

# Καὶρὸς

## THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

*"The time has come. The moment of truth has arrived"*



[Francis Kiure Msangi. 1967. 'Ujamaa']

## THE KAIROS DOCUMENTS

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## GENERAL CONTENTS

1.	CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH: THE KAIROS DOCUMENT [First Edition]	1985	1
2.	CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH: THE KAIROS DOCUMENT [Revised Second Edition]	1986	37
3.	EVANGELICAL WITNESS IN SOUTH AFRICA	1986	81
4.	A RELEVANT PENTECOSTAL WITNESS	1988	121
5.	KAIROS CENTROAMERICANO	1988	139
6.	THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS: KAIROS AND CONVERSION	1989	167
7.	VIOLENCE: THE NEW KAIROS	1990	195
8.	A KAIROS FOR KENYA	1991	209
9.	EUROPEAN KAIROS DOCUMENT	1998	241
10.	A CALL TO PROPHETIC ACTION! ZIMBABWEAN KAIROS DOCUMENT	1998	279
11.	KAIROS INDIA 2000	2000	331
12.	AMERICAN KAIROS	2007	337
13.	A MOMENT OF TRUTH: THE PALESTINIAN KAIROS DOCUMENT	2009	341



# **CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH**

## **THE KAIROS DOCUMENT**

A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in  
South Africa



# CONTENTS

	PREFACE	5
1.	THE MOMENT OF TRUTH	7
2.	CRITIQUE OF 'STATE THEOLOGY'	9
2.1.	Romans 13:1-7	9
2.2.	Law and Order	11
2.3.	The Threat of Communism	12
2.4.	The God of the State	12
3.	CRITIQUE OF 'CHURCH THEOLOGY'	15
3.1.	Reconciliation	15
3.2.	Justice	17
3.3.	Non-Violence	18
3.4.	The Fundamental Problem	20
4.	TOWARDS A PROPHETIC THEOLOGY	23
4.1.	Social Analysis	23
4.2.	Oppression in the Bible	24
4.3.	Tyranny in the Christian Tradition	25
4.4.	A Message of Hope	28
5.	CHALLENGE TO ACTION	31
5.1.	God Sides with the Oppressed	31
5.2.	Participation in the Struggle	31
5.3.	Transforming Church Activities	32
5.4.	Special Campaigns	32
5.5.	Civil Disobedience	32
5.6.	Moral Guidance	33
6.	CONCLUSION	35





## *Preface*

The KAIROS document is a Christian, biblical and theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa today. It is an attempt by concerned Christians in South Africa to reflect on the situation of death in our country. It is a critique of the current theological models that determine the type of activities the Church engages in to try to resolve the problems of the country. It is an attempt to develop, out of this perplexing situation, an alternative biblical and theological model that will in turn lead to forms of activity that will make a real difference to the future of our country.

Of particular interest is *the way* the theological material was produced. In June 1985 as the crisis was intensifying in the country, as more and more people were killed, maimed and imprisoned, as one black township after another revolted against the apartheid regime, as the people refused to be oppressed or to co-operate with oppressors, facing death by the day, and as the apartheid army moved into the townships to rule by the barrel of the gun, a number of theologians who were concerned about the situation expressed the need to reflect on this situation to determine what response by the Church and by all Christians in South Africa would be most appropriate.

A first discussion group met at the beginning of July in the heart of Soweto. Participants spoke freely about the situation and the various responses of the Church, Church leaders and Christians. A critique of these responses was made and the theology from which these responses flowed was also subjected to a critical analysis. Individual members of the group were assigned to put together material on specific themes which were raised during the discussion and to present the material to the next session of the group.

At the second meeting the material itself was subjected to a critique and various people were commissioned to do more investigations on specific problematic areas. The latest findings with the rest of the material were collated and presented to the third meeting where more than thirty people, consisting of theologians, ordinary Christians (lay theologians) and some Church leaders.

After a very extensive discussion some adjustments and additions were made especially in regard to the section entitled 'Challenge to Action.' The group then appointed a committee to subject the document to further critique by various other Christian groupings throughout the country. Everybody was told that "this was a people's document which you can also own even by demolishing it if your position can stand the test of biblical faith and Christian experience in South Africa." They were told that this was an open-ended document which will never be said to be final.

The 'Working Committee,' as it was called, was inundated with comments, suggestion and enthusiastic appreciation from various groups and individuals in the country. By the 13<sup>th</sup> September 1985 when the document was submitted for publication there were still comments and recommendations flowing in. The first publication therefore must be taken as a beginning, a basis for further discussion by all Christians in the country. Further editions will be published later.

*25<sup>th</sup> September 1985  
Johannesburg*

## 1. THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

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.

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 very many Christians in South Africa this is the KAIROS, the moment of grace and opportunity, the favourable time in which God issues a challenge to decisive action. It is a dangerous time because, if this opportunity is missed, and allowed to pass by, the loss for the Church, 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 the people that was imminent, "and all because you did not recognise your opportunity (KAIROS) when God offered it" (Luke 19:44).

A crisis is a judgment that brings out the best in some people 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.

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 Churches. In the life and death conflict between different social forces that has come to a head in South Africa today, there are Christians (or at least people who profess to be Christians) on both sides of the conflict—and some who are trying to sit on the fence!

Does this prove that Christian faith has no real meaning or relevance for our times? Does it show that the Bible can be used for any purpose at all? Such problems would be critical enough for the Church in any circumstances but when we also come to see that the conflict in South Africa is between the oppressor and the oppressed, the crisis for the Church as an institution becomes much more acute. Both oppressor and oppressed claim loyalty to the same Church. They are both baptised in the same baptism and participate together in the breaking of the same bread, the same body and blood of Christ. 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 peace.

The Church is divided and its day of judgment has come.

The moment of truth has compelled us to analyse more carefully the different theologies in our Churches and to speak out more clearly and boldly about the real significance of these theologies. We have been able to isolate three theologies and we have chosen to call them 'State Theology,' 'Church Theology' and 'Prophetic Theology.' In our thoroughgoing criticism of the first and second theologies we do not wish to mince our words. The situation is too critical for that.

## 2. CRITIQUE OF 'STATE THEOLOGY'

The South African apartheid State has a theology of its own and we have chosen to call it 'State Theology.' 'State Theology' is simply the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism and totalitarianism. It blesses injustice, canonises the will of the powerful and reduces the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy.

How does 'State Theology' do this? It does it by misusing theological concepts and biblical texts for its own political purposes. In this document we would like to draw your attention to four key examples of how this is done in South Africa. The first would be the use of Romans 13:1-7 to give an absolute and 'divine' authority to the State. The second would be the use of the idea of 'Law and Order' to determine and control what the people may be permitted to regard as just and unjust. The third would be the use of the word 'communist' to brand anyone who rejects 'State Theology.' And finally there is the use that is made of the name of God.

### 2.1. Romans 13:1-7

The misuse of this famous text is not confined to the present government in South Africa. Throughout the history of Christianity totalitarian regimes have tried to legitimise an attitude of blind obedience and absolute servility towards the state by quoting this text. The well-known theologian Oscar Cullman, pointed this out thirty years ago:

As soon as Christians, out of loyalty to the gospel of Jesus, offer resistance to a State's totalitarian claim, the representatives of the State or their collaborationist theological advisers are accustomed to appeal to this saying of Paul, as if Christians are here commended to endorse and thus to abet all the crimes of a totalitarian State (*The State in the New Testament*, SCM, 1957, p. 56).

But what then is the meaning of Romans 13:1-7 and why is the use made of it by 'State Theology' unjustifiable from a biblical point of view?

'State Theology' assumes that in this text Paul is presenting us with the absolute and definitive Christian doctrine about the State, in other words an absolute and universal principle that is equally valid for all times and in all circumstances. The falseness of this assumption has been pointed out by numerous biblical scholars (see, for example Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, SCM, pp. 354-357; Oscar Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament*, SCM, pp. 55-57).

What has been overlooked here is one of the most fundamental of all principles of biblical interpretation: *every* text must be interpreted *in its context*. To abstract a text from its context and to interpret it in the abstract is to distort the meaning of God's Word. Moreover the context here is not only the chapters and verses that precede and succeed this particular text nor is it even limited to the total context of the Bible. The context includes also the *circumstances* in which Paul's statement was made. Paul was writing to a particular Christian community in Rome, a community that had its own particular problems in relation to the State at that time and in those circumstances. That is part of the context of our text.

Many authors have drawn attention to the fact that in the rest of the Bible God does not demand obedience to oppressive rulers. Examples can be given ranging from Pharaoh to Pilate and through into Apostolic times. The Jews and later the Christians did not believe that their imperial overlords, the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Greeks or the Romans, had some kind of divine right to rule them and oppress them. These empires were the beasts described in the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelations. God *allowed* them to rule for a while but he did not *approve* of what they did. It was not God's will. His will was the freedom and liberation of Israel. Romans 13:1-7 cannot be contradicting all of this.

But most revealing of all is the circumstances of the Roman Christians to whom Paul was writing. They were not revolutionaries. They were not trying to overthrow the State. They were not calling for a change of government. They were, what has been called, 'antinomians' or 'enthusiasts' and their belief was that Christians, and only Christians, were exonerated from obeying any State at all, any government or political authority at all, *because* Jesus alone was their Lord and King. This is of course heretical and Paul is compelled to point out to these Christians that before the second coming of Christ there will always be some kind of State, some kind of secular government and that Christians are not exonerated from subjection to some kind of political authority.

Paul is simply not addressing the issue of a just or unjust State or the need to change one government for another. He is simply establishing the fact that there will be some kind of secular authority and that Christians as such are not exonerated from subjection to secular laws and authorities. He does not say anything at all about what they should do when the State becomes unjust and oppressive. That is another question.

Consequently those who try to find answers to the very different questions and problems of our time in the text of Roman 13:1-7 are doing a great disservice to Paul. The use that 'State Theology' makes of this text tells us more about the political options of those who construct this theology than it does about the meaning of God's Word in this text. As one biblical scholar

puts it: "The primary concern is to justify the interests of the State and the text is pressed into its service without respect for the context and the intention of Paul."

If we wish to search the Bible for guidance in a situation where the State that is supposed to be "the servant of God" (Rom. 13:16) betrays that calling and begins to serve Satan instead, then we can study chapter 13 of the Book of Revelation. Here the Roman State becomes the servant of the dragon (the devil) and takes on the appearance of a horrible beast. Its days are numbered because God will not permit his unfaithful servant to reign forever.

## **2.2. Law and Order**

The State makes use of the concept of law and order to maintain the status quo which it depicts as 'normal.' But this *law* is the unjust and discriminatory laws of apartheid and this *order* is the organised and institutionalised disorder of oppression. Anyone who wishes to change this law and this order is made to feel that they are lawless and disorderly. In other words they are made to feel guilty of sin.

It is indeed the duty of the State to maintain law and order, but it has not divine mandate to maintain any kind of law and order. Something does not become moral and just simply because the State has declared it to be a law and the organisation of a society is not a just and right order simply because it has been instituted by the State. We cannot accept any kind of law and any kind of order. The concern of Christians is that we should have in our country a just law and a right order.

In the present crisis and especially during the State of Emergency, 'State Theology' has tried to re-establish the status quo of orderly discrimination, exploitation and oppression by appealing to the consciences of its citizens in the name of law and order. It tries to make those who reject this law and this order feel that they are ungodly. The State here is not only usurping the right of the Church to make judgments about what would be right and just in our circumstances; it is going even further than that and demanding of us, in the name of law and order, an obedience that must be reserved for God alone. The South African State recognises no authority beyond itself and therefore it will not allow anyone to question what it has chosen to define as 'law and order.' However, there are millions of Christians in South Africa today who are saying with Peter: "We must obey God rather than man (human beings)" (Acts 5: 29).

### **2.3. The Threat of Communism**

We all know how the South African State makes use of the label 'communist.' Anything that threatens the status quo is labelled 'communist.' Anyone who opposes the State and especially anyone who rejects its theology is simply dismissed as a 'communist.' No account is taken of what communism really means. No thought is given to why some people have indeed opted for communism or for some form of socialism. Even people who have not rejected capitalism are called 'communists' when they reject 'State Theology.' The State uses the label 'communist' in an uncritical and unexamined way as its symbol of evil.

'State Theology' like every other theology needs to have its own concrete symbol of evil. It must be able to symbolise what it regards as godless behaviour and what ideas must be regarded as atheistic. It must have its own version of hell. And so it has invented, or rather taken over, the myth of communism. All evil is communistic and a communist or socialist ideas are atheistic and godless. Threats about hell-fire and eternal damnation are replaced by threats and warnings about the horrors of a tyrannical, totalitarian, atheistic and terrorist communist regime – a kind of hell-on-earth. This is a very convenient way of frightening some people into accepting any kind of domination and exploitation by a capitalist minority.

The South African State has its own heretical theology and according to that theology millions of Christians in South Africa (not to mention the rest of the world) are to be regarded as 'atheists.' It is significant that in earlier times when Christians rejected the gods of the Roman Empire they were branded as 'atheists' – by the State.

### **2.4. The God of the State**

The State in its oppression of the people makes use again and again of the name o God. Military chaplains use it to encourage the South African Defence Force, police chaplains use it to strengthen policemen and cabinet ministers use it in their propaganda speeches. But perhaps the most revealing of all is the blasphemous use of God's holy name in the preamble to the new apartheid constitution.

In humble submission to Almighty God, who controls the destinies of nation: and the history of peoples; who gathered our forebears together from many lands and gave them this their own; who has guided them from generation to generation; who has wondrously delivered them from the dangers that beset them.



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. Here we have a god who is historically on the side of the white settlers, who dispossesses black people of their land and who gives the major part of the land to his "chosen people."

It is the god of superior weapons who conquered those who were armed with nothing but spears. It is the god of the casspirs and hippos, the god of teargas, rubber bullets, sjamboks, prison cells and death sentences. Here is a god who exalts the proud and humbles the poor-the very opposite of the God of the Bible who "scatters the proud of heart, pulls down the mighty from their thrones and exalts the humble" (Luke 1:51-52). From a theological point of view the opposite of the God of the Bible is the devil, Satan. The god of the South African State is not merely an idol or false god, it is the devil disguised as Almighty God-the antichrist.

The oppressive South African regime will always be particularly abhorrent to Christians precisely because it makes use of Christianity to justify its evil ways. As Christians we simply cannot tolerate this blasphemous use of God's name and God's Word. 'State Theology' is not only heretical, it is blasphemous. Christians who are trying to remain faithful to the God of the Bible are even more horrified when they see that there are Churches, like the White Dutch Reformed Churches and other groups of Christians, who actually subscribe to this heretical theology. 'State Theology' needs its own prophets and it manages to find them from the ranks of those who profess to be ministers of God's Word in some of our Churches. What is particularly tragic for a Christian is to see the number of people who are fooled and confused by these false prophets and their heretical theology.



### 3. CRITIQUE OF 'CHURCH THEOLOGY'

We have analysed the statements that are made from time-to-time by the so-called 'English-speaking' Churches. We have looked at what Church leaders tend to say in their speeches and press statements about the apartheid regime and the present crisis. What we found running through all these pronouncements is a series of inter-related theological assumptions. These we have chosen to call 'Church Theology.' We are well aware of the fact that this theology does *not* express the faith of the majority of Christians in South Africa today who form the greater part of most of our Churches. Nevertheless the opinions expressed by Church leaders are regarded in the media and generally in our society as the official opinions of the Churches. We have therefore chosen to call these opinions 'Church Theology.' The crisis in which we find ourselves today compels us to question this theology, to question its assumptions, its implications and its practicality.

In a limited, guarded and cautious way this theology is critical of apartheid. Its criticism, however, is superficial and counter-productive because instead of engaging in an in-depth analysis of the signs of our times, it relies upon a few stock ideas derived from Christian tradition and then uncritically and repeatedly applies them to our situation. The stock ideas used by almost all these Church leaders that we would like to examine here are: reconciliation (or peace), justice and non-violence.

#### 3.1. Reconciliation

'Church Theology' takes 'reconciliation' as the key to problem resolution. It talks about the need for reconciliation between white and black, or between all South Africans. 'Church Theology' often describes the Christian stance in the following way: "We must be fair. We must listen to both sides of the story. If the two sides can only meet to talk and negotiate they will sort out their differences and misunderstandings, and the conflict will be resolved." On the face of it this may sound very Christian. But is it?

The fallacy here is that 'Reconciliation' has been made into an absolute principle that must be applied in all cases of conflict or dissension. But not all cases of conflict are the same. We can imagine a private quarrel between two people or two groups whose differences are based upon misunderstandings. In such cases it would be appropriate to talk and negotiate to sort out the misunderstandings and to reconcile the two sides. But there are other conflicts in which one side is right and the other wrong. There are conflicts where one side is a fully armed and violent oppressor while the other side is defenceless and oppressed. There are conflicts that can only be described as the struggle between justice and injustice, good and evil, God and the devil. To speak of

reconciling these two is not only a mistaken application of the Christian idea of reconciliation, it is a total betrayal of all that Christian faith has ever meant. Nowhere in the Bible or in Christian tradition has it ever been suggested that we ought to try to reconcile good and evil, God and the devil. We are supposed to do away with evil, injustice, oppression and sin—not come to terms with it. We are supposed to oppose, confront and reject the devil and not try to sup with the devil.

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

What this means in practice is that no reconciliation, no forgiveness and no negotiations are possible *without repentance*. The Biblical teaching on reconciliation and forgiveness makes it quite clear that nobody can be forgiven and reconciled with God unless he or she repents of their sins. Nor are *we* expected to forgive the unrepentant sinner. When he or she repents we must be willing to forgive seventy times seven times but before that, we are expected to preach repentance to those who sin against us or against anyone. Reconciliation, forgiveness and negotiations will become our Christian duty in South Africa only when the apartheid regime shows signs of genuine repentance. The recent speech of P. W. Botha in Durban, the continued military repression of the people in the townships and the jailing of all its opponents is clear proof of the total lack of repentance on the part of the present regime.

There is nothing that we want more than true reconciliation and genuine peace—the peace that God wants and not the peace the world wants (John 14:27). The peace that God wants is based upon truth, repentance, justice and love. The peace that the world offers us is a unity that compromises the truth, covers over injustice and oppression and is totally motivated by selfishness. At this stage, like Jesus, we must expose this false peace, confront our oppressors and sow dissension. As Christians we must say with Jesus: “Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth. No, I tell you, but rather dissension” (Luke 12:51). There can be no real peace without justice and repentance.

It would be quite wrong to try to preserve ‘peace’ and ‘unity’ at all costs, even at the cost of truth and justice and, worse still, at the cost of thousands of young lives. As disciples of Jesus we should rather promote truth and justice and life at all costs, even at the cost of creating conflict, disunity and

dissension along the way. To be truly biblical our Church leaders must adopt a theology that millions of Christians have already adopted a biblical theology of direct confrontation with the forces of evil rather than a theology of reconciliation with sin and the devil.

### 3.2. Justice

It would be quite wrong to give the impression that 'Church Theology' in South Africa is not particularly concerned about the need for justice. There have been some very strong and very sincere demands for justice. But 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 concession. It does not appear to be the more radical justice that comes from below and is determined by the people of South Africa.

One of our main reasons for drawing this conclusion is the simple fact that almost all Church statements and appeals are made to the State or to the white community. The assumption seems to be that changes must come from whites or at least from people who are at the top of the pile. The general idea appears to be that one must simply appeal to the conscience and the goodwill of those who are responsible for injustice in our land and that once they have repented of their sins and after some consultation with others they will introduce the necessary reforms to the system. Why else would Church leaders be having talks with P. W. Botha, if this is not the vision of a just and peaceful solution to our problems?

At the heart of this approach is the reliance upon 'individual conversions' in response to 'moralising demands' to change the structures of a society. It has not worked and it never will work. The present crisis with all its cruelty, brutality and callousness is ample proof of the ineffectiveness of years and years of Christian 'moralising' about the need for love. The problem that we are dealing with here in South Africa is not merely a problem of personal guilt, it is a problem of structural injustice. People are suffering, people are being maimed and killed and tortured every day. We cannot just sit back and wait for the oppressor to see the light so that the oppressed can put out their hands and beg for the crumbs of some small reforms. That in itself would be degrading and oppressive.

There have been reforms and, no doubt, there will be further reforms in the near future. And it may well be that the Church's appeal to the consciences of whites has contributed marginally to the introduction of some of these reforms. But can such reforms ever be regarded as real change, as the

introduction of a true and lasting justice. Reforms that come from the top are never satisfactory. They seldom do more than make the oppression more effective and more acceptable. If the oppressor does ever introduce reforms that might lead to real change this will come about because of strong pressure from those who are oppressed. True justice, God's justice, demands a radical change of structures. This can only come from below, from the oppressed themselves. God will bring about change through the oppressed as he did through the oppressed Hebrew slaves in Egypt. God does not bring his justice through reforms introduced by the Pharaoh's of this world.

Why then does 'Church Theology' appeal to the top rather than to the people who are suffering? Why does this theology not demand that the oppressed stand up for their rights and wage a struggle against their oppressors? Why does it not tell them that it is *their* duty to work for justice and to change the unjust structures? Perhaps the answer to these questions is that appeals from the 'top' in the Church tend very easily to be appeals to the 'top' in society. An appeal to the conscience of those who perpetuate the system of injustice must be made. But real change and true justice can only come from below, from the people—most of whom are Christians.

### 3.3. Non-Violence

The stance of 'Church Theology' on non-violence, expressed as a blanket condemnation of all that is *called* violence, has not only been unable to curb the violence of our situation, it has actually, although unwittingly, been a major contributing factor in the recent escalation of State violence. Here again non-violence has been made into an absolute principle that applies to anything anyone *calls* violence without regard for who is using it, which side they are on or what purpose they may have in mind. In our situation, this is simply counter-productive.

The problem for the Church here is the way the word violence is being used in the propaganda of the State. The State and the media have chosen to call violence what some people do in the townships as they struggle for their liberation i.e., throwing stones, burning cars and buildings and sometimes killing collaborators. But this *excludes* the structural, institutional and unrepentant violence of the State and especially the oppressive and naked violence of the police and the army. These things are not counted as violence. And even when they are acknowledged to be 'excessive,' they are called 'misconduct' or even 'atrocities' but never violence. Thus the phrase 'violence in the townships' comes to mean what the young people are doing and not what the police are doing or what apartheid in general is doing to people. If one calls for nonviolence in such circumstances one appears to be criticising the resistance of the people while justifying or at least overlooking the violence of the police and the State. That is how it is understood not only by

the State and its supporters but also by the people who are struggling for their freedom. Violence, especially in our circumstances, is a loaded word.

It is true that Church statements and pronouncements do also condemn the violence of the police. They do say that they condemn *all violence*. But is it legitimate, especially in our circumstances, to use the same word violence in a blanket condemnation to cover the ruthless and repressive activities of the State and the desperate attempts of the people to defend themselves? Do such abstractions and generalisations not confuse the issue? How can acts of oppression, injustice and domination be equated with acts of resistance and self-defence? Would it be legitimate to describe both the physical force used by a rapist and the physical force used by a woman trying to resist the rapist as violence?

Moreover there is nothing in the Bible or in our Christian tradition that would permit us to make such generalisations. Throughout the Bible the word violence is used to describe everything that is done by a wicked oppressor (e.g., Psa. 72:12-14; Isa. 59:1-8; Jer. 22:13-17; Amos 3:9-10; 6:3; Mic. 2:2; 3:1-3; 6:12). It is never used to describe the activities of Israel's armies in attempting to liberate themselves or to resist aggression. When Jesus says that we should turn the other cheek he is telling us that we must not take revenge; he is not saying that we should never defend ourselves or others. There is a long and consistent Christian tradition about the use of physical force to defend oneself against aggressors and tyrants. In other words there are circumstances when physical force may be used. They are very restrictive circumstances, only as the very last resort and only as the lesser of two evils, or, as Bonhoeffer put it, "the lesser of two evils." But it is simply not true to say that every possible use of physical force is violence and that no matter what the circumstances may be it is never permissible.

This is not to say that any use of force at any time by people who are oppressed is permissible simply because they are struggling for their liberation. There have been cases of killing and maiming that no Christian would want to approve of. But then our disapproval is based upon a concern for genuine liberation and a conviction that such acts are unnecessary, counter-productive and unjustifiable and not because they fall under a blanket condemnation of any use of physical force in any circumstances.

And finally what makes the professed non-violence of 'Church Theology' extremely suspect in the eyes of very many people, including ourselves, is the tacit support that many Church leaders give to the growing *militarisation* of the South African State. How can one condemn all violence and then appoint chaplains to a very violent and oppressive army? How can one condemn all violence and then allow young white males to accept their conscription into the armed forces? Is it because the activities of the armed forces and the police are counted as defensive? That raises very serious questions about whose side

such Church leaders might be on. Why are the activities of young blacks in the townships not regarded as defensive?

In practice what one calls 'violence' and what one calls 'self-defence' seems to depend upon which side one is on. To call all physical force 'violence' is to try to be neutral and to refuse to make a judgment about who is right and who is wrong. The attempt to remain neutral in this kind of conflict is futile. Neutrality enables the status quo of oppression (and therefore violence) to continue. It is a way of giving tacit support to the oppressor.

### **3.4. The Fundamental Problem**

It is not enough to criticise 'Church Theology' we must also try to account for it. What is behind the mistakes and misunderstandings and inadequacies of this theology?

In the first place we can point to a lack of *social analysis*. We have seen how 'Church Theology' tends to make use of absolute principles like reconciliation, negotiation, non-violence and peaceful solutions and applies them indiscriminately and uncritically to all situations. Very little attempt is made to analyse what is actually happening in our society and why it is happening. It is not possible to make valid moral judgments about a society without first understanding that society. The analysis of apartheid that underpins 'Church Theology' is simply inadequate. The present crisis has now made it very clear that the efforts of Church leaders to promote effective and practical ways of changing our society have failed. This failure is due in no small measure to the fact that 'Church Theology' has not developed a social analysis that would enable it to understand the mechanics of injustice and oppression.

Closely linked to this, is the lack in 'Church Theology' of an adequate understanding of *politics and political strategy*. Changing the structures of a society is fundamentally a matter of politics. It requires a political strategy based upon a clear social or political analysis. The Church has to address itself to these strategies and to the analysis upon which they are based. It is into this political situation that the Church has to bring the gospel. Not as an alternative solution to our problems as if the gospel provided us with a non-political solution to political problems. There is no specifically Christian solution. There will be a Christian way of approaching the political solutions, a Christian spirit and motivation and attitude. But there is no way of bypassing politics and political strategies.

But we have still not pinpointed the fundamental problem. Why has 'Church Theology' not developed a social analysis? Why does it have an inadequate understanding of the need for political strategies? And why does it make a virtue of neutrality and sitting on the sidelines?



The answer must be sought in the *type of faith and spirituality* that has dominated Church life for centuries. As we all know, spirituality has tended to be an other-worldly affair that has very little, if anything at all, to do with the 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. Moreover, spirituality has also been understood to be purely private and individualistic. Public affairs and social problems were thought to be beyond the sphere of spirituality. And finally the spirituality we inherit tends to rely upon God to intervene in his 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 intervention.

It is precisely this kind of spirituality that, when faced with the present crisis in South Africa, leaves so many Christians and Church leaders in a state of near paralysis.

It hardly needs saying that this kind of faith and this type of spirituality has no biblical foundation. The Bible does not separate the human person from the world in which he or she lives; it does not separate the individual from the social or one's private life from one's public life. God redeems the whole person as part of his whole creation (Rom. 8:18-24). A truly biblical spirituality would penetrate into every aspect of human existence and would exclude nothing from God's redemptive will. Biblical faith is prophetically relevant to everything that happens in the world.



## 4. TOWARDS A PROPHETIC THEOLOGY

Our present KAIROS calls for a response from Christians that is biblical, spiritual, pastoral and, above all, prophetic. It is not enough in these circumstances to repeat generalised Christian principles. We need a bold and incisive response that is prophetic because it speaks to the particular circumstances of this crisis, a response that does not give the impression of sitting on the fence but is clearly and unambiguously taking a stand.

### 4.1. Social Analysis

The first task of a prophetic theology for our times would be an attempt at social analysis or what Jesus would call “reading the signs of the times” (Matt. 16:3) or “interpreting this KAIROS” (Luke 12:56). It is not possible to do this in any detail in this document but we must start with at least the broad outlines of an analysis of the conflict in which we find ourselves.

It would be quite wrong to see the present conflict as simply a racial war. The racial component is there but we are not dealing with two equal races or nations each with their own selfish group interests. The situation we are dealing with here is one of oppression. The conflict is between an oppressor and the oppressed. The conflict is between two irreconcilable *causes* or *interests* in which the one is just and the other is unjust.

On the one hand we have the interests of those who benefit from the status quo and who are determined to maintain it at any cost, even at the cost of millions of lives. It is in their interests to introduce a number of reforms in order to ensure that the system is not radically changed and that they can continue to benefit from it as they have done in the past. They benefit from the system because it favours them and enables them to accumulate a great deal of wealth and to maintain an exceptionally high standard of living. And they want to make sure that it stays that way even if some adjustments are needed.

On the other hand we have those who do not benefit in any way from the system the way it is now. They are treated as mere labour units, paid starvation wages, separated from their families by migratory labour, moved about like cattle and dumped in homelands to starve—and all for the benefit of a privileged minority. They have no say in the system and are supposed to be grateful for the concessions that are offered to them like crumbs. It is not in their interests to allow this system to continue even in some ‘reformed’ or ‘revised’ form. They are no longer prepared to be crushed, oppressed and exploited. They are determined to change the system radically so that it no

longer benefits only the privileged few. And they are willing to do this even at the cost of their own lives. What they want is justice for all.

This is our situation of civil war or revolution. The one side is committed to maintaining the system at all costs and the other side is committed to changing it at all costs. There are two conflicting projects here and no compromise is possible. Either we have full and equal justice for all or we don't.

The Bible has a great deal to say about this kind of conflict, about a world that is divided into oppressors and oppressed.

## **4.2. Oppression in the Bible**

When we search the Bible for a message about oppression we discover, as others throughout the world are discovering, that oppression is a central theme that runs right through the Old and New Testaments. The biblical scholars who have taken the trouble to study the theme of oppression in the Bible have discovered that there are no less than twenty different root words in Hebrew to describe oppression. As one author says, oppression is "a basic structural category of biblical theology" (T. D. Hanks, *God So Loved the Third World*, Orbis, 1983, p. 4).

Moreover the description of oppression in the Bible is concrete and vivid. The Bible describes oppression as the experience of being crushed, degraded, humiliated, exploited, impoverished, defrauded, deceived and enslaved. And the oppressors are described as cruel, ruthless, arrogant, greedy, violent and tyrannical and as the enemy. Such descriptions could only have been written originally by people who had had a long and painful experience of what it means to be oppressed. And indeed nearly 90 percent of the history of the Jewish and later the Christian people whose story is told in the Bible, is a history of domestic or international oppression. Israel as a nation was built upon the painful experience of oppression and repression as slaves in Egypt. But what made all the difference for this particular group of oppressed people was the revelation of Yahweh. God revealed himself as Yahweh, the one who has compassion on those who suffer and who liberates them from their oppressors.

I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave-drivers. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians....The cry of the sons of Israel has come to me, and I have witnessed the way in which the Egyptians oppress them (Exod. 3:7-9).

Throughout the Bible God appears as the liberator of the oppressed. He is not neutral. He does not attempt to reconcile Moses and Pharaoh, to reconcile the Hebrew slaves with their Egyptian oppressors or to reconcile the Jewish people with any of their later oppressors. Oppression is sin and it cannot be compromised with, it must be done away with. God takes sides with the oppressed. As we read in Psalm 103:6 (JB) "God, who does what is right, is always on the side of the oppressed."

Nor is this identification with the oppressed confined to the Old Testament. When Jesus stood up in the synagogue at Nazareth to announce his mission he made use of the words of Isaiah.

The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour (Luke 4:18-19).

There can be no doubt that Jesus is here taking up the cause of the poor and the oppressed. He has identified himself with their interests. Not that he is unconcerned about the rich and the oppressor. These he calls to repentance. The oppressed Christians of South Africa have known for a long time that they are united to Christ in their sufferings. By his own suffering and his death on the cross he became a victim of oppression and violence. He is with us in our oppression.

### **4.3. Tyranny in the Christian Tradition**

There is a long Christian tradition relating to oppression, but the word that has been used most frequently to describe this particular form of sinfulness is the word 'tyranny.' According to this tradition once it is established beyond doubt that a particular ruler is a tyrant or that a particular regime is tyrannical, it forfeits the moral right to govern and the people acquire the right to resist and to find the means to protect their own interests against injustice and oppression. In other words a tyrannical regime has no *moral legitimacy*. It may be the *de facto* government and it may even be recognised by other governments and therefore be the *de iure* or legal government. But if it is a tyrannical regime, it is, from a moral and a theological point of view, *illegitimate*. There are indeed some differences of opinion in the Christian tradition about the means that might be used to replace a tyrant *but* there has not been any doubt about our Christian duty to refuse to co-operate with tyranny and to do whatever we can to remove it.

Of course everything hinges on the definition of a tyrant. At what point does a government become a tyrannical regime?

The traditional Latin definition of a tyrant is *hostis boni communis* – an enemy of the common good. The purpose of all government is the promotion of what is called the common good of the people governed. To promote the common good is to govern in the interests of, and for the benefit of, all the people. Many governments fail to do this at times. There might be this or that injustice done to some of the people. And such lapses would indeed have to be criticised. But occasional acts of injustice would not make a government into an enemy of the people, a tyrant.

To be an enemy of the people a government would have to be hostile to the common good *in principle*. Such a government would be acting against the interests of the people as a whole and permanently. This would be clearest in cases where the very policy of a government is hostile towards the common good and where the government has a mandate to rule in the interests of some of the people rather than in the interests of all the people. Such a government would be in principle *irreformable*. Any reform that it might try to introduce would not be calculated to serve the common good but to serve the interests of the minority from whom it received its mandate.

A tyrannical regime cannot continue to rule for very long without becoming more and more *violent*. As the majority of the people begin to demand their rights and to put pressure on the tyrant, so will the tyrant resort more and more to desperate, cruel, gross and ruthless forms of tyranny and repression. The reign of a tyrant always ends up as a reign of terror. It is inevitable because from the start the tyrant is an enemy of the common good.

This account of what we mean by a tyrant or a tyrannical regime can best be summed up in the words of a well-known moral theologian: “a regime which is openly the enemy of the people and which violates the common good permanently and in the grossest manner” (B. Haring, *The Law of Christ*, Vol. 3, p. 150).

That leaves us with the question of whether the present government of South Africa is tyrannical or not? There can be no doubt what the majority of the people of South Africa think. For them the apartheid regime is indeed the enemy of the people and that is precisely what they call it: the enemy. In the present crisis, more than ever before, the regime has lost any legitimacy that it might have had in the eyes of the people. Are the people right or wrong?

Apartheid is a system whereby a minority regime elected by one small section of the population is given an explicit mandate to govern in the interests of, and for the benefit of, the white community. Such a mandate or policy is by definition hostile to the common good of all the people. In fact because it tries to rule in the exclusive interests of whites and not in the interests of all, it ends up ruling in a way that is not even in the interests of those same whites. It

becomes an enemy of all the people. A tyrant. A totalitarian regime. A reign of terror.

This also means that the apartheid minority regime is irreformable. We cannot expect the apartheid regime to experience a conversion or change of heart and totally abandon the policy of apartheid. It has no mandate from its electorate to do so. Any reforms or adjustments it might make would have to be done in the interests of those who elected it. Individual members of the government could experience a real conversion and repent but, if they did, they would simply have to follow this through by leaving a regime that was elected and put into power precisely because of its policy of apartheid.

And that is why we have reached the present impasse. As the oppressed majority becomes more insistent and puts more and more pressure on the tyrant by means of boycotts, strikes, uprisings, burnings and even armed struggle, the more tyrannical will this regime become. On the one hand it will use repressive measures: detentions, trials, killings, torture, bannings, propaganda, states of emergency and other desperate and tyrannical methods. And on the other hand it will introduce reforms that will always be unacceptable to the majority because all its reforms must ensure that the white minority remains on top.

A regime that is in principle the enemy of the people cannot suddenly begin to rule in the interests of all the people. It can only be replaced by another government—one that has been elected by the majority of the people with an explicit mandate to govern in the interests of all the people.

A regime that has made itself the enemy of the people has thereby also made itself the enemy of God. People are made in the image and likeness of God and whatever we do to the least of them we do to God (Matt. 25:49, 45).

To say that the State or the regime is the enemy of God is not to say that all those who support the system are aware of this. On the whole they simply do not know what they are doing. Many people have been blinded by the regime's propaganda. They are frequently quite ignorant of the consequences of their stance. However, such blindness does not make the State any less tyrannical or any less of an enemy of the people and an enemy of God.

On the other hand the fact that the State is tyrannical and an enemy of God is no excuse for hatred. As Christians we are called upon to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44). It is not said that we should not or will not have enemies or that we should not identify tyrannical regimes as indeed our enemies. But once we have identified our enemies, we must endeavour to love them. That is not always easy. But then we must also remember that the most loving thing we can do for *both* the oppressed *and* for our enemies who are oppressors is to

eliminate the oppression, remove the tyrants from power and establish a just government for the common good of *all the people*.

#### **4.4. A Message of Hope**

At the very heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ and at the very centre of all true prophecy is a message of hope. Nothing could be more relevant and more necessary at this moment of crisis in South Africa than 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 his "Kingdom may come" and his "Will may be done on earth as it is in heaven." We believe that goodness and justice and love will triumph in the end and that tyranny and oppression cannot last forever. One day "all tears will be wiped away" (Rev. 7:17; 21:4) and "the lamb will lie down with the lion" (Isa. 11:6). True peace and true reconciliation are not only desirable, they are assured and guaranteed. This is our faith and our hope.

Why is it that this powerful message of hope has not been highlighted in 'Church Theology,' in the statements and pronouncements of Church leaders? Is it because they have been addressing themselves to the oppressor rather than to the oppressed? Is it because they do not want to encourage the oppressed to be too hopeful for too much?

As the crisis deepens day-by-day, what both the oppressor and the oppressed can legitimately demand of the Churches is a message of hope. Most of the oppressed people in South Africa today and especially the youth do have hope. They are acting courageously and fearlessly because they have a sure hope that liberation will come. Often enough their bodies are broken but nothing can now break their spirit. But hope needs to be confirmed. Hope needs to be maintained and strengthened. Hope needs to be spread. The people need to hear it said again and again that God is with them.

On the other hand the oppressor and those who believe the propaganda of the oppressor are desperately fearful. They must be made aware of the diabolical evils of the present system and they must be called to repentance but they must also be given something to hope for. At present they have false hopes. They hope to maintain the status quo and their special privileges with perhaps some adjustments and they fear any real alternative. But there is much more than that to hope for and nothing to fear. Can the Christian message of hope not help them in this matter?

There is hope. There is hope for all of us. But the road to that hope is going to be very hard and very painful. The conflict and the struggle will have to



intensify in the months and years ahead because there is no other way to remove the injustice and oppression. But God is with us. We can only learn to become the instruments of *his* peace even unto death. We must participate in the cross of Christ if we are to have the hope of participating in his resurrection.



## **5. CHALLENGE TO ACTION**

### **5.1. God Sides with the Oppressed**

To say that the Church must now take sides unequivocally and consistently with the poor and the oppressed is to overlook the fact that the majority of Christians in South Africa have already done so. By far the greater part of the Church in South Africa *is* poor and oppressed. Of course it cannot be taken for granted that everyone who is oppressed has taken up their own cause and is struggling for their own liberation. Nor can it be assumed that all oppressed Christians are fully aware of the fact that their cause is God's cause. Nevertheless it remains true that the Church is already on the side of the oppressed because that is where the majority of its members are to be found. This fact needs to be appropriated and confirmed by the Church as a whole.

At the beginning of this document it was pointed out that the present crisis has highlighted the divisions in the Church. We are a divided Church precisely because not all the members of our Churches have taken sides against oppression. In other words not all Christians have united themselves with God "who is always on the side of the oppressed" (Psa. 103:6). As far as the present crisis is concerned, there is only one way forward to Church unity and that is for those Christians who find themselves on the side of the oppressor or sitting on the fence, to cross over to the other side to be united in faith and action with those who are oppressed. Unity and reconciliation within the Church itself is only possible around God and Jesus Christ who are to be found on the side of the poor and the oppressed.

If this is what the Church must become, if this is what the Church as a whole must have as its project, how then are we to translate it into concrete and effective action?

### **5.2. Participation in the Struggle**

Christians, if they are not doing so already, must quite simply participate in the struggle for liberation and for a just society. The campaigns of the people, from consumer boycotts to stayaways, need to be supported and encouraged by the Church. Criticism will sometimes be necessary but encouragement and support will also be necessary. In other words the present crisis challenges the whole Church to move beyond a mere 'ambulance ministry' to a ministry of involvement and participation.

### **5.3. Transforming Church Activities**

The Church has its own specific activities: Sunday services, communion services, baptisms, Sunday school, funerals and so forth. It also has its specific way of expressing its faith and its commitment i.e. in the form of confessions of faith. All of these activities must be re-shaped to be more fully consistent with a prophetic faith related to the KAIROS that God is offering us today. The evil forces we speak of in baptism must be named. We know what these evil forces are in South Africa today. The unity and sharing we profess in our communion services or Masses must be named. It is the solidarity of the people inviting all to join in the struggle for God's peace in South Africa. The repentance we preach must be named. It is repentance for our share of the guilt for the suffering and oppression in our country.

Much of what we do in our Church services has lost its relevance to the poor and the oppressed. Our services and sacraments have been appropriated to serve the need of the individual for comfort and security. Now these same Church activities must be re-appropriated to serve the real religious needs of all the people and to further the liberating mission of God and the Church in the world.

### **5.4. Special Campaigns**

Over and above its regular activities the Church would need to have special programmes, projects and campaigns because of the special needs of the struggle for liberation in South Africa today. But there is a very important caution here. The Church must avoid becoming a 'Third Force,' a force between the oppressor and the oppressed. The Church's programmes and campaigns must not duplicate what the people's organisations are already doing and, even more seriously, the Church must not confuse the issue by having programmes that run counter to the struggles of those political organisations that truly represent the grievances and demands of the people. Consultation, co-ordination and co-operation will be needed. We all have the same goals even when we differ about the final significance of what we are struggling for.

### **5.5. Civil Disobedience**

Once it is established that the present regime has no moral legitimacy and is in fact a tyrannical regime certain things follow for the Church and its activities. In the first place *the Church cannot collaborate with tyranny*. It cannot or should not do anything that appears to give legitimacy to a morally illegitimate regime. Secondly, the Church should not only pray for a change of government, it should also mobilise its members in every parish to begin to

think and work and plan for a change of government in South Africa. We must begin to look ahead and begin working now with firm hope and faith for a better future. And finally the moral illegitimacy 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 God.

## **5.6. Moral Guidance**

The people look to the Church, especially in the midst of our present crisis, for moral guidance. In order to provide this the Church must first make its stand absolutely clear and never tire of explaining and dialoguing about it. It must then help people to understand their rights and their duties. There must be no misunderstanding about the *moral duty* of all who are oppressed to resist oppression and to struggle for liberation and justice. The Church will also find that at times it does need to curb excesses and to appeal to the consciences of those who act thoughtlessly and wildly.

But the Church of Jesus Christ is not called to be a bastion of caution and moderation. The Church should challenge, inspire and motivate people. It has a message of the cross that inspires us to make sacrifices for justice and liberation. It has a message of hope that challenges us to wake up and to act with hope and confidence. The Church must preach this message not only in words and sermons and statements but also through its actions, programmes, campaigns and divine services.



## CONCLUSION

As we said in the beginning, there is nothing final about this document. Our hope is that it will stimulate discussion, debate, reflection and prayer, but, above all, that it will lead to action. We invite all committed Christians to take this matter further, to do more research, to develop the themes we have presented here or to criticise them and to return to the Bible, as we have tried to do, with the question raised by the crisis of our times.

Although the document suggests various modes of involvement it does not prescribe the particular actions anyone should take. We call upon all those who are committed to this prophetic form of theology to use the document for discussion in groups, small and big, to determine an appropriate form of action, depending on their particular situation, and to take up the action with other related groups and organisations.

The challenge to renewal and action that we have set out here is addressed to the Church. But that does not mean that it is intended only for Church leaders. The challenge of the faith and of our present KAIROS is addressed to all who bear the name Christian. None of us can simply sit back and wait to be told what to do by our Church leaders or by anyone else. We must all accept responsibility for acting and living out our Christian faith in these circumstances. We pray that God will help all of us to translate the challenge of our times into action.

We, as theologians (both lay and professional), have been greatly challenged by our own reflections, our exchange of ideas and our discoveries as we met together in smaller and larger groups to prepare this document or to suggest amendments to it. We are convinced that this challenge comes from God and that it is addressed to all of us. We see the present crisis or KAIROS as indeed a divine visitation.

And finally we also like to call upon our Christian brothers and sisters throughout the world to give us the necessary support in this regard so that the daily loss of so many young lives may be brought to a speedy end.





# **THE KAIROS DOCUMENT**

## **CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH**

**Revised Second Edition**

**A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in  
South Africa**

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Second Edition September 1986



# CONTENTS

	PREFACE TO THE REVISED SECOND EDITION	41
	PREFACE	45
1.	THE MOMENT OF TRUTH	47
2.	CRITIQUE OF 'STATE THEOLOGY'	49
2.1.	Romans 13:1-7	49
2.2.	Law and Order	51
2.3.	The Threat of Communism	52
2.4.	The God of the State	53
3.	CRITIQUE OF 'CHURCH THEOLOGY'	55
3.1.	Reconciliation	55
3.2.	Justice	57
3.3.	Non-Violence	58
3.4.	The Fundamental Problem	60
4.	TOWARDS A PROPHETIC THEOLOGY	63
4.1.	Prophetic Theology	63
4.2.	Suffering and Oppression in the Bible	64
4.3.	Social Analysis	66
4.4.	Tyranny	68
4.5.	Liberation and Hope in the Bible	70
4.6.	A Message of Hope	71
5.	CHALLENGE TO ACTION	73
5.1.	God Sides with the Oppressed	73
5.2.	Participation in the Struggle	73
5.3.	Transforming Church Activities	74
5.4.	Special Campaigns	74
5.5.	Civil Disobedience	74
5.6.	Moral Guidance	75
6.	CONCLUSION	77
7.	EXPLANATORY NOTES	77



## *Preface to the Revised Second Edition*

It is exactly one year since the publication of the first edition of the Kairos Document. At that time, we said that "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.*" Today, one year later, the situation in South Africa is indeed far worse than before and the crisis far more serious.

A year ago we had a partial state of emergency, now we have a total, national state of emergency. Then one could, to a certain extent, report about what was happening in South Africa, now there is almost a total blackout of news. Then there were threats of sanctions, now it is a matter of what type of sanctions to apply against South Africa. There is more repression now than ever before with thousands of people in detention, many missing and some restricted or deported. Whilst the Botha regime is going all out to demonstrate its power and its determination to maintain apartheid at all costs, the people have become more determined than ever to resist this regime even at the cost of their lives. This is indeed frightening. It is a *real Kairos!*

The message of the Kairos Document has lost none of its relevance. If anything, it is more relevant today than it was a year ago. The Kairos theologians have therefore decided to publish a second edition of the document.

After extensive discussions amongst the Kairos theologians and with regional groups around the country, and, after considering all the contributions from various groups, churches and other persons here and abroad, and further, because of a desire to keep the document as simple as possible for easy reading by ordinary people, the editing of the document has been kept to a minimum. Amendments, elaborations and additions have been made only where it was absolutely necessary for greater clarity. We have tried to maintain the quality of the first edition, its mood, sharpness, vigour and simplicity because this is what the signatories and others demanded. It had to be left as a prophetic word, a proclamation.

For this reason, no *debates* on the various themes raised by the first edition have been entered into. To meet this need the Kairos theologians are working on a book which will deal with the debates more scientifically. The publication of this book is scheduled for the middle of next year.

The only chapter of the original Kairos Document which has been almost completely rewritten is that on Prophetic Theology. It was generally felt that this chapter was not well developed in the first edition. Otherwise we have added explanatory notes to help clarify some of the points which were not

clear. Also, because of the thousands of people who wanted to have their *names* put to the document, it has not been possible to include a list of signatories in this edition. It would have made the edition too voluminous. We are nevertheless keeping a record of the list.

Responses to the first edition were overwhelming. The document has generated more discussions and debates than any previous theological document in South Africa. There has been overwhelming excitement about it in the Black townships. It reinforced the people's faith and hope for a new and just society in South Africa. It came as an empowering instrument of faith committing them more than ever before to the struggle for justice and peace in South Africa. It was welcomed as a statement of what it means to be truly Christian in a violent apartheid society. For many, the Gospel became 'Good News' for the first time in their lives.

The document also had a mission dimension. Many of those who had abandoned the Church as an irrelevant institution that supports, justifies and legitimizes this cruel apartheid system began to feel that if the Church becomes the Church as expounded by the Kairos Document then they would go back to Church again. Even those who would consider themselves to be 'non-Christians' in the conventional sense began to say that if this is Christianity they could become Christians.

There have also been responses from some of the Churches in South Africa, from various Christian groups around the country and from individual theologians and various other persons. And we have received volumes of responses from our sister churches around the world. All were very helpful in advancing the development of an authentic and relevant theology that addresses itself to the issues of the day. Like any other challenging material the document has also been viciously attacked, mostly by conservative church groups like the 'Gospel Defence League' and 'Christian Mission International.' They actually called for the banning of the document. This came as no surprise to us as they are known for their support of the apartheid regime in South Africa and their attack on anyone who challenges this regime.

It might be interesting to study the relationship between the various individuals and groups who viciously attacked the document and those who welcomed it. For example, how does the theological stance relate to the class position or the social, economic, racial and political interests of these groups or individuals? What is clear is that most of those who attacked the document failed to appreciate the *concerns* of those who participated in producing the document. They looked at the document from their own situation or context which is completely different from that of the participants whose experience and ministry come from the townships. Most of the critics simply took the document out of its context and analyzed it in the realm of abstraction.

To appreciate the Kairos Document one needs to understand and internalize the concerns of those who produced it. Those Christians who live in the townships and who are experiencing the civil war that is tearing their lives apart understand immediately what the Kairos theologians are attempting to say; whilst those who do not have this experience find it difficult to understand the document.

Perhaps the most exciting and most important contribution of the Kairos Document has been its method or way of doing theology. Many Christians here and abroad are using the model or method of the Kairos Document to reflect on their own situation. They have begun to criticise the traditional, historical alignment of the Church with Western ideology, institutions and governments whilst those in the East are grappling with the question of how to live one's faith in socialist societies.

Against this background we publish today this second edition of the Kairos Document. It was developed in the same way as the first edition except that thousands of people have been involved in the process, not only in terms of reflection and study but mostly in terms of involvement and action in the liberation struggle in South Africa. We hope that this edition will not be the end of the process of action and theological reflection on our situation. We hope that it will serve as a never-ending stimulus to keep the cycle of action-reflection-action moving forward.

*September 1986*





## *Preface*

The KAIROS Document is a Christian, biblical and theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa today. It is an attempt by concerned Christians in South Africa to reflect on the situation of death in our country. It is a critique of the current theological models that determine the type of activities the Church engages in to try to resolve the problems of the country. It is an attempt to develop, out of this perplexing situation, an alternative biblical and theological model that will in turn lead to forms of activity that will make a real difference to the future of our country.

Of particular interest is *the way* the theological material was produced. In June 1985 as the crisis was intensifying in the country, as more and more people were killed, maimed and imprisoned, as one Black township after another revolted against the apartheid regime, as the people refused to be oppressed or to co-operate with oppressors, facing death by the day, and as the apartheid army moved into the townships to rule by the barrel of the gun, a number of theologians who were concerned about the situation expressed the need to reflect on this situation to determine what response by the Church and by all Christians in South Africa would be most appropriate.

A first discussion group met at the beginning of July in the heart of Soweto. Participants spoke freely about the situation and the various responses of the Church, Church leaders and Christians. A critique of these responses was made and the theology from which these responses flowed was also subjected to a critical analysis. Individual members of the group were assigned to put together material on specific themes which were raised during the discussion and to present the material to the next session of the group.

At the second meeting the material itself was subjected to a critique and various people were commissioned to do more investigations on specific problematic areas. The latest finding with the rest of the material were collated and presented to the third meeting where more than thirty people, consisting of theologians, ordinary Christians (lay theologians) and some Church leaders came together.

After a very extensive discussion some adjustments and additions were made especially in regard to the section entitled 'Challenge to Action.' The group then appointed a committee to subject the document to further critique by various other Christian groupings throughout the country. Everybody was told that "this was a people's document which you can also own even by demolishing it if your position can stand the test of biblical faith and Christian experience in South Africa." They were told that this was an open-ended document which will never be said to be final.

The 'Working Committee,' as it was called, was inundated with comments, suggestions and enthusiastic appreciation from various groups and individuals in the country. By the 13<sup>th</sup> September 1985 when the document was submitted for publication there were still comments and recommendations flowing in. The first publication therefore must be taken as a beginning, a basis for further discussion by all Christians in the country. Further editions will be published later.

*25<sup>th</sup> September 1985  
Johannesburg*

## 1. THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

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<sup>1</sup> or moment of truth not only for apartheid but also for the Church and all other faiths and religions.<sup>2</sup>

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 very many Christians in South Africa this is the KAIROS, the moment of grace and opportunity, the favourable time in which God issues a challenge to decisive action. It is a dangerous time because, if this opportunity is missed, and allowed to pass by, the loss for the Church, 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 the people that was imminent, "and all because you did not recognise your opportunity (KAIROS) when God offered it" (Luke 19:44).

A crisis is a judgment that brings out the best in some people 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.

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 Churches. In the life and death conflict between different social forces that has come to a head in South Africa today, there are Christians (or at least people who profess to be Christians) on both sides of the conflict—and some who are trying to sit on the fence!

Does this prove that Christian faith has no real meaning or relevance for our times? Does it show that the Bible can be used for any purpose at all? Such problems would be critical enough for the Church in any circumstances but when we also come to see that the conflict in South Africa is between the oppressor and the oppressed,<sup>3</sup> the crisis for the Church as an institution becomes much more acute.<sup>4</sup> Both oppressor and oppressed claim loyalty to the same Church. They are both baptised in the same baptism and participate together in the breaking of the same bread, the same body and blood of Christ. 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 peace.

The Church is divided against itself<sup>5</sup> and its day of judgment has come.

The moment of truth has compelled us to analyse more carefully the different theologies in our Churches and to speak out more clearly and boldly about the real significance of these theologies. We have been able to isolate three theologies and we have chosen to call them 'State Theology,' 'Church Theology' and 'Prophetic Theology.'<sup>6</sup> In our thoroughgoing criticism of the first and second theologies we do not wish to mince our words. The situation is too critical for that.

## 2. CRITIQUE OF 'STATE THEOLOGY'

The South African apartheid State has a theology of its own and we have chosen to call it 'State Theology.' 'State Theology' is simply the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism and totalitarianism. It blesses injustice, canonises the will of the powerful and reduces the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy.<sup>7</sup>

How does 'State Theology' do this? It does it by misusing theological concepts and biblical texts for its own political purposes. In this document we would like to draw your attention to four key examples of how this is done in South Africa. The first would be the use of Romans 13:1-7 to give an absolute and 'divine' authority to the State. The second would be the use of the idea of 'Law and Order' to determine and control what the people may be permitted to regard as just and unjust. The third would be the use of the word 'communist' to brand anyone who rejects 'State Theology.' And finally there is the use that is made of the name of God.

### 2.1. Romans 13: 1-7

The text reads as follows:

1. You must all obey the governing authorities. Since all government comes from God, the civil authorities were appointed by God.
2. And so anyone who resists authority is rebelling against God's decision, and such an act is bound to be punished.
3. Good behaviour is not afraid of magistrates; only criminals have anything to fear. If you want to live without being afraid of authority, you must live honestly and authority may even honour you.
4. The State is there to serve God for your benefit. If you break the law, however, you may well have fear: the bearing of the sword has its significance. The authorities are there to serve God: they carry out God's revenge by punishing wrongdoers.
5. You must obey, therefore, not only because you are afraid of being punished, but also for conscience' sake.
6. This is also the reason why you must pay taxes, since all government officials are God's officers. They serve God by collecting taxes.
7. Pay every government official what he has a right to ask—whether it be direct tax or indirect, fear or honour (Rom. 13:1-7).<sup>8</sup>

The misuse of this famous text is not confined to the present government in South Africa. Throughout the history of Christianity totalitarian regimes have tried to legitimise an attitude of blind obedience and absolute servility towards the State by quoting this text "As soon as Christians, out of loyalty to

the gospel of Jesus, offer resistance to a State's totalitarian claim, the representatives of the State or their collaborationist theological advisers are accustomed to appeal to this saying of Paul, as if Christians are here commended to endorse and thus to abet all the crimes of a totalitarian State."<sup>9</sup>

But what then is the meaning of Romans 13:1-7 and why is the use made of it by 'State Theology' unjustifiable from a biblical point of view?

'State Theology' assumes that in this text Paul is presenting us with the absolute and definitive Christian doctrine about the State, in other words an absolute and universal principle that is equally valid for all times and in all circumstances. The falseness of this assumption has been pointed out by numerous biblical scholars.<sup>10</sup>

What has been overlooked here is one of the most fundamental of all principles of biblical interpretation: every text must be interpreted *in its context*. To abstract a text from its context and to interpret it in the abstract is to distort the meaning of God's Word. Moreover the context here is not only the chapters and verses that precede and succeed this particular text nor is it even limited to the total context of the Bible. The context includes also the *circumstances* in which Paul's statement was made. Paul was writing to a particular Christian community in Rome, a community that had its own particular problems in relation to the State at that time and in those circumstances. That is part of the context of our text.

Many authors have drawn attention to the fact that in the rest of the Bible God does not demand obedience to oppressive rulers. Examples can be given ranging from Pharaoh to Pilate and through into Apostolic times. The Jews and later the Christians did not believe that their imperial overlords, the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Greeks or the Romans, had some kind of divine right to rule them and oppress them. These empires were the beasts described in the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelations. God *allowed* them to rule for a while but he did not *approve* of what they did. It was not God's will. His will was the freedom and liberation of Israel. Romans 13:1-7 cannot be contradicting all of this.

But most revealing of all is the circumstances of the Roman Christians to whom Paul was writing. They were not revolutionaries. They were not trying to overthrow the State. They were not calling for a change of government. They were, what has been called, 'antinomians' or 'enthusiasts' and their belief was that Christians, and only Christians, were exonerated from obeying any State at all, any government or political authority at all, *because* Jesus alone was their Lord and King. This is of course heretical and Paul is compelled to point out to these Christians that before the second coming of Christ there will always be some kind of State, some kind of secular

government and that Christians are not exonerated from subjection to some kind of political authority.

Paul is simply not addressing the issue of a just or unjust State or the need to change one government for another. He is simply establishing the fact that there will be some kind of secular authority and that Christians as such are not exonerated from subjection to secular laws and authorities. "*The State is there to serve God for your benefit,*" says Paul. That is the kind of State he is speaking of. That is the kind of State that must be obeyed. In this text Paul does not tell us what we should do when a State does *not* serve God and does *not* work for the benefit of all but has become unjust and oppressive. That is another question.

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 the Book of Revelation. Here the Roman State becomes the servant of the dragon (the devil) and takes on the appearance of a horrible beast. Its days are numbered because God will not permit his unfaithful servant to reign forever.

Consequently those who try to find answers to the very different questions and problems of our time in the text of Romans 13:1-7 are doing a great disservice to Paul. The use that 'State Theology' makes of this text tells us more about the political options of those who construct this theology than it does about the meaning of God's Word in this text. As one biblical scholar puts it: "The primary concern is to justify the interests of the State and the text is pressed into its service without respect for the context and the intention of Paul."

## **2.2. Law and Order**

The State makes use of the concept of law and order to maintain the status quo which it depicts as 'normal.' But this *law* is the unjust and discriminatory laws of apartheid and this *order* is the organised and institutionalised disorder of oppression. Anyone who wishes to change this law and this order is made to feel that they are lawless and disorderly. In other words they are made to feel guilty of sin.

It is indeed the duty of the State to maintain law and order, but it has no divine mandate to maintain any kind of law and order. Something does not become moral and just simply because the State has declared it to be a law and the organisation of a society is not a just and right order simply because it has been instituted by the State. We cannot accept any kind of law and any kind of order. The concern of Christians is that we should have in our country a just law and a right order.

In the present crisis and especially during the State of Emergency, 'State Theology' has tried to re-establish the status quo of orderly discrimination, exploitation and oppression by appealing to the consciences of its citizens in the name of law and order. It tries to make those who reject this law and this order feel that they are ungodly. The State here is not only usurping the right of the Church to make judgments about what would be right and just in our circumstances; it is going even further than that and demanding of us, in the name of law and order, an obedience that must be reserved for God alone. The South African State recognises no authority beyond itself and therefore it will not allow anyone to question what it has chosen to define as 'law and order.' However, there are millions of Christians in South Africa today who are saying with Peter: "We must obey God rather than man (human beings)" (Acts 5:29).

'State Theology' further believes that the government has the God-given right to use *violence* to enforce its system of 'law and order.' It bases this on Romans 13:4: "The authorities are there to serve God: they carry out God's revenge by punishing wrongdoers." In this way *state security* becomes a more important concern than *justice*, and those who in the name of God work to change the unjust structures of society are branded as ungodly agitators and rebels. The State often admonishes church leaders to 'preach the pure gospel' and not to 'meddle in politics,' while at the same time it indulges in its own political theology which claims God's approval for its use of violence in maintaining an unjust system of 'law and order.'

The State appeals to the consciences of Christians in the name of 'law and order' to accept this use of violence as a God-given duty, in order to re-establish the status quo of oppression. In this way people are sacrificed for the sake of laws, rather than laws for the sake of people, as in the life of Jesus: "The Sabbath was made for man (the human person); not man (the human person) for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). The State's efforts to preserve law and order, which should imply the protection of human life, means the very opposite for the majority of the people, namely the suppression and destruction of life.

