Confrontational Christianity: Contextual Theology and Its Radicalization of the South African Anti-Apartheid Church Struggle

2012

Miguel Rodriguez
University of Central Florida

Find similar works at: https://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd

University of Central Florida Libraries http://library.ucf.edu

Part of the History Commons

STARS Citation

https://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd/4470

This Masters Thesis (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact lee.dotson@ucf.edu.
CONFRONTATIONAL CHRISTIANITY: CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY AND ITS RADICALIZATION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ANTI-APARTHEID CHURCH STRUGGLE

by

MIGUEL RODRIGUEZ
B.S. University of Central Florida, 1997

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of History in the College of Arts and Humanities at the University of Central Florida Orlando, Florida

Spring Term 2012
ABSTRACT

This paper is intended to analyze the contributions of Contextual Theology and Contextual theologians to dismantling the South African apartheid system. It is intended to demonstrate that the South African churches failed to effectively politicize and radicalize to confront the government until the advent of Contextual Theology in South Africa. Contextual Theology provided the Christian clergy the theological justification to unite with anti-apartheid organizations. Its very concept of working with the poor and oppressed helped the churches gain favor with the black masses that were mostly Christian. Its borrowing from Marxist philosophy appealed to anti-apartheid organizations. Additionally, Contextual theologians, who were primarily black, began filling prominent leadership roles in their churches and within the ecumenical organizations. They were mainly responsible for radicalizing the churches and the ecumenical organizations. They also filled an important anti-apartheid political leadership vacuum when most political leaders were banned, jailed, or killed.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I dedicate this work to my late father, Miguel A. Rodriguez. I inherited my revolutionary spirit from him. I also dedicate this work to the Central Florida peace and justice community. You are the current liberation movement. I wish to thank my professors throughout my graduate studies at the University of Central Florida for their encouragement and support, and for making me a historian: Dr. Ezekiel Walker, Dr. John Sacher, Dr. Hong Zhang, and Dr. Vladimir Solonari. Dr. Charles Killinger, thank you for telling me twenty years ago that I should consider the study of history. I’m so glad I finally took your advice. Thank you Ms. Nancy Rauscher for starting me on the right study path. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Alita, for her support and patience, and for understanding the constant long nights of study, writing, and revising.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................................... 1
Historigraphy ............................................................................................................................... 3
Outline of Chapters .................................................................................................................. 12

CHAPTER 1 ......................................................................................................................... 16
  Origins of Apartheid ............................................................................................................. 16
  Overview of the Missions’ Influence among Native South Africans .................................. 20
  The Early DRC and the Formation of the DRC Mission Churches ................................... 26
  The Rise of Religious Apartheid in the Twentieth Century .............................................. 30
  The Rise of Political Apartheid in the Twentieth Century ................................................ 37

CHAPTER 2 .......................................................................................................................... 44
  Early and Limited Resistance to Apartheid in the English-speaking Churches ............... 44
  The Ecumenical Response: The 1960s ............................................................................. 56
  The Dilemma of Major Political Movements – ANC and BCM ....................................... 64

CHAPTER 3 .......................................................................................................................... 77
  The Rise of Contextual Theology ....................................................................................... 77
  Christian Radicalization and the Fall of Apartheid .......................................................... 101

CONCLUSION ....................................................................................................................... 129

REFERENCES ....................................................................................................................... 142
  Primary Sources ................................................................................................................ 142
  Secondary Sources ............................................................................................................ 145
INTRODUCTION

South African apartheid was not only a political system; it was also a religious system. Apartheid incorporated both political and theological ideology and practices to achieve social and economic gains for its white minority population. Although much is documented regarding the political rise and fall of apartheid South Africa in historiographical scholarship, little attention is paid to the theological dimension that both contributed to and dismantled the segregationist government system. Although it is true that talented individuals such as the immensely popular Nelson Mandela and his African National Congress (ANC), as well as trade unions, played instrumental roles in abolishing apartheid, it is equally true that the churches greatly influenced the final outcome of South Africa's political and social oppressive system. Of course, political and economic factors were always in play, but religion and moral authority mattered.

Contextual Theology provided the hermeneutical reasoning, moral force, and prophetic mandate required to confront and dismantle the apartheid system. Contextual Theology is usually referred to as “prophetic theology” because it depends upon biblical “exegesis” – or critical interpretation – and places its emphasis on the biblical themes of liberation and the prophets’ teachings. The biblical prophets appeared in times of social, spiritual, and political turmoil. In

---

3 John Allen, Rabble-Rouser For Peace: The Authorized Biography of Desmond Tutu (NY: Free Press, 2006), 233. Journalist John Allen contends that although the churches provided “an unrivaled array of platforms at a time when few others were available in the black community” in the late 1970s and into the 1980s, trade unions “became more a powerful institutional force for liberation than church denominational structures.” However, he contends that Desmond Tutu, a Contextual theologian, “made a powerful and unique contribution to publicizing the anti-apartheid struggle abroad…”
this regard, Contextual Theology also studies the current times with regard to the gospel teachings. Therefore, “the gospel becomes contextualized in an attempt to understand its meaning in the situation of crisis and conflict.”4 These understandings of biblical exegesis led late twentieth-century Liberation theologians in Latin America and Contextual theologians in South Africa to focus on the conditions of the poor and oppressed, and attempt to remove all social and economic barriers that are deemed oppressive. This theology became a significant driving force used by mostly non-white influential religious leaders and activist theologians to help end the apartheid government.5

Although the Afrikaner Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) and its theology contributed substantially to the government’s apartheid policies, its non-white mission or “sister” churches together with many English-speaking – former English missionary – churches helped dismantle the apartheid system.6 Many times working with anti-apartheid political groups, foreign nations, and international organizations, the churches fought a two front war against the South African government – one religious and the other political. Ecclesiastical forces played no small role to end apartheid.

Before delving further into this work, note that certain words and terms are spelled according to the South African English spelling, such as Coloured instead of Colored and Labour

---

Party instead of Labor Party. For the purpose of clarification, five terms are defined: First, Contextual Theology is considered the equivalent or near equivalent meaning of Liberation Theology in South Africa. Therefore, Liberation Theology and Contextual Theology will be used interchangeably, particularly within the early part of this thesis, unless otherwise noted. Second, apartheid is Afrikaans for “apartness.” It was first coined in the 1930s and used as a slogan in the 1940s by the National Party. After that party’s victory in the South African 1948 general elections, the social customs of apartheid were codified into law.7

Third, the apartheid government tended to separate the races by color and shades of color. Coloureds, for example, were considered having a lighter skin tone than blacks and of mixed race origin. However, Coloureds suffered the same oppression as blacks. For simplicity, blacks will mean black and Coloured people of South Africa unless otherwise noted. Fourth, the “liberation movement,” “freedom struggle,” or “liberation struggle” is typically defined by this author as political organizations, student groups, trade unions, and other secular anti-apartheid groups that directly confronted the South African government. In the 1980s, many churches and ecumenical organizations joined or supported the liberation struggle and they too became part of this group. Finally, the “prophetic church,” in relation to prophetic theology, as mentioned above, refers to the churches and Christian ecumenical organizations that taught or implemented the concepts of Contextual Theology.

**Historiography**

An examination of the recent historical scholarship is appropriate before beginning to

---

explore the topic at hand. Although most of the historical analysis involving the church struggle in apartheid South Africa is over a decade old, a number of these works are significant to this thesis. A brief discussion of some of those works follows.

Richard Elphick’s 1997 article, “The Benevolent Empire and the Social Gospel: Missionaries and South African Christians in the Age of Segregation,” states that early twentieth-century Social Gospel Christians sought to alleviate Africans of oppressive social and cultural policies by implementing British and American Social Gospel ideas. South African Social Christianity, the equivalent of Social Gospel in the industrial nations, made a significant impact on South African Christianity. However, most white liberal and black South Africans, impressed by the self-help teachings of African American Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, rejected the Western industrial “socialist” model and adopted an elitist and paternalistic ideology to seek black African liberation. They believed that the South African racial problems would be resolved through dialogue and understanding among men of reason. This “Tuskegee” model collapsed primarily for two reasons. First, the masses, mostly poorly educated, could not relate to the elitists. Second, the South African government removed any chances of blacks becoming full citizens in 1948, therefore eliminating the means for black self-determination. Only too late did the Social Christians come to understand that they needed to work “with” and not “for” the oppressed Africans.

Elphick provides a nuanced look at the Social Gospel and Social Christianity concepts. However, there were clear distinctions between black rural and urban Christians. Elphick does

---

not discuss these two groups with regard to accepting any form of Social Christianity. Also, South Africa’s Social Christianity, by definition, is equivalent to the Western Social Gospel. However, the South African version took on a more moderate tone in its social activism, preferring to work with the paternalists instead of outright protesting against the government. The more confrontational industrial “socialist” model of the Social Gospel is discarded for the more subdued “Tuskegee” model. However, Elphick does not provide much information on the socialist model, nor does he provide sufficient comparison between the Tuskegee and the socialist model in order for the reader to understand why one model was preferable to the other.

On the other hand, Peter Walshe’s 1997 “Christianity and the Anti-Apartheid Struggle: The Prophetic Voice within Divided Churches,” states that twentieth-century South African Liberation theologians changed their former tactics of “noblesse oblige” or working “for” the disenfranchised – what the Tuskegee method promoted – to working “with” them – what the socialist method promoted in the form of Liberation Theology. Walshe argues that once prophetic Christianity challenged the South African churches’ status quo toward the apartheid system, “the Christian church itself became a site of political struggle.” Walshe provides the reader with an evolution of South African prophetic Christianity from the turn of the twentieth century to the early 1990s, claiming that it became more politicized through the years. At the height of its activism in the 1980s, Walshe states that prophetic Christian leaders worked for ecumenical collaboration and joined the anti-apartheid political movement in order to end apartheid.²⁹

Walshe clearly provides the reader with a better understanding of the churches’ role in the

anti-apartheid struggle. However, Walshe assumes that the reader understands the meaning of the “prophetic church.” It is not clear at first how the word “prophetic” relates to Liberation Theology. For many Christians, prophesy and prophetic signify the biblical end times. This is clearly not what prophetic means to liberal Christians. A basic introduction of biblical themes, such as the significance of prophets in the bible, and what the prophetic teachings meant for Liberation Theologians of the 1970s and 1980s could clear any possible misinterpretations.

John W. De Gruchy’s 1997 “Grappling with a Colonial Heritage: The English-speaking Churches under Imperialism and Apartheid” relates very closely to Peter Walshe’s analysis. De Gruchy, however, begins with the origins of the English-speaking churches – most which eventually became the prophetic churches – from the nineteenth century with the arrival of the British to South Africa. De Gruchy states that the English-speaking churches originally shared the South African’s segregationist policies in the early 1900s. By the mid-twentieth-century, however, cracks between the English-speaking churches and the Afrikaner Dutch Reformed Church began to show as apartheid ideology and policy increased. Although de Gruchy states that the English-speaking churches condemned apartheid policies, at least in principle, and passed resolutions against such policies, they failed to implement their resolutions.¹⁰

To his credit, de Gruchy provides the reader with a good understanding of the origins of English-speaking or South African prophetic churches. The evolution of the English-speaking churches and their relationship with the Afrikaner Dutch Reformed Church are clearly discernable. Nevertheless, de Gruchy’s article states that the Contextual Theologians filled a

crucial political leadership vacuum without providing much analysis as to how the vacuum occurred in the first place.

Similar to Walshe and de Gruchy, Tristan Anne Borer’s 1998 *Challenging the State: Churches as Political Actors in South Africa* emphasizes the role of the churches in confronting the apartheid state. She argues that the churches became “overtly political actors” through at least three factors. First, the state’s intensified repression and the opposition’s increased militancy changed the political environment. Second, the rise of new theology contributed to the churches’ inclusion of certain discourse previously considered beyond the religious sphere. Finally, the nature of political discourse within the churches’ institutional framework contributed to their level of politicization. As an example, Borer states that in 1983, the South African government reacted to church leaders’ increased condemnation of apartheid by often harassing church workers. She adds that, “The ensuing church / state conflict further contributed to the politicization of leaders and their organizations.” This coupled with the increased role of the church leadership in the liberation movement and within the ecumenical organizations “led to spiraling involvement of the [ecumenical organizations] in the political realm.”

Borer’s monograph provides a detailed account of the Protestant English-speaking churches’ and the Roman Catholic Churches’ involvement in the South African anti-apartheid struggle, as well as Contextual Theology’s impact on the radicalization of the churches and their ecumenical organizations. However, her scope of research includes the years between 1980 and 1994. Borer’s work neglects to elaborate how the anti-apartheid political vacuum occurred in the late 1970s. Also, Borer’s book provides a concise but well written description on Contextual

---

11 Borer, xvii, 56.
Theology. Nevertheless, there is a missing component. Although, Marxism is central to the character of Contextual Theology, there is no direct mention or thorough discussion of the influence of Marxist ideology on Contextual Theology.

Another work of significant interest regarding church and state affairs revolving around apartheid is Jacobus Christoff Pauw’s 2007 dissertation, “Anti-Apartheid Theology in the Dutch Reformed Family of Churches: a Depth-Hermeneutical Analysis,” which provides one of the few in-depth analyses of the history of the DRC as it relates to the South African apartheid era. Pauw provides a detailed account of the DRC’s theology and evolution that led to its adoption of segregationist beliefs. Pauw provides thorough analysis on the role that anti-apartheid Dutch Reformed members played in helping dismantle the DRC’s apartheid beliefs. For example, Contextual theologian and former DRC member Rev. C.F. Beyers Naude had been a member of the Afrikaner Broederbond (Brotherhood) since graduating from religious studies at Stellenbosch University. His father had been one of the Broederbond’s first founders and its first president in 1918. The Broederbond was a secret society that organized the Afrikaner power base through its members in the government, military, police, civil service, business establishment, media, and the DRC. Naude’s pedigree and credentials pointed to a future of power and prestige in white South Africa.12

However, he started to question apartheid as his theological knowledge and real world experience broadened. The writings of European theologians during the Nazi era influenced him greatly. Naude found it increasingly difficult to biblically justify apartheid when asked about it during his overseas tours to Europe and North America. In his native South Africa, young DRC

---

12 Pauw, 144. See also, Walshe, “Anti-Apartheid Struggle,” 386.
ministers encouraged Naude to go with them to Indian townships, black mining compounds, and Coloured slum areas. Through his own eyes, Naude witnessed the tragic results of apartheid policy. Eventually, Naude left the Broederbond to support the church’s anti-apartheid struggle. He and his Christian Institute played a crucial role in introducing Contextual Theology to the South African churches.

From the beginning of Dutch settlement in South Africa to the fall of apartheid four hundred years later, Pauw provides one of the most thorough analyses of the DRC’s contribution in conceiving religious apartheid as well as its eventual rejection of it. Also, Pauw masterfully presents a thorough account of the anti-apartheid struggle from the DRC’s and its sister churches’ perspectives that many other scholars leave out. Due to this focus, Pauw’s analysis of Contextual Theology’s contribution to the liberation struggle is not as in-depth.

Another work of interest is J. David Turner’s 1994 monograph, An Introduction to Liberation Theology. Turner states that the Catholic Church, in Vatican II, opened the way for more Latin American church leaders to participate in major Catholic conferences. However, not until the Medellin Conference of 1968 did the Latin American church leaders establish well-defined liberation ideas. One of those ideas is that the struggle for socio-economic equality is central to Liberation theology. However, Turner is not one to give praise to either the concept or practice of Liberation Theology.

He believes that Liberation Theology’s adoption of socialist theory hinders its ability to be an effective means of economic improvement for the poor. He contends that Liberation theologians should avoid Marxist methodologies for changing the socio-economic order in

---

14 Turner, 3, 7.
capitalist structured nations given the grand failure of previously attempted socialist experiments in many of those countries.\textsuperscript{15} Turner, however, neglects to provide any counter argument to the successes of Black Theology – a variant of Liberation Theology – during the Civil Rights movement in the United States. Leonardo and Clodovis Boff’s 1986 seminal work, \textit{Introducing Liberation Theology}, clearly states Liberation Theology’s position on Marxism, which is similar to Martin Luther King, Jr.’s stance – King’s view is briefly discussed later in this paper.

The Boff’s assert that the theology requires Marxism to submit “to the judgment of the poor and their cause, and not the other way around.” In other words, Marxism is only used as an instrument for the sake of the poor. Liberation theology “freely borrows” from Marxist methodology, but it does not exalt Marxist theory over gospel teachings. It holds a “decidedly critical” position in relation to Marxism and rejects its unchristian attributes, such as materialism. The Boffs stress that Liberation Theology also seeks to go “beyond socialism as it exists today.”\textsuperscript{16} From Turner’s vantage point in 1994, socialism failed to produce the classless society it promised. However, the Boffs clearly stated that socialism within Liberation Theology was a means to an end and not the end itself.

Most of the historiographical scholarship presented above focuses on the South African churches’ role within the anti-apartheid struggle. The historiography discusses Contextual Theology’s attributes and contributions – in varying degrees – in radicalizing the churches to confront the state. However, there has been no in-depth scholarly work on the specific contribution of Contextual Theology to the dismantling of apartheid over the full range of time

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 113.
from the arrival of the Dutch to the beginning of democratic rule.

