be a complete emptying of the original charismatic upsurge, since in any organisation based on it, such as the Church, there would be found a latent impulse towards charismatic renewal. Weber, however, provides no particular insight into the question of how the bearers of charisma and the maintainers of institutional structure are able to co-exist in creative tension.

Zygmunt Bauman, who considers this question from the perspectives of post-modernism, describes very crisply the tension between charisma and structure in terms of two processes that are constantly at cross-purposes but which, paradoxically, cannot exist without each other:

...the two processes can hardly trust each other and cohabit in peace,...what one painstakingly builds up and vigilantly protects, the other assaults and tears to pieces. And yet, one can hardly live without the other. They are doomed to accommodate each other, or perish⁴²².

Bauman suggests that a creative way forward is possible and that, in fact, a '*modus vivendi* must be, and has been, found. Or, rather, a number of modes, in succession'⁴²³. Bauman's proposed *modus vivendi*, which separates in time the structured periods from the charismatic upsurges, clearly has merit insofar as the two processes are hereby acknowledged as valid in their own right⁴²⁴. However, what the above schema overlooks, or at the very least minimises, is that the dynamic nature of charisma defies predictability and stratification. On the contrary, charisma tends to emerge 'in season and out of season' The

⁴²¹ Quoted in Gerth & Mills, *op cit.*, p.54.

⁴²² Z. Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1993, p.133.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁴ V.W. Turner introduces the notions of *societas* and *communitas* respectively to refer to the two processes of structure and charisma (*The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1974).

fact that the institutional churches were either unwilling or unable to embrace the *Document* shows clearly that the churches had bought into social institutionalism which structurally militated against the kind of prophetic-charismatic⁴²⁵ upsurge which manifested itself through the *Kairos* challenge. The *KD* revealed, as did other prophetic-charismatic movements in history, that, by and large, the ecclesiastical role players who are closely associated with the structures and bureaucracy of the institutional church are not inclined to give way or recede into the background even for a season to make way for moments of charismatic interventions. There appears to be hardly any obvious historical moments within Christendom when the Church as institution readily subjected itself to the impulses and the transformative influences of major upsurges of prophetic charisma⁴²⁶.

The response of the UCCSA to the *Kairos* challenge, which is examined in some detail and depth in *Part Three* of this dissertation, is a specific case in point. When faced with the challenge of the *KD*, this particular ESC's recognised firstly, the need for fundamental internal transformation and secondly, the necessity for embarking on a process of empowerment in order to respond in a transforming way to the perceived challenge. The appointment of a Task Force (TFCC) within the UCCSA represented a crucial first step towards opening up and mobilising the church in a creative response to the *Document*. The TFCC was given a mandate which effectively opened the way for this UCCSA-appointed group to function as a prophetic voice and a charismatic group within the institutional church. However, when the TFCC sought to implement their church-given mandate for transformation, it met with guarded and qualified approval, at best. At worst, it met with cynicism and outright disapproval from within the ranks of the UCCSA ministerial and lay leadership especially. Despite bearing the stamp of the church's authority, the TFCC met with a multifaceted opposition in the forms of an emerging pro-establishment lobby, forces of conservatism and traditionalism, and those who saw it as their mission to uphold and

⁴²⁵ The sense in which I am using this concept of 'prophetic-charismatic' identifies closely with Weber's notion of the religious prophet as the 'bearer of charisma' (M. Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, translated by E Fischoff, Beacon, Boston, 1963, p.46).

⁴²⁶ The 16th Century Reformation, for example, is itself a consequence of the medieval Church's inability and unwillingness to yield to the challenge of prophetic-charisma in the person of Martin Luther, for example, who arose from within the ranks of the Church and addressed the Church not as an outsider but as an insider.

preserve institutionalism within the UCCSA. The sum total of such opposition effectively put the brakes on the desire for and movement towards transformation, and ultimately neutralised much of the gains brought about by a TFCC which sought to open the church up to the challenges of prophetic-charisma.

The experience of the TFCC within the UCCSA is not unique and merely represents a variation of a theme which has to do with an inherent contradiction that is unearthed when trying to juxtapose structure and charisma within a social institution. Another example of the sometimes paradoxical relationship between structure and charisma within a religious establishment is that which may be observed within the Roman Catholic Church. The establishment of Religious Orders, ie. Dominicans, Jesuits, Franciscans etc., reflects a clear desire on the part of an overtly hierarchical ecclesiastical establishment to allow for the creative co-existence between the dynamism of charisma and the equilibrium of institutional structures. This is not to imply that the Religious Orders were sanctioned by the Holy See with the view to them being set over against the institution of the Roman Catholic Church but with the intention of changing the institution from within. It is worth noting that the Religious Orders themselves all quickly underwent a process of institutionalization. This was particularly true of the Franciscan Order. Francis' successors almost immediately watered down the prophetic line of their founder.

The recognition of the important role of religious communities within the life of the Roman Catholic Church is implicit in the words of Pope John XXIII. The pontiff outlined the aim of Vatican II as follows:

...to invoke a New Pentecost, calling for renewal of the Church in her head and in her members, for her reformation in the reflection of Christ in the Gospels. This ardent desire of enabling the Church in an ever more perfect manner to live as the Bride of Christ was, of course, felt in a special manner by those who, in accordance with their very vocation, dedicate themselves entirely to the loving service of Christ in the Church⁴²⁷.

The significance of the above statement is that the role and function of a charismatic

⁴²⁷ Quoted in 'Religious Life', J J McEleney, S.J., *The Documents of Vatican II*, The America Press, USA, 1966, p. 462.

presence is clearly recognised and acknowledged. In principle, if not always in practice, the supreme hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church affirms that the Religious Orders are an integral part of this church by *design* and not merely on the basis of expediency. The question is, however, whether the Religious Orders are in fact accorded the space and the freedom to impact prophetically, in a major way, on the Roman Catholic Church as institution.

Without attempting to be conclusive, it is undeniable that the pre-Vatican II papal encyclical of Pope Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, allowed for limited space for a spirit of free thinking and prophetic challenge from within the Roman Catholic Church. For instance, such actions as the barring of the Dominican friar, Marie-Dominique Chenu, from teaching on two occasions, in 1942 and in 1954, the suppression of the movement of 'worker priests' and the purging of the Dominican Order of alleged mavericks could not have augured well for a creative co-existence of charisma and structure within the Roman Catholic Church. Vatican II, of course, made a significant break with the spirit of intolerance, heavy-handedness and overt authoritarianism of the past. However, more recent acts such as the denunciation of the world famous theologian Hans Küng by the Vatican in 1979, the excommunication of theologian Tissa Balasuriya, the Sri Lankan Oblate of Mary Immaculate⁴²⁸, and the denial of Liberation Theology as part of mainstream Roman Catholic theology, still raises a question over the inherent capacity of this church to maintain a creative tension between free thinkers and the establishment, or between institutional structure and prophetic charisma.

Therefore, even though one could allow for Weber's 'latent impulse towards charismatic renewal' the relationship between prophetic-charisma and institutional structure functions on largely on the basis of an uneasy alliance. Within the South African ecclesiastical context, the *KD* brought this underlying tension and ambiguous relationship to the fore. It is neither desirable nor likely that the tension and ambiguity which emerged then, and continues to exist between progressive ecumenical organisations, such as ICT, the SACC,

⁴²⁸ Balasuriya is currently Director of the Center for Society and Religion in Colombo, Sri Lanka. His excommunication in January 1997 from the Roman Catholic Church stemmed from the publication of his book, *Mary and Human Liberation*. The sanction was lifted in January 1998.

etc., and the institutional churches is to be dissolved⁴²⁹. The challenge to the institutional churches, however, is to recognise and periodically subject themselves to the seemingly disruptive but ultimately transformative and renewing influence that these organisations and movements bring to bear.

5. An Old Testament precedent

The kind of ambiguous and strained relationship between the churches and ecumenical movements described above played itself out in the history of God's people in ancient Israel, albeit with a variation in the theme. The Old Testament commentator, Walter Brueggemann, explores this phenomenon with some clarity, in an article entitled 'Trajectories in Old Testament literature and the Sociology of Ancient Israel'⁴³⁰. Brueggemann suggests that there are 'two circles of tradition'⁴³¹ in Israel's literature concerning the covenant, one derived from Moses and the other Davidic in its formulation, and that certain trajectories may be traced within these two circles of tradition. These trajectories pit the Mosaic and Davidic traditions against each other:

Applied to the two conventional traditions in the Old Testament, 'trajectarian' suggest that we might be able to trace continuities in the literature shaped and energized by the Mosaic and davidic covenants. Specifically the Mosaic tradition tends to be a movement of protest which is situated among the disinherited and which articulates its theological vision in terms of a God who decisively intrudes, even against seemingly impenetrable institutions and orderings. On the other hand, the Davidic tradition tends to be a movement of consolidation which is situated among the established

⁴²⁹ Such tensions, of course, also exist *within* the churches themselves whereby the forces of conservatism, bureaucratism and institutionalism vie for ascendancy or react against challenges to renew and transform.

⁴³⁰ Brueggemann, 'Trajectories in Old Testament Literature and the Sociology of Ancient Israel', in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol.10, 1979, pp.161ff. See also Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1978. One needs to acknowledge that in his later works on the subject of the prophetic critique, while maintaining his basic premise, Brueggemann moved from a discourse which was mainly based on early socio-historical realities to the textual world and the new language of legal terminology, e.g. 'witness' and 'testimony'. Refer especially to the first two chapters of his 1997 work, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, Fortress, Minneapolis.

⁴³¹ *Op cit.*, p.161.

and secure and which articulates its theological vision in terms of a God who faithfully abides and sustains on behalf of the present ordering⁴³².

The Naboth's vineyard episode in I Kings 21 is an example cited by Bruggeman of these two trajectories coming into contact with one another in the Davidic monarchic period. Ahab, being a king, would understand the Israelite religious tradition in terms of the Davidic covenant, and Naboth being a peasant threatened by the ruling class, would no doubt understand the tradition from the perspective of the Mosaic tradition. It would be nothing other than their personal circumstances, i.e. their positions with regard to the land, that would dictate how they felt about the episode. The status of Naboth as a freeman was bound up with his possession of ancestral land. To have accepted Ahab's proposal, fair as it may seem, would have prejudiced his own status and that of his family, relegating them to the status of royal dependents. Consequently the scene was set for a confrontation between the prophet Elijah and king Ahab (I Kings 21:17f).

Other examples, according to Bruggemann, of how within a particular phase of Israel's history the confrontation between king and prophet is clearly seen, namely between Amos and Amaziah (Amos 7:10-17), and between Isaiah and Ahaz (Isaiah 7:1-9:7)⁴³³. These examples show that the early history of God's people is characterised by an archetypal conflict of interests, broadly operating along the lines of the royal (or establishment) traditions, and the prophetic ones. In the prophetic-charismatic tradition of the post-exilic prophets the *Kairos* theologians found themselves inadvertently pitted not only the against the protagonists of the Apartheid state but also against the bureaucratic reactionism from within the institutionalised churches. Unfortunately, the church-leaders and the churches in the South African context who reacted against, instead of embracing the challenge of the *Kairos*, were not alive and responsive to a unique historical moment. The UCCSA, to its credit, *recognised* that it was confronted by a *Kairos* moment for itself as a church. But in the final analysis this church's overall attempt at ecclesiastical and social transformation fell significantly short of the mark.

⁴³² *Op cit.*, p.162.

⁴³³ *Op cit.*, pp.170-171.

Amongst the other ESC's churches, if any discerned a *Kairos* for themselves, such a recognition did not translate into discernable forms of ecclesiastical transformation which significantly addressed the question of their institutional captivity. At the core of this missed opportunity has been a socio-theological blindness of the churches which, according to the *KD*, manifested itself in the failure to read the 'signs of the times', a feature which requires further examination.

6. Failing to discern 'the signs of the times'

It would be fair to say that the *Document*, in its critique of the churches *theological* orientation, used the term 'the signs of the times', by and large, in relation to the failure of the churches to engage in social analysis. Nolan, however, points out that the *KD* critique points beyond a social analysis of the 'general situation' but to that of 'conjunctural analysis'⁴³⁴. This is an analysis which discerns the 'particular crisis at that point in time because of the conjuncture, or meeting, of opposing forces'⁴³⁵. It was precisely the non-alertness to and lack of discernment by the churches which prevented them from realising the opportunities which emerged out of the *historical moment of crisis* in 1985. It was a crisis, and in the key term of the *KD*, a *kairos* which was brought about, on the one hand, by wide scale and brutal repression in the townships, and on the other hand, the upsurge of resistance amongst popular movements.

It was, in the final reckoning, the collective determination and force of the oppressed communities to persevere in the struggle that prevailed against the onslaught of the Apartheid regime. The ESC's and other churches for that matter, unfortunately, failed to read the crisis as a veritable *Kairos*⁴³⁶. The *KD* identified this failure to discern 'the signs of

⁴³⁴ Nolan A, 'Kairos Theology, in *Doing Theology in Context: South Africa perspectives*, eds. by J de Gruchy and C Villa-Vicencio, Cape Town, David Philip, 1994, p.215.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁶ Robin Petersen suggests that using the two terms 'crisis' and *kairos* as synonymous results in 'a restriction of *Kairos* to the notions of crisis, and thereby limiting the richness of the symbol and its deployment in other less crisis filled contexts'. Such a caution is surely to be heeded. However, as Petersen himself acknowledges, that given the situation of crisis in 1985, the linkage of the two terms unearthed a kind of 'rhetorical power', which provided a socio-theological rallying call. And given the urgency of the

the times' as a fundamental flaw both in the theological and praxiological make-up of the institutional churches. In using this term, i.e. 'the signs of the times' the *Kairos* theologians inadvertently recalled a critique which is not new, and one which, according to Jürgen Moltmann 'is derived from the biblical experience of history and from the language of the Bible'⁴³⁷. Moltmann points out that the expression, 'the signs of the times', propagated itself by way of 'apocalyptic traditions, and continually cropped up in Christian history whenever world history was going through periods and moods of crisis'⁴³⁸. The *KD* clearly draws from the biblical apocalyptic tradition by its use of key eschatological motifs such as 'crisis' and *Kairos*. The eschatology of the *Document*, is however, according to Nolan, implicit rather than explicit:

The eschatology of the *Kairos* Document is implicit. Nowhere is it spelt out as an eschatology and I do not think that those responsible for the document were consciously making use of any particular eschatological framework⁴³⁹.

Nolan pointed out, however, that the use that was made of the *Kairos* idea in the *Document*, in reference to the prevailing crisis in South Africa as a divine *Kairos* contained clear implications for eschatology. In relation to the message of the *KD*, Nolan characterised the relationship between the notions of *eschaton* and *Kairos* as follows:

The *eschaton* is a future act of God that has finality for us because it determines the quality, the mood and seriousness of our present time, that is to say, it transforms the present moment into a particular kind of *Kairos*⁴⁴⁰.

situation, the need for strict hermeneutical correctness was simply a luxury no-one could afford. (Petersen, *Time, Resistance and Reconstruction: Rethinking Kairos Theology*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Divinity School in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Chicago, Illinois, June 1995).

⁴³⁷ Moltmann J, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, translated by M Kohl, SCM Press, London, 1977, p.38.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁹ A Nolan, 'The eschatology of the *Kairos* Document', *Missionalia*, Vol.15, No.2, August 1987, p.61.

⁴⁴⁰ Nolan, *op cit.*, p.64.

The *Kairos* theologians saw in the seriousness of the 'signs of the times' a divinely inspired *Kairos* and the nature and extent of responses to the *KD* represents an unmistakable vindication of the validity of their discernment. Writing from a perspective of Latin American Liberation theology, Jon Sobrino characterises the concept of the 'signs of the times' as 'a historico-pastoral one...in which a discernment of these signs is necessary in order for theology to have relevance'⁴⁴¹. Sobrino emphasised that as far as Liberation Theology was concerned the fundamental 'sign of the times' remains that of the 'irruption of the poor'⁴⁴². The sentiment articulated by Sobrino is echoed by other liberation theologies, both Catholic and Protestant. Victorio Araya, for example, a member of the Methodist Evangelical Church and professor of theology at the Latin American Biblical Seminary in Costa Rica makes the point:

We must therefore be attentive to the kernel of God's manifestation in contemporary signs of the times - attentive to God's challenges coming to us through the cry of millions of poor throughout the world, especially in Latin America⁴⁴³.

The *KD* therefore signified, *by its very appearance*, a 'sign of the times' which the institutionalised churches failed to discern. Moreover, the churches were also challenged by the message of the *Document* itself, a message which communicated itself both in letter and spirit. While the *KD*, by virtue of its appearance alone, showed that its authors were discerning of and responsive to the 'signs of the times', the ESC's betrayed their incapacity, unwillingness and inertia to respond creatively and positively to the challenge. On the one hand the floundering of the churches is rooted in a socio-theological factor, which we have mentioned earlier, namely the fundamental failure to discern a historical moment of intervention to which the churches were being called. This socio-theological inadequacy has to do, in part, with a subdued ethos of social engagement, and consequent

⁴⁴¹ Sobrino J, 'Theology from amidst the Victims', in *The Future of Theology: Essays in Honour of Jürgen Moltmann*, eds. M. Volf, C. Krieg and T. Kucharz, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1996, p.166. Refer also to Segundo, *Signs of the Times: Theological Reflections*, Orbis, Maryknoll, New York, 1993.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴⁴³ Araya V, *God of the Poor: The Mystery of God in Latin American Liberation Theology*, translated from Spanish by Robert R Barr, Orbis, Maryknoll, New York, 1987, p.146.

lack of social analysis. On the other hand, a closer scrutiny reveals that collective *amnesia* also plays a substantial role in the problem as a whole. This question of the *amnesia*, to which we now turn our attention, further illuminates the causes of institutional entrapment of the churches.

7. The problem of the churches *amnesia*

The *KD* challenged the churches, amongst others, to re-define their theological identity and to explore the praxiological implications thereof in terms of a God who 'was is always on the side of the oppressed'(Ps.103:6)⁴⁴⁴. This dimension of the challenge underlied the *Document's* fundamental *theological* critique of the churches. We need to recognise, however, that the manifestation of *amnesia* is something that is a consequence of socio-historical processes. Shaped by many centuries of social institutionalism the Church, in general, becomes alienated from its true theological essence. The many layers of social engineering leaves the Church theologically disorientated and often out of touch with its *raison d'être*.