### **2.3. The Threat of Communism**

We all know how the South African State makes use of the label 'communist.' Anything that threatens the status quo is labelled 'communist.' Anyone who opposes the State and especially anyone who rejects its theology is simply dismissed as a 'communist.' No account is taken of what communism really means. No thought is given to why some people have indeed opted for communism or for some form of socialism. Even people who have not rejected capitalism are called 'communists' when they reject 'State Theology.'



The State use the label 'communist' in an uncritical and unexamined way as its symbol of evil.

'State Theology' like every other theology needs to have its own concrete symbol of evil. It must be able to symbolise what it regards as godless behaviour and what ideas must be regarded as atheistic. It must have its own version of hell. And so it has invented, or rather taken over, the myth of communism. All evil is communistic and all communist or socialist ideas are atheistic and godless. Threats about hell-fire and eternal damnation are replaced by threats and warnings about the horrors of a tyrannical, totalitarian, atheistic and terrorist communist regime – a kind of hell-on-earth. This is a very convenient way of frightening some people into accepting any kind of domination and exploitation by a capitalist minority.

The South African State has its own heretical theology and according to that theology millions of Christians in South Africa (not to mention the rest of the world) are to be regarded as 'atheists.' It is significant that in earlier times when Christians rejected the gods of the Roman Empire they were branded as 'atheists' – by the State.

#### **2.4. The God of the State**

The State in its oppression of the people makes use again and again of the name of God. Military chaplains use it to encourage the South African Defence Force, police chaplains use it to strengthen policemen and cabinet ministers use it in their propaganda speeches. But perhaps the most revealing of all is the blasphemous use of God's holy name in the preamble to the new apartheid constitution.

In humble submission to Almighty God, who controls the destinies of nations and the history of peoples who gathered our forebears together from many lands and gave them this their own; who has guided them from generation to generation; who has wondrously delivered them from the dangers that beset them.

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. Here we have a god who is historically on the side of the white settlers, who dispossesses black people of their land and who gives the major part of the land to his 'chosen people.'

It is the god of superior weapons who conquered those who were armed with nothing but spears. It is the god of the casspirs and hippos, the god of teargas, rubber bullets, sjamboks, prison cells and death sentences. Here is a god who exalts the proud and humbles the poor – the very opposite of the God of the Bible who "scatters the proud of heart, pulls down the mighty from their

thrones and exalts the humble” (Luke 1:51-52). From a theological point of view the opposite of the God of the Bible is the devil, Satan. The god of the South African State is not merely an idol or false god, it is the devil disguised as Almighty God – the antichrist.

The oppressive South African regime will always be particularly abhorrent to Christians precisely because it makes use of Christianity to justify its evil ways. As Christians we simply cannot tolerate this blasphemous use of God’s name and God’s Word. ‘State Theology’ is not only heretical, it is blasphemous. Christians who are trying to remain faithful to the God of the Bible are even more horrified when they see that there are Churches, like the White Dutch Reformed Churches and other groups of Christians, who actually subscribe to this heretical theology. ‘State Theology’ needs its own prophets and it manages to find them from the ranks of those who profess to be ministers of God’s Word in some of our Churches. What is particularly tragic for a Christian is to see the number of people who are fooled and confused by these false prophets and their heretical theology.

South African ‘State Theology’ can be compared with the ‘Court Theology’ of Israel’s Kings, and our false prophets can be compared with the ‘Court Prophets’ of Israel, of whom it is said:

They have misled my people by saying: Peace! when there is no peace. Instead of my people rebuilding the wall, these men come and slap on plaster....I mean to shatter the wall you slapped with plaster, to throw it down and lay its foundations bare. It will fall and you will perish under it; and so you will learn that I am Yahweh (Ezek. 13:10, 14).

### 3. CRITIQUE OF 'CHURCH THEOLOGY'

We have analysed the statements that are made from time-to-time by the so-called 'English-speaking' Churches. We have looked at what Church leaders tend to say in their speeches and press statements about the apartheid regime and the present crisis. What we found running through all these pronouncements is a series of inter-related theological assumptions. These we have chosen to call 'Church Theology.' We are well aware of the fact that this theology does *not* express the faith of the majority of Christians in South Africa today who form the greater part of most of our Churches. Nevertheless the opinions expressed by Church leaders are regarded in the media and generally in our society as the official opinions of the Churches.<sup>11</sup> We have therefore chosen to call these opinions 'Church Theology.' The crisis in which we found ourselves today compels us to question this theology, to question its assumptions, its implications and its practicality.

In a limited, guarded and cautious way this theology is critical of apartheid. Its criticism, however, is superficial and counter-productive because instead of engaging in an in-depth analysis of the signs of our times, it relies upon a few stock ideas derived from Christian tradition and then uncritically and repeatedly applies them to our situation. The stock ideas used by almost all these Church leaders that we would like to examine here are: reconciliation (or peace), justice and non-violence.

#### 3.1. Reconciliation

There can be no doubt that our Christian faith commits us to work for *true* reconciliation and *genuine* peace. But as so many people, including Christians, have pointed out there can be no true reconciliation and no genuine peace *without justice*. Any form of peace or reconciliation that allows the sin of injustice and oppression to continue is a *false* peace and *counterfeit* reconciliation. This kind of 'reconciliation' has nothing whatsoever to do with the Christian faith.

'Church Theology' is not always clear on this matter and many Christians have been led to believe that what we need in South Africa is not justice but reconciliation and peace. The argument goes something like this: "We must be fair. We must listen to both sides of the story. If the two sides can only meet to talk and negotiate they will sort out their differences and misunderstandings, and the conflict will be resolved." On the face of it this may sound very Christian. But is it?

The fallacy here is that 'reconciliation' has been made into an absolute principle that must be applied in all cases of conflict or dissension. But not all

cases of conflict are the same. We can imagine a private quarrel between two people or two groups whose differences are based upon misunderstandings. In such cases it would be appropriate to talk and negotiate to sort out the misunderstandings and to reconcile the two sides. But there are other conflicts in which one side is right and the other wrong. There are conflicts where one side is a fully armed and violent oppressor while the other side is defenceless and oppressed. There are conflicts that can only be described as the struggle between justice and injustice, good and evil, God and the devil. To speak of reconciling these two is not only a mistaken application of the Christian idea of reconciliation, it is a total betrayal of all that Christian faith has ever meant. Nowhere in the Bible or in Christian tradition has it ever been suggested that we ought to try to reconcile good and evil, God and the devil. We are supposed to do away with evil, injustice oppression and sin—not come to terms with it. We are supposed to oppose, confront and reject the devil and not try to sup with the devil.

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

What this means in practice is that no reconciliation, no forgiveness and no negotiations are possible *without repentance*. The Biblical teaching on reconciliation and forgiveness makes it quite clear that nobody can be forgiven and reconciled with God unless she or he repents of their sins. Nor are *we* expected to forgive the unrepentant sinner. When he or she repents we must be willing to forgive seventy times seven times but before that, we are expected to preach repentance to those who sin against us or against anyone. Reconciliation, forgiveness and negotiations will become our Christian duty in South Africa only when the apartheid regime shows signs of genuine repentance.<sup>12</sup> The recent State of Emergency, the continued military repression of the people in the townships and the jailing of all its opponents is clear proof of the total lack of repentance on the part of the present regime.

There is nothing that we want more than true reconciliation and genuine peace—the peace that God wants and not the peace the world wants (John 14:27). The peace that God wants is based upon truth, repentance, justice and love. The peace that the world offers us is a unity that compromises the truth, covers over injustice and oppression and is totally motivated by selfishness. At this stage, like Jesus, we must expose this false peace, confront our oppressors and be prepared for the dissension that will follow. As Christians

we must say with Jesus: "Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth. No, I tell you, but rather dissension" (Luke 12:51). There can be no real peace without justice and repentance.

It would be quite wrong to try to preserve 'peace' and 'unity' at all costs, even at the cost of truth and justice and, worse still, at the cost of thousands of young lives. As disciples of Jesus we should rather promote truth and justice and life at all costs, even at the cost of creating conflict, disunity and dissension along the way. To be truly biblical our Church leaders must adopt a theology that millions of Christians have already adopted—a biblical theology of direct confrontation with the forces of evil rather than a theology of reconciliation with sin and the devil.

### 3.2. Justice

It would be quite wrong to give the impression that 'Church Theology' in South Africa is not particularly concerned about the need for justice. There have been some very strong and very sincere demands for justice. But 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 concession. It does not appear to be the more radical justice that comes from below and is determined by the people of South Africa.

One of our main reasons for drawing this conclusion is the simple fact that almost all Church statements and appeals are made to the State or to the white community. The assumption seems to be that changes must come from whites or at least from people who are at the top of the pile. The general idea appears to be that one must simply appeal to the conscience and the goodwill of those who are responsible for injustice in our land and that once they have repented of their sins and after some consultation with others they will introduce the necessary reforms to the system. Why else would Church leaders be having talks with P. W. Botha, if this is not the vision of a just and peaceful solution to our problems?

At the heart of this approach is the reliance upon 'individual conversions' in response to 'moralising demands' to change the structures of a society. It has not worked and it never will work. The present crisis with all its cruelty, brutality and callousness is ample proof of the ineffectiveness of years and years of Christian 'moralising' about the need for love. The problem that we are dealing with here in South Africa is not merely a problem of personal guilt; it is a problem of structural injustice. People are suffering, people are being maimed and killed and tortured every day. We cannot just sit back and

wait for the oppressor to see the light so that the oppressed can put out their hands and beg for the crumbs of some small reforms. That in itself would be degrading and oppressive.

There have been reforms and, no doubt, there will be further reforms in the near future. And it may well be that the Church's appeal to the consciences of whites has contributed marginally to the introduction of some of these reforms. But can such reforms ever be regarded as real change, as the introduction of a true and lasting justice. Reforms that come from the top are never satisfactory. They seldom do more than make the oppression more effective and more acceptable. If the oppressor does ever introduce reforms that might lead to real change this will come about because of strong pressure from those who are oppressed. True justice, God's justice, demands a radical change of structures. This can only come from below, from the oppressed themselves. God will bring about change through the oppressed as he did through the oppressed Hebrew slaves in Egypt. God does not bring his justice through reforms introduced by the Pharaoh's of this world.<sup>13</sup>

Why then does 'Church Theology' appeal to the top rather than to the people who are suffering? Why does this theology not demand that the oppressed stand up for their rights and wage a struggle against their oppressors? Why does it not tell them that it is *their* duty to work for justice and to change the unjust structures? Perhaps the answer to these questions is that appeals from the 'top' in the Church tend very easily to be appeals to the 'top' in society. An appeal to the conscience of those who perpetuate the system of injustice must be made. But real change and true justice can only come from below, from the people – most of whom are Christians.

### 3.3. Non-Violence

The stance of 'Church Theology' on non-violence, expressed as a blanket condemnation of all that is *called* violence, has not only been unable to curb the violence of our situation, it has actually, although unwittingly, been a major contributing factor in the recent escalation of State violence. Here again non-violence has been made into an absolute principle that applies to anything anyone *calls* violence without regard for who is using it, which side they are on or what purpose they may have in mind. In our situation, this is simply counter-productive.

The problem for the Church here is the way the word violence is being used in the propaganda of the State. The State and the media have chosen to call violence what some people do in the townships as they struggle for their liberation, that is, throwing stones, burning cars and buildings and sometimes killing collaborators. But this *excludes* the structural, institutional and unrepentant violence of the State and especially the oppressive and naked

violence of the police and the army. These things are not counted as violence. And even when they are acknowledged to be 'excessive,' they are called 'misconduct' or even 'atrocities' but never violence. Thus the phrase 'violence in the townships' comes to mean what the young people are doing and not what the police are doing or what apartheid in general is doing to people. If one calls for non-violence in such circumstances one appears to be criticising the resistance of the people while justifying or at least overlooking the violence of the police and the State. That is how it is understood not only by the State and its supporters but also by the people who are struggling for their freedom. Violence, especially, in our circumstances, is a loaded word.

It is true that Church statements and pronouncements do also condemn the violence of the police. They do say that they condemn *all violence*. But is it legitimate, especially in our circumstances, to use the same word violence in a blanket condemnation to cover the ruthless and repressive activities of the State and the desperate attempts of the people to defend themselves? Do such abstractions and generalisations not confuse the issue? How can acts of oppression, injustice and domination be equated with acts of resistance and self-defence? Would it be legitimate to describe both the physical force used by a rapist and the physical force used by a woman trying to resist the rapist as violence?

Moreover there is nothing in the Bible or in our Christian tradition that would permit us to make such generalisations. Throughout the Bible the word violence is used to describe everything that is done by a wicked oppressor (for example, Psa. 72:12-14; Isa. 59:1-8; Jer. 22:13-17; Amos 3:9-10; 6:3; Mic. 2:2; 3:1-3; 6: 12). It is never used to describe the activities of Israel's armies in attempting to liberate themselves or to resist aggression. When Jesus says that we should turn the other cheek he is telling us that we must not take revenge; he is not saying that we should never defend ourselves or others. There is a long and consistent Christian tradition about the use of physical force to defend oneself against aggressors and tyrants. In other words there are circumstances when physical force may be used. They are very restrictive circumstances, only as the very last resort and only as the lesser of two evils, or, as Bonhoeffer put it, "the lesser of two guilts." But it is simply not true to say that every possible use of physical force is violence and that no matter what the circumstances may be it is never permissible.

This is not to say that any use of force at any time by people who are oppressed is permissible simply because they are struggling for their liberation. There have been cases of killing and maiming that no Christian would want to approve of. But then our disapproval is based upon a concern for genuine liberation and a conviction that such acts are unnecessary, counter-productive and unjustifiable and not because they fall under a blanket condemnation of any use of physical force in any circumstances.

And finally what makes the professed non-violence of 'Church Theology' extremely suspect in the eyes of very many people, including ourselves, is the tacit support that many Church leaders give to the growing *militarisation* of the South African State. How can one condemn all violence and then appoint chaplains to a very violent and oppressive army? How can one condemn all violence and then allow young white males to accept their conscription into the armed forces? Is it because the activities of the armed forces and the police are counted as defensive? That raises very serious questions about whose side such Church leaders might be on. Why are the activities of young blacks in the townships not regarded as defensive?

The problem of the Church here is that it starts from the premise that the apartheid regime in South Africa is a *legitimate authority*. It ignores the fact that it is a white minority regime which has imposed itself upon the majority of the people, that is blacks, in this country and that it maintains itself by brutality and violent force and the fact that a majority of South Africans regard this regime as illegitimate.

In practice what one calls 'violence' and what one calls 'self-defence' seems to depend upon which side one is on. To call all physical force 'violence' is to try to be neutral and to refuse to make a judgment about who is right and who is wrong. The attempt to remain neutral in this kind of conflict is futile. Neutrality enables the status quo of oppression (and therefore violence) to continue. It is a way of giving tacit support to the oppressor, a support for brutal violence.<sup>14</sup>

### **3.4. The Fundamental Problem**

It is not enough to criticise 'Church Theology' we must also try to account for it. What is behind the mistakes and misunderstandings and inadequacies of this theology?

In the first place we can point to a lack of *social analysis*. We have seen how 'Church Theology' tends to make use of absolute principles like reconciliation, negotiation, non-violence and peaceful solutions and applies them indiscriminately and uncritically to all situations. Very little attempt is made to analyse what is actually happening in our society and why it is happening. It is not possible to make valid moral judgments about a society without first understanding that society. The analysis of apartheid that underpins 'Church Theology' is simply inadequate. The present crisis has now made it very clear that the efforts of Church leaders to promote effective and practical ways of changing our society have failed. This failure is due in no small measure to the fact that 'Church Theology' has not developed a social analysis that would enable it to understand the mechanics of injustice and oppression.



Closely linked to this, is the lack in 'Church Theology' of an adequate understanding of politics and *political strategy*. Changing the structures of a society is fundamentally a matter of politics. It requires a political strategy based upon a clear social or political analysis. The Church has to address itself to these strategies and to the analysis upon which they are based. It is into this political situation that the Church has to bring the gospel. Not as an alternative solution to our problems as if the gospel provided us with a non-political solution to political problems. There is no specifically Christian solution. There will be a Christian way of approaching the political solutions, a Christian spirit and motivation and attitude. But there is no way of bypassing politics and political strategies.

But we have still not pinpointed the fundamental problem. Why has 'Church Theology' not developed a social analysis? Why does it have an inadequate understanding of the need for political strategies? And why does it make a virtue of neutrality and sitting on the sidelines?

The answer must be sought in the *type of faith and spirituality* that has dominated Church life for centuries. As we all know, spirituality has tended to be an other-worldly affair that has very little, if anything at all, to do with the 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. Moreover, spirituality has also been understood to be purely private and individualistic. Public affairs and social problems were thought to be beyond the sphere of spirituality. And 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 intervention.

It is precisely this kind of spirituality that, when faced with the present crisis in South Africa, leaves so many Christians and Church leaders in a state of near paralysis.

It hardly needs saying that this kind of faith and this type of spirituality has no biblical foundation. The Bible does not separate the human person from the world in which he or she lives; it does not separate the individual from the social or one's private life from one's public life. God redeems the whole person as part of God's whole creation (Rom. 8:18-24). A truly biblical spirituality would penetrate into every aspect of human existence and would exclude nothing from God's redemptive will. Biblical faith is prophetically relevant to everything that happens in the world.



## 4. TOWARDS A PROPHETIC THEOLOGY

Our present KAIROS calls for a response from Christians that is biblical, spiritual, pastoral and, above all, prophetic. *What is it then that would make our response truly prophetic? What would be the characteristics of a prophetic theology?*<sup>15</sup>

### 4.1. Prophetic Theology

To be truly prophetic, our response would have to be, in the first place, solidly grounded in the Bible. Our KAIROS impels us *to return to the Bible* and to search the Word of God for a message that is relevant to what we are experiencing in South Africa today. This will be no mere academic exercise. Prophetic theology differs from academic theology because, whereas academic theology deals with all biblical themes in a systematic manner and formulates general Christian principles and doctrines, prophetic theology concentrates on those aspects of the Word of God that have an immediate bearing upon the critical situation in which we find ourselves. The theology of the prophets does not pretend to be comprehensive and complete, it speaks to the particular circumstances of a particular time and place – the KAIROS.

Consequently 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” (Matt. 16:3) or to “interpret this KAIROS” (Luke 12:56). A prophetic theology must try to do this. It must know what is happening, analyse what is happening (social analysis) and then interpret what is happening in the light of the gospel. This means that the starting point for prophetic theology will be our experience of the present KAIROS, our experience of oppression and tyranny, our experience of conflict, crisis and struggle, our experience of trying to be Christians in this situation. It is with this in mind that we must begin to search the scriptures.

Another thing that makes prophetic theology different is that it is always a *call to action*. The prophets do not have a purely theoretical or academic interest in God and in the signs of the times. They call for repentance, conversion and change. They are critical, severely critical, of the status quo; they issue warnings about God’s punishment and in the name of God, they promise great blessings for those who do change. Jesus did the same, “Repent,” he says “the KAIROS has come and the Kingdom of God is close at hand.”

Thus prophecy is always *confrontational*. It confronts the evils of the time and speaks out against them in no uncertain terms. Prophetic theology is not afraid to take a stand, clearly and unambiguously. Prophetic statements are

stark and simple without being hedged in with qualifications or possible exceptions. They deal with good and evil, justice and injustice, God and the devil. It is not surprising then that any theology that is truly prophetic will be controversial and in some circles it will be very unpopular. The prophets were persecuted and Jesus was crucified.

Nevertheless, prophetic theology will place a great deal of emphasis upon *hope*. Despite all the criticisms, condemnations and warnings of doom, prophecy always has a message of hope for the future. After death comes resurrection. That is the prophetic good news.

A genuinely prophetic theology will also be deeply *spiritual*. All its words and actions will have to be infused with a spirit of fearlessness and courage, a spirit of love and understanding, a spirit of joy and hope, a spirit of strength and determination. A prophetic theology would have to have in it the mind of Christ, his willingness to suffer and to die, his humility and his power, his willingness to forgive and his anger about sin, his spirit of prayer and of action.

Last but not least prophetic theology should be thoroughly practical and *pastoral*. It will *denounce* sin and *announce* salvation. But to be prophetic our theology must name the sins and the evils that surround us and the salvation that we are hoping for. Prophecy must name the sins of apartheid, injustice, oppression and tyranny in South Africa today as 'an offence against God' and the measures that must be taken to overcome these sins and the suffering that they cause. On the other hand prophecy will announce the hopeful good news of future liberation, justice and peace, as God's will and promise, naming the ways of bringing this about and encouraging people to take action.

#### **4.2. Suffering and Oppression in the Bible<sup>16</sup>**

Black Theology, African Theology and the theology of the African Independent Churches have already laid great emphasis upon the biblical teaching about suffering especially the suffering of Jesus Christ. When we read the Bible from the point of view of our daily experience of suffering and oppression, then what stands out for us is the many, many vivid and concrete descriptions of suffering and oppression throughout the Bible culminating in the cross of Jesus Christ.

For most of their history from Exodus to Revelations, the people of the Bible suffered under one kind of oppression or another: "The sons of Israel are oppressed" (Jer. 50:33); "You will be exploited and crushed continually" (Deut. 28:33). They were oppressed by the tyrannical, imperial nations around them. First it was the Egyptians: "The Egyptians ill-treated us, they gave us no peace and inflicted harsh slavery upon us" (Deut. 26:6). Then the various

Canaanite kings oppressed them, for example Jabin the Canaanite king of Hasor “cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years” (Judg. 4:3). And so it carried on with the Philistines, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Greeks and the Romans, each in turn exercising an oppressive domination over this small nation.

But this was not all. The people of Israel were also for many centuries oppressed *internally*, within their own country, by the rich and the powerful and especially by the kings or rulers of Israel who were for the most part typical oriental tyrants. “Here we are now, enslaved; here in the land you gave our Fathers, we are slaves. Its rich fruits swell the profit of the kings who dispose as they please of our bodies and our cattle” (Neh. 9:36-37). For the people of South Africa this situation is all too familiar.

The experience of oppression is vividly described in the Bible. First of all it is described as the painful experience of being crushed to the ground: “Yahweh, they crush your people” (Psa. 94:5); “We are bowed in the dust, our bodies crushed to the ground” (Psa. 44:25). It is the experience of being weighed down by heavy loads (Exod. 1:11; Matt. 11:28). But it is more than just an experience of being degraded and humiliated. They lived with the terrifying reality of killings and murders. “We are being massacred daily” (Psa. 44:22). “Yahweh, they oppress your hereditary people, murdering and massacring widows, orphans and migrants” (Psa. 94:5-6). What grief and torment this causes. “My bones are in torment, my soul is in utter torment. I am worn out with groaning, every night I drench my pillow and soak my bed with tears, my eye is wasted with grief; I have grown old with enemies all round me” (Psa. 6:3, 6-10).

Their oppressors were their enemies. The people of Israel were in no doubt about that. There seemed to be no limit to the wickedness and sinfulness of these enemies: greed, arrogance, violence and barbaric cruelty.

“My enemies cluster round me, breathing hostility, entrenched in their fat, their mouths utter arrogant claims; now they are closing in. They look like lions eager to tear to pieces” (Psa. 17:9-12). “They (the rulers of Israel) have devoured the flesh of my people and torn off their skin and crushed their bones and shredded them like meat” (Mic. 3:3).

Only people who had actually experienced oppression could have written such vivid and graphic descriptions of what it means to be oppressed. In South Africa today, in this our KAIROS, more than ever before the people of the townships can identify fully with these descriptions of suffering, oppression and tyranny.

Nor should we think that this concern about oppression is confined to the Old Testament. In the time of Jesus the Jews were oppressed by the Romans, the

great imperial superpower of those days. But what was far more immediate and far more pressing was the *internal oppression* of the poor and the ordinary people by the Herods, the rich, the chief priests and elders, the Sadducees and Pharisees. These were the groups who were experienced more immediately as oppressors. In one way or another they were puppets of the Romans and to a greater or lesser extent they collaborated in the oppression of the poor. Jesus calls Herod “that fox” (Luke 13:32). He pronounces “woes” upon the rich (Luke 6:24-26), he calls the Pharisees hypocrites, whited sepulchres and a brood of vipers who lay heavy burdens upon the shoulders of the people and never lift a finger to relieve them (Matt. 23 *passim*). It was the chief priests and the elders who handed Jesus over to the Romans.

Throughout his life Jesus associated himself with the poor and the oppressed and as the suffering (or oppressed) servant of Yahweh he suffered and died for us. “Ours were the sufferings he bore, ours the sorrows he carried” (Isa. 53:4). He continues to do so, even today.

#### **4.3. Social Analysis**

It is in the light of the Biblical teaching about suffering, oppression and tyranny that our prophetic theology must begin to analyse our KAIROS and read the signs of our times. Although it will not be possible to attempt a detailed social analysis or a complete reading of the signs of our times in this document, we must start with at least the broad outlines of an analysis of the conflict in which we find ourselves.

It would be quite wrong to see the present conflict as simply a racial war. The racial component is there but we are not dealing with two equal races or nations each with their own selfish group interests. The situation we are dealing with here is one of tyranny and oppression. We can therefore use the social categories that the Bible makes use of, namely, *the oppressor and the oppressed*.

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 *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 conflict. The individuals involved may or may not realise this but the structural oppression that in South Africa is called apartheid will sooner or later bring the people involved into conflict.

On the one hand we have the interests of those who benefit from the status quo and who are determined to maintain it at any cost, even at the cost of millions of lives. It is in their interests to introduce a number of reforms in

order to ensure that the system is not radically changed and that they can continue to benefit from it as they have done in the past. They benefit from the system because it favours them and enables them to accumulate a great deal of wealth and to maintain an exceptionally high standard of living. And they want to make sure that it stays that way even if some adjustments are needed.

On the other hand we have those who do not benefit in any way from the system the way it is now. They are treated as mere labour units, paid starvation wages, separated from their families by migratory labour, moved about like cattle and dumped in homelands to starve—and all for the benefit of a privileged minority. They have no say in the system and are supposed to be grateful for the concessions that are offered to them like crumbs. It is not in their interests to allow this system to continue even in some 'reformed' or 'revised' form. They are no longer prepared to be crushed, oppressed and exploited. They are determined to change the system radically so that it no longer benefits only the privileged few. And they are willing to do this even at the cost of their own lives. What they want is justice for all irrespective of race, colour, sex or status.

Each of the two sides can be further subdivided according to the different opinions people or groups have about the means and strategies to be used to maintain the system or the means and strategies to be used to change it. An almost infinite variety of opinion is possible here and much debate and discussion is needed, as long as one does not lose sight of the fundamental structural division between efforts to continue oppression even in a mitigated or changed form and efforts to do away with oppression in principle and in every form. There are two conflicting projects here and no compromise is possible. Either we have full and equal justice for all or we don't.

Prophetic theology therefore faces us with this fundamental choice that admits of no compromises. Jesus did the same. He faced the people with the fundamental choice between God and money. "You cannot serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24). Once we have made our choice, once we have taken sides then we can begin to discuss the morality and effectiveness of means and strategies. It is therefore not primarily a matter of trying to reconcile individual people but a matter of trying to change unjust structures so that people will not be pitted against one another as oppressor and oppressed.

This is our KAIROS. The structural inequality (political, social and economic) expressed in discriminatory laws, institutions and practices has led the people of South Africa into a virtual civil war and rebellion against tyranny.

#### 4.4. Tyranny

According to our Christian tradition, based upon what we have already seen in the Bible, once it is established beyond doubt that a particular ruler is a tyrant or that a particular regime is tyrannical, it forfeits the moral right to govern and the people acquire the right to resist and to find the means to protect their own interests against injustice and oppression. In other words a tyrannical regime has no *moral legitimacy*. It may be the *de facto* government and it may even be recognised by other governments and therefore be the *de iure* or legal government. But if it is a tyrannical regime, it is, from a moral and a theological point of view, *illegitimate*.

There are indeed some differences of opinion in the Christian tradition about the means that might be used to replace a tyrant *but* there has not been any doubt about our Christian duty to refuse to co-operate with tyranny and to do whatever we can to remove it.

Of course everything hinges on the definition of a tyrant. At what point does a government become a tyrannical regime?

The traditional Latin definition of a tyrant is *hostis boni communis* — an enemy of the common good. The purpose of all government is the promotion of what is called the common good of the people governed. To promote the common good is to govern in the interests of, and for the benefit of, all the people. Many governments fail to do this at times. There might be this or that injustice done to some of the people. And such lapses would indeed have to be criticised. But occasional acts of injustice would not make a government into an enemy of the people, a tyrant.

To be enemy of the people a government would have to be hostile to the common good *in principle*. Such a government would be acting against the interests of the people as a whole and permanently. This would be clearest in cases where the very policy of a government is hostile towards the common good and where the government has a mandate to rule in the interests of some of the people rather than in the interests of all the people. Such a government would be in principle *irreformable*. Any reform that it might try to introduce would not be calculated to serve the common good but to serve the interests of the minority from whom it received its mandate.

A tyrannical regime cannot continue to rule for very long without becoming more and more violent. As the majority of the people begin to demand their rights and to put pressure on the tyrant, so will the tyrant resort more and more to desperate, cruel, gross and ruthless forms of tyranny and repression. The reign of a tyrant always ends up as a reign of terror. It is inevitable because from the start the tyrant is an enemy of the common good.



That leaves us with the question of whether the present government of South Africa is tyrannical or not? There can be no doubt what the majority of the people of South Africa think. For them the regime apartheid is indeed the enemy of the people and that is precisely what they call it: the enemy. In the present crisis, more than ever before, the regime has lost any legitimacy that it might have had in the eyes of the people. Are the people right or wrong?

Apartheid is a system whereby a minority regime elected by one small section of the population is given an explicit mandate to govern in the interests of, and for the benefit of, the white community. Such a mandate or policy is by definition hostile to the common good of all the people. In fact because it tries to rule in the exclusive interests of whites and not in the interests of all, it ends up ruling in a way that is not even in the interests of those whites. It becomes an enemy of all the people. A tyrant. A totalitarian regime. A reign of terror.

This also means that the apartheid minority regime is irreformable. We cannot expect the apartheid regime to experience a conversion or change of heart and totally abandon the policy of apartheid. It has no mandate from its electorate to do so. Any reforms or adjustments it might make would have to be done in the interests of those who elected it. Individual members of the government could experience a real conversion and repent but, if they did, they would simply have to follow this through by leaving a regime that was elected and put into power precisely because of its policy of apartheid.

And that is why we have reached the present impasse. As the oppressed majority becomes more insistent and puts more and more pressure on the tyrant by means of boycotts, strikes, uprisings, burnings and even armed struggle, the more tyrannical will this regime become. On the one hand it will use repressive measures: detentions, trials, killings, torture, bannings, propaganda, states of emergency and other desperate and tyrannical methods. And on the other hand it will introduce reforms that will always be unacceptable to the majority because all its reforms must ensure that the white minority remains on top.

A regime that is in principle the enemy of the people cannot suddenly begin to rule in the interests of all the people. It can only be replaced by another government — one that has been elected by the majority of the people with an explicit mandate to govern in the interests of all the people.

A regime that has made itself the enemy of the people has thereby also made itself the enemy of God. People are made in the image and likeness of God and whatever we do to the least of them we do to God (Matt. 25:49, 45).

To say that the State or the regime is the enemy of God is not to say that all those who support the system are aware of this. On the whole they simply do not know what they are doing. Many people have been blinded by the

regime's propaganda. They are frequently quite ignorant of the consequences of their stance. However, such blindness does not make the State any less tyrannical or any less of an enemy of the people and an enemy of God.

On the other hand the fact that the State is tyrannical and an enemy of God is no excuse for hatred. As Christians we are called upon to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44). It is not said that we should not or will not have enemies or that we should not identify tyrannical regimes as indeed our enemies. But once we have identified our enemies, we must endeavour to love them. That is not always easy. But then we must also remember that the most loving thing we can do for *both* the oppressed *and* for our enemies who are oppressors is to eliminate the oppression, remove the tyrants from power and establish a just government for the common good of *all the people*.

#### **4.5. Liberation and Hope in the Bible**

The Bible, of course, does not only *describe* oppression, tyranny and suffering. The message of the Bible is that oppression is sinful and wicked, an offence against God. The oppressors are godless sinners and the oppressed are suffering because of the sins of their oppressors. But there is *hope* because Yahweh, the God of the Bible, will *liberate* the oppressed from their suffering and misery. "He will redeem their lives from exploitation and outrage" (Psa. 74:14). "I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave-drivers. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians" (Exod. 3:7).

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" (Psa. 12:5). God is not neutral. He does not attempt to reconcile Moses and Pharaoh, to reconcile the Hebrew slaves with their Egyptian oppressors or to reconcile the Jewish people with any of their later oppressors. "You have upheld the justice of my cause...judging in favour of the orphans and exploited so that earthborn man (human beings) may strike fear no more. My enemies are in retreat, stumbling, perishing as you confront them. Trouble is coming to the rebellious, the defiled, the tyrannical city" (Psa. 9:4; 10:18; 9:3; Zeph. 3:1). Oppression is a crime and it cannot be compromised with, it must be done away with. "They (the rulers of Israel) will cry out to God. But he will not answer them. He will hide his face at that time because of all the crimes they have committed" (Mic. 3:4). "God, who does what is right, is always on the side of the oppressed" (Psa. 103:6).

There can be no doubt that Jesus, the Son of God, also takes up the cause of the poor and the oppressed and identifies himself with their interests. When he stood up in the synagogue at Nazareth to announce his mission he made use of the words of Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me.  
For he has anointed me.  
He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor,  
to proclaim liberty to captives  
and to the blind new sight,  
to set the downtrodden free  
to proclaim the Lord's year of favour  
(Luke 4:18-19)

Not that Jesus is unconcerned about the rich and the oppressed. These he calls to repentance. At the very heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ and at the very centre of all true prophecy is a 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 heaven. We believe that goodness and justice and love will triumph in the end and that tyranny and oppression cannot last forever. One day "all tears will be wiped away" (Rev. 7:17; 12:4) and "the lamb will lie down with the lion" (Isa. 11:6). True peace and true reconciliation are not only desirable, they are assured and guaranteed. This is our faith and our hope. We believe in and hope for the resurrection.

#### **4.6. A Message of Hope**

Nothing could be more relevant and more necessary at this moment of crisis in South Africa than the Christian message of hope. As the crisis deepens day by day, what both the oppressor and the oppressed can legitimately demand of the Churches is a message of hope. Most of the oppressed people in South Africa today and especially the youth do have hope. They are acting courageously and fearlessly because they have a sure hope that liberation will come. Often enough their bodies are broken but, nothing can now break their spirit. But hope needs to be confirmed. Hope needs to be maintained and strengthened. Hope needs to be spread. The people need to hear it said again and again that God is with them and that "the hope of the poor is never brought to nothing" (Psa. 9:18).

On the other hand the oppressor and those who believe the propaganda of the oppressor are desperately fearful. They must be made aware of the diabolical evils of the present system and they must be called to repentance. "By what right do you crush my people and grind the face of the poor" (Isa. 3:15). But they must also be given something to hope for. At present they have false hopes. They hope to maintain the status quo and their special privileges with perhaps some adjustments and they fear any real alternative. But there is much more than that to hope for and nothing to fear. Can the Christian message of hope not help them in this matter?

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

There is hope. There is hope for all of us. But the road to that hope is going to be very hard and very painful. The conflict and the struggle will intensify in the months and years ahead. That is now inevitable—because of the intransigence of the oppressor. But God is with us. We can only learn to become the instruments of his peace even unto death. We must participate in the cross of Christ if we are to have the hope of participating in his resurrection.

Why is it that this powerful message of hope has not been highlighted in 'Church Theology,' in the statements and pronouncements of Church leaders? Is it because they have been addressing themselves to the oppressor rather than to the oppressed. Is it because they do not want to encourage the oppressed to be too hopeful for too much?

Now is the time to act—to act hopefully, to act with full confidence and trust in God.

## **5. CHALLENGE TO ACTION**

### **5.1. God Sides with the Oppressed**

To say that the Church must now take sides unequivocally and consistently with the poor and the oppressed is to overlook the fact that the majority of Christians in South Africa have already done so. By far the greater part of the Church in South Africa is poor and oppressed. Of course it cannot be taken for granted that everyone who is oppressed has taken up their own cause and is struggling for their own liberation. Nor can it be assumed that all oppressed Christians are fully aware of the fact that their cause is God's cause. Nevertheless it remains true that the Church is already on the side of the oppressed because that is where the majority of its members are to be found. This fact needs to be appropriated and confirmed by the Church as a whole.

At the beginning of this document it was pointed out that the present crisis has highlighted the divisions in the Church. We are a divided Church precisely because not all the members of our Churches have taken sides against oppression. In other words not all Christians have united themselves with God "who is always on the side of the oppressed" (Psa. 103:6). As far as the present crisis is concerned, there is only one way forward to Church unity and that is for those Christians who find themselves on the side of the oppressor or sitting on the fence, to cross over to the other side to be united in faith and action with those who are oppressed. Unity and reconciliation within the Church itself is only possible around God and Jesus Christ who are to be found on the side of the poor and the oppressed.

If this is what the Church must become, if this is what the Church as a whole must have as its project, how then are we to translate it into concrete and effective action?

### **5.2. Participation in the Struggle**

Christians, if they are not doing so already, must quite simply participate in the struggle for liberation and for a just society. The campaigns of the people, from consumer boycotts to stayaways, need to be supported and encouraged by the Church. Criticism will sometimes be necessary but encouragement and support will be also be necessary. In other words the present crisis challenges the whole Church to move beyond a mere 'ambulance ministry' to a ministry of involvement and participation.<sup>17</sup>

### **5.3. Transforming Church Activities**

The Church has its own specific activities: Sunday services, communion services, baptisms, Sunday school, funerals and so forth. It also has its specific way of expressing its faith and its commitment, that is, in the form of confessions of faith. All of these activities must be re-shaped to be more fully consistent with a prophetic faith related to the KAIROS that God is offering us today. The evil forces we speak of in baptism must be named. We know what these evil forces are in South Africa today. The unity and sharing we profess in our communion services or Masses must be named. It is the solidarity of the people inviting all to join in the struggle for God's peace in South Africa. The repentance we preach must be named. It is repentance for our share of the guilt for the suffering and oppression in our country.

Much of what we do in our Church services has lost its relevance to the poor and the oppressed. Our services and sacraments have been appropriated to serve the need of the individual for comfort and security. Now these same Church activities must be re-appropriated to serve the real religious needs of all the people and to further the liberating mission of God and the Church in the world.

### **5.4. Special Campaigns**

Over and above its regular activities the Church would need to have special programmes, projects and campaigns because of the special needs of the struggle for liberation in South Africa today. But there is a very important caution here. The Church must avoid becoming a 'Third Force,' a force between the oppressor and the oppressed.<sup>18</sup> The Church's programmes and campaigns must not duplicate what the people's organisations are already doing and, even more seriously, the Church must not confuse the issue by having programmes that run counter to the struggles of those political organisations that truly represent the grievances and demands of the people. Consultation, co-ordination and co-operation will be needed. We all have the same goals even when we differ about the final significance of what we are struggling for.

### **5.5. Civil Disobedience**

Once it is established that the present regime has no moral legitimacy and is in fact a tyrannical regime certain things follow for the Church and its activities. In the first place *the Church cannot collaborate with tyranny*. It cannot or should not do anything that appears to give legitimacy to a morally illegitimate regime. Secondly, the Church should not only pray for a change of government, it should also mobilise its members in every parish to begin to

think and work and plan for a change of government in South Africa. We must begin to look ahead and begin working now with firm hope and faith for a better future. And finally the moral illegitimacy 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 God.

## **5.6. Moral Guidance**

The people look to the Church, especially in the midst of our present crisis, for moral guidance. In order to provide this the Church must first make its stand absolutely clear and never tire of explaining and dialoguing about it. It must then help people to understand their rights and their duties. There must be no misunderstanding about the *moral duty* of all who are oppressed to resist oppression and to struggle for liberation and justice. The Church will also find that at times it does need to curb excesses and to appeal to the consciences of those who act thoughtlessly and wildly.

But the Church of Jesus Christ is not called to be a bastion of caution and moderation. The Church should challenge, inspire and motivate people. It has a message of the cross that inspires us to make sacrifices for justice and liberation. It has a message of hope that challenges us to wake up and to act with hope and confidence. The Church must preach this message not only in words and sermons and statements but also through its actions, programmes, campaigns and divine services.





## CONCLUSION

As we said in the beginning, there is nothing final about this document nor even about this second edition. Our hope is that it will continue to stimulate discussion, debate, reflection and prayer, but, above all, that it will lead to action. We invite all committed Christians to take this matter further, to do more research, to develop the themes we have presented here or to criticise them and to return to the Bible, as we have tried to do, with the question raised by the crisis of our times.

Although the document suggests various modes of involvement it does not prescribe the particular actions anyone should take. We call upon all those who are committed to this prophetic form of theology to use the document for discussion in groups, small and big, to determine an appropriate form of action, depending on their particular situation, and to take up the action with other related groups and organisations.

The challenge to renewal and action that we have to set out here is addressed to the Church. But that does not mean that it is intended only for Church leaders. The challenge of the faith and of our present KAIROS is addressed to all who bear the name Christian. None of us can simply sit back and wait to be told what to do by our Church leaders or by anyone else. We must all accept responsibility for acting and living out our Christian faith in these circumstances. We pray that God will help all of us to translate the challenge of our times into action.

We, as theologians (both lay and professional), have been greatly challenged by our own reflections, our exchange of ideas and our discoveries as we met together in smaller and larger groups to prepare this document or to suggest amendments to it. We are convinced that this challenge comes from God and that it is addressed to all of us. We see the present crisis or KAIROS as indeed a divine visitation.

And finally we would also like to repeat our call to our Christian brothers and sisters throughout the world to give us the necessary support in this regard so that the daily loss of so many young lives may be brought to a speedy end.

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<sup>1</sup> Kairos is the Greek word that is used in the Bible to designate a special moment of time when God visits his people to offer them a unique opportunity for repentance and conversion, for change and decisive action. It is a time of judgment. It is a moment of truth, a crisis. (See for example: Mark 1:15; 13:33; Luke 8:13; 19: 44; Rom. 13:11-13; 1 Cor. 7: 9; 2 Cor. 6:2; Tit. 1:3; Rev. 1:3; 22:10).

<sup>2</sup> What is said here of Christianity and the Church could be applied, *mutatis mutandi*, to other faiths and religions in South Africa; but this particular document is addressed to “all who bear the name Christian” (See Conclusion).

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<sup>3</sup> See Chapter Four below.

<sup>4</sup> If the apostle Paul judged that the truth of the gospel was at stake when Greek and Jewish Christians no longer ate together (Gal. 2:11-14), how much more acute is the crisis for the gospel of Jesus Christ when some Christians take part in the systematic oppression of other Christians!

<sup>5</sup> Matt. 12:25; 1 Cor. 1:13.

<sup>6</sup> These are obviously not the only theologies that are current in South Africa but they represent the three Christian theological stances in relation to the present situation in South Africa.

<sup>7</sup> What we are referring to here is something more than the 'Apartheid Theology' of the White Dutch Reformed Churches that once tried to justify apartheid by appealing to certain texts in the Bible. Our analysis of present-day theological stances has led us to the conclusion that there is a 'State Theology' that does not only justify racism but justifies all the activities of the State in its attempts to hold on to power and that is subscribed to as a theology well beyond the White Dutch Reformed Churches.

<sup>8</sup> This and all other quotations in this document are taken from the Jerusalem Bible. The reader is invited to compare this translation with others that he or she might prefer.

<sup>9</sup> Oscar Cullman, *The State in the New Testament*, SCM, 1957, p. 56.

<sup>10</sup> For example: Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, SCM, pp. 354-357; Cullman, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-57.

<sup>11</sup> We realise only too well that we are making broad and sweeping generalisations here. There are some Church statements that would be exceptions to this general tendency. However what concerns us here is that there are a set of opinions that in the mind of the people are associated with the liberal 'English-speaking' Churches.

<sup>12</sup> It should be noted here that there is a difference between the willingness to forgive, on the one hand, and the reality of forgiveness or the experience of being forgiven with all its healing consequences, on the other hand. God's forgiveness is unconditional and permanent in the sense that he is always *willing to forgive*. Jesus expresses this on the cross by saying, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:24). However, we as sinners will not experience God's forgiveness in our lives, we will not actually be freed or liberated from our sins until we confess and renounce our sins (1 John 1:8-9) and until we demonstrate the fruits of repentance (Luke 3:7-14).

Human beings must also be *willing to forgive* one another at all times even seventy times seven times. But forgiveness will not become a reality with all its healing effects until the offender repents. Thus in South Africa forgiveness will not become an experienced reality until the apartheid regime shows signs of genuine repentance. Our willingness to forgive must not be taken to mean a willingness to allow sin to continue, a willingness to allow our oppressors to continue oppressing us. To ask us to forgive our unrepentant oppressors in the sense that we simply ignore or overlook the fact that they are continuing to humiliate, crush, repress, imprison, maim and kill us is to add insult to injury.

<sup>13</sup> Despite what is clearly stated here in the text, several commentators have interpreted the concept of "justice from below" as an exclusion of God and an exclusion of the people who are now at the top. This misinterpretation is very revealing. In the first place it assumes that God belongs on top together with the kings, rulers, governments and others who have power,

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whether they are oppressors or not, and that God cannot work *from below*, through the efforts of the people who are oppressed. It assumes that God is on the side of the oppressor (on top) and not on the side of the oppressed (below). This is precisely what the Kairos Document is contesting.

In the second place there is the conclusion that “justice from below” excludes the White community and anyone else who is presently on top. This is based upon the very revealing assumption that conversion and repentance are impossible and that those who are presently on top will never climb down in order to negotiate as equals with those who are presently at the bottom. Unless they do this, they will indeed be unable to be part of the construction of a just and peaceful South Africa. Those who refuse to repent and change cannot become instruments of God’s justice and God’s peace.

<sup>14</sup> What we have said here about violence and non-violence does not pretend to be a solution to the complex moral problems that we are all faced with as our country is plunged more and deeply into civil war. Our only aim in this section has been to critique an oversimplified and misleading theology of non-violence.

<sup>15</sup> Many readers of the first edition suggested that the meaning of prophetic theology should be spelt out more clearly. The characteristics of prophetic theology that have been included in this second edition are a summary of discussions among Kairos theologians both before and immediately after the publication of the first edition.

It should also be noted that there is a subtle difference between prophetic theology and people’s theology. The Kairos Document itself, signed by theologians, ministers and other church workers, and addressed to all who bear the name Christian is a prophetic statement. But the process that led to the production of the document, the process of theological reflection and action in groups, the involvement of many different people in doing theology was an exercise in people’s theology. The document is therefore pointing out two things: that our present Kairos challenges Church leaders and others Christians to speak out prophetically and that our present Kairos is challenging all of us to do theology together reflecting upon our experiences in working for justice and peace in South Africa and thereby developing together a better theological understanding of our Kairos. The method that was used to produce the Kairos Document shows that theology is not the pre-serve of professional theologians, ministers and priests. Ordinary Christians can participate in theological reflection and should be encouraged to do so. When this people’s theology is proclaimed to others to challenge and inspire them, it takes on the character of a prophetic theology.

<sup>16</sup> This section has been re-written mainly because of the request that more quotations from the Bible be included in the text.

<sup>17</sup> However, the Church must participate in the struggle as a Church and not as a political organisation. Individual Christians as citizens of this country can and must join the political organisations that are struggling for justice and liberation, but the Church as Church must not become a political organisation or subject itself to the dictates of any political party. The Church has its own motivation, its own inspiration for participating in the struggle for justice and peace. The Church has its own beliefs and its own values that impel it to become involved, alongside of other organisations, in God’s cause of liberation for the oppressed. The Church will have its own way of operating and it may sometimes have its own special programmes and campaigns but it does not have, and cannot have, its own political blueprint for the future, its own political policy, because the Church is not a political party. It has another role to play in the world.

The individual Christian, therefore, is both a member of the Church and a member of society, and, on both accounts, Christians should be involved in doing what is right and just. The same is no doubt true of people who adhere to other religious faiths.

<sup>18</sup> There has been a lot of debate about whether the Church should be a ‘Third Force’ or not. It

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is closely related to the question of whether the Church should take sides or not, which we explained in the previous note. The whole question and the full debate will be dealt with in a forthcoming book entitled *The Kairos Debate*.

# **EVANGELICAL WITNESS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

**South African Evangelicals Critique their own  
Theology and Practice**

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# CONTENTS

	PREFACE	85
1.	CRISIS	89
2.	AN OVERVIEW OF THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN EVANGELICALISM	93
	Evangelicalism and Conservatism	93
	Dualism	94
	The Problem of the Concept of Reconciliation	95
	Justice and Peace	98
3.	THEOLOGY OF THE STATUS QUO	99
	Romans 13	99
	'Law and Order'	102
	The Blasphemous Preamble of the South African Apartheid Constitution	102
4.	EVANGELICALISM AND STRUCTURAL CONFORMITY	105
5.	EVANGELICALISM AND CONSERVATISM	107
6.	EVANGELICALISM AND ECUMENISM	109
7.	EVANGELISTIC GROUPS AND MISSION THEOLOGY	111
	Motives for Preaching the Gospel	111
	Origins of these Groups are Suspect	113
	White Domination	113
	Support for Apartheid	113
	Our Theology of Mission and Evangelism	114
8.	RADICALISM AND EVANGELICALISM	117
	Repentance: A Radical Demand for Change	117
	Repentance: A Comprehensive Demand for Change	118
	A Radical Gospel at Loggerheads with Apartheid	119





## *Preface*

Somewhere around September 1985 a group of 'concerned evangelicals' met to discuss the crisis in South Africa and how it affected their lives, their faith and in particular the evangelistic mission which was usually their pre-occupation. It was during the last state of emergency which lasted for about eight months (*July 1985-March 1986*). Many people were in detention and people were dying at an alarming rate per day in the country. Curfews were applied in some areas and the security forces were storming into schools and arresting even eight-year-olds.

Whilst this group of concerned evangelicals was meeting in one of the churches in Orlando, Soweto, the security forces stormed into the school next to the church and kids were seen breaking window-panes and escaping through the windows. After that the security forces attacked the second school some two hundred metres from where the church was. Some children were arrested there. The group felt helpless and could not do much about the brutal acts of the security forces. They were heavily armed and entitled to do whatever without question from anybody let alone the courts on the basis of the emergency regulations.

Then came the second scene when the school kids became angry about what the security forces did, took to the streets and identified whatever 'manageable' targets they could find, given that they were not armed. They stoned a commercial vehicle, stopped it, let the driver go and attempted to put it on fire. As this second scene occurred we agonized about our role in this situation. If we failed to intervene in the legalized brutal violence of the security forces what right do we have to intervene in the counter-violence of the kids? On the other hand the African National Congress (ANC) had called for a people's war in 1986 to defend people against the security forces of apartheid South Africa which they said were killing defenceless people in the townships. What was our response supposed to be in this situation as evangelical Christians in South Africa?

Moreover the situation was no more conducive to mass evangelistic campaigns and revivals. We could not execute our mission or fulfil our calling to the ministry as we were expected to do. In the meantime there was the draft of the Kairos Document in circulation for discussion about the very situation in the country, albeit from a different theological perspective. After discussing the draft we felt that instead of responding to the Kairos Document from an evangelical theological perspective we should rather address ourselves to the Kairos (moment of truth, crisis) evangelical Christians were going through in the country as outlined above.

Our frustration was that our own churches, groups or organizations were almost lost and could not provide prophetic light in the situation. At the worst most would be supporting the status quo instead of being a conscience to the state. We felt that although our perception of the gospel helped us to be what we are, saved by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, born again into the new family of the Kingdom of God, our theology nevertheless was inadequate to address the crisis we were facing. In our series of discussions subsequent to this meeting we realized that our theology was influenced by American and European missionaries with political, social and class interests which were contrary or even hostile to both the spiritual and social needs of our people in this country.

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 a responsibility of cleaning our house before we try to clean other people's houses. The text of Matthew 7:3-5 impressed itself heavily on us even in terms of trying to critique the Kairos Document. We felt 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 today.

This critique has developed over a period of about nine months from September 1985 to June 1986. This involved a series of meetings, discussion groups, workshops and seminars, firstly around Soweto and then extended to the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal (PWV) area. A draft of all the concerns of these groups of evangelicals was compiled in April 1986 and circulated to as many known evangelicals as possible who are known at least to have the same concerns around the country. The final form was then discussed in June 1986, to be made available for publication.

We therefore humbly present this document to all evangelicals here and abroad to use it as a basis of re-examining our ways to see whether we are still doing the will of our Father or are consciously or unconsciously busy with somebody's agenda rather than the agenda of the Lord. We hope that this document will generate constructive discussions amongst evangelical Christians to sharpen their theological tools to enable them to be effective in their ministry and to respond accordingly to the crisis we are facing in this country.

We also subject this document to the broader ecumenical family, which we cannot ignore, for them to also respond accordingly to our agony which we believe they are also going through.

Lastly, we want to clarify our usage of the word 'evangelical' to avoid misunderstanding and confusion as to who is referred to here. We are using this term in a broad sense including those Christians who belong to the charismatic and Pentecostal churches and groups.

*'Concerned Evangelicals'*  
*Johannesburg*  
*July 1986*



## 1. CRISIS

All of us have been severely taxed by the socio-political crisis of our time. Indeed, some more than others, as the death and injury toll in the Township<sup>1</sup> has continued to escalate in spite of our hopes to the contrary, while state repression and harassment has continued unabated.

Called as we are to minister good news, we find ourselves in the midst of bloodshed and death, of increasing bitterness and polarization, and of rising anger in the townships. Our proclamation therefore, has been swallowed up by the cries of the poor and oppressed that it is now even impossible to hold conventional evangelistic campaigns in this war situation. These voices have become so loud that it has become impossible to hear the church preach.

It is in the light of these facts, that we, a group of Evangelicals, clergy and laity, have come together, praying and agonizing together over the issues of our times. We have (in our discussions and meetings since September 1985) critically reviewed our role as evangelical Christians in South Africa and elsewhere. We wish to confess that to a large extent the evangelical community has chosen to avoid that burden of the socio-political crisis in the country. Or at worst, this community we are so committed to, has chosen to take sides in support of the apartheid system in South Africa which is responsible for the violence that is engulfing our country.

We wish to confess that our evangelical family has a track record of supporting and legitimating oppressive regimes here and elsewhere. That this family has tended to assume conservative positions which tend to maintain the status quo.

We wish to confess that the people who regard themselves as evangelicals across all the churches in South Africa condemn and campaign against all efforts to change the racist apartheid system in South Africa. They condemn and campaign against organizations (ecclesiastical and secular) which engage either in relief (aid) ministries to victims of apartheid or direct programmes to remove the apartheid regime.

Besides the crisis in the country, Black Christians (especially those who are evangelicals) in the townships are facing a *crisis of faith*. This crisis of faith is caused by the contradictions they have to live with on a daily basis as they try to live their faith in this crisis situation. This crisis of faith is caused by the dilemma of being oppressed and exploited by people who claim to be Christians, especially those who claim to be 'born-again.' It is a dilemma of being detained by these people, tortured and even killed by them in the name of 'Law and Order' or in the name of combating 'communism.'

This crisis is worsened by the support of the apartheid regime by most evangelical churches and groups which oppose any resistance against the apartheid regime reverting all the time to Romans 13, the concepts of reconciliation, love, humility, peace, non-violence and heavenly concerns rather than earthly concerns. The dilemma of the young people we have to minister to in the townships is further worsened by the fact that the whole Christian family, the so-called Christian West, support these positions. For this reason it is not possible in the townships to look at 'communism' critically because those who speak against communism are almost all the time those who are responsible for their misery, pain, suffering and death.

We could not help it but to be suspicious of the intentions and interests of members of this our family in their zeal to save the world. To remain faithful to the Lord, we are compelled to critique this position to eliminate the contradictions created for those we are called to minister to, and, to expose the interests of those who maintain this position whose interests seem to be above or beside those of the gospel.

In critiquing our theology (evangelical theology) we have identified seven broad areas of concern:

- (1) The area of basic theological problems like evangelical conservatism, dogmatism, dualism, reconciliation, justice and peace,
- (2) The theology of the status quo: that is, the theology which is used to support and maintain existing systems in the world,
- (3) Oppressive structures of evangelical churches and organizations and their tendency to conform or take the form of the world around them, even when this compromises the very gospel of the Lord,
- (4) Conservative church groups across all the churches in South Africa which claim to be evangelicals,
- (5) The lack of ecumenism, that is, inter-fellowship and co-operation even among evangelicals,
- (6) The interests, motives and the theology of mission and evangelism of evangelistic groups both locally and internationally as a characteristic of evangelicalism,
- (7) The radical demands of the gospel as opposed to the conservative tendencies of evangelical groups.

These areas have been singled out as the most pertinent of the problems of evangelicals. In our analysis of these areas we intend to trigger an ongoing

action and reflection process which will help us to sharpen our theological tools to be able to live our faith in the difficult situation in which we find ourselves. Our main aim is to be alive to God's will for us and what he is calling us to.

We are conscious of what Jesus said to his disciples when he sent them to the world that we are sent out as 'sheep in the midst of wolves,' and, for this reason we need to be as 'wise as serpents' (Matt. 10:6). We want to attain maturity of faith, 'to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, *so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles*' (Eph. 4:13-14). We want to speak the truth in love, 'to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ' (verse 15).

We are also aware that because of our witness we may be delivered up to councils and flogged in the 'synagogues of Satan.' We are aware that we may be dragged before governors and kings for the sake of the Lord, and, there we shall bear testimony of our faith and the Spirit of the Father shall speak through us (Matt. 10:17-18). When this happens we shall not be surprised or fall away because our Lord has warned us that '...the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do this because they have not known the Father nor me' (John 16:1-4).





## **2. AN OVERVIEW OF THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN EVANGELICALISM**

Evangelicals in South Africa, as elsewhere, have been at the crossroads for too long reacting to situations rather than leading to the course of events in the world to work towards the Kingdom of God. They have removed themselves from the world, which they call sinful and not worthy of anything except hellfire. Because of this view of life and the world they cannot see any purpose in attempting to change it but rather they are more concerned about saving as many souls as possible from this world. Otherwise they are just waiting for the Lord to come and take them to his abode, to rest, in heaven.

Although they are aware that 'God so loved the world that he gave his only son' (John 3:16) for it, to give it life, and life more abundantly (John 10:10) they have abandoned the world because it is too sinful for them. Their living for Christ in this world is an interim measure that prepares them for heaven. Real life here is meaningless, trying to bring about changes in this world is occupying oneself with earthly things. This view of evangelicals differs radically from the approach of Christ and most of the Jewish traditions during the time of Christ (Sadducees, Pharisees and the Zealots). It is actually closer to the Essenes who withdrew from public life to keep true to their ancestors' faith. They had an ascetic tendency, calling all others 'children of darkness.'

### **Evangelicalism and Conservatism**

Somehow, because of this attitude about the world and this cock-eyed theological perception, evangelicals tend to be conservative. They are pre-occupied with the struggle of conserving the remaining 'truths' about the gospel by living an exemplary life within which there is nothing wrong. But there is always a tendency to want a few explicit rules to follow in their spiritual sojourn. In the quest for these rules evangelicals have gone off the extreme, at the conservative end. There is in the first instance the tendency to legalism which leads to pride, and an inadequate theology about Christian living. Legalism provides support for a conservative and exclusive lifestyle, which is in contrast to the lifestyle of Jesus. In fact, evangelicals go to great lengths claiming Jesus did not teach what he clearly did. We have to, because to admit he taught what he did, would require us either to change (repent) or to criticize him. And neither of these are acceptable. So we opt to discolour the lifestyle of Jesus.

But this approach is contrary to the very gospel of salvation, which requires us to be born again, to be renewed, to create new beings in Christ. The problem is that Jesus was radical, always geared to turning the world upside down. He did not turn the world upside down from the top for the benefit of

the affluent and the powerful in the Jewish society. This would be subversion. But he turned the world upside down from below for the benefit of the poor and powerless (subversion). He challenged the rich young man to sell what he had and give to the poor to be able to follow him (Matt. 19:16-30); he ate with tax collectors and sinners (Matt. 9:10-13); he broke the Sabbath (12:10-14). For Jesus the first shall be last and the last shall be first (Mark 9:35), whoever is great must be a servant, and whatever is first must be the slave of all (Mark 10:43-45). To Jesus the penny contributed by the poor widow is more than all the large contributions of the rich (Mark 10:41-44). In addition he called Herod a 'fox' (Luke 13:32). We would go on and on to learn about the subversive gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Even his followers, the Christians of Acts 17:6, were described as those who have 'turned the world upside down.' The problem is that Jesus was a radical and we are moderates. He was committed to a radical change and we are committed to moderation, to reformist liberal tendencies which leave the system intact. Jesus talked about losing life to gain life and giving one's life for others like he did for us, whilst we are concerned about our interests and the preservation of our lives. To follow Jesus in word and deed therefore means to be radical and not conservative.

## **Dualism**

The concept of dualism is more of a Greek philosophical concept than a biblical concept. The Greek philosophers believed in a clear demarcation between the spiritual and material. They believed that all material things were evil whilst God was a Spirit somehow committed to save the spirit in the bodies of human beings. On the basis of this Greek philosophical concept of dualism western theologians saw the gospel as concerned only with the spiritual rather than the social. They dichotomized between the physical and the spiritual and between the sacred and secular. Evangelical theologians have bought wholesale into this model of dualism.

The consequences of this dualistic form of life has been disastrous for evangelical faith. What this dualism has done is that one can live a pietistic 'spiritual' life and still continue to oppress, exploit, and dehumanize people. And those who are victims of this oppression, exploitation and dehumanization are prohibited from complaining or resisting it because this would amount to worrying about material things that have nothing to do with one's spirituality. Actually dying to engage in a struggle to get rid of this oppression is seen as having 'fallen' from grace. In this way the oppressors of this world are able to maintain their system by conveniently confining the gospel to the spiritual realm alone. It is just like keeping the gospel in captivity to be able to continue in sin without any disturbance to their

consciences. Like the Sadducees and Pharisees, we are claiming the authority of the written law but we refuse to let it address the real issues of our day.