This is the gap that this thesis intends to fill. This work stresses the importance of theology in framing political discourse, influencing political policies, and in taking political action. Contextual Theology’s very nature, which includes Marxist ideology, appealed to the oppressed and disenfranchised groups in South Africa. Its religious concepts also provided the theological justification for its South African ecclesiastical leaders to radicalize and join the liberation struggle. Nevertheless, Contextual Theology was not a result of the inevitable evolution of liberal theology in South Africa. It was an injection into the South African theological discourse introduced from foreign influences such as the United States and Latin America. Prior to the introduction of Contextual Theology in the 1970s, the South African churches failed to effectively unite with the liberation movement and confront the state. However, once it did become a popular theology, primarily among the English-speaking clergy and theologians, it successfully contributed to ending apartheid. This work also provides evidence of how the filling in of that crucial political leadership gap successfully contributed to the ending of apartheid through the Contextual theologians’ direct action campaigns on the domestic front and their diplomatic efforts abroad.

Christianity had not witnessed the degree of political radicalization and ecumenical cooperation within the prophetic church movement until the last decade of the South African apartheid era. Therefore, it is the author’s intent that this thesis, although not exhaustive, provides a comprehensive understanding of apartheid’s history in South Africa and Contextual Theology’s role in its dismantling. It is also the author’s intent that this work revives further research of Contextual Theology’s importance and influence in world-wide political crises and
social movements.

Outline of Chapters

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter, “Origins of Apartheid,” explores the background of the Afrikaner religious experience in South Africa, from the arrival of the early seventeenth century Dutch settlers in Cape Town to their migration, or Great Trek, to the northern interior during British occupation of South Africa. Afrikaner conflict with British rule – which eventually led to the late nineteenth-century Anglo-Boer War – ultimately resulted in the “poor white” dilemma that led to exclusionary policy against non-whites. The chapter also emphasizes on the similarities and differences between the settler (Afrikaner) churches and the English-speaking – predominantly European – churches and their treatment of African groups, such as the Khoikhoi and Xhosa. Also, a brief historiographical analysis is provided on the role and impact that the churches and their missionary work played in the formation of and resistance to racist political policy in South Africa, with special attention given to the adoption of Kuyperian neo-Calvinism Theology in the Afrikaner religious community. This theology is credited with reinforcing the need to separate the races. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the Afrikaner National Party’s rise to power with the support of the DRC.

In the second chapter, “Early and Limited Resistance to Apartheid in the English-speaking Churches and Anti-Apartheid Political Movements,” the early relationship between the English-speaking churches and the DRC is discussed. Also, the early anti-apartheid ecclesiastical movement is represented by Christian ministers Trevor Huddleston and Michael Scott. The anti-
The apartheid political movement is represented by Albert Luthuli, Nelson Mandela, and Stephen Biko.

Huddleston described his limited victories in Johannesburg to prevent the humiliating and oppressive economic and political treatment that non-whites endured during the early years of the post-1948 National Party election victory. Scott attempted to organize an anti-apartheid movement with communist allies and fails. In contrast, Geoffrey Clayton helped unite the English-speaking Protestant and Catholic churches to denounce the apartheid laws, but even after the Sharpeville Shootings and Cottesloe Consultation, full politicization and radicalization were still many years away.

In the meantime, the political anti-apartheid movement had major set backs. Devout Christian and ANC leader, Albert Luthuli pleaded for more church direct action against the government but only received minor concessions. Nelson Mandela, frustrated with the ANC’s pace in dismantling apartheid through non-violent means, helped form a militant wing in the early 1960s. His and his associates’ militant actions resulted in getting them arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to prison for many years. The government also banned the ANC and other anti-apartheid political organizations.

No substantial anti-apartheid movement continued throughout the mid-1960s until the rise of Stephen Biko and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). The BCM was heavily influenced by the Christian clergy. However, Biko’s killing ten years later abruptly ended the BCM’s powerful anti-apartheid influence in South Africa, leaving yet another anti-apartheid leadership and organizational vacuum that needed to be filled.
The third and final chapter, “The Rise of Contextual Theology and the Fall of Apartheid,” provides a more detailed background and definition of Contextual Theology. It also addresses the Belhar Confession – the powerful anti-racist statement of faith influenced greatly by Contextual theologian Allan Boesak of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church – and the Kairos Document, influenced predominantly by the Contextual theologians in the English-speaking churches. The Belhar Confession challenged the Afrikaner Dutch Reformed Church while the Kairos Document challenged to the South African government. The implications and actions resulting from the release of these two official ecclesiastical statements, but particularly the Kairos Document in the Harare Declaration and also the Lusaka Statement, are addressed. In addition, the growing radicalization of the South African churches through the efforts of leading Contextual theologians, such as Desmond Tutu through the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and Allan Boesak through the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), is discussed in detail.

During the last years of the apartheid regime, the church leaders became increasingly vocal and active against the government. They initiated non-violent resistance campaigns at great risk to their freedom and lives. This chapter chronicles the major events that took place during the last decade of the apartheid government. It also reveals the strategies and tactics utilized by the Contextual theologian leaders to dismantle apartheid. It demonstrates that the religious leaders appealed to and worked with foreign governments for economic sanctions against the South African government. They allied with anti-apartheid political groups within and outside the country to apply political pressure against the apartheid regime. The chapter concludes with a brief example of how Contextual theologians helped transition South Africa from apartheid to democracy through the National Peace Accord (NPA) in the early 1990s.
Ultimately, this thesis argues that theology played as much a key role in the dissolution of apartheid as in its formation. Not until the introduction of Contextual Theology in the 1970s and 1980s did the South African English-speaking churches and Christian ecumenical institutions become politicized. Mostly black clergy in influential leadership roles were responsible for this radicalization. Also, with prominent anti-apartheid political leaders imprisoned, banned, or killed, and their organizations outlawed, Contextual theologians successfully united with anti-apartheid opposition groups, and in many cases took the initiative to lead in the front lines of protest, and sustained the domestic and international pressure against the apartheid government until its final dismantling.
CHAPTER 1

Origins of Apartheid

In order to understand Contextual Theology’s influence in South African religiosity and politics, a firm footing must be established in regard to South African history. For it is the beginning of European history within South Africa and European interaction with, as well as reaction to indigenous Africans that sets the motion of events that led to dreaded apartheid, and ultimately its demise. Therefore this chapter begins with the early Dutch Settlement, with its impact on the indigenous people, and concludes with an analysis of the segregationist National Party’s rise to power.

Christianity always played an important role in South African history. The Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie or VOC) – a subsidiary private organization under the auspices of the government of the Netherlands – played a major, albeit unintentional, role in helping establish permanent settlements in South Africa. Prior to the building of the Suez Canal in Egypt in the nineteenth century, the Cape of Good Hope at the tip of Southern Africa provided the quickest and best trade route to the East. The VOC exploited this opportunity successfully. In time, the Dutch established permanent settlements in South Africa with the earliest European settlement established at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652.

---

Pauw, 62. Two important background statements need to be addressed. First, Dutch Calvinism partially developed out of the struggle from Spanish Catholic domination. In 1651, one year prior to the VOC’s arrival to the Cape, the Reformed religion became the state religion of the newly liberated Dutch provinces. Second, Pauw contends that colonization of the Cape was not the original intent of the Dutch government, but evolved through immigration from European settlers and slaves brought from other Dutch colonies.
With regard to church-state issues, however, colonial authority claimed direct control over the affairs of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. The Dutch East India Company believed that it was responsible for the protection of the Dutch Reformed Church. In the VOC’s view, the church helped maintain social cohesion because it demonstrated the holiest example for the Christian religion.\(^\text{18}\)

Church-state cohesion slightly relaxed under the brief French occupation of South Africa. France, under Napoleon Bonaparte’s rule, invaded the Netherlands in 1794, forcing Prince William V to flee to England. William gave the British rule over the Cape of Good Hope in order to prevent France from colonizing it. This mandate formally ended Dutch rule in South Africa. Yet, British rule also ended briefly when the 1802 Treaty of Amiens mandated that the Cape be turned over to French authority – known as the Batavian Republic. During French occupation, more liberal church reforms took place. For example, the new government allowed the establishment of different denominations and missionary groups. Full separation of church and state, however, did not occur. Three years later, a British fleet recaptured the Cape.\(^\text{19}\) Finally, an agreement involving England, Holland, and Sweden in 1814 gave the British official control of South Africa.\(^\text{20}\) Reestablishment of British rule meant the continuance of church and state unity.\(^\text{21}\)

Prior to the 1814 British annexation of South Africa, French Huguenots – fleeing religious persecution in Europe – and Germans joined the Dutch in South Africa. Eventually, the


\(^{19}\) Pauw, 64-5.


\(^{21}\) Pauw, 64-5.
groups merged and even developed their own cultural identity and language – Afrikaners and Afrikaans, respectively. However, after 1814, the British began to settle in the Eastern Cape by the thousands. These new settlers became a buffer between the contentious Afrikaner farmers and native Africans. They began to influence both the Afrikaner and African way of life. In time, the buffer would not be needed because newly implemented British mandates, such as the abolition of slavery and Ordinance 50 – explained later in this chapter – forced the Afrikaners to reconsider their location within South Africa. Also, what the Afrikaners considered British liberal policies involving the treatment of blacks fueled their animosity toward both the English and Africans. These were just a few of the increasingly unacceptable and unforgivable British policies that forced many Afrikaners to migrate from the Cape colony to the hinterland. This exodus is commonly referred to as the Great Trek.\textsuperscript{22}

Near the turn of the twentieth century, the unintentional partitioning of South Africa had evolved among two groups of European origin – the primarily Dutch Afrikaners and their English colonizers. The Afrikaners established two independent republics in the hinterland – the Transvaal in the northern part of the country, and the Orange Free State in the central area. The British controlled the two coastal provinces – the Cape and Natal.\textsuperscript{23}

The discovery of gold in the Transvaal attracted many British and foreign nationals from around the world. These foreigners – or Uitlanders as Transvaal President Paul Kruger referred to them – soon outnumbered the Afrikaners in that republic. Claiming that their work contributed to generating profits for the Transvaal economy, they also soon began to ask for equal rights and voting privileges. The British, hoping to acquire a stake in the potential fortune in gold, pressed

\textsuperscript{23} Woods, \textit{Biko}, 14.
Kruger to accept the Uitlanders’ demands. Kruger refused to give any major concessions and in 1899, the simmering impasse boiled over into the bloody conflict known as the Second Anglo-Boer War.\textsuperscript{24} The war, lost by the Boers three years later,\textsuperscript{25} proved disastrous for many Afrikaner families, leaving many impoverished. The aftermath of the war quickly played into Afrikaner nationalist and religious sentiments, and produced discriminatory policies against blacks that eventually evolved into full blown apartheid by 1948. This subject will be discussed in later pages.

The lack of trained Dutch Reformed ministers after the break between the Cape and Dutch churches prompted the Cape Governor, Lord Charles Somerset, to recruit Scottish missionaries from the London Missionary Society (LMS) for DRC ministry in the early 1800s. Cape colonists of Dutch descent viewed the British governor’s action as a deliberate intent to replace their language with English and thus ultimately encroach upon their culture. As a result, many Dutch-speaking colonists decided to leave the Cape. In the meantime, the Cape Church remained under lessening British state control for two-thirds of the nineteenth century. Not until 1875 did the DRC in the Cape finally receive full independence from state control.\textsuperscript{26}

Although church-state ties ended between England and the DRC, late Victorian-era policy and practice played a vital part in church-state associations between the government and the English-speaking mission churches in South Africa during British rule. Historian Wallace G. Mills points to imperialist J.R. Seeley’s late nineteenth-century monograph, \textit{The Expansion of England}, which argues that a national church and the state should be closely linked. Likewise,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 14-5.
\textsuperscript{25} Woods, \textit{Asking for Trouble}, 22. Boers were descendents of the first Dutch settlers in South Africa. Later they called themselves Afrikaners.
\textsuperscript{26} Pauw., 65-6.
\end{flushright}
Bishop Westcott – referring to the Second Anglo-Boer War – stated that the British hold their empire “in the name of Christ.” The British Empire often protected Christian missionaries in Africa. Many missionaries viewed this safeguard as validation of the Christian mission, therefore inadvertently giving legitimacy to imperial motives. Mills contends that by the turn of the twentieth century, Christians viewed the British Empire as compatible with their own interests.

Similarly, South African professor of Christian Studies John W. de Gruchy states that the English-speaking churches were devoted to England. For example, the English-speaking churches supported the British during the Anglo-Boer War. Voluntarily or not, they also aided in the expansion of the empire in South Africa through their missionary societies. De Gruchy contends that Christianity grew rapidly among the African natives, in large part due to the work of missionary societies. African organizations such as the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) – which formed in 1912 and changed its name in 1923 to the African National Congress (ANC) – adopted the liberal Christian teachings of individual rights and liberty. The missionaries taught these very merits to their African students. Christian teaching created for native Africans a “unifying ethical basis for African nationalism.”

Overview of the Missions’ Influence among Native South Africans

Historians Elizabeth Elbourne and Robert Ross contend that political and religious

---


28 Ibid.

conflict arising out of both Protestant and Catholic Reformations, and religious revivals based on “millennial expectations” were two salient factors that eventually led to overseas evangelical missions in the eighteenth century. With regard to the eschatological factor, two distinct predominant theologies began to take form in the Western, and particularly Protestant Christian, world in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One belief, pre-millennialism, became a staple of conservative church doctrine, while the other, post-millennialism, influenced liberal church theology – this theology had much in common with the Contextual Theology that developed in late twentieth-century South Africa. These two eschatological theologies remain in contention between the conservative and liberal church to this very day. Nevertheless, Historian Wallace G. Mills argues that the pre-millennialist missionaries unwittingly helped serve imperial interests by their non-involvement in, and lack of condemnation of, state affairs. Post-millennialists, on the other hand, leaned toward socially progressive causes and an emphasis in helping society's poor and down-trodden through government intervention, if necessary.

In early missionary South Africa, however, church and state served Dutch Reformed interest to eliminate denominational competition and exploit native peoples. For example, the pastoral Khoikhoi – the first to be encountered by Dutch settlers – were among the earliest native

---

30 Elizabeth Elbourne and Robert Ross, “Combating Spiritual and Social Bondage: Early Missions in the Cape Colony,” in Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History, ed. Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 31. See also, Pauw, 61. It is important to note that Europeans considered the Khoikhoi violent and cannibalistic. However, a mid-seventh-century report from Dutch ship commander Leendert Jansz contradicted those assumptions. After his ship ran aground in 1647 - forcing Jansz and his crew to live in the Cape for a year - he wrote to the VOC directorate, Heeren XVII, that the ship’s crew held friendly relations with the Cape natives.

31 Ibid., 337-8, 342. Pre-millennialists believe that Christ’s Second Coming will not occur before apocalyptic events on earth take place. All existing governments and societies will be shattered. Only after these catastrophes end will Christ establish a heavenly kingdom on earth that will last a thousand years. Post-millennialist Christians, on the other hand, believe that Christ will appear again only after a thousand years of peace on earth. They also believe in a progressive view of history. They contend that God will use humanity in order to create human and social perfection, and achieve millennial peace.
people converted to Christianity by German-speaking Moravians. The Moravian missionary, Georg Schmidt, began his work among the Khoikhoi in 1737.\textsuperscript{32} However, his successful ministry and Moravian doctrinal differences with Reformed theology, especially with regard to baptismal belief and practice, caused his banishment from South Africa.\textsuperscript{33} In 1743, under pressure from Dutch Reformed clergy, the VOC deported Schmidt and his mission from South Africa. Consequently, the Khoikhoi lost most of their livelihood between Schmidt's departure and the restoration of the Moravian mission in 1792. Many Khoikhoi turned to subsistence farming, but even after the Moravian return, the Gonaqua Khoikhoi of the Eastern Cape lost most of their land, herds, and access to water in an unsuccessful rebellion from 1799 to 1802. A large number of Khoikhoi became servants to white settler farmers.\textsuperscript{34}

Some Khoikhoi – who were at least partly assimilated into western culture and who were reduced to subsistence living – accepted Christian conversion more easily than other native groups. The Khoikhoi used Christianity as a form of protection against the exploitation and oppression by the white settlers. Missionary converts used Christian status to gain some control over their lives. As an act of rebellion more than an act of religious experience, Khoikhoi accepted Christianity to defy white Christian settlers – who associated Christians with the white race, and associated Christianity with political and economic control. Christianity became a leveler whereby Khoikhoi could claim equality with the whites. Others believed that they and not the white farmers were the true remnant of the church and therefore the true Christians. The most

\textsuperscript{33} Gerstner, 28-9.
\textsuperscript{34} Elbourne, 33.
vulnerable of the Khoikhoi asserted that Christ was on their side and would not abandon them. Prophetic and bold in claim, South African Liberation theologian clergy – as the Khoikhoi before them – preached this very message centuries later to their predominantly oppressed black congregations during the struggle against white supremacist apartheid.

Nevertheless, Christianity also offered material gains apart from social gains and a means of self worth, particularly outside the colony. Transorangia and Little Namaqualand pastoralists accepted missionaries for their livestock, trading ties to the colonial interior, technology, and even missionary connections with whites who could provide Khoikhoi with weapons for raiding and hunting. The missions also provided mechanical skills that helped serve as a means to avoid “de facto enserfment” within the colony.

Established in 1795 and known as the London Missionary Society (LMS) after 1816, the LMS provided consistent assistance to native South Africans. The LMS was arguably one of the most influential missions that contributed to early native South African Christian conversions, and more importantly to protection of native rights. Interdenominational in policy but mostly Congregational in nature and direction, the LMS soon followed Moravian missionaries to South Africa, eventually adopting some of the Moravian evangelizing practices.