It is therefore, in a sense, not surprising that in the face of the *Kairos* challenge, the institutionalised churches showed that they were estranged from their theological roots. The *KD*, in particular, revealed something of the extent of this estrangement with the ESC's individual and collective *amnesia* being a particular manifestation hereof. What we are emphasising here is that under the many layers of historical institutionalism, the churches have lapsed into an extended *amnesia* or *memory-loss*. By this I mean the significant loss of an authentic and sharp sense of where they are coming from, and more importantly, of what kind of God their worship and witness has to bear testimony to.

A characteristic of this collective *amnesia* is that it tends to operate insidiously, infiltrating the Church's psyche and self-understanding by stealth and deception. Manifestations of this *amnesia* is the dulling of the Church's collective sense of being rooted spiritually and historically with the early faith-communities whose witness to God seldom betrayed a theology of a God who is on the side of the poor and the oppressed. To a significant degree

⁴⁴⁴ *KD*, p.28.

this dulled sensitivity is a consequence of the sheer weight of institutional baggage. This factor can be clearly seen, for instance, in the disproportionate volumes of time, effort and money vested by the institutional churches in the creation and perpetuation of ecclesiastical hierarchies, church buildings and administrative bureaucracies. In this process the churches gradually lose the essential awareness of their unique identity in relation to God's mission, with one of the consequences being an all-consuming pre-occupation with the maintenance of the Church as institution. Jean Baptiste Metz's notion of the 'dangerous memory'⁴⁴⁵ within Christianity is particularly instructive in this regard. Metz points us towards one of the key sources of renewal and liberation from institutional captivity. The expression of a 'dangerous memory' is, according to Metz, at the heart of the public witness of Christian faith:

This thesis is based on memory as the fundamental form of expression of Christian faith and on the central and special importance of freedom in that faith. In faith, Christians accomplish the *memoria passionis, mortis et resurrectionis Jesu Christi*. In faith, they remember the testament of God's love, in which the kingdom of God appeared among men (sic) by initially establishing that kingdom between men (sic), by Jesus confession of himself as the one who was on the side of the oppressed⁴⁴⁶.

For Metz the expression of the Church's faith deriving from the 'dangerous memory' is primarily in relation to the Church's challenge to the social order, or what he describes as the 'systems of our emancipative society'⁴⁴⁷. The need to nurture this dangerous, disruptive and even subversive memory applies equally in relation to the *Church itself*, and not least in regard to the problem of its institutionalism.

In regard to the *KD* and the *Kairos movement* it is this 'dangerous memory' factor which Bonganjalo Goba perceived with striking clarity. In the run-up to the publication of the *Document*, Goba observed that Christian activists who were being frustrated by the ineffectiveness of the churches against Apartheid 'may have to undermine the institutional

⁴⁴⁵ J. B. Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, Burns and Oates: London, 1980, p.89.

⁴⁴⁶ *Op cit.*, p.90.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

churches'⁴⁴⁸. Given the prevailing environment of intransigence displayed by the institutional churches and church-leaders at the time, this kind of incisive and provocative remark was bound to evoke strong disapproval rather than discernment by the churches. Institutionalised church-leaders showed little awareness of the fact that the *KD*, through its very intention to 'undermine the institutional churches', was sending the prophetic signal that they as church-leaders in particular needed desperately to heed.

In the event, the unyielding vanguard of the churches' institutional hierarchies and bureaucracies succeeded in keeping the potentially disruptive and subversive, and ultimately transformative and transforming effect of the *Document* at bay. One of the recurrent, and still valid, criticisms levelled against the ESC's over the years and even decades is that, while paying lip service, through Assembly resolutions, Synod decisions and other denominational pronouncements, to the plight of the poor and oppressed, the churches failed to translate resolution and rhetoric into action. The track records of the institutional churches under discussion in this dissertation show clearly enough that their lack of effective intervention on behalf of the poor and the oppressed betrayed their implicit, and sometimes explicit, support of a social system favouring the rich and the ruling classes. What is undeniable, however, is that the Church universal has always been, and will always be, haunted by a residual theology which requires it to obey God where human authority is in conflict with God's will.

It is this residual theological tradition of a 'dangerous memory' which the ESC's churches, amongst others, seem to have forgotten, forsaken or suppressed. The dominant theological tradition, that which the *KD* labelled 'Church theology', has held sway. The *Document*, in the face of this challenge, represented a theological wake-up call to the ESC's in particular and to South African churches and Christians in general. Unfortunately the churches, in terms of their responses, showed that they were too deep in their theological slumber and did not hear the call, or hear it clearly enough. The profound social, political and organic crisis that prevailed in 1985, however, brought to the fore the irrepressible nature of this 'dangerous memory' which resides within the faith community. With the advent of the *KD*

⁴⁴⁸ Report of the Annual Conference of ICT, May 30 - June 2, 1985, Johannesburg. (ICT Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

the dominant strain of 'Church theology' was being challenged by this 'dangerous memory', unearthed by the cries of the poor and the oppressed.

In the event of the *Kairos* challenge in South Africa the institutional churches' *amnesia* possibly represents one of the major underlying reasons for the failure of the churches both to recognise and to accept that the challenge. The *KD* sought to strike a chord within the institution. It was clear that the churches had muffled their own inner prophetic voices. This characteristic of collective *amnesia* both within church and society is, according to Steve de Gruchy, becoming apparent even in the post-Apartheid era. In a 1997 report to the General Assembly of the UCCSA on the 'Situation in South Africa', Steve de Gruchy made the following observations:

In the first place this *amnesia* belongs to those who were advantaged in the old South Africa. Ask a group of white people how many of them supported Apartheid, and you'll be surprised at how many underground supporters the ANC had!...It is *amnesia*...it is there too, in the psyches of the newly emerged political aristocracy. Comrades who were toy-toying with us in 1987, are suddenly in 1997 driving the black Mercedes' and BMW's that the whites who have emigrated are no longer buying. Comrades who promised to bring democracy and a better life for all, find it easier to forget those promises and enjoy the privileges of their new-found power. This too is *amnesia*⁴⁴⁹.

The problem of *amnesia* also applies to society. But this kind of *amnesia* is extremely pervasive in the churches, and within the context the ESC's they have taken on particular manifestations, as I have attempted to show. The issue of *amnesia* leads us back to the fundamental bondage in which the churches are trapped, which we identified earlier, namely the trap of institutionalism. The question now emerges as to whether the churches have recourse to an escape route from this entrapment or, at the very least, whether they are able to beginning undoing the shackles of this bondage.

8. Conclusion

The *KD* has, firstly, shown up in bold relief the nature and extent of the institutional

⁴⁴⁹ Report to the UCCSA Assembly, Gaborone, 1997.. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

captivity of the churches in South Africa, within a context of the all-consuming social stratification of Apartheid. The *Document* presents a brief but well-founded analysis and critique on why the churches failed, namely their reliance on inadequate theological frameworks, their lack of social and ecclesial analyses, their lack of praxis, etc. What the *KD*, in its critique of 'Church theology' and 'State theology' also highlighted is the fact that certain theological paradigms in South Africa implicitly, and often explicitly, discourse as disguised forms of liberal, conservative and right-wing political ideologies⁴⁵⁰.

Secondly, the churches also failed because they did not recognise the nature of, nor did they acknowledge the extent of their more fundamental bondage to the control and dictates of social institutions in general and to the stifling power of bureaucracy that has found a home and a stranglehold also within the Church. This captivity is a logically prior, and perhaps the primary reason why the institutional churches, whether they were historically located in Apartheid, post-Apartheid era or beyond, flounder in their quest to realise the ideal of being and becoming prophetic churches. Or at the very least, to become churches with a discernable prophetic orientation⁴⁵¹.

The widespread responses to and resonances with the challenge of the *KD* from movements, organisations and individuals outside of the institutional churches is, (i) a challenge to be open and responsive to the 'signs of the times' and the challenges thereof⁴⁵² and, (ii) a call to the churches to create the spaces and the opportunities for the impulses and the prophetic-charismatic upsurges from within and without their institutional boundaries to emerge. It would not be an exaggeration to state that periodic prophetic-charismatic

⁴⁵⁰ See, for example, I Mosala, 'The Theology of Ideology and the Ideology of Theology in the Black and White Church Struggle in South Africa', in *Paradigms and Progress in Theology*, (eds. J Mouton, A.G. van Aarde, W.S Vorster), HSRC, Pretoria, 1988, pp.311 - 319. For an extended treatment of the subject of the ideologies behind Right Wing Religious movements refer to *JTSA*, No. 69, December 1989.

⁴⁵¹ It could therefore be argued that this principle would apply to the institutionalized churches in other parts of Africa, Europe, Asia or America.

⁴⁵² The notion of 'open church' is one that Moltmann explores in his book entitled, *The Open Church: Invitation to a Messianic Life-style*, SCM Press, London, 1978. Moltmann's emphasis in this book is however not so much on the Church's openness to internal prophetic challenges but on the place and role of the congregation in church life and worship.

'interventions' are the indispensable and vital injections needed to revitalise moribund churches in their theology and praxis and to save them from total institutional captivity. Given the fact that the institutionalised churches, by their very nature, cannot be relied upon to provide the well-spring for a dynamic prophetic Christianity, the question arises as to *who* shall provide the source or sources for an ongoing contextual and charismatic prophetic theology and praxis? In other words, from which charismatic wells will the institutional churches drink in order to avoid dying of spiritual thirst? Where shall the churches derive the vision from which could direct them on the way to embarking on theological paradigms shifts which make them more mission-driven and less maintenance-orientated? Whilst the KD identified and, in itself, illustrated the problem, it did not provide an answer to a deeper level of the problem, which requires a conversation on the part of the churches. The conversation, is in relation to turning around and turning back to reclaim, retrieve and revive the prophetic role and mission of the Church at all times and in all situations. But what are some of the main conditions for this to happen? It is to this question that we now turn.

Chapter Two - Strategies towards the prophetic option

1. Creating spaces and opportunities for prophetic activity within the churches

The call to move from 'Church theology' to 'Prophetic theology' represented the core of the challenge of the *KD* to the churches. The *Document* itself is quite emphatic in ascribing much of the inadequacies within the institutional churches to their theological epicentres. In fairness to the ESC's, however, one would have to concede that there always existed, in varying degrees, voices and soundings that could rightly be described as prophetic and theological wake-up calls. The 'dangerous memory' has never been entirely submerged. The emergence of Black theology, for example, represents one such eloquent 'dangerous memory' or prophetic wake-up call from within the institutional churches. Coming out of the era of Black Consciousness and the radical events of the uprisings in Soweto in 1976, the ESC's, whose leadership at the time were almost exclusively white, were confronted by the challenge of an emerging articulate Black theological voice in the persons of the first generation of Black theologians, such as Manas Buthelezi, Ernest Baartman, Allan Boesak, Takatso Mofokeng, Simon Maimela, Bonganjalo Goba, and Desmond Tutu and Itumeleng Mosala. Reflecting on the origins of Black theology, Mosala makes the point that Black theologians did not emerge as a creation of the churches, but that they came into being in spite of the Church. Of such trailblazers in Black theology such as Baartman, Buthelezi, Tutu, Boesak, Goba and Mofokeng, Mosala remarks that 'all of them are the gift of the black struggle to the churches, not of the churches to the black struggle'⁴⁵³.

Prophetic voices also arose from other sources within the churches, such as Feminist theologians, justice groups, theological commissions, youth movements, and even individual church-leaders. The names of leaders such as Desmond Tutu, Frank Chikane and Beyers Naude stand out as examples of prophetic leadership in the churches' opposition to Apartheid⁴⁵⁴. Specifically in relation to the challenge of the *KD*, the prophetic leadership of

⁴⁵³ Mosala, 'Spirituality and Struggle: African and Black Theologies Mosala', *op cit.*, p.80.

⁴⁵⁴ Amongst the vast range of books written to acknowledge the prophetic witness of Tutu, see, for example, *Bishop Desmond Tutu - the Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, J Webster (ed.), Mowbray, London and Oxford, 1982; *TUTU - Voice of the Voiceless*, S du Boulay, Hodder and Stoughton, London, Sydney, Auckland, Toronto, 1988; J Wallis & Joyce Hollyday (eds.), *Crucible of Fire:*

the Revd Joseph Wing guided the UCCSA, at the very least, to acknowledging that the *Document* presented this church denomination with its own *Kairos*, as *Part Three* of this research clearly shows. The adoption and implementation of the *Pastoral Plan* in the UCCSA therefore represented, amongst other things, this particular ESC's explicit attempt to develop a greater prophetic profile as a denomination. However, while this initiative was of value and benefit to the UCCSA and its mission, the project fell short of producing a paradigm shift in its theology and praxis. There exists, as yet anyway, no discernable signs within the UCCSA which, subsequent to its response to the *KD*, would characterise the church as a denomination with a prophetic orientation. To its credit the UCCSA embarked on a major initiative to re-structure itself with the view to a mission rather than maintenance orientation. However, these efforts have floundered against the walls of institutionalism and a resurgent conservatism. One gets the impression that underlying the UCCSA's resistance to transformation is an underlying and deeply-rooted strain of 'Church theology'.

In regard to the other ESC's, if the *Kairos* challenge produced any significant shift towards prophetic theology, such an indication has yet to emerge. Historically, the prophetic track records of these and other churches in South Africa prior to the advent of the *Document* is even less impressive⁴⁵⁵. All of which points, on the one hand, to the lack significant progress in the often-stated quests towards becoming churches which have a prophetic voice. On the other hand, this failure is, as I have attempted to show, also largely due to the social phenomenon of the churches' institutional captivity within society at large.

The Church Confronts Apartheid, Orbis, Maryknoll, New York, 1989, pp.33-39; and Archbishop Tutu: *Prophetic Witness in South Africa*, L Hulley, L Kretzschmar & L Pato (eds.), Human & Rousseau, Pretoria, 1997. In relation to Chikane, refer to P. Walshe, *Prophetic Christianity and the Liberation Movement in South Africa*, pp. 112-162; M Prozesky (ed.), *Christianity in South Africa*, p.81ff; Wallis & Hollyday (eds.), *Crucible of Fire: The Church Confronts Apartheid*, pp.71-79; F Chikane, *No Life of My Own - An Autobiography*, CIIR, 1988. In respect of Naude, see especially *Resistance and Hope: South African essays in honour of Beyers Naude*, C Villa-Vicencio and J de Gruchy (eds.), Wm. B Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1985 and *Many Cultures, One Nation: Festschrift for Beyers Naude*, C Villa-Vicencio and C Niehaus (eds.), Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, 1995.

⁴⁵⁵ Peter Walshe, for instance, in tracing and analyzing the strands of prophetic witness in South Africa since 1910, clearly shows that the dominant impulses of 'prophetic Christianity' have come not from within the institutionalized churches, but from without, e.g.. African Politics, the Sharpeville crisis, the Liberation movements, the ecumenical organizations, etc. (*Prophetic Christianity and the Liberation Movement in South Africa*).

Ironically, it is the perpetuation of the myth itself, i.e. of the nascent existence or immanent realisation of a prophetic church, that keeps the quest alive. What has not been recognised, or if recognised remains unacknowledged by the churches concerned, is that their ongoing captivity to institutionalism consistently reduces the ongoing quests for a prophetic church to ecclesiastical exercises in futility.

However, to state that the prophetic church is a myth and that quests towards a prophetic church are misdirected, is not to imply that prophetic *impulses and activities* from within and without the churches are of no substantial consequence. On the contrary, what is being proposed in this final section of the dissertation is the following: Firstly, that the churches are not necessarily doomed towards an overt and perpetual state of institutional captivity. Secondly, that the key for ecclesial and social transformation is a faith-driven willingness to be subjected to the prophetic-charismatic impulses from within and without the institutional church to the full extent to which transformation is necessary. Thirdly, the institutional churches have a responsibility, not only to discern the prophetic-charismatic impulses, but also to nurture and create the environment within for it to emerge.

Therefore, insofar as the institutionalised churches are receptive and responsive to - instead of reactive against, dismissive of and opposed to - challenges that arise from the soundings, stirrings and impulses of prophetic-charisma, a strong and clear prophetic character is certain to emerge within the life, work and witness of these churches. There are, however, other distinct factors which are essential to the creation and nurturing of an environment in which the prophetic challenge may arise. To these we now turn our attention.

2. Taking seriously the changing social contexts

It is evident that within the relatively short period of ten years, i.e. from 1985 to 1995, the nature of the *relationship* between the ESC's and the state had changed substantially. One could justifiably characterise the shift in relationship from that of confrontation to that of co-operation, collaboration and co-existence. This development is all the more remarkable when one considers that in 1985, the year of the publishing of the *KD*, the already strained relationship between the Apartheid state and the churches moved to new depths of antagonism. Events such as the shootings on Sharpeville Day, March 17, 1985 in Langa,

Uitenhage, put the churches under greater pressure to move beyond protest to resistance. It was in the aftermath of the Langa shootings and other acts of repression that churches were faced with an increasing challenge, both from within and without their respective ecclesiastical establishments. The clarion call was for the translation of their oft' repeated condemnations of the state into actions that represented a more direct challenge to the Apartheid regime.

It was precisely campaigns, such as the Call to Prayer for the End of Unjust Rule in 1985 and in particular the challenge of the *KD* in the same year that forced the ESC's in particular and other churches in general to begin facing up to the contradiction created by themselves. By publicly declaring their opposition to Apartheid and yet not following through with significant actions such as civil disobedience, for instance, the churches were further undermining their credibility as an opposition force to be reckoned with. In the nature of things it took an escalation of the socio-political crisis in the country to produce the first clearest signs of a new dawn in church-state relations. In 1988, the emergence of the ecumenical churches' Standing-for-the-Truth campaign signalled this new turn in the arena of church-state relations, in which prominent church-leaders and laity participated in actions of public protest in open defiance of the state.

The above period saw a determined effort on the part of P.W. Botha's government to crush the burgeoning Mass Democratic Movement of which the churches' Standing-for-the-Truth campaign was an integral part. The subsequent banning of the UDF, COSATU and other organisations from engaging in mass opposition political activities left a leadership vacuum which presented leaders and laity from the ecumenical churches with the opportunity and challenge to play a major role in such public events as the Defiance Campaign of 1989. The high visibility of prominent church-leaders and clergy engaged in protest marchers signalled the new and more defiant era in the ongoing saga of church-state relations in South Africa.

Such actions associated the ESC's and other ecumenical churches more clearly with the cause of the liberation movements and the Mass Democratic Movement. For example, as outdoor political meetings were banned, church buildings were increasingly being used for protest meetings and gatherings - the most well known of such venues being the Regina

Mundi Catholic Church in Soweto, and St. George's Cathedral in Cape Town. Funerals of many a young anti-Apartheid activist killed in the struggle for liberation became a political rallying point as whole communities drew together to strengthen their resolve to resist the Apartheid regime.