This concept of dualism is also applied in trying to differentiate between 'heavenly' things and 'earthly' things. Here for instance, blacks are told to worry only about heavenly things whilst others, claiming to be Christians, dispossess them of their land and enslave them to make profits out of them. This is a hypocritical type of gospel. We believe that whereas all Christians must look forward to a future Kingdom where Jesus will reign, where peace, justice and righteousness will prevail—call it heaven—the fact of the matter is that we are still in this world and we have to eat, be clothed, be housed, etc. We still need to have our children go to school and be taken care of. When Jesus was about to ascend to his Father he did not pray that his disciples follow him immediately, he did not pray that God take them out of the world but he prayed that God should keep them from the evil one (John 17:15). What is important now is to live a righteous life in this world and to be a witness to the coming Kingdom of God.

The Judeo-Christian faith as found in the Bible is different from Greek dualism. It does not differentiate between the spiritual and the social because Jews live their spiritual life in their social life. For the Israelites being oppressed was a concern of their God. When they went to war their God had to be involved or they would be doomed. Their cultural life was a spiritual life. Their economic life was a spiritual life (the Jubilee, the question of loans, etc.). Their political life was a spiritual life (appointment of kings and deposing of kings, how they ruled etc.). There was nothing for the Jews that was not spiritual in their whole lives. There was no reserved room in their lives which was not spiritual which could keep their sins. It was all spiritual.

The African form of spirituality is also the same. For an ordinary African birth, death, employment and unemployment, having a house and not having a house, being sick, attacked or not having money, all had to do with the Supreme Being called Modimo, Unkulunkulu, Tixo, etc. Their ancestors (bodimo, etc.) were understood as being involved in everything that affected them in all aspects of life. The concept of dualism is therefore a foreign concept to both the African and the Judeo-Christian traditions. This is not a biblical concept. It is but a Greek and Western concept.

### **The Problem of the Concept of Reconciliation**

Faced with this trouble-torn country, faced with the war between the apartheid regime and the oppressed masses, faced with the ideological conflicts which are tearing our communities apart, and confronted with the possibility of a revolution, our response and choices will determine the future of our Christian faith in this country.

It is doubtful whether for most evangelicals the real underlying religious issue is clearly visible. On the contrary, the average evangelical seems to react in much the same way as the average agnostic or pagan. The interests of the State and the Church are all confused with one another. In fact, some of our evangelical leaders have actively joined in the cold war and called God to justify the moral blindness and outrageous deeds of generals and industrialists, and to bless shootings and killings as a holy and apocalyptic crusade. To use the cliché of Vietnam days, 'Shoot a commie for Jesus'; in South Africa we hear more and more that 'no price is too high to pay for our religious liberty.'

Even the legislation here not only permits self-defence for those in power but also legislates retaliation which may exceed the amount of the original attack so that the aggressor 'learns a lesson.' This may sound noble, perhaps to those who are not shocked by its all too evident meaninglessness. The fact is that genocide is too high a price, and no one, not even evangelicals, not even for the highest ideals, has the right to take measures that might destroy millions of innocent non-combatants.

That we as Christians have to be peacemakers here is very clear (Matt. 5:9). But how we make this peace is a serious problem especially when we are part of the problem. It is here that the most bedevilling concept, that of reconciliation, arises. The basic text we use here is usually 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 which reads:

...God...through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that is. in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation....We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Whilst Romans 5:10 affirms that 'while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,' some amongst the evangelical family believe that one just needs to preach the gospel more to get more people to be reconciled to God so that they can also be reconciled to other human beings. Well, this is good and in keeping with the gospel but it is not necessarily the solution to our problem. There is no guarantee that all or the majority of South Africans will accept the gospel to effect reconciliation. What is worse is that those we thought were the ones who are 'born again' and 'reconciled' to God have turned out to be the worst racists, oppressors and exploiters. We are committed to preaching the gospel of reconciliation at all costs for the sake of the Kingdom of God, but we are aware that this is just part of the solution and not the whole solution.

Some believe that we must bring together the warring groups to reconcile them. This may sound good but there are serious problems involved here.

Firstly, most Christians, especially evangelicals, have very little understanding of conflict or of the skills of conflict resolution. It is worse when it comes to political or social conflicts because they have no understanding of both political and social dynamics. Most of the time they are not directly involved themselves and have no understanding of the situation. They have no social understanding of ideological dynamics in these struggles. They are for instance quick to condemn communism without any reading or understanding about it. No social analysis is done to understand the dynamics involved. This problem is complicated by the arrogance of most Christians, especially evangelicals, who believe they know better than everyone else because of the 'grace of the Lord.' They ignore the experiences of those who are involved in these situations because they believe these people are sinners and therefore lost. They cannot see any good that can come out of them.

The next real problem is how reconciliation is effected. The weakness with our approach is that we use the word reconciliation simply as a slogan and hope that reconciliation will take place. No sloganizing is going to effect it.

We believe that there is only one way in which reconciliation can be effected. The reconciliation between God and us, for instance, takes place only when we accept God's offer of salvation by faith, confessing our sins, so that our trespasses are not counted against us. In John 1:9 we read that:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from unrighteousness.

It is clear here that reconciliation goes hand in hand with repentance where there is consciousness about one's sins, leading to confession followed by forgiveness and cleansing. This is the only way in which South Africans can be reconciled. Firstly we must all be conscious of the sin that has led us to this war. The sin of racism. The sin of undermining other people as if they were not made in the very image of God. The sin of discriminating against other people and suppressing them to stop them from utilizing their potential and living their lives in full. The sin of dispossessing people of their land. The sin of accumulating riches by making profits at the expense of other vulnerable humans, by so doing impoverishing them. The sin of classism and sexism. The sin of monopoly of power where people want 'reforms' that will leave them still in power; the 'power sharing' that will guarantee white control in South Africa. These are the sins of white South Africa – which sins they need to confess and repent from, so that there can be forgiveness and reconciliation. The sins that black South Africa must confess are those of complacency and permissiveness in the face of sin that reduced the image of God in them into nothingness. Their failure to listen to God and to follow the demands of the gospel. Their failure to minister to white South Africans to repent from their sin of racism. Their failure to preach the gospel against the evil of tribalism in

the form of tribal Bantustans which apartheid South Africa has imposed on them. The sin of failure to exercise their love for- white South Africa by liberating them from their fears because of their age long sin. The sin of simply bottling up with anger and bitterness without opening up to be used by God. The sin of fear of harassment, detention, torture, long imprisonment, assassination and death.

It is clear that reconciliation will not happen without sacrifice and pain. Reconciliation at times goes with tears. Some of us may have to be 'sacrificial' lambs to effect reconciliation. It is clear that reconciliation is not possible without repentance, confession of sins and forgiveness. Any reconciliation which happens without repentance cannot be reconciliation. This is tantamount to reconciling sin with righteousness, evil with good. It is trying to reconcile the devil with God. Is this not a hypocritical form of reconciliation? No compromise with evil is possible in terms of our evangelical faith and thus we must work for real and genuine reconciliation in South Africa. Repentance on the one hand and forgiveness on the other are essential components of reconciliation.

### **Justice and Peace**

From the discussion of the concept of reconciliation, repentance, confession and forgiveness, it should not be difficult to understand that there can be no peace without justice. That justice can occur only if sin is eradicated in our society. People usually talk about peace as if peace can happen without justice. Stopping people from fighting is not the solution to the problem, but facing the questions of justice and injustice is the only way to produce real peace.

It must therefore be our mission to work for justice to be able to produce peace in this our land.

### 3. THEOLOGY OF THE STATUS QUO

Most evangelical groupings, with their narrow view of life and their fundamental approach to the Bible, tend to uncritically support existing oppressive systems. Most of them consciously or unconsciously adhere to Luther's notion of the two Kingdoms: the secular order and the spiritual order which never mix. They argue that the church has nothing to say about this secular order or this earthly kingdom.

Evangelicals are also inclined to the so-called doctrine of creation which takes creation as given and uses slogans like 'it is written,' 'it is historical,' 'it is ordained by God.' This doctrine works for restoration of the old order rather than for renewal. It also talks about prophecy, that is, "it is prophesied," meaning that it is futile to try to effect or work for change within a situation if it was prophesied. At times struggling for justice is seen as struggling against God or prophecy. In South Africa for instance segregation of races is tied to this ordinance of creation as developed by the Afrikaans Reformed Churches and enforced by law by the Apartheid Regime. Most evangelical churches have uncritically adopted this doctrine of separation which is discussed under 'Evangelicalism and Conformity.' This theology is prone to support and perpetuate the status quo.

#### **Romans 13**

Theologians of the status quo, or State Theology, can be characterized by their use and misuse of Rom. 13. Whenever victims of oppression try to raise their voices or resist the oppression Romans 13 is thrown into their faces by beneficiaries of these oppressive systems. Romans 13 is used therefore to maintain the status quo, and make Christians feel guilty when challenging injustices in society.

With their fundamentalist approach to the Bible evangelicals tend to read Romans 13 to mean that one cannot resist or question any government or authority because it comes from God or it is ordained by God. The context or background of this text is completely ignored and, more so, it is not read to the end to understand the whole message Paul was communicating. No reference is made to other related texts in the Bible to help clarify this text.

The problem here is that those who interpret and preach this view of Romans 13 are mostly those who are part of or beneficiaries of the said government or authority, who detest any attempt to rock the boat which could make them sink. And those of us who are the victims or underdogs of society who hold this view, are just victims of circumstances, completely under the influence of

the powerful and oppressors of this world, good students of racist missionaries!

Our understanding of Romans 13 is that although governments are 'ordained' by God what these governments *do* is not necessarily from God and at times can be completely opposed to God. And should this happen as it is with racist and apartheid South Africa, we are bound to say with Peter and John that we shall 'obey God rather than man' (Acts 5:29), because it is not right in the sight of God to listen to man rather than to God. 'For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard' (Acts 4:19-20).

The whole Old Testament tradition contradicts blind obedience to oppressive and unjust systems. One could start from Pharaoh through the prophets to the times of Christ and then to the early churches as we have shown above. No, Romans 13 does not call for blind obedience to all evil systems. It is racist missionaries, colonialists and theologians of the West and their churches who developed this tradition to maintain Western domination and imperialism. Rom. 13 defines the nature of an ordained government that has to be obeyed. It says that governments are not a terror to the people but punish wrongdoers (Rom. 13:3-4). The South African regime as we are experiencing it is just the opposite of what Paul said.

We have experienced the South African regime as a terror to the black majority in South Africa. It has silenced those who peacefully voiced their resentment of the brutality of the apartheid system. It has silenced those who championed the course of justice in South Africa and rather turned on the voices of segregation, dehumanization of blacks, and the voices of those who preach inequality between blacks and whites and of deprivation of human rights for blacks in this country. We have experienced the South African regime as a terrorist regime which raided blacks during the night for permits and passes and which detains our people, tortures them, kills them and imprisons them for working for a just order. To us it is a government that legalizes wrongdoing and punishes right doers.

For even a better understanding of Romans 13 and Paul, we also need to recapture or reconstruct, from various other sources, the circumstances during the time of Paul which caused him to write and communicate this text (letter) to the Roman Congregation (Church). That is, we need to understand the *context* of the *text*. This context does not only refer to the understanding of the whole text but it also refers to the historical circumstances of the time which prompted Paul to address this issue.

Scholars who have researched on this historical context say that Paul was addressing himself to those who so believed that Jesus is their only Lord and King that no other person or government could exercise authority over them. They were subject only to their Lord Jesus Christ. They were defying any



form of authority, whether good or bad, because they had only one Lord who had the only authority over them. This group of people was called the 'antinomians' (those who maintained that the moral law is not binding on Christians) or 'enthusiasts' (about the new faith they received). They misused the Lordship of Jesus.

Paul was thus saying that even if Jesus is your only Lord you are still subject to other forms of authority like governments because they are not a terror to good works in any way – but only if they are not against good works.

It is still strange to us how evangelicals call for a blind obedience to all governments as a scriptural demand and in the same breath call for the subversion and condemnation of the so-called 'communist' governments. If anyone has the right to raise a finger against 'communist' governments, then others must also have the same right of condemning and subverting the racist apartheid regime of South Africa.

We believe that Christians are a critique of the world by their lives, practice and mission, and must retain this critical relationship at all times. Born again Christians must always be dissatisfied about the world, and with existing orders or systems. They must challenge the status quo at all times. They must not be static but they must be dynamic in the direction of radical change. We believe that God, through Jesus Christ, is calling us to salvation, to a radical change of our lives and therefore to a radical change of structures of our society. We believe that we are called to effect these changes. To us it is not a matter of what political system or party is involved but it is a question of how just the system is and how compatible it is to the gospel.

Some enthusiastic missionary evangelists argue that they cannot critique whatever order they find because that would jeopardise their ministry. That is, they may be deported (if they are foreigners) or silenced. For the sake of the gospel they say, we must not interfere with those in power. This position to us actually means preaching the gospel at the expense of the gospel. It means leaving sin to prevail in society to be able to preach against sin. What a contradiction! It is for this reason that oppressed people are rejecting the gospel in their struggles for liberation because of the collaboration of most western pioneers of the gospel with oppressive systems in the two thirds world (Third World).

The worst position is that of those evangelicals who even bribe existing systems for favours to preach the gospel. This is done by creating cordial relationships with these oppressive systems, giving presents to them and helping to legitimize them by developing a theology of the status quo, justifying these systems theologically or biblically. For instance in the celebrations of the so-called independence of Bantustans some of these groups participated actively to promote these systems. This is supported by prophetic

messages (at times using tongues and interpretation in Pentecostal circles) which assure oppressive systems (governments) of God's protection virtually against all those who oppose them however unjust these systems can be. The criteria here is always support or sympathy for the West rather than the truths of the gospel.

### **'Law and Order'**

Evangelical theology with its conservative and legalistic tendencies accepts the call of the apartheid regime for 'Law and Order' uncritically without assessing the type of 'law' and the type of 'order' this evil system is talking about. It does not assess whether this 'law' and this 'order' are in line with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ or whether they negate the gospel.

The fact of the matter is that this 'law' is the unjust law of apartheid which treats blacks as sub-humans (less than the image of God) and this 'order' is the orderly way in which the apartheid regime wants to enforce these unjust laws of apartheid. This 'law and order' means that the oppressed and exploited masses of South Africa must orderly and peacefully submit to their oppressors and exploiters.

This to us is the law of Satan and the order of hell. This, in the name of Jesus, we must resist! It is just part and parcel of the theology of the status quo.

### **The Blasphemous Preamble of the South African Apartheid Constitution**

The preamble of the Constitution of the racist apartheid regime of South Africa is typical of a status quo theology position where God is praised for helping whites (because of superiority of arms) to dispossess the aborigines of this country. It is a theology that takes sides with the powerful in society who oppress the weak, the orphans, the widows and the poor contrary to biblical demands (Isa. 1:16-17). We quote part of this preamble to give an idea of this heretic theology of the status quo.

In humble submission to Almighty God, who controls the destinies of peoples and nations, who gathered our forebears together from many lands and gave them this their own: who has guided them from generation to generation: who has wondrously delivered them from the dangers that beset them.

It is presumptuous on the part of this racist government to claim that it was the God of the Scriptures who 'gathered' whites from Europe to South Africa whereas it is common knowledge that they settled here for economic reasons. This 'God' referred to in this preamble comes across as the god of the

oppressor to black people in South Africa. It is a 'God' of the white people of South Africa. To the township youths who are attacked and killed, this 'God' is the god of the teargas, bullets, sjamboks, prison cells and death. This type of God to us Christians comes as an antichrist, negating the very basis of our Christian faith. We are therefore jealous of the misuse of the name of our God on the constitution of this apartheid system. It is blasphemous against our God and all God-fearing born-again Christians must campaign for the exclusion of this reference to our God in this constitution or otherwise work for a just society in South Africa which will purge it of this blasphemous preamble.



#### 4. EVANGELICALISM AND STRUCTURAL CONFORMITY

Whereas there is a general tendency of the church to conform to the norms and values of the society of its time even when they are at variance with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the evangelical tradition excels in this regard. It is a fact that our faith is expressed in the language or idiom of the time of the Bible. It is expressed in terms of symbols, concept and structures of the time. It is expressed in the culture of the time. And because of this reality our faith tends to be embedded within the jungle of the time to an extent that the gospel gets lost in this jungle. This applies to any time, even our times. Because of the inadequacy of our language, idiom, symbols, concepts, structures and culture to express the truths and mysteries of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can now see only dimly through a mirror and we know in part but one day, face to face with God, we shall understand fully (1 Cor. 13:12-13).

We must therefore be conscious of how the society around us influences us and even distorts our thinking. We must be conscious of how our upbringing, or socialization, affects our perception of life. A good example is how radically different the perceptions of whites and blacks are of the South African reality. It is for this reason that we could read the same text and hear different messages from it because our eyes, ears and our brains are geared to seeing, hearing and understanding things in terms of our socialization.

Because of the influence of the West, because of the perceptions of western Christians the wave of colonization as a victory for the missionary enterprise and the spread of what they called Christian civilization, most of the missionaries could not see the evils of colonization. They could not see the brutalization of the aborigines of the lands they were colonizing. In fact when the colonialist gained victory against the aborigines of these lands and subdued them the missionaries saw an opening for the christianization of those people.

In the same way, evangelicalism, being rooted in the USA and Europe, is blind to western domination and exploitation of the peoples of the Third World. What they see is more of winning souls for Christ rather than the pain and suffering the people are going through. Because of this insensitivity and lack of awareness on the part of these white missionaries about the oppressive nature of their tradition and culture they have transplanted this oppressive culture into the church.

Today, we have these crude missionary attitudes of colonial times still prevalent in evangelical circles. For instance, they still see blacks as the 'mission field' and whites as the bearers of truth and civilization. They still see

Africa as a 'dark' continent which needs the gospel when there are more 'lapsed' Christians or non-Christians in Europe and in white South Africa.

But conformity of evangelicals in terms of proportion is seen more in the structures of their churches, organizations and movements. They are dominated and controlled by whites with heavy paternalistic tendencies. They are structured according to the apartheid norms of our society. One hears more of concepts like 'mother' churches and 'daughter' churches in evangelical circles. One hears more of concepts like the 'white church,' the 'coloured church,' the 'Indian church,' and the 'African church' within evangelicalism. And those African, Coloured and Indian churches, so-called, are usually under the control of the White church of that particular denomination. Because of these lines of white control, black congregations in the townships are not able to minister to the people there according to their needs. For them to address the conflict situation according to the way God calls them to do, usually means victimization from the dominant white block. As a result, evangelicals are paralyzed in the townships, and unable to carry the message of the gospel to the people.

When South Africa is divided according to apartheid norms evangelicals normally move swiftly, without question, to redefine their boundaries to conform with this apartheid development. In fact their structures are a mirror of the evil reality of our society. We are ashamed of the structures of our tradition which are also an indictment to us.

Maybe we need to recall Paul's appeal, two thousand years ago, not to be *conformed* to this world but to be *transformed* by the renewal of our minds, that we may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:2). We pray that evangelicals face the gospel truth that Jesus has broken down the dividing walls of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself a new humanity in place of the two, so making peace, making us fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, in whom (Jesus) the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord (Eph. 2:11-22).

## 5. EVANGELICALISM AND CONSERVATISM

In South Africa, there are evangelical groups in every church from the Roman Catholic Church to African Independent Churches, with the so-called evangelical and Pentecostal churches being the chief bearers of this phenomenon. These groups and related churches tend to all assume conservative positions with a blanket support of the South African apartheid regime. They are so obsessed and pre-occupied with what they call the 'threat of communism' to the extent of blessing any regime in the world that is anti-communist, however evil and corrupt it may be. They have put their eyes so much on their conception of the 'evil' of communism that they cannot see the evils of the systems within which they are living, and, in most cases they are part of the perpetrators or beneficiaries of these systems.

It is strange that these individuals, groups and churches can see the speck in their brothers' and sisters' eyes but cannot detect the log in their own eyes. They are fast and swift in attempting to take out this speck without even worrying about the log in their eyes (Matt. 7:3-5). In fact, it is strange that they feel 'comfortable' with this log in their eyes. It is this very eye which is blinded by the log, the evils of apartheid, through which they want to see the evils of communists. It is for this reason that Jesus called them 'hypocrites.' Listen to what Jesus says:

You hypocrites, first take the log out of your eyes, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye (Matt. 7:5).

In fact they need the power of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to enable them to remove this log. Our focus therefore must be to preach the gospel to help South Africans to remove the log in their eyes before we even talk about 'Communism.' (That does not mean that we endorse totalitarian Marxism or overlook the evils it too has perpetuated in the modern world.)

To these groups and churches what is called western Christian civilization or the western capitalistic culture is seen as identical with the Christian faith or the demands of the gospel. Any other system (especially economic) which is not necessarily capitalist is taken as being atheistic and therefore anti-Christian. In their understanding of their faith they cannot see a possibility of being socialist and also Christian. Tragically, these Christians miss the biblical obligation to measure and critique all systems, capitalist, socialist, Marxist etc., on the basis of biblical norms.

The most striking element of these groups/churches, which is an inherent part of their mode of operation, is that they are always silent about the evils of the South African apartheid regime and its necessary violence to maintain it.

They are quiet about the oppression and exploitation of millions of South African blacks and are not moved by the pain, misery and suffering, blacks are subjected to. But if the victims of this system raise their voice to resist this system, the voices of condemnation from these conservative evangelical groups become the loudest. These are the voices we have heard condemning prophetic church leaders like Bishop D. Tutu, Dr. A. Boesak, Dr. B. Naude and Archbishop D. Hurley, amongst many others.

We wish to put on record that even if we may have differences with some of these church leaders we believe that their efforts and convictions are more honest than the evangelical groups which condemn and attack them. We are disgusted by the hypocrisy of these groups, seen in their doing nothing about the pain and suffering of the people and attacking those who are doing whatever within their power as given by God to change this apartheid system to avoid a blood-bath in this country.

We are convinced that the western capitalist culture has become an idol of these groups. It has become their god which they so love and worship. We are also convinced that there are other interests than those of the gospel which move these people to act against any struggle for justice in this country. We believe that it is the class interest of these people, their position of dominance in our society, their being beneficiaries of this racist apartheid system, which moves them, rather than the gospel.

We are aware that there are some blacks who, having been carried by this lie preached by these groups, believe that being Christian means worrying about heavenly things alone rather than earthly things.

The only time they worry about earthly things is when they are called to defend the status quo. It is when they are called to oppose the people's struggle for justice in this country. When it comes to supporting investments they are the ones who get paraded on international platforms, sponsored by blood money, whilst they know that others are prohibited by law to challenge them.

This tendency of conservatism of evangelicals is a serious concern for us. It is a tendency which ends up on the side of the devil rather than on the side of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is an indictment against the evangelical tradition and makes us ashamed of it. It also makes it difficult to preach the evangelical faith in the townships of South Africa because this faith, this gospel of salvation, is now associated with what are called 'reactionary' forces in the townships. It is our prayer that all evangelicals should fight against this destructive conservatism of evangelicals with a godly jealousy, for the sake of the gospel of the Lord Jesus.



## 6. EVANGELICALISM AND ECUMENISM

Before we deal with this theme we need to explain what we mean by this word ecumenical or ecumenism. The word 'ecumenism' comes from the Greek *oikoumene*, which means the whole inhabited world. Its usage today refers to the world-wide rapprochement among the churches. It describes the process of becoming aware of each other and the attempts to draw closer together. This word has since been used to describe those churches which were willing to participate in this process against those who were not.

Although evangelicals participated in laying a foundation for the twentieth century ecumenical movement, which is now expressed in the form of local Councils of Churches, the World Council of Churches and various other federations and associations of churches, most evangelical groups pulled out of the ecumenical movement in protest against what they saw as humanism and what they called the 'social gospel' within the ecumenical movement. To most evangelicals, evangelism is a priority over and above social needs of the world. To them the greatest need of humanity is his/her spiritual need, the need to be born again, to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to live as Christ did. Social responsibility is of secondary importance, as a by the way, whilst preaching the gospel, or as a means to reach the world.

This separation between evangelicals and the so-called ecumenicals is most evident in the South African church scene today almost on the same basis.

We believe that salvation and social change cannot be separated from one another. We believe that God loved the world as a whole when he gave his only begotten son, Jesus Christ. We believe that the saving act of God is directed not only at individuals but at the whole creation. If the sin of Adam is responsible for corruption and evil in the world, if this original sin is responsible for the chaos in the world, for the wars and rumours of wars, for injustices and oppressive systems, for economic exploitation, then the saving act of Jesus must deal with this whole spectrum of the consequences of the original sin. It must deal with both the spiritual and the political socio-economic realities of the world in which we live.

There is no way therefore in which evangelism can be restricted to the so-called spiritual needs of the society. The opposite also applies that there is no way in which evangelism can be reduced to social involvement without the need for a radical change of heart of humanity. The call to be 'born again' still holds. The call to new life, new creation, where the old has passed away, is still valid. The call to righteousness, to Christian morality that is based on just actions and conduct, still stands. The fact is that the gospel does call for high Christian morality and ethics which can never be mistaken.

We believe that social change does not guarantee the salvation of individuals its much as we do not believe that the salvation of individuals guarantees social change.

We believe that these two dimensions of the ministry of the church should always be put in balance. In fact they should be collapsed into one. The language of the 'two shall be one' should not cause difficulties for us who believe in the mystery of the trinity (the one triune God), the mystery of marriage (where the two become one) and in the mystery of salvation (where Jesus becomes one with us). This is a general concern of God to save the whole creation in its totality.

But the most startling part of this question of evangelicalism and ecumenism is that even evangelicals find it difficult to relate to one another. One finds various forms of ecumenical structures between the so-called ecumenical churches. Structures like the Council of Churches with the Catholics as observers in these structures: structures like federations of churches, theological institutions (federal seminaries) and various other structures at various other levels of the life of the church. Within the so-called evangelicals, there is very little ecumenical activity or fellowship between them. For instance, there is no particular relationship between the Baptists and the Apostolic Faith Mission or between these and the Assemblies of God and other groups. Even youth groups which started as interdenominational, tend to be sectarian (or parochial) at the end.

The question is why evangelicals find it difficult to have fellowship with one another. Some of the reasons advanced were: dogmatism, purism (i.e., holier than thou attitude), the belief that one has the whole truth against everyone else, the problem of individualism (individual faith) as against community faith, their ecclesiology (i.e., their view of the church and understanding biblically), a ghetto theology, fear of being influenced and misled, etc.

There may be various other reasons for the tendency of 'anti-ecumenism' or being against ecumenical relationships amongst evangelicals. We feel that it is important to investigate (research) this area. We feel that this spirit amongst us which makes fellowship and joint efforts together difficult is responsible for our failure to minister effectively to a society at war. We need to broaden our base through ecumenical co-operation to meet both spiritual and social needs of all the people of South Africa.

## 7. EVANGELISTIC GROUPS AND MISSION THEOLOGY

One unique thing about evangelicals is that they believe in undertaking mass evangelistic campaigns, in tents, stadiums, etc. and revival services in the churches. They are committed to the 'Great Commission' as they call it, to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). They are committed to making disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all that the Lord commanded them to observe (Matt. 28:18-20). They take the promise of the Lord seriously that when the Holy Spirit has come upon them they shall be His witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Because of this commitment they have formed evangelistic crusades, associations and groups to undertake this mission. The various evangelical and Pentecostal Churches and youth groups also have their own evangelistic groups for this purpose.

Although we are also committed to mission and evangelism of the world (howbeit in a broader sense) we are concerned about the interests of some of these groups and their motivation to undertake this mission. Whilst we applaud and welcome their outreach drives, and their evangelistic ministry, praising God for the preaching of the gospel, we have, nevertheless some concerns to express about some of them.

### Motives for Preaching the Gospel

Although we are committed to preaching the gospel to extend the Kingdom of God we are concerned about the motives of many groups for undertaking evangelistic missions. Many evangelical churches and evangelistic groups, especially those organized by whites (here or in the USA) preach the gospel to blacks to make them *submissive* to the oppressive apartheid system of South Africa. Some preach to blacks to make sure *they do not steal from their bosses* whilst they are responsible for underpaying them. In some cases, bosses preach the gospel or invite evangelists to preach the gospel to their black workers (employees) to make sure that *they do not demand their rights as workers* particularly as regards just pay. They preach to make workers feel that it is sin to complain about unequal pay for equal work between whites and blacks.

But what is worse today is that most of these groups undertake these campaigns with the aim of *combating* what they call '*communism*' or '*terrorism*.' They are convinced that the western capitalist culture is a Christian culture and that all forms of socialism which they call communist are atheistic and therefore anti-Christian. Most American-based crusades and American-

influenced crusades, for instance, see their mission as that of promoting the West against the East. Winning souls to capitalism has become equal to winning souls for Christ; to them the West represents the Church and the East represents the mission field.

For us who are brutalized by white Christians in South Africa, with the western tradition of oppression and exploitation, for us who are oppressed and exploited by white Christians who are supported by the so-called Christian West, for us who have been called 'communists' because we resisted apartheid and oppression, for some of us who have been detained in solitary confinement under the so-called 'Terrorism' Act just for raising our voices against apartheid, for us this motive can only be seen to be coming from the devil. For us they must be held in suspicion, so that we may question the particular interests of these groups.

We as 'Concerned Evangelicals' have been outraged by the blatant way in which some North American evangelists come here to South Africa in the midst of our pain and suffering, even unto death, and pronounce that 'apartheid is dead' simply because they address a multiracial gathering at a stadium or maybe for a more serious reason of the need to support South Africa because it profits the West at our expense. After declaring the State of Emergency on June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1986, the South African TV replayed one North American Evangelist's sermon for South Africans to justify the silencing of the oppressed majority in South Africa and declaring a news black-out to be able to kill and detain without being monitored by the international community.

This sermon called *on* South Africans to promote and defend so-called western civilization, western freedoms and democracy. Many black South Africans were outraged by this sermon and the arrogance of a foreigner who comes to tell us that apartheid is dead when we know that it is alive and well, and that it kills.

We are also concerned, in the same way, about the sermons of other preachers which assume the same tone presenting white South Africa as almost the chosen one of God to fight against 'communism.' One could go on with many others here at home. It is for this reason that young evangelicals in Soweto have protested against some evangelistic missions in Soweto not because they are against the mission, *per se*, but because of the outrageous motives which hurt blacks in this country.

We are concerned that some of these groups are blatantly *capitalistic* and *materialistic*. They preach the gospel of prosperity claiming that this 'blessed' capitalism is from God by faith if one believes the Scriptures, confesses them and claims possessions (material) desired! What a false 'God of materialism'! This sounds like real idolatry of mammon!

Actually we 'Concerned Evangelicals' feel that these sort of groups benefit from apartheid! The riches of whites created by apartheid, at the expense of blacks, are 'blessed' by these groups as gifts from God received by faith. Many of those who claim these blessings of material possessions acquire such at the expense of others, particularly the black exploited worker of South Africa which exploitation is made possible by apartheid.

### **The Origins of these Groups are Suspect**

One thing that has become clear nowadays is the fact that most, if not all of these groups, originate from outside South Africa, that is either from Britain, the continent of Europe or the USA. Usually the origins of these evangelistic groups, seem to us to be suspect regarding their theological basis for mission and evangelization of the world. For instance, their prominent evangelists are often, if not always, *whites*, who claim they are called by God for Africa, in particular for South African blacks. Some questions arise in our minds, "Are whites the only people who are nearer God, and therefore can easily hear God call them to his ministry, or detect God's call to minister to blacks in Africa?" "Are the black people the only sinners on earth, to warrant such a flood of white missionaries and evangelists from America?"

### **White Domination**

Often these groups are dominated by white Christians. Their committees are imbalanced, as to their racial composition. Even if they had a black majority it would be a token majority, whilst the influence and decision making authority remains with whites. Ideas, structures and policy are determined, both psychologically and practically, by white Christians. And because of this domination of whites, who have no understanding of the happenings in the black townships, their evangelistic mission has been disastrous and in some cases aborted in the townships.

### **Support for Apartheid**

We are distressed when we notice that these groups are ready supporters of apartheid and its apartheid officials. Some Christian (born-again) soldiers get involved in South African Defence Force shootings in our townships, and give testimonies of Christ-inspired victory over 'communists' during church services. We regret their claim to the same faith as us, their prey! Some even prophesy that God is on the side of white racist South Africa, giving them a message of hope for victory against blacks in this country.

Almost all of them practice apartheid. They hold separate services, for 'different race groups' based on mythical claims of *language* and cultural difference—as though all whites speak the same language! Are there no Portuguese, Afrikaners, or French? Why do they not practice the same apartheid amongst themselves for the same reason?

But the most blatant symbol of support for apartheid South Africa and American values is that of the two flags which are hoisted at the Rhema Centre in Randburg, Johannesburg. Blacks who tried to go to the Centre have been greeted by the American and South African flags rather than the flag of the Kingdom of God.

This shows the degree of insensitivity of evangelical groups and their ignorance about the attitudes of most blacks in the townships. It seems that business people will always be ahead of us in terms of marketing skills and techniques and we will always lag behind. The fact of the matter is that the flag of America symbolizes 'enemy number one' in the minds of most blacks in the townships whilst that of South Africa is an insult to their humanity and dignity. It is for this reason that it is absolutely urgent to bring down those flags to replace them with the flag of the Kingdom of God for the sake of the gospel of the Lord in South Africa.

### **Our Theology of Mission and Evangelism**

The tendencies we have referred to above have made the preaching of the gospel in our country more difficult for those of us who are called into this situation. These tendencies have reinforced the perceptions of some blacks that God is a God of the white oppressors and that the church is a western institution used by the western countries to keep blacks in subjugation. These tendencies in fact indirectly encourage more interest in the very communism these groups so fear and preach against.

We believe that unless evangelicals broaden and deepen their conception of mission and evangelism their ministry is doomed in this country. We need to accept that whereas we are called to preach the gospel in the world so that many can be saved to be able to enter into the Kingdom of God, to acquire eternal life, these very people who have accepted the Lord still have to live in this world. Before Jesus Christ comes we are to live our lives in this very world.

The question is whether we then become mere spectators in this sinful world or through our new perception of life, because of the gracious gift of God, we become a witness as to what real life is and show what it means to live life more abundantly. Do we have any contribution to make to this gloomy world or not? Do we have a ministry to it or not?

We believe that God loves this whole world and that God has called us to minister to this whole world. We are called to minister to both the spiritual and social needs of the world. We believe that one cannot meet the spiritual needs of people effectively if this does not touch on, or have any bearing on their social needs. Evangelism therefore cannot be separated from social action and social justice. In fact evangelism and social action go hand-in-glove. If we bear the name of evangelicals we have to be true to our name by preaching good news to the poor, by proclaiming liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, by setting at liberty those who are oppressed, and by proclaiming the favourable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19).





## 8. RADICALISM AND EVANGELICALISM

By now it should be obvious that we have been trapped in the subtle forms of a false theological stance. Our faith is not conservative in the same way as we practice it. It is true that we, Christians, must conserve the Truth, our God-given life, and love-motivated goodness, and all other godly or Christ-like virtues. But it is not true that we must then conserve evil ideologies such as apartheid and exploitative economic systems like the operation of capitalism in the South African context. We should not conserve a corrupt and sinful political order of the day simply because it gives us an opportunity to preach the 'spiritual' gospel, especially for wrong reasons.

To try to extract some 'spiritual life' from a political or economic life, in the name of 'non-involvement' in politics is dualism. This dualism outlook on life is unscriptural. Life is a whole. A 'horn-again' Christian was not exempted from carrying a 'pass' book, with its evil accompaniments! This is a political issue. Then why step aside when this miniature symbol of apartheid oppression, called the 'dompas,' is attacked? Yet one accepts it without questioning. Perhaps we think of this as a blessed hypocrisy!

We need to ask God to help us to see, hear, and speak out! We need to find out the nature and essence of the Gospel of 'repentance and remission of sins,' we have received. Is it conservative and dualistic? Does Christianity mean marriage with the government of the day? Is our evangelical faith radical or liberal? Does it call for uncompromising righteousness or for compromised moderation?

### **Repentance: A Radical Demand for Change**

It is a maxim that to be an evangelical means to believe in repentance of one's sin(s) and conversion. It means to believe in salvation by faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is also equally true that in our proclamation of the gospel, we condemn sin in all its forms: personal, collective and structural. We then also call people to repentance, with the hope of forgiveness of sin, and restoration of relationship with God and with people.

Whereas the word repentance (Greek, *metanoia*), means a change of mind, attitude or course, its emphasis seems to be the view to hope. In other words, one ought to repent of one's sin(s), with a view to entering into new life or relationship. It should however, be clear that this does not mean that the fact of sin is undermined or underplayed. Rather, sin is exposed and condemned. The aim being to see a totally changed life.

We therefore need to realize that a call to repentance is a call to a radical change. It is a call to a radical break with sin. A radically new life is expected from a penitent sinner, after repentance, confession and forgiveness. 2 Corinthians 5:17, is a case in point. A person 'in Christ,' is a new person. The old is past. The new has come. Is this not a radical fundamental change? What about the transformation that St. Paul of Tarsus is speaking of in Romans 12:2? It is transformation by the renewal of the mind to make out what the will of God is in our lives.

### **Repentance: A Comprehensive Demand for Change**

The problem with us (evangelicals) is that we became very radical and uncompromising against a well-selected set of sins while ignoring the rest for reasons that are not clear to many. We preach vociferously against adultery, fornication, drunkenness, thieves, robbers, hatred but are completely silent about the sin of discrimination and the sin of apartheid. We close our eyes to texts like 'God shows no partiality' (Acts 10:34). We do not see the sin of building walls of hostility between blacks and whites like the Jews did between them and the Gentiles (Eph. 2:11-22). We forget that the New Testament talks about the fact that there is no more Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female for we were baptized in one Spirit into the one body of Christ and were all made to drink of one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11 etc). We are silent about the sin of oppression and exploitation. We dishonour the poor and honour the rich (James. 2), contrary to the word of God.

It is clear, therefore, that our radicalism is selective radicalism. When one goes through the sins emphasized and those which are de-emphasised, one can see a particular class bias. The obvious drunkards, thieves and robbers are members of a particular class of people that is likely to be oppressed, deprived, underpaid, etc., while the sins that are *not* emphasized are the sins of the rich, the oppressors, the exploiters, etc. There is therefore a definite bias in our sermons and message of salvation which is directed mainly at blacks rather than whites. Whites can remain racists who undermine and dehumanize blacks and still be regarded as 'fantastic' Christians. At the worst, they would even speak and sing in tongues to the glory of God whilst they are responsible for the misery of millions of people in our country. At best we can only preach sermons which assure them against communists, meaning their victims of oppression and exploitation.

We as evangelicals need to repent of this selective radicalism and biased morality. We need to go back to the Great Commission that calls us to preach the gospel to the whole world: to Gentiles and Jews alike, to whites and blacks alike, bearing in mind all the time that our God is not an impartial God. We must begin to preach vociferously against structural and institutionalized

sins, like the sin of apartheid, etc. It is strange that we do preach against tribal attitudes (between Tswanas and the Zulus, between the Shangaans and the Sothos, etc.) but we seldom preach about the attitudes between whites and blacks, between white missionaries and black pastors. Is it because those who led this mission were whites and therefore geared the emphasis of our sermons in our- training away from their own sins and focused them on us alone. Was this not a great cover-up for their own sins?

### **A Radical Gospel at Loggerheads with Apartheid**

There are many areas at which the radical gospel we are preaching becomes at loggerheads with apartheid in South Africa and its unjust laws. Converts who have repented from the sin of racism cannot be allowed to live where they choose to live, to break away from the structural sin of separation of races in this country. The restrictions on the movements of blacks seriously affects their evangelistic machinery to reach out to more souls. The suppressive security legislations inhibit the open preaching of the gospel lest one is prepared to be harassed and imprisoned by the apartheid security forces.

Our type of gospel proclamation demands repentance. Our teaching is committal. Our discipleship is transformational. If in the process of preaching the gospel and discipleship ministry we encounter legislative hindrance, what do we do? Do we obey Christ, which means disobedience to these laws? Or do we obey evil laws that hinder the preaching of the gospel? How do we respond or react, when we are called by God Almighty to minister to all nations (as it is scriptural) while the South African regime executive laws to permit ministry to a particular race-group only? What do we do if a host of racist legislations hinder or frustrate the gospel ministry?

The gospel is radical. A call by God to a prophetic ministry is often, if not always, radical. Jeremiah was called by God to minister to nations of his time. God set him "over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:10).

This constitutes a call and commission to a radical ministration. We have not done this. We have rather regrettably betrayed the faith. We have cowardly 'sold out' the mission of our Lord; we have sold out our birth right. We have mismanaged our responsibility. WE MUST REPENT AND MINISTER ACCORDING TO OUR CALLING.

We call upon all committed evangelicals in South Africa to come out boldly to be witnesses of the gospel of salvation, justice and peace in this country without fear. You have not received the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear (Rom. 8:15) as many of us have done. We have to take a stand now even if it may mean persecution by earthly systems. For if we fail now we shall have no

legitimacy in the post-liberation period unless we want to join the hypocrites of this world.

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<sup>1</sup> Soweto.

# **A RELEVANT PENTECOSTAL WITNESS**

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# CONTENTS

	PREFACE	125
1.	INTRODUCTION	127
1.1.	The Call of the Gospel	127
1.2.	The South African Situation	127
1.3.	The Silence of Pentecostals	128
2.	PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY AS A CONSERVATIVE STATUS QUO THEOLOGY	129
2.1.	Salvation and Repentance	129
2.2.	Baptism in the Spirit	130
2.3.	The Gifts of the Spirit	130
3.	THE RATIONALE BEHIND A CONSERVATIVE THEOLOGY	133
3.1.	The Pentecostal Message did not take its Roots Locally	133
3.2.	The Pentecostal Message was Highly Spiritual	133
	The Pentecostal Pre-Occupation with Heaven	134
4.	A RELEVANT PENTECOSTAL WITNESS	135
5.	PLAN OF ACTION	137





## *Preface*

To our brothers and sisters in the Pentecostal churches in South Africa:

We greet you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We thank God for the gift of his Spirit which he has freely given to the church, and which we, through faith, have fully received. We thank him that it is the same Spirit who has baptised us into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). We are also grateful to God that we can be his witnesses here in South Africa, in spite of the disappointment, the pain and the sorrow this witness entails.

Our country is a land of beauty and splendour, yet within its confines there is immeasurable deprivation, suffering and death. We cannot understand how innocent people could have been subjected to so much humiliation and indignity for so long. We cannot understand how we could have insulated ourselves from the suffering of our own people within the body of Christ.

We are reminded of the time when God sent Moses to Egypt to tell Pharaoh to release his people (Exod. 5:1), for he had seen their affliction and had heard their cry (Exod. 3:7). We believe that our God is a God who "changes not" (Mal. 3:6), and that he has seen the affliction and has heard the cry of his people in South Africa. We believe that as God had called Moses to deliver his people from the yoke of slavery, in the same way he calls the church to proclaim prophetically the deliverance of his people from the yoke of apartheid.

We praise God for the churches who are obedient to this call, and who are working as his instruments to end apartheid.

What about us? Are we not also part of the body of Christ? (1 Cor. 12:27). Have we not been baptised into one body by one Spirit? (1 Cor. 12:13). Why then, have we never joined together with the rest of the body as one united witness against apartheid?

When we examine ourselves, we find that we have not borne a true testimony that apartheid is ungodly and unchristian. Rather, we have helped feed and nourish it to grow and be the monster it is today.

From within our ranks there have emerged right-wing Christian groups who try to discredit many of God's people striving to bring about justice and equality in South Africa. They claim to be apolitical, yet by nature they are pro-government and are, therefore, very much political. They claim to be anti-communist, yet the enemy we face is not communism but apartheid. They claim wealth and prosperity in the "name of the Lord," yet the laws of the

land are such that it is impossible for the majority of the people to share in the nation's wealth.

We have been so closely aligned to these groups that we are in mortal danger of selling our birthright and of becoming right-wing ourselves. Our history shows us that this was not the way Pentecostalism began.

We trace our history back to the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles, in 1906. While slavery had already been abolished, black people still carried the scars of this horrible system. They were still politically oppressed and discriminated against. The white mainline churches felt that they held monopoly over God's grace and revelation. If anything was to be done, it would be by them, and not by the children of slaves. But God "lifted the meek" and "gave grace to the humble" (Psa. 147:6; Jas. 4:6), for it was in a little black church, led by a humble black minister, where this revival took place. It was an astonishing fact that white ministers from the South (prior to the Civil War this was a place where slavery was religiously protected) went up to Los Angeles to receive the gift and the blessings of the Spirit through the intercessions and prayers of their fellow-black believers. It was a time, as an eye-witness stated, "The 'colour line' was washed away in the blood" (This quotation is taken from Walter Hollenweger's book, *Pentecost between Black and White*, p.19.).

We also note that in our history there emerged a right-wing element that brought about the unchristian separation between the white and the black Pentecostal churches.

It was unfortunate that white Pentecostals succumbed to the pressure of the conservative mainline churches, which tried to discredit them by pointing out their "lowly" beginnings in a black church. It was unfortunate that white Pentecostals gave in to the laws of the Southern states which prohibited racially mixed meetings. It was unfortunate that we received this kind of compromised Pentecostalism, the kind that shaped our thinking and our theology. Much of what we received as traditional Pentecostalism is in fact a subversion of the true Pentecost of Acts 2 and of Azusa Street.

In the Azusa Street Revival we find the legitimacy to continue our witness as Pentecostals. It was here that God called to himself a prophetic movement in an oppressive society that belied the dignity of black people. It was here that God called to himself humble people to be his witnesses in a hostile world. It was here that powerless people were baptised in the Holy Spirit and endued with power to preach the good news of Jesus Christ, with "signs following."

It is in this tradition that we come bearing a Relevant Pentecostal Witness.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

From the outset we wish to make it known that we are not working at cross-purposes with, nor do we want to duplicate that which has already been stated in the Evangelical Witness. We have been challenged by this document and our attempt at a Relevant Pentecostal Witness must be seen as a witness built upon this challenge.

We have come together for the following reasons:

### **1.1. The Call of the Gospel**

We believe that we are to preach the good news of our Lord to the whole world. We believe that we are to be obedient to the Great Commission which the Lord gave us — to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19). However, we are aware that neither our Lord nor his disciple preached in a vacuum, but in a concrete situation. Holy Scripture affirms that the Good News was not divorced from the people and their reality. Our Lord did not make claims which people could not understand nor relate to. Before he claimed to be the Bread of Life, he fed the hungry (John 6:11, 35). His claim to be the Light of the World was made intelligible after he had healed a man born blind (John 8:12; 9:1, 2).

### **1.2. The South African Situation**

The concrete situation in which we are called to preach is one where a minority ruling class has occupied the major part of the land. They have benefitted from all its economic wealth, while the disenfranchised majority have faced the brunt of political oppression and economic exploitation. Furthermore, the ideology of apartheid had received its support and justification from a particular nationalist theology within the Reformed Church. The English-speaking churches also lent their support to this heresy.

Apartheid works on the premise that the different race groups in this country should be separated. This was put into operation by the Group Areas Act, the Bantustan System, and recently, the Tri-Cameral Parliament. With the present "Reform" policy of the government there is the anticipation of a fourth "Black Chamber" added to the present Tri-Cameral System. All this legislation has further increased the frustration for millions of people. One of the prime implementers of apartheid ideology, H. Verwoerd, stated that apartheid was an act of "good neighbourliness," a very different view of neighbourliness to that presented in the Scriptures (Luke 10:29-37): the story of the Good Samaritan.

This false and distorted view of “good neighbourliness” is still being put forward today by the proponents of apartheid. One does not have to look far to know that apartheid is designed to keep political and economic power in the hands of the white minority at the expense of the black majority. Even today with the so-called Reform programme by the South African government, it is not uncommon for blacks to remain victims of re-settlement programmes and forced removals, with the consequent break-down of family life. This is a direct contradiction of what the church believes concerning family life. Scripture teaches that “what God has joined together let no man [*sic*] put asunder” (Matt. 19:6). Apartheid retriberalizes black people, separating them residentially on this basis. As a result of this policy most black people are to be re-settled in Bantustans, visiting “white South Africa” only as migrant workers.

In recent years there has been an upsurge in resistance to apartheid. The government has responded by declaring a state of emergency, banning extra-parliamentary organisations to the left of the government, banning individuals, detentions without trial, and an attempt to silence the media in this country, more especially the alternate press.

Churches and church organisations working to end apartheid have been the targets of severe criticism from the government. The situation is such that the government wants to decide what should and what should not be preached from the pulpits. Church leaders, notably Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Rev. Frank Chikane, Dr. Alan Boesak and Dr. Beyers Naude have been presented by the government media as instigators of violence and are accused of being Marxists in Christian clothing. As Christians we pledge our support for these leaders in their prophetic witness, for in choosing between Caesar and God, we choose God.

### **1.3. The Silence of Pentecostals**

Our attempt in the above analysis of the South African situation is admittedly superficial, yet by all accounts we have been conspicuously silent. It would seem as if we are preaching the gospel in a totally different situation. Here we must admit that a make-believe situation has been created by the defenders of apartheid. It is a situation where there is no human suffering, no politically inspired unrest, and no dissatisfaction with the present ruling class. It is a situation where there is law and order, stability, justice and peace. Our silence lends support to this make-believe situation and betrays our blindness to the true context. Our silence is a wilful support of an ideology that is irreconcilable with the Holy Scriptures and with our Christian Faith.

In repenting of this sin we are forced to re-examine our theology.

## 2. PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY AS A CONSERVATIVE STATUS QUO THEOLOGY

### 2.1. Salvation and Repentance

In order to enter the body of Christ, one must be “born again” (John. 3:3). There is a turning away from the old order. A new act of creation takes place (2 Cor. 5:17). The person who is now a believer has found salvation and is spoken of as “being saved.” Salvation is seen as a personal affair between the individual and God. It is highly internalised and the conditions within society that make people act in a certain way are not taken into account. People are called to repent from drunkenness, fornication, adultery, drug addiction, stealing, lying and other “sins of the flesh.” We do not deny that these are sins and that we need to address them, however, we become as hypocritical as the Scribes and the Pharisees who “strain at a gnat and swallow a camel” (Matt. 23:24), by omitting “the weightier matters of the law...” (Matt. 23:23). We have neglected to point out sins such as racial prejudice, bigotry, economic exploitation and oppression. All these sins have produced the structural sin of apartheid. We tend to address the problems and not the cause. Therefore, we have not challenged the perpetrators and the adherents of apartheid. Neither have we challenged people to repent of the racism of white supremacy, nor have we challenged those who accumulate wealth at the expense of the poor to find salvation in the Zacchaeus tradition (Luke 19:8, 9).

South Africa is a land of unequal opportunity. It is a land of two world—a world of the rich minority and a world of the poor majority. Yet under such divisive conditions we preach a single message of repentance. We see sin mainly as an inherited human condition. We do not regard its presence in our society through the evil actions of people or in the implementation of evil structures. We therefore call master and slave, rich and poor, oppressor and oppressed, irrespective of the degree of crime or the degree of injury, to one repentance. We do not follow the tradition of John the Baptist who called on people to repent of specific sins within their specific social context. For example, he said to the tax-collectors, “Exact no more than that which is appointed you,” and to the soldiers, “Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely.” (Luke 8:13, 14).

We have also not followed the way in which our Lord preached repentance. The challenges he issued to the Scribes and the Pharisees (people who abused their privileged positions of power), were not the same challenges he issued to the poor and the oppressed. He called on the poor and the oppressed to “take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly at heart” (Matt. 11:29). He called the Scribes and the Pharisees “hypocrites” (Luke 11:44), and a “generation of vipers” (Matt. 12:34). He accused them of heaping unnecessary burdens on the poor and the oppressed, yet they were not

willing to relieve the people of their burdens “with one of their fingers” (Matt. 23:4; Luke 11:46). To the victims of oppression he said, “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28).

It is ironic that severe discipline is placed upon those who falter and commit sins which we as Pentecostals emphasise, yet those who are guilty of many of the apartheid sins can even find sanctuary behind our pulpits.

## **2.2. Baptism in the Spirit**

It is the sincere desire of all Pentecostals to be baptised in the Spirit. In order to covet this experience one has to live a holy life. To live a holy life one must no longer be beset by the lifestyle of the old order. Clearly visible must be a life of morality, goodwill, honesty, sober habits, meekness, obedience to the Word of God and respect for law and order. What is not understood, however, is that these virtues are normally more easily attainable in an affluent middle-class society. Those who have to struggle with inferior housing, and inferior jobs, have neither the luxury nor the inclination to indulge in feelings of goodwill, meekness and obedience to their white “masters.” Consequently, we are faced with the situation where a believer from an oppressed community, in order to receive the Spirit baptism, has to make a greater stride towards holiness than a believer from an affluent white community.

As Pentecostals we have failed to see that the maintenance of white affluence is done at the expense of black poverty and oppression. We have failed to acknowledge that the social conditions in the oppressed communities are a direct result of the social conditions in the affluent white communities. We do not deny that those aspects of morality and holiness which Pentecostals point out are important. However, in our situation they are ineffective when they are not seen as being intrinsically linked with the corruptness of white affluence.

## **2.3. The Gifts of the Spirit**

Concerning spiritual gifts, Pentecostals use 1 Cor. 12:4-11 as an important source of information. There is no Pentecostal church that does not encourage its believers to seek for the gifts of the Spirit. While Paul lists nine gifts in 1 Cor. 12, the more sought after gifts are: the gift of tongues, the gift of prophecy, the gift of discerning between spirits, and the gifts of healing. Pentecostals find in these gifts a great blessing and power when witnessing to the gospel of our Lord. No doubt, a church that has all the gifts in operation can be a powerful instrument for witness. However, when there is separation and division then we can say that these gifts have been subverted and made

of no effect. In 1 Cor. 12, these gifts are given for the common good of the whole church. The use of these gifts testifies to the unity of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12, 13).

In South Africa the body of Christ is not united but politically and economically divided. While Scripture teaches that the dividing wall of hostility has been broken whereby we are no longer foreigners and aliens (Eph. 2:14, 19), apartheid has reconstructed this wall separating us one from the other. For the most part, the Pentecostal church has thrived under the Group Areas Act. It has no qualms about having separate so-called Indian, Coloured, African and White sections within the church. Is this a true testimony to the one Spirit who unites us? (1 Cor. 12:13).





### **3. THE RATIONALE BEHIND A CONSERVATIVE THEOLOGY**

So far we have outlined the pertinent features of Pentecostal belief and we note the conservative way in which it has been implemented. We would be the first to admit that should these beliefs be contextualised then the church on the whole will be able to make a greater stride towards working for change in South Africa.

What is it that has made Pentecostal theology so conservative? The following reasons may be outlined:

#### **3.1. The Pentecostal Message did not take its Roots Locally**

It came from abroad, notably the USA. When the early Pentecostal missionaries came to evangelize, they did not find it necessary to analyse the South African context. (This is still the practice today of Pentecostal pastors, evangelists and missionaries who come to South Africa to preach and to evangelize). They found it expedient not to jeopardize their position with the government of the day. Therefore, they did not get involved in any matter that seemed political. As a result, their message was conservative and upheld the status quo. We find this view in conflict with the tradition of the early church. The early Christians did not appease the ruling government so that life could be made easy. When unchristian demands were placed upon them, they defied these demands at the cost of their freedom and even at the cost of their lives. This is evidenced by the fact that much of the bible was written from prison.

#### **3.2. The Pentecostal Message was Highly Spiritual**

Reacting against nominalism in the mainline churches in the States, Pentecostals moved to the other extreme, in attaining a "high spirituality." Soon in most matters the "concrete" was replaced by the "spiritual," giving birth to a "other-worldly" theology. A person was seen as having a body, a soul and a spirit, and the greatest appeal was made to the soul. The social, political and economic conditions did not matter; what mattered was that the soul be saved. This is not the scriptural view of personhood. In the creation account the human person is seen as a living being, a holistic person (Gen. 2:7). Throughout the Old Testament the Hebrews always saw people as such. It was the Greeks who emphasised the idea of the soul. The New Testament followed the Hebrew tradition concerning its view of humankind. In any case, our spirituality can only be seen in relation to our humanity, for a tree is only known by its fruit (Matt. 12:33). Because we have not attended holistically to the needs of people, many have seen the Christian gospel as irrelevant and have turned to other ideologies that can fulfil these needs.

### **3.3. The Pentecostal Preoccupation with Heaven**

Heaven is seen as the goal to which all Christians should strive. Every aspect of life is seen from this viewpoint. In order to accommodate this one-sided view we tend to interpret everything spiritually. Thus, one is saved to enter heaven. Salvation becomes solely a spiritual possession. The Pentecostal preoccupation with heaven is seen in its liturgy, its songs and its ministry. Heaven is the focal point even in the counselling of the sick, the depressed and the bereaved. This “other-worldliness” has often led Pentecostals to be accused of being “too heavenly minded and of no earthly good.” We believe that heaven is a promise to all believers, but while we are in this world we are to be witnesses to it. It is a world which God loved so much that he gave his only Son to it (John 3:16). As his church we continue this gift to the world.

#### 4. A RELEVANT PENTECOSTAL WITNESS

We accept and affirm the Pentecostal teachings and its tenets. However, a Pentecostalism that ignores the concrete situation in which it works can be extremely dangerous in its irrelevance. It can easily be infiltrated and manipulated by racist ideologies and exploitative structures. With deep regret we note that this has sometimes been the case. The recent statement, made in Durban on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1988, by the Full Gospel Church is a case in point. On SATV its stance against sanctions was given more coverage than its stance against apartheid. Unfortunately this statement was made to sound like one that may have emerged from the "Reform" programme of the Nationalist government. This does not mean that other Pentecostal denominations are any different. We believe that by making our witness relevant we will be obeying the call of the Gospel. We will also close the doors to any right-wing infiltration and manipulation.

As concerned Pentecostals we repent of our apathy to human suffering which has been the order of the day for so long in our country. We stand committed to work against apartheid in all its forms. Wherever possible we will seek to work with our brothers and sisters outside the Pentecostal tradition who are committed to bringing about a just society in South Africa, ("that they all may be one...even as we are one" John 17:21). We also wish to affirm the fact that we are not closed to dialogue with others in the Pentecostal tradition. We need, however, to state our position quite clearly so that dialogue may proceed from this position.

By seeking a relevant witness we stand firm on the foundation of Scripture, and respond in the tradition of the Evangelical Witness.



## 5. PLAN OF ACTION

1. We need to take the message of a relevant witness to as many Pentecostals as possible throughout the country;
2. We need to link up and unite with other Pentecostals who are involved in a relevant witness;
3. Through workshops and other similar projects we need to work with clergy and laity on a theological education programme concerning a relevant Pentecostal witness;
4. We need to preach a relevant witness from our pulpits, incorporate it into youth programmes, the Sunday school syllabus, bible studies and the women's groups;
5. As relevant Pentecostals we need to seek fellowship with each other, irrespective of our denominational ties. We need to meet for worship, exhortation and spiritual upliftment;
6. We need to make our witness practical by being involved in community projects in conjunction with progressive community organisations.



# KAIROS CENTROAMERICANO





## INTRODUCCION

1. Este documento va dirigido a todos los cristianos y personas de buena voluntad que han seguido de cerca la situación y las luchas de nuestros pueblos y que oran y se solidarizan con nosotros en todos los países del mundo.
2. Queremos a través de este trabajo, animarles a seguir identificándose con nuestra lucha y con nuestra esperanza. Necesitamos que los cristianos de todo el mundo sigan firmes y constantes en la solidaridad con América Central.
3. Nos dirigimos de manera especial y urgente a las comunidades cristianas de Centroamérica misma y de Estados Unidos, por ser los pueblos más directamente involucrados en los conflictos que estamos viviendo en la región.
4. Al compartir con ustedes el testimonio de nuestra fe, deseamos también hacer un llamado a nuestra conciencia de cristianos centroamericanos. Sentimos y creemos que estamos llegando al momento de unirnos más estrechamente y hacer decisiones conjuntas. Debemos velar y orar, reflexionar y tratar de discernir los signos de los tiempos. Sólo así podremos hacer opciones y realizar acciones consecuentes con los anhelos y con el clamor de nuestros pueblos. Tenemos el deber, como cristianos, de contribuir al logro de una paz digna que surja del respeto y la defensa de nuestra libre autodeterminación y de la construcción de la justicia y de la fraternidad.
5. El Kairós centroamericano surge de 464 años de luchas, agonías y esperanzas. La confrontación con la política neocolonialista e intervencionista de Estados Unidos, está llegando a su punto culminante en toda la región. La guerra de agresión en contra de Nicaragua, las constantes presiones sobre los gobiernos de América Central incluyendo Panamá y Belice por parte del gobierno de Estados Unidos para que apoyen su política, la ocupación de Honduras como plataforma militar y el apoyo militar a los regímenes represivos de Guatemala y de El Salvador, ponen en peligro la vida de más de 22 millones de seres humanos en esta región. Nuestros pueblos, empobrecidos ya por un sistema económico nacional e internacional injusto, gimen y luchan con denuedo y esperanza.
6. Confesamos humildemente que nosotros no hemos llegado a un discernimiento pleno y satisfactorio de esta hora difícil. A pesar de nuestra limitación, queremos contribuir con esta primera palabra para dar inicio a un proceso conjunto de análisis, reflexión y discernimiento que vaya arrojando

cada día más luz para todos nosotros aquí en América Central y también a nivel internacional.

7. Con este documento «Kairós Centroamericano» no pretendemos dar ninguna última palabra. Queremos más bien compartir humildemente nuestra fe, nuestra visión cristiana de esta hora histórica que vivimos en Centroamérica, y abrir así un espacio de reflexión y diálogo en las comunidades y en las Iglesias, junto a todos los hombres de buena voluntad. Invitamos a todas las comunidades a orar, reflexionar, discernir y llegar a formular su propia visión cristiana de este Kairós que Centroamérica es, y a compartir ese discernimiento con las demás comunidades, en un ejercicio profético de solidaridad compartida, de cristiana corresponsabilidad histórica hacia Centroamérica.