The Dutch Johannes Theodorus van der Kemp headed the first LMS mission in the Cape in the early 1800s. Van der Kemp avoided changing Khoikhoi culture. He is quoted as saying that “all civilization is from the Devil.” This ran in direct opposition to other missionaries who

---

36 Ibid., 36.
38 Elbourne, 31.
wanted the Khoikhoi to become civilized and adopt the practices of an “individualistic capitalist society.” At the other extreme, white farmers attempted to keep the Khoikhoi under their labor control and in permanent subsistence farming. At times the farmers employed intimidation of mission stations, misrepresenting the intent of missionaries, and even violence against the Khoikhoi in order to force them into farm labor.\textsuperscript{39}

Van der Kemp and his colleague James Read – ironically both pre-millenialists – obtained some judicial victories for the Khoikhoi who brought grievances against the farmers. Other LMS missionaries also supported Vander Kemp’s and Read’s initiative. However, not all LMS missionaries approved of, for example, establishing circuit courts for Khoikhoi complaints. This made some missionaries uncomfortable with the purpose and intent of the missionary work. Some complained that Van der Kemp danced too closely with politics instead of civilizing the natives. According to Elbourne and Ross, the dissenting missionaries feared that the “radical millenarianism of the first missionaries were being overtaken by a much more quiescent Christianity, both in Europe and in South Africa.”\textsuperscript{40}

The Scottish minister John Philip became head of the LMS in South Africa in 1820. Philip took an almost opposite approach to Van der Kemp. Philip believed in acculturating the Khoikhoi in property rights and Western culture. He used this as a political strategy so that the Khoikhoi could retain their individual rights. His successful demonstration of displaying westernized Khoikhoi people and villages, and equally successful appeal to British authorities in London, helped win the Khoikhoi a measure of “freedom and protection.” At the same time,

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 37.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
Acting Governor Richard Bourke issued Ordinance 50 granting the same rights to all groups within the Cape, and the LMS viewed this as a major win. The governor’s ordinance allowed the LMS to keep its promise to the Khoikhoi as long as converts made a profound cultural transformation. Khoikhoi could now own land, and government no longer implemented *de facto* force labor on them. The LMS efforts to attain basic rights for the Khoikhoi – despite his acculturation methods – only solidified the relationship between the two groups.41

Needless to say, the English-speaking missionaries made their most positive impact on the African indigenous population by providing “sound education” through church schools and universities. Archbishop Desmond Tutu – who will be discussed in greater detail in later chapters – states that the churches greatly contributed to African education. “Had things depended only on the government, then many [Africans] would have either had no education at all or would have had to be content with an inferior brew available in the few government institutions set aside for blacks.”42 The churches – as well as other non-Christian religious institutions and leaders – educated many of the anti-apartheid leaders that would eventually confront the National Party government during the height of the apartheid era. In 1999, Nelson Mandela stated in Parliament that “without the Church, without religious institutions, I would never have been here today.”43

41 Ibid., 38-9. See also, Woods, *Biko*, 17. African indigenous people did not remain passive in light of settler occupation of their lands. Between 1779 and 1879, two major tribes went to war with their occupiers. The Xhosa fought at least nine wars with frontier farmers, attempting to prevent Afrikaner migration from the Cape. Although greatly outnumbering the Afrikaners, the Xhosa could not defeat the more advanced weaponry of the farmers. See also, Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa: 1876-1912* (Great Britain: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1991; reprint, Great Britain, Abacus, 2002), 70-1. (page citations are to the reprint edition). Similarly, Zulu warriors fought bravely and resourcefully against the might of British arms. For example, at the Battle of Isandlwana on January 22,1879, the Zulus defeated the British, killing 858 – including 52 officers. The defeat resulted in the toppling of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli’s government. However, the British ultimately defeated the Zulus that same year in Natal.


43 Ibid., 320, 356-7. In a response to the 1994 Peace Lecture of the World Conference on Religion and Peace,
Ironically, black theologians would teach the churches and their schools about Contextual Theology, as this theology did not come directly through the church educational system. As will be discussed later, Contextual Theology evolved out of mid-twentieth-century struggles between churches and tyrannical governments. In the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, the theology of the DRC remained dominant in South Africa.

The Early DRC and the Formation of the DRC Mission Churches
Although current historiography argues slightly differing opinions on the genesis of apartheid theology in the DRC, its beginning reaches as far back as the early Dutch settlers’ extreme Calvinistic interpretation, known as Covenant Theology. Covenant Theology provided an explanation for both humanity’s fall into sin and the foundation of all societal relationships. Yet, doctrinal differences arose among the seventeenth-century Dutch settlers who taught that children of believers were “externally holy,” or needing conversion in order to receive salvation, and those who taught that children of believers were already saved at conception, or “internally holy.” Those who believed in internal holiness regarded all white Europeans and their children as

Mandela credited the “teachings of all religious faiths” for the reason why the African National Congress was the head of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. He mentioned Hindu Mahatma Gandhi, Muslim Abdullah Adburrahman, and Christians Rubusana and Father Trevor Huddleston as examples of religious leaders that “contributed to the school of thought that guided the [South African] liberation movement.” In a 1999 address to Parliament for the World Religions in Cape Town, Mandela noted that he and his fellow inmates studied the Bhagavad Gita, the Koran, and other religious scriptures along with the Bible. Mandela emphatically stated that the “propaganda that has been made…about the liberation movement…is completely untrue. Because religion was one of the motivating factors in everything we did.”

44 Pauw, 215-6. Historian Jacobus Pauw’s dissertation contends that prior to the twentieth century, DRC theologians fluctuated between the more ethical critical-realistic and the more orthodox naïve-realistic biblical interpretations. Critical realism contends that our knowledge of the divine will always be incomplete because knowledge about God is based as much on reality as it is on the mind. In contrast, naïve-realism (also known as “common sense realism”) takes a more anti-rationalist view and argues that anyone with basic common sense has direct access to Biblical truth. Naïve-realism took hold in the DRC during the social, political, and economic upheaval of post-Boer War South Africa. Pauw states that, “The so-called ‘poor white problem’ (armblankevraagstuk) coupled with large-scale urbanization also strengthened the need for the kind of ‘simple theology’ that orthodoxy and naïve realism provided, as opposed to the more ‘academic theology’ of the ethical school and critical realism.”
saved, and the natives as unsaved. Eventually, the internal holiness doctrine became the predominant belief in the Dutch settler community.

The large migration of the Dutch community from the Cape to the northern interior – known as the Great Trek from 1835 to 1846 – played a significant role in the minds and theology of the early Boers. Hardly any educated theological leadership existed in the frontier wilderness for nearly two hundred years. However, the first Afrikaans writers, and particularly the poets, portrayed the Boers as a persecuted people delivered to the Promised Land, and which subsequently faced a “Babylonian captivity at the hands of the British.” These types of biblically symbolic origin stories helped mold – in time – a prejudicial and white supremacist attitude within the Afrikaner community. The “wellsprings of apartheid” originated in the frontier Afrikaner churches during the 1850s. Indoctrination of social and religious chauvinism did not appear within the early Dutch settlers of the Cape.

Evidently, the early Cape church had no plans for separate worship based on ethnicity. The Church Ordinance of 1804 – imposed by the Cape’s commissioner General J.A. De Mist – declared that all people could worship together in the same church. It was only later in the nineteenth century that the practice of unified church worship changed with missionary practices and the emergence of Afrikaner nationalism. Non-whites began to be seated at the back or sides

---


46 Gerstner, 19-20, 24. Gerstner states that the Reformed Church, during the VOC era, even considered European children of Roman Catholic decent, unrepentant sinners, and atheists in its “thousand-generation covenant” and eligible for baptism. Excluded from this covenant were Jews, Muslims and those considered “Heathen.”

47 Isichei, 111.
of the church. Eventually they were placed in separate buildings altogether.\textsuperscript{48} Needless to say, with such exclusionary polity, the DRC – with minor exceptions – did not involve itself extensively in missionary work.\textsuperscript{49}

The DRC mission churches were actually segregated congregations within the Dutch Reformed family of churches in South Africa based on skin color and language. Pauw contends that although, at first, the notion that black and Coloured people should worship separately from white people was seen as contrary to Christian principle, the DRC church polity changed in favor of segregation as Afrikaner identification increased. Until the mid-nineteenth century, the church’s official polity was to allow all members, regardless of their race or ethnicity, to worship together in the same building. The synod of 1857 officially sanctioned segregation policies. The church formally subjected black and Coloured congregants to separate Christian teaching facilities known as a \textit{gesticht} or “separate building.”\textsuperscript{50} Ministry to black and Coloured members fell under the expertise of white DRC missionaries. Hence, the \textit{gestichte} eventually became known as the DRC “mission churches.”\textsuperscript{51}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{48} Pauw, 60.
\item \textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 59, 65. In 1794, Rev. M.C. Vos requested that the Dutch church send missionaries for the slaves and Khoikhoi people. Vos is known for his work in establishing the South African Missionary Society in 1799. Pauw also notes that the establishment of the Coloured, black, and Indian reformed churches “is partly the result of the mission practice of the [DRC] during the 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries.”
\item \textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 67-9.
\item \textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 69. Johann Kinghorn, “Modernization and Apartheid: The Afrikaner Churches,” in \textit{Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History}, ed. Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 136. The nationwide church, NGK or \textit{Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk} (Dutch Reformed Church or DRC), formed in 1652 at the Cape. The smaller Afrikaner Transvaal based \textit{Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk} or NHK and \textit{Gereformeerde Kerk} or GK, formed in 1855 and 1857, respectively. The establishment of DRC “younger,” “mission,” or “daughter,” churches are as follows: The colored NGSK or the \textit{Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendings Kerk} (Dutch Reformed Mission Church or DRMC) originated in 1881, and the black NGKA or \textit{Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika} (Dutch Reformed Church in Africa or DRCA) originated in 1963. The DRMC and DRCA, both established by the DRC, united in 1994 to form the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA); See also, Pauw, 57-8. A schism occurred within the DRC (or NGK) in 1853. Afrikaners decided to brake away from Cape British rule and established an independent government in the Transvaal in 1852. Three of the four Afrikaners broke away from the NGK in the Cape to establish the NHK or \textit{Nederduitsch}.
\end{itemize}
DRC mission churches did not develop in the same manner as those formed from the missionary societies. It is important to note that the policy of *gesticht*, for instance, did not exist outside the Cape. The DRC congregations within the Transvaal, Free State, and Natal were strictly white. In addition, these regions rejected the intervention of missionaries within the DRC congregations. The reason for the animosity between the congregations and missionaries was due to the missionary societies’ criticisms of colonist racist policy. Therefore, separate churches for black and Coloured people outside the Cape were predominantly established by the mission societies with little involvement from the DRC.\(^{52}\)

However, within the Cape itself, the DRC leadership observed an unacceptable amount of disorganization in the DRC mission churches. Therefore, the white leadership – and not the Coloured members of the mission churches – drew up a constitution to form its first “daughter” church for Coloured members. The Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) originated in 1881. However, Coloured members were not always willing to leave their DRC congregations. There were instances, such as in Swartland in 1881, where white members forced their Coloured members to leave their local DRC congregations and move to the newly established DRMC congregation.\(^{53}\)

The DRC primarily left the missionary work of converting the Xhosa – or black people in the Eastern Cape – to the missionary societies. However, the expansion of DRC congregations – particularly in the mid-nineteenth century – into black areas resulted in the eventual formation of

---

*Hervormde Kerk* church in the newly created Boer Republic of the Transvaal. Three further splits within the Reformed Church took place in the Transvaal in 1859 due to disputes regarding foreign hymns. The Indian *IGK* or *Indier-Gereformeerde Kerk* (Indian Reformed Church which later became the Reformed Church in Africa or RCA) originated in 1968.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 82.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 76-7, 79-80.
the Dutch Reformed Bantu Church in 1951. The unification of the DRMC of the Orange Free State, the DRMC of Transvaal, the DRMC of Natal, and the DR Bantu Church established the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) in 1963.54

The migrant Indian population spent the second half of the nineteenth century suffering through seclusion and inequality. As a result, Indian Christians held limited contact with the established churches. A century later, missionaries and evangelists succeeded in forming DRC congregations with Indian members. By 1962, four Indian DRC congregations united and in 1968, the Indian churches passed a constitution for a separate church from the DRC, and establishing Indian Reformed Church. In the 1976, its name changed to the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA).55

**The Rise of Religious Apartheid in the Twentieth Century**

Around the time of General James Hertzog’s party rise to power in the 1920s, the Dutch Reformed Church responded to the Afrikaner plight by initiating relief programs. The DRC, for example, created irrigation settlements for rural white families and bought the crops produced from those settlements. The church also established boarding houses for poor students and schools for the speaking-, hearing-, and sight-impaired. The church built orphanages, nursing homes, and hospitals. It also established social work programs and women’s organizations, the latter of which contributed greatly to the progress of Afrikaner society.56

Although the church provided pragmatic aid to the Afrikaner community, it also helped form public policy detrimental to black and Coloured interests. The DRC considered the root

54 Ibid., 84-7.
55 Ibid., 87-9.
56 Neame, 42-3, 46, 140. Former Boer General James Hertzog founded the Afrikaner National Party in 1914.
cause of the Afrikaner financial dilemma to be not only city culture and British capital influence, but also the “black peril.” Therefore, by the mid-1930s, the DRC began to realize segregationist policy through church influence in politics and political parties. The DRC established committees in the late 1930s and early 1940s to lobby the government against racial mixing and racially mixed marriages. The committees also demanded separate residential group areas and even racially segregated work plants and factories.\(^{57}\) The church representatives’ appeals to the state set the stage for twentieth-century South African apartheid policy.

Since many DRC members were also members of the National Party when it swept into office in 1948 – and the National Party now had control of parliament, and thus legislation – the government did not ignore the petitions from the church. The government soon passed the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act as its first piece of apartheid legislation. The government also reinforced laws against interracial sex, known as the Immorality Act. The state also instituted urban separation, known as the Group Areas Act. Two crucial factors arose out of the National Party’s election victory. First, the government could now send large donations to DRC social programs,\(^{58}\) thus helping strengthen Afrikaner institutions, particularly the church, through financial means. Second, in obliging the DRC’s requests, the government began to socially and politically disenfranchise millions of native Africans. The draconian era of South African apartheid officially began.

Religious scholar Johann Kinghorn contends that the DRC not only well entrenched itself in Afrikaner politics, but also fueled and sustained Afrikaner values, namely the family and hierarchical structure. Furthermore, the churches endorsed the merger of these central Afrikaner

---

\(^{57}\) Kinghorn, 139, 141.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 140 - 1.
values with nationalism, Kuyperian neo-Calvinism—discussed further below—and racism.

Therefore, the church not only supported apartheid policy when the National Party took power in 1948, but also assisted in laying the foundation for the “ideology of enforced race separation.”

Aided by the church, Afrikaner politicians mixed the concept of nationalism with that of family, which they believed to be the two bases for all human continuation. They interpreted “nation” to mean a racially common people who spoke a common language. This Afrikaner notion of nationalism tied to the concept of family values allowed for a radical transformation in social policy that drastically undermined the socio-political order for native Africans.

Furthermore, Afrikaner religiosity based itself on a strict hierarchal order and adoption of Kuyperian neo-Calvinism. This European Dutch theology argued that the struggle for human rights, equality, and democratic principles within Europe deteriorated the concept of God’s sovereign authority over all nations and peoples. Afrikaners considered anything that appeared to threaten this authority an affront to God’s commands and laws. Therefore, modernism—with its democratic values, liberalism, and communism—deserved no attention, but rather distrust and resistance. Kuyperian neo-Calvinism theology reinforced the need to defend and uphold the God-ordained hierarchal structure. Kuyperians believed that Europe pushed God and God’s order for humanity out and allowed the infestation of immoral and disorderly humanism in. The Afrikaners did not intend to repeat this mistake in South Africa.

---

59 Ibid., 141-2. See also, John W. de Gruchy and Steve de Gruchy, The Church Struggle in South Africa: Twenty-fifth Anniversary Edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 5-6. The de Gruchys state that the DRC was conservative in its doctrine but not strictly Calvinist. They state that Rev. S. J. du Toit, one of the fathers of Afrikaner nationalism, helped promote and popularize Kuyperianism—a more strict Calvinism—in the Cape. Du Toit broke away from the DRC to form his own church. Later when the Gereformeerde Kerk (Dopper Kerk or GK) formed in 1859, it adopted du Toit’s Kuyperianism. During the nineteenth century, the GK was strictly Calvinist, not the DRC. See also, Christian Science Monitor, October, 28, 1986.

60 Ibid., 142.

61 Ibid., 143.
Kuyperianism – introduced by Dutch lecturer Abraham Kuyper in the nineteenth century already started influencing Afrikaner thought even prior to the Boer War. Pauw contends that Kuyper attempted to restore seventeenth-century Calvinism – when its theological status was influential and powerful, and this, in turn, carried over to Dutch prosperity and world influence. Kuyper tried to unify the pockets of Calvinist communities, producing a rise in Christian nationalism that would be embraced by all nations. Afrikaners, in contrast, interpreted Kuyperian neo-Calvinism as an attempt to unify, in particular, the Afrikaner community in South Africa, and set it apart from other nations or races.62

Furthermore, Pauw states that Afrikaners began to give more importance to what he calls “natural theology.” Instead of interpreting scripture in terms of biblical revelation, Afrikaner Christians chose to view and interpret scripture through their own “history, culture, nature, and / or rationality.” They selected texts which justified their reasoning to separate the races. The DRC pointed to Galatians 4:2, which supported their argument that Afrikaners should rule over other races. They also added that those races would profit from this dominance.63

Kuyperianism supported this rationale of dominance by stressing the nation as one of the religious realms ordained by God, under God’s authority and each having their own laws. This is where the unity or commonality among these realms ends. Since each realm maintains its own sovereignty, the premise of universalism is considered false. Therefore, “pluriformity,” not uniformity, is the accepted premise in creation. Students at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU University Amsterdam) embraced Kuyperianism and its concept of pluriformity in the 1930s and

62 Pauw, 112.
63 Ibid., 111-2. See also, Gal. 4:2 NIV (New International Version). “He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.”