The intense pressure on the government from all opposition quarters, of which the ecumenical churches had become a more significant part, was maintained and which eventually culminated in the unbanning of the ANC, PAC and the SACP and the eventual release of Mr Nelson Mandela in February 1990. The actions of Mr. De Klerk in unbanning of the political parties and setting Mandela free was hailed by most churches and church-leaders. The above development in particular set the stage for a radically new order in the nature of church-state relations which, from 1990 to 1995 in particular, saw the churches inclined to seek new avenues of rapprochement rather than persist in opposition.

With the country's first democratic elections and the adoption of the Interim Constitution in April 1994, the churches had become effective allies with the new government of National Unity. It is notable that a number of prominent churchpeople and Christian activists of yesteryear, such as Fr. S. Mkatswha, Sr. Bernard Ncube, the Revd a Stofile, Dr. A Boesak, Dean Farisani and Dr. F Chikane were taking their places in the corridors political power. Prophets of the Apartheid-era were becoming parliamentarians within the new social dispensation. With the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa, the Apartheid state had been decisively consigned to the scrapheap of history.

However, even some four years after the 1994 elections, and on the eve of the 1999 elections, it is evident that all is not well within the new social order, and the new-found alliance between the ecumenical churches and the state is, at best, a precocious one, and at worst, a potentially perilous one. The question of growing poverty and economic deprivation, for example, raises the disturbing question about the capacity and the will of politicians, parliamentarians and the business moguls to translate the gains of social democracy into economic benefit for the masses. This question of the poor and their ongoing plight is one that is at the heart, firstly, of the credibility of the new social order and, secondly, that which should guide and inform the churches' quest for a new and contextually relevant prophetic theology. Other factors such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic,

the abuse of women and children, the breakdown of family life, corruption in the private and public sectors, secularisation and the escalation of violent crime merely underline the urgent need for a re-defined prophetic theology that is coming to grips with the vicissitudes and vagaries of the post-Apartheid social order.

As we have shown, the inherent ability of the institutionalised churches to lead the charge against the evils in society is, at best, limited and at worst, ineffective. Given this inadequacy and incapacity, particularly in presenting an essential and ongoing prophetic challenge to both the state and society, we need to look elsewhere for the sources for the prophetic impulse and activity which would enable and empower the churches, at the very least, to be exposed to and to be reminded of their essential task as instruments of God's mission and agents of social transformation. Amongst the sources of challenge, inspiration and empowerment is surely the communities of the poor and the marginalised people who are present both in the churches and within society.

3. The option for the poor

'You shall always have the poor with you...' This statement, attributed to Jesus in Matthew's Gospel (26:11) is often quoted in support of a particular ideological position⁴⁵⁶. What cannot be disputed, however, is the reality of persistent and widespread experiences of poverty⁴⁵⁷ by individuals, communities, nations and even by continents throughout

⁴⁵⁶ Frequent allusion to this text (i.e. Matt.26:11) is in relation to 'explaining' or justifying the existence of poverty as a given. In other words, poverty is a reality which one should accept for it is inherent in the created order, and as such fore-ordained by God. Those who subscribe to the above position conveniently forget, or ignore, the Old Testament origin and reference which carries the concomitant: 'Therefore, I command you, You shall open your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor in the land' (Deut.15:11).

⁴⁵⁷ Any single definition of poverty is bound to be inadequate. Given the changing and changed social contexts in South Africa, with the emphasis moving towards defining poverty mainly in *economic* terms, a comprehensive delineation of the nature of poverty is even more problematic. Therefore the sense in which I am using the term here denotes a range of experiences, eg. of being disregarded, or excluded, or despised, or oppressed. The *Inter-Church Coalition on Africa*, for instance, suggests that poverty is measured in terms of the following five areas: (i) Material Deprivation, ie. lack of income, resources and assets; (ii) Physical Weakness, ie. malnutrition, sickness, disability, lack of strength; (iii) Isolation, ie. illiteracy, lack of access to education and resources, living in isolated or peripheral areas, marginalisation and discrimination; (iv) Vulnerability, ie. vulnerability to contingencies which increase poverty, such as war, climate changes, seasonal

history⁴⁵⁸. In the present century, with all the scientific advances made towards improving the quality of human life, in a relatively wealthy and industrialised country such as the United States of America, the indications are that poverty is a burgeoning phenomenon. The USA-based *Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy*, for example, sketches the following picture of the growing measure of poverty in the America:

In 1985, 20 million people were hungry in the United States. By 1995 that number had increased to 30 million. The Food Stamp Program, the main federal government food assistance channel, currently serves 26 million people (about 10 percent of the U.S. population) per month...The U.S. government's measure of poverty is based on the income needed to purchase a minimally adequate diet ⁴⁵⁹.

The extent of poverty in South Africa has, by all indications, not decreased since the scrapping of doctrinaire Apartheid from the early 1990's onwards, and the subsequent demise of the Apartheid-state in 1994. A report on poverty in South Africa, commissioned in 1995 by the government's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) office,

fluctuations, illness or injury; (v) Powerlessness, ie. the inability to avoid poverty or to make changes in a situation of poverty (*Responses to Poverty in the North and South*, ICCAF: Toronto, 1996, p.9). From a biblical perspective, much academic debate about whether one or other biblical text speak about a 'material' or 'spiritual' condition, when referring to 'the poor' seems to me to miss the core meaning of the biblical concern in this matter. Gutiérrez surely points in the right direction when, in reference to the use of the word 'poor' in Luke 6:20-26, for instance, states: 'The Greek word for poor here is *ptochoi*. It's meaning here is beyond any doubt: etymologically the word means "stooped", the "dismayed". It is actually used to speak of the needy, those who must beg in order to live - those whose existence, then, depends on others. In other words, it means the helpless'. ('Option for the Poor', *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, eds. J. Sobrino & I. Ellacuria, Orbis: Maryknoll, 1996, p.28.). Other relevant expositions on biblical definitions of 'poor' and 'poverty' are too numerous to quote here. Such a survey, in any event, falls outside of the scope of this study.

⁴⁵⁸ For a historical perspective on this matter from the point of a Roman Catholic Liberation Theology, refer to 'The Option for the Poor during a Thousand Years of Church History', in *The Bible, the Church and the Poor: Biblical, Theological and Pastoral Aspects of the Option for the Poor*, G. Pixley and C. Boff, translated from the Spanish and Portuguese by Paul Burns, Burns & Oates Wellwood, 1989, pp. 159-184.

⁴⁵⁹ M.J.Cohen and J.D'Costa, 'Overview of World Hunger', in *What Governments Can Do: Seventh Annual Report on the State of World Hunger*, Bread for the World Institute: Silver Spring, 1996, pp. 9-10. According to a 1994 report by the United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF] some 20% of children live in poverty in the United States ('The Industrialized World: Achievement and Disparity', *The Progress of Nations*, UNICEF, New York, 1994, p.42.).

sketches the following disturbing picture:

...53% of the population lives on less than R301 a month. In fact more than half of these are called "ultra-poor" because they live on less than R178 a month. Most of these poor people are African (95%), the majority are women (61%) and a surprising 45% are children under the age of 16⁴⁶⁰.

The situation of escalating economic deprivation and hardship in South Africa has elicited widespread concern from the main sectors of society, i.e. the religious establishments, labour, business and the government. To its credit the democratically-elected government of South Africa, in contrast to the previous Apartheid regime, appears to be much more serious about eradicating poverty amongst the majority of citizens. The proliferation of Commissions, Summits and Campaigns on Poverty⁴⁶¹ reflect this mood of seriousness in addressing what is clearly emerging as the single greatest new challenge to the churches in South Africa⁴⁶². Graeme Bloch, a member of the War on Poverty Steering Committee, and chief director of Social Development in the Department of Welfare, highlights the fact even three years after the country's democratic elections, the economic disparity between black and white South Africa remains as wide as ever. Bloch quotes the following statistics in

⁴⁶⁰ Quoted from 'Key Indicators of Poverty in South Africa', A Report prepared by South Africa and World Bank researchers for the office of Reconstruction and Development Programme. (*Challenge*, 35, April/May 1996, p.2). Refer also to other publications such as *A Profile of Poverty, Inequality and Human Development in South Africa*, Human Sciences Research Council: Pretoria, 1995; *Beyond Poverty: Report of the Poverty Summit held at Midrand*, Quo Vadis Communications: Gauteng, 1998; J May, *Experiences and Perceptions of Poverty in South Africa: Final Report*, Praxis Publishing, 1998; and D. S. Gillan (ed.), *Church, Land and Poverty: Community Struggles, Land Reform and the Policy Framework on Church Land*, The South African Council of Churches, The National Land Committee, The Church Land Project, The Surplus Peoples' Project: Johannesburg, 1998.

⁴⁶¹ For example, the nation-wide *Speak Out on Poverty* campaign (also referred to as *The Poverty Hearings*) which was co-ordinated by the South African Human Rights Commission, the Commission on Gender Equality and the South African Non-Government Organizations Coalition; the creation of a *Poverty Eradication Commission* by church-leaders; and the *National Poverty Summit* (June 26-28, 1998) initiated by the, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town the Most Revd Njongonkulu Ndungane; the *War on Poverty Declaration* adopted by the South African Council of Churches, the South African Non-Government Organizations Coalition, the Homeless People's Federation, the Department of Welfare, the Congress of South Africa Trade Unions and the United Nations Development Programme.

⁴⁶² See, for example, articles on the subject of 'The Church and Poverty' in *Challenge*, No.35, April/May 1996.

support of his contention:

About 2,3 million South Africans are malnourished. a quarter of schools have no running water within walking distance; half have no electricity. While 66% of Africans are poor, only 2% of whites are. South Africa, three years into the transition, remains one of the most unequal societies in the world⁴⁶³.

The persistent economic contrast between rich and poor is corroborated from another independent source, ie. the 1996/97 South African Christian Handbook, which portrays the situation of poverty in the country as follows:

South Africa is a country of vast contrasts. This reflected in the land area which ranges from mountain grandeur to arid desert. It is reflected in the lives of those who participate in the highly sophisticated western economy to people, whose way of life differs little from the primary lifestyles existing in most of Africa - that of rural subsistence. It is reflected in social data which indicates the relative wealth in the urban areas, where children are educated and receive adequate health care, to the rural part of the country where the quality of life is poor⁴⁶⁴.

What the above translates into, in terms of human development, is a rather dismal picture, described hereunder as follows:

The World Bank has developed a rating system known as the Human Development Index. This combines a number of social indicators including per capita income, food supply and access to clean water. South Africa rates 86th on this human development index alongside Paraguay, but if this were to be divided racially, then the white population would rank 19th and the Black population 119th. The rating, however becomes even more complex when differences between urban and rural dwellers are taken into account. The average for South Africa is 0,69 on a scale of 10. The Western Province had the highest rating with 0.76, while the Northern Province was the lowest at 0.4⁴⁶⁵.

⁴⁶³ G Bloch, 'It's time for a war on poverty', *The Star*, 29 August, 1997.

⁴⁶⁴ M Froise (ed.), *South Africa Christian Handbook 1996/1997*, Christian Info: Johannesburg, p.25.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Given the harsh legacies of political repression, cultural alienation, social deprivation and economic injustices from a protracted Apartheid era, poverty is arguably more widespread today than ever before. And poor people themselves, precisely because of their historical experiences of sustained deprivation, repression and exclusion find it extremely difficult to organise themselves in ways that they could make their plight known and heard by those able to significantly alter their circumstances. The vast majority of poor people are usually those who suffer in silence, who sit silently and patiently in front of factory gates day after day hoping against hope for employment. They are the ones who occupy the pavements with their meagre produce or merchandise hoping for a few sales. They are the ones who have thrown pride and human dignity overboard to walk the streets to beg. The poor in the South African context are therefore still very much 'with us and amongst us'. The question is whether, in the new social dispensation, the *voice* of the poor will be heard, and whether such a voice would not only be clearly heard but acknowledged to be the soundings, stirrings and main impulses of the prophetic voice for this new era in South Africa, and possible even beyond the present time into the new millennium? It appears that this recognition has filtered through, in the Latin American context, for example. From the perspectives of both first and second generations of Liberation theology, the phenomenon identified as the *irruption of the poor* has, according to Gustavo Gutiérrez, heralded a decisive change in the socio-theological scenario, and which has subsequently become a major hermeneutic for present and future genres of Liberation theology:

Our days bear the mark of a vast historical event: the *irruption of the poor*. We refer to the new presence of those who had actually been absent in our society and in the church. By *absent* we mean of little or no significance, as well as being without the opportunity to manifest their sufferings, solidarities, projects and hopes. As a result of a long historical process, this situation has begun to change in Latin America⁴⁶⁶.

The poor in Latin America are, according to Gutierrez, silent no longer. They were making their presence felt in a new and challenging way and making an intervention for and on

⁴⁶⁶ G Gutiérrez, 'Option for the Poor', in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, J Sobrino and I Ellacuria (eds.), Orbis: Maryknoll, New York, 1993, p.22.

behalf of themselves. In his assessment of the broader international scene Gutierrez observed that similar changes were also occurring in Africa and Asia⁴⁶⁷. But to what extent are we experiencing the *irruption of the poor* in South Africa? In other words, given the history of economic, social, cultural and political deprivation of the majority South Africans in society and in the churches, can we justifiably expect the poor communities to *irrupt*, to emerge forcefully, at this juncture? More specifically, for the purposes of this study, to what extent can we expect the poor to beat the drums of prophetic challenge in South Africa during this extended time of social transition and beyond into the new millennium?

It is the view of the writer that to expect an *irruption of the poor*, in the sense that Gutierrez speaks about it, with a major impact on socio-theological scene in this country is, *at this historical stage*, premature. Political liberation has been achieved, and the gains in favour of the poor should, of course, not be underestimated. However, the processes of economic advancement and human empowerment amongst the masses of black people in the country still have a substantially long way to go. This is not at all to imply that the poor communities are thereby, of necessity, reduced of to mere objects in the quest for social transformation. On the contrary, the achievement of political liberation in South Africa is in large measure due to the sustained historical acts of resistance - often in the face of severe repression - and the definitive exercise of political power at the ballot boxes by the poor, on behalf of themselves and of the country as a whole. But the extent to which poor communities in South Africa are able to speak and act for themselves is significantly restricted, due in the main to the sheer weight of their historical disadvantages and the perpetuation of their deprived status in society. This ongoing modern form of enslavement, ie. poverty, constitutes the basis for a radical and ongoing prophetic critique of the church itself and of society. The experiences of the poor is therefore an essential hermeneutic by which theological jargon and sophistry must be assessed. The cry of the poor is that which also decodes the spin-doctoring of the statisticians.

However, if we accept that the poor 'will always be with us', and all the ramifications of

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

this fact within the South African context, the question which also needs to be asked and addressed is: how are the prophetic messages which emanate from amongst the poor themselves to be heard, and how are such prophetic impulses to be picked up, nurtured and processed for the benefit of all concerned? In other words what is involved in the 'prophetic option for the poor'? It is to this question that we now turn. The oft' repeated phrase, 'option for the poor'⁴⁶⁸ can hardly be used today as if its meaning is self-evident. Unfortunately this phrase has been subjected to misrepresentation and misunderstanding. For example, one of the common misunderstandings is that 'option for the poor' has to do with a preference for ministry to and amongst poor and deprived communities rather than amongst the non-poor. Albert Nolan outlines in unambiguous terms what we should understand by this phrase, 'the option for the poor', as follows:

The option for the poor is not a choice about the *recipients* of the gospel message, *to whom* we must preach the gospel; it is a matter of *what gospel* we preach to anyone at all. It is concerned with the *content* of the gospel message itself. The gospel may be good news for the poor and bad news for the rich but it is a message for both the poor and the rich⁴⁶⁹.

The 'option for the poor' is therefore not a matter of a preference for some people over others, but a question of taking up the cause of the poor as opposed to the cause of the rich and powerful. The meaning of the above phrase is expressed in another way by Gutiérrez, in his observation about the distinctions made by Liberation theology among three notions of poverty. These are 'real poverty, as an *evil* (that is, as not desired by God); spiritual poverty, as *availability* to the will of the Lord; and *solidarity* with the poor, as well as with

⁴⁶⁸ It is unknown when and in which context this phrase, 'option for the poor' was first used. What is evident, however, is that it has become current since the early 1980's to the present time in ecclesiastical circles, particularly in Latin America. Donal Dorr, writing in 1983, states: 'This phrase burst upon the ecclesiastical scene only a few years ago. Since then it has become the most controversial religious term since the reformers' cry, "salvation by faith alone"'. (*Option for the Poor: A Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching*, Maryknoll: New York, 1983, p.1) See also Dorr, 'Option for the Poor: What does it mean?', in *Spirituality and Justice*, Gill and Macmillian: Dublin, Orbis Books: Maryknoll, New York, 1984, pp.74-86.

⁴⁶⁹ Nolan A, 'The option for the poor', in *Resistance and Hope: South African essays in honour of Beyers Naude*, C Villa-Vicencio and J de Gruchy (eds.), Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1985, p.118.

the situation they suffer'⁴⁷⁰.

The above-quoted third notion of poverty, i.e. '*solidarity* with the poor, as well as with the situation they suffer' underscores the point being made here about the proper meaning of the phrase 'option for the poor'. The 'option for the poor' therefore suggests itself as a challenging option for the churches and for Christians in South Africa. For even though the vast majority of black Christians who belong to the 'mainline churches'⁴⁷¹ are materially poor, the trappings and facades of these institutionalised churches undermine a genuine self-understanding amongst rank and file members of themselves as a church of and for the poor. It is likely that even a cursory survey amongst the ecumenical churches in South Africa as to how their financial and human resources are used would show that the needs of the poor is not high on their list of priorities⁴⁷².

It is therefore partly because of their characterisation as 'mainline' or 'established' churches and partly because of where much of the ministry and mission of the institutionalised churches happen that these denominations are not regarded as churches-of-the-poor, in the way as the AIC's, for example, could claim to be. Linda E Thomas, an African-American theologian and anthropologist who has been involved in research on the AIC's in South Africa, suggests that one of the reasons why these churches are so popular amongst the poor is because the AIC's are not about the creation of religious institutions, but that they are focussed on the integrating of religion with the 'circumstances of daily life'. Thomas elaborates:

⁴⁷⁰ Gutiérrez, *op cit.*, p.22.

⁴⁷¹ It is no co-incidence that, in popular ecclesiastical terminology, the ESC's and other ecumenical churches are referred to as the 'mainline churches' or the 'established churches'. This characterization by churchpeople in South Africa suggests that these churches are seen as being relatively prominent, wealthy and well established as social and ecclesiastical institutions, a characterization which tends to mask the fact that many, if not most, of the people belonging to these denominations are in fact neither wealthy nor socially prominent.