8. Les invitamos pues a multiplicar y difundir este nuestro documento, y les rogamos encarecidamente nos envíen sus reacciones, sugerencias, reflexiones y críticas, o mucho mejor su propio «documento Kairós Centroamericano», a los apartados 3205 y RP-082 de Managua (Nicaragua). Gracias.

## **PARTE I: LA REALIDAD QUE VIVIMOS**

### **1. La vida en Centroamérica**

9. Durante los últimos diez años han muerto en Centroamérica más de 200.000 personas, de un total de 25 millones de habitantes en la región (cerca del 1%). En su gran mayoría pobres: sindicalistas, indígenas, campesinos, guerrilleros, cooperativistas, jóvenes reclutados a la fuerza para luchar contra sus propios hermanos. Todos ellos víctimas de una política de terror y contrainsurgencia.

10. La guerra no es un azar ni resultado de una naturaleza violenta del centroamericano. Es fruto de la injusticia. Es la lucha de los pueblos en defensa de su vida, contra los privilegiados que siempre han detentado el poder económico, político y militar. Sectores que han sido apoyados y financiados por los gobiernos estadounidenses, que defienden su hegemonía a costa de las naciones del Tercer Mundo.

11. Los conflictos armados en nuestros países no son más que expresiones dramáticas de la violencia institucionalizada. En Nicaragua la contrarrevolución armada y financiada por el gobierno de Estados Unidos ha provocado miles de asesinados de la población civil, así como en El Salvador y Guatemala este papel de genocidio lo desarrollan los ejércitos gubernamentales.

12. Expresión de esta violencia institucionalizada es la guerra económica contra las mayorías. Entre sus víctimas podemos mencionar:

13. -Quienes en el campo y la ciudad se organizan en sindicatos y otras asociaciones democráticas para defender sus vidas, víctimas de la represión, desaparición, tortura y muerte.

14. -Mujeres obligadas a emigrar hacia las ciudades para ofrecerse como domésticas o prostituirse.

15. -Obreros que sufren caídas constantes de sus salarios reales. Alto número de desempleados y subempleados. Migración masiva hacia países del norte en busca de empleo y seguridad.

16. -Cientos de miles de campesinos desplazados de sus lugares de origen por no poder trabajar sus tierras debido a los operativos militares.

17. -Mineros y madereros explotados por corporaciones transnacionales que destruyen el medio.

18. -La emigración de los técnicos en busca de empleo remunerado.
19. -Familias divididas; niños huérfanos, esposas solas.
20. Otra forma de violencia institucionalizada es el alto grado de analfabetismo en la mayor parte de la región. La invasión cultural que impone el sistema de vida norteamericano como un paraíso. Los servicios de salud insuficientes, con altos niveles de mortalidad infantil.
21. La guerra tiene raíces comunes, pero se expresa de forma diferente en cada país: en Nicaragua, un estado joven, revolucionario, lucha por defender sus conquistas, su soberanía e independencia contra la administración norteamericana, que le ha declarado la guerra en todos los ámbitos: diplomático, económico, político, social y militar con las bandas contrarrevolucionarias. En Guatemala, la dictadura ancestral se manifiesta hoy en el gobierno demócrata cristiano, disfraz del genocidio y etnocidio, que nuevamente se recrudece. En El Salvador, un movimiento popular y guerrillero crece, presentando una alternativa frente a un gobierno títere de los norteamericanos. En Honduras los verdaderos gobernantes son los militares representantes de la política agresiva y militarista de Estados Unidos. En Costa Rica una democracia se debilita y pierde credibilidad por la pauperización y el endeudamiento. En Panamá una larga y dura lucha nacionalista culminó con la firma del tratado Torrijos-Cárter (1977), que promete devolver a los panameños su principal recurso, su canal interoceánico. El Imperio busca de mil maneras incumplir estos acuerdos.

## **2. Antecedentes del momento actual**

22. La lucha actual de Centroamérica comienza con la conquista de nuestros pueblos por la política colonialista de la España del siglo XVI, saqueando las riquezas naturales y explotando a los nativos con la «legitimidad» de la Corona española, la cruz y la espada. Los indígenas fueron sometidos a regímenes de trabajo esclavizante en la agricultura y en la minería. Fueron siglos de lucha desigual de españoles y criollos contra indígenas y negros esclavos traídos del Africa, de expropiación de sus tierras, culturas y vidas. Pocos pueblos, como los mayas y caribes lograron cierta cuota de independencia. Estos pueblos aún siguen luchando por sobrevivir.

2. La independencia política de España, como consecuencia de su desgaste político y económico, no vino a mejorar las condiciones de los pobladores en nuestros países. Las minorías privilegiadas mantuvieron para sí las ventajas de este nuevo fenómeno. El siglo XIX registró una constante pugna entre liberales y conservadores. Y es en la segunda mitad de este siglo cuando Centroamérica es incorporada al sistema capitalista de producción con economías de agro exportación, en torno principalmente al café. Esto

significó un mayor despojo de las masas empobrecidas, con la conversión del campesino en jornalero en las haciendas de café y banano.

24. La historia de nuestras pequeñas repúblicas, divididas en la primera mitad del siglo XIX por los intereses de las clases dominantes, es la historia de la búsqueda del modelo político y económico a seguir. La soberanía de Nicaragua se vio agredida por los intereses norteamericanos por una vía interoceánica. Nicaragua fue escenario de la digna guerra centroamericana contra el filibustero Walker y del Ejército Defensor de la Soberanía, liderado por Augusto César Sandino contra la invasión del ejército norteamericano en 1927. Similares intereses de los norteamericanos se han dado en torno al canal de Panamá. Aquí una lucha nacionalista logró los acuerdos Torrijos-Cárter para la devolución del canal. Las innumerables maniobras de los estadounidenses para incumplirlos han desatado los conflictos actuales.

25. En Guatemala, la conquista por primera vez de un gobierno democrata, popular y participativo, fue destruida en 1954 por el golpe militar fabricado por la Central de Inteligencia (CIA) que formó un ejército mercenario desde Honduras.

26. Los regímenes militares han sido la tónica dominante en nuestras naciones, y han sido equivalentes a dictaduras antipopulares y represivas. Claro ejemplo de esto fue la masacre de 1932 en El Salvador de 30.000 campesinos que se alzaron por el hambre y la falta de democracia. Costa Rica fue un espacio civil dentro de esa tónica. Las alianzas militares de la región (CONDECA) no fueron sino políticas contrarrevolucionarias, que se reflejaron más claramente en la adopción de la Doctrina de Seguridad Nacional, en «prevención» de cualquier intento de constituir en la región una nueva Cuba, pueblo éste que mostró un camino para construir la nueva sociedad.

27. Ahora, el militarismo sigue siendo la espina dorsal de la política norteamericana de dominación del área. Sus bases militares en Panamá y Honduras, lo confirman.

28. Las expresiones de resistencia de nuestros pueblos no han estado ausentes en ningún periodo. En los últimos años el FSLN logró, junto con el pueblo, la liberación de Nicaragua. En El Salvador y Guatemala hay organizaciones político-militares y populares que presentan una verdadera alternativa.

### **3. Inserción geopolítica de Centroamérica**

29. La lucha de los pueblos de Centroamérica tiene implicaciones globales. Hoy se plantean las exigencias urgentes de un nuevo orden internacional en lo económico, en lo político, en lo jurídico. Se trata de suplantarse en las relaciones internacionales el derecho de la fuerza por la fuerza del derecho.

30. Al interior de Centroamérica la fuerza moral de este planteamiento geopolítico descansa sobre su base popular. En Nicaragua la revolución popular sandinista se va construyendo y ya se ha plasmado en su nueva Constitución un proyecto original de democracia plena, participativa (a través de organismos de masas: jóvenes, mujeres, obreros, etc) y representativa (pluralismo de partidos políticos que participan en la Asamblea Legislativa). Un elemento importante de esta democracia popular y participativa es la creación y protección de un espacio para la autonomía cultural y política de los grupos étnicos. Sin esta participación de las comunidades indígenas no se puede dar verdadera democracia en los demás países del área.

31. No es casual que las luchas populares centroamericanas hayan servido como ocasión para la conformación de un activo bloque de naciones latinoamericanas. Primero se formó el Grupo de Contadora, integrado por México, Venezuela, Colombia y Panamá, para buscar una salida negociada a los conflictos centroamericanos, como alternativa a las soluciones militares y antipopulares que promueve Estados Unidos. Posteriormente se sumaron a este grupo Brasil, Argentina, Perú y Uruguay. De modo que Centroamérica ha servido de ocasión para una aglutinación bolivariana que va cambiando las relaciones entre Estados Unidos y América Latina. La misma Organización de Estados Americanos OEA, otrora instrumento de los intereses norteamericanos, ha cobrado cierta autonomía. Las naciones latinoamericanas han asumido las banderas de la autodeterminación y la no-intervención, causas que antiguamente no pasaban de ser expresión de los deseos de países impotentes, pero que hoy por la unión se han transformado en una plataforma política respetada en el concierto de naciones y una propuesta latinoamericana para un nuevo orden político internacional.

32. El gobierno norteamericano, empecinado en una política de agresión a estas pequeñas naciones que siempre consideró como un patio trasero, ha continuado desarrollando la contrarrevolución en contra de las normas internacionales y en contra de la voluntad latinoamericana de buscar soluciones razonadas.

33. La interpretación de la democracia y los gobiernos democráticos en donde se logran los modelos occidentales según la visión de Estados Unidos, choca totalmente con el sentir y pensar de nuestros pueblos. La naciente democracia de Nicaragua para ellos es totalitarismo y gobierno que destruye los valores occidentales; los regímenes violatorios de los derechos humanos y fieles ejecutores de los planes contrarrevolucionarios, como los democristianos de El Salvador y Guatemala, son para ellos el vivo retrato de la democracia. El gobierno hondureño, militarizado y utilizado como base de agresión, es para ellos el régimen democrático a salvar del expansionismo sandinista. Estamos asistiendo así a una interpretación del mundo diametralmente opuesta.

34. El proceso de los acuerdos de Esquipulas manifiesta el deseo de nuestros pueblos de encontrar una salida centroamericana a los problemas centroamericanos. La posibilidad de una solución negociada, sin interferencias foráneas, se ve constantemente amenazada por la intransigencia norteamericana frente a soluciones justas.

#### **4. Los cristianos en Centroamérica**

35. La novedad eclesial más significativa de las luchas populares centroamericanas es la participación de amplios sectores cristianos dentro del movimiento popular y de las fuerzas armadas del pueblo. Desde las tempranas comunidades eclesiales de Olancho (Honduras) y San Miguelito (Panamá), hasta la incorporación de cristianos y de algunas comunidades en la insurrección en Nicaragua, pasando por las comunidades indígenas y no indígenas en Guatemala y los cristianos dentro del movimiento popular salvadoreño, los cristianos están inmersos en este caminar, formando además un sector específico dentro de las luchas revolucionarias.

36. Como consecuencia de esta militancia cristiana se han multiplicado los mártires centroamericanos, cristianos que han sido asesinados por su seguimiento de Jesús. Es de todos conocido el martirio de Mons. Oscar Arnulfo Romero, arzobispo de San Salvador. Son muchos los delegados de la Palabra de Dios y agentes de pastoral que han sido asesinados por la contrarrevolución en Nicaragua y los gobiernos represivos en Guatemala, El Salvador, y Honduras, por su testimonio a la Palabra. Hay también cristianos que perecieron en combate después de haber tomado las armas por la causa popular movidos por su fe, como Arlen Siu, Sergio Guerrero Soza, Padre Gaspar García Laviana, en Nicaragua, Padre Ernesto Barrera en El Salvador, Padre Guadalupe en Honduras, etc.

37. Muchos son los testimonios de fe viva, tanto personal como comunitaria: la esperanza contra toda esperanza vivida en medio de los bombardeos y operativos militares indiscriminados en las montañas de Guatemala y las comunidades en resistencia; las comunidades en las zonas bajo control guerrillero en El Salvador, donde se ha desarrollado una pastoral de acompañamiento; las comunidades en las zonas de guerra de Nicaragua, que defienden con las armas y la fe sus vidas y su producción...

38. Centroamérica aporta en estos últimos años nuevas formas de evangelización, una pastoral de fronteras inmersa en la conflictividad de las armas, del movimiento popular, de la lucha por la paz, con el envío del Señor a ser fermento en la masa. Se ha abierto un diálogo y una práctica entre cristianos y revolucionarios, en una relación nueva, no exenta de tensiones, pero plena de aportes para el proceso de liberación.

39. Hay una actitud positiva en autoridades eclesiales para prestar el servicio evangélico de humanización del conflicto y de mediación en busca de soluciones negociadas.

40. Toda esta participación ha destacado también una nueva reflexión teológica y pastoral con esfuerzos por sistematizar y dar testimonio a las iglesias hermanas fuera de la región. Florece una nueva espiritualidad, una práctica cristiana que ha despertado una solidaridad que ha vivificado a muchas iglesias en muchos países.



## **PARTE II: MIRANDO ESTA HORA HISTORICA CENTROAMERICANA DESDE LA FE**

4. Queremos descubrir el significado cristiano que tiene esta hora histórica centroamericana que estamos viviendo. Para ello nos valemos de la fe cristiana. Nos sentimos iluminados por:

42. a) La palabra y la praxis de Jesús, que viviendo en una situación social crítica y conflictiva como la nuestra, la de la Paz Romana ofrecida e impuesta por el Imperio, fue testigo de los caminos que conducen a la verdadera Paz, optando inequívocamente por los pobres;

43. b) El Dios que Jesús nos ha revelado, que es Dios de Vida y de Paz, sin confundirlo con cualquier imagen idolátrica de Dios;

44. c) La utopía del Reino, revelada por Jesús como voluntad de Dios sobre la historia, y encomendada a sus seguidores como causa mayor y meta suprema de nuestro quehacer histórico.

### **1. SIGNOS DEL REINO EN ESTA HORA HISTORICA CENTROAMERICANA**

Ayudados por nuestra fe descubrimos estos signos del Reino en Centroamérica:

#### **1.1. El pueblo se hace sujeto histórico.**

45. Sentimos que en esta hora está madurando la conciencia histórica de nuestros pueblos centroamericanos. Las mayorías secularmente oprimidas están tomando conciencia de su dignidad. Dejan de ser «masas» para pasar a ser más y más conscientemente «pueblo». Irrumpen los pobres en la historia como pueblos que se hacen sujeto de sus propios procesos de liberación.

46. Simultáneamente oprimido y creyente, este «pueblo que no era pueblo y que ahora es pueblo» se hace también, cada vez más, «pueblo de Dios». El Espíritu lo ha sacudido y le ha hecho sublevarse frente al sistema de opresión. En la fe ha encontrado nuevas luces para desenmascarar la injusticia y para seguir a Jesús como el que quita el pecado del mundo, el liberador de toda opresión, el que da la Paz de un modo distinto a como lo da el mundo.

47. Desde la fe vemos a nuestro pueblo como un colectivo Siervo de Yavé, elegido y llamado a redimir activamente al mundo con su dolor fecundo, y a implantar el Derecho entre las naciones.

48. Con la nazarena María, también nosotros proclamamos la grandeza del Señor, porque mira la humillación de sus pobres, asume la defensa de los oprimidos, derriba del trono a los poderosos y lucha con nosotros para librarnos de la manos de nuestros enemigos. Algo de la utopía del Reino se realiza históricamente cuando avanza el proyecto de paz de los pobres, cuando son removidos los obstáculos que les impiden vivir dignamente. Algo de divino tiene el luchar por los derechos de los pobres, que son derechos de Dios. Sentimos proclamada la grandeza y la gloria de Dios cuando los pobres tienen acceso a la vida en abundancia y a la paz, cuando luchan como pueblo por construir el Reino en la historia.

49. El que el pueblo de los pobres, pueblo de Dios se haga sujeto histórico es una Buena Noticia que sólo los pequeños y los que miran desde su óptica son capaces de captar. Sólo a ellos les ha sido dado el entender estas cosas, el descubrir esta señal del Reino que es «alegría para todo el pueblo» (Lc 2,10-12).

### **1.2. Avanza el proyecto de Paz del pueblo.**

50. Nuestra tierra es rica y fecunda. Pero nuestras riquezas han venido siendo secularmente saqueadas por los sucesivos imperios, en connivencia con oligarquías locales cómplices, y bendecidos por la Iglesia. Así se nos ha despojado de lo más elemental de Vida: alimento, salud, educación, tierra, techo, trabajo... y por eso no hay paz. Por eso hay guerra en Centroamérica.

51. Nuestros pueblos han dicho ¡basta! Se están poniendo en pie, están unificando su rebeldía, están tratando de construir la Paz desde los derechos de los pobres sin poner sus esperanzas en los poderosos, desde la unidad centroamericana y latinoamericana, más allá de los foros e instancias de que se sirve el Imperio, sostenidos por el apoyo de la solidaridad internacional.

52. En estos pasos que la Paz da hacia nosotros, pasos pequeños si consideramos la magnitud de la tarea que aún nos espera, vemos acercarse al Reino de Dios, que es Paz, Justicia y Vida para los pobres.

### **1.3. La cruz y la persecución por el Reino.**

53. Hoy como ayer Jesús y su Causa son signos de contradicción. En eso los discípulos no somos menos que el maestro. Hoy como ayer los poderosos insisten en perpetuar el sistema de opresión. Siguen imponiendo la cruz y la muerte a quien se atreve a luchar por la misma causa por la que luchó Jesús. Quieren evitar que llegue su Reino. Quieren evitar que las mayorías oprimidas lleguen a hacerse pueblo, que el pueblo se haga Iglesia, que el

pueblo de Dios sea verdaderamente un pueblo histórico, que la Iglesia se encarne en el pueblo.

54. Vemos arreciar la persecución, la cruz y la muerte que el Imperio y sus cómplices desatan contra el pueblo y su proyecto de Paz, contra los pobres rebeldes, contra los constructores del Reino. Pero junto a esta cruz y esta muerte hemos visto florecer el testimonio de la sangre martirial de tantos hombres y mujeres que han dado y siguen dando heroicamente su vida por la Causa, por la Paz, por la Causa de Jesús. Esta herencia martirial nos desafía y nos convoca a la fidelidad, a la entrega, al heroísmo, al seguimiento radical. Es ella una de las más preciosas señales del Reino que llega a nosotros.

#### **1.4. Centroamérica, profecía histórica del Dios de los Pobres.**

55. En el proceso de maduración de su conciencia histórica, ayudados por la fe, los pobres de América Central llegaron a descubrir que el Dios de la sociedad occidental cristiana no era el Dios de Jesús, sino un ídolo del Imperio. Comprendieron que Dios no quiere el actual sistema vigente (aún bendecido por iglesias institucionales), sino un orden nuevo, que pasa por la destrucción del viejo.

56. Desde esta fe, se alzaron y siguen alzados contra la vieja sociedad llamada cristiana; se rebelaron contra aquel Dios supuestamente cristiano. Pero no lo hicieron en nombre del ateísmo o en contra de la religión, sino apelando explícitamente al Dios verdaderamente cristiano, al Dios de Jesús redescubierto inequívocamente como Dios de los Pobres y Dios de la Vida. Y en esa lucha siguen, incluso allí donde, destruido el orden viejo, enfrentan ahora la guerra del Imperio por impedir establecer y consolidar el proyecto de paz del pueblo.

57. Así, la guerra en Centroamérica es también una guerra religiosa y teológica, una lucha entre dioses situados a ambos lados del conflicto. El Dios de los Pobres revelado por Jesús ha escuchado una vez más su clamor y se ha hecho presente para conducir a los oprimidos a la liberación, contra los opresores y contra sus dioses.

58. Con su rebeldía y con su lucha, con su sangre derramada y su colectivo martirio, están denunciando como «no cristiano» al Dios que justificó la conquista y se prestó a bendecir los sucesivos imperios, al mismo Dios que siguen invocando tantos «cristianos» de hoy que continúan bendiciendo y apoyando el mismo sistema imperial.

59. El proyecto de muerte dirigido contra estas mayorías centroamericanas oprimidas y creyentes para someter su santa rebeldía es la última edición de

las ejecuciones y muertes infligidas «en nombre del Dios de la sociedad cristiana occidental» a lo largo de la historia.

60. Los pobres de Centroamérica están siendo actualmente testigos y mártires del Dios de Jesús, Dios de Vida, Dios de los Pobres. Son una profecía viva proclamada desde la práctica histórica, que invita a las iglesias cristianas a abandonar a los dioses del Imperio y a convertirse al verdadero Dios manifestado por Jesús, sin empeñarse en servir a dos señores.

### **1.5. Presencia de la Salvación en el proceso de Liberación.**

61. Nuestros pueblos viven en proceso de liberación. Vemos nuestra lucha como un último recurso, como nuestra única salida para sobrevivir, para salvar históricamente nuestra dignidad de hijos de Dios, para colaborar con Dios en su designio salvador. La guerra centroamericana es una guerra de liberación: defendemos nuestro derecho a la paz frente a una secular agresión. Lo que hay de absurdo en toda esta violencia es ante todo el empeño de los poderosos por impedir que los pueblos sean libres.

62. La fe nos dice que la historia del Dios encarnado camina en la historia de los hombres, que la historia de la salvación es la historia de nuestra liberación total. Por eso, aunque hay que distinguir cuidadosamente entre progreso temporal y crecimiento del Reino de Dios, sin embargo, tanto el progreso temporal como el progreso de los procesos de liberación interesan grandemente al Reino de Dios. Igual que Israel cuando fue liberado de la opresión de Egipto, así nosotros no podemos dejar de experimentar el paso salvador del Señor cuando pasamos a condiciones de vida más humanas, cuando la Paz y la Vida se acercan a nuestro encuentro, cuando damos un paso por pequeño que sea hacia la Liberación plena.

63. No identificamos la liberación histórica con la salvación escatológica, pero tampoco las separamos indebidamente. Ni las separamos ni las confundimos. Hay una presencia de Reino misteriosa, objeto de fe en el avance del proceso de liberación del pueblo, aunque este proceso tenga su autonomía y metodología propias. Todo el derroche de esperanza y de generosidad de nuestros pueblos, no es algo que pueda perderse en el abismo de la muerte, sino que está escrito con letras de sangre en el Libro de la Vida y pertenece al Reino definitivo que misteriosamente crece ya y triunfa día a día en nuestra historia camino de su plenitud final.

## **2. ANTISIGNOS DEL REINO EN ESTA HORA HISTORICA CENTROAMERICANA**

### **2.1. El pecado contra el Espíritu Santo.**

64. Nosotros reconocemos con gozo la acción del Espíritu en los signos del Reino que se dan en nuestra historia a través de los pobres, por el protagonismo de nuestro pueblo, en favor de la Vida y de una Paz que sea fruto de la Justicia, en los procesos liberadores de nuestros pueblos... Son todos estos los signos que avalaban y avalan el mesianismo (Lc 7, 18ss) de aquél que vino a que tuviéramos Vida y Vida en abundancia (Jn 10,10). Por eso, consideramos que tal como denunció Jesús (Mc 3, 28ss), hoy como ayer, el pecado contra el Espíritu Santo consiste en no reconocer la obra y la gloria de Dios en todo aquello que favorece la vida de los hombres, la vida de los pobres, la Paz del pueblo.

65. Así, nos parece un verdadero pecado contra el Espíritu Santo la teología y la pastoral que continúan la tradición teológica legitimadora de la conquista y del genocidio, de la dominación y de la opresión. Hoy día legitiman también la conculcación de la soberanía de nuestros pueblos, el capitalismo monopolista trasnacional que nos explota, el imperialismo que nos oprime, los gobiernos títeres y las fachadas democráticas que ocultan al mundo nuestra verdadera realidad... Esta teología y esta pastoral ignoran y silencian la miseria en que viven las mayorías oprimidas, la muerte impuesta a los pueblos prohibidos. El propio Imperio apoya, promueve, financia y adopta esta teología, como un arma mortífera contra los pobres, contra sus procesos de liberación, contra su fe cristiana liberada y, en definitiva, contra el Dios de los pobres. Para nuestra fe, nos resulta escandaloso que haya cristianos y autoridades de las Iglesias que cometan este pecado contra el Espíritu Santo, en connivencia con los poderes tenebrosos de este mundo de pecado.

66. Idéntico juicio nos merece la teología apocalíptica fundamentalista que se presenta tanto en Iglesias institucionales cuanto sobre todo en sectas, y que afirma que toda obra histórica del hombre es obra del demonio, hasta que Cristo venga. Por su parte, otra serie de teologías se consideran a sí mismas como suprapolíticas, o patrocinan un supuesto apoliticismo como línea de conducta ética cristiana. En realidad, todas esas teologías representan un espiritualismo falso y evasivo, que aliena a los hombres, los desvía de sus responsabilidades históricas y hace el juego a los enemigos de los pobres prestándose a ser utilizada para satanizar todo intento de liberación con un anticomunismo irracional.

67. Cómplices de este pecado contra el Espíritu Santo son también tantos hermanos que, entre nosotros o en el primer mundo, confesándose cristianos

o no, permanecen atrincherados en su comodidad, excusándose en la lejanía, en la falta de claridad de información, en su pretendida neutralidad, en la pluralidad de interpretaciones, en la complejidad de los problemas... mientras los pobres siguen muriendo y a su proyecto de paz y de vida se le imponen nuevas y mayores cuotas de sangre.

## **2.2. El pecado en el movimiento popular.**

68. Desde nuestra fe vemos el movimiento popular como una mediación necesaria para nuestro servicio al Reino. Esa misma fe y nuestro compromiso práctico nos dan lucidez crítica para no absolutizar lo que sólo es una mediación. Como mediación, el movimiento popular es una realidad humana no exenta de limitaciones ni libre de pecado. Nuestra lucha contra el pecado se dirige también a todo lo que de pecado pueda darse en las mediaciones que ponemos en práctica en nuestra lucha por el Reino.

69. Por eso, sin perder de vista nunca el interés global final, y siempre con un espíritu constructivo (hacia la construcción del Reino), nos sentimos impelidos a aportar nuestra crítica e incluso nuestra denuncia de todo lo que en el movimiento popular haya podido haber en algunos momentos de traición, rivalidades y hasta de graves enfrentamientos internos por encima de la causa y los intereses populares, o de alejamiento respecto del pueblo, de todo lo que haya podido haber de populismo, militarismo, burocratismo, abusos, discriminaciones, venganzas, incoherencias, infidelidades...

70. Asimismo, en espíritu de autocrítica y de compunción, sintiéndonos pecadores y llamados a una conversión permanente, pedimos perdón a Dios y a los hermanos por todo lo que en nuestra vida personal y comunitaria hay de pecado y de escándalo: incoherencias personales, cansancios y desánimos, conflictos comunitarios, actitudes antievangélicas, ambiciones de poder o deseos de hegemonía, intolerancias y sospechas, poca generosidad en el perdón, cobardía ante las exigencias radicales de la defensa de los derechos de los pobres... Seguimos permanentemente a la búsqueda del Hombre Nuevo que anhelamos construir.

71. Nuestra crítica y autocrítica, firme y sincera a la vez que constructiva y leal, forma parte del positivo apoyo que desde nuestra fe nos vemos obligados a dar incondicionalmente a la causa de la liberación de nuestros pueblos. Jesús, que tan claramente apoyó la causa popular, no vaciló en «desafiar» al pueblo cuando en algunos momentos lo exigió la lealtad a la causa mayor del Reino.

### **2.3. La manipulación de la defensa de la democracia y de los derechos humanos.**

72. Para nosotros, la democracia y los derechos humanos son un paso adelante en la historia de la humanidad, una conquista irrenunciable que ha de ser profundizada incesantemente. Por eso, no comulgamos con quienes hacen de ellos una lectura restrictiva, ni con quienes manipulan esta bandera de los pobres en contra de los intereses del pueblo. Por ejemplo,

73. cuando se utiliza para encubrir, tras una fachada de democracia electoral, regímenes represivos y genocidas, culpables de decenas de miles de desaparecimientos y asesinatos; regímenes que privan al pueblo de lo más elemental de la Vida en favor del lujo y del privilegio de una oligarquía escandalosamente minoritaria;

74. cuando se utiliza para amparar ocultamente la propuesta de un partido político como la democracia cristiana, que actúa como fuerza de legitimación del sistema de dominación;

75. cuando se utiliza para soslayar el cuestionamiento global al presente ordenamiento del mundo, al orden establecido desde la conquista, al orden imperial, al sistema que privilegia a los poderosos, a la «sociedad occidental cristiana»...

76. No basta proclamar la democracia formal electoral o los derechos civiles y políticos en su concepción liberal burguesa. Quedarse ahí, o utilizar esta proclamación para combatir la posibilidad de un verdadero «gobierno del pueblo», o para ignorar e impedir la realización de los derechos humanos que asisten a los pueblos como naciones, como etnias o como clases, su derecho a la soberanía, a la autodeterminación, a la vida para las mayorías... es una manipulación y un pecado contra la Vida y contra la Verdad.

### **2.4. Las condenas de la violencia que violan la Vida.**

77. Después de siglos de connivencia y de legitimación de un sistema de dominación y de violencia institucional, a pesar de gloriosas excepciones proféticas, sólo cuando los pobres optaron por defenderse las Iglesias finalmente se pronunciaron para condenar «toda violencia venga de donde viniere». El uso acrítico de esta condena, mantenida a veces con una voluntaria ceguera, equipara bajo el mismo rótulo tanto la lucha de los pobres por defenderse y sobrevivir, como la opresión sistemática de los poderosos y la represión con que responden a los pobres insumisos.

78. Por otra parte, muchas instituciones eclesiásticas lavan la conciencia de las oligarquías privilegiadas, responsables del sistema de violencia

institucionalizada contra las mayorías centroamericanas, lo legitiman ideológicamente, lo bendicen jurídica y eclesiásticamente, ponen capellanes (sacerdotes, pastores y hasta obispos) al servicio de ejércitos y cuerpos represivos, o consideran dicha violencia como deber de protección del orden «legal».

79. A este respecto es significativo y particularmente escandaloso que Nicaragua, el único país de nuestra área donde el proyecto popular está en el poder, sea el único lugar donde la mayor parte de las iglesias institucionales y sus jerarquías no hayan condenado «toda violencia, venga de donde viniere», ni han condenado la violencia ejercida por las fuerzas antipopulares sostenidas por el imperio.

## **2.5. Los llamados a la reconciliación que contemporizan con el pecado.**

80. En Centroamérica escuchamos con frecuencia llamados a la reconciliación que formulan las iglesias como situándose por encima de las partes implicadas en el conflicto centroamericano, apelando al amor y a la fraternidad cristiana. Los llamados parecen en principio muy cristianos, pero tratando de hacer con atención un discernimiento espiritual encontramos que no lo son tanto.

81. El conflicto centroamericano se da entre un opresor violento y fuertemente armado y unas mayorías secularmente oprimidas, masacradas e indefensas. Es un conflicto que sólo puede ser descrito como una lucha entre la justicia y la injusticia, entre el bien y el mal, entre la Vida y la Muerte. En este contexto, la idea de reconciliar el bien con el mal no sólo representa una aplicación equivocada de la idea cristiana de reconciliación, sino que es además una tergiversación de la fe cristiana. Nuestro deber es acabar con el mal, con la injusticia, la opresión, el pecado, y no llegar a un acuerdo con él. No debemos reconciliar el bien con el mal, ni la vida con la muerte. Toda contemporización con el mal conduciría a una paz que no es la del Reino. Toda reconciliación cristiana pasa por una opción radical por la justicia y por los pobres.

82. La paz que el mundo ofrece es una «reconciliación» que encubre la injusticia y la opresión. La paz es fruto de la justicia, no resultado de arreglos negociados con la injusticia. En Centroamérica, como en toda América Latina, no hay otra posibilidad de reconciliación cristiana que la puesta en marcha del plan de paz del pueblo, de los pobres organizados y conscientes, como alternativa opuesta a la de los que han sido y son sus opresores.

83. Desde nuestra fe cristiana no podemos llamar a la reconciliación como un dictado venido de fuera, eludiendo nuestra propia responsabilidad en el conflicto. Tenemos un deber positivo de trabajar por la reconciliación



verdadera, reconciliación que nosotros creemos posible porque conocemos la capacidad del Pueblo pobre para perdonar, como un acto de dignidad y humanidad frente al enemigo, siempre que desaparezcan las causas que provocan la injusticia y el conflicto.

### **3. CENTROAMERICA ES UN KAIROS**

84. El análisis y discernimiento que hemos hecho de los signos y antesignos del Reino en medio de los signos de los tiempos y del lugar que vivimos en Centroamérica nos llevan a concluir que esta hora histórica de Centroamérica es un Kairós, una oportunidad de Gracia, una hora decisiva, un tiempo especialmente denso dentro del horizonte de la historia de la salvación.

85. La crisis centroamericana ha ido agravándose y profundizándose. El conflicto ha llegado a un climax de tensión y de madurez de conciencia. Nunca como ahora en la historia se han sentido los pobres tan impulsados por el Viento del Espíritu a ser eficaces instrumentos de proyecto del Padre de todos. Nunca como ahora se han sentido implicadas y desafiadas las Iglesias de Centroamérica por el Dios de los pobres. Nunca como ahora ha tenido que refugiarse el Imperio tan irracionalmente en el derecho de la fuerza. Nunca como ahora el mundo ha tenido una conciencia internacional tan extendida de solidaridad y corresponsabilidad ante lo que se juega en Centroamérica, ante lo nuevo que esta tierra está dando a luz para una Nueva Humanidad y para un Mundo Nuevo.

86. Es el momento. Es la hora determinante. Es un llamado decisivo de Dios. Es el tiempo aceptable, tiempo de gracia, tiempo de salvación. Es el paso de Dios por nuestra Historia, por Centroamérica. La sangre de Abel clama al cielo. El grito de Lázaro reclama una atención inaplazable. Los pueblos centroamericanos irrumpen en la conciencia mundial como jueces veraces de nuestra proclamada fraternidad. Las mayorías oprimidas del tercer mundo miran a Centroamérica con angustia y con esperanza. Centroamérica se ha convertido en un Kairós de consecuencias imprevisibles: o cerramos por muchos años un espacio para la esperanza de los pobres, o abrimos proféticamente un Día Nuevo para la humanidad, para la Iglesia.

87. Es el Kairós Centroamericano: una oportunidad de gracia en la que el Señor nos convoca a asumir los desafíos de esta hora histórica. Una oportunidad de gracia para crear un nuevo orden internacional donde prevalezca la fuerza del derecho sobre el derecho de la fuerza, donde los pueblos secularmente prohibidos y humillados pasen a ser libres, a vivir en soberanía y autodeterminación, donde los pueblos pequeños puedan convivir hermanados sin que ningún imperialismo les amenace. Una oportunidad para reparar penitencialmente los errores históricos de la conquista y el genocidio, para asumir una nueva actitud ante los 500 años. Una oportunidad para

reparar los pecados históricos de las Iglesias, para historificar nuestro compromiso y nuestra espiritualidad, para vivir nuestra fe de un modo encarnado en la historia. Una oportunidad irrepetible para venerar reverentemente la sangre de la muchedumbre histórica de héroes y mártires, para consolar a tantos hermanos heridos por el dolor y la muerte, para dar esperanza y transmitir coraje a los pobres de la Tierra, tantos de los cuales miran a Centroamérica como su hermana mayor. Una oportunidad de gracia de conversión para que el primer mundo y la llamada «sociedad occidental cristiana» se vuelvan al verdadero Dios cristiano que los pobres les permiten redescubrir con su testimonio profético.

88. Esta hora histórica de Centroamérica es un Kairós, el paso de Dios, encarnado en Jesús, por esta cintura ardiente de América Latina, convocándonos a la lucha por el Reino, a la cruz, a la esperanza ineludible, a la solidaridad invencible, al triunfo de la resurrección.

#### **4. NUESTRA RESPUESTA A ESTE KAIROS CENTROAMERICANO.**

##### **4.1. La opción por los pobres.**

89. Nosotros no podemos ser cristianos en Centroamérica sin tomar postura en favor de los injustamente marginados, en favor de las mayorías oprimidas, y en contra de los opresores en cuanto tales, en contra del sistema de muerte que domina el mundo; sólo así podremos seguir a Jesús.

90. Esta hora histórica centroamericana exige radicalmente una clara definición geopolítica: se está con el pueblo o se entra en connivencia con sus opresores; se está con los pobres o se está con el Imperio; con el Dios de la Vida o con los ídolos de la Muerte; con el Dios de Jesús o con un falso Dios cristiano.

91. El Kairós centroamericano implica reconocer la dignidad de los pobres, reconocerles el derecho a ser protagonistas de su propia liberación, a ser protagonistas de un proyecto de liberación para todos, privilegiando a los subgrupos más oprimidos: la mujer, los indígenas, los afroamericanos...

##### **4.2. Nutrir la esperanza del pueblo.**

92. Cada uno de nosotros nos alimentamos de la experiencia espiritual del pueblo de Dios centroamericano, de su fe, su esperanza, su amor revolucionario. Somos testigos de su testimonio martirial. Y a la vez nos sentimos llamados a aportar nuestro grano de arena para alimentar, fortalecer y sostener su esperanza.

93. Queremos alimentar esta visión de fe que nos hace descubrir la presencia de Dios caminando delante de nuestro pueblo, excitando nuestros deseos de libertad, conduciéndonos esforzadamente por las duras veredas de la liberación, defendiéndonos de nuestros opresores, sosteniéndonos en la escasez del desierto mientras escapamos del alcance del Imperio...

94. Este alimentar la esperanza de nuestro pueblo será también nuestra mejor aportación la que nos es más propia o específica en cuanto cristianos, como fermento en la masa al proceso de liberación de nuestro pueblo, a la realización histórica del plan liberador de Dios, a la construcción del Reino en la historia.

#### **4.3. Radicalizarnos en el servicio al Reino.**

95. En esta hora en que vivimos en Centroamérica un conflicto histórico donde nos debatimos dramáticamente entre la vida y la muerte, no podemos menos de volver nuestra atención a lo más esencial de nuestro ser cristiano y concentrarnos radicalmente en la voluntad última de Dios sobre la historia: ¡su Reino! Queremos radicalizarnos en el seguimiento de Jesús: vivir y luchar por su Causa.

96. Queremos superar la clásica tentación en la que durante tantos siglos han caído nuestras iglesias, de ponerse a sí mismas como su propio fin, concentrándose en su vida intereclesial, convirtiéndose en un fin en sí mismas, y desentendiéndose en definitiva de las luchas históricas donde se debate el advenimiento del Reino y la gloria de Dios, llegando a considerar de hecho la construcción del Reino en la historia como una actividad profana o política que no les competería.

97. Con la mirada puesta en el Reino (la Causa de Jesús, el absoluto al cual todas las mediaciones han de ordenarse) queremos ayudar a nuestras iglesias a superar toda dicotomía y todo reduccionismo, a encarnarse en el pueblo, a aceptar la vocación profética y sacerdotal del pueblo de Dios, a abandonar su pretendida neutralidad y superar sus divisiones internas optando inequívocamente por los pobres, a bajar a la arena de la historia y a hacer eficaz allí con esperanza su fe y su amor, a arriesgar su prestigio y hasta su paz, a asumir la persecución y la muerte misma, y a gritar con los hechos desde esta tierra volcánica: ¡venga tu Reino! ¡Hágase tu voluntad en la tierra, en Centroamérica, como en el cielo!.

## 5. DESAFIOS DEL KAIROS CENTROAMERICANO A NUESTROS HERMANOS.

98. Centroamérica es un Kairós de Gracia no solamente para los que en ella vivimos. Creemos que también es un desafío para las Iglesias y el mundo. Permítannos, hermanos, abrirles humildemente nuestro corazón y hacerles confiadamente sugerencias que puedan ayudarles a acoger este Kairós Centroamericano.

99. *Somos prójimos de ustedes.* Queremos responderles aquella pregunta que, como el jurista del evangelio, quizá ustedes también se hagan: «¿Quién es mi prójimo?» (Lc 10,25ss). Nosotros somos aquel hombre de la parábola de Jesús frente al que ustedes deben ser buenos samaritanos. Estamos malheridos al borde del camino, avasallados sin piedad por los sucesivos imperios, explotados por las trasnacionales, masacrados y reprimidos por los aparatos militares, marginados, privados de lo más elemental de la vida, deportados, exiliados, refugiados... Aunque quizá lejanos en la geografía, estamos muy próximos a ustedes. Tan próximos, que, en realidad, nuestra situación es el reverso mismo de la que ustedes viven. Somos sus prójimos. No se hagan sordos al grito de Centroamérica. No pasen de largo, ni siquiera para entregarse al culto. No teman contaminarse haciéndose solidarios con nosotros. Oigan más bien la palabra de Jesús: «cada vez que lo hicieron a uno de mis hermanos más pequeños, a mí me lo hicieron» (Mt 25, 31ss).

100. «¿Qué has hecho de tu hermano?» ¿Qué han hecho ustedes de estos pueblos? ¿Qué han hecho de Centroamérica? La sangre de este Abel centroamericano, que brota de los 200.000 muertos, de innumerables mártires, clama al cielo y se dirige al Congreso Norteamericano, a la Europa conquistadora, a los hermanos desentendidamente insolidarios...

101. *Opten por los pobres rebeldes.* Dios optó por los pobres para su liberación, animándoles a liberarse. Ustedes también, opten por los pobres, contra la pobreza. Rebélense contra la situación de los pobres y luchen por destruir todos los mecanismos que la producen. Opten políticamente por la liberación de los pobres, y traduzcan esa opción en una participación activa con ellos en la superación del sistema que genera la pobreza. Opten por la rebeldía de los pobres y por los pobres rebeldes, los pobres incómodos que reivindican sus derechos y denuncian los privilegios de las minorías. Reconozcan al pueblo humilde que se convierte en sujeto histórico y reclama su autodeterminación en pie de igualdad, sin limosnas ni beneficencia.

102. *Ya no es posible un cristianismo provinciano.* Ya no es posible ser cristiano encerrado en los estrechos límites de la propia comunidad o nación. Hoy sólo se puede ser consecuentemente cristianos haciéndose cargo de las responsabilidades históricas internacionales frente al prójimo mundial. El cosmos es nuestra casa. El mundo es nuestra familia. Los pueblos son

nuestros prójimos. El mundo es nuestra responsabilidad. La historia colectiva es nuestra tarea. Es ahí donde debemos gritar apasionadamente: ¡Ven, Señor Jesús!

### **PARTE III: DE CARA A LA ACCION, HOY**

#### **La solidaridad ecuménica: ser prójimo de quienes luchan por la vida.**

103. Después de analizar nuestra difícil y esperanzadora situación centroamericana y su evolución hacia un proceso de soluciones no violentas a los conflictos estructurales que ya hemos señalado, particularmente a partir de Esquipulas II, y habiendo realizado también una extensa reflexión teológica en la cual han participado teólogos, sacerdotes, pastores y líderes eclesiales de base del movimiento ecuménico mesoamericano, en esta parte de nuestro documento deseamos formular una serie de propuestas hacia el interior de las comunidades cristianas de América Central y del mundo entero. Estas propuestas las presentamos a ustedes, hermanos y hermanas, con sentido de urgencia y con el propósito de contribuir a la construcción de la paz para los pueblos de Centroamérica y consolidar el proceso de una lucha legítima por la justicia, la igualdad y la liberación humana. Como cristianos nos sentimos interpelados por el Señor para trabajar en este proyecto, con espíritu profético, en fidelidad a la causa de los pobres y oprimidos, que es la causa del reino de Dios.

104. Este es el desafío que en América Central nos interpela a nosotros y que desde nuestro contexto ponemos ante ustedes, cristianos y personas de buena voluntad en todo el mundo. Hemos descrito aquí la dolorosa situación de guerra prolongada que aún vivimos y que deseamos que concluya pronto porque la paz y la vida son derechos inalienables de los pueblos. Hemos afirmado también con la máxima fuerza que ésta no es una guerra absurda, sino la culminación de una lucha, la que durante cinco siglos los pueblos de América Central sostienen contra sus explotadores. La guerra de los últimos diez años debe entenderse como una intensificación de esta larga lucha. Pero deseamos subrayar que los pueblos centroamericanos son pacíficos y proponen a lo largo de su historia una vida de paz e igualdad social. La violencia estructural la origina la colonización y ha sido profundizada en este siglo por el imperialismo norteamericano. El gemido de nuestros pueblos y el sentido de su lucha es el cese de esta violencia y de todo género de agresión que destruyen la vida y el futuro, para abrir por sí mismos un camino para nuevas transformaciones espirituales y materiales que conlleve a la creación de la nueva comunidad.

105. Hermanas y hermanos: hemos leído esta lucha desde la fe de los pobres en el Dios de la Vida como una oportunidad de gracia, una ocasión para la salvación de estos pueblos secularmente dominados, como un «Kairós» que no debe desatenderse, pues posiblemente no vuelva a darse por muchas generaciones si hoy despreciamos este llamado del Señor.

106. Por tal razón nos exhortamos a nosotros mismos y apelamos a la «proximidad» de nuestros hermanos y hermanas. Les pedimos y demandamos solidaridad con una causa que creemos es la causa de Dios y de su Reino. Urgimos compasión por el sufrimiento inocente de miles y miles de víctimas de la represión en esta parte neurálgica del continente. Pedimos sus oraciones y su acompañamiento para todo este pueblo de Dios.

107. Hermanas y hermanos: para trabajar juntos por la causa de la paz, de la justicia y de la vida de los pueblos centroamericanos les proponemos algunas tareas de solidaridad, alrededor de las cuales podremos organizarnos y actuar ecuménicamente.

**Interpelación a nuestras comunidades en América Central.**

108. 1. Palpamos en estos últimos años una experiencia más concreta en el desarrollo de un espíritu ecuménico en las comunidades cristianas de América Central. Son valiosos los proyectos ecuménicos que se estructuran en la marcha y coadyuvan a la construcción de la esperanza, la justicia y la emancipación de nuestras iglesias y pueblos. Queremos animarnos a cultivar este espíritu con mayor dedicación, a evitar las divisiones y fraccionamientos entre nosotros, a fomentar la comunicación y la cooperación ecuménica en nuestra área y con toda América Latina. Es urgente articular de manera más eficaz nuestras acciones en todos los planos de la vida eclesial y social.

109. 2. Debemos de confesar que por muchos años hemos permanecido indiferentes al dolor, al sufrimiento y a la muerte de los pobres de nuestras propias comunidades. Reiteramos en este tiempo de juicio y de gracia nuestro compromiso consecuente con los pobres y la lucha por la justicia, la paz y la liberación. Sólo de este modo tiene sentido nuestra fe, la proclamación del evangelio de Jesús y la comunión.

110. 3. En nuestra región han surgido movimientos populares para luchar por la paz, la justicia y la reconciliación. Consideramos que debemos apoyar estos movimientos con mayor compromiso, y a la vez mantener vivo el espíritu y la llama que ha originado la insurrección evangélica que ha reactivado el profetismo de la iglesia y su discernimiento para ser fiel a la misión de Dios.

**Exigencias urgentes al Gobierno de Estados Unidos.**

111. 4. Exigimos al Gobierno de Estados Unidos cesar definitivamente su apoyo económico y militar a la contrarrevolución en Nicaragua y acatar el fallo de la Corte Internacional de Justicia de junio de 1986, que condenó la agresión de EEUU contra Nicaragua, y exigió, además de su cese, una indemnización por las consecuencias de sus ataques a comunidades civiles,

que ocasionaron muerte y destrucción económica. Pedimos a las iglesias, cristianos y movimientos de solidaridad de EEUU continuar implementando formas de presión para que cese esta criminal acción de terrorismo, y en su lugar se formule una política de cooperación y paz para Nicaragua y Centroamérica.

112. 5. Exigimos al Gobierno y el Congreso de EEUU respetar la soberanía de la República de Panamá y la devolución del Canal a Panamá, cumpliendo puntualmente los acuerdos Torrijos-Carter. Animamos a los gobiernos democráticos y pueblos de América Latina a expresar su solidaridad al pueblo de Panamá en su lucha por una auténtica soberanía.

113. 6. Exigimos al gobierno de Estados Unidos el retiro de las tropas norteamericanas y contrarrevolucionarias del territorio hondureño y el respeto a su soberanía.

114. 7. Exigimos a los gobiernos de EEUU e Israel y de todos los países del mundo, cesar su apoyo militar y político al Gobierno de Guatemala y El Salvador donde los ejércitos hacen la guerra al pueblo sufrido provocando miles de muertos y de desplazados. Pedimos asimismo a la Organización de las Naciones Unidas mantenga su relator en Guatemala para fiscalizar la violación sistemática de los derechos en ese país.

#### **Peticiones a los gobiernos de América Latina, Naciones Unidas y otros organismos multilaterales.**

115. 8. Hacemos un llamado a los gobiernos de América Central a dar continuidad y cumplimiento a los Acuerdos de Esquipulas II, especialmente a los asuntos de seguridad, democratización, respeto a los Derechos Humanos, repatriación voluntaria e integración económica. Recomendamos a los gobiernos del área dar seguimiento al proceso de Contadora en los aspectos no cubiertos por el Acuerdo de Esquipulas II.

116. 9. Hacemos un llamado urgente a los pueblos de América Latina y sus respectivos gobiernos a mantener y a acrecentar su solidaridad con la causa de América Central, asumiéndola como suya.

117. 10. Hacemos un llamado urgente a los gobiernos, a los Organismos Multilaterales de Desarrollo y Humanitarios y a las Organizaciones Ecuménicas de Desarrollo a realizar acciones coordinadas que contribuyan a la reconstrucción socio-económica de América Central, y a tomar acciones inmediatas hacia la solución de la actual crisis económica y la hambruna que se cierne sobre los países del área. Pedimos a los gobiernos, las Iglesias y movimientos de solidaridad prestar todas las atenciones a los refugiados centroamericanos que lleguen a sus países.



118. 11. Proponemos a la Organización de Naciones Unidas y a la Organización de Estados Americanos organizar un proceso concreto de gestiones para el desmantelamiento de las bases militares extranjeras en Centroamérica, Belice, Panamá y los países del Caribe, declarar y hacer de toda esta región una zona de paz. Interpelación a las Iglesias y cristianos del mundo.

119. 12. Pedimos a las Iglesias de todo el mundo, pero especialmente a las Iglesias de Roma, España, Portugal, Inglaterra, Estados Unidos y de los países latinoamericanos que celebren actos penitenciales de gran envergadura con ocasión del quinto centenario de la sujeción de América Latina, comprometiéndose eficazmente ante sus gobiernos en favor de su emancipación.

120. 13. Pedimos a las Iglesias de Estados Unidos y Canadá que fomenten ayunos y actos de obstrucción, incluso llegando a los extremos que heroicamente llevaron a nuestro hermano Brian Willson a sacrificar sus piernas para detener un tren militar y frenar la política guerrerista de Estados Unidos contra América Central. Reconocemos la inmensa solidaridad de las Iglesias y el pueblo de Estados Unidos para con los pueblos de Centroamérica, pero queremos decirles que la lucha es larga y dolorosa y apenas hemos comenzado. Les animamos a continuar el intercambio y la cooperación ecuménica con América Central, a conocer más profundamente nuestras realidades y a apoyar a nuestros pueblos en la digna lucha por la Paz y la Vida.

121. 14. Pedimos a las Iglesias y cristianos de todo el mundo y particularmente de América Latina celebrar cada año oraciones, vigiliyas, cultos, procesiones y otros actos apropiados de intercesión por América Central en el aniversario del martirio de nuestro hermano Oscar Arnulfo Romero (el 24 de marzo de 1980) así como en otros momentos oportunos.

### **Urgencia de un nuevo orden de justicia y paz.**

122. 15. Solicitamos concretamente a la Asamblea General de la ONU, a los Organismos Multilaterales de Financiación, al Banco Mundial, al Fondo Monetario Internacional y a los Gobiernos del mundo céntrico, condonar la Deuda Externa del Tercer Mundo porque ésta fue construida sobre bases injustas, y porque entre otras razones el flujo real de beneficio del Tercer Mundo hacia los países ricos excede la suma total de la Deuda.

123. 16. Asimismo pedimos a todos los gobiernos del mundo abocarse con urgencia a la creación de un Nuevo Orden Económico Internacional que permita a los pueblos pobres salir de situaciones de miseria, conducir un proceso de desarrollo integral de justicia y dignidad, de respeto a la integridad de la creación, y de paz.

124. Hermanas y hermanos. Suscribimos en nombre de Cristo y de nuestros pueblos este Documento «Kairós Centroamericano», y nos reafirmamos juntamente con ustedes en el propósito de orar, trabajar y luchar por que las propuestas aquí formuladas puedan implementarse y la justicia y la paz lleguen a nuestros pueblos centroamericanos y al mundo. Oramos porque la gracia y el Espíritu de Dios nos acompañe en esta lucha por el Reino.

*Nicaragua Libre, Centroamérica*

*Pascua de Resurrección, 3 de abril de 1988.*

# **THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS**

## **KAIROS AND CONVERSION**

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# CONTENTS

	PREAMBLE	171
1.	THE ROOTS OF OUR CONFLICT	173
	Colonialism	173
	People against Colonialism	173
	Western Imperialism	174
	People against Imperialism	175
	Low Intensity Conflict	176
	Christian Conflict	176
2.	THE FAITH OF THE POOR	179
3.	OUR PROPHETIC MISSION	183
	Idolatry	183
	Heresy	186
	Apostasy	187
	Hypocrisy	188
	Blasphemy	189
4.	THE CALL TO CONVERSION	191
5.	CONCLUSION	193
	EXPLANATORY NOTES	194



## *Preamble*

We, the signatories of this document, are Christians from different church traditions in seven different nations: the Philippines, South Korea, Namibia, South Africa, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala. What we have in common is not only a situation of violent political conflict, but also the phenomenon of Christians on both sides of the conflict. This is accompanied by the development of a Christian theology that sides with the poor and the oppressed and the development of a Christian theology that sides with the oppressor. This is both a scandal and a crisis that challenges the Christian people of our countries.

Although the phenomenon is much the same in each of our countries, the two antagonistic forms of Christianity are referred to with a variety of different names: liberation theology, black theology, feminist theology, minjung theology, theology of struggle, the Church of the poor, the progressive church, basic Christian communities, on the one hand; and the religious right, right-wing Christianity, conservative Christianity, state theology, the theology of reconciliation, the neo-Christendom movements and anti-communist evangelicals, on the other hand. In each of our nations we shall have to spell out exactly which groups of Christians we are referring to.<sup>1</sup> Whatever difference of terminology there may be, the conflict and division amongst Christians is basically the same in each of our countries.

The purpose of this document is not simply to deplore the divisions among Christians or to exhort both sides to seek unity. We wish to lay bare the historical and political roots of the conflict (Chapter 1), to affirm the faith of the poor and the oppressed Christians in our countries (Chapter 2), to condemn the sins of those who oppress, exploit, persecute and kill people (Chapter 3), and to call to conversion those who have strayed from the truth of Christian faith and commitment (Chapter 4). The time has come for us to take a stand and to speak out.

The road ahead is like the road to Damascus along which Saul was travelling to persecute the first generation of Christians. It was along this road that he heard the voice of Jesus calling him to conversion. We are all in continuous need of self-criticism and conversion. But now the time has come for a decisive turnabout on the part of those groups and individuals who have consciously or unconsciously compromised their Christian faith for political, economic and selfish reasons.





## **1. THE ROOTS OF OUR CONFLICT**

1. As Christians, we look at our situation with eyes that have read the Bible stories. According to the Bible, violent conflict began when Cain killed his brother Abel despite the fact that they had just offered sacrifices together to the same God (Gen. 4: 3-8). Israel was born as a people of God in struggle against the power of Egypt. It had to confront the great empires of ancient times, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Greeks and the Romans. The prophets were often in conflict with the kings of Israel when they saw that the people were treated unjustly. Jesus preached a message that incurred the ire of the religious authorities, who handed him over to the Roman procurator to be crucified.

2. The early Christians were considered a threat by the Roman Empire; they were persecuted and martyred. Then in the fourth century, under Emperor Constantine, Christianity became the official religion of the empire. In the hands of the ruling powers it became a weapon for legitimising the expansion of the empire and, later, the colonisation of peoples.

### **Colonialism**

3. Except in the case of Korea which was colonised by Japan, the European nations that colonised our countries pride themselves on being Christian. Conquest and evangelisation, colonisation and the building of churches advanced together. The cross blessed the sword which was responsible for the shedding of our people's blood. The sword imposed the faith and protected the churches, sharing power and wealth with them.

4. As a result of "discovery and conquest," millions of people have been killed; indigenous populations have been eliminated; entire civilisations and cultures have been destroyed. Millions have been enslaved, uprooted from their native land, de-culturized and deprived of their wealth and resources. Women and children have been victims of additional and distinct oppression. Natural resources have been exploited and abused to such an extent that they cannot be replenished.

5. One of the most serious and lasting legacies of European colonialism is racism. In South Africa it has been institutionalised and legalised in the form of the notorious system of apartheid.

### **People against Colonialism**

6. The history of our people is not only a history of oppression and suffering; it is also a history of struggle. The first stories of resistance come

from the indigenous people and communities. The colonisers had superior weapons and the indigenous communities often fought separately instead of together, but they resisted, sometimes to the very last member of the community. Others withdrew deeper into the mountains to preserve what was left unconquered by the invaders.

7. From within the womb of colonialism, those who were initially conquered eventually rose in rebellion, and in some cases overthrew colonial rule through revolution. There were many battles and few lasting victories, but the prophets and martyrs of the people established a tradition of resistance.

8. Although Christianity was part and parcel of colonial rule, Christians were also to be found on the side of the people who fought against colonialism. In Latin America, during the first centuries of colonisation, missionaries and even bishops added their own to the voices of protest, to the extent of denying the Spanish crown the right to expropriate the land of indigenous people and to put them under foreign authorities. In Korea Christians fought for national independence against Japanese colonialism.

### **Western Imperialism**

9. Today, most Third World countries are no longer colonies, but we are still dominated by one or more imperial power—the United States, Japan and Western Europe. Their web of economic control includes an unfair international trade system, multinational companies that monopolise strategic sections of our economy, economic policies dictated by lending banks and governments together with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Even technology is used as a tool for domination. The staggering size of Third World debt is only one dramatic sign of our subordination to imperialism.<sup>2</sup>

10. In some of our countries imperialism violates national sovereignty by establishing military bases with nuclear weapons that endanger our people's lives. Various methods of political intervention subvert our independence, usually with the cooperation of local rulers. Our educational system, mass media, religious and cultural institutions reproduce a subservient colonial mentality; this is reinforced by Western habits of consumption.

11. Imperialism uses the tactic of divide and rule. It supports governments that discriminate against people and treat them unjustly because of their race or colour. It reinforces sexism and the subordination of women. It sometimes widens the divisions even amongst the elite but more often it seeks to unite the ruling elite against the people. In most countries this leads to the establishment of what is today called the *national security state*.

12. The effects of imperialism upon the Third World form a litany of woes: our children die of malnutrition and disease, there are no jobs for those who want to work, families break up to pursue employment abroad, peasants and indigenous communities are displaced from their land, most urban dwellers have to live in unsanitary slums, many women have to sell their bodies, too many die without having lived a life that human persons deserve. We also suffer because of the plunder of our natural resources, and then we ourselves are being blamed for it.

### **People against Imperialism**

13. The tradition of popular resistance lives on in our countries. Even though most of our ruling elite collude with imperialism to deceive and divide the people, groups and communities manage to reflect critically on their oppression and organise themselves. Communities of peasants and indigenous people, workers and slum dwellers—men, women and children—struggle for their own immediate needs and also for shared long-term issues. In much the same way, students, youth and teachers, church people and cultural workers, doctors, nurses, lawyers and members of other professions, including some business people become part of the mass democratic movement.

14. As this movement becomes more widespread and organised, the power and wisdom of ordinary people develops and deepens. They recall lessons from history, learn from their mistakes and achievements, and experience solidarity. They exchange insights about the nature of imperialism and its many disguises. Going beyond protest and resistance, they assume responsibility for proposing and pursuing a people's alternative to the present system. They do not have illusions that the struggle will be easy or quick, but also do not shirk sacrifice because they have hope.

15. This movement of organised and conscious people marks the coming of age of a new historical subject. As we exchange our stories not only within our countries but among different countries, we also learn the many names we give to this new creation—the people, *el pueblo*, *minjung*, *ang sambayana*.<sup>3</sup>

16. As Third World people, we focus on Western imperialism and what is called North-South relations, but we are aware of other important conflicts in the world. There is the East-West conflict between industrial capitalist countries and socialist countries. There are conflicts within capitalist countries and among capitalist countries; the same is true of socialist countries.

17. Western imperialism tries to force our struggle for national liberation into an East-West framework. Let us be clear that we know about the problems and wrongdoings of the East, both within socialist countries

themselves and in their relation to other Third World countries. But what we experience directly is domination by the West and we do not want to be drawn into the East-West conflict.

18. Socialist countries are admitting their mistakes and addressing the need for reforms. The United States and the Soviet Union both declare that they want to slow down and even reverse the arms race, and talk of negotiations to solve regional conflicts. All these are welcome pronouncements. Ironically, just when there is talk of more peaceful coexistence between East and West, our countries in the South experience increased hostile attacks from the West.

### **Low Intensity Conflict and Total War**

19. Colonial and imperial powers have reacted to the people's resistance by devising different counter-insurgency programmes. Faced with the emergence of Third World people as new historical subjects, they have developed what they consider a more sophisticated response. It has different names—low intensity conflict (LIC), low intensity war, total war, total strategy, total security.

20. For the imperialists, it might be a low intensity conflict, but for Third World people it is total war. LIC uses all military weapons, short of nuclear arms. It employs not just rifle infantry, but artillery, helicopter gunships, armoured vehicles like casspirs in South Africa and Namibia and armadillos in Central America; it does not hesitate to bomb suspected rebel areas. It organises paramilitary groups, death squads and vigilantes to divide and destroy unarmed communities and organisations of the people.

21. Unlike traditional regular warfare, total war places a premium on psychological and ideological war. In Namibia and South Africa, this is called "winning hearts and minds" or WHAM. The Santa Fe Document<sup>4</sup> calls it "cultural war." It tries to discredit all those who work for change by calling them "communists", while trying to present the government as democratic. In highly repressive and polarised situations, it promotes reformist alternatives, or a "third force". This total strategy includes the misuse of Christianity as a religious legitimisation for the West.