33
1940s. Afrikaners, likewise, bought into Kuyper’s theology of the God-ordained and sovereign realms. The concept of the nation as one of these realms drove their nationalism. Pauw agrees with Kinghorn in that Afrikaners viewed South Africa not as one nation with different races but as a “cosmos of nations.” The argument ran as thus: In order to guarantee the separate development of nations in accordance to their own abilities, the separation of the nations must be encouraged and maintained.

Pauw, similar to Kinghorn, argues that after 1950 the DRC and the state – led by the National Party – had, for all intense and purposes, completely unified. The DRC adopted the concept of pluriformity to justify its theological position on apartheid. By the second half of the twentieth century, the church no longer needed to defend its reasoning for racial separation, but only point to Kuyper’s pluriformity of creation, as this theology became anchored in official church papers. Church polity would then transfer to state policy as church ministers met with government ministers to propose and pass apartheid legislation. In a 1982 address to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) in Ottawa, Allan Boesak asserted that although the government enforced apartheid, the DRC crafted, introduced, and supported the system:

South Africa is not the only place in the world where oppression and exploitation are the daily bread of the poor and the defenseless. What is unique, however, is the role the churches, more specifically, the Reformed churches. In a very important address

---

64 Pauw, 112-3.
65 Ibid., 113.
66 Ibid., 113. See also, Phillip Berryman, Liberation Theology: Essential Facts About the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1987), 134, 137. The DRC relationship with the National Party government compares to Religious Scholar Phillip Berryman’s explanation of “christendom.” He states that two powers exist in Christendom, temporal and spiritual. “Christianity receives official recognition and in return supplies legitimation for those who hold temporal power.” Another term for Christendom, especially in the United States, is “civil religion.”
67 Pauw 113.
given in 1980, D.P. Botha showed conclusively that the present policy of apartheid is essentially the missionary policy of the white Dutch Reformed churches. These churches not only provided a theological justification for the policy but also worked out, in considerable detail, the policy itself. It is these churches that from 1932 on sent delegation upon delegation to the government to get proposals for racial legislation accepted. It is these churches that worked hard to devise practical policies of apartheid that could be implemented by the government, while at the same time formulating a theological construction to justify the policy plans. It was these plans that the churches finally in 1947 presented to the National Party – which accepted them as a program that became a winner at the polls in 1948.\textsuperscript{68}

Since the church sanctioned and even encouraged “separate development” policy, Afrikaners felt justified in their attempt to separate the races in all levels of society. Many falsely believed that they were doing right by seeking the progress of all people in South Africa through the separation of the races. Pauw states that their nationalism and “civil religion” had been blindly shaped by their unwarranted fear of \textit{gelykstelling} (racial mixing).\textsuperscript{69} They did not consult with the other nations (non-DRC churches), for that matter, in their attempt to restructure South African society in their own image. Afrikaners thought they were creating an ordered and well-structured society for all groups. What they were actually creating was chaos, confrontation, and graves for thousands of South Africans, and the eventual dismantling of their own religious theologies and state policies.

Communists naturally became the primary adversaries of Afrikaner Christians. In 1948, the South African Communist Party (SACP) criticized the newly victorious National Party for its exclusionary and racist policies. Black and Coloured Africans – because they too protested the new government – became inextricably linked with the communists. Christian nationalists such as J.D. Vorster – also an ardent anti-communist leader – saw apartheid as the system that provided

\textsuperscript{68} Allan A. Boesak, \textit{If This is Treason, I Am Guilty} (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 6.

\textsuperscript{69} Pauw, 113, 115. See also citation 66 for the definition of civil religion.
the appropriate hierarchical structure to maintain proper social order and thwart the unholy alliance between native Africans and communism.\textsuperscript{70} Apartheid did not succeed in suppressing blacks and leftists permanently. Ironically, an Afro-Christian-Marxist unity, in the form of an opposing politico-religious force known as Contextual Theology, arose decades later to confront, challenge, and help defeat the Christian nationalists, and the very institution of apartheid itself.\textsuperscript{71} The characteristics of, and the players behind, Contextual theology will be addressed in later pages.

In the meantime, the new government, with the aid of the DRC, began defining the very concept of apartheid to suit its own nationalist interests. Kinghorn argues that DRC theology and influence penetrated Afrikaner nationalist thought. The theology, for instance, taught that God created separate nations to abide by the structures of authority. No true equality within society exists, since everyone has his or her place within the hierarchy. Therefore, the nationalists viewed humanitarian internationalism, with its universal concept of fraternity and egalitarian principles, as an affront to God-sanctioned nationalism.\textsuperscript{72}

Although the National Party accepted the church’s reasoning pertaining to the orderly structure of nations, nationalism did not mean outright racism. Kinghorn further argues that whereas racism views genetic differences as unchanging, nationalism believes that nations can change and are all destined to be equal at some point in time. However, it is the responsibility of


\textsuperscript{71} See also, Martin Luther King, Jr., \textit{The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.}, ed. Clayborne Carson (New York: Intellectual Properties Management in association with Warner Books, 1998), 21-2. South African Liberation Theologians also studied Martin Luther King, Jr.’s writings. For King – also considered a Liberation theologian in his own right – capitalism and communism complimented each other, and elements of both were required for economic fairness and justice.

\textsuperscript{72} Kinghorn, 144.
“higher” nations to guide the “lower” nations to eventual equal status. Since nation became equated with race, the new government accepted a paternalistic role toward the other races within South African society.\textsuperscript{73}

The people’s congress held in 1950 – and initiated by Professor of Missions at Stellenbosch seminary, G.B.A. Gerdener – officially substituted the concept of racial divide with “separate development.” The congress’s agenda – which addressed the “native question” – is what Kinghorn describes as the “blueprint for the entire social restructuring of South African society.”\textsuperscript{74} Afrikaner and Christian nationalists may have thought that apartheid, now also called by them as separate development, would allow for the “civilization” of native peoples. The nationalists deceived themselves into thinking that this new policy benefited all races within South Africa. The Afrikaner churches, in effect, helped unite social construct with religious doctrine – making it “possible to elevate secular apartheid policies to the status of faith, and to turn a modern-day inquisition loose on anyone of alternative mind.”\textsuperscript{75}

The Rise of Political Apartheid in the Twentieth Century

Although the British won the Anglo-Boer War, they gave commonwealth status to South Africa on May 31, 1910, uniting the former Afrikaner republics of the Transvaal, Orange Free

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 144-5.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.,145. See also, JSTOR, “Herman Merivale and the Native Question, 1837-1861,” http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/4048310?uid=3739680&uid=2129&uid=2&uid=70&uid=4&uid=3739256&sid=55936563733 (accessed March 22, 2012). The “native question” is a term that South African white rulers – beginning with the British – used in their lexicon regarding the native populations. It typically meant the issue the government or religious institutions faced in determining the future social structure, education, political rights, etc. of native populations. In some cases, the authorities had good intentions to “better the material conditions” of the indigenous peoples. However, most of those intentions failed to bare fruit and gave way to “native policy” which led to native oppression, submission, and disenfranchisement.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 141-2.
State, and the two former British provinces of the Cape and Natal. Louis Botha and Jan Smuts ruled as the new leaders of the new commonwealth nation, the Union of South Africa, with Pretoria as its administrative capital. Afrikaners made up the majority of the white constituency in South Africa: sixty percent Afrikaners to forty percent English-speakers. Politically, the implications of this ratio negatively impacted millions of black South Africans for most of the twentieth century.

Only three years after national independence, racial discriminatory policy had already been implemented. The Land Bill / Natives Land Act of 1913 limited land ownership to the indigenous population. The government only allowed ten percent of the total area of South Africa to blacks. The bill assigned racial land zones and introduced what Woods called “territorial apartheid.” The policy led to black African confrontations with the government and culminated with the Bulhoek Massacre of 1921. Blacks squatted on land in Bulhoek – near Queenstown – and refused to move. They charged at a police force sent to move them, and, as a result, the police fired their weapons killing 180 squatters. The government spared neither the South African Indian nor Chinese populations. South Africa brought the Indians and Chinese in as laborers to work the sugarcane fields and gold mines, respectively. White miners complained and the government repatriated most of the Chinese. The government was less successful with the

---

76 South African History Online, “Constructing the Union of South Africa: negotiations & contestations, 1902-10,” http://www.sahistory.org.za/liberation-struggle-south-africa/constructing-union-south-africa-negotiations-and-contestations-1902 (accessed March 6, 2012). After the signing of the Treaty of Vereeniging, which brought the Anglo-Boer War to an end in 1902, England wanted to rule to a united country that could defend itself, and where British and Afrikaners could work together to rebuild South Africa, but particularly the mining industry. Afrikaners, on the other hand, preferred a union to federalization because they could be freer from England’s rule. Therefore, the British parliament created the South Africa Act of 1909, granting South Africa commonwealth status in 1910.

77 Woods, Biko, 15.

78 Ibid., 16.
Mohandas K. Gandhi, a Natal lawyer at the time, stunted government attempts to relocate the Indians during Jan Smuts’s administration. Through Gandhi’s efforts, the South African Indian Congress was formed in 1923 to protect Indians against government abuses. However, the government continued to disenfranchise the Indian population. For thirty years, the Mines and Works Amendment Act of 1926 (or Colour Bar Act) prohibited Indian miners from working in skilled jobs. In the following year, the Nationality and Flag Act prevented Indians from becoming South African citizens through naturalization. Having been raised in his early years in South Africa and suffering beatings by the hands of blacks as well as whites, Gandhi’s grandson, Arun, stated that it felt as if everyone hated each other. Nevertheless, Mohandas Gandhi inspired the primarily black organizations of the ANC and PAC to adopt non-violent resistance tactics against the government. However – as will be discussed in later pages – the ANC eventually abandoned non-violence for more violent means to confront the government and end apartheid.

Although the ANC became increasingly active between 1917 and 1924, Scholar L.E. Neame contends that “poor white-ism” became an issue to further drive contention between blacks and whites as early as 1922. Many Afrikaner communities – left poorer after the Anglo-

---

82 Arun Gandhi, “Lessons Learned from My Grandfather: Non-Violence in a Violent World” (speech given at the University of Central Florida in Orlando on November 10, 2011), The UCF Global Perspectives Office, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida.
84 Ibid., 19.
Boer War – began to slowly migrate to the urban areas prior to 1925. However, after 1925 the Afrikaners moved to the cities in droves. Depression and drought in South Africa forced three hundred thousand whites – mostly Afrikaners – into poverty. The once landowners of the countryside found themselves as low skilled, lower class manual laborers in the cities, and that is if they could find jobs – poverty struck one in three Afrikaners.85

Furthermore, the events that unfolded in the 1920s reinforced Afrikaner nationalism and church-state unity. Afrikaner nationalism began a sharp rise from 1924 when white supremacist politicians such as Hertzog – founder of the Afrikaner National Party – exploited the bleak economic situation. Hertzog and the Labour Party demanded jobs for white workers and a white South Africa policy. They formed a coalition and a new political party basing its discriminatory “native policy” – legislative segregationist policies against blacks – on the premise that the white population should dominate “in the spirit of Christian trusteeship with the strictest avoidance of any attempt at race mixture.”86 The combination of nationalism and racism appealed to many Afrikaners. In 1924, Hertzog’s coalition won enough votes to assume control of the country. Woods argued that this election “signalized the start of a program of apartheid, or racial discrimination enshrined in statute, although the most extreme forms of this were to be enacted by Hertzog’s political successors in 1948.” Hertzog politically disfranchised the entire black population of South Africa. He only allowed a small contingent of whites to indirectly represent

blacks in Parliament. 87

Indeed, the political systemization of apartheid policy did not start until after the 1948 elections for two important reasons. First, the National Party did not remain in power consecutively since 1924. The more moderate Smuts outmaneuvered Hertzog in 1939 by exploiting anti-Hitler sentiments in Parliament. Smuts retook power for a few years. Secondly, Hertzog did not aggressively pursue more radical apartheid polices. Ostensibly, Hertzog had apprehensions about altering the 1910 constitution to effectively disenfranchise all Coloured voters in the Cape. Hertzog’s successors had no such reservations. Although the former Boer general died during World War II, the National Party resumed its xenophobic campaign in the post-war years and regained power in 1948 with Daniel Malan as its new leader. 88

Although racist legislation existed prior to 1948, 89 the bulk of the notoriously repressive apartheid laws came soon after the National Party’s 1948 election victory. The new government passed nearly as many laws in three years as were passed in the first twenty-five years since 1910. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriage Act of 1949 made it a crime for whites to marry...

87 Woods, Biko, 16, 20.
88 Ibid., 16. See also, Newell M. Stultz, Afrikaner Politics in South Africa, 1934-1948 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 5-6. From the political angle, Stultz claims that political disunity among Afrikaners and English-speaking South Africans resulted in the National Party gaining power in 1948. The policy of “conciliation” between Afrikaners and Anglo South Africans broke apart when Prime Minister Jan C. Smuts urged that South Africa declare war on Germany in September 1939. Between 1934 and 1939, both Afrikaners and Anglo South Africans united under the notion of “South Africa first.” Stultz states that many Afrikaners, feeling let down by Smuts’s announcement, left his more moderate United Party by the tens of thousands. Stultz declares that this incident directly caused the defeat of the United Party in the 1948 general election. In any case, the control of South Africa by the Afrikaner National Party in 1948 became a watershed year as apartheid laws increased in number and intensity in the subsequent years.
outside their own race. The Immorality Amendment of 1950 criminalized adultery between whites and blacks. The Population Registration Act of 1950 instituted a national register to categorize persons by race. The Group Areas Act of 1950 continued where the Urban Areas Act of 1923 left off. The government forced the removal of thousands of blacks from their homes and relocated them into segregated residential areas. The Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 banned communism from South Africa. The government went as far as to consider any call for reform a communist subversion. The Bantu Building Workers Act of 1951 allowed for training of blacks in skilled labor, but only in designated areas. The Separate Representation of Voters Act of 1951 – not the last apartheid law enacted by far – removed Coloureds from the common voters’ roll.\(^90\)

Woods made an important distinction between South African apartheid and American Jim Crow laws. He states:

> Although there were obvious similarities in the Deep South and South African manifestations of racism, I found some interesting differences both in fact and style. The major difference was of course that Southern racism was disapproved of by the federal government in Washington, whereas in South Africa it was actually promoted and legislatively implemented by national government. There has never been a pattern of lynching in South Africa, or any open equivalent of the Klan. Afrikaner Nationalists prefer to exercise their racial prejudices through statutory enactments framed in decorous parliamentary surroundings after hours of pious oratorical attempts to justify such measures to their allegedly Calvinist Consciousness.\(^91\)

Episcopalian Sheena Duncan, the 1980s president of the Black Sash – the 1,500-woman South African anti-apartheid group – stated to a UN delegation in New York that it was a mistake to believe that apartheid was a civil rights issue. She added that there was a “fundamental

---

\(^90\) About.com, “African History Glossary – Apartheid Laws”


\(^91\) Woods, Biko, 46.
difference” between U.S. and South African constitutions. The American constitution, she explained, “Guarantees civil rights,” wherein South Africa, “that is totally lacking. [South Africa has] no bill of rights or constitutional protections. Rather, the purpose of apartheid – and it is built right into the Constitution – is to deny blacks political power.”

Although rival political parties formed to help blacks acquire more political rights, the National Party remained in political power through illegitimate means. Both the Liberal Party – led by popular author Alan Paton – and the less liberal Progressive Party formed in 1958. However, the National Party banned the Liberal Party’s important office holders. The Liberty Party ceased to exist after the government’s legislative maneuver prevented multi-racial political parties from forming. The Progressive Party, in comparison, held only one seat in parliament for over a decade. The National Party stacked votes in its favor to win election after election since 1948. Although whites had always been the minority in South Africa, the rural Afrikaner vote counted nearly twice as much as an urban predominantly black vote. Out of the 165 parliamentary seats available in the November 30, 1977 general election, over eighty percent (or 135) went to the National Party, and the Progressives only held 17 seats. Woods noted that the 1977 election results signified that most of the white voters determined to stop the black liberation movements at any cost, including “full-scale civil war.”

---

92 Christian Science Monitor, October 31, 1985. The Black Sash originated in 1955. The group has worked against the forced removals of non-whites to the reserves, consoled non-whites on their rights under apartheid laws, brought media attention to the plight of blacks in South Africa, and organized protests. Originally an all-white and female organization, the group began allowing men in as associate members in later years. The organization acquired its name from the press, which observed the early protestors wearing black sashes a “sign of mourning for the rape of the Constitution” when Pretoria began removing Coloureds from the voting rolls.

93 Woods, Biko, 47-8.
CHAPTER 2

Early and Limited Resistance to Apartheid in the English-speaking Churches

This chapter argues that the English-speaking churches failed to effectively confront the apartheid government and join the anti-apartheid political groups until the introduction of Contextual Theology in the 1970s and 1980s. Prior to Contextual Theology, the churches did not have the theological rationale and justification for Christian radicalization against the state. This chapter begins with the early relationship between the English-speaking churches and the DRC in the early twentieth century and ends with the dissolution of the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s.

The English-speaking churches usually held cordial relations with the DRC until the first-half of the twentieth century. In one particular case, the Anglican Church even entertained union with the DRC as early as 1870. In 1936, the English-speaking churches, together with the Cape and the Transvaal synods of the DRC, founded the Christian Council of South Africa (CCSA). However, the DRC’s increasing involvement with Afrikaner nationalist politics and racial discriminatory policies in the 1920s and 1930s began to strain Anglo-Afrikaner unity. Both the Cape and Transvaal synods withdrew their memberships from the CCSA in 1941 declaring that their views regarding the native question did not coincide with those of the English-speaking churches.94 Since the turn of the twentieth century, English-speaking churches and missions

---

tended to work for more rights and freedoms for blacks than the DRC.