⁴⁷² To the best of my knowledge a comprehensive survey of this nature has not as yet been undertaken, and in the absence thereof any categorical statements on this matter cannot be made. However, I can speak of the denomination to which I belong, namely the UCCSA, in which the highest single allocation of funds, annually, is certainly not in respect of the poor, whether inside or outside of the church.

In South Africa, poor people struggle for life in ways that are alien to others, black or white, who have financial security. These churches form a liberating source of renewal for their members, because the churches respond to the challenges of their members' lives, and embody a concrete means of survival for poor people⁴⁷³.

Although the AIC's have numerically⁴⁷⁴ overtaken the 'mainline churches', it is evident to any observer that AIC's, apart from the fact that the majority of their membership are from the poorest of black communities, do not pursue the creation of infra-structures and bureaucracies that consume vast amounts of time, money and other material resources⁴⁷⁵.

The ESC's and other institutionalised churches would therefore do well to reassess their socio-economic status as denominations, and to concentrate more of their efforts on becoming what they often claim to be, namely churches in solidarity with the poor. Amongst other things, this would mean a radical reprioritising of material, financial and human resources in favour of the upliftment and empowerment of the poor, whether such poor are inside or outside of the bounds of the institutional church. This would of necessity require a fundamental change of attitude and orientation in relation to the poor on the part of church hierarchical authorities and bureaucracy. It would mean, *inter alia*, that new opportunities would have to be created, new forums would have to be established, and re-structuring⁴⁷⁶ to be effected in order for the prophetic voice by the poor and behalf of the poor to be articulated and to be heard. The non-readiness and non-willingness of the

⁴⁷³ For a profile of the AIC's, written from the point of view of an insider, refer to *Who are the Independent Churches?* by P Makhubu, Skotaville, Johannesburg, 1988. Refer also to M. West, *Bishops and Prophets in a Black City: African Independent Churches in Soweto*, David Philip: Cape Town, 1975.

⁴⁷⁴ According to the 1991 Census figures, the AIC's comprise an overall membership of approximately six million members, while both the Dutch Reformed Church and the Roman Catholic Church together have a total membership of under five million. (Refer to *South African Christian Handbook*, p.58).

⁴⁷⁵ Thomas, 'Constructing a Theology of Power: Lessons from Apartheid: Anthropological Reflections on Healing Rituals among Poor Black South Africans', *Missionalia* 25: Vol.1, April 1997, p.19.

⁴⁷⁶ In this regard the UCCSA went further than other ecumenical churches in responding to the prophetic challenge of the KD. This church embarked on an all-embracing re-structuring programme since 1987. Unfortunately, for the reasons discussed in *Part Three* of this dissertation, the UCCSA also did not follow through to the logical consequences of the 1987 initiative as far as changing the institutional profile was concerned.

churches to *listen* to the poor and to the prophetic voice is amply illustrated in their responses to the *KD*. Villa-Vicencio points to this tendency which came to the fore in relation to the challenge of the *Kairos*:

The institutional churches, whose spokespersons are so ready to identify the weaknesses of the Document appear set, as they have done so often in the past, to again experience their *Kairos* as historical judgement. Is there no occasion for the churches to be quiet and listen?⁴⁷⁷

However, the prophetic word itself need not remain silent, obscured or unarticulated because the process of empowerment of the poor to fully speak for themselves has not as yet come to fruition. The *KD* and the *Kairos* theologians illustrate this point very powerfully. It is a fact that at least some of the authors, and many of the signatories of the *Document* did not reside or work in the townships from day to day. However, by being in solidarity with township people they were relatively well placed to hear, discern and help articulate the dominant sentiments of black communities.

Poor and oppressed communities are often materially poor because of the socio-political and economic systems which marginalize and discriminate against them. The communities of the poor and oppressed as such constitute the normative contexts, the raw material, for the genesis of prophetic and charismatic impulses. Prophetic interlocutors and other organic intellectuals are therefore often obliged to speak on behalf of the poor. It needs to be emphasised, however, that their role is strictly an intermediate one. However crucial their function, interlocutors need to interact with the poor with the view to 'working themselves out of a job'. They need to go the further step of giving their full support and putting their weight behind the initiatives aimed at empowering the poor to speak and act prophetically for themselves. In the words of Gutiérrez, the poor have to be assisted to become 'artisans of their own liberation':

We will not have an authentic theology of liberation until the

⁴⁷⁷ Villa-Vicencio, 'A Reluctant Response: Has the Challenge been heard?', *JTSA*, No. 55, March 1986, p. 56.

oppressed themselves are able to freely and creatively express themselves in society and among the people of God...We shall not have our great leap of faith forward, into a whole new theological perspective, until the marginalised and exploited have begun to become the artisans of their own liberation -until their voice makes itself heard directly, without mediators, without interpreters...We shall not have our quantum theological leap until the oppressed themselves theologize⁴⁷⁸.

The institutional churches and church-leaders in South Africa would therefore be well advised to learn the important lesson about being in touch with the poor and marginalised communities from both the process and content of the *KD*. The *Kairos* theologians took their cue and were in fact challenged by the cries of the oppressed. It is out of this hearing and responding to that the authors of the *Document* were able to articulate a prophetic word on behalf of the poor. Given the fact that a new democratic political dispensation in South Africa has, to date, not translated into significant economic empowerment of poor black communities, church-leaders should keep their theological ears to the ground and be alert to the emergent new *kairos* from within the contexts of the poor. The poor, therefore, constitute an ongoing *normative context* for the construction of a relevant prophetic theology within a changing and changed social order.

Moreover, the ongoing task of seeking new and creative ways for the empowering of the poor and marginalised communities to enable them to speak and act prophetically for themselves, should feature as a major item on the churches' agendas. It would not be amiss to suggest that after political liberation in South Africa, the next major phase of the struggle is that of economic empowerment, and the major thrust of the challenge to the churches is to declare in word and in deed, that Jesus came to the world that all 'may have fullness of life' (John 10:10) - a promise that applies in a substantial way to those who are poor. As a fundamental part of a strategy for the prophetic option, therefore, the churches need to choose and work out the implications of an option for the poor.

We turn now to consider the extent to which existing and emerging Contextual theologies impact on the formulation and sustaining of a prophetic critique by the churches.

⁴⁷⁸ G. Gutiérrez, in R McAfee Brown, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology*, Orbis Books: Maryknoll, 1990, p.70.

4. Dialoguing with Contextual and Liberation theologies

4.1 Interlude: A second *Kairos Document*?

The question of the emergence and the need for a second *KD* is one that requires our attention at this juncture. The power of the *Kairos symbolism* was evident even at the time when the *Document* was first released. An international observer, Israel Batista, characterised the evocative power of the *KD* as follows:

...(KD) was like the sound of the horn in the Old Testament on the Day of Atonement calling for repentance and restitution. The sound of the horn woke up our spirits, inspired our resistances and strengthened our commitments⁴⁷⁹.

The call from some quarters for the publication of a second *KD*, some ten years after the first, represented an authentic and legitimate need to capitalise on the enormous momentum generated by the *Kairos* movement internationally and in South Africa. However, though obviously well-intentioned, this seems to be a wrong route. The *Document*, the subsequent *Kairos* movement, and the emergence of a *Kairos symbolism* were all characterised by spontaneous and almost irrepressible resonances. Given the above, it would surely be premature and ultimately counterproductive to insist on the necessity of a second *KD* merely to harness the *Kairos*-generated momentum. Moreover, the nature of the crisis in South Africa, and for that matter beyond the borders of this country, has yet to be discerned and clearly defined. The question may also be raised as to whether the crisis, if and when it is more clearly defined, in fact constitutes a *Kairos*.

The fact remains, however, that the new emerging society in South Africa is showing enough clear signs of a society under significant stress, and a major causative factor in is the post-1994 elections experience of disconfirmed expectations amongst the poor and formerly politically oppressed people of the country. Given the above scenario, it is not surprising that there is a call for the retrieving of the powerful *Kairos symbolism*, which suggests itself as an authentic contextual trajectory that could chart the course for present

⁴⁷⁹ Israel Batista, *A Witness of Faith*. Sermon given at the Service of Worship (Regina Mundi Church) during the 10th Anniversary *Kairos* Celebrations, September 22-35, 1995, Johannesburg. (D. van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

and future prophetic Christianity both in South Africa and abroad. Certainly the nature of the 10th Anniversary Celebrations of the *KD* showed, beyond doubt, that the *Document* which brought into being an international *Kairos* movement unearthed a powerful theologically sustainable and sustaining symbol. Since 1985, the events associated with *Kairos* Africa, *Kairos* Europa, *Kairos* America and *El Kairos en Centroamerica*, represent a significant development within the international ecumenical arena.

By all indications the above-named movements, which have adopted *Kairos* as their *leitmotiv*, were still active, as evidenced by the presence of and testimonies given by the international participants at the 10th Anniversary Conference *cum* Celebrations of the *KD* in 1995. The Conference resolved, therefore, that the ICT Planning Committee began working on proposals for a second *Kairos Document* with the view to it being published by the end of June 1996. ICT Research Officer, Stiaan van der Merwe, however, expressed serious reservations about the intention to have a second *KD* published:

What is needed here is not another *Kairos*, which I said is beginning to sound like *Rocky V*, *DOS 6.2.2!* (We are on our way to K.D. 2.2.3!). This lessens the impact of the K.D. It cheapens it, as though there can be another, re-definition of prophetic theology. No! What we require is a continuation of the process, a second phase, if you like. To talk of a *Kairos* II implies that *Kairos* I is completed. It has not⁴⁸⁰.

Such objections to a proposed second *KD* being published were clearly valid, on three counts at least. Firstly, the specific elements of the socio-political crisis that prevailed in 1985 which galvanised the process leading up to the publication of the *KD* no longer prevailed. Secondly, the initial responses to the 1985 crisis by the *Kairos* theologians and the subsequent process of consultation which led to the production and publication of the *Document* then was clearly an unforced exercise which, despite the repression under the State of Emergency, succeeded to a remarkable degree, whereas the new processes undertaken which was aimed at the creation of a second *KD* seemed to be more than just a little forced and contrived. Thirdly, the *KD* in 1985 was, in a profound sense, a *time-piece*

⁴⁸⁰ Report on the Planning Meeting for the Tenth Anniversary of the *Kairos Document*, May 8-9, 1995, Safari Hotel, Johannesburg. (D van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

and the subsequent *Kairos* movement internationally was a unique event in ecumenical history and theology. The low impact of the 1990 sequel to the *Document*, namely *The Road to Damascus*, demonstrated conclusively that the *KD* was an extremely hard act to follow. An attempt therefore to produce a second *KD* may prove not only to be a singularly poor successor, but also serve to undermine the immense gains and merely detract from this unique 1985 publication⁴⁸¹.

The above objections, however, in no way intend to deny the validity of a growing sense in South Africa that new elements of crisis exist in the prevailing social context, and that a serious attempt should be made to analyse and address such concerns. The question is whether a second *KD* is one of the most appropriate and effective routes. While Stiaan van der Merwe's criticisms of the proposed second *KD*, quoted above, are mostly agreeable, his point about prophetic theology is surely amiss. Prophetic theology, contrary to van der Merwe's insistence, is constantly in need of *redefinition*. However, what is needed for the present time is not merely a rehashing of the outworn prophetic rhetoric associated with the Apartheid era. Jim Cochrane made this point in 1992 already - some two years before the first democratic elections which ushered South Africa into a new socio-political era - in an article entitled, 'Prophetic Theology Must Adapt or Die':

The Rustenburg Declaration acknowledges the challenges of the *Kairos* Document and even confesses the guilt of the Churches, but then allows the Churches to slip back into the typical "church theology" of moderation and reconciliation. However, this reflects, much more accurately than the *Kairos* Document ever did, the real core of the Church. And that is the problem for prophetic theology today...prophetic theology has been plunged into crisis today because of the promise of the gradual demise of racial injustice. If Apartheid is not on the way out, it is a bit less visible and less easy to define. When we add to this the fact that prophetic theology was linked with socialism and socialism too seems to be on the way out, we should not be surprised to discover that "ordinary Christians" no longer appear to be interested in prophetic theology⁴⁸².

⁴⁸¹ To the best of my knowledge, at the time of the writing of this dissertation, the proposed second *Kairos Document* has not as yet been written.

⁴⁸² *Challenge*, No.3, February 1992, pp.16-17.

The redefining and adaptation of Prophetic theology is even more pressing given the fact that the new democracy in South Africa has heralded an end to what the *Document* called 'State theology', which amongst others, legitimised oppression. Yet the dominant experience of many (mostly black) South Africans is still that of an oppression in the form of extreme poverty and deprivation. Moreover, the challenge of the *KD* to the churches ten years ago, to make the decisive paradigm shift from 'Church theology' towards prophetic theology has not been taken up in any significant way by the churches. When the ICT, therefore, adopted a theme such as 'Remaining Prophetic in a time of Reconstruction and Development'⁴⁸³ for its 1995 annual general meeting, it was recognising, on the one hand, the importance *for itself* to retain and maintain its prophetic character as an organisation. Moreover the above theme also sent out a clear signal about the need for Christians and churches to be prophetically vigilant.

Precisely because the dominant experience of most people in South Africa is still one of poverty, the prophetic warnings about systemic injustice which is at the root cause of such large-scale deprivation, has to be sounded loudly and clearly. The victory in the political arena is but one phase of a multi-dimensional struggle for liberation. The report of the ICT Resolutions Committee at the 1995 to the annual general meeting summed up this awareness very well:

...the euphoria and gratitude over the decisive victory for our political liberation should not make us forget that political power does not automatically mean economic power and empowerment for the majority of our people. We should not forget that our roots as well as our rendezvous with the risen Christ is with the poor "in Galilee". We should regroup and assess our prophetic mission in a situation new to us; and that, whilst being prophetic, should not be beyond hearing-distance from strategic allies in political office. We should remain vigilant watchdogs⁴⁸⁴.

The changed situation of having 'strategic allies' in political and government office

⁴⁸³ Report of National Conference of The Institute for Contextual Theology, Johannesburg, 1985 (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

⁴⁸⁴ Report of the Resolutions Committee to the 1995 ICT Annual General Meeting, Johannesburg. (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

presents, of course, a new challenge to the churches and to the ecumenical movements to be on the one hand in solidarity and on the other hand to maintain a prophetic critique. The challenge also calls for re-positioning and re-alignment by the churches, not only in relation to the state, but also in relation to one another as churches. In this regard, Cochrane, in 1990 already, sounded a word of warning to the ecumenical churches about the 'danger of a new magisterium of churches'⁴⁸⁵. Perceiving that there existed an uncritical and hasty tendency by Christians and churches to demonstrate a united front, Cochrane observed that one of the casualties in the process is Prophetic theology. This tendency is one which is likely to 'sideline all forms of prophetic theology, making them marginal to the "moral majority" within the Christian Church'⁴⁸⁶. Cochrane rightly saw that the above scenario was one that would play right into the hands of the de Klerk government, for whom such a development in the ecclesiastical arena was 'of great value to the state in its need for legitimacy'⁴⁸⁷. Although the issue of state legitimacy was no longer before us in the new dispensation, the problem of a neutralised prophetic movement in South Africa is still a serious one.

I have suggested that the realisation of a prophetic church is somewhat a utopian dream. However, I also pointed out that this does *not* imply that the quest for a redefined and sustainable prophetic theology should not be undertaken, and done so as a matter of some urgency, not least, by the churches themselves. In the final analyses, it is precisely the impulses which both emerge from and feed into a dynamic Prophetic theology that would keep the churches from losing sight of their essential mission and witness. It is the prophetic critique which would also keep the churches from easily settling into the stratifications of social institutionalism, alongside other institutions, and being held in perpetual institutional captivity.

If, as we have suggested, that the publication of a second *KD* is not an immediate and

⁴⁸⁵ J Cochrane, 'A Balance of Forces: The South African Church in Present Context', *History in the making: Documents reflecting a changing South Africa*, January 1991, Vol.1, No.3, p.55.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

compelling option, what about the function of *Kairos* theology? It is to this question that I now turn to examine the nature and future role of *Kairos* theology.

4.2 *Kairos* theology

The *prima facie* appeal of a second *Kairos Document* applies equally to *Kairos* theology, the theological strand that emerged in the wake of the *KD*. *Kairos* theology is defined by Albert Nolan, one of the main authors of the *Document*, as follows:

Kairos theology is the name we give to the type of theology which was first committed to writing in a well-known document signed by more than 150 persons and published in South Africa on 25 September 1985⁴⁸⁸.

The *Kairos* theologians, as we have discovered in *Part Two* of this dissertation, did not set out to produce what eventually crystallized into a specific theological nomenclature which is identified as *Kairos* theology⁴⁸⁹. What the authors of the *Document* did set out to do was to provide a basis for a theological critique of 'Church theology' and 'State theology' in South Africa. Insofar as the *KD* aspired towards the creation of a new theological category, the challenge was directed at the churches to engage in the quest for a 'Prophetic theology'. The definition of *Kairos* theology given by Nolan clearly relates this theological development and discourse *directly* to the socio-political events of crisis which preceded the publishing of the *Document* in September 1985, and to subsequent *Kairos* developments in South Africa and abroad. In this regard the object of the theological exercise was not to achieve theological comprehensiveness, but *contextual relevance* within a situation of

⁴⁸⁸ Nolan, 'Kairos Theology', in *Doing Theology in Context: South African Perspectives*, Eds. J de Gruchy & C Villa-Vicencio, Cape Town, David Philip, 1994, p.212.

⁴⁸⁹ An interesting variation on this theme of *Kairos* theology is the term, 'Kairotic Theology', associated particularly with the North American context. Reflecting on this theme from within this context, Robin Petersen identifies the following three dimensions of 'Kairotic Theology', which by and large corresponds with the basic definition of *Kairos* theology: Firstly, it implies a Contextual theology that of necessity begins with an analysis of the 'signs of the times' - hence, social analyses. Secondly it implies a particular notion of temporality and its relation to political, cultural and religious life. Thirdly, the notion of 'discernment' presupposes and is funded by a notion of spirituality. (*Time, Resistance and Reconstruction: Rethinking Kairos Theology*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, June 1995, pp.45-46).

extreme crisis. Nolan makes this point with clarity and force:

The *Kairos* Document was vividly and dramatically contextual; it came straight out of the flames of the townships in 1985. Those who had no experience of the oppression, the repression, the sufferings and the struggles of the peoples in the townships at the time were not able to understand the faith questions that were being tackled there, let alone the answers⁴⁹⁰.