### **Christians in Conflict**

22. The misuse of Christianity in the ideological war is imperialism's response to an earlier development—the good news of Christian participation in the suffering and struggle of the people.

23. Some Christians started by immersing themselves in communities of the oppressed and then came to understand their faith as commitment to solidarity. For other Christians, involvement came as their response to an imperative of faith, the fruit of reflection in basic Christian communities. However different their paths may have been, their participation developed into a more organised and conscious direction. They took up whatever tasks needed to be done within the people's movement, but they also sought to release the power and resources of their faith and Church to serve the poor.

24. This new development has caused grave concern in the highest circles of imperialist leaders. The organised and conscious presence of Christians in the people's movement is not only one more addition to the ranks of those who struggle against the system of domination; it weakens the capacity of imperialism to use Christianity to defend the empire.

25. No wonder then that formal proposals for a systematic attack on the theology of liberation have been presented to the president of the United States, as in the Santa Fe Documents I and II. New institutions have been established to develop a theology that defends imperialism. Joint projects are launched with some Third World governments and security agencies to infiltrate the Church, co-opt conservative Christians and "neutralise" progressive ones. Christianity is interpreted to suit these purposes while the theology of liberation is accused of being political.

26. Christian faith has now been introduced into the political conflict. Both oppressor and oppressed seek religious legitimation. Both sides invoke the name of God and of Jesus Christ, and Christians are found on both sides of the political conflict in most of our seven countries.

27. Nor does the matter end there. The political conflict has now entered into the Churches. The Church itself has become *a site of struggle*. Some sectors of the Church align themselves with the status quo and defend it passionately, while others align themselves with the oppressed and struggle for change. There are yet others who claim to be neutral. In fact neutrality plays into the hands of those in power because it enables them to continue and to discredit the Christians who oppose them. Neutrality is an indirect way of supporting the status quo.

28. There is nothing new about religious conflict as such. Christians or believers in the God of the Bible have been on opposing sides in political conflicts before. What is new today is the intensity of the conflict and the awareness we have of it. Never before have we been so conscious of the political implications of Christian faith. This religious conflict is not a mere academic debate; it is a matter of life and death. What is at stake is the future of justice, peace, freedom, and the glory of God.

29. The conflict amongst Christians raises some very serious questions which we shall have to address in the rest of this document. Is the God invoked by both sides the same God? Is God on both sides? If not, on whose side is God? What has been revealed to us about God in Jesus?

## 2. THE FAITH OF THE POOR

30. The God whom the missionaries preached was a God who blessed the powerful, the conquerors, the colonisers. This God demanded resignation in the face of oppression and condemned rebelliousness and insubordination. All that was offered to us by this God was an interior and other-worldly liberation. It was a God who dwelt in heaven and in the Temple but not in the world.

31. The Jesus who was preached to us was barely human. He seemed to float above history, above all human problems and conflicts. He was pictured as a high and mighty king or emperor who ruled over us, even during his earthly life, from the heights of his majestic throne. His approach to the poor was therefore thought of as condescending. He condescended to make the poor the objects of his mercy and compassion without sharing their oppression and their struggles. His death had nothing to do with historical conflicts, but was a human sacrifice to placate an angry God. What was preached to us was a completely other-worldly Jesus who had no relevance to this life.

32. These were the images of God and Jesus that we inherited from our conquerors and the missionaries who accompanied them. In some cases these beliefs were imposed upon us at the point of the sword and some of our ancestors were forcibly baptised. In the case of Korea, European missionaries came without colonisation. It was only later that we discovered that this God and this Jesus had been formed in the image and likeness of European kings, emperors and conquerors.

33. Gradually our experience of poverty and oppression began to raise questions for us: Why does God allow us to suffer so much? Why does God always side with the rich and the powerful? Some of us began to see that these questions were also raised in the psalms and in the book of Job who refused to accept any easy answers. Was poverty and oppression really the will of God?

34. In time we began to realise that we could never expect justice from our oppressors. After many years of protest and pleading we began to take responsibility for our own liberation. We began to organise ourselves and became a people, the subjects of our own history, *el pueblo, minjung*. *Minjung* is the Korean word for the people as opposed to the ruling powers when they become conscious of themselves as subjects who can decide for themselves instead of being mere objects to be ruled and governed.

35. The Christians who were part of this development began to read the Bible with new eyes. We were no longer dependent upon the interpretations of our oppressors.

36. What we discovered was that Jesus was one of us. He was born in poverty. He did not become incarnate as a king or nobleman but as one of the poor and oppressed. He took sides with the poor, supported their cause and blessed them. On the other hand, he condemned the rich. "Blessed are you who are poor" (Luke 6:20) "Woe to you who are rich" (Luke 6:24). He even described his mission as the liberation of the downtrodden (Luke 4:18). That was the very opposite of what we had been taught.

37. At the heart of Jesus' message was the coming of the Reign of God. We discovered that Jesus had promised the Reign of God to the poor: "Yours is the Reign of God" (Luke 6:20) and that the good news about the coming of God's Reign was supposed to be good news for the poor (Luke 4:18).<sup>5</sup>

38. The Reign of God is not simply a way of speaking about the next world. The Reign of God is this world completely transformed in accordance with God's plan. It is like the Jubilee year of Leviticus 25 when all those who are living in slavery will be set free, when all debts will be cancelled and when the land will be restored to those from whom it was stolen. The Reign of God begins in this life but stretches out beyond this life. It is transcendent and eschatological without being unconcerned about the problems and suffering of the poor in this life.

39. In preaching the Reign of God, Jesus was prophesying the coming of a new world order. This brought him into conflict with the status quo of his time, the religious and political authorities. They found his preaching "subversive." That is why they conspired to kill him.

40. Jesus was and still is the Word of God, the true image of God. The poor and the oppressed Christians of today, together with those who have taken an option for the poor, can now see the true face of God in the poor Jesus—persecuted and oppressed like them. God is not an almighty oppressor. The God we see in the face of Jesus is the God who hears the cries of the poor and who leads them across the sea and the desert to the Promised Land (Exod. 3:17). The true God is the God of the poor who is angry about injustice in the world, vindicates the poor (Psa. 103:6), pulls down the mighty from their thrones and lifts up the lowly (Luke 1:52). This is the God who will judge all human beings according to what they have done or not done for the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick and those in prison (Matt. 25:31-46).

41. We are grateful to God for the grace that has enabled us to rediscover God in Jesus Christ. "I bless you Father for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children" (Luke 10:21). It is



by the Spirit of God that we have been able to see what the learned and the clever were not able to see. We no longer believe in the God of the powerful and we want no gods except the God who was in Jesus. "I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no gods except me" (Exod. 20:1-2).

42. With this new faith in Jesus, we can now begin to read the signs of our times, discern the presence of the risen Jesus in our midst, appreciate the action of the Holy Spirit and see our present conflict with new eyes. We are no longer surprised to discover that the followers of Jesus are crucified and killed. Now we can hear God's voice, especially in the cry of the poor, in the cry of pain and protest, of despair and hope.

43. God is on the side of the poor, the oppressed, the persecuted. When this faith is proclaimed and lived in a situation of political conflict between the rich and the poor, and when the rich and the powerful reject this faith and condemn it as heresy, we can read the signs and discern something more than a crisis. We are faced with a *kairos*, a moment of truth, a time for decision, a time of grace, a God-given opportunity for conversion and hope.



### 3. OUR PROPHETIC MISSION

44. Throughout history, we Christians have often been deaf to God's voice and blind to God's presence in people. This lack of faith has prevented us from exercising the prophetic mission that Jesus has given us. We have often been silent instead of denouncing injustice and oppression. Instead of working for justice and liberation, we have often remained uninvolved.

45. How shall we explain this silence and un-involvement, this blindness and unbelief? For some of us, the reason lies in a life that is not confronted by the suffering and struggle of the poor, and therefore the choice of a convenient God who does not challenge us to take part in a movement for change. For others, however, the reason lies in a choice of privilege and power, and *^conscious* defence of the status quo. In many cases, it includes taking part in attacks against movements for change, in repression and the killing of the poor.

46. For such people, it is not simply an inability to see and hear; it is a refusal to see and hear. It is not merely lack of faith in the God of life; it is the worship of a false God – the sin of idolatry.

47. Although we are conscious of our own sins, we must raise our voice in the denunciation of this sin. It is a sin that serves the total war being waged against the people, leading to the death and destruction of our communities.

48. The sin of idolatry lies at the heart of the imperialism of money. In choosing to serve the idols of death rather than the God of life, Christianity is used as a weapon against the people. Idolatry leads Christians to other sins – heresy and apostasy, hypocrisy and blasphemy.

#### **Idolatry**

49. Idolatry is the sin of worshipping or being subservient to someone or something which is not God, treating some created thing as if it were a god. "They worshipped and served the creature instead of the creator" (Rom. 1:25). In the Old Testament Moses and the prophets condemned the worship of the golden calf, the Baals and other idols made by human hands (Exod. 20:4-5; Psa. 115:4). In New Testament times the principal form of idolatry was the worship of Mammon (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13).

50. The same is true for us today. In our countries, the worship of money, power, privilege and pleasure has certainly replaced the worship of God. This form of idolatry has been organised into a system in which consumerist

materialism has been enthroned as a god. Idolatry makes things, especially money and property, more important than people. It is *anti-people*.

51. Because the idol is anti-people, it *d demands absolute submission and blind obedience*. The idols we read about in the Bible make their followers into slaves, prisoners or robots depriving them of freedom. Subservience to money dehumanises people. Profits are pursued at the expense of people. The graven image of the god of money today is the national security state that defends the system and demands absolute and blind obedience. In some countries, it is cruel and merciless; in others, it wears a deceptive mask. Those who disobey are punished brutally; those who obey are rewarded with material benefits and security. Idols rule by fear and intimidation or by trying to buy people, to bribe them and seduce them with money.

52. Idolatry is the *denial of all hope for the future*. The idols of the past were worshipped by people who were afraid of change, who wanted things to remain the same, who did not want a future that was different, who found their security in the status quo. The same is true today. Those who benefit from the status quo live in total fear of any real transformation. They are at the service of the status quo and will go to any lengths to make it secure.

53. It was for the sake of *security* that the people of ancient times turned to the Baals and other idols. Today, our oppressors turn to money and military power and to the so-called security forces. But their security is our insecurity. We experience their security as intimidation and repression, terror, rape and murder. Those who turn to the idols for security demand our insecurity as the price that must be paid. They fear us as a threat to their security.

54. Idolatry demands a *scapegoat*. The idolaters believe that some people or groups of people must be blamed for all that goes wrong in a society so that by driving out or killing the scapegoat, they can feel purged and exonerated of their guilt. This is an idolatrous way of dealing with guilt and achieving atonement. Often enough, perfectly innocent people are sacrificed as scapegoats, though it 'may sometimes happen that the scapegoat is not entirely innocent, like the woman taken in adultery in John 8:2-11.

55. The worshippers of money in our countries use communism or socialism of any kind or even suspected leanings in that direction as their scapegoat. The guilt that they feel and the sins that they commit are projected onto this convenient scapegoat, that then can be blamed for all that is wrong or might go wrong in the future. Thus violence, disregard for human rights, repression and brutality are talked about as the characteristics of communists. It then becomes perfectly justifiable to harass, imprison, torture and even kill them. They have become scapegoats.<sup>6</sup>

56. In this way, it also becomes possible to justify the persecution of the Church. Certain people in the Church, progressive groups or, in some places, Church leaders, are labelled “communists,” to separate them from other Christians and turn them into scapegoats who can then be discredited, hated, denounced, silenced and even eliminated.

57. The idols demand *human sacrifices*. This is what angered the prophets most of all about the worship of the Baals. Jeremiah deplored the superstitious belief that the gods can only be placated by the sacrifice of children (Jer. 19:4-5). Today this is still the most evil dimension of the sin of idolatry in our countries. People, young and old, innocent and defenceless, are being sacrificed to placate Mammon—the national security state and international capitalism.

58. We live with the everyday reality of human sacrifice: starving children, deaths in detention, assassinations, massacres and disappearances. The killing of people has become a kind of religious ritual, a necessary part of the total war on people.

59. Idolatry is *fanatical*. It encourages irrational and unrestrained behaviour. We see this in the massacres of people by soldiers, policemen and death squads, contras and vigilantes. We see it also in their demented hatred of those who resist and their frenzied persecution of church persons when they protest. It is impossible to be reasonable when you submit to the idols of money, power, privilege and pleasure. The idols create bloodthirsty feelings that the system itself cannot control.

60. Idolatry is a *lie* and it can only continue by deceiving people more and more. The fundamental lie is making material things more important than people. Scapegoating is a lie. Presenting all real change as communist and therefore atheist is a lie.

61. Idolatry's propaganda is a series of lies. It presents the existing order as the natural order of things and radical change as chaos. It co-opts the words that people use to describe their aspirations, like peace, democracy and freedom, and makes them mean something different. Peace comes to mean preserving the status quo. Democracy is used to describe the manipulation of national elections, apartheid elections for local government as in South Africa, or a mechanism to ensure that the majority of the people do not have access to real power. Freedom means giving the rich and powerful the opportunity to exploit and manipulate others. Idolatry disguises the truth and creates a whole culture of lies. Satan, as Jesus says, is the father of lies (John 8:44).

## Heresy

62. The word heresy means *choice*. A heresy is a form of belief that selects some parts of the Christian message and rejects other parts, in such a way that those doctrines which are selected for belief become themselves distorted.

63. The theological justification of apartheid in South Africa has been declared a heresy. It is recognised by most Christians today to be a distortion of God's revelation. But we would like to take this famous declaration further: we denounce all forms of right-wing Christianity as heretical.

64. Right-wing Christianity under whatever name is a way of believing that rejects or ignores parts of God's revelation and selects and distorts other parts in order to support the ideology of the national security state. We are convinced that this heretical choice is made for selfish political purposes, although not all the adherents of right-wing Christianity are necessarily aware of this. Consequently right-wing Christianity is the conscious or unconscious legitimization of idolatry.

65. Right-wing Christianity is being promoted with vigorous and expensive campaigns in all our countries and in almost all Christian traditions: Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran, Anglican, Evangelical and Pentecostal.

66. One of the characteristics of this new heresy is that it denies Christian freedom by insisting upon blind obedience to authority. The famous text from Romans 13 is misused to demand unquestioning and uncritical allegiance to the political authorities who exercise the politics of death and deception. Similarly, in some countries Christians are commanded to submit themselves blindly to the absolute authority of church leaders.

67. Right-wing Christianity replaces Christian responsibility and trust in God with submission to the yoke of slavery. It promotes authoritarianism and domination in the family and society. It often distorts even the authority of the Bible by treating it as a book from heaven that must be obeyed without understanding or critical comprehension. In some countries, this is called fundamentalism. The attempt to find security in blind obedience, absolute certainties and submission to authoritarianism is not faith. It is slavery. "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1).

68. Another characteristic of right-wing religion is that it takes some of the valid distinctions made by Christianity e.g., between body and soul, material and spiritual, this world and the next, politics and religion, the profane and the sacred, society and the individual and turns them into antagonistic *dualisms*. It creates polarisation and antagonism between the body and the

soul, the material and the spiritual. This is against Christian teaching since the Bible reveals only one God creator of the material and the spiritual, the individual and the social. We must not “put asunder what God has put together.”

69. It is not without reason that right-wing Christians believe in antagonistic dualisms. It prevents the spiritual from influencing their material lives, it keeps God out of their political and economic interests. They say that they are only interested in the soul, but in fact they are very concerned about the political and economic status quo. They want to preserve it at all costs because it benefits them. They say we must keep religion out of politics but invoke a kind of religion that supports the status quo. They reduce salvation to that of the soul only.

70. This leads to an other-worldly interpretation of the Bible. Everything in the Bible that refers to material possessions, wealth and poverty, oppression and liberation is distorted and made to refer only to other-worldly and individualistic concerns. This spiritualistic interpretation of the Bible is reductionist.

71. A further characteristic of right-wing Christianity is that it is fanatically *anti-communist*. It one-sidedly identifies Christianity with capitalist values of individualism and competition while rejecting the Christian values of equality and cooperation, saying that these are communist and socialist values. Communism, whatever real faults it may have, is then used as a *scapegoat*. The war against communism is treated as a holy war or crusade. Christian values like loving your enemy, forgiving seventy times seven times, compassion, solidarity and calling the sinner to conversion are conveniently forgotten once a person or group is labelled “communist” or “subversive.”

## **Apostasy**

72. Apostasy goes much further than heresy. It abandons the Christian faith altogether. In the past, those who apostatized from the Christian faith gave up the name “Christian”. But today it would not be strategic for the worshippers of the idol to admit that they are no longer Christians. For convenience they still call themselves Christians and continue formally professing the Christian faith, but in fact they no longer believe, much less live, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

73. That they are not just heretical Christians but apostates becomes unmistakably clear when they begin to persecute the Church. They discredit priests and pastors, nuns and theologians, Church leaders and Christian communities, harass them, sometimes imprison them, torture and kill them. When the Church and its theology is seen as a dangerous threat to the

national security state and when the Church becomes a target for national security strategy, then it is not just a question of heresy but of apostasy.

74. In some of our countries military chaplains are sent to schools to explain the total war against the people. They arrange camps and conferences for church youth and Sunday school teachers; military men are specially trained to take over catechism classes. Alternative councils of churches are set up, alternative church leaders and churches are promoted to support the national security state.

75. This persecution of Christians also involves vicious attacks upon liberation theology. Right-wing sects are promoted in order to undermine and divide those churches that take the side of the poor. This is part of an imperialist strategy that does not even bother to keep itself secret: it is spelled out clearly for Latin America in the Santa Fe Documents I and II.

## **Hypocrisy**

76. Jesus issued many strong condemnations of the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. They did not always practise what they preached. They were not in reality what they appeared to be in public, they were whited sepulchres. Because they were more concerned about their popularity and their reputations than about the truth, they became too cowardly to speak out about the real evils in their society. They strained out gnats while swallowing camels and saw the splinter in someone's eye while overlooking the plank in their own eyes (Matt. 23:24; 7:5).

77. Is it not true that some Christians and Church leaders in our countries are like these scribes and Pharisees? They are very cautious and "prudent" and do not wish to rock the boat. They are either part of the rich and powerful or afraid of them. Even when there are obvious cases of injustice, they do not speak out or do something about it. When hundreds or even thousands "disappear," it is especially hypocritical for church leaders to maintain their silence. We know that in some cases, this silence is even worse than hypocrisy – it is a mask for their complicity in the "dirty war."

78. There are those who claim to be non-partisan and talk of keeping the balance, but they betray their partisanship by criticising mainly those who question the status quo. They speak of reconciliation and patience, but address this mainly to the victims of the system and the powerless. They promote reforms as a "third way," but restrict people's participation to traditional forms. They profess commitment to democracy, but do not wish the people to exercise power effectively. They warn against the dangers of politicising the Church, but they often compromise the Church through alliances and negotiations with those in power. They accuse progressive



Christians of dividing the Church, but in some countries they use their position to force a split between the institutional and the popular Church even denying that some base communities are part of the Church.

79. There is hypocrisy in the use of double standards, while claiming to have only one. For example, there are those who preach absolute non-violence, but while they condemn the armed struggle of the people, they seldom question the use of arms against the people. They recognise the right of self defence when the state invokes it, but not when the people exercise it. In the case of military forces, they uphold the legitimate use of violence and criticise only its abuse; but when it comes to the people's use of arms, they do not make the same distinction. The ideological reasons for such double standards are exposed by what they say about a state that is socialist, anti-imperialist or progressive. Suddenly, they seem to have no problem at all about the use of violence against such states, even indiscriminate violence. This is a clear case of double standards and hypocrisy.

## **Blasphemy**

80. Idolatry is a sin against the first commandment. Of all the sins related to it, none is more scandalous than the sin against the second commandment – blasphemy. “You shall not utter the name of Yahweh your God to misuse it” (Exod. 20:7). It is blasphemy to misuse the name of God in defence of imperialism. Theologians of the Institute of Religion and Democracy in the United States of America even compare multinational corporations to the servant of Yahweh. This sin has deadlier consequences when some bishops and priests become military officers, thereby legitimising the armed forces, and when they publicly bless the weapons of war that are used to kill our people, thereby justifying total war as a holy war. In some countries there are priests who are not only chaplains of the military they even provide spiritual advice to leaders of death squads. To invoke the name of the God of life to justify death and destruction is blasphemy. It is giving scandal to the little ones (Mark 9:42; Luke 17:1-2).

81. In the service of the idols, certain things and persons become sacred. Money and property and, above all, security, are sacred. Government and military authorities are like priests of a pseudo-religion. In some countries, whites become a sacred people. This too is blasphemy.

82. Blasphemy also takes the form of “satanization” – attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to the devil. Satanization refuses to see the God of life in the liberation of the people. It sees the work of liberation as the work of Satan and accuses the people of being possessed by evil spirits. In his time, Jesus was accused of being under the power of Beelzebub precisely when he freed

people from evil spirits and healed them. We also remember Jesus' warning about the sin against the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:22-30).

#### 4. THE CALL TO CONVERSION

83. The most famous conversion story in the New Testament is the story of the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus. Before his conversion, Saul (as he was then called) persecuted those Jews who had been converted to the way of Jesus. He took sides with the Sanhedrin, the chief priests of the Temple, the scribes and the Pharisees, against Jesus and the people who believed in Jesus. In other words, Saul sided with the authorities and the status quo against this new movement that wanted to “turn the world upside down” (Acts 17:6). Saul stood by and approved of the killing of Stephen (Acts 7:58; 8:1). Stephen, like Jesus, was seen as a dangerous threat to the Temple and the Law (Acts 6:14-15). This was more than a religious conflict because the Temple was the centre not only of religious power but also of political and economic power, while the Law was the guarantee that nothing in that society would change. As far as Saul was concerned, Judaism had to be purged of this new movement in its midst. The disciples of Jesus had to be pursued in every town and village, dragged out and stoned like Stephen.

84. “Saul was still breathing threats to slaughter the Lord’s disciples” as he travelled down the road to Damascus armed with letters authorising him to arrest any followers of the Way, men or women, that he could find (Acts 9:1-2). Then suddenly it happened. Saul made the startling discovery that he was on the wrong side, that God was on the side of Jesus and that the persecution of the people who followed Jesus was the persecution of Jesus himself. “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? Who are you, Lord? I am Jesus whom you are persecuting” (Acts 9:3-5).

85. What was revealed to Saul was that God was not on the side of the religious and political authorities who had killed Jesus. On the contrary, God was on the side of the One who had been crucified as a blasphemer, who had been accused of being possessed by Beelzebub, who had been handed over as a traitor, an agitator, a pretender to the throne of David and a critic of the Temple (Matt. 26:62, 65-66; Luke 23:1-2,5,13). On the road to Damascus Saul was faced with this conflict between these two images or beliefs about God. He was struck blind by it. It was his *kairos*. Saul became Paul when he accepted in faith that the true God was in Jesus and that the risen Lord was in the very people whom he had been persecuting.

86. This *kairos* on the road to Damascus must be taken seriously by all who in the name of God support the persecution of Christians who side with the poor. The call to conversion is loud and clear.

87. We must be converted again and again from the idol of Mammon to the worship of the true God. We cannot serve two masters, we cannot serve both God and Mammon (Matt. 6:24).

88. Beware of false prophets. They come to us disguised as sheep but inside they are wild wolves. We can recognise what they really are by their fruits (Matt. 7:15-20). There are false prophets who say there is peace when there is no peace (Jer. 6:14; 8:11; Ezek. 13:10). Hear the prophetic voice of those who are being persecuted and oppressed.

89. God is calling us to abandon the practice of making individuals or groups into scapegoats who can be blamed for the very sins that we ourselves commit. Most of all the practice of using communism as a scapegoat must be exposed and rejected. Communist regimes and movements must be criticised too, but they must not be made into scapegoats.

90. We must take seriously Jesus' accusation of hypocrisy. We cannot sit on the fence and profess neutrality while people are being persecuted, exploited and killed. We cannot remain silent because we fear the authorities and do not want to rock the boat. Jesus calls all hypocrites to conversion.

91. All of us who profess to be followers of Jesus of Nazareth are in continuous need of conversion. While we see clearly the idolatry, the heresy, the hypocrisy and the blasphemy of others, we ourselves need to search our own hearts for remnants of the same sins and for signs of triumphalism, self-righteousness, dogmatism, rigidity, intolerance and sectarianism. There should be no place in our hearts for any kind of complacency.

## CONCLUSION

The particular crisis or *kairos* that has led us to the writing and signing of this proclamation of faith is the conflict between Christians in the world today. We have wished to make it quite clear that we believe that those Christians who side with the imperialists, the oppressors and the exploiters of people are siding with the idolaters who worship money, power, privilege and pleasure. To misuse Christianity to defend oppression is heretical. And to persecute Christians who are oppressed or who side with the oppressed is apostasy – the abandonment of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What we are dealing with here is not simply a matter of morality or ethics. What is at stake is the true meaning of our Christian faith. Who is God? Where is the true Jesus? It is not those Christians who struggle against oppression who are heretics, but those who support the forces of evil and death. The name of God is being blasphemously misused.

This proclamation was written and signed to give an account of the *hope* that is in us. Like the disciples who travelled along the road to Emmaus we are sometimes tempted to give up hope. As the two disciples say: "Our own hope had been that he (Jesus) would be the one to set Israel free" (Luke 24:21). What they still had to learn from Jesus and what we need to be reminded of again and again is that the way to freedom and salvation is the way of the cross. "Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:26). There is no cheap salvation or liberation. There is no easy road.

Because of our faith in Jesus, we are bold enough to hope for something that fulfils and transcends all human expectations, namely, the Reign of God. We are even called to live with the hope that those who collaborate with the idols of death and those who persecute us today will be converted to the God of life.

None of this can happen, however, without pain, suffering and many deaths. Jesus promises us the Reign of God but he also promises that "they will hand you over to Sanhedrins and scourge you in their synagogues." "You will be dragged before governors and kings." "Brother (and sister) will betray brother (and sister) to death, and the father his child." "You will be hated by all on account of my name." (Matt. 10:17-22).

The disciple cannot be greater than the master, and we are following the path of a crucified Christ. Whatever twists and turns the road might take, be firm and steadfast. The pain we undergo is part of the birth pangs of a new creation.

The experience of our seven countries working together to compile this document over a period of two and a half years has been an example of solidarity. We hope that such examples of cooperation and dialogue will continue, will develop and will be extended for the benefit of all.

Our oppressors organise themselves nationally and internationally. We cannot afford to face the struggle separately. Solidarity is not optional if we are to promote the cause of God in the world. We call on fellow Christians in the Third World, in industrial capitalist countries and in socialist countries to build a network of exchange and cooperation.

19<sup>th</sup> July 1989

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<sup>1</sup> The list of right-wing Churches, groups, crusades, newsletters and personalities in South Africa is seemingly endless. For more information see *The Religious Right in Southern Africa* by Paul Gifford (University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1988). Many Christians in South Africa would of course not identify themselves with either of these two forms of Christianity but locate themselves somewhere in the middle.

<sup>2</sup> The words "Imperialism," "Western Imperialism" or the "Empire" are used in this document to refer to the First World countries that dominate, exploit and oppress Third World countries. It should be understood to include the South African experience of a white First World that oppresses a black Third World within the same country.

<sup>3</sup> "The people" is a relatively new sociological and political term. It should be carefully distinguished from "people" (without the article) meaning human beings in general or some human beings. "The people" is not a quantifiable number of individuals, it is a social force, a social movement, a new social consciousness. "The people" means the poor and oppressed insofar as they have now become subjects of their own future (historical actors) rather than mere objects of historical change. In other words, when those who are oppressed and those who side with them become conscious of themselves as a force that can be organised to act together, to make demands and to change the course of history, they become "the people." The theological significance of this social force has been worked out most fully by the South Korean theology of minjung. *Minjung* means "the people."

<sup>4</sup> The Sante Fe Document is a fifty-three page policy proposal entitled *A New Inter-American Policy for the Eighties*, issued in May 1980 by the Council for Inter-American Security. It argues that the USA should conduct a "cultural war" in Latin America especially "to counter liberation theology." There is now a second document known as Sante Fe II.

<sup>5</sup> "The poor" as a biblical category refers not only to those who are economically deprived. It includes all who are oppressed, discriminated against or marginalized — the outcasts. Thus in today's world it would include the victims of racism, sexism, political repression and any other form of oppression. "The poor" also includes all who side with the oppressed and take up their cause, those who take an option for the poor or in biblical terms "those who hunger and thirst for justice" (Matt. 5:6) and are therefore "poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3).

<sup>6</sup> The word "scapegoat" comes from the Bible. It refers to the ritual in Leviticus 16: 8-10, 20-22 in which the priest is instructed to lay the sins of the Israelites upon the head of a goat which is then released to escape into the desert. A goat was used precisely in order to contradict the idolatrous practice of using human beings as "scapegoats."

# **VIOLENCE: THE NEW KAIROS**





# CONTENTS

1.	THE NEW KAIROS	199
	What is that challenge?	199
2.	THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES	201
	The Conditions for Violence	201
	The Pattern of Violence	202
	The Conspiracy	203
3.	CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCHES	207



## **1. THE NEW KAIROS**

In July 1985 the iron fist of the first state of emergency came down hard upon the people of South Africa's townships. Many were killed, injured, maimed for life or locked up in detention. Some of the pastors, theologians and church workers who were appalled by the iron fist of the police, came together to write the Kairos Document. They said that it was a moment of truth for the Church and that it was no longer possible to remain silent or to indulge in vague generalities.

The Kairos Document was published on 25<sup>th</sup> 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 1985. It has been said that if we had all heeded the prophetic warning of the Kairos Document five years ago, today's violence could have been avoided. Be that as it may, the challenge to the Churches at this moment in our history is more serious than ever before.

### **What is that challenge?**

The Institute for Contextual Theology has done research, consulted numerous influential Christians, held a series of meetings and visited the victims of violence in the townships. A major consultation with some Church leaders is being planned. In the meantime a very clear challenge, a *new kairos*, has emerged.



## 2. THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

In the first place what is required of us in the present circumstances is a penetratingly *astute* analysis of the signs of our times. We cannot afford to be fooled by the propaganda, the cover-ups, the smokescreens, the lies and the confusion. For, as Jesus warns us, *the children of darkness are frequently more astute than the children of light* (Luke 16:8). We cannot afford to rely upon superficial explanations of the present violence: tribalism, political rivalry between ANC and Inkatha, gangsterism, poverty, conditions in the hostels, police partiality and so forth. Some of these things are indeed factors to be considered but there is more to it than meets the eye. We must become astute enough to find out what is really going on. Without a penetrating analysis, all our efforts, all our advice and all our admonitions will be in vain.

### The Conditions for Violence

A good analysis will need to be clear about the difference between the *causes* of the violence and the *conditions* that make violence possible. A fire hazard is not the same as a fire. A fire hazard means the conditions of dryness and high temperatures that make it possible for a fire to start and spread quickly. But the fire has to be started by a spark, a match, an arsonist.

The present conditions in South Africa are the results of oppression and exploitation, of colonialism and apartheid. Most black people have been deprived of their land, reduced to poverty, forced into hostels as migrant workers or into squatter camps as job-seekers, while others have managed to settle permanently as residents in townships. Exploitation and apartheid education have given us a vast number of semi-literate, unemployed youth. The homelands policy failed, but it left us with potential tribalism in some places and a certain amount of tension between urban and rural people.

The potential for conflict, a fire hazard, has been there for a long time. It is to the credit of the black people of South Africa that they did not allow it to burst into flames before.

The unbanning of political organisations on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, the release of political prisoners and the talks about talks have not really changed the conditions of life in the townships. At first there was hope but for those whose sufferings have continued and even become worse despite all the talk about a new South Africa, hope has turned into disillusionment. On the other hand, the prospect of majority rule and the possibility of some form of socialism in the future has filled many whites with greater fear than ever. Disillusionment, fear and mistrust only serve to make the situation even more of a fire hazard.

Nor has the Church itself been all that helpful in diffusing potential conflict. Many pastors have actually contributed to the conditions that do not make for peace by underlining the fear of communism or socialism, and by creating an unbridgeable gulf between the spiritual and the material. Many pastors give the impression that the values of the gospel are so exclusively personal, private and spiritual that they have little or no bearing upon social, political, economic, national, tribal and racial affairs-except to condemn blindly everything associated with communism. As we now see, that has been of no help at all in preventing violence.

However, none of this can be said to be the *cause* of the recent violence in our country. These are only the conditions that have been so effectively exploited. By whom? Who started the fires around the country?

### **The Pattern of Violence**

Allegations of police using excessive force against; crowds of people engaging in peaceful marches or rallies have been made frequently. Despite the new policy that allows for peaceful marches when permits have been granted, the police have thrown teargas into stadia and other meeting places as they did in Mamelodi and Port Elizabeth.

It times the people have retaliated by throwing stones, going on the rampage or attacking the police themselves.

In Natal, affidavits presented to the courts point to indiscriminate attacks. The attackers, according to this evidence, have been KwaZulu policemen and Inkatha impis led by the so-called warlords. Here too there has been retaliation and even revenge but it would be quite wrong to see the Natal violence as tribalism or factionalism. In Natal everyone involved, both the attackers and the victims, are Zulus. But what we have seen is that tensions between rural and urban Zulus, between squatters and residents, between supporters of Inkatha and supporters of the ANC, have been systematically exploited by the, warlords to fuel the fires of violence and bloodshed. But what for?

In recent months the violence has systematically and deliberately exported from Natal to the Southern Transvaal. The evidence from the people in the affected areas is unanimous. In one township after the other the violence was deliberately sparked off by mysterious people and by certain white policemen. The spark in most cases was skilfully placed *rumour*. Amongst residents, squatters and the youth the rumour would be: "*Inkatha is Coming.*" In the hostels the rumours or stories would be: "*The comrades are going to attack; the youth who are dictating to their elders must be put in their place; an ANC takeover will mean domination by Xhosas; Inkatha can help you to defend yourself*"

*and to attack the Xhosas or comrades."* The fact that hostel residents have been armed and that the police role has been highly partial, has meant that the violence has been even more devastating

All the eyewitnesses attest to the fact that there was nothing spontaneous about the conflict. It was carefully orchestrated and *it* had nothing to do with tribalism. 40% of the residents in Soweto who were attacked by hostel dwellers were themselves Zulus. In Thokoza especially, attempts were made to get Zulus and Xhosas to fight. Nor were the attacks aimed solely at the ANC or at the young comrades. Residents of the townships were killed indiscriminately.

What we are dealing with here is a well-planned *conspiracy*.

In some places it simply didn't work. In Soshanguve, Atteridgeville and Alexandra, for example, the rumours were spread, but the civic associations intervened quickly to avert the violence by showing both residents and hostel dwellers that they were being used as pawns by unscrupulous instigators of violence.

Gradually the plotters, whoever they are, began to overplay their hands: minibuses with armed men, black and white, shooting people indiscriminately in several townships and in the centre of Johannesburg, balaclava-clad gunmen, whites with faces painted black and then the great train massacre. No attempt was made to disguise this violence as tribalism or factionalism or political rivalry or any other form of so-called black on black violence. It was naked terrorism executed by well-trained and highly professional hit-men.

A *pattern* now begins to emerge. In all the different incidents from the shooting of peaceful marchers to Inkatha warlords, from the burning of squatter camps to train massacres, from the inciting of hostel dwellers to the failed attempts to set Indian and African against one another in Natal, one aim or purpose emerges. It is known as *destabilization*. All the evidence, according to the best analysts, is pointing to a well-planned conspiracy to destabilise the emerging new South Africa. The net result of all the violence is much more *fear* than ever before, much more suspicion, much more confusion and much more despair – a very unstable situation. But why? And who?

## **The Conspiracy**

There is a sinister hand behind it all, a "third force," or, as one woman from Soweto said, "*There is a fox behind the wolves who are killing us.*" At this stage it is not possible to name the fox, but it is possible to narrow down the range of possibilities by trying to answer two questions: who would have

sufficient *motive* to want to commit the crime? And who would have the *means* to execute it? There are people who could have a sufficient motive because destabilisation is in their interest, but they do not have the means, the resources, the power, the weapons, the professionalism, the information and the skills to carry it out. On the other hand some who have the means might lack a motive since it does not benefit their cause.

We can begin with *Right Wing*, e.g., the AWB and all the other militant formations. Destabilisation is very much in their interest. They want to reverse the process of negotiations that Mr. de Klerk says is now irreversible. But does any right wing group have the means to mount a national operation that is so sophisticated, so professional, so well co-ordinated and so invisible? And which right wing group has the power to give instructions to policemen and to Inkatha supporters, and to employ extremely well-trained black and white hit-men? The so-called "third force" is not a right wing formation like the AWB, although individual right wingers are no doubt members of this "third force".

What about individuals in *Inkatha*? Because Inkatha feels excluded from the negotiation process and because it is losing support, and because Mr. Mandela has proved to be so much more popular than Chief Buthelezi, there are some who believe that individuals in Inkatha might well regard it as in their interest to destabilise the present process and especially to destabilise the ANC. But these individuals in Inkatha do not possess the means, the resources and the influence over white policemen. Inkatha is not the fox or "third force."

Many people believe that the *police* are behind all the recent violence. Whatever Mr. Vlok may say, some policemen are certainly responsible for not preventing the violence. They have protected Inkatha supporters and the hostel dwellers; they have stood by watching while the violence rages and they have themselves been responsible for the shooting of countless people. On the other hand, not all policemen have been involved. Black policemen are often excluded from acts of killing or destabilisation and some police officers have genuinely tried to work for peace. Does that mean that the conspiracy comes from a small clique of white policemen? Are they the faceless "third force"? Some of them may be part of it, but it is unlikely that a group of white policemen *alone* could command the necessary authority and resources to execute such a sophisticated conspiracy.

Of course, this is all speculation. There is no hard evidence that can lead us to the conspirators. All we have is circumstantial evidence but people are dying and therefore we must leave no stone unturned in our search for clues.

Some newspapers have recently focused our attention in another direction, (*New Nation* 21/09/90, pp. 6-7; *Weekly Mail* 21/09/90, pp. 1-2)



If we are looking for people with resources, the weapons, the expertise and training, professionalism and the experience, the ability to kill and to destabilise, then we must surely look at the history of the *Special Forces* of the SADF. Destabilisation has always been their speciality: in Namibia, Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. They have always trained and used surrogate forces: Koevoet, UNITA, RENAMO. That the special forces have been training Inkatha at a place called Hippo along the Caprivi Strip seems to be supported by incontrovertible evidence gathered by the alternative press (Weekly Mail 21/09/90, p. 1.). Moreover the evidence presented to the Harms Commission has made us all aware of the sinister role played by one of these Special Forces: the CCB. We have also heard of the use that was made of Askari's death squads and other highly trained hit-men.

Here we have the people with all the means necessary to orchestrate a massive covert operation of destabilisation, but would individuals or elements of the Special Forces of the SADF have any reason or motive for wanting to destabilise the new; South Africa? Yes, they would have. It would be the same as their reasons for destabilising Mozambique or Angola and their reasons for trying to destabilise SWAPO and the ANC over so many years. Their reasons would be the same as those of other similar forces in other parts of the world, from Central America to the Philippines. These reasons are quite simply to *wreck* any attempt (by a government or a potential government) that is perceived to be a move towards a Marxist one party state, or a move towards *communism*.

Many whites and not a few blacks believe that the greatest danger for the future is the ANC's talk about negotiations and its close association with the SACP. At the level of politics this entails discrediting the SACP, ridiculing nationalisation and trying to weaken the support for the ANC. At the level at which these elements operate anything goes: killings, massacres, wars, terrorism; as long as it helps to destabilise communism.

The conspiracy behind the violence in South Africa today *could* be the same as conspiracies in other parts of the world where violent conflict is instigated as a counter-revolutionary measure and as a way of distracting attention from the real issues. In fact this kind of conspiracy has a name. Its advocates or proponents throughout the world call it *Low Intensity Conflict*.

There is no conclusive proof and in such operations it would be very difficult to find conclusive proof; but as one newspaper puts it, "*Direct involvement by members of the military's special forces, for personal or other reasons, in the violence cannot be ruled out*" (Weekly Mail 21/09/90, p. 2). If this were true, then, as in the case of the CCB operatives, a question arises about the line of command. How far up does it go?

One can hear the protestations of Mr. Vlok and of Mr. Malan: "*Where is your evidence? Bring us the evidence.*" The Church leaders and the Independent Board of Inquiry into Informal Repression (IBIIR) have handed over a large number of sworn affidavits to the government. The ANC leadership has presented dossier after dossier of evidence pointing to a sinister plot. the alternative press has also unearthed a great deal of information. So the evidence is there, and in any case if the police and the army were really interested in finding out who was behind the violence *they* would be questioning the hostel-dwellers, the squatters, the residents and black police officers, *they* would be collecting affidavits, *they* would be following up clues like the bullets used, the false number plates on minibuses the whites with blackened faces and so forth. The fact that they are *not* doing most of this and that they have instituted *Operation Iron Fist* instead, is in itself very, very suspicious.

Is this what we have come to in South Africa? Are these the *signs of our time*?

### 3. CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCHES

Many Church leaders and pastors have shown great concern for the victims of violence and for the women and children who have become refugees. They have visited the strife-torn townships, collected affidavits and taken them to Mr. Vlok and to Mr. de Klerk. They have tried to get individuals and groups to meet with one another and they have made numerous appeals for peace from the pulpit and through the media.

But all of this does not face the contradictions and crises of the present situation. On the one hand we have talks about talks and the hope of negotiations in the near future; while on the other hand there is more violent conflict than ever before. Exiles are about to return, prisoners are being released, and yet there are others who are still being detained. While we are experiencing a new balance of forces with talk about an interim government and the need to re-structure the economy, we are also experiencing mysterious forces that are killing our people. The Church itself is caught up in these dilemmas: the more the Church appeals for peace, the more the violence continues; and the more the Church condemns the savagery of the killings, the more savage they become; and the more the Church speaks about reconciliation, the more the people plead for arms to defend themselves against attack. Appeals for peace have more and more of a hollow ring about them because they do not put the blame for the violence where it really belongs -outside the townships. Here then is the new *kairos*.

A strong, clear *prophetic word* is needed. The sins of the wicked must be exposed and condemned. We dare not sit back and wait because the evidence is not yet technically complete, while hundreds of people are being slaughtered on our streets. We must speak up, we must raise questions, we must take risks, we must call for inquiries. Together with the lawyers, the politicians and the journalists we must monitor the violence, search for its causes and try to make the truth known. We must not be afraid to point a finger in the direction of those who are conspiring against us all. The violence must be stopped at its source.

Let Mr. Vlok and Mr. Malan shout at us. Let our critics accuse us, let the death squads themselves haunt us. But for the sake of those who are suffering we must speak out. In the name of God we must condemn those who hire others to kill, those who treat black life cheaper than dirt, those who plot and conspire and provoke others into acts of savagery. The wickedness of these conspirators has no precedent even in South Africa. We must condemn their sin, even if we have never seen their faces and we don't know their names. We must say to them, in the name of God, "*Thou shall not kill.*"

A prophetic word would also have to show how this *violence* and the conspirators behind it *exposes the false prophecies* of a new South Africa, of an end to the season of violence, of an end to white domination and control. Apartheid, racism, oppression and violence are still very much part of the system that rules our lives – despite all the promises of a different future. 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 the people of South Africa by apartheid.

And finally a prophetic word from the Church at this time must be above all a word of *hope*. Nothing could be more hopeless than the realisation that you are unable to defend yourself and your family, that there is no one else to defend you, that your attackers will never be apprehended and that justice will not be done. Some measure of hope could be restored if there were a prophetic church leadership that would risk everything to search for the truth, to publish the truth and to take every action possible to ensure that justice is done. The Church should also encourage the people of the townships to organise themselves into structures like civic associations which would ensure greater unity on the ground. This in turn, will help to resist the counter-revolutionary tactics of the enemy. This strategy has shown to be effective in the various townships where violence was averted. Encouragement and help like this from the Churches would give our people some reason to face the future with hope. God in Jesus Christ is our hope. But how do we communicate this to people who live in fear of the next attack?

The primary task of the Church at this moment, then, is not to call for *peace* but to call for *justice*. The culprit must be found and brought to justice. And there must be no cover-ups. Because unless justice is done and seen to be done, there is no hope of peace in the near future.

# A KAIROS FOR KENYA

NCCK Reflection on the KANU Review Committee  
Report and KANU Special Delegates Conference  
Resolution on it

*“COME NOW, LET US REASON TOGETHER”  
SAYS THE LORD*

ISAIAH 1:18



# CONTENTS

	INTRODUCTION	213
1	PREAMBLE	217
2	PLURALISM AND DEMOCRACY UNDER ONE PARTY	217
3	SEPARATION OF POWERS	218
4	OMBUDSMAN	218
5	CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS	219
6	REFERENDUM	219
7	THE KENYA WE WANT CONVENTION	219
8	PARTY STRUCTURE	220
9	IMAGE OF THE PARTY	220
10	AFFILIATION OF ORGANIZATIONS TO KANU	220
11	CORRUPTION	221
12	TRIBALISM	221
13	UNEMPLOYMENT	222
14	ABUSE OF ELECTORAL PROCESS (RIGGING)	223
15	DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL	224
16	DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT	224
17	LIMITATION OF THE TENURE OF OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT	225
18	KANU FINANCES	225
19	QUOTA SYSTEM	225
20	YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT	226
21	AFRICANISATION OF THE ECONOMY	226
22	EQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF NATIONAL RESOURCES	226
23	ACCOUNTABILITY	227
24	RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE STATE	228
	APPENDIX	229
	NCKK MEMORANDUM TO THE KANU REVIEW COMMITTEE	229
1	NATION BUILDING AND THE CONSTITUTION	229
2	PEOPLE PARTICIPATION	231
3	CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES	235
4	SINGLE-PARTY AND MULTI-PARTY DEMOCRACY	235
5	QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP	236
6	SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES	237
7	CONCLUSION	238





## INTRODUCTION

On the 21<sup>st</sup> June, 1990 the Kenya Africa National Union (KANU) Executive Committee approved the KANU Review Committee (KRC) under the Chairmanship of the Vice-President H. E. George Saitoti, to look into the KANU nomination rules, KANU election rules and KANU Code of discipline with a view to making them more responsive to the changing needs and wishes of the people. No sooner did the KRC embark on its task than it became increasingly clear that its mandate was too narrow vis-à-vis the prevailing interest and aspirations of the Kenyan people. Thus the mandate of the Committee was de facto broadened.

Kenyans of all walks of life and from every place and all places came out in big numbers and freely and openly presented their views to the KRC verbally and in writing. The exercise was unprecedented in the socio-political history of our country. Consequently, the report of KRC reflects a national agenda set by the people of Kenya. That means the report deserves to be taken with grave seriousness.

The Committee presented its report to the President H. E. Daniel Arap Moi in October, 1990. The report and its recommendations were presented to a special KANU delegates' conference which was held at Kasarani Sports Complex from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1990. The Conference adopted the KRC report in total.

On 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1990, the NCK Executive Committee made a preliminary response to the report and promised to study it carefully after which it would make its views known to the public. This document, which was adopted by the Executive Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> March, 1991, is the result of the study.

The NCK found it necessary to have a thorough study and reflection of the KRC report because of a number of reasons:

Firstly, the Council was convinced that in setting up the Committee, H. E. the President took a wise and healthy decision. KRC provided a forum through which the Kenyan people participated in discussing matters that vitally affected their lives as individual communities and as society. It was a commendable exercise in democracy.

Secondly, the Council took the work of the KRC seriously considering the amount of time that the members of public spent in order to present their views and the time the Committee spent listening to everyone who came. We understand no one was turned away. The Council's memorandum to the Committee is appended to the document.

Thirdly, the Council would like to encourage such fora through which collectively Kenyans can meaningfully and effectively create a society that is participatory, just and peaceful in which expression of their views can be made freely and without fear. In this way the people will be educated in the affairs of the nation and thereby develop into responsible and informed citizens.

We recognize with praise to God and congratulate the Party and the Government for actions already taken in implementing some of the recommendations of KRC. Furthermore, we call for a clear and comprehensive programme in management of the desired change, because that will provide something for which Kenyans will aspire and look forward to and hopefully be committed to.

Such a programme will remove any anxiety that might be occasioned by suspense and ignorance. It would also pre-empt any clandestine and undesirable or ill-intentioned activities.

If on the other hand, a clear programme on how to manage change is not set then change might eventually manage us. And that could happen with all the concomitant chaos that has befallen so many countries of Africa and elsewhere in the world.

The title of this booklet is A KAIROS FOR KENYA. We have read the signs of the times and are now convinced that this is the time for Kenyans to come together and deliberate on the direction the country is to take. In view of the prevailing socio-political climate the Council is compelled to urge our leaders to hasten the pace for such deliberations in order to determine how to manage the inevitable change. This should be done in and for the best legitimate interests of the Kenyan people and not just change for its own sake or merely as a response to external pressure.

We consider our country to be in an opportune moment. As we have noted earlier, a national agenda has already been set. What is needed now is a programme and a mechanism through which the agenda is to be deliberated on and implemented. In this contention we are reminded of the words of Shakespeare when he said "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood leads on to fortune....On such a tide are we now afloat....And we must take the current when it serves..."

The reflections contained in this booklet are not a repetition of our memorandum to the KRC, but is an attempt to capture the spirit and message of Kenyans as evidenced in the report of the KRC. Secondly, it is an expression of our Pastoral concern over the situation our country currently finds itself in. In these reflections, the Council believes to be speaking "the

truth in a spirit of love” (Eph. 4:15.). The booklet should therefore be received in this spirit.

*Rev. Samuel Kobia*  
*General Secretary*



## **1. PREAMBLE**

The Council notes with appreciation that the KANU Special Delegates' Conference called at Kasarani on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1990 adopted in whole the Report by the KANU Review Committee. The Council wishes to congratulate the party on this and to make a number of observations:

1.1. Firstly: It would have been better if the Report was delivered to the Delegates a few days before the meeting. This would have given them a good opportunity to consult with the members and party branches that they represent on the various matters contained in the Report, thereby allowing members to exercise their democratic right at the grass root level.

1.2. Secondly: The procedure adopted at Kasarani where the entire body of delegates debated the report in one forum was somewhat ineffective. As a result, most of the recommendations of the KRC were not discussed and therefore could not really be said to have received the express approval of the meeting. Such future Delegates' meetings should be organized in groups so that the delegates can have an effective opportunity to make their contributions. Discussing such important matters in plenary session only completely defeats the purpose of the conference and negates the participants' democratic right of free expression and participation. It should have been possible to organize the delegates into smaller manageable groups to discuss the different aspects of the Report and make their recommendations to a plenary session for consideration and adoption.

## **2. PLURALISM AND DEMOCRACY UNDER ONE PARTY**

The council notes though the Delegates' Conference resolved that Kenya should continue a one party political system, and that KANU continues to be the sole political party the Delegates did, not deal effectively with the question of ensuring that democracy is practised in that party. The Report correctly stipulated that Kenyans want a party in which they have freedom of action, the right to dissent and to express divergent views in all matters affecting them. KANU has seriously curtailed these rights and it is somewhat unfortunate that even after the KRC had clearly identified this requirement the Delegates did nothing to establish and ensure a full and complete exercise of this right. It is clear from the KRC Report that Kenyans will not be satisfied with one party unless that party allows the free exercise of democratic choice, tolerates divergent opinions amongst its members and affords sympathetic consideration to such views and opinions.

2.1. If KANU wishes to remain the sole political party in the country, then it should cease to conduct its affairs in a manner which provokes people to

want to form another political party. The party should therefore devise systems which could realize democracy within the party so that it does not turn itself and the State into a dictatorship.

2.2. The Council feels that elevating a political party to constitutional organ as was done by entrenching KANU in the constitution is undemocratic and can have tragic consequences. The party should continue to be a voluntary society subject to the general laws regulating the organization of societies.

Constitutionalizing the party makes it an organ that cannot be properly supervised by the officers whose responsibility it is to supervise the organization of societies and other associations. Constitutionalization also means that the party is made the subject of concern to all Kenyans even those who may not desire to be or remain members of KANU. The council therefore calls for immediate steps to be taken to remove KANU as a named organ in our constitution. The notion that KANU should not be sued in our Courts of Law should be corrected. KANU should remain subject to the authority of the courts like all other societies and parties in the country.

### **3. SEPARATION OF POWERS**

The Council would have liked to see the Delegates' Conference support the call by the public of the need to maintain clear separation of powers which need to exist between the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary and the need to ensure that these are seen to be operating independently. All Administrative actions of the Executive should be amenable to the Constitutional provisions on the separation of powers.

### **4. OMBUDSMAN**

The Council contends that the reasons advanced by die KRC for not recommending the establishment of the office of an Ombudsman were not convincing. The council feels that the country would benefit immensely from the setting up of an office headed by one or several people to provide an avenue for remedying administrative abuses and excesses. We would like to observe that since Ndegwa's Commission the formation of this body has been recommended by a few other Commissions. The issue needs to be re-visited. The Council therefore endorses the members of public persistent calls for the creation of the office of the Ombudsman. It feels that the Anti-corruption Tribunal and other disciplinary bodies would not be adequate substitutes for the office of an Ombudsman as we assess the needs of our country today.

## **5. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**

The Council has carefully considered this matter against the background of the opinions expressed before the KRC. While the Council accepts that Parliament is Supreme and has the constitutional authority to amend any provisions of our constitution, nevertheless we feel that a number of Legal and Constitutional measures have been piloted through the National Assembly with such hurry and expedition as to deprive members thereof and the public of an opportunity to consider and discuss the issues thoroughly. The Council regards this practice as counterproductive and would recommend that Members of the parliament and the public be given ample time for discussion particularly when this has to do with amendment to the Constitution.

5.1. The Council therefore recommends that since Kenyans have a basic right to participate meaningfully and constructively in discussions concerning their destiny and that of their country, the government should stop hurrying up legislation in Parliament by using devices that abridge Parliamentary debates on legislative measures. Parliament Standing Orders should not be used to negate the purpose of Parliament which is to serve as the people's forum and audit for considering legislation.

## **6. REFERENDUM**

The council notes and accepts the KANU Review Committee's recommendation that there is no need at the present time to amend the constitution to provide for the process of assessing public opinion by referendum. The council agrees that referenda like other processes are capable of manipulation and "rigging".

The council, however would recommend that a mechanism be devised which would ensure that there is adequate public debate and assessment of public opinion on important topical public issues by independent institutions such as the Law Society of Kenya, Religious organizations, University Student Unions, COTU, FKE, Women organizations, etc.

## **7. THE KENYA WE WANT CONVENTION**

The Council notes the KRC recommendation that it "does not consider it necessary to recommend the holding of a National Convention at the present time." We note the penultimate words "at the present time."

In our understanding this means that the objective is accepted provided it is given the right timing. In view of the prevailing socio-political climate, the

Council is convinced that now is the time for such a national convention. We further consider it important and democratic for a nation to have such a forum from time to time. We recall the two conventions held in 1978 and 1982. The council would wish to be associated with such an exercise, which undoubtedly would be of benefit to our country.

The purpose would be providing a forum whereby issues of a public nature can be examined by multi-purpose, multi-disciplinary and mixed-composition groups and audiences. The council would recommend that such conventions be held at regular intervals of not less than five years.

## **8. PARTY STRUCTURE**

The council agrees with the argument that the District Branch Office should be abolished since effective political organization should start at the Constituency level. The Council has particularly noted that the idea and practice of the district party bosses had created divisions rather than unity in the district. The hegemony where certain party bosses want to rule the whole district should be broken. The council feels that organizing the party on the basis of constituencies rather than districts would result in greater administrative competence.

## **9. IMAGE OF THE PARTY**

The council notes with appreciation the suggested amendments to the KANU constitution on the administration of party discipline and looks forward to seeing their being implemented.

9.1. The council however calls for the strict enforcement of the code of discipline especially paragraph appendix 2(k) where members could be disciplined for:

“Engaging in dishonourable and discrediting verbal or press exchanges with other members or non-members especially where such exchanges tend to lower the dignity and image of the party in the eyes of the public.”

9.2. The council recommends that other offences for discipline should include such calls as inciting the members of the public to disobey the law.

## **10. AFFILIATION OF ORGANIZATIONS TO KANU**

The council feels that the party should not seek further affiliations of independent organizations as it was done with KANU-MYWO. We



recommend that for industrial peace, and socio-economic stability, such organizations should be left to operate freely and independently without being politicized. The council feels that KANU should strengthen its women wing as a political organ to cater for the rights of KANU female members; consequently MYWO should be left to operate as a social welfare organization for all women of Kenya irrespective of their political persuasion. The council feels that all Kenya women, whether members of KANU or not should be free to participate in Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organization.

## **11. CORRUPTION**

The council notes with appreciation the KRC recommendation and observations that “there is an urgent need to establish an anti-corruption unit in the Kenya Police Force.” While appreciating this concern by the party, the council observes that corruption has eaten into the fabric of our society and affects all sections of public life. The council feels that this country has never taken a serious attempt at its eradication probably because public servants at very high levels are not keen to stamp it out.

11.1. The council would recommend that a war or a programme to combat corruption at all levels be declared and should start from those at the levels of Ministers and Permanent Secretaries. The programme should also address itself to misuse or misapplication of public funds and resources as well as abuse of public office. The council would wish to assure the Government that it would be more than ready to play its part to fight against this deadly evil.

## **12. TRIBALISM**

The council identifies herself with the views of the members of the public that “the common man did not think of tribalism in his daily struggle to meet the basic needs of life....Politicians and heads of public institutions were seen as practising tribalism to protect their positions.”

12.1. While agreeing with the recommendation of the KRC that “tribalism and nepotism should be strongly condemned and where a person is found to be practising tribalism he should be severely punished,” the council recommends that all efforts should be employed to fight tribalism and nepotism. It is the council’s view that this would be one area where the office of the Ombudsman would be needed most.

### 13. UNEMPLOYMENT

The council appreciates the appointment of the Presidential Employment Commission which has now reported and requests that urgent measures will be taken to implement the report. The Council would wish to offer help in its implementation.

13.1. Urban Poverty. One of the issues closely linked with unemployment and which was sidelined by the KRC is the issue of urban poverty. Urban poverty is the most fertile source of crime, disease and instability in any country. The council observes that the programmes to ameliorate the effects of urban poverty have not been very effective and that the government has tended to leave it to NGOs and other institutions to combat indecency. Local authorities have been left to deal with this most intriguing matter with the result that they have tended to resort to demolition of shanties and other residences of the urban poor without providing alternative accommodation. The programme of cleaning urban slum settlements even if well intentional, has tended to be undertaken with such callousness and the careless disregard of people's rights to life and property as to estrange a significant proportion of the people from the authorities. The programmes have resulted in massive displacement which in turn has resulted in increased unemployment and un-solaced bitterness.

The attempt to control and regulate the hawkers' trades has also been badly implemented. The pulling down of hundreds of kiosks which provide a livelihood for thousands of people, many of whom have nowhere else to go, has created a social problem of significant proportions which should be addressed. The Council regrets very strongly the manner in which this exercise was undertaken and calls on the government to halt it and to ensure that as to provide facilities to residents.

13.2. However, the Council feels that the question of unemployment goes together with an education system. She advises against a system of producing a group of people who cannot be absorbed in the economy because of the irrelevance of their education. We observe that there has been an over-politicization of the 8-4-4 system which has adversely affected its implementation. The Council feels that the implementation should be left to educational professionals. In its implementation, care should be taken to ensure that enough resources are available. The Council feels that the admission to the institutions of high learning should be rationalised to take into account the capacity of our existing institutions to properly prepare the students and the ability of the economy to absorb them upon completion. The Council feels that over-production of university graduates may lead to unemployment of a type that may be dangerous to the country, and therefore close supervision is necessary.

#### **14. ABUSE OF ELECTORAL PROCESS (RIGGING)**

The Council identifies herself with the observation of KRC that,

“In any democracy abuse of the electoral process diminishes the credibility of the Government and undermines the confidence which the electorate have in their elected leaders...and that...in both secret ballot and queue-voting electoral process, rigging can take piece.”

While it may therefore be impossible to eliminate rigging completely, all available machinery should be employed to reduce the rate of any kind of rigging. The Council appreciates the recommendation of the KRC to transfer the returning and presiding officers on the election eve.

However the Council urges the government also to consider the following additional measures:

14.1. Returning and presiding officers should not be selected exclusively from the Provincial Administration. They could be other Public Servants and people in the professions, commerce or industry and the clergy.

14.2. It is suggested that names of returning and presiding officers should be selected at random matching them against constituencies at one forum a few days before the elections. This will avoid any officer knowing far in advance where he/she will supervise the elections. The method of transferring them on the election eve as recommended by KRC is open to abuse as there will always be somebody (or people) who will make decisions on “the election eve” transfers. Consideration should be given to undertaking the Selection officials using a computer programme.

14.3. The supervisor of elections should take a more effective role in organizing and management of elections and should not leave it wholly to the Provincial Administration. Consideration should be given to the establishment of election tribunals comprising of independent people not seeking political office to resolve on the spot election disputes as the electoral process moves on.

14.4. The electoral law should be amended and be strictly enforced to punish all those who are involved in committing election offences.

14.5. On a long term basis, public education on the rights and duties of the citizen should be undertaken. The Council could make her contribution in this area by organizing series of seminars on responsible citizenship in conjunction with the party and the government.

14.6. In its own activities, the Council accepts that member churches should set a good example when it comes to their elections. The public will not have confidence in the church leaders when it learns that their elections have not been just and fair as the Church preaches. The Council urges that in the absence of other political parties, provisions should be made in the constitution to allow independent candidates for both parliament and local government elections.

## **15. DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL**

The Council feels that since the government has a machinery to deal effectively with any insecurity or other threat to the security of the country, there is no need for detention without trial, except probably during the time of war or emergency. Detention without trial defeats the purpose of law and undermines the constitutional presumption of innocence until proof of guilt.