    Early twentieth century Protestant missionaries rooted in “Social Christian” principles and influenced by the teachings of Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, taught self-help, “eschewed formal politics…and …sought to elevate blacks with the aid of white patrons.” This form of Social Christianity compared to the industrial “socialist” form of Social Christianity – as preached in popular mainline churches in the industrial nations of England and America – in that they both emphasized Christian charity and reconciliation between the various social groups, and attempted black empowerment through formal education and religious training. However, the industrial model differed from the “Tuskegee” model in that it challenged the social structure, capitalism, and the upper classes. Nevertheless, South Africans of all races, impressed by their visits to Tuskegee in the United States, adopted the Tuskegee model, which Historian Richard Elphick states made a “profound impact in South Africa.” In this respect, missionaries, African Christians, and “white paternalists” began forming loose alliances in the early 1920’s.95

    In addition, Social Christians, influenced by the international missionary movement’s progression into a world-wide ecumenical movement, sought to establish a council whereby the members would be organizations, such as churches and missions, and not individuals. The Social Christians believed that this restructuring would help give a louder voice to the black clergy and laity. Instead, it unintentionally provided a louder voice for South African whites who controlled

---

the main churches and “often opposed the missionaries’ activist programmes.”  

After the National Party regained power in 1948, South Africa moved farther to the political right while many blacks moved farther left. Social Christian activism dwindled as South African whites’ indifference to Social Christianity’s message grew into aggression. At the same time, Social Christianity lost its popularity among Christian liberals as they increasingly joined political organizations. Congregationalist and ANC president, Albert Luthuli, who will be discussed in more detail in later pages, drew the ire of the missionaries when he began associating with left-wing allies of the ANC.  

Within the church missions themselves, elitist whites and elitist blacks believed that the South African racial problems would be resolved and black advancement achieved once “reasonable men of influence” from the various races and ethnicities in South Africa sat down with each other to air their differences. Elphick contends that this type of paternalistic missionary view made sense only as long as blacks had the chance of gaining the full benefit of South African citizenship. Once the government removed this opportunity after 1948, “it seemed that the elitist programme of the Social Christians had been a disastrous mistake.” Elitists separated themselves from the masses which resulted in the failure of the Social Christians to mount an effective popular resistance movement. Furthermore, the missionaries’ “inherited assumptions” prevented them from “seriously connecting with the socialist strands of the Social Gospel” that developed in industrialized nations.  

Elphick adds that the Social Christians’ hopes of reconciling the elites of different races...
and establishing a new society through evangelism, education, and social work appeared important against the repressive apartheid system. English-speaking churches did begin to mobilize, however slowly, into a more coalesced resistance against the apartheid government after 1948. Increasingly under black leadership and “inspired by more radical ‘prophetic’ theologies of liberation,” the churches and the South African Council of Churches (SACC) – formerly the CCSA – immersed themselves in the anti-apartheid struggle.\footnote{Ibid., 364.}

Ecumenical relations and alliances succeeded more among the English-speaking churches such as the Congregationalists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Anglicans. The designation of “Southern Africa” in their title from the late 1960s meant that they were now part of the international church community. They were also affiliated with their own world-wide confessional bodies, such as the Anglican Communion, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches – primarily Presbyterian and Congregationalist – and the World Methodist Conference. By this time, they also became members of international church alliances, such as the World Council of Churches (WWC).\footnote{De Gruchy, “Colonial Heritage,” 158-9.} As will be argued in later pages, Contextual theologians used these indispensable associations and their resources to apply international pressure that helped dismantle South African apartheid.

Christian Studies professor John W. De Gruchy contends that shortly after 1948, Anglicans, Congregationalists, Methodists, and even Roman Catholics\footnote{The focus of this thesis is primarily on the affects of Contextual Theology on South African apartheid. Concentration is on the theology and its impact and not on the contributions of Christian denominations per se. To include the contributions of every denomination against apartheid is too exhaustive for the length of this paper. Therefore, involvement of specific denominations is kept to a minimum. For a more thorough study of Roman Catholic involvement against apartheid, see also, Tristan Anne Borer, \textit{Challenging the State: Churches as Political Actors in South Africa, 1980-1994} (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998). See also, Joy Brain,} began to speak out
against apartheid policy. They also passed official resolutions against apartheid legislation. However, these resolutions did little to nothing to stem the growing apartheid policies of the government. De Gruchy states that the churches failed to effectively combat apartheid due to the poor implementation of their resolutions. Mostly white leadership ran English-speaking churches, and racial tension and discrimination also occurred within the denominations. Black congregants – frustrated with the lack of leadership within their own churches in the early apartheid era – continued to press their churches to stand against apartheid measures, and also turned to political organizations such as the ANC for help.  

In the meantime, individual leaders from the English-speaking church community began to support a multiracial South Africa. These leaders claimed that the church could not at the same time call itself Christian and support racial segregation. The churches officially condemned apartheid, but the active and public involvement by some of their clergy caused division in their congregations. Paton declared that some white members in the Anglican Church, for example, believed in white hegemony and did not wish to change the status quo. These Anglicans agreed with their Afrikaner counterparts in the DRC, just less vocally. It is telling that the majority of the white laity in the Anglican synods supported, or at least did not oppose, the government’s racial policy. Paton contended that in most synods across South Africa, only a minority of white laity joined the majority of their white Christian leaders in directly opposing racial discriminatory laws.  

103 Ibid., 157, 161.  
104 Alan Paton, Apartheid and the Archbishop: The Life and Times of Geoffrey Clayton (New York: Charles
Pauw argues that ecumenical organizations such as the Christian Council of South Africa (CCSA) formed to address the “spiritual and general welfare of the non-European races.” The CCSA, formed in 1936, originally had the backing of the Cape and Transvaal DRC synods. However, unity between the English-speaking and the Afrikaner churches did not last long. Both groups argued over the native policy as well as over South Africa’s support for the British during World War II. The Cape and Transvaal Synod withdrew their memberships from the CCSA in 1941, forming their own organization, the Federal Mission Council (*Federale Sendingraad*) a year later. The CCSA’s influence further weakened as non-whites came to view the CCSA as paternalistic in attitude and too passive in action – that is, taking very cautious steps in defending non-white grievances against the government. Pauw contends that the mainline English-speaking churches were simply not ready to “resist apartheid in practice.” However, a few “outstanding individuals” within the mainline churches did begin to confront and challenge this “pervasive passivity.”

Religious leaders such as Anglican priest Trevor Huddleston and Bishop Ambrose Reeves pressed on despite the controversy. Both Huddleston and Reeves, after witnessing first hand the struggle of black people under apartheid’s cruel laws, believed that the church had to take the side of the oppressed, and they encouraged active involvement with the ANC. The South African government eventually deported Reeves. Only Huddleston and a few other church leaders attended the Congress of the People when the Freedom Charter – defined later in this paper – was adopted at Kliptown in 1955.

---

Pauw, 117-8.
De Gruchy, “Colonial Heritage,” 161. The contributions of all the Christian clergy and lay leaders that confronted the apartheid government are far too numerous to name and detail. This analysis focuses on a select few church leaders.
The late Trevor Huddleston ministered in the western section of Johannesburg in the black township called Sophiatown. He began his ministry there under the auspices of another early anti-apartheid champion, Bishop Geoffrey Clayton. Although poor, grimy, and raucous, the value of land in and around Sophiatown increased since the turn of the twentieth century. White sprawl surrounded the Western Native Township, Martindale, Newclare, and Sophiatown. In Huddleston’s first year of ministry in Sophiatown, the city council proposed to remove all the blacks, Coloureds, Indians, and Chinese in the western parts of Johannesburg. One of the few locations in South Africa where blacks could own land in the mid-twentieth century was Johannesburg’s western areas. Yet, the Anglican Church gained a small reprieve for the citizens of the western townships four years prior to the National Party’s election victory.

Declaring the council’s proposal as unjust to Christian principles, Huddleston asked the 1944 Johannesburg synod to condemn it. The synod unanimously supported Huddleston, resulting in the city council withdrawing their plans. However, this small victory only temporarily postponed the changes that ultimately ravaged and demised complete non-white populations throughout South Africa.

During his twelve year tenure in Johannesburg, Huddleston witnessed the devastating effects of one of the most brutal laws passed against black South Africans. The National Party imposed the notorious Natives Act (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) in 1952 in order to curtail the influx of blacks coming into the major cities looking for work. For

leaders, both within the DRC family of churches and the English-speaking churches, who directly impacted the anti-apartheid ecclesiastical movement, and particularly the Contextual Theological movement, within South Africa. See also, Pauw, 118.

107 Paton, 132.
108 Ibid., 133.
example, only blacks born in Johannesburg could work there. However, the government forced work-age blacks to carry identification (passes) proving their birth in Johannesburg, or else suffer the consequences. Typically, the authorities imposed a monetary fine or a term in jail. The government pardoned no one for absent mindedness or for claiming theft of identification.\textsuperscript{110}

After spending two nights in jail, Jacob Ledwaba – a husband and father who the authorities arrested for not carrying his pass and being out in the streets after curfew – came home with a terrible ache in his abdomen claiming that he had been kicked in the stomach. He died in the hospital of bladder injury. Huddleston attempted to sue the authorities but with no avail. Although Huddleston produced medical affidavits, the courts claimed lack of evidence to convict the police. The courts officially attributed Ledwaba’s death to congenital syphilis.\textsuperscript{111} The horrible toll that the Pass Laws took on black society caused Huddleston to write:

The proof and the offense are in fact identical: for if you are an African and you have left your papers at home you have committed a crime; you can be arrested and imprisoned immediately, and the quickest and safest way to get your release is to pay an “admission of guilt” fine without argument. The fact that you are not guilty of any real offense is beside the point. You are an offender because, by accident, you have tried to evade the control of the state. You have walked freely where you would have shared sunbright air with your neighbour; or perhaps you have actually stood in a bus queue in order to reach your home; or perhaps you have gone to post a letter or to buy a soft drink….But without a pass you are not entitled to such liberties and it is the duty of the police to remind you of the fact, for only in this way is control possible.\textsuperscript{112}

For Huddleston, apartheid did not represent separate development for the benefit of all nations (or races), but the subjugation of one nation over the other. Huddleston believed that the Pass Laws – being the very byproduct of apartheid – represented unjustifiable discrimination,

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 33.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 22.
and guaranteed “domination” and the “permanent superiority of one race over another.” The Pass Laws even went a step further by causing what Huddleston called the “depersonalisation of man…the submerging of the individual in the mass.” The Pass Laws reduced man “because he is black, to an integer, a fingerprint in a file, a thing rather than a person. But a sentient thing, threatened and fearful because of the shape of the society of which he is a part.”

The stories such as those of Jacob Ledwaba made Huddleston into a vocal and influential Christian activist prior to the advent of Contextual Theology in South Africa. Huddleston’s religious purpose and mission in life became self evident. He, a white minister, advocated and protested for the rights of oppressed and marginalized black South Africans. He unequivocally stated in his 1956 seminal monograph, *Naught for Your Comfort*:

I pray God I may never forget or weary in fighting against [apartheid], for it seems to me that as a Christian, and above all as a priest, my manward task is always and everywhere the same: to recognize my brother more than my brother, more than the personality and the manhood that are his; my task is to recognise Christ Himself. I cannot, therefore, stand aside when it is He whom men treat contemptuously in the streets of the city.

A contemporary of Huddleston’s – another Anglican priest and advocate for racial justice – appeared on the scene in the mid-1940s. More timid than Huddleston, Michael Scott also came under the direction of Clayton after he arrived in South Africa in 1943. In 1944, Scott founded the Campaign for Right and Justice. He helped place the courageous Afrikaner Judge Krause as the organization’s president. Scott also worked with the United Party parliament members and the Communist Party to organize a national conference for his organization. Scott appealed to his clergymen to join him, but only five bishops responded, and they all refused to attend any of the

---

113 Ibid., 34-5.
114 Ibid., 35.
conference sessions.\textsuperscript{115}

Nevertheless, the Campaign proceeded, and at its national conference called for direct political participation for all South Africans, for ending discriminatory policies, for distribution of land to the poor, and a minimum wage to the equivalent of 2 dollars per week.\textsuperscript{116} The parallels of Scott’s actions in 1944, in particular, to the Contextual Theology movement of the late 1970s and 1980s are astounding: the determination to advocate for the disenfranchised, the forming of political organizations and tactics, and the collaboration with other political groups and communist ideals.

However, Scott’s Campaign did not succeed in its intended goals for three important reasons. First, contention arose between all the represented groups. The white liberals argued with white and black radicals, the Communists argued with the Christians and ex-Communists. Also, the United Party representatives wanted the assurance that there would not be any consideration of forming a new opposition party. The organization fought within itself for two years when on August 12, 1946, black gold-miners went on strike and the United Party determined to break it. The Campaign uncovered the harsh labor conditions, forcing the United Party to appoint a formal enquiry commission. In turn, many upset members of the United Party resigned to give their support to the very conservative National Party.\textsuperscript{117}

The debacle with the Broederbond pamphlet incident added to this calamity. The

\textsuperscript{116} Payton, 135.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
Campaign planned on exposing the Broederbond, a secret Afrikaner organization comprised of three thousand members committed to preserving white supremacy. Afrikaner National Party members resided in the heart of this organization. However, United Party officials visited Scott before the Campaign published the article, warning Scott that the information had been taken from Military Intelligence and its use could incur dangerous ramifications for Scott’s organization. Adding more to the intrigue, a leader from the Jewish Board of Deputies signed an affidavit testifying to the United Party members’ statements and also confirming that the Jewish Board intended to use the Campaign to form a new political group, in direct violation of Scott’s promise to the United Party against a new political party establishment through the Campaign.118

Scott decided not to publish the pamphlet. However, the Campaign committee, consisting of substantial Communist votes overruled Scott. He resigned, leaving the Campaign to the Communist members. Scott felt used and undermined by the Communists, and shortly after Scott’s resignation from the very organization he established, the Campaign fell apart.119

Unfortunately, the unintended consequences of Scott’s Campaign may have helped usher the National Party into power in 1948, and thus bringing with it the extreme apartheid legislation that Scott probably never intended or imagined. As evidenced in the Scott Campaign, there hardly existed any compatibility between the Church and the Communists in the mid-twentieth century. The failure of the Christians and Communists to work together is evident in the distrust the groups had for one another in the early struggles against discrimination and inequity in the 1940s and 1950s.

118 Ibid., 135-6. See also, Walshe, “Anti-Apartheid Struggle,” 386. As explained in the Historiography section of this thesis, the Broederbond was a secret society that organized the Afrikaner power base through its members in the government, military, police, civil service, business establishment, media, and DRC.
119 Payton, 136. Scott never stated that the Communists and the Jewish Board conspired together to undermine him.
The influential Anglican archbishop Geoffrey Clayton of Cape Town had somewhat more success than Scott. Clayton, found himself campaigning against the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1957 with the Catholic archbishop of Durban, Denis Hurley. Their ecumenical alliance protested the “church clause” within the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1957 that prohibited blacks from attending church in white areas.120

The churches vehemently protested and Archbishop Clayton, who previously opposed church and priest involvement in political affairs, called upon his clergy to disobey the law, and Hurley did likewise. This incident also marked a seminal moment since the National Party came into power. The English-speaking Protestant churches united under one banner to call for dissent against a draconian government policy. Also for the first time, even the Roman Catholic Church joined the protests.121

Pretoria’s attempt to separate black and white worship from the English-speaking Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic Church produced two unintended consequences. First, it consolidated the English-speaking churches in their struggle against apartheid. Second, it brought the Catholic Church into the anti-apartheid movement’s camp.122 The churches could no longer ignore the abuses of apartheid once the most prominent church leaders in their country became intricately involved in the anti-apartheid movement. However, it still took another two decades for the churches to become the vanguard of a struggle that saw political organizations

---

120 Pauw, 118-9.
121 De Gruchy, “Colonial Heritage,” 161-2. In 1953, The Bantu Education Act handed over the mission schools to the government. Those churches that refused to let the state run their schools lost their government subsidy and the government forced them to shut down. De Gruchy contends that the churches reluctantly gave in under pressure. Pretoria successfully wrested control of some of the best schools in black education from the churches. Influence in black education transitioned from the English-speaking Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic Church to the government.
122 Pauw, 118-9.
banned and activist leaders imprisoned or killed. By 1960, South African Christians – particularly those in the urban areas – had the will, but not the complete unity to combat apartheid. They still lacked the binding theology that would unify the English-speaking churches with anti-apartheid Afrikaner Christians and the DRC sister churches in the push to dismantle the apartheid system.