The 'faith questions' that needed addressing were of such a critical nature that they could not wait for the often cumbersome and protracted processes of academic theological debate. The answers that were sought were urgent. The context was one of grave crisis - literally, a matter of life and death! Therefore, one of first and the most important features of *Kairos* theology is that it adopted a radically different *hermeneutic* from that which has characterised academic theological discourse. In the *KD* no solutions were being suggested for questions which were not being asked. The faith questions that were being posed were reality-based, non-rhetorical, and were questions demanding a non-theoretical word from God. In this regard, Malusi Mpumlwana noted that the *Document* was 'the South African classic of contextual theology'⁴⁹¹, by virtue of the following features:

It starts from the life reality; it is a community effort, and an invitation to further community reflection; it asks questions, uncomfortable questions about life, the teaching and practice of the church in the context of oppression and its religious legitimization; it draws on theological skills as required resources; it is a call to practicalities that will make a social difference⁴⁹².

Kairos theology therefore differs markedly from most academic theological formulations in that its importance lies not in its content but in its *methodology*. It is a theological discourse which emerged through a process of critical group reflections on a specific time and socio-political context of crisis. On this score, *Kairos* theology locates itself alongside other such modern theologies, such as Liberation theology, Black theology, Political theology,

⁴⁹⁰ Nolan, *op cit.*, p.213.

⁴⁹¹ M Mpumlwana, 'The Road to Democracy: The Role of Contextual Theology,' *JTSA*, No.85, December 1993, p.8.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*

Womanist (or Feminist) Theology, Constructive theology, etc., within the theological nomenclature of Contextual theologies⁴⁹³.

In common with the fundamental point of departure of such theologies, as listed above, *Kairos* theology's methodology regards the *context* as normative for its discourse. Also, as with the other Contextual theologies identified above, *Kairos* theology is based on what Nolan calls a 'new consciousness' of the context:

All theologies are contextual in their origins, but not all theologies arise out of and are relevant to, the context in which they are now being taught or imposed...Today we understand the importance of contextuality and it is this new consciousness that makes our theology different...It is not without reason that the theologies which are unaware of their own limited contextuality are white, male and Western. Nor is it a coincidence that these have been the dominant theologies in our world for centuries. The context of these theologies has been precisely the corridors of power and oppression. It is the oppressed of this world who first discovered the importance of contextuality and the myth of universalism⁴⁹⁴.

This *self-conscious* use of context is sharply evident in the *KD*. The *Kairos* theologians, who came to the conclusion that in the given situation of violent repression by a government whose very legitimacy was in question, a theological response that was radically different from that propagated by both the state and the ecumenical churches in South Africa was as necessary as it was urgent. The prevailing context of growing suffering

⁴⁹³ The use of the designation 'Contextual theology' has been criticized by Itumeleng Mosala, for example, who inveighs against 'contextualist' theologies for disguising hidden theological 'Word of God' positivism (*Biblical hermeneutics and Black theology in South Africa*, Michigan: Eerdmans Press, 1989, p.20). While this critique applies to certain discourses which pose as Contextual theologies, it is not appropriate to the notions of Contextual theology expounded by Albert Nolan in *God in South Africa: The Challenge of the Gospel*, whereby Nolan distinguishes two forms of contextual theology based on an analysis of form and content. The first type, which Nolan rejects as inadequate and faulty, assumes a given doctrinal content that is simply to be applied in a given context. In the second type, which Nolan develops, the content of the Gospel is not a fixed given. What is given is only the very broad outlines of its form and the content can only be worked out in a given context, which provides a second, and more substantial normative nexus for theological construction. For a concise account of models of Contextual theology, see Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, (Gen. ed.) R.J. Schreiter. Faith and Culture Series. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1992.

⁴⁹⁴ Nolan, 'Contextual Theology: One Faith, Many Theologies', *The Chancellor's Lecture*, Regis College, Toronto, 1990, pp.9-10.

and death experienced by the many black people in the townships cried out for an authentic Word of God - a Word which took seriously the extent of their persecution, their pain, their struggles for freedom and their hopes for liberation.

The constitutive elements of *Kairos* theology, therefore, on the evidence of the *KD* is, first and foremost, the experience of crisis, and secondly, the reflection upon such an experience in the light of the Word of God. The normativity of context in *Kairos* theology has been criticised in certain quarters on the basis that such theological discourse is open to total relative and arbitrary use of the Bible⁴⁹⁵. The validity of such criticism, however, depends on the extent to which the critic is aware of and acknowledges that their own context, their own assumptions, and the extent to which their own questions provide a particular perspective on the Bible. When the poor, for example, read the Bible with serious questions about God's will for them, they will invariably discover that the Bible has much to say about poverty and oppression. On the other hand, those who live in another context and therefore have no experience of poverty and oppression will invariably overlook what is being said about these matters in the Bible and will construct entire theologies without reference to poverty and oppression⁴⁹⁶.

It is evident from the brief survey above that *Kairos* theology, by its very nature, militates against it being cast in the same mould as the Systematic theologies which come from the European and North America contexts. *Kairos* theology therefore locates itself firmly within the overall camp of Contextual theologies. However, unlike Black theology or Feminist/Womanist theology which discourses on an ongoing basis until such time as its objective has been achieved, i.e. the liberation of black people and women respectively, the parameters of *Kairos* theology is determined by the recognition of and response to a perceived crisis, which historically came to a head in 1985.

⁴⁹⁵ The DRC, for example, dismissed with scorn the *KD*'s claim to theological credibility and in particular the *Document*'s use of Scripture (*Die Kerkbode*, 21 May 1986).

⁴⁹⁶ This is not at all to discount the fact that there are many people from non-poor contexts who have deliberately and intentionally entered situations of suffering, poverty and oppression and reflected theologically in full solidarity with the poor and the oppressed.

The question then arises: *Kairos* theology, *quo vadis*? This question illustrates precisely the problem outlined above in relation to the intention by some of the *Kairos* theologians to want to produce a second *KD*. Quite clearly we have much to learn both from the process, methodology and content of the *Document*, and from *Kairos* theology that has emerged as a theological discourse in its own right. However, would we be justified in positing *Kairos* theology as *the* new paradigm for prophetic theology in South Africa *today*? And is *Kairos* theology to be *the* shape and character of Prophetic theology to come? We would have to answer the above questions by acknowledging, as we have done above, that the substantial contribution both the *KD* and *Kairos* theology has made to theological discourse in general and to the sphere of Contextual theology in particular. However, we also have to recognise that *Kairos* theology, by its very nature, has distinct limitations. Some of these major limitations have been identified by one of the architects of the *KD*, Albert Nolan, as follows:

Despite its obvious value and importance, *Kairos* theology has its limitations. Theology and theological reflection must cover a far larger area of issues and concerns than only social and political crises. There are matters of permanent concern like sin, values, God, creation, Jesus Christ, salvation, the environment and so forth. And there are more personal concerns like relationships, prayer and death that any comprehensive theology would have to deal with. *Kairos* theology could never claim to be a complete and comprehensive theology⁴⁹⁷.

The *KD*, however, never set out to address life and death concerns in a complete way, and therefore *Kairos* theology, as a Contextual theological discourse did in fact not aspire towards comprehensiveness. Paradoxically, the greatest strength of *Kairos* theology, i.e. its contextual relevance *vis-à-vis* a particular crisis, is also its greatest limitation. It seems to me therefore that both the proposed formulation of a second *KD* and the mere reliance on a possible second phase of *Kairos* theology constitutes only a partial framework for discerning and constructing a theological framework which embraces the changed and changing socio-theological landscape of South Africa. Clearly the power and potential of the *Kairos* symbolism is not to be underestimated and may only need the right spark to

⁴⁹⁷ Nolan, 'Kairos Theology', *Doing Theology in Context: South African Perspectives*, p.217.

restart the fire that got the *KD* and the *Kairos* movement going. The prophetic legacy of the *Kairos* challenge for both Prophetic christianity and Prophetic theology must be recognised, affirmed and nurtured. It is, for example, highly conceivable that *Kairos* theology may prove to be an indispensable part in the ongoing formulation of new and relevant Prophetic theologies for the future. But for the time-being anyway, its future seems to be uncertain. We therefore have to scan the theological horizons for other theological 'role-players' with equal or greater potential impact and influence on a Prophetic critique of and for the churches, and the construction of a new generation of Prophetic theology for the prevailing times.

4.3 Black theology

The first and perhaps most obvious additional theological role-player which is indispensable in the creation of a Prophetic theology for our times is that of Black theology. To be sure, there are those commentators who assign to Black theology a place in past history, albeit a significant place, but who do not see any relevance or role for it in the present and future scenario:

The need for Black Theology is surely past...The need for an African Theology is self-evident but amply supplied by the ZCC. The rest of us in the 'white' churches are bending over backwards and making ourselves look quite idiotic by pretending to be 'African'. It is as though Christianity is like some interdenominational game and those who attract the most blacks will take home the medals to their camp⁴⁹⁸.

It seems to me that the above position is fundamentally flawed insofar as its proponents have lost sight of the very *raison d'être* for Black theology, namely that of the theological empowerment of black people. While this process of empowerment has come a long way since the 1970's, the task of theological capacity-building amongst the black communities of rural poor, youth and women - from within their own contexts of ongoing socio-political and economic deprivation as black Christians - is far from accomplished. The presiding

⁴⁹⁸ J Williamson, *Unpublished Essay, Theological Education by Extension College, Johannesburg, 1997* (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

bishop of the MCSA, Mvume Dandala, made reference to the ongoing need, for example, for black clergy to create and develop Contextual liturgies⁴⁹⁹. Dandala observed that part of the reason why most black clergy seem unable to embark on such ventures in bold and forthright ways has much to do with the 'weight of the white superiority complex'⁵⁰⁰. The fundamental need still exists, therefore, for ongoing programmes and processes of black empowerment, in the sphere of theological competence and beyond.

The question is therefore not whether Black theology still has a significant role to play in this new social dispensation but what kind of a role. The concomitant to this question is also to ask about what constitutes a redefined Black theology within the context of certain new socio-political realities which have come into being in the post-Apartheid era. Having surveyed the past and present contributions of Black theology to the theological enterprise in South Africa, John Parratt suggests that Black theology, like African theology, must of necessity reckon with the following 'central issues':

These central issues are grouped around two main areas: first, the methodology or approach to dogma and to the Bible, and second, the place of black experience in constructing theology. These two areas are equally the concern of both "African" and "black" theology (or "cultural" and "liberation" theologies)⁵⁰¹.

For the purposes of this study in particular one also needs to ask the question as where the cutting edge of Black theology's prophetic critique is to be found. Are we, for instance, at the point of surpassing what Parratt calls the 'second stage in Black theology'⁵⁰² in South Africa? In which case it would be incumbent upon the 'now generation' of Black theologians, such as Tinyiko Maluleke, Buti Thlagale, Itumeleng Mosala, Lizo Jafta and

⁴⁹⁹ M Dandala, Keynote address at the 1997 Theological *Indaba* of the Theological Education by Extension College, Turffontein, April 1997. (D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰¹ J Parrat, *Reinventing Christianity: African Theology Today*, Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1995, p. 193.

⁵⁰² Parratt, *op cit.*, p.182.

Bonganjalo Goba⁵⁰³, to enter the public arena of socio-theological discourse more decisively, spell out more clearly and articulate more sharply what the shape of a new Black theology is taking⁵⁰⁴. The re-articulation and re-formulating of Black theology is important for its own sake as well as for the essential contribution it has to make towards shaping a Prophetic theology for our changed and changing times in South Africa in particular and in Africa in general.

4.4 African theology

The second major theological role-player in the equation of what constitutes an adequate Prophetic theology for our time is that of African theology. While African theology still has the dominant connotation of concerning itself fundamentally with the relationship of Christian theology to African culture, there appears to be a growing recognition that matters of socio-political concern are not outside of its theological ambit⁵⁰⁵. However, does the above *rapprochement* necessarily suggest that African theology has the potential or has in fact begun to play a constitutive role in prophetic critique of both church and society in South Africa today?

⁵⁰³ We should recognize that the likes of Thiagale, Mosala, Boesak, Goba, Jafta and others represent both a 'first generation' and a 'new generation' of Black theologians and that these veterans of Black theology still have a major role to play within the theological enterprise in South Africa.

⁵⁰⁴ The need for redefining Black theology is underlined by strong criticisms emanating also from within the ranks. Bonganjalo Goba, for example, acknowledges that Black theology has failed to 'encourage an inclusive vision for our society' ('The Role of Religion in Promoting Democratic Values in the Post-Apartheid Era: A Personal Reflection', *Journal of Constructive Theology*, Vol.1, No.1, 1995, p.17). Basil Moore is more scathing: 'The current state of South African black theology can be likened to that of an organism with a sound head and needy feet...with nothing in the middle connecting the two' ('Lord, Help Thou Our Unbelief: Black Theology Revisited', *Bulletin for Contextual Theology*, 1995).

⁵⁰⁵ The earliest signs of a thawing in the relationship between Black theology and African theology can be clearly discerned, for example, in an address given Desmond Tutu at a conference of African and Black American theologians in Ghana 1975. While acknowledging the failures and inadequacies of Black theology as well as African theology, Tutu observed that he was himself both 'an exponent of Black Theology, coming as I do from South Africa' and 'an exponent of African Theology, coming as I do from Africa'. ('Black Theology and Africa Theology: Soulmates or Antagonists?', *A Reader in African Christian Theology*, J Parratt [ed.], SPCK, London, 1987, p.54). Some twenty years later, i.e. in 1995, Parratt picks up on the same point, noting in this regard that any supposed dichotomy between 'inculturation' and 'liberation' theologies in Africa is 'greatly overstated', for example, in Emmanuel Marty's book entitled, *African Theology: Inculturation and Liberation* (Parratt, op cit., p.193).

It seems to me that we should look for clues to the above question in relation to the origins of African theology. Unlike Black theology, which arose from within the context of socio-political upheaval in South Africa, the genesis of African theology not only predates but also emerges from beyond the borders of South Africa. Parratt makes the point that the origins of what has become known as African Theology has much to with the historical development of political independence in Africa during the 1950's and 1960's:

Several factors - not all of them theological - contributed to the call for a Christian theology "with an African face". The emergence of independent nations from former colonial territories, and indeed the pre-independence political movements themselves, certainly played a significant role. So also, especially in French-speaking Africa, did the philosophy of *negritude*⁵⁰⁶

It is clear from the above picture that African theology⁵⁰⁷, or to put it another way, the process of theologising that emerged from within the context of an African consciousness, contained a strongly critical dimension from the outset. It arose out of a deep dissatisfaction with, and protest against, the westernised theology which was governing the nature of an African church. In this sense, therefore African theology and Black theology share a similar frame of reference, or point of departure. It may even not be too far-fetched to claim that the very emergence of African theology itself as a critique of the imposition of euro-centric models of church in Africa sowed the seeds for critical and Prophetic theological discourses such as Black theology in South Africa. Of course, African theology developed its own emphases, namely that of seeking to express Christian faith within the African cultural and traditional milieu. The theologies of the AIC's are a particular example of this African theological genre⁵⁰⁸. This emphasis of the African cultural milieu brings an added dimension to the capacity of African theology to contribute to a collective prophetic critique

⁵⁰⁶ Parratt, *op cit.*, p.13.

⁵⁰⁷ E Fashole-Luke alerts us to the fact that the term itself, i.e. 'African Theology' arose not so much as a definition but rather as a label ('The Quest for African Christian Theology', *Journal for Religion and Theology* 32, No.2, 1975, p.74).

⁵⁰⁸ For more information and insight into the theological and ecclesiastical ethos of the AIC's refer to such publications as *Speaking for Ourselves: Members of the AIC's Report on their Pilot Study of the history and theology of their Churches*, ICT: Braamfontein, 1985; and *Consultation with African Instituted Churches*, WCC, Geneva, 1996.

in the African context.

As with Black theology, therefore, the question we need to pose is not whether African theology has something to contribute towards a prophetic critique of church and society, but what its particular manifestations are, and where its thrust and cutting edge is to be discerned. Again, a clear and integrated answer has to be provided by the exponents of African theology themselves, not least for their own sake but also for the sake of theological discourse in general and Prophetic theology in particular.

4.5 Feminist/Womanist theology

In common with Black theology and African theology the role and function of Feminist/Womanist theology⁵⁰⁹ as integral part of the ongoing prophetic critique in South Africa cannot be underestimated or underplayed. It is to the credit of the Feminist/Womanist movements that their critique of patriarchal oppression has withstood the numerous attempts at denigration. It is no small achievement that Feminist/Womanist theology has endured and grown in stature as a formidable theological discourse⁵¹⁰. For the purposes of this study we will, briefly, refer to the question of its contribution in the arena of prophetic critique in South Africa.

In the July 1997 *Bulletin for Contextual Theology in Southern Africa and Africa*,

⁵⁰⁹ The question of women 'naming themselves' in South Africa is one that is still far from settled. Beverley Haddad sums up the situation as follows: 'Some women in South Africa consider themselves "feminist". Others have adopted the term "womanist". Others still have shunned both in favour of a more explicitly South African term'. ('Engendering Theology: South African Voices', *Bulletin for Contextual Theology in Southern Africa & Africa*, Volume Four, Number Two, July 1997).

⁵¹⁰ The July 1997 *Bulletin for Contextual Theology in Southern Africa & Africa* lists an annotated bibliography of something in the order of 240 publications (books, journal articles, papers, etc.) related to Feminist/Womanist issues that emerged from within the South African and African context since the early 1980's. This fact is all the more remarkable when one considers that the first Feminist Theology conference in South Africa took place in August 1984, in Hammanskraal. The acknowledgment, by Wilma Jakobsen, for example, that Feminist/Womanist theology is still a 'fledgling project' in need of discovering the terrains Christology, ethics, inclusive language, liturgy, ecclesiology, systematic theology, hermeneutics, etc. does not negate the substantial ground covered already. Perhaps the greatest gain to date of this theological discipline is that it has set the process of womens' liberation, from internalized male superiority. on the road (op cit. p.7).

Feminist/Womanist theologians set out to address a number of critical issues of concern amongst women. These range from the abuse of women by men, to Africanisation, to the question of power and leadership in Church and society, to human sexuality. While a prophetic critique does not emerge as an obvious underlying theme in articles, the mere fact of an attempt by Feminist/Womanist theologians to address such issues from their own perspective introduces an unmistakably critical factor. The question is, however, to what extent do Feminist/ Womanist theologians see their stance overtly in terms of a prophetic critique.