15.1. If it becomes necessary as in the case of times of war or emergency, to detain an individual the Council recommends that the detained person be allowed to enjoy as normal life as is possible within the provisions of the law. He should for example be allowed to be kept informed about family life. Restrictions on his liberty should be only such as are rendered necessary by the need to preserve public security and not by way of punishment.

15.2. The Council further recommends that the Detention Review Committee should have representation from religious groups.

## **16. DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT**

While recognizing that it is the constitutional prerogative of the President to dissolve parliament and recognizing that it is a decision which cannot, for sound social, political and economic reasons, be taken lightly or on the spur of the moment, the Council feels that if the political and other reforms recommended by the KRC are to be faithfully implemented, it is essential that the implementation be undertaken by a crop of leaders elected through the recommended method of election.

The Council recommends therefore that as soon as the recommendations to the alteration of the electoral procedures are completed the H. E. the President give serious consideration to an early dissolution of Parliament so that the people can freely elect a parliament in which they have confidence. The Council further suggests the party should likewise organize and hold grass root elections in the not too distant future.

## **17. LIMITATION OF THE TENURE OF OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT**

The Council noted the views of the members of the public on limitation of the tenure of the office of the future-presidents and direct elections of the president. The Council also notes the KRC recommendation in which it says that “at this time of our development...no change should be entertained on the constitutional provisions relating to the institution of the presidency.”

17.1. However, the Council believes that the limiting of the tenure of office of the President is a good thing for both the governed and the institution of the presidency. It therefore recommends that the tenure of office of future presidents should be limited to two terms of five years each. The Council feels that the spirit of public accountability would be greatly enhanced by such limitation.

17.2. The Council therefore suggests that there are enough arguments for the constitution to be changed accordingly as a preparation for the election of future presidents.

## **18. KANU FINANCES**

18.1. The Council recommends that since KANU is a registered society, it should set a good example by making its returns to the Registrar of Societies and to its members on the financial statements each year. This will enhance the members’ confidence in the party.

18.2. The present fee of KShs. 10,000/- and 3,000/- payable by those seeking nomination for election is very high for some members of the public who would want to be elected, particularly considering that these candidates are also required to be life members of the party. It is recommended that the party finance the nomination from other funds and not tax the members so fiercely.

## **19. QUOTA SYSTEM**

The Council feels that the quota system in education should not be applied discriminatorily on the basis of tribe.

The Council recommends that the quota system should be seen as a temporary measure to be applied while the government is making appropriate adjustments in education opportunities throughout the country so that selection can revert to merit alone and not by district or province.

## **20. YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT**

The Council fully supports the proposal for the establishment of a separate Directorate of Youth Affairs within the party. The Council, however, feels that the nation should once again address itself to the problem of the Youth and therefore recommends:

20.1. A programme for the youth between school leaving and becoming adults should be established. The Council notes with regret that these are the youth mostly exposed to crime and other evil activities. The Council should establish institutions whereby vocational training for youth are provided with stiff training leaving one institution and joining another.

## **21. AFRICANISATION OF THE ECONOMY**

The Council notes with regret that Africanisation of the economy has not fully taken ground although the Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 "African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya," had observed that this "is likely to be of short-term duration."

21.1. The Council recommends that the government revisit the suggestions made in the above Sessional Paper Section 83 and 84 as far as it relates to the economy and the need for its effective Africanisation.

21.2. The Government should also evaluate the recommendation made in the Sessional Paper No. I. of 1986 on "Economic Management for Renewed Growth."

The Council further calls for a balanced economy and none should be promoted at the cost of the others, although certainly there must be a bias in favour of an indigenous category.

21.3. The Council notes with regret that the Government has not sufficiently supported African entrepreneurs attempting to break into the financial and industrial sectors.

## **22. EQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF NATIONAL RESOURCES**

The Council commends the KRC particularly on its recommendation 9:24.7 where it is stated:

"That in our implementation of the national planning and development programmes, the government should ensure a fair and equitable distribution of the national resources and opportunities to all areas of the country."

The Council feels that what is required is the immediate implementation of the above recommendation.

22.1. The Council notes that there has been considerable mal-application of national economic resources with the result that areas not requiring services have often been serviced while those requiring them are denied. The Council recommends that the NCKK should form an Economic Study Committee which should contribute to national planning.

22.2. We strongly recommend and urge member churches to consider it of paramount importance to actively participate in district Development in order to participate in planning.

### **23. ACCOUNTABILITY**

The Council commends the KRC for its informative and thorough introduction on the section on "Accountability." It especially notes with satisfaction the observation from the Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 that:

"II. Mutual social responsibility is an extension of the African family spirit of the nation as a whole, with the hope that ultimately the same spirit can be extended to even larger areas. It implies a mutual responsibility by society and its members to do the very best for each other with the full knowledge and understanding that if society prospers, its members will share in that prosperity and that society cannot prosper without the full co-operation of its members. State has an obligation to ensure equal opportunities to all its citizens, eliminate exploitation and discrimination, and provide needed social services such as education, medical care and social security."

Further, the Council would like to identify herself with the observation of the KRC that:

"In search of the firm foundation on which to build our independent Kenya, our forefathers felt that one of those pillars was mutual social responsibility as seen in a family situation. In African traditional belief, we believe that 'I am because you are, and that you are because I am.' In other words, your actions have a bearing on me and vice versa and also on the coming generation. For this reason, each one of us must therefore be accountable to the other just as one generation is equally accountable to the next. Good stewardship or management can be called the other word for accountability and entails trusteeship for others as opposed to ownership."

The Council also appreciates the fact that accountability is required from leaders of all cadres as spelt out by the KRC (3.2.8.)

23.1. The Council wishes to assert that “Accountability makes each person answerable to others in the way he/she carries out or undertaken responsibilities, whether public or private, within the context of a recognized national ethic.” The Council therefore affirms the importance of acceptability from all walks of life because the lack of it has contributed to the mismanagement of our important Institutions.

23.2. It is the challenge of everyone to advocate for accountability and especially the church in all her programmes.

23.3. Church leaders should also evaluate themselves and bear in mind much damage could be caused by irresponsible utterances.

23.4. All finances of the churches should be well accounted for before asking other institutions to account for their finances.

## **24. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE STATE**

The Council applauds the KRC for spelling it clearly for the first time the relationship between the State and religious organizations (KRC Recommendation 3.2.7.)

“The relationship between the State and religious organizations can only be understood by recognizing their functional independence, and that the religious organizations need the State just as the State needs them. Mutual acceptance of these complimentary roles in nation building would provide a more enabling and healthy environment for the betterment of the welfare of our people. In this kind of relationship, a demarcation line as to what is political or spiritual, secular or sacred is hard to mark, just as a coin has two sides, yet is still a coin.”

24.1. The Council recommends that a forum be created where religious leaders and politicians could meet and interact to exchange ideas on matters of mutual interest in order to avoid confrontation. This Council would wish to assure all concerned that it will be ready to give its constructive suggestions through such a forum in order to avoid the unnecessary misinterpretations and misrepresentations which characterised the relationship between the Council and politicians in the recent past.

*Adopted by the NCCK Executive Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1991 at Limuru Conference and Training Centre.*



## **APPENDIX**

### **NCKK MEMORANDUM TO THE KANU REVIEW COMMITTEE**

30<sup>th</sup> July, 1990

His Excellency the Vice-President  
and Minister for Finance,  
The Hon. Prof. George Saitoti,  
Chairman, KANU Review Committee.

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Members of the Committee,

First of all, we congratulate you on your appointment to this very important committee. We churches, and we trust Kenyans in general, have very high expectations of the outcome of this committee's work. The spirit within which you have started your work is good and augurs well for the welfare of this country. You have our best wishes and sincere prayers.

We are fully aware that the terms of reference for the committee are rather limited. Nevertheless, the undertaking provides a very unique opportunity for the people of Kenya to participate in this process by expressing freely their views and opinions on matters that are important in their lives and in the life of the nation. Moreover, we believe that KANU's ultimate objective is to build and sustain a society that is united, stable, just, peaceful and participatory. In that endeavour, talking and listening to one another is absolutely essential. It is within that context therefore we feel obliged to make the following comments and proposals:

#### **1. NATION BUILDING AND THE CONSTITUTION**

Kenya, like most other African countries is young and still struggling to evolve as one nation. At independence, we inherited not a nation but the apparatuses of the state which in themselves did not necessarily constitute a nation. One of course could not have expected the colonial government to create a nation to hand it over to Kenyans at independence. That noble task was in the hands of the Kenyan people who since independence have been vigorously and tirelessly struggling to do just that. However, there are many forces, both historical and socio-political, that have militated against those efforts. To be able to overcome them, all the people of Kenya must concert their efforts and resources, including ideas and opinions which should be expressed freely. There is therefore need to create an enabling environment for that purpose. It is in that light that what KANU has done by providing

the opportunity for Kenyans to freely express their views on how the party should be reformed for the better, is a step in the right direction.

For any modern nation to develop and flourish it must have a strong foundation upon which to build. That is its constitution. Secondly, it must have a mechanism for meaningful and effective participatory democracy which finds expression inter alia through regular elections. There are other relevant aspects in building and sustaining modern nations but we wish to comment on those two which we consider to be cardinal.

History shows that erosion or disregard of the basic tenets of a country's constitution and denial of full participation of the people in free and fair elections always end in futility. That is why churches in this country and the NCKK in particular have continued to be extremely concerned about the amendment of the constitution and also in the electoral system.

In 1962, the NCKK sent a memorandum to the Lancaster House Conference, requesting for fundamental rights including freedom of worship, to be included in the constitution of an independent Kenya. In 1976, the NCKK strongly opposed the proposal to have the constitution changed to bar the vice-president from assuming the presidency in the event it was vacated by the incumbent president.

During 1976-1977, several consultations were organized by the NCKK throughout the country to make people understand human rights and to prepare them to honour and respect Kenya's constitution. The Council felt that the change the constitution group was going to confuse and disorient people.

In September 1978, the NCKK Executive Committee in its efforts at supplementing government's efforts in development of a society of enlightening citizens, passed the following resolution:

"The Kenya Constitution should be translated into Kiswahili to enable wananchi to read it in the language they can understand and church leaders should teach members of their congregations the fundamental human rights and freedoms protected by the constitutions."

Both in 1986 and 1988, the NCKK expressed its grave concern over the constitutional amendments to remove the security of tenure of the Attorney General and the Controller and Auditor General in the first instance, and that of the judges of High Court and Court of Appeal in the second instance.

Our concern is that over time through peace meal changes, the Constitution formulated at the time of independence has been greatly watered down. The cumulative effects of the constitutional amendments has been to alter the philosophy upon which the independence constitution was based.

(a) Since the Kenya Constitution was the fruit of almost a century of Kenya's political aspiration, its actual formulation being only a culmination of those aspirations, it should develop in time rather than get limited or diluted.

(b) The Constitution is the *supreme* arbiter of social affairs and the bed-rock of law, order and justice. Therefore, Constitutional change should be a very slow, deliberate process with mechanisms for wider participation e.g., through Parliamentary hearings and enquiry from experts. This is important in view of the fact that Kenya is a one-party state as far as the expressing of differing views it concerned. That will give space for all voices including opposing ones to be heard over prolonged periods of time in order:

(i) To avoid haste or passing for the sake of expedience and also:

(ii) To ensure stability of institutions and therefore predictability of the same.

(c) The Kenyan people have a right to be fully informed about the objects of intended Constitutional amendments so they can ponder over the subsequent consequences. But the way the Constitutional changes have been made denied the people that right.

(d) It is to be noted that we do not advocate opposition for its own sake. The cardinal concern here is that the machinery instituting Constitutional changes should be democratic in the widest sense of the word.

(e) The Kenya Constitution should be translated into Kiswahili so that the majority of Kenyans can read it in the language they understand.

## **2. PEOPLE PARTICIPATION**

By nature, human beings have an intrinsic urge to want to belong. One of the most obvious ways of belonging is through participation. In summary, it is right to say "I belong because I participate, and since I participate therefore I belong." If one is left out, one feels his worth is abused and is being considered an irrelevant or non-person. That is why in places where non-participation in the affairs (social, political, or economic) that most affect people's lives is institutionalized (colonial or apartheid situation), those people will struggle for their right to participate.

Meaningful and effective participation in the social, political, and economic affairs of the nation therefore is one of the visible expressions of freedom and dignity of the citizens.

We wish to reiterate that when it comes to participation, it must be authentic, meaningful and effective. It is quite possible for people to be cheated through machinations and manipulations into believing that they are participating, but in effect they are not. In such a situation, it will not take very long before people come to realize that their participation is of little or no consequence, and as a response they will be antagonistic to the system. And among the things that grown up human beings hate most is to be “kidded” i.e., to be treated like kids.

One of the rights of Kenyans as enshrined in the constitution is to participate in the election of their representatives. There are many types of elections that take place all the time in the lives of the people at grassroots, district, regional and national levels. The most significant form of participation for the majority of Kenyans however is in parliamentary elections. No wonder this generates a lot of emotions and tensions, and frustrations for some, just as it provides a time for joy and jubilations for others. The method and administration of elections therefore is extremely important in the national life of our people.

Acutely aware of the centrality of participation in the political life of society, the churches in Kenya and the NCCK in particular have continued to encourage the government to allow for more and meaningful participation. That was the case both before and after independence. The NCCK news magazine “Rock” was the first newspaper in the country to challenge the colonial government on the inevitability of a one man one vote in a Kenyan undiluted democracy.

In February 1958, the NCCK Executive Committee passed a resolution which wanted the Minister for African Affairs to allow political meetings to be held at the Stadium instead of at Makadara Hall which was not adequate.

In recent years, the NCCK has expressed serious concern over the rigging of elections; a practice which robs the electorate of their legitimate right to choose candidates of their choice. Rigging of elections is a sin against the electorate because in effect it means those responsible for the exercise do not respect and value the dignity of the electorate. Secondly, it “kicks” the electorate that they are participating fairly and freely when in fact they are not. On their part, the electorate will lose confidence in the electoral system and question the integrity of the officials responsible for the exercise. At worst, they will lose trust in such officials. They will also tend to be apathetic towards participation in the elections. In our observation, that is the kind of situation we found ourselves in following the 1988 elections. The by-elections of the post-1988 elections have for instance been characterized by the lowest voter turn-out ever.

In light of the above, the NCCK wishes to make the following comments and recommendations:

(a) On Queue-voting

The NCKK recognizes and appreciates the efforts that the ruling party KANU is making in the manner of queue nominating/voting in order to make the voting system fairer by involving many people to participate in nominations and elections.

This grants the opportunity to every member to participate in the elections right from the grassroots to the national levels. We reckon that in the elections, the cases of rigging have been rampant even where a secret ballot has been used. However, the secret ballot has a permanent record which can be retrievable. In its face value, queue-nominating/voting would be very fair because it is done in broad daylight. It is cheaper and also time-saving. Therefore it could be the ideal method, but the practice hitherto requires that it should be reviewed.

It would seem that queue-voting was introduced because the secret ballot was abused through rigging. We contend that what should be done is to seek ways of removing the abuse rather than change the entire system. In our opinion, queue-voting is by nature intimidating and therefore there are many voters who will not participate with clear conscience. We still hold the view that if church leaders are publicly identified with a particular candidate against another, their pastoral ministry to those they did not support would be affected adversely. Needless to say, even the "flock" are not supposed to openly show whom they support because this would likely breed hatred and disunity. Indeed, consequences of the queue-voting already show that it generated a lot of hatred and divided families and individuals. The Council therefore wishes to call upon the party to come up with a method which can enable all bona fide voters to participate. Church readers, top civil servants and members of the armed forces, most of whom are *party members*, *should be able to participate in nominations by secret ballot as promised by the party*. The danger of this practice is that it will create two classes of citizens in the country which will smack of inequality. The best solution we recommend therefore is to scrap queue-voting altogether and revert to the secret ballot for all. Our aim is to help evolve a free, fair and fully participatory practice which will encourage love, peace and unity among all Kenyans.

We welcome the President's announcement that the results will be announced on the spot and this may remove some of the abuses. It is our hope that there will be no intimidation to those who may dispute the results and call for a recount.

(b) The 70% Clause

This clause which allows the candidate to be declared a winner after gaining 70% of the nominating party members saw some candidates get into parliament by a minority nomination.

In one case where there are more than 68,000 registered KANU members, only 6.64% participated in the queuing nominations, but the candidate went through parliament because he had gained 70% of those who turned up to queue-vote on the nomination day. Another one went through where only 14.84% of the registered KANU members participated.

*The NCCK would prefer that the 70% clause be scrapped off COMPLETELY. If on the other hand, the party insists on retaining it, then it should be 70% of the total registered voters as it had been suggested by the President. In this case, the candidate will have in fact been nominated and elected by the majority.*

(c) Expulsion of Members

We realise that human institutions such as political parties are both inclusive and exclusive. A party must have within its rules, the power to exclude as part of its inner disciplinary life. However, the recent spate of party expulsions of people holding different opinions have tended to create deep intimidations and fear on the part of party members to express their honestly-held opinions freely.

These expulsions have created fear in some members of Parliament as we have witnessed that many motions, especially those on constitutional changes, passing through in the Parliament with very little debate or none at all. Now one wonders how the electorate can depend on their members of parliament to represent them when the same members feel insecure and threatened.

*We recommend that the party refrains totally from expelling members since there is only one party. We are concerned that some people have been expelled from the party permanently and as it were making them "stateless." If in a family a member makes a mistake he is punished within that family and not thrown out because he has only one family anyway. The same should be the case in a one-Party situation.*

(d) Returning Officers

It is to be noted that allegations of rigging of elections are directed not only to the queue-voting but even to the secret ballot as well. This suggests that the returning officers are not altogether being fully just in their job. One of the ways of improving on the system is to have other impartial people

participating in the returning of votes. We therefore propose that returning officers should include not only civil servants but also religious personalities and others known for their impartiality.

### **3. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES**

We propose that KANU should consider constitutional matters that have been raised by various individuals and that have implications for people's participation. This should include:

- (i) The possibility of a referendum on issues of national importance.
- (ii) Tenure of presidency to be 5-Year term, and we add
- (iii) The state president to be elected through a vote by all Kenyans and for him to be above political parties.
- (iv) Review of detention without trial with a view to abolishing it.

### **4. SINGLE-PARTY AND MULTI-PARTY DEMOCRACY**

In the recent past, a lot has been said about the issue of single-party versus multi-party democracy. In our opinion, we consider that what really matters most is to evolve a sustainable system which will enable Kenyans to participate meaningfully and effectively in creating a society that is just, peaceful, and with a unity of purpose to the end that all Kenyans will be provided for in basic human needs. Such a system must also safeguard and protect the fundamental rights of every Kenyan which must include the right to life, the right to liberty, the right not to be subjected to torture or inhuman treatment, the right to property, the right to privacy of one's home and business, the right to the protection of law, freedom of worship, freedom of expression (and freedom after expression), freedom of the press, freedom against discrimination, freedom of association and freedom of movement.

After listening to various views concerning multiparty democracy, what seems to be a bone of contention vis-à-vis single-party democracy is the issue of checks and balances. That is an issue we suggest that KANU looks into very seriously indeed. For instance, it will be useful for KANU to consider what implications the numerous constitutional amendments since 1963 gave on the system of government we have. Granted that the amendments were made piecemeal, but their cumulative effect should be evaluated as a package in order to appreciate the extent to which the system of government envisaged at independence has been changed.

Going by statements made especially by His Excellency the President, we understand that KANU is not opposed to a multi-party system as a matter of principle. The issue rather is that of time. That means a multi-party system is envisaged for sometime in the future. How far into the future is a question that many Kenyans might want to ask. In order to allay the kind of anxieties that an endless future will create in the minds of many, we propose that KANU should come up with a programme that shows how the system will be transitioned into a multi-party democracy. Such a programme should include inter alia:

(a) A mechanism through which a majority of Kenyans will participate meaningfully and constructively in discussions concerning the Kenyan and the Kenya, we want.

(b) Criteria for the formation of political parties. This is a critical point vis-à-vis the multiplicity of ethnic groups in the country, for instance, a political party that has support of only one situation. For a political party to qualify for registration it must have a reasonable percentage of followers, e.g., not less than 50% of total membership from tribes other than that of the head of the party. Then again, such membership should be spread throughout all the ethnic groups. That is because political parties should be national in character and not merely tribal.

## **5. QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP**

Leadership in any society is vital for development and harmony. We believe that genuine leaders are made by God because he is the one who gave them leadership qualities and then chosen by people. But very often, once in leadership positions, and have acquired power, leaders tend to forget that they are in fact supposed to be servants of the people; they become lords over the people instead. And so their relationship with the led assumes the master/servant form.

Leaders should not only lead but should also be good examples to the people and especially the youth to whom they will pass on the leadership. But a critical assessment of leadership in this country will leave a lot to be desired in this respect. The relationship between leaders of various institutions and organizations is characterized by hostilities, quarrels and even internal wrangles. Leaders in this country hardly listen to one another and end up trading accusations between themselves in public and over a prolonged period of time. It is quite common to read in our daily papers about leaders burying their hatchets (which incidentally keep on resurrecting all the time). It is a pity when we consider how much energies and resources we leaders have wasted quarrelling and fighting among ourselves instead of working together to build a strong and united nation.



We wish to point out that here we are referring not only to political leaders but to religious and other leaders as well. After all, are we not products of the same socio-political set-up. Part of the problem we see is that leaders instead of having power of love, all they have is the love of power. And that is very dangerous for leaders. Generally, our leadership is in want of the following qualities which are all work of good leadership: humility, tolerance, gentleness, compassion, justice, and bearing one another in love. If our leaders had and practised these qualities, the result would be mutual respect and unity of our people through the bond of peace.

In our view, there is need for leaders in this country to do self-examination and seek where they have gone wrong. Then genuinely repent to God for cleansing. That way God will bless our land and our leaders.

In order to strengthen and improve the leadership and harness the available resources for nation building, we propose the following:

(a) The establishment of a mechanism through which leaders in the country will have dynamic and constant dialogue among themselves. God himself says “come and let us reason together.” An example of such a mechanism is the national leaders’ population conference, the second such conference having taken place in 1989 with very useful results.

(b) KANU should institutionalize this review committee so that it will in future be held regularly.

(c) A national code of conduct should be formulated under which leaders of all walks of life shall be disciplined.

(d) KANU leadership should desist from advising KANU Youth League members to behave in a manner that is disrespectful of other leaders in the society. Instead, KANU leaders should endeavour to inculcate in the league members the sense of duty, respect of law and order, and in conformity with our culture, respect for leaders and elders. The league members should not be made to feel that they can replace the work of the police, but may supplement the same.

## **6. SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES**

It is beyond the scope of this memorandum to go into any details concerning socio-economic issues that are important to the lives of Kenyans. In our considered opinion, abject poverty and its derivatives is the most critical and challenging single issue in Kenyan society. Ways and means of combating poverty should be sought vigorously and towards that end the KANU government should spare no effort. Very commendable work has been done

by the Presidential Committee on Employment, clearly demonstrating the seriousness with which he takes the problem of unemployment. KANU should use its machinery and wide network to attack poverty in all its forms.

In the same way that through Harambee funds have been raised to alleviate problems in education and the plight of the disabled, we propose setting up of a Programme to Combat Poverty (PCP) at a national level and funds be raised for this purpose. Details of modalities for setting up such a programme may be worked out in consultation with various institutions in the country.

The NCCCK member churches have suggested that the following issues be looked into critically by the government. We will simply list them down for the Committee's attention:

- (a) The education system
- (b) Corruption and tribalism which are the twin cancers in society
- (c) The merits and demerits of cost-sharing
- (d) Forced Harambees
- (e) Land issues
- (f) The need to strengthen rather than weaken professional bodies in the country
- (g) Concern over prolonged running of Nairobi by a Commission thereby denying the Nairobi people chance to elect leaders of their choice.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

Mr. Chairman, we wish to conclude by reiterating that the NCCCK is deeply committed to development, peace, justice, and participatory democracy. Since its inception, the Council has strongly advocated for human rights, social justice for all, unity of all Kenyans, and the rule of law.

Social justice and the equitable distribution of wealth for all Kenyans are as much a part of the Gospel we are called upon to declare as is the message of salvation to every individual soul. Our job is not to be concerned with politics or economics for their own sake, but with character and personality which cannot be developed except in an environment in which the political scheme and the economic framework are in accordance with the Divine will. The methods we adopt in the effect to transform men and women through the power of Christ must be adjusted to the new conditions that will confront them, the new rights that they will be called upon to carry.

Mr. Chairman, our thoughts and prayers are with you as you carry on the enormous and noble task ahead of you. Thank you.

*Rev. Samuel Kobia*  
*NCKK General Secretary*

*Rt. Rev. George Njuguna*  
*Chairman*  
*NCKK Justice, Peace and Reconciliation*  
*Committee*

*INSTEAD LET JUSTICE FLOW LIKE A STREAM  
AND RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE A RIVER THAT  
NEVER GOES DRY*

*AMOS 5:24*



# EUROPEAN KAIROS DOCUMENT

For a Socially Just, Life-Sustaining and Democratic  
Europe

*A call to faith communities, trades unions and all  
movements and individuals that are working for social,  
political and economic change, to build coalitions to work  
for the liberation of society from the stranglehold of the  
deregulated globalised economy and its competitive  
culture*

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# CONTENTS

	INTRODUCTION	245
I	SEEING THE TRUTH OF THE SITUATION	251
1	Our experiences in the global context	251
2	The special situation of Central and Eastern European countries	252
3	The special situation of the European Union	253
II	RECOGNISING THE CAUSES	257
1	Roots in European culture	257
2	Key points of our analysis	258
III	MAKING A JUDGEMENT WITH OUR HEARTS AND MINDS	263
1	Old conflicts	263
2.	New Possibilities	265
IV	ACTING TOGETHER	267
1	Recognition and acknowledgement	267
2	Refusal	268
3	New visions	270
4	Small-scale alternatives	270
5	Political involvement	273





## INTRODUCTION

### *In Europe there are clear signs of change*

Unemployed people are no longer willing to be excluded and are taking the initiative. Trade unions are again active in politics and no longer allow their hard-won rights to be destroyed. Women's groups are tackling patriarchal structures. Students are protesting against cuts in education, the community against a health system that favours the rich and farmers against agricultural policies that benefit large companies and the owners of capital. Christians and even institutional churches are returning to their biblical roots and rediscovering their "preferential option for the poor." Congregations and citizen's action groups are giving sanctuary to refugees threatened with deportation and taking further action. Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) are pooling their resources in various campaigns for justice between North and South. The peace movements have gone public again, and ecological movements fight vigorously against threats to the natural world. Intellectuals, artists and even middle class people are speaking up and saying, "This is enough!"

With this European KAIROS DOCUMENT, we would like to discern the meaning of these new movements in Europe, and play our part in the changes they seek.

In 1985 the repression of the majority of the population in *South Africa* by apartheid reached its height. At the same time resistance was growing inside and outside the country. Following their theological reflection, Christians involved in the liberation struggle called upon the churches to opt clearly for resistance and solidarity. This served to strengthen the world-wide anti-apartheid alliances. They called their challenge a KAIROS document. They understood Kairos as the Greek word used in the Bible with the meaning *opportunity for repentance and a change of heart, opportunity for change and for decisive action with the oppressed in a time of crisis or at the moment of truth*. In 1988, Christians in Central America were inspired by the South African document and produced their own Central American Kairos Document. In cooperation with the military regimes of the region, President Reagan had begun a "Total war against the poor" and their social movements. Those Christians among them formulated "Challenges to the Churches and the World." Finally, Christians from the Philippines, South Korea, Namibia, South Africa, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala joined together to publish "The Road to Damascus: Kairos and Conversion." They called upon the churches and Christians, particularly in the North, to withdraw their support for the persecution of people (particularly in the South) and to renounce colonialism and imperialism—by analogy with the conversion of

Saul to Paul on the way to Damascus, when he turned from persecution to establishing the Messianic community of peace and justice.

In 1989 ecumenical groups took up this call at the First European Ecumenical Assembly for “Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation” in Basel. They formed the European grassroots network *KAIROS EUROPA*. They had two particular concerns. Firstly, that injustice is not life-threatening only for people in the South. Neo-liberalism, based on deregulated market forces, is leading to mass unemployment and social cutbacks in Europe too. It is not just a matter of the injustice that Europe meets out to other continents, but also of growing injustice within Europe itself, against which there is growing resistance. Secondly, such resistance can only be successful if people in solidarity with the excluded and disadvantaged in South and North, East and West, join together across the borders of different faiths and philosophies. This challenge, therefore, is not issued to Christians and churches alone. How did it come about? Since 1996 KAIROS EUROPA has invited groups, movements and individuals to develop a European Kairos Document. To date, over two hundred of them have shared in the process of discussion and in formulating several drafts. New responses, additions and amendments have been coming in every day, so it is clear that we cannot claim that this version is the last word. We wish to contribute to stimulating a process that goes beyond this document. We invite you to think about this document, to sign it, to continue the discussion and, above all, to form alliances with others in order to change the present situation. The causes of unjust developments in Europe and world-wide have common roots. We can only tackle them with any expectation of success if we work together.

### **Who are the people making this call?**

The authors and signatories are people and groups of different kinds, with varying interests and political options, but with a common concern.

- They include mainly *self-help organisations* of people particularly hard-hit by economic and social developments in Europe, along with *grassroots groups* and movements in solidarity with them. They work for social justice, peace and the environment; solidarity groups in partnership with groups and movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America; people struggling for social justice in central, western and eastern Europe; groups working against patriarchal structures and for just relations between the sexes; groups combating racism on behalf of coexistence based on equal rights; peace groups and groups fighting against environmental degradation and for sustainable ways of living and working, and for sustainable attitudes and structures in all areas.

- Among us are people who have been *excluded*. Their work has been taken away. They are in debt. They have lost their homes. They are recipients of social security and are lone parents. They are disabled. Women are especially disadvantaged in all groups. They are older people on small pensions. They are asylum seekers and migrants who suffer discrimination. They are victims of structural and sexual violence. They are excluded from society and the official churches, and from any possibility of influence, either directly or indirectly. Some of them even have no legal status. Many of them have retreated into ghettos, others suffer depression and others react with unaccustomed aggression. They seek to unite with others for the right to be included.
- Among us are *people in insecure employment*. Many are afraid of being the next to lose their jobs. Therefore they allow their employers to pressurise them into accepting lower wages, to accept worse working conditions, even to abandon a sense of solidarity with others and to pursue their own self-interest. They feel under stress, fall ill more and more often, but may not do so without risking their work and income. They feel that they are fighting for survival and have little joy any more. Together with others they seek strength to hold their heads up high.
- Among us are *young people* with no hope of a decent future. They receive education that is inadequate. Many of them are illiterate; others are not very competitive and will never have a regular job. Instead of going to school or college they struggle to make a living. They fight for survival by living on the streets, working for meagre wages and by prostitution. They fight as child soldiers against other child soldiers in the wars of others, or find themselves constantly fleeing from oppression. Carefree play and the opportunity to develop their talents has given way to drug-taking and a culture of violence. Among us also are groups working for street children, others for the ecological rights of children who have been poisoned in their mother's womb by environmental pollution. Young people watch the present adult generation stripping the earth of its resources as if there were no tomorrow. Since Chernobyl, an industrial disaster that recognised no international frontiers, they have lost all confidence in any responsibility being taken for future generations. They are searching, therefore, for partners with whom they can fight together for a future worth having.
- Among us are *women* threatened by cultural violence, physically and mentally. They are often treated like objects and degradingly stereotyped by the media, in literature and other arts. They are subjected to sexual harassment in many work situations. Their contributions to work and home are often taken for granted and made

invisible in a world where women are considered to be subordinate to men. Violated and excluded by economic, political and religious structures, women resist all these forms of oppression. With other excluded groups they wish to be full participants in these areas from which they have previously been excluded.

- Among us are groups and *people from central and Eastern Europe* who are in the midst of transition and sometimes dramatic change. Before the majority of people had any idea about what was happening, a minority with power and influence were quickly able to take advantage of the situation. There was no analytical debate about the failed experiment with state socialism or the structures of the market economy. Many of the people have lost out socially and culturally; many have been uprooted. They were looking for a better connection between freedom and justice.
- They feel they have been forcibly colonised by a new power. They do not want a bureaucratic state in which all the structures are extremely well organised, but a state in which they can enjoy social and economic justice. So more and more people are now ready to oppose the dictatorship of the market. A voice from Hungary said, "We live under the third dictatorship in our lifetimes, Stalin, Hitler and now the world market."
- Among us are *people of the middle classes* who have in some way or other suffered discrimination or poverty and so have become aware. They see that injustice, the dismantling of the social welfare system, violence and the destruction of nature are in the end damaging the whole of society and consequently their own children and grandchildren. It is now clear that poverty is increasingly affecting their social class. They too suffer illnesses caused by pollution, and are becoming spiritually empty. They are trying, therefore, not to get stuck in the ethical dilemma between understanding these issues on the one hand, and the pressure to keep up their standard of living on the other. They wish to join with others to bring about the necessary changes in society.

### **Whom are we addressing?**

Many people have lost faith that they are able to do anything to correct economic or political mistakes through voting or through dialogue with those in power. Some have given up hope. Others, however, organise themselves in *civil society*, a term used internationally to describe organisations and actions by citizens in all spheres other than the private and public sectors and the armed forces. We are convinced that it is only through such civil engagement from below that practical alternatives can be developed, and that economics

and politics can once again be placed in the service of human beings. For this reason this appeal does not go directly to economic and political institutions, but more indirectly by being addressed to people active in civil society. The concept of civil society is not unambiguous. There are those active in civil society working for the interests of the politically powerful and economically wealthy. We want to engage with those active in civil society working for people, nature and future generations—particularly those in conflict with those with power and money. We want to invite as many people as possible, given the very critical situation both in Europe and world-wide, to join (in their own interest) with these vital movements and, thereby, to send out signals of hope. Most self-help organisations and movements concentrate on a single issue or particular group of people, e.g., unemployment. Such a sharp focus is necessary, but because the urgency of the work itself is so great, activists sometimes have no energy or courage left with which to fight on a broader front or to get involved politically. Single issue organising is the best way to overcome the exclusion and discrimination against people in our competitive society. Single issue groups are unique resources of wisdom, experience and knowledge of strategies for action. A *fundamental change in our economic, political and value system* is necessary today. Because no individual can achieve that alone, it is paramount to work together. Our goal is to invite civil society groups like those mentioned above, as well as individuals, to engage in a process of reflection and action so as to reinforce their capacity to network and form alliances. It is not about building a new large-scale organisation, but the enabling of practical coalitions at all levels and with specific goals; local coalitions like Agenda 21; national coalitions like the solidarity with organisations of unemployed people in France; European alliances like the Euromarches against unemployment, job insecurity and exclusion. In order to strengthen the ability to form coalitions, and to actually form them, we propose *four steps* in this document:

- I. Seeing the truth of the situation
- II. Recognising the causes
- III. Making a judgement with our hearts and minds
- IV. Acting together

In this spirit we invite organisations and persons committed to a socially just, peaceful, life-sustaining and democratic Europe to reach agreements going beyond their single issue and, together with the victims, to support, or form, politically effective coalitions.



## I. SEEING THE TRUTH OF THE SITUATION

### 1. Our experiences in the global context

Europe has enjoyed great prosperity, but now is an increasingly *deeply divided society*. It is well-known that, world-wide, 20% enjoy 80% of the income and resources, while 80% of the world's population share the rest. Just how extreme this contrast between rich and poor has become is shown by United Nations statistics published in 1997, which state that the net assets of the richest people in the world, 358 dollar billionaires, equal the total annual income of 45% of the world's population (2.3 billion people). This division, which is increasingly evident in Europe, is experienced not only in material ways. The entire lives of people who are excluded are characterised by difficulties, suffering, stress, insecurity, fears and abandoned hopes. Working people in the rest of Europe are being persuaded of the virtues of the British model of employment, following the pattern of the United States, and so are being prepared for *lower salaries and worse working conditions*. *Structural changes in agriculture* are rapid, farming is giving way to so-called agri-business. A small number of farms based on ecological principles will survive. Others are trying to save or develop cooperative farms. The majority of the small farms, probably in the long term more than 50%, will be forced out of business. Unemployment leads to a loss of self-respect and dignity and may result in a dependence on social security or even in homelessness. Women are particularly disadvantaged and single parents even more so. The greatest problem in Europe and world-wide is undoubtedly growing structural unemployment on a massive scale. Nowadays we are witnessing not only 19th century style exploitation but also *exclusion*. We are very aware that 70% of excluded people are women. There is a growing current in society which dismisses those who not winners in today's competitive world market. The same global mechanisms which led to 500 years of genocide, ecocide, slavery and colonialism are increasingly impacting on Western Europe. We must not be surprised that *violence* is rapidly increasing, given the dramatic increase in *poverty and misery of people in the South, the East and the West*. Europe has a long tradition of violence; sexual violence against women, abuse of children, violence against nature and against people of other cultures who, disparagingly, have been labelled as primitive. The history of our culture and language is full of myths, symbols and expressions of violence. From these roots violence is again breaking out in schools, families and cities. Feelings of powerlessness can lead to hopelessness, which fosters the spiral of violence. Old hostilities between different population groups break out again and are artificially exacerbated, for example in the former Yugoslavia. The arms trade is flourishing. The manufacturing of security equipment for the police, security forces and prisons is that part of the economy with the highest growth rate. Although the East-West conflict is over in Europe, certain forms of military spending are still growing, e.g., for the Eurofighter (10 billion

pounds in the next few years). We could even speak of a new militarisation of the West. New enemy stereotypes serve to justify the rapid reaction forces, e.g., Eurocorps, designed to safeguard the economic interests of western industrialised nations. We also witness structural violence, the erosion of democracy by multinationals and financial institutions, the tyranny of advertising and consumption, and discrimination against critical thinking in the media. With regard to issues of *ecology*, we are at a standstill. Despite Chernobyl, nuclear energy has regained respectability; reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and the saving of energy fall far short of the necessary targets, so that global warming proceeds apace. With the argument of needing to be competitive in the world market, ecological standards are being lowered, and the safeguards with regard to genetic engineering are being eroded. Enormous quantities of natural resources are mobilised for a production of goods and services which are only consumed due to the perpetual artificial stimulation of needs and addictions. The ecological question, considered globally, has a massive social impact. Poverty in the Two Thirds World is growing directly as a result of ecological degradation caused by the dominance of economic interests. For example, the clear reduction in the quantity of rain in the Sahel in the last two decades is to be understood in the light of global warming. Hunger in north-east Brazil is not just connected with land ownership, but also with the deforested coastal areas. According to estimates of the International Red Cross, there are already about 50 million environmental refugees. The forecasts for the immediate future are crucial. If ecological structural change is not tackled soon, the Fraunhofer Institute estimates an additional 900 million to 1.8 billion deaths from starvation by the year 2030. The rich 20% of humankind not only consumes over 80% of the earth's resources, but also causes over 80% of the toxic emissions, and consumes over 80% of the fossil fuels and most of the non-renewable resources.

## **2. The special situation of Central and Eastern European countries**

It has become customary to interpret social and economic difficulties in central and Eastern Europe as the legacy of communism. This is too facile, and misses the point. The intrusion of world market forces into these countries, however, has virtually denied them any possibility for *social and economic self-determination*. Many of them (especially Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia) were already highly in debt to the West before the fall of the iron curtain and in this way they were victims of the same mechanism as the debtor countries of the Two Thirds World. After the fall of communism, however, resources were sold out to the West and the society divided dramatically into a few winners and many losers. To give only a few examples: In the former East Germany only 6% of productive assets have remained in the ownership of East Germans; the rest was bought up by agencies from the West that already owned capital. The north coast of Russia



has been bought up almost entirely by large western enterprises because it holds large oil and mineral reserves, other raw materials and forests. In the rest of Russia, Trans-National Companies (TNCs) benefit substantially from profits made from its natural resources. In exchange for loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to assist the election campaign of Boris Yeltsin, Russia reduced massively the export duties on its natural resources, thus depriving the impoverished country of a further source of foreign currency. The liberalisation of markets in countries of the former Eastern bloc has been a continuous drain on its wealth, because in free market trading the weak always lose out to the rich. The *division between rich and poor* in the countries of central and Eastern Europe is dramatic. Unemployment is far above the level of western European countries. Structural adjustment programmes are hitting women in particular. The weakest in society are being pushed into abject poverty. The division of society is all the more dramatic as it is taking place so rapidly, joblessness and the severest forms of poverty having been hitherto largely unknown. A new disturbing development in the *search for peace* is the integration of central and eastern European countries into NATO. These countries are burdened with the need for new armaments in order to modernise their armies. The western arms manufacturers win, the people of those countries lose. There could have been a different approach that did not extend western domination, that of together making a completely new security programme. The necessary instrument already exists: the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It only needed to be strengthened. The *environment* is a further area where the West must accept its share of responsibility. Western European countries have used countries of eastern Europe as dumping grounds for contaminated and dangerous refuse, so adding to the pollution caused by those countries themselves. Some organisations in the West are carrying out charitable work in Eastern Europe. There are, however, very few statements, hardly any analysis and little political lobbying concerning structural questions. There is an urgent need for action in these respects.

### **3. The special situation of the European Union (EU)**

In 1993 the *single market* was introduced in the European Union, using the argument that it would create jobs. It was immediately possible to see through this. When, in 1992, the Treaty of Maastricht decided upon Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), this was supported with the argument that this was a further step which would make political and social union inevitable. What has actually happened, however, is that monetary union has been ratified which is designed to achieve currency stability (or stability of wealth creation) only. It is not linked to any legally binding commitment to implement a common employment and social policy. Further, monetary union is not linked to a European policy for international financial and economic institutions. The goal of such a policy should be to regulate flows of

capital, and particularly to curtail speculation and prevent tax flight. Instead, the convergence criteria for entry into monetary union, linked to public budgets which are over-indebted through tax flight, lead to austerity politics. Consequently, the people of Europe are forced into the same structural adjustment programmes as the IMF dictates to the over indebted countries of the South and East. The guiding interest of political action in the EU is to create the most profitable conditions for capital growth, and to position itself in competition against the US and Japan. The projects of the single market and EMU basically aim at concentrating capital for purposes of competition. The consequences are growing *unemployment, social cutbacks and the marginalisation of disadvantaged regions in Europe*. Consequently, the EU promotes further *liberalisation of world trade* and erodes the favourable trading conditions for former colonies (as agreed in the Lomé Convention). This has serious negative consequences for the countries in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific (ACP countries), which have already suffered enough through western European colonialism. It does not promote social and ecological standards in world trade, as is being shown again in negotiations on the Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI), which, in its present form, means the total abdication of social and political responsibility in favour of economic interests. It undertakes hardly any initiative to cancel the debts of formerly colonised countries, thus demonstrating that it is not prepared to face up to the responsibility of 500 years of colonialism during which there was a constant flow of resources from South to North. European countries have caused many political and social problems in the Two Thirds World, yet *refugees and migrants* from those countries are being rejected, in ever more brutal ways. *Racism* has thus been revived in Europe, and is increasingly violent. Through such policies and practices in 'Fortress Europe' we are losing our sensitivity to the worth of each person. *Ecologically* speaking, the EU presents a divided picture. On the one hand it adopts good legislation, e.g., on drinking water. On the other, developing the single market, which results in vastly increased flows of traffic, rather than regionalisation of the economy, makes no ecological sense. Most laws, however, are reducing ecological standards, e.g., recent legislation regarding genetic engineering. It is feared that the recent developments in genetically modified seeds for crops of wheat etc will massively increase the use of herbicides, which will lead to monocultures and a loss of bio-diversity. In the agricultural sector there is still no index that puts a visible cost against environmental damage. Such a measure would lead to a more ecological framework and less use of all agricultural chemicals (fertilisers, crop sprays, animal growth hormones and antibiotics) and to agriculture that would nurture the environment. Alternative/renewable energies are not receiving sufficient support. Agenda 21, launched at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, which should have been implemented long ago, is not given priority by the EU. In short, whoever had believed that Europe, which has much greater influence than any single country, would bring its old social traditions and its new ecological consciousness into play in the international community, must feel deceived. On the contrary, *the EU is a*

*vehicle for promoting free market principles in Europe.* The EU and the governments of the member states give priority to optimising conditions for the financial markets. Already the market has triumphed over concern for social needs. The scope for democratic action remains limited in the EU. The European Parliament has little decision-making power, and the national parliaments are satisfied with accepting or refusing measures adopted by the Council of Ministers in conjunction with the European Commission. Without a fundamental policy U-turn, Western Europe will again continue on a path of global destruction and injustice.



## II. RECOGNISING THE CAUSES

### 1. Roots in European culture

Deeply rooted in *European culture* is the *violent desire for domination and possession*. The roots of this can be traced back to the origins of patriarchy, namely around 2000bce. More recently, perhaps the most influential expression of this is the Hellenistic – Roman imperialism, as seen in the work of the Greek philosopher Aristotle in the fourth century BCE. It is he, the tutor of the conqueror Alexander the Great, who set out the classical expression of the social system where there can be one ruler over subjugated peoples, or an emperor and superior race that dominate the barbarians. Within the family structure a similar paternalistic patriarchy was established, where a husband dominates his wife and family. Similarly owners dominate their slaves and humans the non-human creation. This system was inscribed in the statute book of Roman law and became the backbone of patriarchal western civilisation. Through the Emperor Constantine came Christianity's link with Roman law and empire (312 CE). From being a small persecuted Jewish sect, Christianity, as the state religion, has acted violently against other peoples and faith communities, especially Jews and Muslims. This intolerance was expressed in such atrocities as the Crusades, the Inquisition and the genocide accompanying the Conquistadors in Latin America right up to the Shoah (holocaust) of the fascism of Hitler and the recent ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. *For the last five or six centuries*, the tradition of cultural violence has been connected with the *violence of the capitalist monetary economy*, which has used *science and technology* to control nature. Violence towards women and people of other races, enshrined in Europe's myth, legend and symbol, erupted most notably in the burning of witches (Francis Bacon) and murderous forms of colonialism. *Today* the "West" which emerged from these traditions, has achieved economic, political and cultural dominance world-wide. Its latest name is '*globalisation*.' The economic sector and dominant political forces are promoting the following myth: the economy has become globalised and consequently all working people and all countries must 'adapt' themselves, as if to an unalterable fate. This is called 'structural adjustment,' for which so-called reforms must be made. Whoever does not keep up with world market competition is left outside. This is presented as a principle just as valid as the natural law of evolution, with the 'survival of the fittest.' Following the classical liberalism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this ideology of our political and economic leaders is called *neo-liberalism*. It still disseminates the misleading opinion that it is in the interests of the weak when the strong are procured advantage. We would wish that the major political parties, the Socialist, Social Democratic and Green Parties in Europe, offered a clearer analysis and appropriate alternatives. The same is true for the majority of trade unions and the major European churches. We do see that they criticise the consequences of the system and make general statements

against “pure market economy.” However, they should name the culprit together with the consequences and have courage to make a detailed analysis of the mechanisms, structures and cultural and religious norms which make up the system. They do not attack the interests which lie behind these mechanisms, and they justify this by saying they cannot be changed. If they did, they would breathe a liberating strength into many people, enabling them to overcome their feeling of helplessness vis-à-vis these structures and together to look for alternatives. This is precisely where our appeal comes in. We want to break through the diffuse anxiety about anonymous and apparently fatal powers by calling them by name. Thus we will be better able to develop alternatives of our own and influence policy makers.

## **2. Key points of our analysis**

- *Global concentration of economic power*

Globalisation is the playing field only of those people and systems that deal with flows of capital, which include finances, the economy (including technological development) and the media. The TNCs, banks and insurance companies, in conjunction with the mass media which they control, are the ‘global players,’ and they successfully play off unionised workers and national governments against each other. They drive small and medium sized companies into merciless competition, and often into bankruptcy. The local communities affected have no effective say in the decision-making in these concerns, though they are sometimes drastically affected.

- *Playing the workers off against each other*

New technologies result in higher productivity. Less work is needed for the same output. However, instead of using this situation of less labour and simultaneously increased profits to achieve a fair distribution of work and income for all, ever increasing levels of unemployment are used to increase the pressure on those still in employment to accept lower wages and more unfavourable working conditions. Every time large scale redundancies are made the stock market booms and the value of shares increases. The profits are seldom reinvested in innovative, viable businesses which both use natural resources sparingly and create ‘good’ jobs. More often they are channelled into increasingly speculative short-term financial transactions, a practice that runs the risk of leading to a crisis in the world economy.

- *Tax avoidance*

The owners of capital use transnational freedom to make profits while bypassing the tax systems of states. They pay no taxes either on profits made from monetary assets. Neoliberal politics reinforce this process through

cutting taxes for capital-owners, with the argument that this leads to the creation of jobs, which has now been proved wrong. In fact, the increasing liquidity of capital is invested in rationalisation and speculative financial trading. Tax losses through mass unemployment, tax breaks for the wealthy and capital and tax flight are again the main reasons for the over-indebtedness of practically all public budgets. In this way the owners of capital profit twice, from their tax evasion, and from interest gained on money lent to the state. States, for their part, are withdrawing ever more money from social benefits in order to finance this tax evasion and their interest payments.

- *Financial speculation*

Growing attacks by speculators have occurred during the past few years. Institutions like the IMF, being supported by the richer states, had to intervene more and more because they are anxious to avoid more global crises. Such attacks took place among the European currencies in 1992-93, against the Mexican currency in 1994 and the Asian currencies in 1997 and up to this day. These speculative movements have undermined both genuine economic activity and the social situation, and sometimes the independence of states. Thereby they have lost any possibility for making improvements in social justice. The ever growing volume of currency transactions on the world level (more than 1,300 billion dollars per day), of which a staggering 97% are merely speculative, is not only distorting macro and micro economic decisions. It is turning away, towards merely speculative goals, savings that could be invested for more useful aims. It also leads to intolerable instabilities in different fields, for instance in the prices of raw materials.

- *Economic crime*

A further problem of the deregulated global economy is organised economic crime. Between 30% and 50% of the world economy is estimated to be accumulated illegally. This includes the arms and drugs trade; shipping under 'flags of convenience,' which result in ecological catastrophes when tankers get shipwrecked; trafficking children for adoption and women for prostitution; and money laundering by means of bank secrecy and tax havens.

- *Socio-economic and military causes for migration*

In poorer countries, terrible divisions have been caused by the contrast between the great wealth of a minority and the poverty of the majority, enormous national debts and structural adjustment. In addition there is the migration provoked by military activity, in which EU countries share the guilt. For example, they supply Turkey with weapons and treat the Kurds, expelled by these weapons, as criminals. Millions of people try to find a safe place and a future through emigration. Those who are able to penetrate the walls of 'Fortress Europe' are being blamed for the world-wide chaos that is

the legacy of the last 500 years. Most of them are only able to immigrate 'illegally.' The 'solution,' offered by our neoliberal politicians is not the elimination of the fundamental causes of misery in our countries and theirs, but to deport the people who are looking for refuge. Migration is misinterpreted as the cause and not the consequence, and the result is that the same people are victims a second time.

- *Neoliberal policies of deregulation and the erosion of democracy*

Sine 1971, deliberate political decisions were made to stop regulating the capital markets. Responsibility lies with the governments of the seven richest industrial nations (G7) since the 1970s. They permit and support deregulation, liberalisation and privatisation, not just by means of their 'World Economic Summits' but via the Bretton Woods Institutions which they control. These are the IMF, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). If the MAI being negotiated now is passed in the present form, the TNCs could sue governments if their social or ecological legislation threatens their interests. In contrast, governments would have no such legal redress against the companies. This project breaches the UNO Charter on the economic rights and duties of states (1974); "Each nation has the right to regulate the foreign investments and to control them." *With such political decisions, democratically elected governments will have themselves abolished democracy at the international level in the most important matters of economic and financial policy.* Politicians have themselves given power away and in the realms of economy and high finance they have thereby made people and natural life support systems completely dependent on the profit driven market economy. Politicians further coerce people by means of laissez faire competition and Structural Adjustment Programmes to accept the dismantling of social systems and eco-dumping. The UNO is being deliberately kept in check and manipulated by this coalition of market forces and the governments of the rich, and its reform proposals are not allowed onto the agenda.

- *Remilitarisation of foreign policy*

In spite of the end of the East/West conflict, western politics support the profit orientated arms industry. At the same time, the West, led by the USA, serves its world-wide economic interests by having troops on the alert for rapid intervention in crises. The recent Gulf War was the first major example. Instead of banning military violence, regional conflicts are heated up, and the flames of war are fanned by the sales of arms. Wars would seem once again to be a legitimate means of politics.



- *The uniform culture of the mass media*

The capitalist economy has taken over not only politics, but also the media. Except for small remnants they have been released from public, democratic control and aggressively privatised. The result is a gigantic concentration of power and the manipulation of “hearts and minds” into capitalist values and behaviour, acceptance of violence, sexism and general disinformation and illusion.

- *Economics as a system of belief*

Neoliberal economic science spreads the belief among people, making them feel powerless, that the developments of world economy are fate, as unalterable as the laws of nature. The present system of power and control survives on that basis. Social scientists have proved that the dominant economy is no science but a system of belief, in which the growth of monetary wealth is ‘God.’ People are expected to subjugate themselves and the planet to this god, which has, of course, to be defended by a gigantic global military apparatus.

- *Rendering home economies invisible*

Something which is completely ignored in neoliberal thinking and action is the home economy. If criteria other than those of monetary economy were to be used, it has been estimated that home economies constitute over 50% of the national product even in industrialised countries. Women’s work is made invisible here, and so is the subsistence economy of the poor world-wide. For an alternative economy there is a great potential here for the self-liberation of people from the dictates of global markets.

- *Our own striving after consumption, wealth and power*

We are aware that the structures of finance, production and distribution can only function because the majority of people support them through how they spend and invest their money. People strive for a healthy and fulfilled life. The market seizes upon this striving, as do the media, creating the illusion that all is possible. From a child’s earliest years our education system encourages competitive behaviour and establishes a pattern of elitism. The personal liberation from pseudo-happiness to fulfilled life in community, from powerlessness to shared responsibility, is a great force for the renewal of society. How do we judge the role to be played by organisations and groups in society? How could trade unions, churches, religious communities, grassroots organisations and NGOs find a united voice and the ability to form alliances? Are they not separated by fundamentally different philosophies and a history of mutual distrust?



### III. MAKING A JUDGEMENT WITH OUR HEARTS AND MINDS

It is scarcely surprising that the global coalition of finance, business, media and G7 governments can play its victims from all countries and all sectors of society off against each other so easily. Within our society there is a great need for self-reflection and mutual reconciliation, to enable us to counteract current destructive political, socio-economic and cultural developments, and to create alternatives. The following are some examples of the need to move from our conflict ridden history towards mutual reconciliation based on justice.

#### 1. Old conflicts

- *Labour movements*

As the industrial revolution got under way and people were exploited under harsh working conditions, the working poor organised themselves in various forms in the labour movement. In this situation, the charitable work of the churches tried to assist the working class victims of unbridled capitalism. It was only later, however, that the majority of the churches began to denounce the inhumane character of the system. To this extent, the atheistic reactions of Marxism, the trade union movement and communism are understandable. For its part, Stalinism has left many wounds in all camps. Bureaucratic socialism has showed no more interest in sustaining our natural world than has capitalism. It is obvious that our whole modern view of the world is in crisis. In the recent neoliberal period, the trade unions had tried to react to the transnationalisation of capital by closing ranks to become a European and even an international union movement. But because of organisational difficulties and also the short term differences between the workers of different countries, they have not yet formed an effective countervailing power. There is also a lack of adequate representation of the unemployed, which could achieve recognition of their vital interests. All these areas of conflict, both past and present, need to be given attention in order that we can today build effective alliances.

- *Women's movements*

Discrimination against women is systemic in nearly all of Europe's social, political, economic and religious institutions, and has been formed and shaped by patriarchy. Indeed, patriarchy has been blind and deaf to the many historical forms this has taken. Since the nineteenth century, and more intensively in the last thirty years of this century, the women's movements have struggled in both society and faith communities for the full participation of women. They have fought to be involved in the shaping of society, at every

level of its institutions, and in the reordering of unjust relations between the sexes in both public and personal arenas. Change demands:

- that society refuses to continue to stereotype women merely as victim and men as oppressor.
  - that those in power situations, men or women, recognise and enable the agency of women as they work for the recognition of their contributions on the employment scene and in unpaid work.
  - the taking of responsibility by both women and men for the dismantling of patriarchy. For men, moving forward requires an honest admission of the oppressive effects of discrimination and current models of power on women and other vulnerable groups.
  - challenging the flawed stereotypes of both maleness and femaleness.
  - the journey out of patriarchy for both women and men. This involves and is affected by making all the contextual connections with other forms of oppression, economic, racist and heterosexist.
- *Faith communities and cultures*

There have always been many different cultures in Europe, and particularly so now, given the numbers of refugees and migrant workers, many of whom have settled here permanently. The critical and self-critical dialogue between the different value systems, cultures and religions, and the development of joint courses of action, has hardly begun. The mutual violations between the people of different faiths go back a long way. Since, for example, the Christian church linked up with the Roman Empire, it has continually mixed the proclamation of the kingdom of God with political, economic and cultural interests. To give only a few examples; the Crusades in the Middle Ages; the conquest of North and South America legitimated by mission; the colonialism of Protestant led nation states. The European churches thereby became complicit in the exclusion, persecution and sometimes extermination of individuals, groups and peoples which did not want to subordinate themselves. Even church divisions were caused by this mixing of religious and political and economic interests, e.g., in 1054 between the eastern and western church, and in the sixteenth century between the Roman church and Reformation churches. The war in Yugoslavia, the conflict in Northern Ireland, and the tension between the Arab Islamic and western Atlantic worlds shows that the wounds have not been healed to this day. Religious motives can be misused to justify the resolution of conflicts through the use of force. Therefore dialogue between the faith communities and the different cultures in Europe is essential. Such dialogue should not lose itself in generalities, but have the specific aims of discovering new ways of living and

working alongside each other, and new means of establishing justice and peace.

## 2. New possibilities

In order to overcome the effects of the European culture and its world-wide impacts, we need a very deep change. Two questions are particularly important. What spirit is shaping human relationships? And how do we move from a spirit of competition to a spirit of cooperation? The Brazilian liberation theologian and trade unionist Frei Betto, as did Ernst Bloch and Antonio Gramsci before him, claimed that Soviet style socialism, which was put forward as an alternative system, concentrated itself exclusively on the will and reason. It overlooked the fact that *people have emotions, love beauty and want to transcend themselves and their world*. Philosophically we speak here of aesthetics and religion, theologically of spirituality. If we neglect this dimension in people, particularly in a male culture, then capitalism fills the empty space with illusions and things that do not really fulfil us. In contrast to the religion of the market, and following the line of thought of Frei Betto, we can affirm that our alternative visions are inspiring. Working together to fulfil these visions is both challenging and fun. Work and celebration are kept in balance. We do not need to burn out in the struggle. A new culture of mutual support helps us, in spite of our painful inadequacies, to find energy both personally and in community for developing our alliances and solidarity. The history of human resistance helps us to learn not to lose hope even when we fail. A new spirit of cooperation cannot appear out of nowhere. It grows out of the hard experience of wrestling with community or other broader issues with other individuals and groups when there are many conflicts of interest. The following are some examples of successful or incipient dialogues and coalition processes:

- the cooperation of Christian base communities, parts of the institutional churches, unions, peoples' movements and popular religions in Latin America in the spirit of liberation theology.
- the Zapatista coalition attempts, starting in Chiapas, Mexico.
- the French protest movement since 1996.
- efforts to form an extra-parliamentary opposition in Germany, instigated by the Erfurt Declaration in 1997.
- the church asylum ("sanctuary") movement.

- the Euromarch movement against unemployment, job insecurity and exclusion, beginning with the EU summit in Amsterdam in 1997.
- the European Women's College in Zürich that tries to promote an intensive networking and communication process between eastern and western European women.

In the *second part of this document* we give an *example* of self-critical theological *reflection* of the history and present situation of the churches in the context of the processes taking place in society, in order to strengthen their ability to form alliances. In this spirit we request faith communities, human rights movements, unions, social, peace and ecological movements, women's organisations, regional groupings from eastern, western, northern and southern Europe and also from other continents, to share with us their view of the issues referred to here. Please write your stories, reflections and suggestions for action. These will all go into a supplement to this document which will be produced in 1999 with the purpose of stimulating a broader exchange of experience and a united political engagement.

#### IV. ACTING TOGETHER

After efforts at the national level to tame capitalism around the middle of this century, it seems that, since the 1980s, we have been immersed in a culture of neo-liberalism and exposed helplessly to the power of global capitalism. The introduction of modern technologies has weakened the labour movement and the West no longer needs to take account of a competing socialist alternative. But this conclusion is wrong. It neglects two things:

- the history of resistance in Europe and world-wide.
- the fact that the current system is facing ever growing crises and so cannot go on as it is.

It is a myth that there is no alternative to neo-liberalism, which is being maintained by the EU and its member states, the United States, Japan and the elites of other countries. Such ideas have contributed towards widespread mistrust of public institutions and limited people's freedom to lead self-directed lives in community with others. This system can be changed.

We invite you to consider the following possibilities

##### 1. Recognition and acknowledgement

With the aim of liberation and making a new beginning, we can recognise and acknowledge our historical guilt, selfish attitudes and rigid structures and where we continue to make the mistakes of supporting the predominant development model.

This process of coming to terms with the past can and must take place on all levels, local, national, European and, not least, world-wide. In this, we must work together with committed groups in all continents.

- The starting point is *listening to the victims* among and beside us. This is a crucial step. It requires patience. It builds trust and provides vital information and clarification that is essential before any action is taken. Alliances in local neighbourhoods, villages, towns and cities may begin by asking the questions:
- Who and where are the victims of the evils, of the past and the present, of violence, individual or structural injustice, and rape of the environment?

- Who are the victims around us, e.g., children, women, working people, farming families, unemployed persons, homeless people, people in debt, refugees?
- Who are the victims far away (North-South/West-East)?

Listening to the pain of the victims, hearing the truth of their stories, and then giving them space in which to tell their own story in public, is the beginning of the healing process. This cannot reverse the injustice suffered, but can open up a pathway leading to new justice. So the process of reconciliation in society is begun.