The Ecumenical Response: The 1960s

The Sharpeville massacre of 1960 considerably changed the course of the ecclesiastical movement against apartheid. Sharpeville deeply affected the English-speaking churches in general, and the DRC family of churches in particular. No longer willing to sustain the abuse and indignity of the Pass Laws, twenty thousand non-violent marchers took to the streets in March 1960 in an attempt to return their passes and surrender themselves for arrest to the authorities at Sharpeville. Instead of jailing the huge crowd, the police opened fire, killing nearly seventy and wounding over 180 people. The police shot most of the victims in the back. Soon after, riots broke out all across the nation, and Pretoria imposed a state of emergency. It gave the police force the right to arrest and hold anyone suspected of undermining the government. The authorities arrested two thousand political activists and permanently banned both the ANC and PAC.¹²³

Although various forms of church activity in support of anti-apartheid measures prior to 1960 have been demonstrated, the theological foundation needed to directly and radically confront apartheid did not yet form. Pauw contends that the churches began to focus on an

¹²³ Borer, 37.
official theological response to apartheid primarily after the participation of worldwide ecumenical movements. The evolution to a sound theological response, however, was slow in coming. At the first assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948 – the year that the National Party assumed power in South Africa – the delegation stated its concern regarding South African racial discriminatory policy. Shortly thereafter, the WCC’s general secretary, W.A. Visser ’t Hooft, went to South Africa. He wrote a report based on his observations and noted that black society was falling apart. Visser ’t Hooft denounced the white churches and especially the DRC for not taking a firm prophetic position against the state.\textsuperscript{124}

However, the Sharpeville Shootings became a turning point for the ecumenical movement. The WCC became more active in South African affairs when the Anglican archbishop of Cape Town, Joost de Blank, sent a letter to Visser ’t Hooft calling for the removal of the Cape and Transvaal DRC from the WCC. De Blank’s letter infuriated the DRC churches. The WCC considered this incident as an opportunity to both reconcile the two sides and talk about race relations at the same time. The mediation became known as the Cottesloe Consultation – named after the Johannesburg suburb where all the delegates convened. Eight WCC South African member churches, which included the Cape DRC, the Transvaal DRC, and also the more conservative \textit{Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk} (NHK), attended. In all, eighty South African delegates attended Cottesloe, including eighteen black representatives.\textsuperscript{125}

Although the event intended to bring about a more robust and concerted multi-denominational engagement on the issue of race relations in South Africa, the declaration

\textsuperscript{124} Pauw120. See also, The World Council of Churches, “The WCC and the Ecumenical Movement,” http://oikoumene.org/en/who-are-we/background.html (accessed February, 29, 2012). Ecumenical church leaders agreed to establish a World Council of Churches in 1937. However, the outbreak of WWII delayed its actual organization until 1948. That year, 147 different Christian churches met in Amsterdam for the first WCC gathering.\textsuperscript{125} Pauw, 120-1.
adopted at Cottesloe collapsed by the following year, and with it all hopes for Anglo-Afrikaner ecumenical relations. Cottesloe adopted the statement that no one could be excluded from any church due to race. Also, the statement asserted that everyone, regardless of race, should have equal political and social rights. Ironically, the basis for the document came from a study by the Cape DRC initiated before the start of the conference in Cottesloe. All delegates except the NHK signed the declaration. The DRC delegation issued a separate statement declaring that it still supported the government’s apartheid policy. With this addendum, the delegates at Cottesloe released the statement to the general public. The Afrikaner newspapers immediately shot the Cottesloe proclamation down. Politics got involved once again in religion when Prime Minister H.F. Verwoerd announced in his 1961 New Year’s message that Cottesloe represented individuals, not the churches, and the issue would be resolved in the synods. Pauw contends that Verwoerd missed an opportunity to bridge the growing separation between the DRC and the English-speaking churches as well as to admit the humiliation that apartheid caused blacks. Instead, the DRC “chose to step back into line with the state, in effect choosing what would become thirty years of self-isolation.”

Pressured by the Afrikaner press and Prime Minister Verwoerd’s rejection of Cottesloe, the DRC not only renounced Cottesloe but pulled its membership out of the WCC. Voices within the DRC called the leadership to disavow apartheid and unite with the other churches. However, since Afrikaner control had been “consolidated and centralized” by this time, the DRC decided to side with the government and its leadership threw its lot with the secret Afrikaner Broederbond

126 Ibid., 121.
127 Ibid., 141.
which was comprised of prominent political, business, and church leaders. In the following year, all of the DRC delegates, except for one, officially rejected Cottesloe. The Cape and Transvaal DRC synods reasserted their support for the apartheid government and removed their memberships from the WCC, thus breaking all ties with the English-speaking churches within and outside of South Africa.

However, the one delegate that did not reject the Cottesloe declaration, Rev. Naude from the Southern Transvaal DRC, became a powerful influence in the Christian response to apartheid. He still believed in ecumenical ties and disapproved of apartheid. With fellow likeminded Afrikaner ministers from the DRC, Naude launched the *Pro Veritate*, a theological journal that provided a space for Afrikaner ministers and DRC members to discuss their ideas about apartheid, the Bible, and ecumenism. Naude and his colleagues went a step further by cofounding the independent ecumenical organization, the Christian Institute of Southern Africa (CI) in August 1963. The CI provided ecumenical study and discourse for members of different Christian denominations. Membership in the CI was voluntary and open to all Christians. The CI also promised to not interfere with any members’ devotion to “his own church or creed.”

When the CI offered Naude the post of director, his church threatened to remove him from his ministerial position in the DRC if he did not decline the position. Pauw notes that Naude “regretfully but resolutely” abandoned his position in the DRC, and chose to support the CI by accepting the role of director. The CI soon became “one of the key organisations in the ecumenical movement in South Africa.”

---

128 Ibid.  
129 Ibid., 121.  
130 Ibid., 122.  
131 Ibid., 122-3, 145-9, 161. As Naude witnessed the depravity of the Indian townships, black mining compounds,
After participation in the WCC’s Geneva Conference, Naude returned to South Africa with a renewed commitment to end apartheid. In 1968, the CI joined the SACC after it had restructured from its struggling predecessor, the CCSA. In the same year, both organizations jointly issued the *The Message to the People of South Africa*. This document declared that the Gospels supported neither the concept nor the practice of apartheid. It also insisted that the Kingdom of God meant equal justice for all within the realm of public policy.\(^{132}\) Nearly all the English-speaking churches – excluding the Baptist Union, which withdrew its membership from the SACC – and thousands of individuals eventually supported the document.\(^{133}\) Later in 1968, the CI and SACC also co-sponsored the Study Project of Christianity in Apartheid Society (SPROCAS). This program generated a variety of publications relating to “education, economics, society, politics, law, and the church.” Unfortunately non-whites viewed both *The Message* and SPROCAS as paternalistic in nature, still focused on “white interests.”\(^{134}\)

Also in the 1960s, two important international ecumenical events drew the attention of the South African churches in the 1960s. The first event to influence the churches was the Second Vatican Council that took place between 1962 and 1965. De Gruchy argues that both the South African Roman Catholic Church and the English-speaking Protestant churches began to work closer together on social justice issues.\(^{135}\) Fascinatingly, modern concepts of Contextual Theology that mostly Protestant South African church leaders used actually originated from the Catholic Liberation Theology tradition.

---

\(^{132}\) Ibid., 123.

\(^{133}\) De Gruchy, “Colonial Heritage,” 163.

\(^{134}\) Pauw, 123-4.

\(^{135}\) De Gruchy, “Colonial Heritage,” 163.
Latin American Catholic theologians and priests, such as Gustavo Gutierrez from Peru, Leonardo Boff from Brazil, and Luis Segundo from Uruguay are arguably considered the early fathers of Liberation Theology, the equivalent of South African Contextual Theology.

Theological scholar J. David Turner states that beginning with Vatican II, the Catholic Church allowed for more Latin American church leadership participation in major Catholic conferences. However, not until the Medellín Conference of 1968, did the Latin American church leaders establish well-defined liberation ideas. Subsequently, 1971 saw the official birth of the Liberation Theology movement with theologian Gustavo Gutierrez’s book, *Teología de la*...

---

136 Turner, 3, 7. See also, Werner G. Jeanrond, “From Resistance to Liberation Theology: German Theologians and the Non/Resistance to the National Socialist Regime,” *The Journal of Modern History* 64 Supplement: Resistance Against the Third Reich (1992): S187 – S199, S193, S195. Divinity professor Werner G. Jeanrond suggests that Liberation Theology’s beginnings existed as early as the 1930s - just prior to and during World War II. For example, he points to European theologians who resisted the Nazi regime. Jeanrond argues that Swiss theologian Karl Barth began the process for the formation of a political theology. However, Barth’s personal convictions prevented him from actually reconciling between theological and political ideas. Therefore, Jeanrond argues that Barth did not develop a new theological response to the religious and political crisis facing Germany at the time. German Lutheran theologian and Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, on the other hand, combined both Barth’s ideas with his own concept of Christian “praxis” (or practice) to “face the concrete problems of Christian witness in a very complex and confused cultural and political situation.” Bonhoeffer viewed Christian theory and practice eschatologically. For Bonhoeffer, the imperative lies in God’s Word and the transformation of the world, not the survival of the church organization. Resistance to Hitler, therefore, was not only justifiable but necessary for the church to carry out its mission for this world’s restoration. Jeanrond argues that Bonhoeffer’s theological ideas and political actions greatly influenced both Protestant and Catholic theology. German Reformed theologian Jurgen Moltmann further refines Bonhoeffer’s theology. Adopting ideas from St. Thomas Aquinas, he argues that it is the duty of the Christian to resist corrupt regimes given that the resistance must be “legitimate.” The Christians’ obligation must also strive to reinstate governmental legitimacy, reinstate the existing constitution, or create a new constitution that protects human rights. More significantly, Jeanrond states that Moltmann emphasizes the need to adequately define a “theology of resistance” in light of continuing economic abuse of Latin Americans or the oppression of blacks in South Africa. See also, Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church*, trans. Robert R. Barr (NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 49. Similar to Bonhoeffer’s teaching of a transformational world and against church survival, former Latin American Catholic priest and Liberation Theologian, Leonardo Boff states that, “Jesus did not go forth to preach the church, but to preach the kingdom of God…[which] does not mean a national theocracy…or territory…or something purely spiritual. It means a new world order, where God is all in all…” See also, Eugene M. Klaaren, “Creation and Apartheid: South African Theology since 1948,” in *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History*, ed. Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 370-1. Religious professor Eugene M. Klaaren states that European and American trained scholars taught theologies of Barth and Bonhoeffer in South African English universities. Consequently, South African theologians and clergy demanded more socio-economic equality for all South Africans. For a better understanding of the influence of St. Thomas Aquinas’s politico-theological thoughts on Western culture, see also, Dino Bigongiari, ed., *The Political Ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas: Representative Selections* (NY: Hafner Publishing Company, 1953; reprint, 1965).
In Switzerland in 1966, the WCC sponsored the second event that influenced the South African churches, named the Geneva Conference on Church and Society. This conference took an even more extreme course than Vatican II. The conference called for direct engagement in struggles for social justice and revolutions. Out of this meeting, the WCC’s Program to Combat Racism (PCR) arose. Part of its initiative was to establish a special fund to distribute to organizations attempting to end racism. In 1970, the PCR contributed $120,000 to Southern African liberation movements, including the ANC.

In the 1970s, as the CI began to observe more successful strikes by the black trade unions, observe the BCM’s questioning of capitalism in relation to black labor exploitation, and as it received demands for more direct action from its foreign donors, its own attitude and approach to black activism began to change in the early 1970s. Furthermore, the WCC’s Program to Combat Racism also made an impact on the CI. The CI began to meet and interact with black Christian leaders in the BCM such as Oshade Phakathi, Manas Buthelezi, Barney Pityana, and Allan Boesak (of the DRMC). The Special Program for Christian Action in Society -2 (SPROCAS-2) formed out of the determination that the CI should involve itself directly in the black liberation struggle, as opposed to merely changing white attitudes about apartheid. Due to Naude’s and the CI’s efforts, blacks began to increasingly trust the white activists as co-partners in the anti-apartheid movement. Blacks saw that whites too became the targets of police harassment, detention, and banning “for the sake of black liberation.”

---

138 De Gruchy, “Colonial Heritage,” 163. See also, Borer, 8.
139 Pauw, 124-5.
and the CI in the 1970s made it possible for Black (Liberation) theologians to combine efforts with their white counterparts in the 1980s in their mutual struggle to end apartheid.

Due to the work of Naude and the CI, even some of the more traditionally conservative black Evangelical church leaders also began to attack the apartheid system. In 1973, the Lutheran priest Manas Buthelezi gave a speech at the Congress on Mission and Evangelism in Durban challenging white influence in the Christian church and calling for whites to view the gospel through the eyes of black evangelists. In 1975, the black synods established the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa (ELCSA), with Buthelezi as one of its bishops, after he attempted and failed to unite the racially segregated Lutheran synods.140

As the conservative churches experienced turmoil due to the anti-apartheid issue, so did the more moderate and liberal churches. The SACC’s 1974 Resolution on Conscientious Objection produced greater controversy within the English-speaking mainline churches. The SACC condemned South Africa’s war with Angola and called on Christians not to serve in the conflict. While some mainline churches drew closer to the liberation movement, many congregants within those churches withdrew their memberships to join more conservative churches. At the same time, this reaction by many whites produced an opportunity for non-white Christian leaders to attain more prominent roles in the mainline churches. Barney Pityana and Malusi Mpumlwana became ordained Anglican priests. Mandlenkhosi Zwane became an ordained Catholic priest, and in 1976, the church appointed him Bishop of Swaziland. The Anglican Church appointed Desmond Mpilo Tutu as Bishop of Lesotho in 1976, Bishop of

---
140 Ibid., 126.
Johannesburg in 1984, and Archbishop of Cape Town in 1986.\footnote{Ibid., 125-6.}

The Dilemma of Major Political Movements – ANC and BCM

One of the most popular figures in the ANC’s history is the late Chief Albert Luthuli, who came from a Congregationalist Christian background. He rose to the ranks of ANC leadership in 1952 and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1960. Luthuli helped organize the first Defiance Campaign. Its purpose was to protest the apartheid laws enacted shortly after the National Party’s rise to power in 1948. The Campaign included the ANC, the Indian Congress, and other anti-apartheid groups wishing to participate. The Campaign would be implemented in three phases. First, small groups initiated well organized civil disobedience in the cities. Second, the Campaign spread from the city to the countryside. Finally, the defiance spread throughout the entire country.\footnote{Luthuli, 113, 119.}

Although the Campaign did not effectively penetrate the countryside, membership in the ANC exponentially increased fourteen fold, from a mere seven thousand to one hundred thousand. Luthuli maintained that the intentionally non-violent Defiance Campaign was largely successful until sudden and unexpected riots broke out. Luthuli contended that black rioters supplied the excuse that the white authorities needed to crack down on the Campaign. More than half of the protestors in Port Elizabeth included juveniles not associated with the Campaign. Luthuli believed agitators – quite possibly encouraged by the white authorities – infiltrated some of the peaceful protests in order to stir up the violence that quickly spread into different cities throughout South Africa. The government retaliated brutally, in many cases firing into crowds,
killing scores, and passing the Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Public Safety Act, which essentially made it illegal to protest in South Africa. The government’s severe reaction against the Defiance Campaign deterred many protestors from continuing in the movement, while others abandoned non-violence all together.143

One main difference between the first Defiance Campaign of 1952 and the second Defiance Campaign in 1989 – which will be discussed in later pages – was the lack of unified institutionalized church involvement in the former. Luthuli stated that “the churches did not speak with one voice.” In January 1953, Luthuli attended the Executive Committee of the CCSA. The Council timidly approached the issue of the Defiance Campaign. The Council refused to make an official statement on the grounds that it “does no more than seek to co-ordinate,” and referred the issue back to the member churches. Luthuli thought the response and recommendation too “evasive.” He believed that the Council and the Church “as a whole” had an obligation “to give moral guidance at once while the issue was alive and while some Christians were confused about the principles involved.” As if taken directly from the Contextual Theology that did not exist yet, Luthuli emphatically stated that “Christianity must be concerned with what is going on inside people here and now.”144

Nevertheless, Luthuli praised the Catholic Church and some of the English-speaking Protestant churches for at least not condemning the Defiance Campaign. To Luthuli, the churches started to become “involved in the South African struggle as churches…instead of taking the stand, politics is not our business.” The Christian Council eventually appointed a sub-committee to draft a statement approving of protest activity as long as it did not conflict with the individual

143 Ibid., 125 - 8.
144 Ibid., 137 - 8. See also, Allen, 169.
conscience and God’s Law. The Council’s cautious stance on protests evolved considerably over time. By the mid 1980s, the Council, in the form of the SACC, led the opposition in protests and non-violent civil disobedience against the state. It is evident that Luthuli believed and wanted a more activist role for the churches to play in South Africa – which he attained, but only thirty years later. Luthuli’s own theology preceded his time by decades. However, he led in the ANC, not in the church. He held no powerful position in the Congregational church at the time, and therefore was incapable of influencing other ministers and churches, as was the case with Contextual theologians in the 1980s.

White ministers continued to run the churches in the mid-twentieth century. Luthuli condemned what he called “white paternalist Christianity – as though the whites had invented the Christian Faith.” He stated that the Christian ministers “talk[ed] down” to their black congregants “instead of coming down” among them. The 1980’s Contextual Theology taught and stressed the practice of the latter. Regrettably, it took nearly another quarter century before the South African churches appointed black church leaders who related with the masses of oppressed black worshipers.

Nelson Mandela – originally an attorney by trade – is arguably the most popular and important ANC leader, taking the ANC to a new level in tactics. As previously mentioned, Gandhi had a major influence on the ANC’s non-violent opposition toward the South African

145 Luthuli, 136-7.
government. However, Mandela became increasingly frustrated with the white government’s intransigence toward the ANC’s peaceful appeals for black rights. Abandoning non-violent methods, he resorted to alternative means. He reasoned that only violence moved the government to compromise, and so together with a few of his associates, they formed *Umkhonto we Sizwe* – which translates to Spear of the Nation and is also known as MK. *Umkhonto we Sizwe* planned three phases, if required. First, the ANC decided to sabotage the nation’s infrastructure, deliberately avoiding human injury or death. If this did not work, they employed more aggressive means, such as attacks on police headquarters and military bases, but avoiding civilian casualties. If the government still remained recalcitrant to the ANC’s demands, they planned to engage the nation into a full blown civil war.\(^{147}\)

Eastern Bloc nations sent the ANC aid through the efforts of the SACP. However, the Eastern Bloc – along with all the major African nations and some other developing nations that supported the ANC’s efforts – only sent meager material resources. Wealthier Western nations refused to aid the ANC despite appeals from Mandela’s lieutenants.\(^{148}\) Although many black African nations gained independence from their former colonial powers, understandably one of the reasons for refusal of Western aid was that the Cold War reached its height in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The white South African government – not technically considered an imperial regime, but a former colony of the British – stood firmly with the West’s anti-communist “infiltration and expansionist” policies. The churches had better success in getting the Western world to cooperate with the opponents of apartheid during the 1980s – explored in later pages.