The above question is answered, albeit not in a direct way by Adande Nomvula Washington, of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Transkei. Washington sets out in her article to 'call to attention the unmined sources of women's theology in South Africa, the implications of continued burial of the sources' and finally to 'suggest a model for bringing them into the ongoing discourse'⁵¹¹. She goes on to make the point that the questions raised by women doing theology in South Africa today are not questions to be answered by Feminist/Womanist theologians but that these are 'already in the network and can easily enter the discourse'⁵¹². Therefore, according to Washington, the questions are addressed to all those 'who do theologies in the course of everyday life'⁵¹³.

It is not within the scope of this study to pursue the implications of the above statements by Washington. Suffice it to say, that from the point of view of Prophetic theology, the signals from Feminist/Womanists theologians are clear enough. For one thing, Feminist/Womanist theology locates itself firmly within the sphere of contextual theologies, while at the same time militates against pushed away to the peripheries and kept from engaging within the mainstream of theological discourse. The stance is therefore one of both engagement and critical distance. Both these ingredients are indispensable to the ongoing task of constructing a Prophetic theology in South Africa today.

⁵¹¹ Washington, *op cit.*, p.20.

⁵¹² *Op cit.*, p.21.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*

The foregoing survey on the roles of Black theology, African theology and Feminist/Womanist theology in relation to the formulation of a Prophetic theology and critique for South Africa today underscores the importance of Contextual theologies in this process. There are however new developments on the Contextual theological market which merit a mention in the context of this discussion.

4.6 New and emerging Contextual theologies ✓

It is significant that since the advent of the *KD*, books, dissertations and articles which resort under the overall nomenclature of Contextual theology have proliferated⁵¹⁴. More directly related to the *Document* itself, as part of the longer term theological responses to the *Kairos* were the emergence of such as volumes as *We Shall Overcome: Spirituality for Liberation*⁵¹⁵; *Doing Theology in Context: South Africa Perspectives*⁵¹⁶ and *God in South Africa*⁵¹⁷. The latter, by Albert Nolan, arguably represents the most definitive theological work to date which undergirds the *KD*.

Within the last five to ten to years especially a number of variations of the theme of Contextual theology have emerged on the theological scene, many of which cannot be left out of the reckoning in the quest towards a Prophetic theology in contemporary times. These are, *inter alia*, a Theology of Reconstruction⁵¹⁸, Constructive theology⁵¹⁹, Grassroots

⁵¹⁴ Refer to *Bibliography in Contextual Theology in Africa*, Volume 1, edited and compiled by J.R. Cochrane, I.W. Henderson & G.O. West, Cluster Publications: Pietermaritzburg, 1993.

⁵¹⁵ M. Worsnip & D. van der Water (eds.), Cluster Publications: Pietermaritzburg, 1991. For an interesting liturgical perspective see S de Gruchy, 'Singing the Kairos', pp.5-27.

⁵¹⁶ J. de Gruchy & C. Villa Vicencio (eds.), *Theology and Praxis: Volume One*, Orbis books, Maryknoll, New York, David Philip, Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1994.

⁵¹⁷ A. Nolan, *God in South Africa*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1988.

⁵¹⁸ A strong case has been made that in the light of the new democratic dispensation in South Africa, the theological paradigm shift to be made currently is in the direction of a 'Theology of Re-Construction' (See, for example, C Villa-Vicencio, 'Beyond Liberation Theology: A New Theology for South Africa, in *Challenge*, February 1993, pp.24-25). The notion of a Theology of Reconstruction has, however, been sharply criticized by Sam Maluleke, who sees in it an 'attempt to ask people to stop demanding justice and instead be "constructive"'. Maluleke adds, that from a 'Black and African perspective, therefore, the proposed reconstruction theology, instead of, or alongside liberation theologies is misplaced, dangerous and unacceptable' (Maluleke, 'Do

theology⁵²⁰, and a Theology of Power⁵²¹, which, in addition to Black theology, African theology and Feminist/ Womanist theology would also have a distinct influence on the shape of an integrated Prophetic theology. The extent to which the relatively new varieties and brands of Contextual theologies will impact on the nature of a prophetic critique of church and society in South Africa depends largely on whether their discourses, firstly, stay in touch with the critical issues of social concern and, secondly show consistency with the theological paradigms that undergird the prophetic movement.

Over and above the more academic, formalised and structured Contextual theologies surveyed and named above, certain additional strata of activities with a theological basis remain a vital ingredient for an adequate recipe for a Contextual and contemporary Prophetic theology. These we will now briefly explore.

4.7 Contextual theology projects

One of the projects that made a significant contribution to the *Kairos* process in the 1990's is the Contextual Theology Units (CTU's), a forum for theological empowerment in non-academic contexts within the South African. The CTU process was initiated as a project of ICT in 1992⁵²². The *KD* has, amongst other things, shown that effective and relevant

we need a Theology of Reconstruction?', *Challenge*, Sept/Oct 1994, p.20-21). Neither of the above positions, however, seem to deny the need for an ongoing Prophetic theology.

⁵¹⁹ See *Journal of Constructive Theology*, Centre for Constructive Theology, University of Durban-Westville.

⁵²⁰ See M. Mthembu, 'Elements of a Grassroots Theology in the South African Context', *Journal of Constructive Theology*, Vol.2, No.2, December 1996, pp.61-83.

⁵²¹ See Linda Thomas, 'Constructing a Theology of Power', *op cit.*, pp.19-39.

⁵²² The project of CTU's was launched at the Annual General Meeting of ICT in 1992. The ICT Ministries Department was then mandated to facilitate this project. The CTU's were conceived of as small groups drawn from churches, trade unions, civics, youth, women and other community-based organizations, that would engage participants in critical theological reflection and action on socio-political and developmental issues. The major focus of the project was therefore to facilitate theological empowerment of ordinary people, and especially amongst the poor and marginalised communities. (Refer to the following publications for detailed information on the origins, nature, purpose and progress on the CTU's: Reports of the ICT Annual General Meeting, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997 & 1998; *Contextual Theology Units Training Workshop: Challenges Facing Contextual Theology Today*, ICT, Johannesburg,

theologising does not only happen within the confines of the academia. Moreover, especially in times of crisis, when the urgency of the situation calls for urgent and on-the-spot faith reflections, the often protracted nature of academic theological discourse can be more of a hindrance than a help.

ICT has, in this regard, popularised the concept of contextual theological group-work through the CTU's, which were designed to facilitate critical theological reflection at the most basic levels of church and Christian life. The premise for this level of theological discourse is that any practising Christian can *do* theology and that anyone who is genuinely trying to live as a Christian can theologize creatively about his/her faith. It is not even necessary to be educated or well informed and that the basic requirement is that an active faith and a commitment to praxis. The emphasis on the *doing* of theology is crucial to the process of engaging in this kind of theological activity. And because the method adopted is plain and simple, all comers are welcome, especially the poor and marginalised. It is precisely within the context of this kind of theological reflection on the praxis of history that the poor discover the liberatory and prophetic word. Therefore, poor people in the black townships and some rural areas, on the basis of contextual theologies need not always be spoken for, but could speak a prophetic word themselves through a forums such as the CTU's.

In the poor communities, churches are not institutionally organised into bureaucracies with burdensome structures and conflicting interest amongst those in authority. The absence of this kind of institutional baggage frees the poorer church community groups to engage in free and unhindered charismatic activity. In this regard, such groups may draw on all the resources of their rich traditional community heritages, such their cultural symbols to interpret and express their experiences of faith and to fashion their own local contextual theologies and praxis⁵²³. Yet there is also a need for a measure of structure, coherence and

1996; See especially *ICT News*, December 1995, Vol.II, No.4, for a report on 'The Kairos Process and the CTU's').

⁵²³ The experience of Latin American Liberation theologians is instructive in this regard. In the attempt to raise the consciousness of the poor according to the powerful message of Liberation theology, Liberation theologians have often found themselves confronted with the massive reality of the *religioso popularidad* (popular religion) of the villages and the *barrios*.

continuity. The creation of the CTU's go a long way to address the need for putting a place a structured, yet sufficiently flexible theological forum in which critical reflection can happen on ongoing basis to respond in a contextual way to the emergent to questions of life and faith asked especially by the poor and the marginalised⁵²⁴. The CTU's therefore serve as a *theological home* for such, where the grassroots spirituality of the poor is not dissipated as it would be in an artificially imposed theological environment, where the poor can truly drink from their own theological wells. In this regard, Jim Cochrane, for example, rightly perceives that the thrust of the challenge of Prophetic theology in contemporary times in South Africa is that of 'broadening its approach, to speak the language of, and, listen to the needs of people who just want to be "ordinary" and to lead "ordinary" lives'⁵²⁵. Cochrane goes on to identify the following three areas in which prophetic theology need to come into its own amongst the poor and "ordinary" people:

The first is spirituality. The search for a life-giving and liberating spirituality that is deeper and more locally based must be taken more seriously. The second would be the development of a theology that is less intellectual and more a matter of story-telling, using local images, symbols and feelings and engendering a sense of belonging. And finally there is the need to bring the "big issues" or grand theories about race, class, gender or ecology down to earth, so that they relate to the daily needs and experiences of "ordinary" people⁵²⁶.

Contextual theology in South Africa would accordingly be well advised to take full account of the expressions of popular religion of the poor in theological discourse.

⁵²⁴ Over the 1994-1995 period, for example, on the basis of specific crisis-issues discussed, the following programmes of actions were taken at CTU regional workshops across the country: Gauteng (23/5/95): To produce a Theological Reflection Paper on Crime; Pietersburg Sub-Region (19-20/6/94): Undertake a phenomenological study of Witchcraft; Sekhukhune (21-29/4/95): To convene a summit on the issue of Violence; North West Province (1994): Formed the first Independent Fraternal after the fall of the Bophuthatswana homeland; Free State (10-11/5/95): Presented a Rape-Crisis project to ICT; Eastern cape (25-28/5/95): Produced a Bible Study on Romans 13:1-7; Mpumalanga Province (10-11/11/94): Formed a CTU central committee to address critical issues. (Report on Contextual Theology Units Training Workshop: Challenges facing Contextual Theology Today, ICT, Johannesburg, 1996. D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg).

⁵²⁵ Cochrane, 'Prophetic Theology must Adapt or Die', *Challenge*, February 1992, No.3, p.17.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*

The CTU's also serve another important purpose in relation to the roles and functions of those Christians and churchpeople privileged to study theology as an academic discipline. The knowledge gained and insights gleaned from research and formal study is vital to the processes of CTU's 'on the ground'. In a meaningful sense theological discourse can therefore be properly grounded, as the reflections of CTU's in turn feed back into the academic spheres of theological activity. The CTU's, by virtue of their contextual proximity to the lives of the poor have their theological ears to the ground and are as such well placed to hear the prophetic and charismatic impulses which are coming through all the time. The interlocutors have, therefore, in this regard a vital ongoing function of interpretation and articulation to perform in the CTU's.

In the final analysis however, the effectiveness the CTU's are to be assessed in terms of the extent to which they are promoting a culture of contextual theologising in which poor and disadvantaged Christian groups are empowered to speak and to act for themselves, amongst others, in a prophetic way. Any serious construction of Prophetic theology in South Africa today can therefore not afford to ignore or minimise the contribution of theological activities related to the CTU's⁵²⁷.

Other Contextual theology projects which play a formative role in the construction of contextual theology are, *inter alia*, The Contextualisation of Theological Education in South Africa (reconstituted and renamed 'The National Initiative for the Contextualisation of Theological Education' [NICTE]), The Institute for the Study of the Bible, The Umtata Women's Project, etc. These and other such projects which, by their very praxis orientation, have their theological ears close to their respective grounds or terrains, and are therefore indispensable to the processes of constructing a Prophetic theology for our times.

5. Nurturing the ecumenical movement

It is quite conceivable that the *KD* would not have been produced and published in the absence of an ecumenical agency such as ICT, who, together with other ecumenical

⁵²⁷ For further information on the ongoing role of the CTU's in relation to the *Kairos* process, refer to 'The *Kairos* Process and CTUs', in *ICT News*, Vol. II, No.4, December 1995.

organisations as SACC, ABRECSA and other national and regional movements spearheaded prophetic Christianity during the Apartheid era. However, with the demise of the all-consuming monster of Apartheid, can we expect the same prophetic leadership from such agencies in a post-Apartheid democratic society? The question may even be raised as to the continued usefulness, if any, of such ecumenical agencies in the new socio-political dispensation. Villa-Vicencio, for example, raises a related question about the future role of the ecumenical churches in particular, and suggests that the church's major contribution to the post April 1994 'nation-building process' should formulate itself in terms of a three-fold 'theological space', 'moral niche' and 'cultural incentive' ⁵²⁸.

One of the reasons the above question is especially pertinent is the growing lack of ecumenical enthusiasm and commitment on the part of the ESC's in South Africa who in past years found themselves united in their witness to the Gospel around a common cause. For example, one can cite instances such as the establishment of FEDSEM in 1961 as one of the more bold and successful ventures in the ecumenical churches' witness against the Apartheid tertiary education system. The sad and unfortunate closure of FEDSEM in recent years is symptomatic of an unmistakable shrinking commitment by the churches to the ecumenism, and a return to a growing spirit of denominationalism⁵²⁹.

The significance of the above tendency amongst the ecumenical churches is precisely the fact that a diminishing ecumenical commitment may also render the life, worship and witness of ecumenical agencies such as ICT, SACC, etc., in jeopardy. This is all the more reason for such ecumenical agencies to re-invent themselves, and to re-define their essential roles. Whatever else may constitute such a re-definition, central to the present and future challenge is for ecumenical agencies to be prophetic at heart, and to present the constant yet

⁵²⁸ Villa-Vicencio, 'Are we still of any use? A question of Social Significance', *Sociopolitical Changes and the Challenge to Christianity in South Africa*, C.W. du Toit (ed), UNISA, Pretoria, 1994, pp.95 - 110.

⁵²⁹ There were other factors as well, such as financial constraints, crisis in effective leadership, and the problem of maintaining a secure environment for staff, students and their families that combined to force closure. But in the final analysis, it was the significantly diminished ecumenical commitment (which represented the backbone of the establishment) on the part of the participating churches, that caused the closure of FEDSEM in 1994.

changing prophetic challenge to both church and society in a time of social, cultural, political and economic change.

EPILOGUE

One of the major learnings that emerges very clearly from this study on the *KD* - and the variety of responses by the churches, individuals and faith-communities to the challenge of the *Document* - is the extent to which theology, ecclesiology and praxis is informed, shaped and ultimately determined by a given *context*. This insight applies not only to the subject matter of this thesis but also, in a profound way, to the shaping of my own thinking and theological discourse as a researcher, and writer of this dissertation, which has been in process over the somewhat extended period from the early 1990's to the present time.

When I set out on this project my engagement with the subjects and objects of the study arose from within a socio-political context and a theological discourse significantly different and far removed from where things are at the present time. My major theological framework and point of departure, for example, was that of the tenets of the Theology of liberation which, in the South African context, was largely focussed on the struggle against Apartheid. Therefore, in my capacity as UCCSA tutor and lecturer at FEDSEM in the late 1980's and the early 1990's, a theological seminary situated within the township context of Imbali, Pietermaritzburg, where the Inkatha warlords and the ANC comrades waged a relentless and seemingly never-ending war for ascendancy, the nature of my ecclesiastical connectedness and the tone of my theological discourse - intentionally and of necessity - reflected the texture of a politically troubled and socially turbulent time.

I have since moved on from lecturing at FEDSEM, to serving my church as Mission Enabler with the responsibility for spearheading the UCCSA *Pastoral Plan*, to where I find myself in the present time, namely as General Secretary of my denomination. There can be no doubt that these different vocational environments have each contributed uniquely to the shaping of my thinking and theological discourse, in the process of engaging in this research over the years. Paradoxically - some commentators may even say *ironically* - much of the criticism directed towards church-leadership in this study, especially in relation to their lack of prophetic critique, applies equally to myself in my relatively new leadership role within my church. In a profound sense I now find myself challenged to 'practice what I have preached' throughout this research and particularly in the final chapters. Be that as it

may, what is abundantly clear to me is that my convictions about the importance and the imperativeness of prophetic ministry within the UCCSA dare not now be abandoned, compromised or sacrificed on the altars of expediency. I do recognise, however, that the challenge before me, in my capacity as General Secretary, is a daunting one - for example, to hold together in a creative tension the sometimes disruptive prophetic impulses and the need for secure and stable structures of the church, or to engender a mission-consciousness while at the same time maintaining the organisation in good order.

The above challenge, notwithstanding, it is salutary to reflect on the fact that my own personal and professional circumstances have changed significantly since 1985 - the year of the *KD*. For one thing, the UCCSA has undergone ecclesiastical transformation and still is in the phase of re-structuring and re-orientation. For another, South Africa has converted from a racist autocracy to a non-racial democracy, with the political context especially having been subject to radical change. And here we are, as a country, standing on the eve of a second general election within the new socio-political dispensation. Some political commentators may even say that we are standing on the eve of a major crisis, given the current uncertainties and controversies around preparations for the 1999 general elections. It seems to me a critical question before us, as churches and as faith communities, is the following: Whatever the prevailing context and the future scenarios may be, are we, individually and collectively as people-of-faith alert and vigilant to discerning 'the signs of the times', and in our discernment are we and shall we be poised to sound the prophetic word and to respond in a way that is ultimately creative and constructive for both Church and society?

It goes without saying that any attempt to peg the parameters for a prophetic critique for all times and for all situations and any quest to design a blueprint for Prophetic theology for our changing times and context would amount to an ecclesiological and theological exercise in futility. But the futility of such a venture does not exonerate the Church from seeking to be true to its prophetic calling which, in the final analysis, derives from its very being and essence, a calling which is modelled and founded on Jesus Christ, the prophet of God *par excellence*. It is in this regard that the lessons to be learnt and the insights to be gleaned from both the resonances and dissonances *vis-à-vis* the challenge of the *KD* presents the

ESC's - and all churches who have been challenged - with the gift of a prophetic legacy which, if spurned, ignored or trivialised, would be at the churches' peril. Conversely, the prophetic profile and capacity of the ESC's can only be significantly enhanced as they reflect upon a prophetic moment that burst forth through the *Document*, learn from the *Kairos* processes and allow their own inerrant prophetic impulses to emerge and to run its course within Church and society. In a profound sense, the ESC's need to discover how to drink from these wells. In the view of this writer, it is amongst the poor and marginalised communities - both within the churches and without - that the soundings of the prophetic word shall most clearly be discerned. Though it is God who raises up prophets from amongst God's people (cf. Acts 3:22), it is the churches and the communities of faith who have nurture and receive their proclamations of God's judgement and grace.