- Further, there should be an opportunity for the *admission of individual or collective guilt*. Particularly in Western Europe there is no public pressure to force perpetrators to choose between legal prosecution or testimony before a truth commission with the possibility of subsequent amnesty. The apology of Bill Clinton in March 1998 to African nations for the historic taking of slaves would have been a positive step in this direction, had he not, however, stated “no aid but trade,” in which he reinforced the economic servitude of Africa to the global economic players. Nelson Mandela understood this truth immediately, and said so. A few sincere, individual admissions of guilt would be of significant symbolic value. An admission of guilt by collusion from the churches and other key members of society for the mistakes in Europe and its nations could itself have a significant public impact.

This could lead to a healing dialogue of all parties concerned.

## 2. Refusal

We can refuse to take part in structures we have recognised as being violent and unjust towards people and the creation and reject the spirit, logic and practice of deregulated capitalist accumulation of monetary assets, with military protection.

- In the sense of increasing capital, *money* is at the centre of the existing structures of injustice and violence. Its accumulation is the God of this world order. To say “No” to the accumulation of money in the broadest possible coalitions is the beginning of all resistance. In practical terms that means saying “No” to the deregulation of the capital markets which only have one goal, namely the accumulation of wealth, without any social, ecological and democratic commitment. Saying “No” to interest gained through speculation. Some of us say “No” to interest altogether and therefore ask for an alternative monetary system. Saying “No” to currency speculation. Saying “No” to a monetary system which is detached from equitable distribution of



employment and justice in international trading. Saying “No” to an international order of finance, which is controlled only by the rich in their own interest and which enables tax flight and tax dumping. In practice we can boycott such commercial banks which have branches or business partners in tax havens and at the same time call upon union, church and public institutions to do the same.

- Very commendably, the German Constitution requires that the owners of *property*, which includes both physical and monetary assets, carry social obligations. Today, however, this is more and more a rhetorical statement in view of the current distribution of property and the possibility of making tax-free profits on the transnational markets. We can together, therefore, declare the system of limitless and absolute ownership illegitimate. We can demand wealth reports as well as poverty reports in order to bring the scandal of unjust distribution into public discussion. We can also publicly denounce the increasing concentration of economic power in the hands of a few corporations and banks, as do the Religious for Peace with their weekly vigil in front of the Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt, and those organising other direct non-violent actions.
- In order to protect the property of the wealthy, *equipment for internal and external security* is constantly being developed. Such a preoccupation with protecting wealth can be condemned. Also, we can learn to live without arms. For young men that means conscientious objection to military service.
- We can also resist the temptation of indulging in more and more *consumption*, encouraged as we are by advertisements and the media. This pressure to consume is motivated by the drive for economic growth and this in turn by the central purpose of accumulating wealth. In response, one can take part in consumer boycotts and seek a more simple lifestyle.
- We can resist the widespread international *industrialisation of agriculture* and the policies which support this.
- We can resist everything that destroys *bio-diversity*, i.e., the variety of species of plants and animals and their habitats. We must be informed about the dangers of genetic engineering, and the patenting of plant, animal and human genes, and resist wherever the welfare of people or the earth is threatened.

We call on all those people and organisations who have great concern about such structural injustices not only to condemn the consequences of the current system, but also to say a clear “No” to the underlying principles of the current

global system. To say “No” also to its political implementation in their countries, in the EU and in the international organisations for which the G7 countries bear responsibility such as the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO and the OECD (MAI).

This means we must say “No” to political parties that support neoliberal policies. In this connection also, a broad-based debate on the spirituality of resistance and forms of civil disobedience is urgently required.

### **3. New visions**

We can develop a new vision of an economy embedded in the social and ecological context.

- Some helpful guidelines for action arose out of the ecumenical process of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation:
- the preferential option for the poor,
- the preferential option for non-violence, and
- the preferential option for endangered life.

This orientation offers a radical change of perspective.

- The first goal of *economic activity* should not be the accumulation of monetary assets dictated by the global market, and therefore economic growth measured in monetary terms. Instead it should be the satisfaction of the basic needs of people living in a local area and in their social, cultural and natural environments, taking account of the life of future generations. From this point of view, economic activity is successful only if it also fulfils social and ecological goals.

We propose, therefore, a *dual strategy* for developing alternatives:

- local small-scale initiatives that are partially independent of the world markets, and
- building alliances for political intervention to “tame” the system.

### **4. Small-scale alternatives**

We are able to realise life-giving visions in our own areas of activity by setting up small-scale alternatives.

With this approach, the invisible *home economy* takes on fundamental importance and likewise the *economies of local areas and small regions*.

A partial decoupling from the dictates of world markets is possible. We recommend here an international handbook for the strengthening of the local economy (see Richard Douthwaite (1996) in the resource list). He identifies different possibilities:

- *Local currencies, Local Exchange and Trading Schemes (LETS)* that need no cash, *credit unions*.
- the use of *alternative banks* and credit facilities (joined together in Europe in INAISE). Instead of high street banks. In the churches' arena there is the *Ecumenical Development Co-operative Society (EDCS)*.
- In local communities become as self-sufficient as possible by using *alternative energies* (wind, sun, water, biomass).
- Become also as self-sufficient as possible in basic foodstuffs and clothing, by direct purchase from *organic farms, producer-consumer cooperatives, country to town partnerships* etc. The priority is to develop an environmentally-friendly local economy with strong local circulation of goods and services. Craftspeople and small companies with a social and ecological concern are valued as important partners in this approach.

Some of these concerns are combined in the initiatives connected with *Local Agenda 21* in Europe and the other continents (Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 of the Rio Conference on Environment and Development, 1992). This gives a good framework for forming alliances and developing self-critical dialogue far beyond the immediate locality.

Small-scale initiatives are also possible in, or can be aided by, the following:

- Alternative economic activity is possible beyond the local sphere. The best-known means is through that of '*fair trade*,' in which fair wages are paid to the producers. Fair trade initiatives show that we as *consumers have power to be a counter force*. We can also take part in boycotts of TNCs which violate social and ecological criteria in a particularly flagrant fashion. Well known examples for such campaigns in Europe are those focussing on Nestle, Shell and Siemens. In contrast, we can affirm and prefer companies that consider social and ecological criteria.
- A central area is *communication*. Groups in the Netherlands have begun to coordinate an initiative for open, honest communication called the "People's Communication Charter." Although computers, e-mail and

the internet were developed for military and commercial purposes, and although the mass use of electronics is ecologically very damaging because of the problems of disposal, these instruments, particularly e-mail, can be used in building up countervailing power. A recent successful example is provided by the coordinated actions of the unemployed movement in France. Internationally too, communication between movements using e-mail and the internet is cheaper and can be more effective, in that they provide scope for better participation, including of poor people, provided that they can organise access to a computer. But caution is still called for. The priority must always be face to face contact.

- We could also have more self-direction in the area of *education*. Education has become centrally organised. It is vocationally orientated, and focuses on academic success to the detriment of life skills. Schooling could provide excellent opportunities for developing an inclusive society, for example in the mixed schools in Northern Ireland. Education should cater for the whole person; it should include community and political education; an awareness of other cultures, faiths and minority groups; decision-making skills; and the development of critical thinking so that the rising generation can grapple with the crucial issues detailed in this Document. Such education would emphasise skills of cooperation rather than competition, and would give a central place to questions of the future.
- In the *area of peace* there are also many possibilities of implementing small scale alternatives. Wherever conflict leads to violence at the local level we can assist in non-violent conflict resolution and initiate healing processes. As part of the ecumenical process for justice, peace and integrity of creation, practical initiatives have been taken, including civilian peace services as alternatives to military service. In ideal circumstances, such civil peace services can reduce or even replace military interventions and violent incidents within nations. A voluntary "peace-tax" should be introduced in each European country, allowing citizens to make a public stand for a society committed to non-violence, in which conscientious objection and the resolution of conflict through mediation and other just and peaceful means both play an important part.

In all these areas there are great opportunities for the *churches, faith communities and trade unions*, as they are themselves controlling large amounts of money and are therefore able to begin to invest their money according to alternative economic, social and ecological criteria. In their own spheres they can distribute work and income fairly and develop open and trusting relationships with people, irrespective of their formal status. They can pursue

ecological principles. They could become oases of love and justice within the wider environment of deceit.

*Grassroots groups, alternative communities and cooperatives* are strongest at the local level. With their commitment to concrete goals they can themselves begin to realise the vision of a new society: new patterns of behaviour between men, women and children; marginalised people being included; learning to view oneself from the perspective of other religions and cultures; sharing; solving conflicts without violence; cooperation instead of competition; taking individuals with their gifts seriously instead of classifying them according to their 'marketability.' In short, putting people and the totality of their needs at the centre, and valuing people and communities, rather than fostering competing individuals.

Small-scale initiatives are not to be misunderstood as being *the* alternative. They are limited in their scope. They also share in the ambiguities of the macro-system. For example, alternative banks are legally forced to deposit part of their capital as security in the general monetary system. Furthermore, the populations of a region naturally want to engage in economic exchange with those of another region. They should be free to trade in this way, as they choose, and not be forced to do so by monopolies to their disadvantage.

If, however, the macro-systems are meant to serve the local resident and not the other way round, they must be regulated democratically by social and ecological conditions. To struggle for that is the second essential part of the dual strategy.

## **5. Political involvement**

We can engage in political involvement, through forming alliances for a socially just, life-sustaining and democratic Europe.

At the local level, alliances are needed to create and support, through *community based political activity*, a localised economy, social policies, ecological action and justice in North-South relations. As well as self-help groups, charitable organisations, churches, faith communities and trade unions, radical politicians and those with businesses at the local level are also important participants in this work. Kairos Europa has begun to network such local alliances. A very important alliance, which was especially mentioned by the Second European Ecumenical Assembly meeting in Graz in 1997, is the linking of the ecumenical process of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation with Local Agenda 21.

It is clear, however, that work at this level only is insufficient, given the globalisation of finance, the economy and the media. Even the *national level* is

offering only very limited possibilities for action. It is therefore necessary to link political efforts at national level with parallel efforts at the *European and global level*.

What are the key areas of alternative policies and strategies for action about which committed groups should develop a consensus?

In order to achieve liberation from the grip of deregulated globalised finance and economy, our first target must be policies of tax and finance. At present, the major tax burden is on employment, while money, the ownership of property and the consumption of energy and resources, are only lightly taxed. It should be exactly the other way round. Changes, however, will not be possible unless there is a *framework for democratic, social and ecological reregulation of transnational capital at the level of international institutions*. That must be the starting point of any political campaign or engagement. Without such a measure, in the North and the South, the east as well as the West, we would foresee no more enlightened employment and social policies, no new approach to ecological issues, increasing numbers of refugees and migrants and an ever more precarious peace.

In the longer term, we must raise the fundamental question as to whether the need for peaceful, ongoing life on our planet for people and the natural world is compatible with a capitalist economy centrally geared to the accumulation of monetary wealth.

Out of these considerations, we campaign for change in the following specific ways in particular key (overlapping) policy areas:

- Tax, Finance and Economy
  - the linking of monetary policy to employment and social policies.
  - the development of alternative economic indicators, that evaluate such matters as pollution and the consumption of natural resources, as well as the quality of jobs created etc., so that the concept of economic success is redefined.
  - a limit to the private ownership of land and capital.
  - an appropriate wealth tax.
  - a capital gains tax, harmonised throughout the EU, raised at the source of profit, to end tax evasion and tax dumping, which occurs as governments compete with each other to offer tax advantages.

- the abolition of tax havens, which contribute significantly to the indebtedness of public budgets.
- the cancelling of debts of countries made poor by the North.
- global taxation of speculative transactions (Tobin Tax).
- a progressive taxation on natural resources and non-renewable sources of energy.
- a rethinking of the Multilateral Agreement on Investments, so as to give governments the right to put social and ecological conditions on investments and encourage local investment in initiatives that benefit local people.
- the setting of social and ecological parameters for world trade.
- the democratisation of the economy, ranging from joint decision-making in and self-ownership of factories to a UNO controlled reform of the international institutions, the IMF, World Bank etc.
- the development of an international legal system for the socio-ecological regulation of financial and economic questions, broadening the competencies of the International Court of Justice to include matters of socio-economic concern.
- Employment and Public Services
  - a drastic reduction of working hours (regionally adjusted), to help reduce unemployment. Loss of income should be compensated on a socially staggered scale, possibly with temporary state subsidies. The hours released in this way should be used for doing socially useful work in the community, and for pursuing vocational and political continuing education.
  - an end to cutbacks in protective regulations for women, connected with pregnancy, child-birth, unpaid leave for family reasons and factories with periodic work.
  - the introduction of an economic guarantee for every person, to prevent poverty, misery and exclusion for even greater numbers of people.
  - the linking of employers' national insurance contributions to profits and not to the number and wages of people employed.

- a special 'sharing the load' initiative through a one-off tax payment on high levels of wealth in favour of a 'special fund for the abolition of mass unemployment,' in particular to create jobs to carry out essential tasks in society which make no profit.
- an end to cutbacks in health and education.
- the re-democratisation of the media.
- The Environment
  - make a real commitment to the outcomes of the Rio conference of 1992, particularly with regard to CO<sup>2</sup> emissions and the use of synthetic nitrogen fertilisers, and to Local Agenda 21 and sustainability.
  - the promotion of energy saving, and its production from renewable sources.
  - the development of an economy and technology that is socially and ecologically sustainable.
  - an end to nuclear power production.
  - the strict rejection of any genetic interference in the human genome.
  - global regulation on the patenting and use of genetically engineered seeds in order to protect biodiversity and the freedom and economic welfare of small farmers worldwide.
  - policies that encourage smaller farms, and farming that is kind to the land and animals.

## **Refugees and Migration**

- attack the root causes of forced migration, which are mainly social and economic, rather than the migrants and refugees themselves.
- an EU directive against racial and religious discrimination.
- a humane reception for asylum seekers.



## Peace

- integrated strategies of non-violent conflict resolution in place of further spending on defence and intervention forces.
- revive the anti-fascist consensus that existed after the Second World War, and out of which the UNO was formed, particularly in the light of alarming shifts to the right in the politics of many European countries.
- press for the strengthening of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as a spearhead for comprehensive political, economic, social, cultural and ecological cooperation.

We have acknowledged and named the causes, rejected what is wrong, developed new visions, committed ourselves to small-scale alternatives and seen the urgency of political intervention. No-one can do everything. Every new alliance, however, will be another step towards achieving our goals. All strength to your elbows!



# A CALL TO PROPHETIC ACTION!

Towards the Jubilee Year 2000

For a Socially Just, Democratic and Prosperous  
Zimbabwe

*A call to faith communities, civic organisations and all  
movements and individuals that are working for positive  
social, political and economic change to build solidarity  
to work for social, economic and political transformation  
of society for delivery from poverty, social inequality and  
to promote good governance*

**ZIMBABWEAN KAIROS DOCUMENT**

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# CONTENTS

	Preface	283
1.	GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY	285
1.1.	Introduction	285
1.2.	Good Governance	285
1.3.	Fear of Authority	288
1.4.	Lack of Accountability and Transparency	290
1.5.	Consultation	292
1.6.	Budget-Making	293
1.7.	Political Parties	293
1.8.	The Executive System	297
1.9.	Constitution	297
2.	SOCIO-ECONOMIC POLICIES	301
2.1.	Introduction	301
2.2.	Hopes and Fears	302
2.3.	Land	303
2.4.	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme	305
2.5.	Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation	306
2.6.	The Debt Crisis and ZIMPREST	306
2.7.	Jubilee 2000	307
2.8.	Employment	308
2.9.	Participation and Consultation	308
2.10.	Vision 2020: Participation and Distracted	309
2.11.	Health	309
2.12.	Education	311
2.13.	Overhauling the whole education system and the Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training	313
2.14.	Environment and Resource Management	315
2.15.	Job Creation and Entrepreneurship	317
2.16.	Housing	318
2.17.	Poverty	318
3.	GENDER AND YOUTH	321
3.1.	Introduction	321
3.2.	Gender	322
3.3.	Lobola/Rooru: Commercialisation of Marriage	323
3.4.	Violence, Rape and Sexual Harassment	323
3.5.	Gender in the Church	324
3.6.	Gender and Education	324
3.7.	Family	325
3.8.	Youth	325
3.9.	Health	326
3.10.	Youth and Education	327
3.11.	Conclusion	328



## *Preface*

This is our critical moment of truth. This is our time for honest reflection and critical action by Zimbabwean Christians as a community, a community which has contributed so much to our beloved country, but yet has much more to do. This is our Kairos moment.

History shows that when our cause is just, when we share risks, when we act intelligently and practically, together we can bring about positive changes in God's world. In 1985 the repression of the majority of the population in South Africa by apartheid reached its height. At the same time resistance was growing inside and outside the country. Following their theological reflection, Christians involved in the liberation struggle called upon churches to opt clearly for resistance and solidarity. This served to strengthen the world-wide anti-apartheid alliances. They called their challenge a KAIROS document.

Kairos is a Greek word used in the Bible meaning opportunity for repentance and a change of heart, for change and for decisive action with the oppressed in a time of crisis or at the moment of truth. The conversion of Saul to Paul on the way to Damascus, when he turned from persecution to establishing the messianic community of peace and justice was a moment of Kairos. Our commitment and faith in Christ will lead us in addressing our crisis. Since Independence, the Christian community has done some healing of our nation's physical, material and social wounds. It has participated in righting some wrongs, helped redress some imbalances. We have done this with God's help. Our prayers have been heard.

But there is so much more. We cannot, in conscience, let this Kairos moment pass. As prophets have done through the ages to this very time, we must search ourselves honestly and speak courageously of the changes that are needed for justice to prevail for all God's people in this land. We can see the painful reality of our current socio-economic, political and cultural situation. We can see our strengths and our potential. We can see our weakness and lack of courage.

There are ongoing and urgent needs for economic justice and land redistribution. We can see the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic which kills an average of 700 of our people weekly. We can see corruption, family disintegration and environmental degradation.

As we approach the Jubilee Year 2000, we remember Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. As we struggle together, we are inspired by his engagement in prophetic action in his life and time. He is with us. He is our inspiration and our life. He calls us to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. We are called to seek the truth and act upon it.

This then, is our time for prophetic action, our critical moment of truth. We must act at this time and for this beautiful place we are proud to call Zimbabwe. We must act immediately so that legitimate expectations and hopes that came with Independence do not wither in this country, a country born out of the struggle and suffering of our people.

This is the Kairos time. Zimbabwe has been plunged into a political, economic and, above all, moral crisis that is shaking its very foundation. There is every indication that the crisis has only just begun and that it will deepen and become even more threatening in the months ahead.

At the end of 1996 some 50 Christians, women and men, lay and clergy, joined together to reflect and pray, analyse and critique our national scenario. We shared perspectives and recorded our experiences, concerns and hopes for Zimbabwe. We committed ourselves to work for further change. In various places and experiences, we continued to meet, reflect, study and deepen our understanding of the theological implications of our times.

Now, we are calling all Christians, and all who care about our nation and humanity at large, to join in this Kairos time. This document is a Christian, biblical and theological commentary on the crisis in Zimbabwe today. It is an attempt to reflect and act on the situation of poverty, ill-health, bad governance, corruption, fear and hopelessness that we are forced to endure.

The document is also a critique of the current theological and ecclesiastical models that determine the type of activities the church engages in when faced with national problems. It is an attempt to develop, out of this perplexing situation, an alternative biblical and theological model that will lead to new forms of activity that will make a real difference to the future development of our beloved country.

We are calling you to use this document as a starting point for discussion and reflection. We are calling you to join us in the immediate prophetic action that is imperative if we are to have a future of justice and peace.

*Harare,  
October 1998*



## **1. GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY**

### **1.1. Introduction**

*Man and woman were created in God's own image and likeness. God looked upon them as worthy of dignity and value. The Israelites were especially chosen, their cries in slavery were heard and they were liberated to form a nation, governed according to the precepts of Yahweh through the Ten Commandments and the law which emanated from them. Israelites freely worshipped their God. Over the centuries they experienced suffering and exile, yet they continued with hope and trust in Yahweh.*

*In Christ's time on Earth, there was no separation between civil and religious governance among the Jewish people. The leaders, the Scribes and Pharisees, the temple hangers-on ruled under the yoke of Imperial Rome and were co-opted by the colonizers. The colonized suffered in the process. For the great masses of people, Jewish law had become an intolerable burden. Instead of fostering justice, mercy and compassion, the ruling elites corrupted and exploited the law to their own advantage.*

*In no uncertain terms, Jesus condemned the leaders of his time for their hypocrisy (Matt. 23) but he did not come to abolish the law. He came to fulfil it (Matt. 5:6). "I have come so that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10b). Thus, governance according to Christ is an action characterised by forgiveness, tolerance and justice for the achievement of lives that are full and peaceful. For such good governance, there must be leaders who are selfless and committed to achieve this fullness of life for their people. They must be prepared to make sacrifices and suffer, putting the good of the community before their own interests. They must lead by example- not just by edict. Upright, just leaders will have the respect and loyalty of their people. Together they will share in the abundance of creation. Each will value and uphold the dignity of the other before the law and before God. Governance should therefore be a reflection and witness of Jesus Christ, done in righteousness and justice.*

### **1.2. Good Governance**

Good governance refers to the just, fair and effective exercise of power by the government on behalf of the people. It demands power-sharing in the best interests of the people, involving a wide spectrum of citizens in decision-making processes.

A system of good governance is one in which the people and the leaders have trust, confidence and respect for one another. Bad governance is one where leaders oppress their people and treat them as inferior. Leaders in good gov-

ernance are elected to serve, not to dominate. Christ clearly teaches us that leaders must be the servants of all (Mark 10: 41-45).

When we elect a government we choose people whom we believe will implement our chosen policies and ideals for the good governance of everyone, not just an elite. The government comes from the people and is answerable to the people and to God- respecting God's law and respecting human rights. Good governance will reconcile and create harmony between people of different ethnic, racial and religious backgrounds. It aims at a just sharing of resources and power. It respects and encourages human rights. This democratic framework seems to be elusive in our Zimbabwe today

In Zimbabwe, the 1990 Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), slashed government resources in education, health and social services for the most vulnerable and the most needy. Yet our government continues to prioritise the maintenance of an excessively large cabinet. About 15% of the current national budget vote is on salaries of public officials. It maintains a large defence and security establishment in times of relative peace. It fails to distribute wealth equitably and favours the rich.

Health and education, our top priorities when we elected ZANU-PF to power in 1980, was meant to be accessible to all free of charge. Today these two departments are grossly underfunded and their efficiency seriously curtailed. As a result, our people suffer. All, apart from a rich elite, find the costs of education and health a heavy burden. Our land after 18 years has still not been distributed equitably. Thousands of hectares have been taken by government and given to senior ministers and officials while the peasants on communal lands can barely eke out an existence.

People's dignity and well-being are being compromised.

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As Christians we believe that all people are created as equals in the image and likeness of God. We cannot accept that increasing numbers of people are being reduced to living in inhuman circumstances which deny their dignity, nor can we allow corruption, wrongful use of influence and abuse of power so prevalent in our midst.

We must stand firm in our expectation that public affairs will be conducted openly, honourably and honestly. Those in authority must be accountable to the people and the law. The voices of the people must be heard in decision-making and national dialogue.

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We Zimbabweans have been patient for the past 18 years to the point of passivity. While our political leaders continued to trample on our rights to decent living conditions Finally, when we could stand no more, the poor, led by

women and children, demonstrated against unjustified food prices which left them hungry. The government, responded with tanks and bullets against unarmed people. Mass violence spread early in 1998. A number of citizens died, others were injured and massive damage was done to businesses. The economy lost close to a billion dollars. Our country's international reputation was damaged as foreign media dubbed it a civil war.

Commissions were established, committees set up, promises made, parliament ignored, unjust taxes imposed and Zimbabweans responded again by staying away from work for two days. This was a massive and peaceful expression of distrust in their leaders.

More confrontations are expected as prices and wages render workers and peasants poor beyond imagination and labour unions strike to achieve a living wage.

This growing hopelessness and anger is not new. Our people have told their leaders over and over that unaccountable government must cease, that changes must be fundamental and sincere or they would face the wrath of the majority. For example, the 1996 strike by nurses and doctors resulted from a refusal by ministers to listen and discuss legitimate grievances. Government responded to union demands by dismissing thousands of professionals and then sending in riot police to use tear gas and batons on people holding peaceful and legal demonstrations and meetings. Now we have so few nurses that our health system is in shambles and we must hire nurses from abroad at far higher wages than our local nurses were demanding.

In moments of crisis our leaders shut their ears to the cries of the people and cannot provide responsible governance. Dialogue, discussion and respect will succeed where violence and fear wreak havoc and chaos.

But we, the people, must also meet our responsibilities.

In conditions of scarcity and struggle, we find ourselves shut out, excluded from the wealth that still exists in our land. We learn that the individuals in the ruling party influence the course of events in unjust ways for their own selfish ends. Despite strict media controls, we still read and hear of increasing corruption at all levels. Our people are frustrated and discouraged. They are depressed and frightened. They are cynical and apathetic about politics and tend more and more to withdraw and "leave politics to the politicians," allowing the corrupt and venal to amass more wealth and abuse power.

We must change that attitude and once again re-engage in dialogue for change and demand a process for good governance. We must make certain that our voices are heard, not just by our polite and false cheering as leaders pass by in their large motorcades. Instead we must participate, not by

refusing to vote or voting mindlessly for a single party during elections, but by actively participating in civil society at all levels.

We must therefore insist that government creates a non-threatening environment in which forums to educate and inform people can be created so that citizens can constructively challenge unjust structures at all levels of society. Civil society must demand changes that rectify the imbalances in the electoral procedures and resourcing of political parties

The public sees a ruling party with a disproportionate access to financial support, control of both electronic and print media, dishonest registration and balloting procedures, coercion and violence. It is a ruling party built with political structures designed to keep it in power. This must change if elections are to offer meaningful choices to the voters. We need to demand changes so that voters can understand that being a member of an opposition party or voting against ZANU-PF candidate is not an act of disloyalty to Zimbabwe or a rejection of those leaders who fought for liberation from an equally repressive regime. Our loyalty is to our motherland, not to a single political power. We are a democracy, a multi-party democracy and should be seen to meaningfully exercise our democratic right to vote

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As Christians, we must recognise our responsibility to promote leadership and moral vision within society. Politics affects every aspect of our daily life, along with economics. Today the two have become inseparable. Encouraging and challenging our leaders must be accepted as a fundamental responsibility for all the people of Zimbabwe. Together, leaders and the people they serve, must work in co-operation and harmony. Only in this way can we aspire to build a truly representative, democratic, pluralistic and just system of governance.

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With the coming of Independence in 1980 there was a great desire for peace and a justifiable fear of the recurrence of war. There was massive destabilisation from apartheid South Africa. People tolerated harsh economic and social situations so that the new independent government would have time in the midst of external destabilisation to establish its credentials in the hope that it would fulfil the aspirations of the people who had elected it.

We waited patiently and slowly grew more and more frustrated as our liberation hopes were squandered. By now our tolerance is coming to an end. People demand real change, a more just and fair society for all citizens.

### **1.3. Fear of Authority**

In Zimbabwe, people express real and constant fear of those in authority and the apparatus which surrounds them to keep them in power. As a result we

have become afraid to question and criticise government officials, as is our constitutional right. People are afraid to criticise those who hold power: the executive, the government, officials, police, the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO); and especially the ruling party. We have seen harassment, disappearances, arrests, brutality and even death inflicted on those courageous enough to ask rational questions against mistakes made by the powerful political elite.

Most people have limited or no access to politicians, civil servants and the powerful business elites. This is partly due to the structures and procedures in place for government and administration and partly due to the “chef syndrome” which elevates those in positions of power to almost god-like status. These prevent state and society from positive interactions.

However, despite all this other baggage, we are also a society in which fear prevails. Too many have friends and relatives who have suffered at the hands of the state, people who had unexplained accidents or have been arrested, those who have had to answer trumped-up charges or heard the midnight knock on the door.

We cannot move towards a better society when we are afraid of the consequences of criticising or peacefully challenging the injustice and incompetence that exists.

*“Fear thou not for I am with thee” (Isa. 41:10).*

We recognise our many failings in this regard, including the failings of those within the church who fear to follow the gospel imperatives.

While some churches have consistently challenged injustice, both before and after Independence, many have failed to educate their members about abuses of power by authorities and have failed to involve their members in promoting justice and peace. In this sense, the churches share responsibility for the fear of authority that has gripped us.

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Churches must enable and support people in gaining the confidence necessary to hold leaders and decision-makers accountable for their actions. Individual ministers, priests, pastors and lay leaders must take issues of justice, politics, and economics to their congregations in sermons, meetings, and Bible study sessions. Especially bishops and church leaders must lead by example and have the courage to challenge public authorities. They, more than anyone else, must uphold issues of justice and truth within their own structures that are at the heart of the Gospel message. Church leaders too often become used to wielding power without question.

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#### **1.4. Lack of Accountability and Transparency**

Government does not exist for itself. It is for the people and of the people and must always maintain a high degree of accountability to the electorate. The present political system in Zimbabwe does little to ensure that Government is answerable to the public. There is lack of consultation and transparency on the part of Government which leads to corruption, and grants undue influence and power to those in positions of leadership. There are insufficient checks and balances between executive, parliament and judiciary so that none can be overruled by the other and each has its own unique role which is clearly defined and into which the other cannot encroach. Too often, decisions are made in an exclusive way, making it almost impossible for us to know the reasoning behind many laws and regulations under which we must live.

There are many and frequent examples: deals relating to the development of the Hwange Thermal Power Station granted to Malaysia without proper bidding; the cellular telephone networks in which the independence of the courts was undermined; granting of many government contracts without proper tendering; dismissal of officials who tried to play the rules and blocked politicians from getting their way; the tenders for building our new airport in Harare in which nepotism was rampant.

Taxes and levies are imposed in direct violation of the most basic tenets of democracy. Taxation and other policies are made without representation whereby parliament must rubber stamp without questioning many decisions made by the executive and cabinet: the drought levy was implemented with little warning; taxes to pay war veterans allowances, however worthy, were introduced by a government which knew it would have to raise further taxes on an already overburdened public to pay for them; other taxes have had to be repealed when a normally passive parliament and ruling party revolted at cabinet's high-handedness. It is not by coincidence that Zimbabwean citizens are among the highest taxed in the world.

There is huge cynicism regarding the President's expensive foreign travel and abuse of the state-owned airline at a time when it is preparing to privatize.

Other ministers and senior officials drive million-dollar cars and four-wheel drive vehicles at taxpayers' expense. They have access to luxurious housing for which they receive a lump sum housing allowance.

The Official Secrets Act and the Law and Order Act have changed little since they were enacted by the racist Smith regime against which our people fought so bravely. These acts remain repressive now as then. In fact the notorious Law and Order Act is soon to be transformed into the Public Order and Security Act, an equally if not more, draconian piece of legislation aimed at weakening civil liberties. Other acts such as the University of Zimbabwe Act (1990), the Labour Relations Amendment Act (1992) and the Private Voluntary Organisations Act (1997) cloak the activities of the government in mystery.

The controversial Presidential powers emergency regulations created a one-man dictatorship in 1987.

The President has the absolute right to dissolve the Parliament if they pass a vote of no confidence against him. This has resulted in the absence of checks and balances necessary for good governance and has seriously weakened the role of parliament.

For democracy to function properly, people must have free access to information. This means a free press and freedom of expression. In Zimbabwe, the main source of information – the daily newspapers, radio and television – are all controlled by government. Although we have elements of a vibrant independent press, these are limited to the literate elites who live in urban areas. Radio, which can reach 100% of our people in their indigenous language, whether they can read or not, is wholly state-controlled. This means that little is done which could inform and challenge ordinary people, leading to dynamic public debate and scrutiny of government's actions and informed choices. Without a free press and without free association and discussion, democracy is a sham.

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Those in public authority must stand accountable to the people for inappropriate or incompetent decisions. It is not a sign of weakness to apologise publicly for mistakes and to accept the consequences. Errors, however innocent, must be acknowledged and corrected. Past injustices must be confessed and retribution made so that healing can take place. Public funds and resources belong to the people. They must not be misused or mismanaged because the leaders of today hold these resources as stewards for the generations of tomorrow. Those who manage them must be accountable to the nation and before the law.

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At all levels of our society, integrity and hard work should be valued, and greed and corruption rooted out. We must never forget that political leaders are our servants, not our masters.

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### **1.5. Consultation**

Good democratic governance requires widespread consultation with all the people. There should be clear mechanisms in place to enable voices from the grassroots to be heard and recognised by decision-makers. Parliamentarians must accept the duty of relaying the views of their constituents to government and explaining government's actions to their constituents.

If they are true democrats they will have the best interests of their people at heart, bridging the gap between the state and the population. They need to create an enabling environment for consultation and dialogue—ensuring, too, that Government is in constant dialogue with civil society, community and church organisations on issues that concern their members. The people of Zimbabwe are citizens, not subjects. When they are not consulted, they must disown Government policies.

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When they are diminished and bowed down through oppression, trouble and sorrow, he pours contempt upon princes and causes them to wander in waste places where there is no road. Yet he raises the poor and needy from affliction and makes their families like a flock (Psa. 107:39-42).

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Alarming instances of lack of consultation have been shown in the flawed formulation and implementation of ESAP, National Social Security Authority (NSSA), currency fluctuations and bank failures and, the introduction of the Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST). All of these little-understood issues have seriously affected the living standards of most citizens including sections of the middle class. Inflation and currency devaluation has been born out of a combination of these programmes and lack of government commitment in cutting its wasteful expenditure patterns.

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On major controversial issues, government can hold consultations and referenda to explain issues to the people and at all times encourage and initiate public debate on issues of national concern. Proper institutions to promote social dialogue must be established. As presently constituted the government must improve the institutional presence of the National Economic Consultative Forum (NECF) and speedily implement findings by the Parliamentary Reform Committee.

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## **1.6. Budget-making**

It is deeply regretted that the present system in Zimbabwe, in which so much power is concentrated solely within the executive, cabinet and ruling party politburo, makes the essential ideal of consultative planning impossible. Annual government budget-making is a process shrouded in secrecy. As a necessary process of creating and distributing the wealth of the nation, preparing a budget should entail a broad based consultative discourse and dialogue.

Otherwise people's sense of ownership and co-operation towards the year's economic goals ceases to exist and there is a "we versus them" atmosphere.

It appears the only submissions to be taken seriously are those from commerce, business and industry—the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce (ZNCC), the Commercial Farmers' Union (CFU), the Confederation of Zimbabwean Industry (CZI) and the Employers Confederation of Zimbabwe. The interests of these groups are usually contrary to those of the poor who are the majority. The vast amount of budgetary money allocated to defence is unacceptable. Much of it—at this time of publication—is going to bolster the ailing regime of President Kabila in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The taxes of our people, including the poor, are being used to pay the costs of an external war. The reasons for Zimbabwe being involved in this war are, to say the least, dubious. Meanwhile the vast majority at home suffer from a decaying health system and lack of funding for education, etc.

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We must insist that an alternative budgeting process be implemented a process that ensures the input of all stakeholders in budget making and monitoring.

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## **1.7. Political Parties**

With the ousting of the illegal racist settler regime, people have assumed the new government would radically alter the laws of the system it had inherited. To the contrary, it entrenched some of the most repressive laws of the old discredited Rhodesian Front regime. The only changes made in many restrictive laws were to simply exchange the word Rhodesia for that of Zimbabwe and continue as before.

The colonial tradition of concentration and monopoly of power and centralisation of authority had allocated the exercise of power to a few and severely restricted black majority participation in government. Despite our hopes and expectations in 1980, today we find new black political and economic elites, which have replaced the old colonial elites within the same

structures. These new power-brokers continue to resist sharing power and participation with the majority in Zimbabwe.

This inherited system, a *de facto* one-party state, is the major obstacle to the development of political pluralism, democracy and development, despite the fact that we are constitutionally a multi-party state.

The arguments from ZANU-PF about the advantages of centralisation within the dictates of a single party ring hollow in these days of burgeoning multi-party democracies. Instead of constantly battling for the supremacy of the party, our legislators and political leaders must spend their energies and resources on the equitable distribution of resources to the people, especially the 62% of households who, according to the Poverty Assessment Survey held in 1994, have incomes below the Total Consumption Poverty Line.

Our real priorities are:

- Greatly improved health care especially for those with HIV/AIDS and related illnesses;
- Education for all, using a variety of curricula to meet today's new technologies;
- Social services for the elderly, disabled, mentally ill, orphans and street children;
- Greater emphasis on job creation, especially for youth and those retrenched due to the ravages of ESAP;
- Major infrastructure building to improve transportation, electrification and basic services especially in rural Zimbabwe;
- The necessary flexibility to respond to the needs of the people during times of natural and human disasters.

We have also seen consistent failure to distinguish between the ruling party and state. Many people, especially in rural areas, do not even know there is a difference. What ZANU-PF dictates almost automatically becomes law. It is clear that national policy is regarded as a ZANU-PF central committee prerogative.

The old Soviet Union-style single-party system placed all power to initiate laws in the tightly-controlled party leadership, politburo and central committee. Parliament was simply a rubber-stamp. This system remains alive in Zimbabwe despite every indication that ZANU-PF is in shambles and riddled with factionalism. All major legislation rests with the party structures.

In all our past elections there have been consistent allegations, reported by election monitors, that drought relief is distributed only to those with ZANU-PF party cards and that people were threatened that they must vote for the ruling party or else they will not receive further assistance. Using strong control of national resources, ZANU-PF has created an artificial state of dependency for the survival of rural people.

ZANU-PF since 1980 has controlled the national daily print media, news agencies, radio, and television. The Broadcasting Act, now being amended to give the State more control of the airwaves, has been used to enforce this monopoly and prevent the emergence of independent radio and television, forcing the one commercial television channel to use ZBC facilities.

Recently Christian broadcasters confronted the government with the proposed bill to “liberalise” the electronic media—a new Broadcast Act—as a sham and forced the minister responsible to admit that the new laws would give more power and resources to the government-controlled electronic media. Unless this control is broken, opposition parties and new political movements will remain on the periphery of public awareness. Zimbabweans deserve to be able to make real choices and have free access to uncensored information for them to make informed decisions.

Yet, the Political Parties Finance Act guarantees that funding is provided by the Government only to parties with 15 or more seats in Parliament—meaning that ZANU-PF receives all government support while other parties and independent MPs get nothing. Almost the entire budget of ZANU-PF’s massive structure comes from taxpayers or the profits of secretive party-owned enterprises which are also all mixed together with parastatals.

Ruling party politicians, especially central committee members, are accused of using government vehicles, even aircraft, and other resources in campaign activities. With the ruling party’s total control over local and national government, as well as business and investment, other parties cannot find funding. They are severely disadvantaged, unable to campaign widely in the country to promote alternative ideas or policies. Opposition candidates and especially independent ones are physically harassed and threatened by ZANU-PF youth and women’s league members as they attempt to carry out their democratic right to present alternative issues, policies and views. The list of attacks, even deaths, and police harassment of opposition politicians is a national disgrace and a blot on the independence of the law enforcement agencies. This is not the system of governance for which Zimbabweans struggled and died for in the 1970s.

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We must question why the ruling party seems to be deliberately ignoring calls to change the Electoral Act which perpetuates a system in which ZANU-PF cannot cede even a small amount of power to an opposition. What are leaders afraid of? Is it, perhaps that a vibrant opposition might uncover further examples of corruption and incompetence.

This is the time to question our current electoral system. Civil society needs to be empowered to make politicians more accountable for their actions. We call upon the Government to institute more inclusive bodies responsible for the running of elections in Zimbabwe. Contesting parties should have an equal say in terms of how individuals are nominated to serve in such bodies as the Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC) and the Delimitation Commission. These bodies need to involve individuals approved by all those contesting elections if there is to be confidence in the system. These bodies need to be fully independent of government.

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Electoral registers (voters' roll) must be accurate and up-to-date to prevent any possibility of fraud or incompetence. It must be made easier to register, so that long queues do not discourage people. There is need for a more professional approach in the conduct of the Registrar-General's office.

Intimidation of voters must be dealt with severely by the police because it is common in both rural and urban areas. Recently an independent Member of Parliament, speaking on behalf of another independent candidate in a Harare by-election, had a petrol bomb thrown at her by a gang of ZANU-PF youth. People who refuse to vote for a single candidate have been beaten. Mobs of hooligans hang around voting booths intimidating voters. People without ZANU-PF cards have had property destroyed and have been assaulted. ZANU-PF politicians who have encouraged or participated in attacks are never brought to book. This sort of intimidation on a regular basis is intolerable in a democratic society.

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The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever leans on, trusts in, and puts his confidence in the Lord is safe and set on high. Many gave and seek the ruler's favour, but the wise person waits for justice from the Lord (Prov. 29:25-26).

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It is our concern that, if this system is allowed to continue, more and more people will lose faith in the electoral process. Eventually, this will give rise to questions regarding the legitimacy of a government elected through a system in which the majority of people have lost confidence. We consider it to be of paramount importance that the Government reform this system, making it open, transparent, and fair. It must be seen as a reliable means to elect or remove leaders and should be guaranteed through constitutional means.

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## **1.8. The Executive System**

Our current system of government, which has an executive president who is both head of state, commander-in-chief of the armed force and head of government, as well as head of ZANU-PF, concentrates almost absolute power in one person. There is no constitutional limit on the number of terms in office for the president. The executive president is surrounded by an extremely influential and loyal group of ministers and officials.

There is little scope for parliament, where back-benchers are routinely coerced to rubber-stamp executive decisions. Even those who try to be involved and have the best interests of their constituents at heart cannot impact or even initiate meaningful policy changes because of the heavy presence of cadres loyal to the President. Recent examples of MPs criticizing cabinet ministers, voting against new taxes and even suggesting a limit be placed on the number of terms an executive president may serve have resulted in severe sanctions by the ruling party. Expulsion and the threat of physical attack have overruled Parliamentary privilege. The concerns of the voters are ignored from one election campaign to another. We, the people, are not well-represented in decision-making, contradictory to notions of popular governance.

The concentration of power—especially when cabinet ministers serve at the will of the president, many since 1980—is a disincentive for concerned and relevant politicians to honestly represent the interests of the majority. For those seeking political promotion or eventual promotion to cabinet, it is difficult to survive outside the Executive Presidency. There is little scope for opposition members to be involved in decision-making and, therefore, little incentive for politicians to stand for other parties or as independents. The scarcity of stimulating debate in Parliament on crucial decisions further weakens our democratic culture and structures.

The Presidential term of office must be limited to a specified number of terms agreed through a process of wide consultations with the people. The Parliamentary Reform Committee is a welcome development. Parliament needs to be reformed by: establishing a strong and effective committee system; empowering backbenchers; limiting the number of Ministers and drastically reducing or removing the number of presidential appointees.

## **1.9. Constitution**

A constitution is the collection of fundamental principles by which a country is governed and is, in a sense, a vision of what people want their nation to be. A constitution is the totality of laws, regulations, and rules under which government and the governed must live. Unless amended by a two-thirds

majority of parliament, it cannot be changed or violated. Constitutions which have many amendments are usually found where a single ruling entity has sole power. The Zimbabwean situation is revealing. Only three MPs do not belong to ZANU-PF and it is difficult for meaningful debate to take place in the interest of citizens rather than the dominant party.

Some new constitutions like those of Namibia and South Africa are models for the world in their concern for the rights of people and their progressive vision. Others, sadly including Zimbabwe, are an assortment of old colonial constitutions with a great number of amendments designed to fit into the ideology of the ruling party. A new constitution must be drawn up through a consultative participatory process and submitted to the people for approval through a national referendum. This requires a constitutional forum or assembly drawn from a broad spectrum of society. The National Constitutional Assembly is a welcome development we must take advantage of.

The Zimbabwean Constitution has been amended 15 times between 1980 and 1997. Many of these amendments have infringed on the rights of Zimbabweans or have been made in reaction to Supreme Court rulings that a particular governmental action or law was unconstitutional. The government's solution, because it has such a huge majority in parliament is to amend the constitution to suit its particular need. No country should be able to change its constitution so easily. All public servants, from the president to cabinet, to MPs, to armed forces and police, to MPs, swear allegiance to uphold all of it, without exception. Particularly the president, the parliament and the judiciary are sworn to defend the constitution against anyone who would violate it.

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In particular, a Charter of Rights must be entrenched which cannot be changed except to enhance and expand the rights of citizens.

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A constitution is a sacred document belonging to a country's people to safeguard the interests of all. It should be easily interpreted and self-explanatory. It should be accessible to every citizen and be available in local languages. A constitution is trivialised and diminished when it is amended to serve the short-term needs of political leaders.

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When the wicked are in authority, transgression increases, but the uncompromisingly righteous shall see the fall of the wicked (Prov. 29:16).

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Zimbabweans have a right to an all inclusive and consultative process to create a new Constitution, with an entrenched Bill of Rights, to replace the outdated and mutilated Lancaster House Constitution of 1979 with its colonial legacy and one-party amendments. Our existing constitution is no longer rel-

evant to the current Zimbabwean situation, particularly in view of the wave of democratisation sweeping across the continent.

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Evil people do not understand justice, but they who grieve and seek the Lord understand fully (Proverbs 28:5).

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## 2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC POLICIES

### 2.1. Introduction

*The Old Testament prophets protested against the outrages committed against the poor by the rich and powerful (Isa. 3:15, Amos 5:12, Ezek. 22:29). They stridently condemned those who used political, economic and religious authority for their own selfish ends. They understood that one earth and its resources were created by God for all to share and must not be appropriated by individuals or groups in an exclusive way. Human beings are stewards of creation rather than its owners.*

*Jesus Christ inherited, maintained and personified this prophetic tradition. Like the prophets of old and down through the ages, he discerned the signs of the times and was deeply immersed in the struggles, the pain, hope and joy of his people. Out of his deep solidarity with them, the prophetic word welled up within him and was spoken. He saw clearly how an oppressive political system and an exploitative economic system made it impossible for the people to live a full human life.*

*Jesus, discerning the signs of the times, proclaimed a new vision of life—the kingdom of God— a totally new way of perceiving and acting. Jesus said the Kingdom was about realising all that is positive plus life-giving in people's daily lives. This was at the heart of his preaching, teaching and living in more than 50 stories about the kingdom recorded in the gospel. It is like a seed, he said, that has small beginnings but could produce a great harvest or grow into a mighty tree (Mark 13). It involved conversion, a profound change of heart and mind (Mark 1:15). Contrary to popular expectations, those who are poor, who mourn, who are merciful, who are pure in heart, are blessed (Matt. 5:1-10).*

*This is not a kingdom of the rich and powerful (Luke 6:20-26). It is as impossible for the rich man to enter the kingdom as it would be for a camel to be threaded through the eye of a needle (Mark 10:25). The rich man was condemned because he did not share his wealth with the beggar (Luke 16:19-31). The pursuit of wealth is opposed to the pursuit of the kingdom. If you love and serve one, you must reject the other (Matt. 6:24). Setting one's heart on the kingdom and its values of truth, justice and community means divesting material possessions (Matt. 6:19-21, Luke 12:33-34, 14:33) in order to share them with others (Acts 4:32-37).*

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The church today must reflect the life of Jesus. It must search to perceive and understand the signs of the times for the people of our time. It must provide critical analysis of economics, politics, education, health, land...housing – not from the perspective of educated elite but from that of the poor, weak and dispossessed.

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The radical demands of Jesus are profoundly challenging. In opting for the poor, suffering and marginal people of his time, he sided with the struggling majority rather than with the powerful, political, economic and religious leaders. Within that majority he was so moved with compassion for the suffering of outcasts- the sick, the disturbed, those engaged in despised work such as prostitution and tax collection- that he made a deliberate choice to join them. He became an outcast himself, someone considered by the 'respectable' people of his time as cursed.

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It must care for those who are being marginalised and exploited by the policies of the powerful. It must focus on viable policies and oppose exploitation and corruption wherever it is found. It must declare that people are more important than profit, that truth overcomes deceit and that love alone brings life.

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The church must declare that wasteful lifestyles based on material greed, selfish pride, status and ambition are false and stifle the human spirit. People are hungry, not only because of shortage of food but because of the lack of justice and a shortage of love (Prov. 30:23, Amos 8:4-7). In its own educational, health, social and pastoral programmes, the church must promote the values of the human spirit: love, compassion, generosity, integrity, service and commitment to others. True human values are kingdom values. Jesus promoted and lived a life full of these values in his time. We must live them in our time as well.

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## **2.2. Hopes and Fears**

In 1980 the future of newly independent Zimbabwe was filled with promise. The country had an abundance of human and natural resources, more than enough for all. In the early years there were significant strides made, especially in health and education. Many new schools and hospitals were built, especially in rural areas. The communication and road network improved markedly. Electrification of the rural centres attracted investment and the introduction of resettlement schemes won the confidence of the people.

However, even as these positive developments occurred, corruption was gradually taking root as some ministers and high officials began their

individual pursuit of wealth through land-grabbing and misuse of public funds. Corruption starts at the top-but gradually permeates an entire society with its lack of transparency.

Because of Independence and following from it, great hopes of development and a better life for all were raised. These hopes were gradually eroded as poor government planning and management of resources, together with the increasing incidence of corruption, ensued.

All this combined to place Zimbabwe's economy in serious jeopardy so that in 1990 our deficits had grown beyond our control and government was forced into the structures of ESAP. Socialism was scrapped as an official party and state ideology and, as the banking institutions demanded, food subsidies were removed, price-controls lifted and cost-recovery schemes in health and education were imposed.

As ESAP made greater demands, there was little support for the informal sector and growing lack of employment opportunities for school leavers. The gap between haves and have-nots widened. The poorest and weakest suffered most. According to the United Nations Development Programme, inequality in Zimbabwe is one of the worst in the world. The richest 20% of the country's population use up 46.9% of all expenditure, the poorest 10% only 1.8%.

This gap must be a major concern for all Christians. The church is concerned about all people but it has a special concern for the poor and downtrodden, the victims of society. It must be concerned with the material and spiritual well-being of people as they live their day-to-day lives and recognise that Zimbabwe has reached an impasse. While we work to achieve growth and prosperity, we must not achieve this at the expense of the poor, the unemployed, and youth—by now the majority of our citizens—and the elderly.

### **2.3. Land**

Land is life for all Zimbabweans. The land is our birthright and inheritance. It is the centre of our spiritual and cultural lives. When we lost it to the colonial settlers we lost our being and identity. This was the primary reason we fought the liberation war for our Independence.

The Lancaster House Agreement prevented the immediate transfer of land rights to the most needy because of the willing-seller/willing-buyer provisions which reduced accessibility to land for all but the rich. The years following the Lancaster House Agreement solidified and entrenched the position of whites and the black elite who rushed to grab land. The Lancaster

House Constitution lapsed in 1990 but the government seems to have been unable to buy available land. The peasants remain in the most barren and arid communal

The eviction of people who have no clear entitlement to land, without providing them with alternative places to stay, is a clear indication of lack of government concern and commitment to redressing the land imbalance.

It is a moral violation of trust placed by the people in our government. Examples abound of evictions in both rural and urban areas. The mushrooming of unplanned settlements and the intolerant attitude of municipal authorities indicate that few people care about this issue. Land is needed for residential purposes as well as farming. Due to these delays, the land crisis has deteriorated into civil disobedience as ordinary villagers from Svosve, Nyamandlovu, Chiweshe and other areas have in the recent months spontaneously invaded white owned commercial farms to resettle or settle themselves. The government has intervened and forcibly removed them.

Access to land is essential for economic empowerment. It is a source of capital for industrial development and enables us to acquire appropriate technology to boost our yield. Land enables us to grow food and supplement our income and provides a space on which to build our homes. We must have a fair distribution of land for economic justice, racial reconciliation and peace.

Despite many promises, the government has been unable to determine a land reform policy that is fair and just. It has made many futile attempts since 1980, all of which seem to have benefited a few, while leaving millions to eke out a bare existence on arid and infertile communal lands, leftovers from the old Tribal Trust Lands of the colonial era.

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In order to bring about equitable land reform we must achieve: the restitution of land, water, and property rights to indigenous people; the formation of a land bank to facilitate management and proper methods of fanning; racial harmony between black and white farmers and their families; production for both local and international markets; justice for farm workers through improved wages and living conditions and education for their children.

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Appropriate farming systems must be encouraged where drought is prevalent, so that land is not needlessly depleted by over-intensive agriculture.

Where only livestock production is suitable, restocking ought to take the form of livestock rather than seed packs. Recently the government launched a controversial plan which designated more than 1,500 largely former white-owned commercial farms for resettlement purposes. The donor conference held in September 1998 to raise funds for the land redistribution exercise was a flop.

It now hangs in the balance as to when people are going to be resettled. The land exercise should be taken as an overdue exercise that must not be used at any cost for furthering political interests. Justice must be seen to prevail.

In Amos 5:24 we read: "Let justice roll down like waves and righteousness like an ever flowing stream." Where is justice in the distribution of land in Zimbabwe today?

#### **2.4. Economic Structural Adjustment Programme**

In the 1980s, Zimbabwe had made progress in improving social services, health and education, reconstruction and development of public infrastructure. Average life expectancy was on the rise, the literacy rate increased, infant and maternal mortality were declining and other social indicators were encouraging. With the introduction of ESAP the situation began to be rapidly reversed.

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Prosperity and welfare are in his house and his righteousness endures forever  
(Psa. 112:3).

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When Zimbabwe proceeded with ESAP, the programme was presented as the introduction of a new era after 10 years of centralised economic planning. It was sold to the people as a shift in economic policy to reduce government intervention. Included in these changes were:

- Easing of price controls;
- Deregulation of the labour market;
- A shift of public spending away from social services and emphasis on economics;
- Measures intended to make foreign exchange more accessible to private investors;
- Removal of government subsidies in health and education.

The main aim of the programme was to loosen government control of the economy so that there might be more competition leading to foreign investment, greater exports, increased productivity and indigenous entrepreneurship.

The effects of ESAP have been hard on the poor. Those who have benefited have been the big multi-national companies and the political elite who continue to support structural adjustment policies at the expense of the poor

and marginalised. The programme essentially places economic priorities ahead of social policy. The unfortunate and disturbing fact is that these economic reform policies are dictated and monitored by the international financial system. While the government needs the support of the IMF and the World Bank, it has been unwilling to meet some of the genuine demands such as drastic cuts in the costs of governance.

It is widely acknowledged that ESAP was poorly formulated and implemented because of government's stubborn refusal to reduce deficits through cutting expenditure on non-essential spending. The failure of ESAP is, however, broadly attributed to the refusal by the government to widely consult civil society on the formulation and implementation of the reform programme. As if ESAP did not give enough problems to the nation, the post-ESAP period has seen Zimbabwe going into the worst economic recession since 1980.

## **2.5. Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation**

While no serious evaluation has taken place on the human and social effects of ESAP, a second more intense phase has been launched two-and-half-years later known as ZIMPREST.

It has been hailed as an attempt to correct the economic failures of ESAP. It proposes to stabilise and further increase the wealth of the nation through macro-economic stability, similar to the first phase. By adjusting the social and economic framework within which various components of the programme will be implemented, it is believed that this can be achieved.

## **2.6. The Debt Crisis and ZIMPREST**

The biggest challenge facing the Government is the reduction of the debt—now about 90% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Economists agree that this debt is unsustainable. Instead of providing essential social services such as health and education, the government must pay more than 40% of its income to service interest on the debt. The debt level is escalating and needs urgent attention if the debt and interests are to be reduced to manageable levels. This is a challenge which ESAP failed to solve and ZIMPREST aims to overcome.

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Churches here should take advantage of the World Council of Churches debate which will take place in December 1998 in Harare on Jubilee, a biblical concept of debt forgiveness.

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## 2.7. Jubilee 2000

Many church organisations around the world are calling for Third World debt cancellation in a campaign known as Jubilee 2000. This campaign aims to reduce the overwhelming US\$250 billion debt owed to the so-called First World by developing nations, Zimbabwe being one of them.

The world over, concerned Christians are re-examining the biblical theme of the Jubilee. A world-wide network called Jubilee 2000 is campaigning for cancellation of unpaid debt by collecting 21 million signatures in both debtor and creditor nations.

Through this sustained and systematic campaign, the Christian community hopes to force the globalised economy to cancel many Third World Debts in order to set them on a path of sustainable development. Jubilee 2000 calls debt in countries like Zimbabwe “a new form of slavery where the burden of a country’s debt is transferred not to the wealthy but to the very poor, who are crushed by the extra demands, and at a stroke isolated from the Western world community which is steadily growing richer.”

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Zimbabwean church leaders and the entire Christian community should make Jubilee 2000 a priority program and make certain that government, business and labour support the World Council of Churches (WCC) in its campaign for Jubilee debt forgiveness. It is in Zimbabwe’s best interest.

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ZIMPREST recognises that the reduction of the debt is critical to the whole reform process. Plans are to reduce the debt to 2.9% of the total value of goods produced in the country (GDP) in the fiscal year 2000-2001.

In theory, the plan will result in deep cuts in government expenditure. The IMF and the World Bank continue to call for drastic cuts in the public service. The problem is that 60-70% of the civil service works in the key areas of health and education which are most likely to experience cuts. It is desirable but much less likely that non-essentials like ministerial perks and defence and security spending will be affected. We are concerned about where social funding will come from if the targets for the year 2000 are to be met.

It is in this perspective that we hope that some of the debt will be unilaterally cancelled under pressure from Jubilee 2000. The alternatives are too demanding on a fragile economy, but without such a solution, the government can only increase funds available to it by privatising state owned assets like parastatals and using the funds raised to defray the debt and reduce budget deficit.

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It is, however, our conviction that strategic parastatals which are crucial to the national interest should not be sold. Instead, they should be restructured and commercialised to instil professionalism and promote efficiency, thereby making them financially viable and not a drain on the treasury

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## **2.8. Employment**

Employment creation is essential. At the moment, unemployment is officially above 40% of the country's labour force but most analysts put it well above 54%. ZIMPREST's goal is to reduce it to 24%, still high, but also overly ambitious, given the chronic shortage of infrastructure, the continued redundancies, retrenchments, lack of capital for prospective entrepreneurs and an almost stagnant industrialisation.

An innovative aspect of ZIMPREST is the understanding by government of the continuous threat of drought which can have serious impact on the economy. The 1992 drought is still fresh in our memories. To offset the devastating effect of droughts, economic growth between 6-7% a year should be achieved during the good agricultural seasons. This, too, is ambitious given the economic problems of the country such as the unstable currency and recent decline in tobacco prices.

ZIMPREST aims to bring "an adequate and sustainable rate of economic and social development to eliminate poverty." It hopes to marshal the resources of the public sector to help people become self-reliant and productive contributors to the nation. This was one aim of ESAP which failed dismally.

## **2.9. Participation and Consultation**

An alternative development programme requires broad-based consultation and participation at all levels. ZIMPREST must be a programme of substance and action, not a mere declaration of intent without supporting structures.

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As a departure from ESAP, we urge the government that ZIMPREST should be publicly-owned and accepted.

For ZIMPREST to be successful it must have credibility and be representative of all sectors of our society. It should be a people-centred development programme and simply not another baby of the World Bank and the IMF aimed at trade deregulation for the benefit of the global and local capitalist system.

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## **2.10. Vision 2020: Participation or Distraction?**

Vision 2020, a long-term planning process initiated by the government with funding from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is said to be a more consultative and democratic process than ESAP and ZIMPREST. However, in the view of many analysts, it is an effort by government to distract people's attention from the current social ills of poverty and unemployment. The once-popular slogans, such as "health for all by the year 2000" have been scrapped and moved ahead to 2020 as a public relations device. The practical needs of the masses are being compromised by unrealistic shifts in policy programmes and wastage of resources with inadequate consultation.

Citizens have become tired of dictated policies and cynical in their response to Vision 2020. Instead, people are calling for an honest assessment of the current state of the country. It is impossible to trust a government claiming to be committed to a participatory approach regarding Vision 2020 while it is unavailable to discuss immediate problems such as galloping inflation, unemployment and a deteriorating health delivery system.

## **2.11. Health**

At Independence, the vision of Equity in Health was clear, guided by the Growth with Equity policy articulated during the Zimbabwe Conference on Reconstruction and Development in 1981. The country joined the ranks of other countries to achieve the international goal of 'Health for all by the Year 2000' and beyond. Zimbabwe made credible strides in bringing health services to the people. New clinics and hospitals were constructed. Those that were inherited from colonial government were renovated and updated. Training schools for nurses and doctors were opened or updated and expanded.

Health services were free for the poor, defined as those earning a monthly income of Z\$150 and below. The concept of equity in 1980 emphasised the 'health need' rather than the ability to pay as the basis for providing care.

The Ministry of Health, in 1982, adopted the Primary Health Care (PHC) approach as the strategy to redress health inequalities, achieve integration and improve access to health services. The PHC emphasised a comprehensive health package (combined curative, promotive, preventive and rehabilitative care). Patients would be expected to present at the primary level first and then be progressively referred to secondary (District), tertiary (Provincial) and quaternary (Central) levels depending on the complexity of illness. These policies ensured that the majority of the population's access to health was increased and improved. The establishment of a Rural Health Care Division

in the Ministry of Health meant that the rural population was given specific priority.

In 1986, the government introduced the Zimbabwe Health for All Action Plan which was a translation of policies stated in the policy document 'Planning for Equity in Health.' The objective of this document was to ensure the highest possible level of health and allow citizens to fully participate in national and economic development of the country.

These policies and plans were indeed important and were to some degree implemented with success. Sadly, the decision by the government to liberalise the economy was accompanied by massive and negative changes that were to affect the masses in a terrible way. Since the introduction of ESAR government expenditure on health care has been drastically reduced. Increased pressure due to the realities of financial austerity and inflation an expanding population, and illness related to HIV/AIDS. Diminishing spending on basic medicines and drugs, extension and preventative health services, specialist facilities, new equipment and treatment facilities and other components of quality health care delivery have reduced a growing health service to one which barely functions. There is considerable concern that despite the government's commitment to Primary Health Care, a disproportionate amount of public spending continues to go to tertiary and higher levels of care. This benefits, disproportionately, a minority of the population (urban and better off).

With further budgetary cuts every year, and services less accessible, the working atmosphere for nurses and doctors is now frustrating and even dangerous.