In the meantime, the ANC’s new approach to working with outside groups did not fare

---


\(^{148}\) Ibid.
well with some of its younger members, particularly Robert Sobukwe. He felt uncomfortable with the ANC’s increased association with the Communists. He also opposed diluting the ANC’s all black constituencies with non-white allies.  \(^{149}\) Luthuli stated that due to Smuts’s enactment of the Asiatic Land Tenure Act – also known as the Ghetto Act – in 1946, the Indian Congress forged an alliance with the ANC. The Ghetto act – in similar fashion to the Group Areas Act for blacks – forced Indians to relocate from their homelands onto reserves. The alliance between the ANC and the Indian Congress “was criticized by a minority within the A.N.C., who wanted Africans to ‘go it alone.’”  \(^{150}\)

In addition, the ANC’s policy charter, the Freedom Charter, equally disturbed Sobukwe and some other members of the ANC. The Freedom Charter called for a multi-ethnic and multi-racial South Africa. The charter stated that South Africa belonged to all peoples within its borders. Sobukwe believed the charter catered too much to non-black interests and did not adequately address black self-reliance. The split between Mandela and Sobukwe formally occurred in 1959 with the formation of the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC). Many young ANC activists soon joined the PAC. Both organizations had huge support from blacks within South Africa.  \(^{151}\) However, shortly after the infamous Sharpeville Shootings, the government imposed the Unlawful Organization Act, formally banning the ANC and PAC in April 1960.  \(^{152}\)

In 1956, Pretoria previously charged Mandela and 155 other political leaders with conspiracy to overthrow the government through violence. Mandela remained on bail for most of what became known as the Treason Trial. After a team of defense lawyers withdrew from the

\(^{149}\) Ibid.  
\(^{150}\) Luthuli, 101.  
\(^{152}\) Borer, 37.
Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Dum Nokwe, Robert Resha, and Ahmed Kathrada prepared and presented the defense case in 1960, with Mandela leading the cross-examination. The government eventually acquitted the defendants. However in a separate trial that took place in November 1962, Mandela found himself sentenced to five years imprisonment for inciting strikes and leaving South Africa without proper documentation.153

The following year, the authorities raided the ANC’s underground headquarters in Rivonia, arresting Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Ahmed Kathrada, Dennis Goldberg, and Lionel Bernstein. Elias Motsoaledi, Andrew Mlangeni, and Mandela joined the arrested. Their trial became known as the infamous Rivonia Trial that sent Mandela and the rest of the accused – except for Bernstein, who the government acquitted – to Robben Island in 1964.154 With the heads of the powerful anti-apartheid political organizations effectively removed, their organizations banned, and their underground armed struggle relatively ineffective against the government, and no viable anti-apartheid organization to immediately take the place of the ANC or PAC, apartheid policy remained entrenched throughout most of the 1960s.

The late South African journalist Donald Woods wrote, “With Mandela imprisoned and Sobukwe banned, there was for some years a leadership vacuum in South African black politics. It was filled toward the close of the 1960s by Bantu Stephen Biko.”155 Woods’s words highlight

---

154 Ibid., 162, 189. See also, *Forward*, July 1964. At the time of Mandela’s verdict, international trade unions were the most vocal, particularly in condemning the Suppression of Communism Act and Sabotage Act that sent Mandela and his fellow defendants to prison. The British Trade Union Congress and the American AFL/CIO sent a message to Prime Minister Verwoerd expressing their “deepest indignation” for the conviction of the all eight accused Rivonia defendants and demanding their release.
the effectiveness of the South African government to root out and silence the opposition leadership within the decade of the 1960s. It is also important to note here that the churches had not yet solidified their response to, nor coordinated their strategy and tactics against the apartheid government.

Therefore, the interim period between the banishment of the ANC in the early 1960’s and the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in the late 1960s witnessed the height of Grand Apartheid, whereby racial discrimination had been imposed to nearly all aspects of life in South Africa, under Prime Minister Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd – its chief architect. Verwoerd became prime minister of South Africa on September 3, 1958, after Johannes Gerhardus Strijdom – who succeeded Malan – died of cancer. He helped turn South Africa from a commonwealth to a republic on May 31, 1961. On September 6, 1966, a deranged parliamentary staff member, Dimitry Tsafendas, killed Verwoerd. Eight days later, Balthazar Johannes Vorster became prime minister on September 13, 1966. Nevertheless, Grand Apartheid continued unobstructed in South Africa.

However, Verwoerd is better known for his Grand Apartheid policy. The Group Areas Act of 1950 was one of the most infamous laws against blacks. Much like the Land Bill of 1913, the Group Areas Act forced blacks into segregated areas of the country called “reserves,” “traditional

156 Forward, May, 1963. Government officials held great enforcement power in the 1960’s. Although South Africa instituted the Publications and Entertainment Act, the Minister of Justice did not have to rely on neither it nor the Publications Control Board to ban any press critical of Pretoria. In 1963, the minister forced at least three newspapers to close, and a fourth neared bankruptcy as a result of government pressure.
homelands,” or “Bantusans.” The government called this policy “separate development” in the attempt to ward off international criticism of white South African segregation efforts. The official statement for the Bantusan areas declared that blacks would self-rule over time.\(^\text{158}\)

Pretoria designated sixteen million blacks to nine so called “independent” and separate “homelands” with the intent to disenfranchise all black civil and human rights within South Africa proper. Pretoria designated four million Zulus to kwaZulu, four million Xhosas to two Xhosa areas called Transkei and Ciskei. The government assigned the other smaller black “ethnic” groups, including Swazis, Vendas, Tswanas, and Sotho to the remaining six homelands.\(^\text{159}\)

The National Party touted that blacks would have the benefit to preserve their separate cultures and languages. However, all four “ethnic” groups – Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi, and Ndebele – speak the common language of Nguni. As Woods pointed out, there are more differences in words and pronunciations between Afrikaans and English than between Zulu and Xhosa, which are nearly indistinguishable. The separation of the “ethnic” groups had more to do with control and development. In essence, there still remained one South Africa that comprised of three million Afrikaner National Party members or sympathizers who ruled over sixteen million blacks, one million Coloureds, and one million Indians, non-Afrikaners, and anti-National Party whites.\(^\text{160}\)

Nevertheless, apartheid policy continued unobstructed during the middle to latter part of


\(^{159}\) Woods Biko, 49.

\(^{160}\) Ibid.
the 1960s. Although the Afrikaner National Party may have also thought their strategy to remove leaders of the anti-apartheid movement a success, a fledgling student movement started growing within the liberation struggle. Eventually, this movement and its ultimate leader became as powerful against, and as threatening toward, the government as the ANC under Mandela.

Mostly white English-speaking students from the liberal universities of Cape Town, Witwatersand (Johannesburg), Natal (Durban and Pietermaritzburg), and Rhodes (Grahamstown) made up the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). Although many white students sacrificed for the anti-apartheid cause by being arrested and banned, their leadership remained white. As in the churches prior to the 1970s, whites sympathetic to black suffering usually led the opposition against apartheid policy and state action in student-led organizations. Biko did not accept white leadership for a predominantly black cause. He therefore instigated the formation of the South African Student Organization (SASO). The all black organization formed in 1969 with Biko as its first president.

Biko felt that organizations such as NUSAS only limited the freedom struggle to black students. Believing that black students understood the black condition on South Africa better than their well-meaning white counterparts, he wanted representation for all black people, and the only way of doing this was through the BCM. For him and his movement, liberal whites stood on the fence on many issues facing black South African society. Moderation would not suffice, and Biko wanted direct confrontation. As Woods contended, “clear polarities” needed to be established and the “middle-of-the-road section…eliminated in order to bring about

---

161 Woods Biko, 34.
confrontation."^{163}

Anti-capitalist sentiment and the faltering South African economic system played into the liberation struggle’s hands. Barney Pityana, the chief lieutenant in SASO – who also became an ordained Anglican priest – contended that the years of brainwashing of black indigenous people in South Africa by white colonists had to be reversed. Blacks were taught that whites were the benchmark by which all other races must be measured. White “capitalistic tendencies” stressed monetary wealth as a measure of status, thus introducing the “class situation…as a value even for blacks.”^{164} Pityana believed that Western culture thrived on capitalist exploitation. Whites, in his view, would never renounce this way of life. Original black South African society viewed the tribe as an augmentation of the family, with the chief being the caretaker of the tribe’s property. Within this system, Pityana argued that “all collective enterprise was geared to the general good.”^{165}

Black people needed to become self-reliant and pull away from political systems that cater to white voter interests at the expense of the politically disenfranchised blacks. The leaders of the BCM meant to give back the dignity and self-worth of blacks. “The confidence thus generated will give them a sense of pride and awareness.” Therefore, the BCM determined to reject the “directionless” multiracialism for a more “positive unilateral approach” in the fight for

---

^{163} Woods, *Biko*, 36. See also, Boesak, Allan Aubrey, *Farewell to Innocence: A Socio-Ethical Study on Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1977), 1. Allan Boesak, a Liberation theologian from the DRMC differentiated “Black Consciousness” from “Black Power.” Black Consciousness is an existential realization that black people’s humanity is comprised of their “blackness,” and there is no longer a need to feel ashamed of being black. They can celebrate their black culture and history without being confined by white culture and white values. “It is an attitude, a way of life.” Although Black Consciousness is a vital part of Black Power, the two are not synonymous. Black Power, is call for “fundamental change in systems and patterns in society which oppress or which give rise to the oppression of black people.”


^{165} Ibid.
equal rights and justice. In other words, the blacks in South Africa would go at it alone.\textsuperscript{166} The BCM was definitely pro-black, but never an anti-white movement. Biko had much respect for all kinds of people and he refused to view whites as lesser human beings.\textsuperscript{167}

Woods contended that the young Biko – twenty years of age in 1966 – stood out among all the many other BCM leaders. By the early 1970s, Biko started to be recognized as the embodiment of this new and growing political force – Black Consciousness, “a new totality of black response to white power, and with it a new era in the racial struggle in South Africa.”\textsuperscript{168} No other leader in the BCM exemplified this new struggle better than Biko. He mastered his political skills well and played the principle role in attempting to unite the ANC and PAC. Unfortunately, the government suspected his involvement.\textsuperscript{169} Biko did not succeed in unification due to his untimely death.

On August 18, 1977, South African Security police stopped Biko and his colleague, Peter Jones, as the two men drove into Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape. Shortly thereafter, the police took both men into custody, and Biko remained in detention for nearly a month.\textsuperscript{170} The authorities held him naked for eighteen days without questioning him. On September 12, 1977, thirty years of age, he died of brain injuries incurred by at least three strikes to the head just five days earlier.\textsuperscript{171} At the time, the Security Police denied culpability, and they blamed the official cause of death on a hunger strike,\textsuperscript{172} but the overwhelming evidence of police abuse suggested

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., 38-9.  \\
\textsuperscript{168} Woods, \textit{Biko}, 39.  \\
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., 403.  \\
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 218.  \\
\textsuperscript{171} Tutu, \textit{Peaceful Revolution}, 15.  \\
\textsuperscript{172} Woods, \textit{Biko}, 218.
\end{flushright}
otherwise.

Twenty thousand people attended Biko’s funeral, including whites, such as the Reverend David Russell, a close friend of his. Major embassies sent delegates as well, and in an almost foreshadowing of things to come, all the major churches sent representatives to the funeral. Upon Biko’s death, the BCM had dissolved. Biko held the movement together with charisma, political savvy, and courage. A spin-off group calling itself the Azanian People’s Organization (APO) did attempt to organize. However, it never reached the strength or influence of Biko and his BCM.\textsuperscript{173}

The government proceeded to ban twenty black consciousness organizations and sympathizing groups, which included the SASO and the Black People’s Convention (BPC). The government also jailed most of the organizations’ leaders. Pretoria also ordered the banning of the South African popular black newspaper, \textit{The World}. The state banned Biko’s close white friends, the nonconforming DRC church leader Naude and newspaper editor Donald Woods.\textsuperscript{174} In October 1977, the Security Police permanently banned the Christian Institute as it raided the CI’s offices and confiscated all its assets. After the demise of the BCM and its allies, the government only believed its remaining threats to be the ANC and the United Democratic Front (UDF).\textsuperscript{175} The UDF and its involvement with Contextual theologians will be described in later pages.

However, Biko’s death only exacerbated the simmering discontent among non-whites in South Africa. His murder by the state invited an onslaught of condemnation from the world community. The United Nations, for example, voted to prohibit arms sales to South Africa in

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., 218, 353, 408. Woods book details the circumstances that led to Biko’s death and court proceedings involving the investigation of Biko’s death.

\textsuperscript{174} Tutu, \textit{Peaceful Revolution}, 16.

\textsuperscript{175} Pauw, 125. See also, Woods, \textit{Biko}, 401-2.
1977. This embargo became the first imposed upon a UN member state.\textsuperscript{176}

In the interim, another powerful movement started to grow. Its ascension actually began years prior to the formation of the BCM. It was one of the few major legal and legitimate anti-apartheid movements left in South Africa after the BCM disbanded. Pretoria would not only have to contend with the subversive political pressure and military threat of the ANC, but also the open religious pressure and moral authority of the South African churches. As Borer contends, “The churches became the only space left for internal legal opposition. As church leaders moved to fill society’s vacuum…they increasingly were forced to assume the role of political leadership.”\textsuperscript{177}

\textsuperscript{176} Tutu, \textit{Peaceful Revolution}, 16. See also, Allen, 167. Congratulating the efforts of American diplomats in Africa for helping to reach compromise on the resolution, Cyrus Vance – United States secretary of state under President Jimmy Carter – commented that it was the first time the council had ever used Chapter VII against a member state.\textsuperscript{177} Borer, 79.
CHAPTER 3

The Rise of Contextual Theology

This final chapter argues that Contextual theologians filled the crucial political leadership vacuum missing after the death of Steve Biko. It also argues that Contextual Theology radicalized the churches and ecumenical organizations to take direct action against the apartheid government and unite with the liberation struggle. The chapter begins with an introduction to the concepts of Contextual Theology. It proceeds to discuss the major campaigns against the state that Contextual theologians led, and finishes with the pivotal role Contextual theologians played in the National Peace Accord.

The struggle for socio-economic equality is central to the concept of Liberation Theology. Therefore, it does not shy away from its borrowing of Marxist ideology. Theologians Leonardo and Clodovis Boff state:

Liberation theology uses Marxism purely as an instrument. It does not venerate it as it venerated the gospel...Liberation theology freely borrows from Marxism certain “Methodological pointers” that have proved fruitful in understanding the world of the oppressed, such as: the importance of economic factors, the attention to the class struggle, the mystifying power of ideologies - including religious ones.\(^{178}\)

Pretoria often accused Contextual theologian Desmond Tutu of supporting communism. In his response to Pretoria, Tutu emphatically declared, “I reject Marxism as I reject apartheid, which I find equally abhorrent and evil.”\(^{179}\) However, he also stated that the South African government’s

---

\(^{178}\) Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, 28. See also, John Macmurray, *The Clue to History* (NY: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1939), 19-20. Regarding Communism’s relation to Christianity, late Scottish philosopher John Macmurray stated, “It is a plain matter of historical fact that the social content of communist theory is derived from Christianity, through the philosopher Feuerbach’s treatise on *The Essence of Christianity*, in particular.”

practices and oppression were “the best breeding grounds for Communism.” He added:

The West is giving free enterprise and capitalism very bad names as the allies of that vicious system of apartheid. Many of our people reject capitalism and the free enterprise system as exploitative and for us the enemy of our enemy is our friend. Anyone who supports us against apartheid, not just with fine words but with fine matching actions, is our friend…"\(^{180}\)

At the eulogy for slain Chris Hani, the General Secretary of the SACP and member of the ANC’s national executive committee, Tutu praised Hani as a “hero and great leader, irrespective of whether he was a Communist or not.” Tutu claimed that those who invented apartheid and oppressed blacks were Christians – referring to the DRC.\(^{181}\)

Therefore, Liberation Theology’s emphasis and purpose is to “liberate” the poor and oppressed from subjugation of the powerful, even if it uses Marxism as a tool. Nevertheless, the study of the Bible from the vantage point of the oppressed “is the hermeneutics or specific interpretation [reading] used by liberation theology.” The authors, however, are quick to point out that this particular hermeneutics is not the only correct one. Nevertheless, they considered the hermeneutics the appropriate one for the times in 1960s and 1970s Latin America. In the Boffs’ view, the very essence of Liberation Theology helps address the concerns of the poor. It presents overarching themes of biblical revelation: “God the father of life and advocate of the oppressed, liberation from the house of bondage, the prophecy of a new world, the kingdom given to the poor, the church as total sharing. The hermeneutics of liberation stresses these veins, but not to the exclusion of everything else.”\(^{182}\) In South Africa, this “hermeneutics of liberation” took on an evolutionary process in the 1970s and 1980s.