The *KD*, to be sure, contained weaknesses and limitations - some of which were substantial and others negligible. One of the former must surely be the false assumption in the *KD* that by outlining the three types of theology, i.e. 'Church theology', 'State theology' and 'Prophetic theology' and by doing a brief analysis thereof and then making a passionate plea, churches and Christians will embrace a prophetic critique and convert to Prophetic theology. What the *Document* has achieved, however, is to awaken the churches to the divine imperative of their prophetic role. This is a legacy of the *KD* which shall surely endure within ecumenical contexts within South African and in the international community-of-faith. Such an awakening or new awareness, however, does not necessarily translate into the desired result. But it does set the scene and provide a new launching pad for prophetic consciousness within the churches, which could lead to greater recognition for and the embracing of a prophetic ministry and mission.

The medium and long-term prospect of achieving the above objective is - as I have attempted to demonstrate in *Part Four* of this dissertation - contingent upon certain factors which bear recapping at this juncture. These are: (i) a clearer self-understanding on the part of the ESC's of the primary reasons why their prophetic propensity and capability is hamstrung, namely, by the traps of institutionalism and institutionalised ecclesiastical authority, by the unprocessed conflict between charisma and institutional structure, and by the problem of collective *amnesia* and the failure to discern the 'signs of the times';

(ii) a commitment to and an intentionality about embarking on strategies towards the prophetic option, such as creating the spaces and opportunities for prophetic impulses to emerge, taking seriously the prevailing social contexts, being intentional about 'the option for the poor', dialoguing with Contextual and Liberation theologies, engaging with Contextual theology projects on the ground, and nurturing the ecumenical movement.

The manifestations of a greater prophetic profile within the ESC's will, in the nature of things, differ in accordance with the particular vision statements and mission thrusts within these churches. Within the UCCSA, we have embarked on a new journey, in response to the challenge of the *KD*. The major thrust of this journey is that of allowing ourselves to undergo the paradigm shift from being a church preoccupied with institutional maintenance to a church which is driven by a mission impulse. As I have shown in the chapter on the UCCSA, this decision and this quest by the church has proved to be an exceedingly difficult task. At the very least, however, I believe that the UCCSA is *en route*. The imagery used by Wayne Schwab to describe this process is helpful and challenging. Schwab suggests that the journey or the movement from maintenance to mission should take on the character of 'a migration':

Recovering mission is not the new "gimmick" for renewal. Rather, it is a call to a new and special kind of journey, to a migration. We return home from a journey to familiar surroundings, but migrants leave their past home forever. They carry with them only the bare essentials for survival in a new land. Migrants expect what they bring with them to be assimilated into a wholly new way of living. The church will face a migration if it plans to move from maintenance to mission.⁵³⁰

The full impact and final outcomes of the current processes of change and transformation within the UCCSA in the wake of the challenge of the *Document*, as it manifests itself in the 'migration' from maintenance to mission, from 'Church theology' to Prophetic theology, from rhetoric to action and from resolution to implementation is yet to emerge and may well be the subject of further research in years to come.

⁵³⁰ A. W. Schwab, 'From Maintenance to Mission: Not a Journey but a Migration', *Michaelmas*, 1997 : Vol.40, No.4, School of Theology: University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee.

I hope and pray, that the learnings and the legacy of the *Kairos* challenge shall further inspire not only the UCCSA but also the other ESC's - and all other churches and Christians who are open to receiving this legacy - to rise to and embrace the challenges of prophetic ministry for these times and into the new millennium.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE

A profile on the Institute for Contextual Theology

In ICT's 10th Anniversary brochure, entitled 'Ten Years of Theology and Struggle', the genesis of the Institute is described as follows:

The Institute for Contextual Theology was the climax of a whole range of initiatives and proposals made by different people at different times and at different meetings or conferences. It was in fact amazing how the thinking of so many diverse people came together to gel into one idea and one plan. We needed a South African institute to promote a theology that would relate to our situation of conflict and oppression.

Those involved in the initial discussions on the founding of ICT were: Dr. Alan Boesak, Dr. Bonganjalo Goba, Prof. Charles Villa-Vicencio, Dr. Francois Bill, Dr. Beyers Naude, Ds. Elias Tema, Dr. Jim Cochrane, the Revd. Cedric Mayson and Prof. Simon Maimela. ICT was formally established in 1981. Its first chairperson of the Steering Committee was Prof. Maimela and Ds. Tema was elected as Project Coordinator.

At the first annual general meeting of ICT in 1982 the Revd. Frank Chikane was elected as first General Secretary of the Institute. Under the leadership of Chikane, Nolan, Naude, Sister Bernard Ncube and Fr. Smangalisio Mkhatswa, who became General Secretary in 1988, ICT provided an ecumenical forum for the construction of a unique South African brand of Liberation theology, i.e. that of 'Contextual theology' - in part, to distinguish itself from earlier developments in Latin America. This designation was a matter of fundamental importance as the particular South African context needed to take full account not only of race and class exploitation, but also of a more complex range of Christian denominations, the rich heritage of African traditional religion and other faiths.

Through conferences, workshops and publications, the staff and the many participants from the ecumenical world worked to articulate a theology that grew out of an understanding of South Africa history and society, an analysis of social structures, including sexism, and reflection on the conditions of the poor. With this kind of orientation, ICT was uniquely placed and able to act as a catalyst, or midwife, for the processing, production and publication of the *KD* and for the co-ordination of the subsequent *Kairos* movement. The *Document* probably represented ICT's most influential publication and most significant single contribution to the sphere of theological discourse in South Africa.

For further information on and analysis of ICT refer *inter alia* to the following sources:

1. *Contextual Theology in South Africa: An Analysis of the Institute for Contextual Theology*, unpublished doctoral dissertation by Lawrence T. Kaufman, Rome, 1997.
2. ICT annual general meeting reports from 1982-1998 (ICT Archives, Johannesburg).
3. *ICT News*, 1983-1998 (ICT Archives, Johannesburg).

APPENDIX TWO

Press statement on 25 September 1985 at the offices of the South African Council of Churches, Johannesburg, on the release of the *Kairos Document*.

'In the last two years the crisis in the country has been deepening and taking on dangerous proportions. In a period of one year, from September 1984 for instance, we had at least 700 people killed and the majority of which have been killed by the police or army. This is an average of 2 people killed per day. The month of August 1985 alone, at the close of this period, has the highest number of deaths (163) giving an average of 5.3 deaths per day. Thousands of people were injured, more than 10,000 detained or arrested, some of whom were arrested under emergency regulations. In the last month about 2000 school children from under the age of eight were arrested in Soweto alone causing enormous agony for the parents of the children.

It is clear from available statistics that the situation has worsened since the State of Emergency was declared. One of the results of the State of Emergency is that other areas where there was not much activity have risen up against the Apartheid regime. The final result has been enormous suffering and pain for the majority of the people in the country.

It is in the light of this deepening crisis that we, as Christian theologians, began to agonize and reflect more seriously on this situation in order to develop a theological understanding of the situation and in order to determine the role of the Church. But the process began a long time ago. Many theologians have been struggling for years to discover the relevancy of the Christian Faith to the South African situation. It has been a painful process requiring a great deal of spiritual discernment and a long-standing commitment to defend the Christian faith. Many people have already suffered for their faith in South Africa.

In our theological reflections which have taken place in various parts of the country, we tried to understand what this crisis or *Kairos* meant for us theologically. We made a critique of what we have chosen to call "**State Theology**", that is the theology the State uses to justify, maintain and perpetuate this unjust Apartheid system. We have also made a critique of what we have chosen to call "**Church Theology**", which is the usual theology of the Church expressed in the form of Church statements and pronouncements about the situation. We then tried in all humility, to begin to formulate an alternative theology which we have chosen to call "**Prophetic Theology**". Finally we tried to face the consequences of this type of theology and the action we feel called to engage in with a clear intention of dismantling Apartheid for the sake of the Kingdom of God and the people of God who are victims of this system.

We have undertaken this critique of both "**State Theology**" and "**Church Theology**" simply because during our reflection on the various responses of the Church to the crisis, we found that there were theological models that determined and influenced the way in which many Christians and Church-leaders responded. We have done this without any intention of attacking any particular person or persons. Our intention in making this *Document* public today is to help all Christians in South Africa and elsewhere to sharpen their understanding of our situation as Christians and to become conscious of the various theological models

that influence their activities and then to redirect their efforts accordingly.

We wish therefore, here, today to make public the full text of the *Kairos Document*. It is entitled "**Challenge to the Church**" and subtitled "**a Theological comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa**". This *Document* is the result of months of research and reflection by a fairly large number of theologians. The printed text has a hundred and one signatories and we are also presenting today an additional list of signatories whose names were given to us after the text had already gone to the printers. The names are still pouring in and we are convinced that if there had not been such an urgency we would have been able to consult more ministers and theologians we would have had many more signatories. The response from theologically qualified people throughout the country has been overwhelmingly positive.

However, there is nothing final about this document. It is a beginning, a first attempt at a more truly Christian, more biblical and more prophetic response to the political crisis in which we find ourselves today. It is hoped that the document will stimulate discussion as well as action and that others will develop further the themes that we have presented here. At a later stage we will publish a more technical booklet documenting more fully the Biblical and theological evidence of our assertions.

It should also be noted that the *Kairos Document* is addressed to "the Church". That is to say it is not addressed to the Apartheid regime which we regard as oppressive, tyrannical and morally illegitimate. Nor is it addressed to any other political organisation. And when we say that it is addressed to the Church we do not mean only Church-leaders, we mean all the members of all our Christian Churches in South Africa.

Moreover it is not the signatories of this document who are challenging the Church. We believe that the political crisis itself is a *Kairos*, a challenge that comes from God.

We are also making public today a brief summary of the *Kairos Document* in English. Summaries in Zulu, Sotho, Xhosa and Afrikaans are in preparation.

And finally we would like to spell out some of consequences and implications of this theological document.

1. The basis of our argument that "**State Theology**" is heretical and blasphemous and that "**Church Theology**" in relation to our situation is inadequate and misleading, we call upon all Christians, who have not already done so, to take sides with the oppressed people of South Africa - because "God is always on the side of the oppressed"(Ps.103:6).

2. We call upon the Church to develop a ministry of participation in the struggle for liberation by supporting and encouraging campaigns and actions of the people. As Christians and together with all peace-loving South Africans we believe that the ideal way of resolving the crisis in South Africa is a peaceful one. But we reject the hypocrisy of calling what the people do "violence" while the aggression and oppressive violence of the police and the army is called "justifiable use of force for defensive purposes". The Church

can only give moral guidance in these matters by first uncovering this hypocrisy.

3. We call upon the Church to transform its own special activities, its services and liturgies, to promote the liberating mission of God in our present crisis.

4. We call upon the Church to engage all Christians in special and direct campaigns to bring the scourge of Apartheid to a speedy end. In terms of this we would give our support to the stayaway campaign initiated by the "National Initiative for Reconciliation" although, since we emphasised in this document the importance of consultation and co-ordination, we would hope that this initiative will not be pursued without consultation and with trade unions and political organisations.

5. We have said that the Church cannot collaborate with tyranny and oppression. We therefore give our support to the often repeated call "to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29) and to call for civil disobedience in the face of unjust laws.

6. We believe that this theological document has serious implications for the work and the direction of ecumenical initiatives like those of the "Christians for Justice and Peace"(CJP) and the "National Initiative for Reconciliation and Peace" and numerous other Church organisations. It also has implications for the attitude of Christians towards some recent political initiatives concerning "talks", "negotiations" and "national conventions".

We have argued that there can be no Biblical reconciliation or true peace without justice. Christians cannot try to reconcile good and evil, justice and injustice, God and the devil. Injustice and oppression must be removed before negotiations can begin. Negotiations can only take place between equal and free partners. No person can negotiate while he or she is being held on the ground by force. It would be like asking a woman to negotiate with a rapist while he continues to rape her.

If true reconciliation must be based on justice and equality, then it follows that certain practical conditions would have to be fulfilled before negotiations can begin.

- i) The first would be that all political prisoners, especially Nelson Mandela, be released.
- ii) All political organisations would have to be unbanned and political exiles be allowed to return.
- iii) All Apartheid laws and all the security legislation that suppresses the opponents of Apartheid would have to be repealed.
- iv) The State would have to guarantee that it will not use violence against its opponents by signing a cease-fire agreement with all its opponents especially the ANC
- v) All the parties involved in the negotiations would have to agree about the dismantling of every vestige of Apartheid and about the establishment of a just society in which everyone is equal before the law.

This would be the only way of guaranteeing that the negotiations would be between equal and free partners. This is the only possible road to peace. Talks between the regime and black urban councillors who are subject to that regime or between the regime and Bantustans who are at the mercy of Pretoria could not be called true negotiations and will not bring peace.

It should be emphasized that these practical considerations are not part of the *Kairos Document*. They are some of the practical implications of the theology in this document and we hope that all Christians will read, at least in its summary form, discuss and act upon.

The time has come. The moment of truth has arrived. South Africa has been plunged into a crisis that is shaking the foundations and there is every indication that the crisis has only just begun and that it will deepen and become even more threatening in the months to come. It is the *Kairos* or moment of truth not only for the Apartheid but also for the Church.

We as a group of theologians have been trying to understand the theological significance of this moment in our history. It is serious, very serious. For the Church and for Christians in general this is our *Kairos*, the moment of grace and opportunity, the favourable time in which God is challenging us to decisive action.

It is a dangerous time for, if we miss the opportunity and let it pass us by, the loss for the Church, and for the gospel and for all the people of South Africa will be immeasurable. Jesus wept over Jerusalem. He wept over the tragedy of the destruction of the city and the massacre of people that was imminent, 'and all because you did not recognise your opportunity (*Kairos*) when God offered it' (Lk. 19:44).

A crisis is a judgement that divides the heroes from the cowards. It brings out the best in some and the worst in others. A crisis is a moment of truth that shows us up for what we really are. There will be no place to hide and no way of pretending to be what we are not in fact. At this moment in South Africa the Church is about to be shown up for what it really is and no cover-up will be possible. In that sense what we are experiencing is a divine visitation. Woe betide those who sleep through it. 'Wake up. The time has come. Your salvation is closer now than when we were converted' (Rom. 13:11).

In order to appreciate fully and clearly what the Spirit is now saying to the Churches we must engage ourselves in a very serious reading of the 'signs of the times' (Mt. 16:3) or, as Luke puts it 'interpreting our *Kairos*' (Lk 12:56). How do we interpret this critical moment in our history?

The Churches have long been saying that Apartheid is a sin or a heresy and that it is unjust and oppressive. All along the Churches have been pleading for change - urging the government and the white community to change its ways. All to no avail.

But now something new has happened in South Africa. Now, as never before, the oppressed people of South Africa have taken their destiny into their own hands. They have

risen up against their oppressors, against the powers that rule our lives and they are demanding their freedom. The oppressive power of the army and the police has been used to crush this uprising with even greater violence than before. But the people are willing to die for their freedom, they will not give up.

The people, on the whole, are treating the present government as illegitimate. The Churches, on the whole, are still treating the present government as legitimate. The people are treating the present government as a tyranny that is now subjecting them to a reign of terror. The people want the downfall of this government and the setting up of a new government freely elected by all the people of South Africa.

The Churches are still treating the present government as the legitimate authority that must institute changes or reforms, speak to Black leaders and convene a national convention. There is clear contradiction here. Is the present government legitimate or not. Is it an irreformable tyranny or not? Here is our *Kairos*, our moment of truth. On whose side is the God of the Exodus now?’

(ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

APPENDIX THREE

Statement by the *Kairos* theologians on the *kairos* process, January 1986.

'In June 1985, a few people met to prepare the next issue of ICT News, the quarterly publication of the Institute for Contextual Theology. ICT provides the administrative back-up to a range of independent "Contextual theology" projects such as the black theology project and the African Independent Churches project. Round about that time, the SADF had raided into Botswana, killing several people and the African National Congress (ANC) had subsequently announced its intention "to intensify the armed struggle". It was decided to reflect theologically on these events which amounted to a declaration of war and then to publish these reflections in a special edition of the ICT Newsletter.

However, this initial proposal was overtaken by the declaration of the State of Emergency on 20 July 1985. At a meeting held soon after the declaration of the State of emergency, it was decided that the crisis at that time should be stated theologically and that appropriate Christian responses be formulated. After some discussion about the traditional responses of the Church to the political situation and the reasons for these, it was decided that a meeting be held in August to draft a statement that would analyse these past Church responses and would state clearly what a Christian response to the present crisis should be. In preparation for that meeting, different people were asked to do some research and to write papers on a range of subjects including the theology of the state, the theology of the Church as reflected in its statements and passive role, etc. These papers were then to be copied and distributed to many more who were invited to discuss these papers at the August meeting.

At this meeting attended by about thirty people, the papers were discussed and criticised and many changes proposed. With these proposals in mind, people were asked to rewrite their papers. Others were asked to write papers on new topics which arose during the meeting. These rewritten papers and the additional ones then formed the first draft of "the *Kairos Document*", a name which came out of a later meeting when it became clear that the statement could be more widely distributed and so have more impact in a booklet form than in a special edition of ICT News as originally planned. Besides, the process had expanded far beyond the initial vision and had become a project in its own right.