By now, most Civil Service Reforms such as motivation and training to increase efficiency and effectiveness of health personnel are yet to be met. Problems of low staff morale, low productivity, mal-administration of staff, and impoverishment of health workers continues. This has resulted in the exodus of specialist health personnel from the public to the private sector at a time when this sector offers limited service to the rural population, the majority of Zimbabweans.

The spectre of privatisation and decentralisation of health institutions, hangs over public health care, negatively affecting the performance and morale of public health providers. Increased privatization will compromise equal access for all Zimbabweans to quality health care, creating a two-tier system, in which only the well-off may be able to receive the best treatment.

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The immediate challenge for us, as Christians, is to make an honest reflection of this crisis situation in preparation of a complete restoration of hope in the health sector. Through lobbying and advocacy, we should strive for excellence in health care and ensure that all people are given an equal opportunity in terms of accessing the health delivery system. The budgeting of vast monetary resources to the Ministry of Defence cannot be justified. It is a total distortion of priorities. As we are involved in an expensive external war in the Congo, our nation languishes under a very poor health delivery system. Our sick suffer and die.

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The introduction of “user-fees” in 1991-1992 put the already inadequate services out of the reach of most Zimbabweans, especially the poor. The government has failed to pay local companies for the supply of adequate drugs and equipment for hospitals, clinics and other health institutions. The result is that even basic essentials are now difficult to acquire.

The present state of affairs is deplorable. As noted above, in rural areas few incentives exist to attract qualified health personnel, especially doctors and nurses. The health sector has experienced the highest brain drain of personnel to neighbouring countries, where better pay and working conditions prevail. Due to this exodus, a grave shortage of staff in hospitals and clinics is now the norm.

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As Christians confronted with the stark reality of HIV/ AIDS, we can not afford to play the role of spectator as our health system deteriorates. The number of HIV cases increased from 119 in 1989 to 1.2 million in 1998, and there are an estimated three-quarters of a million AIDS orphans. Recent (1998) research suggests that the average life expectancy of Zimbabweans has fallen from over 60 years a decade ago, to somewhere between 40 and 50 years today. The peril in which our youth find themselves is particularly disturbing. In view of the AIDS holocaust, Christians cannot allow the situation to further deteriorate.

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## **2.12. Education**

Education is one of Zimbabwe’s critical social sectors. Soon after Independence, the government introduced mass education, particularly free services for those attending primary schools. Zimbabwe boasts one of the most advanced educational systems in Africa. According to the 1992 census, rural area literacy levels stood at 37.5% rising to 92.4% in urban areas. The number of secondary schools increased from 179 in 1980 to 1529 in 1996, and enrolment shot up from 0.074 million in 1980 to 0.75 million in 1986. However, these figures mask the inequities in gender, access and quality of education.

The education sector is now enduring some of its worst experiences due to the adoption of ESAP. The problems affecting education and training in Zimbabwe include decline of resource allocations from central government. Research has suffered due to lack of finance, and the whole infrastructure, in terms of workshops, laboratories, classrooms, libraries and teaching and learning materials, badly require refurbishing and rehabilitation. With the introduction of structural adjustment, the government was forced to reintroduce school fees.

This has resulted in the increase of difficulties for families to send children to school. Social problems related to the increased number of school dropouts which include prostitution, crime, street children, social discontent and strife are on the increase. At the moment, critical issues in education and training can be identified as follows:

- The absence of a comprehensive policy framework
- The question of access
- Limited financial resources and the fact that 97% of the available finance goes to wages and salaries. Despite that, the education sector receives the largest budget allocation
- Relevance of the curriculum
- Quality assurance
- Slow progress in Early Childhood Education.
- Equity in Teacher Distribution
- Skills shortage
- Deteriorating infrastructure.
- Training of teachers failing to keep pace with demand
- Unskilled students entering the job market prematurely
- Unemployment of 300,000 school leavers per annum

Given the above needs, there is urgent need to match the country's educational provision with the developmental aspirations of the country. The country needs an educated and informed labour force and primary education must be a right for all children, whether or not parents can afford to pay. Cost-recovery measures have led to urban children being sent to rural

schools. This has aggravated existing difficulties. Because the quality of education in many rural areas was already poor, the influx of urban student's further strains resources. There are currently few incentives for teachers to work in deprived rural areas where they are needed most. Although there is a policy to deploy teachers to less attractive schools, poor conditions at these schools mean that teachers do not stay there for long, resulting in inequity in the quality of education provided.

Elements of social inequity should be addressed through the education system. There is evidence of inequity in the female/male enrolment ratio. Whereas the level of participation of girls is almost at par with boys at primary level, the percentage of females falls as the level of education goes higher. Despite affirmative action at the University of Zimbabwe, the female population is only 33%.

The curtailment of the government's subsidy to higher education colleges and universities has had grave repercussions for teaching and research. Poor working conditions are widespread, material documentation has deteriorated and low standards of lecturers as well as of students has become the norm.

The introduction of tuition payment for students in higher education has also caused hardships for many families. The Social Dimension Fund (SDF) introduced in 1994 to cover tuition and examination fees for poor children has not been very helpful. It fell far short of meeting basic needs and did not address other school attendance expenses including school levies, materials, uniforms and other costly items. Students from low income families report that it is difficult to access funds to help pay tuition and related expenses.

### **2.13. Overhauling the whole education system and the Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training**

We must completely overhaul the whole system of our education if we are to produce relevant and motivated students who are well prepared to face the world. Major changes are needed if we really want to view education as a long term investment in human resources. It is now over 36 years since a national commission on education, the Judges Commission (1962) was set up. We therefore welcome the recent establishment of the Commission of Education and Training in Zimbabwe given the fact that it has been launched 18 years after Independence. The Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training was established by a presidential proclamation on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1998 to conduct a comprehensive review of the education and training sector in Zimbabwe.

The commission's task is to inquire into the current education system with a view to coming up with viable policy changes that would be, among other

things, be relevant to a rapid globalisation of the world economy. Apart from the global changes the commission had to propose changes on the education system that would meet the demands of a liberalised economy.

The Commission of Inquiry in Education and Training's terms of reference were to inquire into and report upon the subject of inquiry looking at:

- (a) the inherited education systems in terms of relevance, quality and orientation in view of the rapidly changing socio-economic environment;
- (b) the basic educational and training needs and aspirations on the eve of the twenty-first century, and having regard to the challenges of a competitive global environment in the Information Age;
- (c) the fundamental changes to the current curricula at all levels;
- (d) the establishment of an appropriate framework for the organisation and management of the education and training systems, with particular attention to their institutional capacity, and the administrative, financial and legislative requirements for the decentralisation of functions to local authorities and communities;
- (e) the issues of gender and gender equity as regards access to education at all levels and the formulation of appropriate remedial measures.

The government echoed its commitment to educational review in ZIMPREST which proposes a continued national commitment to investing in human resources development, through a combination of public sector programmes and private initiatives to fund and provide services in education. The proposals raised in ZIMPREST are aimed at improving capacity utilisation and reducing running costs in the education sector:

- rationalising central government structures and developing a comprehensive strategy for decentralisation of management responsibilities to education institutions and local authorities;
- improving the relevance of education curricula to the economy and increasing the capacity of school leavers and graduates to secure gainful employment;
- increasing access to education for disadvantaged groups, especially girls;
- examining the issues of burden-sharing regarding the costs and benefits of different levers and forms of education; and

- providing programmes for adults, so as to provide opportunities for life long education.

As Christians, we need to complement the emphasis by government on the need to review the education system in line with economic reforms. This is fundamentally important in strengthening Zimbabwe's position in an Information Age within a global village. Scientific and technological research and development need to be fuelled by a relevant education and training system. As the Commission is sitting in Harare and other centres during the course of 1998, it is important to encourage local communities, business, religious and professional organisations, tertiary institutions and ordinary citizens to work with it. The problem area for under-privileged children on commercial farms should be addressed in partnership with farmers. Churches should reclaim their role in the provision of education in the country.

#### **2.14. Environment and Resource Management**

Our rich natural resources are a precious heritage and despite daily pressures, care for the environment should be everyone's concern. We must prevent wastage of resources and learn to practice stewardship in which all people can have adequate access to land and water. People with privileged access to these and other resources have a responsibility to set a lead in careful use, reduced consumption and recycling. Christians, in particular, have a responsibility to be leaders in conserving God's creation.

In poor rural regions, poverty usually results in over use of natural resources (resource degradation) which, in turn, intensifies poverty through a lack of natural resources such as fertile land, water, and forest cover.

Faced with this reality, the slogan—"Re-use, Re-duce, and Re-cycle"—must become a rule of life. Tree planting schemes which involve local communities and which are sustainable, must be promoted. Use of alternative fuels instead of wood, must be pursued.

Land usage must be sustainable and protect vulnerable regions from overuse and erosion.

Urban areas suffer from particular types of environmental pollution, such as the careless disposal of sewage and industrial waste and the unrestrained emission of noxious fumes and gases from industrial plants and motor vehicles. Increased environmental pollution threatens the health of all. Children and the old are particularly susceptible to respiratory diseases. Adverse effects result in absenteeism from work and poor performance by school children. Costs of medical treatment are an additional burden for low-income people.

Certain rural areas suffer from particular forms of environmental degradation, such as mining-scars and waste, gold-panning erosion and, in some border areas, land-mines.

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Effective and enforceable legislation, together with political incentives and economic resources, are necessary to safeguard and conserve the environment at local levels. The church should lead by example, by planting trees, conserving energy, examining solar and wind power alternatives and other resources. It should strengthen its teachings on stewardship and challenge state and local government leaders to put care of the environment at the forefront of planning and decision-making.

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Sustainable and renewable resource-management is ideal

Good agricultural organisation and practice is essential if our environment is not to suffer through over-grazing and mono-culture. Siltation of rivers must be prevented. Water resources need to be protected and properly and fairly utilised to benefit the whole population. The issue of fair access to water from streams, rivers and dams is of great importance and demands speedy attention. Water is crucial for development.

In many areas, water sources need to be further developed for domestic, agricultural and industrial purposes. Agreements must be reached over water-rights with our regional neighbours, to ensure that water is shared fairly between countries and peoples.

Mining developments pose special problems, as mineral wealth is not renewable. Diversification in mining areas and the decentralisation of industries is essential to sustain the long-term viability of these areas. Secondary processing of our resources could benefit the local economy but occurs only too seldom in Zimbabwe. In many cases, raw material is exported for processing.

Particular attention is needed to ensure that local communities benefit from mining and other ventures and that the local environment is safeguarded.

For example, Mberengwa district produces emeralds but remains very poor. The same situation is found in Mutoko district despite the quarrying of marble (largely for export) and in the sugar-producing area of Triangle.

While good management of our resources is the special concern of government, local authorities and leaders of industry and agriculture, it is also everyone's responsibility. It should be for the benefit of all. It is essentially part of our stewardship of God's creation (Gen, 1:26-30) and should be an expression of our endeavour to love our neighbours as ourselves.



## 2.15. Job Creation and Entrepreneurship

The growing levels of unemployment in the country are unacceptable. Economic growth and job-creation are lagging far behind the numbers of school-leavers and job-seekers. Furthermore, job creation must be a priority for both government and private sectors.

We need to create an environment which will enable all investors, particularly within the indigenous sector, fair access to funds. We must encourage Zimbabweans abroad to invest at home. Indigenisation only for the few is elitist and promotes social and economic inequality. The informal sector is increasingly important. Local and national governments must promote the horizontal and vertical growth of this sector, which currently employs large numbers of young people who would otherwise be unemployed. Affordable premises in which to work and training in marketing strategies would assist in promoting small-scale entrepreneurs.

The question of indigenisation is critical in addressing issues that relate to sustainable poverty alleviation through industrialisation. The colonial system and the socialist rhetoric of the 1980-1990 Zimbabwe government did not openly encourage the creation of a truly indigenous class that would assist the majority from liberating themselves from the painful burden of being consumers of goods produced elsewhere. With the inception of economic liberalisation, new opportunities for the majority to become producers have emerged.

To survive in a harsh market economy, the majority of Zimbabweans, faced with rising structural poverty, unemployment and the threat of destitution, entered the informal sector *en mass*. Having independently taken the tools of production, these small-scale producers found themselves excluded by mainstream policies and the politically heavy call for Affirmative Action or Indigenisation. The formation of the Indigenous Business Development Centre and Affirmative Action Group in the 1990s was not broad-based as it narrowly favoured the interests of a clique of entrepreneurs who had strong links with the state for self-enrichment.

Now that the government has a draft policy on indigenisation, it is important to ensure that the basis of this policy is the economic empowerment of the erstwhile marginalised majority.

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As Christians, the participation of citizens in economic development is paramount given that the process will go a long way in addressing social inequality and inequity whilst paying attention to poverty alleviation.

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## **2.16. Housing**

Human beings are made in God's image deserving respect and dignity (Gen. 1:26). All human life requires shelter as a right. A home is a place where you retire, where you put your head down to rest and refresh yourself and the place you dream your dreams.

Shelter must enable adequate privacy, space, security, lighting and ventilation.

We applaud the government for facilitating the building of houses through the Ministry of Public Construction and National Housing (MPCNH). Building societies and NGOs are also helping to make housing accessible.

But, we must deplore the reality that some of these houses are taken by government officials and influential people. Corruption and abuse of power in distribution offices has meant that many poor remain deprived.

We urge the provision of houses that are well-built and large enough for families to live in comfortably and happily with adequate and future expansion. Such housing must be affordable and accessible to all people.

Despite past efforts, Zimbabwe has a serious problem of landless and homeless people. In urban areas, there are increasing numbers of children growing up on the streets.

In rural areas, some people are being told that the land they claim is not theirs, preventing them from having homes to live in and land for planting. Often there is no electricity, clean water or sanitation, with consequent threats to health.

Women and children are especially vulnerable. It is often difficult to find accommodation for children.

Land must be allocated for the landless, allowing them to build decent houses with local resources. In all areas where people settle or are settled, there must be adequate sanitation, by providing pit latrines and boreholes.

## **2.17. Poverty**

Christians should not accept material poverty as a God-given blessing. Excessive poverty in the face of great and unequal wealth is a scandal which must be eradicated from Zimbabwe.

Poverty is a daily issue for many people in our country who worry about how they will feed their children. We must address poverty not as a theoretical or abstract problem- but as the reality seen in the increasing numbers of street-children, beggars and hawkers. Even those with housing find themselves increasingly impoverished, with less and less money left for essentials. Health and education is being taken as a luxury as households are being forced to make the inevitable choice to cover rent and food.

According to the Poverty Assessment Survey held in 1994, 72% of Zimbabwean households in the rural areas are poor compared with 46% in the urban areas. Of particular concern is the increasing feminisation of poverty. Female headed households, which represent about 37% of total households, registered a higher incidence of poverty compared to male-headed households in the assessment survey. About 74% of female headed households are poor compared to about 57% for the male-headed households. Women shoulder an even greater burden of supporting poor families. Many women work long hours both at home and outside the home, leaving them little time for leisure or rest. Women's health and well-being suffer as they struggle daily to provide for their families.

We have responsibility to change a world where the poor are considered outcasts and de-humanised by their well-to-do neighbours. It is an even greater responsibility if we are the well-to-do neighbours.



### 3. GENDER AND YOUTH

#### 3.1. Introduction

*As Christians, we believe God created all people to coexist equally. Social, political, and religious differences should not separate us. Colour and ethnicity should not segregate us. We are all called to live as God's children, exercising a spirit of tolerance and unity (Gal. 3:28-29). Christian men and women should not discriminate against each other in any way. Each member of society should feel wanted and valued.*

*Old Testament religion and culture, and even in the time of Jesus, were deeply patriarchal. Only men were important. To be born female was a disadvantage. Women, like children, did not count. They could not become disciples of a scribe or members of the Pharisees, Sadducees or other classes. Places of honour in houses of worship (Synagogues) or at the table were reserved for men. Women were kept on the periphery. A woman's role was to provide sexual pleasure for her spouse and to bear children.*

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*In a society where men had the right to dominate women, Jesus turned things upside down. Jesus abhorred oppression of any sort and he abhorred the oppression of women by men.*

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*Jesus was considered controversial by the religious and political elite as a result of his attitude to women. He gave women the same value and dignity as men. Women were among his friends and followers (Mark 15; 14:40-41; Luke 8:2-3; John 11:5; 20:11-18). He broke the cultural norms by befriending a foreign Samaritan woman (John 4:7-9). He touched and spoke in public to a sick woman whom he healed and then placed her in the middle of the synagogue (a place reserved for men).*

*He called her a "daughter of Abraham," a phrase that is unique in the Bible since the Jews normally spoke only for the "sons of Abraham" (Luke 13:12-16).*

*Jesus refused to go along with the assumptions of his society. Rather than accepting that his mother Mary's value derived from being the mother for an extraordinary man, he insisted that her greatness lay in her ability to hear the word of God (Luke 11:27-28). The first witnesses to the Resurrection were women.*

*Gender oppression is found in Zimbabwe, today. It is found in family life, in sexual relations, in education and employment. Women are often given subservient roles in business, social and political life and in the life of the church. The notion of the man as head of the household in African society needs to be reflected on and reviewed in the light of the desired emancipation of women from all that binds and enslaves.*

*It is the new generations that will experience the results of this movement for greater dignity and equality between men and women. The youth of today look forward to a better future where boys and girls become men and women worthy of equal respect.*

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The message and witness of Jesus inspires women to undertake the struggle for emancipation. They cannot do this alone; they need the solidarity of men.

Men must understand that they, too, need to be freed.

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Matters of human dignity and justice are fundamental to the pursuance of peace and stability in our society. We see many signs of inequality and oppression in our society. While concerned about the rights of all Zimbabweans, we find that injustice towards women and youth is particularly disruptive of the peace of our nation and keeps us from our development goals.

### **3.2. Gender**

Within our society and culture certain roles and patterns of behaviour have been imposed upon men and women, trapping each into stereotypes that damage dignity and restrict freedom.

The current power imbalance between men and women is at the root of some of the social problems that we have in our communities. Traditionally, men have been in control of resources at home and at work, giving them power, to which few women have access. They have the final say in whatever decisions the family makes. Women occupy reduced space in society and, in many cases, their rights are compromised.

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These imbalances in our society must be corrected. Girls must be enabled to realise their potential and women must be enabled to seek promotions and training for more skilled professions. God created man and woman to live together with equal access to human rights and resources.

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Women are expected to remain faithful to their husbands, the reverse must be expected of man despite Christian norms of monogamy, it is common for a man to have female partners besides his legal wife and get away with it. Women are often subject to physical violence in the home. Men claim that they are merely disciplining their wives and even police consider domestic violence a “private affair” and not a crime. There are many forms of violence—rape, sexual assault and abuse, harassment and violence linked to traditional practices.

Culture and religion condition women to be subservient to men through a process of socialisation. From childhood, boys and girls are groomed to play different social roles. The girl-child often has less access to education

compared to her male counterparts. She is encouraged to do housework and look forward to early marriage and motherhood.

This has implications later in life, when we see women stigmatised for being unmarried or childless and when, so often, we see women occupying less challenging and lower status jobs while men hold higher ranking and more influential positions.

### **3.3. Lobola/Rooro: Commercialisation of Marriage**

Lobola was initially meant to be a sign of appreciation on the part of the bridegroom who gave gifts to his bride's family at the time of the wedding. It was not intended to be a symbol of women's inferiority. Sadly, in our society lobola has become a commercialisation of marriage.

Grooms are 'charged' more for an educated bride or because the bride's parents experienced some hardship in bringing up their child.

Such practices contribute to the oppression of women by men. The groom and his family treat the bride not as an equal human being but as purchased property. Parents when giving a bride to a bridegroom should not put emphasis on lobola but on the existing relationship based on love and partnerships as envisaged in true Christian marriage.

The current form of lobola creates problems in that young men may not be able to afford the often exorbitant amounts of money and instead turn to cohabitation rather than real marriage. This, in turn, encourages unstable partnerships which break down and create single parents and broken homes.

Lobola does not have to be abolished, but it should be understood as a token of appreciation, not as the sale of a woman.

### **3.4. Violence, Rape and Sexual Harassment**

The increasing levels of male violence, rape and other forms of assault against women are unacceptable and criminal.

While such violence is perpetrated by males, we recognise they may find themselves trapped by social expectations.

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Christians must reflect on the biblical teaching that all human beings are created in the image of God. Any abuse of women is a sin against God. Acts of sexual abuse and other forms of violence compromise male dignity.

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Abusive actions rob both men and women of their humanity and the fulfilment which they need to discover in each other as people of God.

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The churches have not made full use of available opportunities to help members of their communities appreciate each other's humanity. It is not too late to challenge men to change and to take responsibility for the immoral and criminal behaviour of other men. The churches, leaders and people of our country must accept responsibility for legislation and education for equality and justice for both women and men. Violence against any one vulnerable sector cannot be tolerated.

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### **3.5. Gender in the Church**

There are problems of inequality in the church which must be addressed. In some churches there are duties which are only given to men and not to women. Often, administrative positions and councils tend to be dominated by men. This reflects inequalities between sexes which contradicts God's plan and agenda for humanity.

While there are churches which have changed policies that discriminated against women, others have interpreted the scripture narrowly to promote discrimination of women and deny their active participation in the leadership of church life. They have done this despite biblical references to the important role of women (e.g., Deborah, Mary, Martha).

Where women have been ordained, some men and women have demonstrated negative attitudes towards female clergy.

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The church has to be encouraged to take a leading role in gender issues. Its own behaviour and practices must be reviewed and must reflect respect and justice for women, especially when it is challenging society to take a sensitive approach to gender issues.

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### **3.6. Gender and Education**

Gender discrimination is also reflected within the educational policies of our families. Some parents deny their female children equal opportunities to education. No matter how bright they are, girls may be denied the opportunity to go to school. Some families allow their girl children to go to school only to grade seven, or up to form two, even though they may have better skills and higher ambitions than their brothers.

The argument levelled against educating female children is that they will get married and leave the home while male children will remain members of the



family. Education of females is seen as a waste of money, especially as school fees increase under structural adjustment. It is noteworthy that even when parents do not educate them, female children usually end up looking after their parents, rather than the male children.

This problem must be addressed by both word and deed. All children have equal opportunities in their lives.

As a Christian community, we must educate ourselves to the rights of girl-children; the right to be educated and the right to contribute to their own independence as adults and to the good of Zimbabwe as a nation.

### **3.7. Family**

There should be no abuse of the term “head of the family” and no abuse of the power that many people associated with it. Not all heads of family are men, increasingly women assume that role. Women’s contribution to family life must be acknowledged and respected. Some traditions run counter to the right to dignity for all members of a family. In all things the biblical imperatives of justice and equality in family life are to be the norms. Inheritance practices have resulted in great suffering and injustice. When a man dies, often all his property is inherited by his original family, leaving his widow and children destitute. Such practices can have no place in a community that respects and protects the rights of all its members.

### **3.8. Youth**

Many of our young people (13-30 years) are caught in a dilemma between modern or western culture and indigenous cultures. Rather than being supported to accept the best of both, many youth suffer from the worst effects of each. As they move towards western ideas and values, traditional values of community and family unit are often eroded, especially in urban settings.

Many young people are raised in a new society where the role of the family is diminished. Children are brought up in single parent families because of divorce, death or separation. With limited knowledge about life these young people often lack role models. With the weakening of the extended family because of urbanization, the advice they used to get from *tetes*, *ambuyas*, and *sekurus* is not readily available and in schools and youth programs. In churches there is little sex education. So they are left to face these challenges on their own.

There are youth, too, who, become single parents, or young parents, because of ignorance, peer pressure and lack of guidance.

Young girls are often stigmatized and forced to leave school if they become pregnant. This often prevents them from being able to provide for their children, perpetuating the cycle of ignorance and poverty.

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As parents and Christians too, we need to understand the times in which young people are living and help them find a secure and productive place where they can be part of a community that values integrity and gives due respect to its young people. If we love our young people and our country, let us come to their rescue and help them to find solutions to the complex world in which they live.

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Youth need to be well-informed about their social environment and well-being. They need to be given hope for their lives, hope for their families and hope for their futures. Having a well-informed youth means having an empowered Zimbabwean society. These problems should be addressed by the government, the church and parents themselves. The Ministries of Education, Health and Child Welfare should be challenged to embark on a vigorous education program for young people. The churches must include educational programs which address the problems facing the youth.

### **3.9. Health**

Many young people in Zimbabwe face health problems today that were not present in the past.

It is estimated that about 1.5 million people are HIV positive and that an average of 700 people die of AIDS every week. The situation is very serious indeed and calls for urgent remedial action. It is painful to see that 70% of the people dying of AIDS and those infected with HIV are young people, between 16 and 37. These young people should be the future of the nation.

Youth are particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe because it is primarily spread through sexual contact and young people live in an environment influenced by western cultural values which promote experimentation. Many young people also feel they have no hope for the future. There are few jobs, education has become expensive and health fees are unaffordable. In some cases young women are forced into prostitution as a means of survival.

There is a genuine need for some form of education in schools and youth groups (especially in our churches) that addresses the developing sexuality of young people. It is understandable why some parents and even churches are very hesitant to respond to this need. Some adult Christians—parents and teachers—may argue that such education was never formally provided in

their youth. This may be true but we also must recognise that the world of today is very different from that of yesterday.

Today's world of lax moral standards, poverty, broken families, unemployment, promiscuity, and in particular, the terrible scourge of HIV/AIDS is experienced by our youth. It must be addressed. Questions must be asked. The type of questions will have a vital bearing on our understanding of life and love.

*How much sexual information are youth capable of understanding at a tender age?*

*How should this information be imparted?*

*Are they just given facts or are these facts underpinned by life-giving values?*

*In view of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, how does one respond to the ever present call for 'safe sex' and the use of condoms? How 'safe' are condoms? Is there a danger that while providing a certain level of 'safety,' they also promote a promiscuous life-style among our youth?*

*Is a major criterion for sex the need to avoid a life-threatening disease or is sex related to the married life-long commitment of two people in truth and love?*

*If it is the latter, how do we prepare our youth for this commitment?*

*There is much talk from both educational and health authorities, and the church about "no sex before marriage and fidelity to one partner for life." How seriously do we accept this message?*

*They are no easy answers to these and other questions. All of us must struggle with them if we wish to be true and integral.*

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The Christian faith promotes the highest values of honesty, morality, truth, dignity, self-respect, and respect for others. Living these values will renew our lives. It will save our young people, our future. The church must also take the lead in urging care and love for those who are already living with HIV/AIDS, ensuring that they are not ostracized in the workplace, the home, or the community. They are ill and should not be condemned for their suffering.

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### **3.10. Youth and Education**

The number of unemployed youth is continuously rising in the country with an estimated 300,000 school-leavers every year while the job market is only able to create 10,000 jobs each year. For youth to find employment or create jobs without any previous work experience is extremely difficult

Even after finishing 'O' levels and 'A' levels most young people cannot find employment. The situation is worse in rural areas where there is no access to tertiary institutions such as teachers' colleges, technical colleges, and universities and where most parents cannot afford to pay college fees.

Our education system needs to be revised so that it is relevant to our present situation. Students must be encouraged to think critically and empowered so that they can find jobs or start their own viable projects. They need practical skills and work experience. The re-introduction of technical schools could alleviate many of these problems.

It is recognised that it is also difficult for many students to start businesses because financial institutions ask for security in the form of assets. As a result, some youth use illegal means to gain this start-up capital.

There is great concern that suicide rates among youth will increase as they are unable to meet the expectations of their parents who expect help with educating younger siblings and support in their old age.

The government, churches and NGOs must play their part in empowering youth through education and information schemes, so that they have viable options. The government must examine the issues of job creation and education. Budget allocations need to prioritize job creation and loans for students and young people.

There is need for practical and accessible skills training which will enable youth to participate in entrepreneurship and development programs. This skills training should be incorporated into school programs, through technical schools or programs, and also be accessible to school-leavers. Vocational colleges must be accessible to all, and not limited to those with the ability to pay high tuition

### **3.11. Conclusion**

We must be clear. There is nothing final about this document. It is not something with which we will all agree. Our hope is that it will stimulate discussion, debate, reflection and prayer, but above all that it will lead to action. We invite all committed Christians to take the matters we have raised further, to do more research, to develop the themes we have presented here or critique them and return to the Bible, as we have tried to do with the questions raised by the crisis of our times.

We have struggled for so long to build our nation. We have inherited valued traditions. We have chosen leaders to represent us. All of us together have much to do to work for a just and peaceful future.

We must not hesitate. We cannot turn away because problems are too big, too systematic, and too dangerous. Now is the time for us to look critically at ourselves, to recognize our achievements and determine to correct our failures. We have begun the reflection and the analysis. Now, we must act.

Not all of these goals can be met overnight. Many will require a long term inculcation into our society and culture.

We believe, with the moral strength of the church and its clergy supporting our vision and our principles, we can achieve good governance in Zimbabwe. But it will not come from Government alone. It will come from all of us challenging and supporting the actions of our leaders

Now is the moment to begin change.

**Towards Jubilee Year 2000.**



# KAIROS INDIA 2000

*[Circa. 1999]*





## RESEARCH NOTES

Internet research has revealed that a process towards the development of a Kairos India Document was begun as early as 1999. In this regard, a consultative conference entitled: “Kairos India 2000: A Process of Reflection for Social Activists” was held from 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> August, at Ahmednagar in Maharashtra, attended by some forty social activists, academics and community leaders.

A draft study document entitled “Indian Kairos Document: A Theological Comment on the Socio-Political Crisis in India” edited by habil James Massey, a member of the National Commission for Minorities, Government of India and published by the Community Contextual Communication Centre, New Delhi, was made available to all participants at the consultation. Attempts at obtaining this draft by the researcher have to this date proved fruitless.

In his key note address to the consultation, Massey stated that the draft document was addressed to the Indian Christian church with the intent of recapturing the sense and meaning of Kairos as experienced by those belonging to tribal groupings, Dalits and other disenfranchised members of Indian society. The document apparently sought to develop an alternative biblical and theological model to assist the Indian church and Christian community to not only respond to the perceived crisis in Indian political life, but also aid in restructuring India’s socio-cultural and political life, which was seen as being responsible for keeping a vast majority of the population, particularly Dalits, tribal groupings, women and other repressed classes captive. As Massey was to affirm:

This draft document can also help the social activists to enter into a process of reflection, because it draws our attention to the experience of historically oppressed Dalit-Bahujan communities for the last 3500 years.<sup>1</sup>

In what followed, Massey provided a short, but detailed social, historical and theological reflection on what he understood as India’s ‘Kairos.’ To his mind, Indian society faced three major challenges:

- I. The Socio-Cultural System of India
- II. The Phenomenon of Globalization
- III. The Demand of ‘Social Justice’

Brought together, these issues provided the necessary urgency and decision to which social activist groups and the India church were being called:

Are we going to stand (in solidarity) with Dalit-Bahujan or with the traditional dominant groups, who are going to fight in future more aggressively, the cause of 'cultural nationalism' as well as of 'globalization.'<sup>2</sup>

For Massey, India's 'Kairos' urgently called for a process of reflection which would lead to the development of a new prophetic spirituality:

There is a dire need for a prophetic spirituality...which always calls for repentance, conversion and change. It is confrontational in nature and it enables person to confront the evil and injustice. It is always ready to take stand. It always is rooted in social, economic and religious conditions of a particular time. It always brings hope for the victims or oppressed by denouncing the oppression and announcing the good news of salvation.<sup>3</sup>

Massey concluded his address by echoing the original Kairos Document:

The 'Kairos' is addressed to all those, who are willing to honour the life on this mother earth, who are going to trust in human potentials, who are willing to work with the victims of century old socio-cultural system and newly surfaced phenomenon of globalization. Because the final call of 'Kairos' comes to the social activists (including church) is: they should move from 'ambulance ministry' to a 'ministry of involvement and participation' in the struggle of the Dalit-Bahujan for their liberation (including their own), so that a 'just society' may get established, in which peace will reign with justice, and all will live with fuller redeemed dignity and recovered humanity.<sup>4</sup>

At the close of the consultation, a draft "Statement of Conscience" was issued clarifying the political position of social action groups present and calling upon the broader community to strengthen the secular democratic polity by defeating the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the then upcoming national elections.<sup>5</sup>

*Gary S D Leonard*  
*28<sup>th</sup> September 2010*

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<sup>1</sup> habil James Massey, "Kairos India 2000: A Process of Reflection for Social Activists," <<http://www.cca.org.hk/clusters/fmu/resources/urm/up9p/99build1.htm/>> [Accessed 27 September, 2010].

<sup>2</sup> Massey, "Kairos India 2000..."

<sup>3</sup> Massey, "Kairos India 2000..."

<sup>4</sup> Massey, "Kairos India 2000..."

<sup>5</sup> See E-Newsletter, Religious Perspectives on Human Rights, vol. 1, no. 11, (August 23, 1999), <<http://www.rghr.net/mainfile.php/1999/12/>> [Accessed 27 September 2010].



# AMERICAN KAIROS DOCUMENT

*[Circa. 2007]*



## RESEARCH NOTES

Internet research has revealed that as early as 2006 the internet domain <http://www.kairosamerica.org> was setup as a workspace for the development and drafting of an American Kairos Document. In addition, the website provided access to earlier Kairos Documents as well as to articles, essays and reading notes aimed at assisting in the development of a rational approach to social criticism within the North American context.

Registered in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, the Kairos America website invited those in the Cleveland Heights area to attend regular meetings on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month held at a local bookstore between the hours of 19h00 to 21h00. While these meetings were intended for those local to the Cleveland, Ohio area, inputs from the wider community were also encouraged. To facilitate such collaboration, a moderated 'Blog' was to be hosted by the website.

According to the last postings found on the website, the twice-monthly meetings were suspended until 10<sup>th</sup> April 2007, after which they were to resume.

While the website is still on-line, with all links to documentation apparently remaining live and intact, there appears to be no recent activity, the last official update being posted to the domain by the webmaster/editor on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2007.

*Gary S D Leonard*  
*28<sup>th</sup> September 2010*





# **A MOMENT OF TRUTH**

**A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of  
Palestinian Suffering**

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# CONTENTS

	INTRODUCTION	345
1	THE REALITY ON THE GROUND	347
2	A WORD OF FAITH	351
3	HOPE	355
4	LOVE	359
5	OUR WORD TO OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS	363
6	OUR WORD TO THE CHURCHES OF THE WORLD	365
7	OUR WORD TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY	367
8	JEWISH AND MUSLIM RELIGIOUS LEADERS	369
9	A CALL TO OUR PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND TO THE ISRAELIS	371
10	HOPE AND FAITH IN GOD	373



## INTRODUCTION

We, a group of Christian Palestinians, after prayer, reflection and an exchange of opinion, cry out from within the suffering in our country, under the Israeli occupation, with a cry of hope in the absence of all hope, a cry full of prayer and faith in a God ever vigilant, in God's divine providence for all the inhabitants of this land. Inspired by the mystery of God's love for all, the mystery of God's divine presence in the history of all peoples and, in a particular way, in the history of our country, we proclaim our word based on our Christian faith and our sense of Palestinian belonging—a word of faith, hope and love.

### *Why now?*

Because today we have reached a dead end in the tragedy of the Palestinian people. The decision-makers content themselves with managing the crisis rather than committing themselves to the serious task of finding a way to resolve it. The hearts of the faithful are filled with pain and with questioning: What is the international community doing? What are the political leaders in Palestine, in Israel and in the Arab world doing? What is the Church doing? The problem is not just a political one. It is a policy in which human beings are destroyed, and this must be of concern to the Church.

We address ourselves to our brothers and sisters, members of our Churches in this land. We call out as Christians and as Palestinians to our religious and political leaders, to our Palestinian society and to the Israeli society, to the international community, and to our Christian brothers and sisters in the Churches around the world.



## 1. THE REALITY ON THE GROUND

1.1 *"They say: 'Peace, peace' when there is no peace"* (Jer. 6:14). These days, everyone is speaking about peace in the Middle East and the peace process. So far, however, these are simply words; the reality is one of Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, deprivation of our freedom and all that results from this situation:

1.1.1. The separation wall erected on Palestinian territory, a large part of which has been confiscated for this purpose, has turned our towns and villages into prisons, separating them from one another, making them dispersed and divided cantons. Gaza, especially after the cruel war Israel launched against it during December 2008 and January 2009, continues to live in inhuman conditions, under permanent blockade and cut off from the other Palestinian territories.

1.1.2. Israeli settlements ravage our land in the name of God and in the name of force, controlling our natural resources, including water and agricultural land, thus depriving hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, and constituting an obstacle to any political solution.

1.1.3. Reality is the daily humiliation to which we are subjected at the military checkpoints, as we make our way to jobs, schools or hospitals.

1.1.4. Reality is the separation between members of the same family, making family life impossible for thousands of Palestinians, especially where one of the spouses does not have an Israeli identity card.

1.1.5. Religious liberty is severely restricted; the freedom of access to the holy places is denied under the pretext of security. Jerusalem and its holy places are out of bounds for many Christians and Muslims from the West Bank and the Gaza strip. Even Jerusalemites face restrictions during the religious feasts. Some of our Arab clergy are regularly barred from entering Jerusalem.

1.1.6. Refugees are also part of our reality. Most of them are still living in camps under difficult circumstances. They have been waiting for their right of return, generation after generation. What will be their fate?

1.1.7. And the prisoners? The thousands of prisoners languishing in Israeli prisons are part of our reality. The Israelis move heaven and earth to gain the release of one prisoner, and those thousands of Palestinian prisoners, when will they have their freedom?

1.1.8. Jerusalem is the heart of our reality. It is, at the same time, symbol of peace and sign of conflict. While the separation wall divides Palestinian

neighbourhoods, Jerusalem continues to be emptied of its Palestinian citizens, Christians and Muslims. Their identity cards are confiscated, which means the loss of their right to reside in Jerusalem. Their homes are demolished or expropriated. Jerusalem, city of reconciliation, has become a city of discrimination and exclusion, a source of struggle rather than peace.

1.2. Also part of this reality is the Israeli disregard of international law and international resolutions, as well as the paralysis of the Arab world and the international community in the face of this contempt. Human rights are violated and despite the various reports of local and international human rights' organizations, the injustice continues.

1.2.1. Palestinians within the State of Israel, who have also suffered a historical injustice, although they are citizens and have the rights and obligations of citizenship, still suffer from discriminatory policies. They too are waiting to enjoy full rights and equality like all other citizens in the state.

1.3. Emigration is another element in our reality. The absence of any vision or spark of hope for peace and freedom pushes young people, both Muslim and Christian, to emigrate. Thus the land is deprived of its most important and richest resource -educated youth. The shrinking number of Christians, particularly in Palestine, is one of the dangerous consequences, both of this conflict, and of the local and international paralysis and failure to find a comprehensive solution to the problem.

1.4. In the face of this reality, Israel justifies its actions as self-defence, including occupation, collective punishment and all other forms of reprisals against the Palestinians. In our opinion, this vision is a reversal of reality. Yes, there is Palestinian resistance to the occupation. However, if there were no occupation, there would be no resistance, no fear and no insecurity. This is our understanding of the situation. Therefore, we call on the Israelis to end the occupation. Then they will see a new world in which there is no fear, no threat but rather security, justice and peace.

1.5. The Palestinian response to this reality was diverse. Some responded through negotiations: that was the official position of the Palestinian Authority, but it did not advance the peace process. Some political parties followed the way of armed resistance. Israel used this as a pretext to accuse the Palestinians of being terrorists and was able to distort the real nature of the conflict, presenting it as an Israeli war against terror, rather than an Israeli occupation faced by Palestinian legal resistance aiming at ending it.

1.5.1. The tragedy worsened with the internal conflict among Palestinians themselves, and with the separation of Gaza from the rest of the Palestinian territory. It is noteworthy that, even though the division is among Palestinians themselves, the international community bears an important responsibility for



it since it refused to deal positively with the will of the Palestinian people expressed in the outcome of democratic and legal elections in 2006.

Again, we repeat and proclaim that our Christian word in the midst of all this, in the midst of our catastrophe, is a word of faith, hope and love.



## **2. A WORD OF FAITH**

### **We believe in one God, a good and just God**

2.1. We believe in God, one God, Creator of the universe and of humanity. We believe in a good and just God, who loves each one of his creatures. We believe that every human being is created in God's image and likeness and that every one's dignity is derived from the dignity of the Almighty One. We believe that this dignity is one and the same in each and all of us. This means for us, here and now, in this land in particular, that God created us not so that we might engage in strife and conflict but rather that we might come and know and love one another, and together build up the land in love and mutual respect.

2.1.1. We also believe in God's eternal Word, His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, whom God sent as the Saviour of the world.

2.1.2. We believe in the Holy Spirit, who accompanies the Church and all humanity on its journey. It is the Spirit that helps us to understand Holy Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, showing their unity, here and now. The Spirit makes manifest the revelation of God to humanity, past, present and future.

### **How do we understand the word of God?**

2.2. We believe that God has spoken to humanity, here in our country: *"Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days God has spoken to us by a Son, whom God appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds"* (Heb. 1:1-2).

2.2.1. We, Christian Palestinians, believe, like all Christians throughout the world, that Jesus Christ came in order to fulfil the Law and the Prophets. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, and in his light and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we read the Holy Scriptures. We meditate upon and interpret Scripture just as Jesus Christ did with the two disciples on their way to Emmaus. As it is written in the Gospel according to Saint Luke: *"Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures"* (Luke 24:27).

2.2.2. Our Lord Jesus Christ came, proclaiming that the Kingdom of God was near. He provoked a revolution in the life and faith of all humanity. He came with *"a new teaching"* (Mark 1:27), casting a new light on the Old Testament, on the themes that relate to our Christian faith and our daily lives, themes such as the promises, the election, the people of God and the land. We believe that the Word of God is a living Word, casting a particular light on each

period of history, manifesting to Christian believers what God is saying to us here and now. For this reason, it is unacceptable to transform the Word of God into letters of stone that pervert the love of God and His providence in the life of both peoples and individuals. This is precisely the error in fundamentalist Biblical interpretation that brings us death and destruction when the word of God is petrified and transmitted from generation to generation as a dead letter. This dead letter is used as a weapon in our present history in order to deprive us of our rights in our own land.

### **Our land has a universal mission**

2.3. We believe that our land has a universal mission. In this universality, the meaning of the promises, of the land, of the election, of the people of God open up to include all of humanity, starting from all the peoples of this land. In light of the teachings of the Holy Bible, the promise of the land has never been a political programme, but rather the prelude to complete universal salvation. It was the initiation of the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

2.3.1. God sent the patriarchs, the prophets and the apostles to this land so that they might carry forth a universal mission to the world. Today we constitute three religions in this land, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Our land is God's land, as is the case with all countries in the world. It is holy inasmuch as God is present in it, for God alone is holy and sanctifier. It is the duty of those of us who live here, to respect the will of God for this land. It is our duty to liberate it from the evil of injustice and war. It is God's land and therefore it must be a land of reconciliation, peace and love. This is indeed possible. God has put us here as two peoples, and God gives us the capacity, if we have the will, to live together and establish in it justice and peace, making it in reality God's land: *"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it"* (Psa. 24:1).

2.3.2. Our presence in this land, as Christian and Muslim Palestinians, is not accidental but rather deeply rooted in the history and geography of this land, resonant with the connectedness of any other people to the land it lives in. It was an injustice when we were driven out. The West sought to make amends for what Jews had endured in the countries of Europe, but it made amends on our account and in our land. They tried to correct an injustice and the result was a new injustice.

2.3.3. Furthermore, we know that certain theologians in the West try to attach a biblical and theological legitimacy to the infringement of our rights. Thus, the promises, according to their interpretation, have become a menace to our very existence. The "good news" in the Gospel itself has become "a

harbinger of death” for us. We call on these theologians to deepen their reflection on the Word of God and to rectify their interpretations so that they might see in the Word of God a source of life for all peoples.

2.3.4. Our connectedness to this land is a natural right. It is not an ideological or a theological question only. It is a matter of life and death. There are those who do not agree with us, even defining us as enemies only because we declare that we want to live as free people in our land. We suffer from the occupation of our land because we are Palestinians. And as Christian Palestinians we suffer from the wrong interpretation of some theologians. Faced with this, our task is to safeguard the Word of God as a source of life and not of death, so that “the good news” remains what it is, “good news” for us and for all. In face of those who use the Bible to threaten our existence as Christian and Muslim Palestinians, we renew our faith in God because we know that the word of God can not be the source of our destruction.

2.4. Therefore, we declare that any use of the Bible to legitimize or support political options and positions that are based upon injustice, imposed by one person on another, or by one people on another, transform religion into human ideology and strip the Word of God of its holiness, its universality and truth.

2.5. We also declare that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is a sin against God and humanity because it deprives the Palestinians of their basic human rights, bestowed by God. It distorts the image of God in the Israeli who has become an occupier just as it distorts this image in the Palestinian living under occupation. We declare that any theology, seemingly based on the Bible or on faith or on history, that legitimizes the occupation, is far from Christian teachings, because it calls for violence and holy war in the name of God Almighty, subordinating God to temporary human interests, and distorting the divine image in the human beings living under both political and theological injustice.



### 3. HOPE

3.1. Despite the lack of even a glimmer of positive expectation, our hope remains strong. The present situation does not promise any quick solution or the end of the occupation that is imposed on us. Yes, the initiatives, the conferences, visits and negotiations have multiplied, but they have not been followed up by any change in our situation and suffering. Even the new US position that has been announced by President Obama, with a manifest desire to put an end to the tragedy, has not been able to make a change in our reality. The clear Israeli response, refusing any solution leaves no room for positive expectation. Despite this, our hope remains strong, because it is from God. God alone is good, almighty and loving and His goodness will one day be victorious over the evil in which we find ourselves. As Saint Paul said: *"If God is for us, who is against us? ...Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all day long'...For I am convinced that (nothing) in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God"* (Rom. 8:31, 35, 36, 39).

#### **What is the meaning of hope?**

3.2. Hope within us means first and foremost our faith in God and secondly our expectation, despite everything, for a better future. Thirdly, it means not chasing after illusions – we realize that release is not close at hand. Hope is the capacity to see God in the midst of trouble, and to be co-workers with the Holy Spirit who is dwelling in us. From this vision derives the strength to be steadfast, remain firm and work to change the reality in which we find ourselves. Hope means not giving in to evil but rather standing up to it and continuing to resist it. We see nothing in the present or future except ruin and destruction. We see the upper hand of the strong, the growing orientation towards racist separation and the imposition of laws that deny our existence and our dignity. We see confusion and division in the Palestinian position. If, despite all this, we do resist this reality today and work hard, perhaps the destruction that looms on the horizon may not come upon us.

#### **Signs of hope**

3.3. The Church in our land, her leaders and her faithful, despite her weakness and her divisions, does show certain signs of hope. Our parish communities are vibrant and most of our young people are active apostles for justice and peace. In addition to the individual commitment, our various Church institutions make our faith active and present in service, love and prayer.

3.3.1. Among the signs of hope are the local centres of theology, with a religious and social character. They are numerous in our different Churches. The ecumenical spirit, even if still hesitant, shows itself more and more in the meetings of our different Church families.

3.3.2. We can add to this the numerous meetings for inter-religious dialogue, Christian-Muslim dialogue, which includes the religious leaders and a part of the people. Admittedly, dialogue is a long process and is perfected through a daily effort as we undergo the same sufferings and have the same expectations. There is also dialogue among the three religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as well as different dialogue meetings on the academic or social level. They all try to breach the walls imposed by the occupation and oppose the distorted perception of human beings in the heart of their brothers or sisters.

3.3.3. One of the most important signs of hope is the steadfastness of the generations, the belief in the justice of their cause and the continuity of memory, which does not forget the "Nakba" (catastrophe) and its significance. Likewise significant is the developing awareness among many Churches throughout the world and their desire to know the truth about what is going on here.

3.3.4. In addition to that, we see a determination among many to overcome the resentments of the past and to be ready for reconciliation once justice has been restored. Public awareness of the need to restore political rights to the Palestinians is increasing, and Jewish and Israeli voices, advocating peace and justice, are raised in support of this with the approval of the international community. True, these forces for justice and reconciliation have not yet been able to transform the situation of injustice, but they have their influence and may shorten the time of suffering and hasten the time of reconciliation.

### **The mission of the Church**

3.4. Our Church is a Church of people who pray and serve. This prayer and service is prophetic, bearing the voice of God in the present and future. Everything that happens in our land, everyone who lives there, all the pains and hopes, all the injustice and all the efforts to stop this injustice, are part and parcel of the prayer of our Church and the service of all her institutions. Thanks be to God that our Church raises her voice against injustice despite the fact that some desire her to remain silent, closed in her religious devotions.

3.4.1. The mission of the Church is prophetic, to speak the Word of God courageously, honestly and lovingly in the local context and in the midst of daily events. If she does take sides, it is with the oppressed, to stand alongside



them, just as Christ our Lord stood by the side of each poor person and each sinner, calling them to repentance, life, and the restoration of the dignity bestowed on them by God and that no one has the right to strip away.

3.4.2. The mission of the Church is to proclaim the Kingdom of God, a kingdom of justice, peace and dignity. Our vocation as a living Church is to bear witness to the goodness of God and the dignity of human beings. We are called to pray and to make our voice heard when we announce a new society where human beings believe in their own dignity and the dignity of their adversaries.

3.4.3. Our Church points to the Kingdom, which cannot be tied to any earthly kingdom. Jesus said before Pilate that he was indeed a king but *"my kingdom is not from this world"* (John 18:36). Saint Paul says: *"The Kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"* (Rom. 14:17). Therefore, religion cannot favour or support any unjust political regime, but must rather promote justice, truth and human dignity. It must exert every effort to purify regimes where human beings suffer injustice and human dignity is violated. The Kingdom of God on earth is not dependent on any political orientation, for it is greater and more inclusive than any particular political system.

3.4.4. Jesus Christ said: *"The Kingdom of God is among you"* (Luke 17:21). This Kingdom that is present among us and in us is the extension of the mystery of salvation. It is the presence of God among us and our sense of that presence in everything we do and say. It is in this divine presence that we shall do what we can until justice is achieved in this land.

3.4.5. The cruel circumstances in which the Palestinian Church has lived and continues to live have required the Church to clarify her faith and to identify her vocation better. We have studied our vocation and have come to know it better in the midst of suffering and pain: today, we bear the strength of love rather than that of revenge, a culture of life rather than a culture of death. This is a source of hope for us, for the Church and for the world.

3.5. The Resurrection is the source of our hope. Just as Christ rose in victory over death and evil, so too we are able, as each inhabitant of this land is able, to vanquish the evil of war. We will remain a witnessing, steadfast and active Church in the land of the Resurrection.



## 4. LOVE

### The commandment of love

4.1. Christ our Lord said: *"Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another"* (John 13:34). He has already showed us how to love and how to treat our enemies. He said: *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous....Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect"* (Matt. 5:43-48).

Saint Paul also said: *"Do not repay anyone evil for evil"* (Rom. 12:17). And Saint Peter said: *"Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called"* (1 Pet. 3:9).

### Resistance

4.2. This word is clear. Love is the commandment of Christ our Lord to us and it includes both friends and enemies. This must be clear when we find ourselves in circumstances where we must resist evil of whatever kind.

4.2.1. Love is seeing the face of God in every human being. Every person is my brother or my sister. However, seeing the face of God in everyone does not mean accepting evil or aggression on their part. Rather, this love seeks to correct the evil and stop the aggression.

The injustice against the Palestinian people which is the Israeli occupation, is an evil that must be resisted. It is an evil and a sin that must be resisted and removed. Primary responsibility for this rests with the Palestinians themselves suffering occupation. Christian love invites us to resist it. However, love puts an end to evil by walking in the ways of justice. Responsibility lies also with the international community, because international law regulates relations between peoples today. Finally responsibility lies with the perpetrators of the injustice; they must liberate themselves from the evil that is in them and the injustice they have imposed on others.

4.2.2. When we review the history of the nations, we see many wars and much resistance to war by war, to violence by violence. The Palestinian people has gone the way of the peoples, particularly in the first stages of its struggle with the Israeli occupation. However, it also engaged in peaceful struggle, especially during the first Intifada. We recognize that all peoples

must find a new way in their relations with each other and the resolution of their conflicts. The ways of force must give way to the ways of justice. This applies above all to the peoples that are militarily strong, mighty enough to impose their injustice on the weaker.

4.2.3. We say that our option as Christians in the face of the Israeli occupation is to resist. Resistance is a right and a duty for the Christian. But it is resistance with love as its logic. It is thus a creative resistance for it must find human ways that engage the humanity of the enemy. Seeing the image of God in the face of the enemy means taking up positions in the light of this vision of active resistance to stop the injustice and oblige the perpetrator to end his aggression and thus achieve the desired goal, which is getting back the land, freedom, dignity and independence.

4.2.4. Christ our Lord has left us an example we must imitate. We must resist evil but he taught us that we cannot resist evil with evil. This is a difficult commandment, particularly when the enemy is determined to impose himself and deny our right to remain here in our land. It is a difficult commandment yet it alone can stand firm in the face of the clear declarations of the occupation authorities that refuse our existence and the many excuses these authorities use to continue imposing occupation upon us.

4.2.5. Resistance to the evil of occupation is integrated, then, within this Christian love that refuses evil and corrects it. It resists evil in all its forms with methods that enter into the logic of love and draw on all energies to make peace. We can resist through civil disobedience. We do not resist with death but rather through respect of life. We respect and have a high esteem for all those who have given their life for our nation. And we affirm that every citizen must be ready to defend his or her life, freedom and land.

4.2.6. Palestinian civil organizations, as well as international organizations, NGOs and certain religious institutions call on individuals, companies and states to engage in divestment and in an economic and commercial boycott of everything produced by the occupation. We understand this to integrate the logic of peaceful resistance. These advocacy campaigns must be carried out with courage, openly sincerely proclaiming that their object is not revenge but rather to put an end to the existing evil, liberating both the perpetrators and the victims of injustice. The aim is to free both peoples from extremist positions of the different Israeli governments, bringing both to justice and reconciliation. In this spirit and with this dedication we will eventually reach the longed-for resolution to our problems, as indeed happened in South Africa and with many other liberation movements in the world.

4.2.7. Through our love, we will overcome injustices and establish foundations for a new society both for us and for our opponents. Our future

and their future are one. Either the cycle of violence that destroys both of us or peace that will benefit both. We call on Israel to give up its injustice towards us, not to twist the truth of reality of the occupation by pretending that it is a battle against terrorism. The roots of "terrorism" are in the human injustice committed and in the evil of the occupation.

These must be removed if there be a sincere intention to remove "terrorism." We call on the people of Israel to be our partners in peace and not in the cycle of interminable violence. Let us resist evil together, the evil of occupation and the infernal cycle of violence.



## 5. OUR WORD TO OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

5.1. We all face, today, a way that is blocked and a future that promises only woe. Our word to all our Christian brothers and sisters is a word of hope, patience, steadfastness and new action for a better future. Our word is that we, as Christians we carry a message, and we will continue to carry it despite the thorns, despite blood and daily difficulties. We place our hope in God, who will grant us relief in His own time. At the same time, we continue to act in concord with God and God's will, building, resisting evil and bringing closer the day of justice and peace.

5.2. We say to our Christian brothers and sisters: This is a time for repentance. Repentance brings us back into the communion of love with everyone who suffers, the prisoners, the wounded, those afflicted with temporary or permanent handicaps, the children who cannot live their childhood and each one who mourns a dear one. The communion of love says to every believer in spirit and in truth: if my brother is a prisoner I am a prisoner; if his home is destroyed, my home is destroyed; when my brother is killed, then I too am killed. We face the same challenges and share in all that has happened and will happen. Perhaps, as individuals or as heads of Churches, we were silent when we should have raised our voices to condemn the injustice and share in the suffering. This is a time of repentance for our silence, indifference, lack of communion, either because we did not persevere in our mission in this land and abandoned it, or because we did not think and do enough to reach a new and integrated vision and remained divided, contradicting our witness and weakening our word. Repentance for our concern with our institutions, sometimes at the expense of our mission, thus silencing the prophetic voice given by the Spirit to the Churches.

5.3. We call on Christians to remain steadfast in this time of trial, just as we have throughout the centuries, through the changing succession of states and governments. Be patient, steadfast and full of hope so that you might fill the heart of every one of your brothers or sisters who shares in this same trial with hope. *"Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you"* (1 Pet. 3:15). Be active and, provided this conforms to love, participate in any sacrifice that resistance asks of you to overcome our present travail.

5.4. Our numbers are few but our message is great and important. Our land is in urgent need of love. Our love is a message to the Muslim and to the Jew, as well as to the world.

5.4.1. Our message to the Muslims is a message of love and of living together and a call to reject fanaticism and extremism. It is also a message to the world

that Muslims are neither to be stereotyped as the enemy nor caricatured as terrorists but rather to be lived with in peace and engaged with in dialogue.

5.4.2. Our message to the Jews tells them: Even though we have fought one another in the recent past and still struggle today, we are able to love and live together. We can organize our political life, with all its complexity, according to the logic of this love and its power, after ending the occupation and establishing justice.

5.4.3. The word of faith says to anyone engaged in political activity: human beings were not made for hatred. It is not permitted to hate, neither is it permitted to kill or to be killed. The culture of love is the culture of accepting the other. Through it we perfect ourselves and the foundations of society are established.



## **6. OUR WORD TO THE CHURCHES OF THE WORLD**

6.1. Our word to the Churches of the world is firstly a word of gratitude for the solidarity you have shown toward us in word, deed and presence among us. It is a word of praise for the many Churches and Christians who support the right of the Palestinian people for self determination. It is a message of solidarity with those Christians and Churches who have suffered because of their advocacy for law and justice.

However, it is also a call to repentance; to revisit fundamentalist theological positions that support certain unjust political options with regard to the Palestinian people. It is a call to stand alongside the oppressed and preserve the word of God as good news for all rather than to turn it into a weapon with which to slay the oppressed. The word of God is a word of love for all His creation. God is not the ally of one against the other, nor the opponent of one in the face of the other. God is the Lord of all and loves all, demanding justice from all and issuing to all of us the same commandments. We ask our sister Churches not to offer a theological cover-up for the injustice we suffer, for the sin of the occupation imposed upon us. Our question to our brothers and sisters in the Churches today is: Are you able to help us get our freedom back, for this is the only way you can help the two peoples attain justice, peace, security and love?

6.2. In order to understand our reality, we say to the Churches: Come and see. We will fulfil our role to make known to you the truth of our reality, receiving you as pilgrims coming to us to pray, carrying a message of peace, love and reconciliation. You will know the facts and the people of this land, Palestinians and Israelis alike.

6.3. We condemn all forms of racism, whether religious or ethnic, including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, and we call on you to condemn it and oppose it in all its manifestations. At the same time we call on you to say a word of truth and to take a position of truth with regard to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land. As we have already said, we see boycott and disinvestment as tools of non violence for justice, peace and security for all.



## **7. OUR WORD TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

7.1. Our word to the international community is to stop the principle of “double standards” and insist on the international resolutions regarding the Palestinian problem with regard to all parties. Selective application of international law threatens to leave us vulnerable to a law of the jungle. It legitimizes the claims by certain armed groups and states that the international community only understands the logic of force. Therefore, we call for a response to what the civil and religious institutions have proposed, as mentioned earlier: the beginning of a system of economic sanctions and boycott to be applied against Israel. We repeat once again that this is not revenge but rather a serious action in order to reach a just and definitive peace that will put an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories and will guarantee security and peace for all.



## **8. JEWISH AND MUSLIM RELIGIOUS LEADERS**

8.1. Finally, we address an appeal to the religious and spiritual leaders, Jewish and Muslim, with whom we share the same vision that every human being is created by God and has been given equal dignity. Hence the obligation for each of us to defend the oppressed and the dignity God has bestowed on them. Let us together try to rise up above the political positions that have failed so far and continue to lead us on the path of failure and suffering.



## 9. A CALL TO OUR PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND TO THE ISRAELIS

9.1. This is a call to see the face of God in each one of God's creatures and overcome the barriers of fear or race in order to establish a constructive dialogue and not remain within the cycle of never-ending manoeuvres that aim to keep the situation as it is. Our appeal is to reach a common vision, built on equality and sharing, not on superiority, negation of the other or aggression, using the pretext of fear and security. We say that love is possible and mutual trust is possible. Thus, peace is possible and definitive reconciliation also. Thus, justice and security will be attained for all.

9.2. Education is important. Educational programs must help us to get to know the other as he or she is rather than through the prism of conflict, hostility or religious fanaticism. The educational programs in place today are infected with this hostility. The time has come to begin a new education that allows one to see the face of God in the other and declares that we are capable of loving each other and building our future together in peace and security.

9.3. Trying to make the state a religious state, Jewish or Islamic, suffocates the state, confines it within narrow limits, and transforms it into a state that practices discrimination and exclusion, preferring one citizen over another. We appeal to both religious Jews and Muslims: let the state be a state for all its citizens, with a vision constructed on respect for religion but also equality, justice, liberty and respect for pluralism and not on domination by a religion or a numerical majority.

9.4. To the leaders of Palestine we say that current divisions weaken all of us and cause more sufferings. Nothing can justify these divisions. For the good of the people, which must outweigh that of the political parties, an end must be put to division. We appeal to the international community to lend its support towards this union and to respect the will of the Palestinian people as expressed freely.

9.5. Jerusalem is the foundation of our vision and our entire life. She is the city to which God gave a particular importance in the history of humanity. She is the city towards which all people are in movement—and where they will meet in friendship and love in the presence of the One Unique God, according to the vision of the prophet Isaiah: *"In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it....He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more"* (Isa. 2: 2-4). Today, the city is inhabited by two peoples of three religions; and it is on this prophetic vision and on the international resolutions concerning the totality of Jerusalem that any political solution must be based. This is the first issue that

should be negotiated because the recognition of Jerusalem's sanctity and its message will be a source of inspiration towards finding a solution to the entire problem, which is largely a problem of mutual trust and ability to set in place a new land in this land of God.



## **10. HOPE AND FAITH IN GOD**

10.1. In the absence of all hope, we cry out our cry of hope. We believe in God, good and just. We believe that God's goodness will finally triumph over the evil of hate and of death that still persist in our land. We will see here "a new land" and "a new human being," capable of rising up in the spirit to love each one of his or her brothers and sisters.