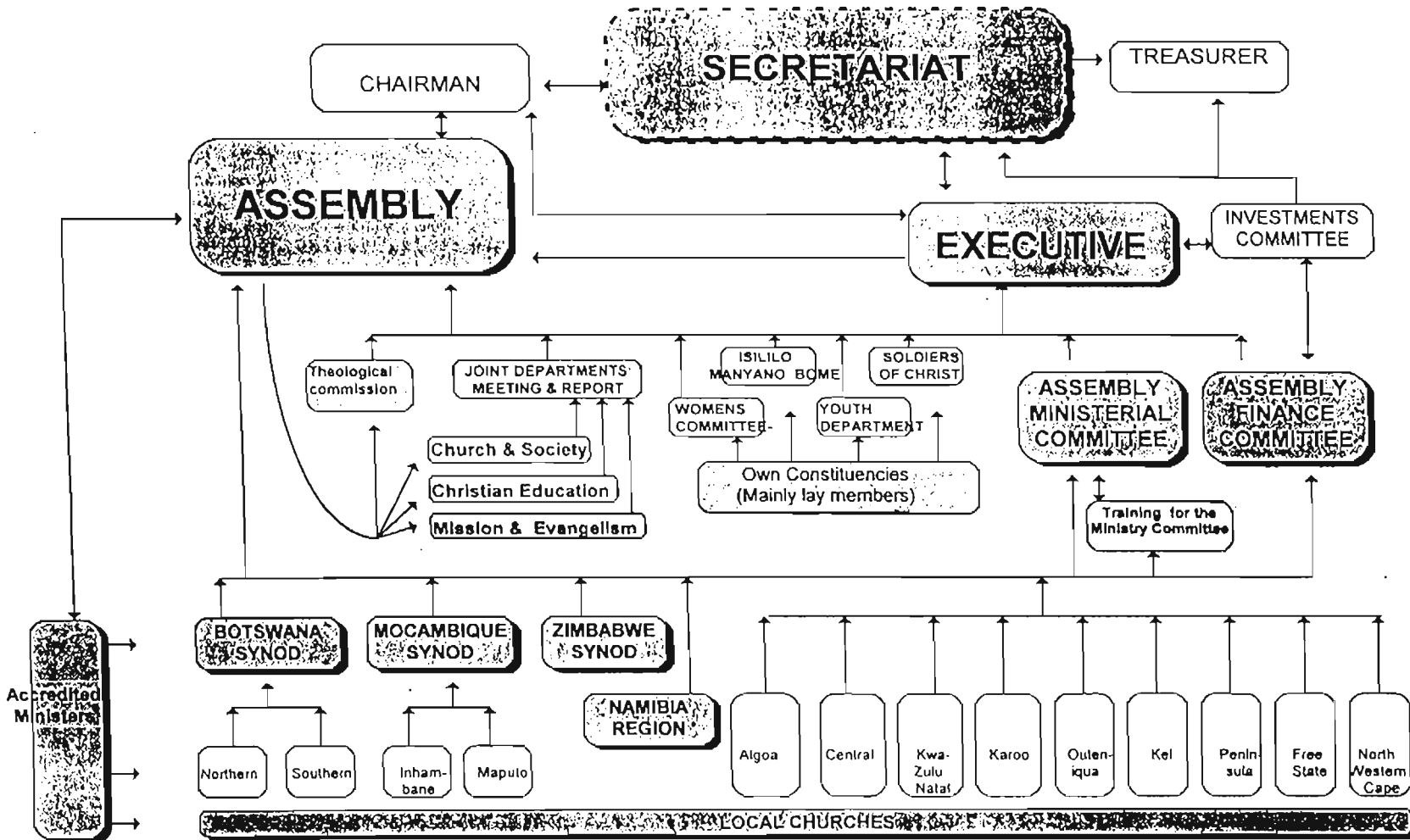
Again the first draft was subject to the criticisms of many people and the document went through three or four drafts before being published as individuals and groups around the country were invited to respond critically. With the intensifying crisis demanding a response, the document was submitted to a wide range of 'theologians on the periphery' (ie. ordinary Christians not normally approached for their comment on the political crisis in the country) for their support. Many Church-leaders were also given copies of the document. Signatories were gathered from all of the various Christian traditions and it was only because of the urgency of the situation that more signatories were not gathered before the launch of the document at a press conference on 25th September 1985.

The *Kairos Document* then was not written by "seven nameless Theologians", implying some kind of conspiracy, rather it arose out of a process of theological reflection on the political crisis in our country, a process in which numerous Christians were involved.

Perhaps it is difficult for those who are used to theology being written by individual academics in ivory towers to understand this "process theology" rooted in real historical conditions and in which many people participate. Neither was the document initiated or financed by the SACC - an accusation which obviously tries to discredit and/or the SACC. For Christians under siege by the SADF in the townships and among Christians who have been frustrated by the passive role of the institutional Church, the *Kairos Document* is being hailed as a confession of faith which at last is uncompromisingly rooted in and which challenges our context of economic exploitation, political oppression and violent repression. Precisely because of this, the status quo of oppressive Judaic society had reason to feel threatened by the teachings and actions of Christ - so that they eventually crucified him!

(The above statement was published in the January 1986 edition of *Crisis News*). (ICT Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg).

APPENDIX FOUR
Organnogram of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa



(D van der Water Archives, Kairos Files, Johannesburg)

APPENDIX FIVE

Comments on the *Kairos Document* by UCCSA ministers adopted by the UCCSA Executive Meeting, March 1986.

Comments on 'Preface' (by the Revd J Wing)

The *Kairos Document* arises out of an actual situation and the political and social deprivation of Black people, as people. It is existential theology, born out of the heart of Soweto in a time of serious crisis. The main purpose of the document is clearly stated in the Preface: "To reflect on the situation and to determine what response by the Church and by all Christians in South Africa would be most appropriate".

Although the *Kairos Document* is referred to as "a people's document", it must, according to its authors, test its validity by Biblical faith and Christian experience in South Africa. The fact that the *Kairos Document* is described in the Preface as "an open-ended" document which will never be said to be final is an important premise on which to base continuing dialogue.

The insight is essential as it has been suggested in some quarters that the *Kairos Document* has spoken the last word, and that the challenge it presents to the Church and the Nation at this time is an almost absolute ultimatum. If the *Kairos Document* is what its authors claim for it in the Preface, then "it must be taken as a beginning, a basis for further discussion by all Christians in the country". On such a basis, the UCCSA welcomes the appearance of the *Kairos Document*, primarily as a "challenge to the Church" and not as a "credo" for the Church.

The UCCSA would be prepared to accept the challenge as a form of prophetic witness and service, without necessarily endorsing, without qualification, all its statements or the strategy it proposes.

Comments on Chapter One - the Revd J. Wing

The continuing crisis in South Africa has produced what the *Kairos Document* rightly describes as "The moment of truth". History consists of "times", each of which brings its own challenge and responsibility. In Scripture the "*Kairos*", the right time, has to be acted upon there and then. This is God's own way because he always acts at the right time, and his actions can never be postponed to a more opportune moment. Scripture bears testimony to this. When God said, "let me people go", they were delivered from slavery in Egypt. Then when "the right time had come" God sent forth his Son into the world to liberate and redeem it. Another time would not have been the "right time".

Both South Africa and the Church are being shown up for what they are at the moment. The subtlety of the so-called "reform programme" in South Africa is being evaluated for what it is - "Political Fraud". And the Church is embarrassed and confused by attempting to come to terms with a political system which is determined by an ideology which the Church has declared heretical, whilst practising ecclesiastical Apartheid, by perpetuating division,

and compromising its integrity by working within the existing pattern of Apartheid society.

Neither the Church nor the State is ready or able to respond adequately to the crisis situation, and that compounds the crisis. We are caught up in a crisis from which the Church cannot extricate itself completely, because it is so much part of it. Crisis and *Kairos* are not the same, but they invariably come together. The crisis may continue indefinitely, but the *Kairos* does not last for ever. The judgement on Jerusalem was that it did not recognise and seize the moment of truth when it came (Luke 19:44).

The present crisis highlights our divisions in the Church as never before and renders the Church almost ineffectual, when it should be presenting "crisis" as "opportunity" and seizing that opportunity and using it to witness to and to effect justice and peace.

Unfortunately, the Church is itself caught up in and is a casualty of the crisis; it is divided as never before. The division between denominations is still there and is a disgrace in our divide society, reducing the Church's credibility as the agent of change, justice and peace. The division between black and white; a different social background, outlook and attitude are still there and are aggravated by the privileged position of whites and the deprivation and oppression of blacks. It is, however, an oversimplification to speak of a black Church and a White Church's, because by far the most sinister form of division in the Churches today, is the division between the blacks who are prepared to work within the system, ostensibly to bring about reform, and those blacks who want to see Apartheid dismantled and the structures of oppression overthrown. The major cause of violence in the townships is also one of the major causes of conflict in the Church. Denominationalism are divided by it, the ministry is divided by it and congregations are torn apart by it, in some cases whilst all ministers and congregations are affected by it to a grater or lessor degree. The statement in the *Kairos* Document that "the Church is divided and its day of judgement has come", is the truth, in all its starkness.

The peace and unity of the Church in time of crisis has been a major pre-occupation of the UCCSA and the CUC-affiliated Churches ever since 1970. We have managed to maintain a semblance of organisational unity and of Koinonia, but not of justice and truth.

The Church must identify with the victims of injustice and oppression and it has a significant role to play in their liberation. This could be at the expense of its own unity. This raises the question: What must be given priority in the Church - its unity or its integrity? The first chapter of the *Kairos* Document analyses the Church's division and its dilemma without resolving it.

The recurring refrain in the *Kairos* Document that "God sides with the oppressed" is not disputed, on the basis of Scripture. It follows, that if God sides with the oppressed, then the Church, which is the Body of Christ in the world, must also side with the oppressed. If it does not, then it has a crisis of integrity, but either way, there is a crisis of unity, and a crisis of love, because it is easy to hate, not only oppression, but also the oppressor. The Gospel declares that God hates sin and loves the sinner and the cross is both God's judgement on sin and, at the same time, God in Christ reaching out in love and mercy to

the sinner. The Church in South Africa cannot escape the paradox; the challenge to the Church is to declare God's judgement on Apartheid and oppression and to proclaim God's offer of love and renewal for the liberation and healing of our society - and every person in it.

Comment on Chapter Five - the Revd R Robertson.

The Kairos Document is sharp and clear in its analysis of where we are, i.e. its critique of State Theology and Church Theology and the Prophetic Theology it offers - even if one does not fully agree with this analysis. It is less clear in stating what methods Christians may use and the Church may sanction in bringing about change. It is in this area of the permissibility of violence that a far-reaching moral and practical choice has to be made.

When it comes to the last chapter "Challenge to Action" the proposals offered are also not so clear or comprehensive. Some principles are mixed with a few practical suggestions. These principles are that the Church should, [a] find its identify with the oppressed, [b] participate in and support their struggle without trying to be a "third force", and [c] provide moral guidance in this struggle. The struggle and its goal are only referred to as "liberation and a just society" and "a better future", and this is confused by the sentence on page 23 which reads: "We have the same goals even when we differ about the final significance of what we are struggling for". Can we assume that Christians and the world have either the same methods of struggle or the same goals?

A valuable practical action relating to church activity specifically is that worship services should address themselves to our social crisis as well as to private religious needs. The other proposals "from consumer boycotts to stay-aways" and "civil disobedience" happen to be non-violent in character - so long as they are achieved without intimidation. They have already been discovered as the resources of the oppressed and what is needed now is the study and application of these methods, which we can learn from other far greater exponents such as Gandhi and Martin Luther King. But beyond this learning, if the *Kairos* theologians and others will be persuaded to embrace these methods, there needs to be a vision of future S.A. society and a programme to build that future. Civil disobedience and non-cooperation simply clear away the obstacles in the way of such a programme.

In India, Gandhi called it "the Constructive Programme" and it entailed a great deal of sacrificial work to raise the subservient to independence. In the USA in the 1950's and 60's the vision was clear enough: Blacks simply wanted equal civil rights with the rest of the population and they achieved this. But if we see the whole South African system as evil and of the devil, as *Kairos* does, then some vision of our future society according to God's will needs to be caught by the Church and shared with the nation. The *Kairos* does not give us and it is not sufficient to assume that if Apartheid is destroyed, that a better system will automatically take its place.

Denis Beckett's book, "Permanent Peace" is a positive attempt to describe such a vision, based on democratic concepts and is aimed at dissolving the fears that now paralyse so many South Africans. As Prof. Hans Küng said: "The problem begins where *Kairos* ends."

Comment on Chapter Five - the Revd B.G. Mōngwaketse

CHALLENGE TO ACTION?

5.1 God sides with the Oppressed: God hates oppression. I want to quote two verses from the Bible - Exodus 23:9 "You shall not oppress a stranger" and Lev.25:17 "You shall not victimize one another but you shall fear God". I quote these two verses against many more verses from the Bible that God is against any form of oppression.

The *Kairos* document should have coupled apartheid and oppression as sin. This is to counteract the oppression of the oppressed, to oppress one another within the struggle for liberation and after gaining liberation from oppression. The Church should be called upon to eliminate the sin of oppression among its people.

5.2 Participation in the Struggle. This should be participation in the struggle for a just society. I think our terminology should not be influenced by organisation with no defined Christian principle. "Liberation" is only from sin of oppression - I agree than campaigns should be supported by the Church to give them direction.

5.3 Transforming Church activities. Here I agree with the document but I only ask theologians of the *Kairos* Document to come up with a statement of belief to be recited in churches as an Act of Intent to do away with oppression and to fight against oppression.

5.4 Special Campaigns. The last sentence is not very clear to me. The Church should be struggling for a just society.

5.5 Civil Disobedience. The Church should safeguard splitting its ranks - civil disobedience, even among the oppressed, needs people with strength, courage and perseverance to suffer prolonged imprisonment and harassment (Physical). I support it.

5.6 Moral Guidance. Nothing to add.

5.7 Conclusion. Nothing to add.

(D. van der Water Archives, *Kairos* Files, Johannesburg)

APPENDIX SIX

UCCSA Assembly mandate to the *Kairos* Task Force, September 1987

1. Assembly directs the Task Force, in consultation with the Executive Committee to examine the new broadened developments in relation to the understanding and locus of the local church, as set out in section 3 of the report, in the light of the needs of particular areas, situations and groups, and directs the Task Force to prepare concrete proposals for implementation in specific "areas" identified by the Executive Committee.
2. Assembly resolves (contingent upon the acceptance by the assembly of the proposals for the Order of Elders):
 - (a) that a Training of Elders Committee (TEC) be appointed by Assembly as a sub-committee of the assembly Ministerial Committee, along similar lines to the TMC, but with responsibility for the administration and training of the Order of Elders;
 - (b) that a consultation be held to determine the terms of reference, goals and programme both of the Order of Elders and the TEC, with the Rev. Basil Manning as convenor.
3. Assembly refers back to the Task Force the whole area of specialised ministries for further study and the formulation of appropriate recommendations for the consideration of the Church at all levels - denominational, regional and local.
4. Assembly directs the Task Force to explore the possibility of creating an Order of Christian Service, in consultation with the Christian Education department and the Moffat Community.
5. Assembly notes that the Training for the Ministry Committee and SACTE have given some thought to pre-Seminary formation for ministerial candidates, and directs the TMC to examine the possibilities further, in consultation with SACTE, with a view to implementing a scheme for pre-Seminary training.
6. Assembly resolves that a Ministers' Convention be held in 1989.
7. Assembly directs the Task Force to plan and co-ordinate the Ministers' Convention.
8. Assembly resolves that an allocation of R15 000 be made from the UCBWM *Kairos* Grant and appropriate UCCSA funds, to meet the general costs and subsidies for members attending.
9. Assembly requests local churches to pay the accommodation and travel costs of their ministers (board R150 and travel according distance). To this end, Assembly recommends to local churches that they set aside the sum of R30 per month for the whole of 1988 in order to be able to meet the convention costs of their ministers in 1989.
10. Assembly directs the Task Force to prepare appropriate pre-Convention material and it

requests all ministers to make a careful study of it as and when it is sent out during the course of 1988.

11. Assembly directs the Finance Committee to explore the principle of voluntary equalisation funds and to make appropriate recommendations regarding the introduction of such a fund to the Executive Committee.

12. Assembly refers the financing of specialist ministries to the Finance Committee for further consideration and report back to the Executive Committee.

13. Assembly resolves that the broad mandate of the Task Force shall be as follows:

...to serve as a "think tank" within the denomination, reflecting on its mission, ministry and structures in the light of the different and changing contexts within which the Church is placed and called to witness, and to make proposals accordingly.

14. Assembly resolves that the *Kairos* Task Force be re-named THE TASK FORCE ON THE CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH.

APPENDIX SEVEN

Evaluation of Task Force on the Challenge to the Church to the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, Dr R Petersen, University of the Western Cape, 1997.

Problems

1. Communication

- 1.1 The communication of the goals of the Task Force could have been better
- 1.2 The problem of translation of materials into local languages would have significantly enhanced the effectiveness of the educational thrust
- 1.3 The problem of translating ideas gained at Regional and denominational training sessions into local contexts

2. See-Judge-Act model

- 2.1 I have already noted the point that there was a relatively low positive assessment of the model (58% finding it helpful). This might perhaps indicate a problem either in the use of the model, an understanding of it, or perhaps even in the overuse of it.

3. Blockages

- 3.1 The perception that the Task Force was operating as an 'executive within the Executive' was an early but a persistent complaint by some. While this was continually addressed by the Task Force, perhaps more could have been done to elaborate precisely how the Task Force fitted into the Executive structures of the Denomination.
- 3.2 Certain Regions (Algoa, Peninsula, Natal, and to a lesser extent, Transvaal) have been somewhat resistant to the *Pastoral Plan* at Regional level, although there has been some activity at local church and organisational level.
- 3.3 A point made by many respondents is that the empowerment of the laity through the process has threatened many of the ministers, especially those with an authoritarian style of leadership.
- 3.4 Communication in English (primarily) means that much of the material sent of Church secretaries is not fully understood or acted upon.
- 3.5 Generally, where the minister was supportive, the *Pastoral Plan* was accepted and adopted at a local level, and where the minister was resistant, it was not.
- 3.6 Where there was no minister, the success of the *Pastoral Plan* depended on the right lay leaders receding the training.

4. Lack of 'follow-up'.

- 4.1 This was the most commonly heard complaint. Clearly, more key personnel were needed to implement the training at a local level.

5. Appointment of Mission Enabler

5.1 While this was one of the most critical elements to the success of the *Pastoral Plan* (it is almost impossible to envisage what would have been done without such a person) the manner of appointment was raised as a problem.

6. Resignation of Mission Enabler

6.1 Equally strongly held was the opinion that the resignation of the Mission Enabler had hindered the final implementation of the *Pastoral Plan*.

6.2 This was linked (not by the Mission Enabler himself, it must be stated) to the decision of the assembly to reject the proposed restructuring of the Executive.

Keys to Success

1. 'Weight' given to the Task Force. The Task force contained from its inception most of the key decision makers in the denomination. This meant that its proposals were generally taken very seriously.

2. Committed leadership. The task Force was blessed with committed leadership of its members, the crucial support and participation of its General Secretaries, and the diligent work of its various conveners and core members.

3. Openness to change. The willingness of the denomination to accept the work of the TASK Force and its sometimes quite radical proposals for change indicate a tremendous openness on the part of the denomination.

4. Appointment of the Mission Enabler. Evaluating the sheer volume of work accomplished by the Task Force (the number of workshops held, the number of people trained, the quantity and quality of the resource material produced) it is quite apparent that this would not have been possible without the work of a full-time Mission Enabler. It is quite clear from the interviews conducted that in the person of Des van der water the Task Force had someone who drove the process with skill, commitment and above all, a passion for the vision of the Task Force.

5. Support of partners. It was recognised and acknowledged that without the support of our partner bodies (the United Church Board for World Ministries and the Council for World Mission) the work of the Task Force would have been impossible. From their assistance with the funding of the Ministers Convention, to their enabling of the employment of the Mission Enabler, their support was deemed crucial.

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