---

\(^{180}\) Ibid., 100.
\(^{181}\) Ibid., 253.
\(^{182}\) Boff, \textit{Introducing Liberation Theology}, 32-3. Clodovis Boff now rejects Liberation Theology. However, Leonardo is still a proponent of this theology.
Professor of Government Tristan Anne Borer argues that Contextual Theology, the theology where South African Black (Liberation) Theology evolved to, can only be explained through its ties to the BCM – “the experimental base from which black theology arose.” For instance, both the BCM and Black Theology came out of the University Christian Movement (UCM). Furthermore, the leadership in the SASO, one of the BCM’s main organizations, included many seminarians. Similar to the BCM, the theology emphasized black self-esteem and freedom from slave mentality. Although “black” was reinterpreted to mean all people of color suffering from white oppression, Black Theology also tended to exclude white English-speaking Christians. Black Christians considered their white counterparts in the liberation movement hypocritical since many English-speaking churches still barred many blacks from positions of leadership.¹⁸³

This period in South African Black Theology held great influence over many black Christian students from the late 1960s to 1976. During these years, Black Theology closely resembled its more secular counterpart, the BCM and its emphasis on black consciousness, which Borer calls the “theology of consciousness.” During this period, Black Theology promoted black pride, and taught its adherents that the white power structure was to blame for the poverty, oppression, and lack of power in the black community. This period in Black Theology formed the foundation for political activism within the churches.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Borer, 92.
¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 91-2. See also, Woods, Biko, 52. Woods contested that Black Consciousness emphasized much more than political liberation for blacks, but also psychological liberation. He stated that “in getting to know Biko, [he] came to realize that [Biko’s] special genius was for the breaking of chains – the psychological chains that trapped the black man as securely as the legislative chains of statutory apartheid.” See also, Boesak, Farewell to Innocence, 1. With regard to Black Theology, Boesak argues that, “Black Theology is the theological reflection of black Christians on the situation in which they live and on their struggle for liberation.” See also, Desmond Tutu, God Is Not a Christian: And Other Provocations, John Allen ed. (NY: HarperCollins, 2011), 122. Likewise, Tutu states that,
In the late 1960s, the CI began to focus more on black and liberation theology. “As CI members were increasingly exposed to the particular needs of black churches, its direction gradually changed to a more contextual theology…”\(^\text{185}\) The CI contributed in large measure not only toward the evolution of Contextual Theology in South Africa, but also in producing the Contextual theologians that replaced banned and killed anti-apartheid political activist leaders.

The years between 1976 and 1981 – the year of the Soweto uprisings to the year that Borer states Contextual Theology entered the South African scene – saw Black Theology evolve from black consciousness to political engagement. For one, the concept of “blackness” became replaced with “liberation,” in no small measure due to black liberation theologians such as Rev. Allan Boesak from the DRMC. He states that “behind the reality of the theology of liberation and the challenge it poses for the Christian church are realities hitherto anxiously ignored by the theology of the western world – the realities of rich and poor, of white and black, of oppressors and oppressed, of oppression and liberation from oppression.” For Boesak, the Christian West long ignored or even covered up the hard truths underlying the suffering for the disenfranchised in what he called a “bland kind of innocence.” Liberation Theology is meant to unveil the truth and expose the “myths” and lies used to spiritually and physically control the weak and helpless.\(^\text{186}\) Although Boesak still believed in the need for black consciousness, his greater aim stressed “human liberation.”\(^\text{187}\)

Liberation Theology’s religious characteristics affirmed its moral and firm stance with society’s downtrodden, even beyond ethnicity and color. “Class” and not “race” became the

\(^{\text{185}}\) Pauw, 150.
\(^{\text{186}}\) Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence*, 3.
\(^{\text{187}}\) Borer, 93.
dominant word of choice in South African Liberation Theology. The change from race struggle to the more encompassing class struggle was not semantics at play, but crucially necessary for the Christian revolution against the state that took place throughout the entire decade of the 1980s. However, the association between this new theology of (socio-economic) liberation with Marxism is evident.

Partly as a result of conversations with Latin American Liberation theologians, South African theologians realized oppression involved economic as well as social consideration. Race became tied to economic exploitation. In theological circles, the liberation struggle began to be viewed and written about not as one based on liberation from whites, but liberation from poverty. Therefore, after 1983, Liberation theologians began to use the term Contextual Theology over Black Theology. This change in terms and theological understanding made a significant impact on the churches. The broader and more inclusive language allowed for a more ecumenical

---

188 Matthew Schoffeleers, “Black and African Theology in Southern Africa: A Controversy Re-Examined,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 18, Fasc. 2 (1988): 99 – 119. Not all native Christian South Africans joined the ranks of Liberation or Black Theology. The late anthropologist Scholar Matthew Schoffeleers made a succinct yet an informative approach to comparing what is commonly known as African Theology with Black (or Liberation) Theology. Schoffeleers stated that although African Theology and Black Theology are at times contradictory and opposing, they are both supportive of black interests. Especially after World War II, theologians within the established churches encouraged the idea that traditional African religion and Christianity are not incompatible with one another. Therefore, African Theology has elements of both traditional African religion and Christianity. This concept helped encourage both church indigenization policy and African theological legitimacy. Black Theology, on the other hand, is fueled by its opposition to poverty and racial discrimination. African Theology emphasizes ancestral and cultural pride. Black Theology focuses on black pride and self-determination. Another difference between the two theologies is their location. African Theology tends to originate from rural areas whereas Black Theology is popular in urban environments. There are, of course, other African Christian influences in South Africa, such as the Independent Churches, where Africans first formed independent Christian theology outside the influence of the mother churches. Both African Theology and Independent Churches – viewed by Schoffeleers as pacifist prophecy – tend to focus on individual suffering, whereas Black Theology – viewed by Schoffeleers as militant prophecy – concentrates on social suffering. However, Independent Churches are more theologically conservative and tend to regard African Theology as a breeding ground for witches and evil spirits. Nevertheless, Schoffeleers’s main argument is that Black Theology won out over African Theology – and even Independent Churches – during the apartheid era as a popular Christian voice in South Africa because of the mass urbanization and migration of blacks into the townships. Black Theology simply resonated better to a larger audience facing abhorrent oppression in over populated areas.

189 Borer, 92-3, 99
effort within Christian organizations such as the SACC to participate fully in the struggle for liberation.\textsuperscript{190}

Much of the credit for the change in theological perception is owed to the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT), established in 1981 and composed mainly of former Christian Institute members and Black theologians. The ICT’s goals were both religious in nature – to set a theological foundation for the advent of a new society, and political in purpose – to prepare the process for participatory democracy in a new South Africa. The ICT contributed to many projects and conferences in the 1980s related to Liberation Theology. The institution defines Contextual Theology as doing theology in context of real life experiences. Borer explains Contextual Theology further by stating that “the one major idea that all contextual theologians adhere to [is that] all reflection must begin from within a particular context, or life situation.”\textsuperscript{191}

South African theologian John W. De Gruchy wrote a complete book on the subject and concept of Contextual Theology in 1986. In his monograph, de Gruchy suggests:

The word ‘contextual’ suffers from the same overexposure as does ‘crisis’, and yet it conveys most adequately what it signifies. The crisis in the church and ministry in the South African context is directly related to a country in crisis. A theology of ministry has therefore to be worked out in relation to our particular historical situation and its demands. As such it needs to be a theology of ministry which relates not only to black and white pastors and congregations, not only to urban and rural situations, but also to the urgent demand for social justice and transformation which arises as much from the gospel of the kingdom of God as it does from the cries of the poor and the oppressed.\textsuperscript{192}

Borer describes four main concepts that make up Contextual Theology. First, Contextual Theology utilizes “exegesis” or critical interpretation of biblical texts, with emphasis on

\textsuperscript{190} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{191} Borer, 100.
liberation and prophetic teachings. Therefore, the “task of contextual theology is to read and interpret the sign of the times in light of the gospel teachings.” Contextual Theology is therefore synonymous with Prophetic Theology. Second, Contextual Theology pulls from the biblical stories of liberation. The gospel is interpreted though the viewpoint of the poor and oppressed. It refuses to accept the economic and social status quo that favors only the advantaged and privileged.

Third, the prophetic message must be translated into a more contemporary social analytical framework, and “thus read from a social scientific perspective.” As early Social Gospel Christians viewed the plight of the poor in early twentieth-century urban America as a structural condition, so did Contextual theologians view the problems facing South Africa as structural. To Contextual theologians, sin no longer encompassed solely an individual’s personal acts, but societal abuses as well. To some theologians, even personal conversion is unattainable without also working for structural transformation. Finally, Contextual Theology methodology is “hermeneutical praxis,” or “doing theology.” In other words, theology begins with the experiences of those caught in the struggle – the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed. Any theological interpretation from the wealthy and privileged class is rejected because it supports the current oppressive social structure. Only theology rooted in liberating practice can be considered a liberating theology. Liberation theologian Leonardo Boff states that, “Good liberation theology presupposes the art of linking its theories with explicit inclusion of practice…” Similarly, Boesak wrote that praxis, “or strategic aspect” in the context of Black Theology, for example, “leads inevitably to the mobilization of black people for participation

193 Borer, 102-3.
194 Boff, Introducing Liberation Theology, 72.
with power in the public arenas of policy and decision-making.\textsuperscript{195}

Contextual Theology, therefore, encouraged politicization within the churches, and particularly within Christian ecumenical institutions such as the SACC. It involved not only “a way of thinking” but also “a way of acting,” and “taking sides” with the poor and oppressed. Clerics and the churches must not be neutral in a time of crisis. For Contextual Theology sees a neutral stance as equivalent to taking sides, by default, with the oppressor.\textsuperscript{196} The late Latin American Liberation theologian, Luis Segundo, made a similar assessment in his interpretation of Black theologian James Cone’s book, \textit{A Black Theology of Liberation}. Segundo stated that, “Every hermeneutic entails conscious or unconscious partisanship. It is partisan in its viewpoint even when it believes itself to be neutral and tries to act that way.”\textsuperscript{197}

Borer contends that these Contextual Theology concepts – which she calls “theology of power” – contributed to a more political self-identity among South African Christians and Christian organizations. The “entire underlying social and economic structures of the apartheid system” were so corrupt that reform of that system could no longer be considered a viable solution. Apartheid had to be destroyed, and “Christians soon came to realize that working for

\textsuperscript{195}Boesak, \textit{Farewell to Innocence}, 71.

\textsuperscript{196}Borer, 103, 142-4. Borer states that the SACC primarily represented the views of the Council’s delegates rather than the institutional churches per se. Borer contends that the SACC, “was certainly more radical than many of its own member churches.” She further states that the SACC represented the “voiceless in the form of the masses of grassroots Christians who were not in leadership or administrative positions within the institutional churches, but who were most victimized by apartheid’s brutality…”

\textsuperscript{197}Juan Luis Segundo, \textit{Liberation of Theology}, Trans. John Drury (NY: Orbis Books, 1975, reprint 1976), 25. See also, Borer, 103. See also, Tutu, \textit{Peaceful Revolution}, 72. In the government sponsored Eloff Commission hearings that probed into the SACC’s alleged financial indiscretions, Contextual theologian Desmond Tutu stated that “Where there is injustice, exploitation and oppression, then, the Bible and the God of the Bible are ‘subversive’ of such a situation. Our God…is not God sanctifying the status quo. He is a God of surprises, uprooting the powerful and unjust to establish his Kingdom.”
this would not come without confrontation and a heavy cost.\textsuperscript{198}

With a more defined and inclusive theology of “praxis” and as more black ministers began to penetrate the leadership positions in the churches and religious organizations in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the churches began to make the next transition from passive resisters to active resisters of the apartheid system. By the end of the transition – which took nearly the entire decade of the 1980s – the churches became one of the main internal opposition groups against the apartheid government, replacing the banned political groups. Furthermore, the church leaders became the voices for the exiled, imprisoned, or killed anti-apartheid political leaders.

No other black religious leaders exemplified the “praxis” of Contextual Theology more than Anglican Desmond Tutu, Dutch Reformed Allan Boesak and Beyers Naude, and Frank Chikane, from the Apostolic Faith Mission. They all met the criteria of Contextual Theology as described above. In the aftermath of Soweto, and particularly Biko’s death, these Contextual theologians helped usher in a new ecumenical protest movement in both Christian and South African history.

Biko’s murder by state officials became a rallying cry for the anti-apartheid movement and a final wake-up call for the churches, but the incident at Soweto the year prior to Biko’s death had already signified to the world that South Africa would hurdle into oblivion if the government continued upholding its oppressive laws. In June 1976, twenty thousand school aged children began a peaceful march in protest of the government’s repressive education laws against blacks. The authorities fired on the marchers killing thirteen year old Hector Pieterson. Soon

\textsuperscript{198} Borer, 91, 103.
violence escalated throughout the country. Seven hundred deaths took place between 1976 and 1977 as a direct result of Soweto. 199

By the time of “Soweto ’76” and Biko’s death in 1977, the churches stood at a crossroads. They would either continue to rail against the apartheid establishment from the pulpits and pews, or take to the streets in protest. They would either quietly plead for mercy for the millions of disenfranchised and oppressed black South Africans, or directly demand change from the corrupt power structure that subjugated and continued to marginalize blacks in their own land. A diminutive, unassuming, cartoonish-looking Anglican priest made the first move of defiance. In a few years, his name became world renowned for his anti-apartheid activism, and his brand of South African Contextual Theology inspired thousands of faithful, and even the non-observant, at home and abroad, to courageously confront the apartheid regime.

The Anglican Bishop of Lesotho, Desmond Mpilo Tutu, spoke at Biko’s funeral. He reflected the disbelief and frustration of black South Africans in his speech. Tutu’s homily also foreshadowed the new ecclesiastical movement that was about to take on the might of the Afrikaner government in a decade long battle of wills, open domestic protests, and international diplomacy. 200 Through the leadership of the Contextual theologians, the English-speaking churches and ecumenical organizations soon replaced Biko and the BCM. As de Gruchy states, “Church leaders from the English-speaking churches, such as Bishop Tutu, played a crucial leadership role in the absence of the recognized black political leaders, many of whom were in prison or exile.” 201

199 Pauw, 125.
200 Tutu, Peaceful Revolution, xi. Nelson Mandela wrote that the complete picture of the anti-apartheid struggle could not be understood without taking into account the contributions of Archbishop Desmond Tutu.
At Biko’s funeral, Tutu mentioned two important points related to Contextual Theology. First, he proclaimed that Jesus Christ “took the side of the oppressed, the poor, the exploited.” Secondly, Tutu also tied the black consciousness movement and Biko to God’s intentions. He contextualized the struggle in South Africa by stating that the BCM sought to release blacks from their oppression by giving them a sense of self-worth.  

The stage had been set for confrontation between the church and the state. Borer states the three interrelated components that pushed the churches toward inevitable conflict with the state in the decade of the 1980s. She begins with stating that the extreme violence the state used in attempting to quell the protests jolted the churches into action, or at least into serious consideration of the roles they would play in the anti-apartheid struggle. Additionally, as the clergy began to speak out more loudly against the abuses of government, the state increased its attacks against the clergy, which included harassment, arrests, deportation, and even torture. Finally, the churches found themselves increasingly politicized as Pretoria eliminated most of the political opposition groups through repression. Borer argues that the “churches increasingly became the only space left for internal legal opposition, which forced them to accept a more political self-identity.” Therefore, during the early 1980s, religious organizations such as the SACC typically protested against the subjugation of the opposition and human rights violations by the state. Toward the end of the decade, the church leaders were so politicized that their “conflict with the state…took on a life of its own” as they filled a “political void caused by the removal of political leaders from society.”

South African journalist John Allen agrees with Borer. He contends that in the late 1970s,

---

203 Borer, 51-2.
activism – particularly black – was limited to a few voices, such as BCM leaders and Mangosuthu Buthelezi of kwaZulu. Buthelezi protested against the demand for Bantustan independence and called for Nelson Mandela’s release. However, mixed-race churches – such as Anglicans, Congregationalists, Methodists, and Presbyterians – “provided the only high-profile representative forums in South Africa where blacks and whites could debate the country’s future.”

Soon after Biko’s funeral, Tutu became the General Secretary of the SACC in March 1978. The SACC, under Tutu’s leadership, played an important role in the anti-apartheid movement. Multi-racial churches that formed from the original missions to South Africa and even various indigenous churches made up the SACC. The membership count consisted of twenty-eight full participating churches and four with observer-only status. Although individual church denominations at the time still held a significantly higher proportion of white clerical leadership, the SACC contained a more representative level of black religious leaders. It also boasted that its member churches included between twelve million to fifteen million followers, compared to only four million whites in the entire country, which Parliament represented. Fortunately for the SACC, its exemplary leader in the early 1970s, John Rees – a gifted Methodist layman – began promoting more blacks to leadership positions. In 1972, Pretoria labeled the SACC a black organization. With more “socially active” black leaders in its ranks, it began to take on a more aggressive anti-apartheid role.

As general secretary, Desmond Tutu took the SACC from a more reform minded organization to a completely confrontational organization. As early as 1979, the national

---

204 Allen, 168.
205 Allen, 168-9. See also, Borer, 146.
conference of the SACC approved a resolution that called for civil disobedience against apartheid laws. However, the SACC held hopes that the government could still be reformed through negotiation. Contextual theologians such as Tutu, Boesak, and others realized the need to get politically confrontational with the government to bring down apartheid.206

South Africa had many centripetal and centrifugal forces playing against it as the decade of the 1980s dawned. In 1974, Angola and Mozambique became independent of Portuguese control, allowing for anti-South African paramilitary forces such as the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO) to threaten South African national security. The South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) in Namibia – then occupied by South Africa – became such a concern for Pretoria, that the South African Defense Force (SADF) sent troops to fight the guerrilla group. South Africa lost its political influence of the southern African region when Robert Mugabe took power in Zimbabwe. Many young South African blacks fled to join the ANC in exile. They returned only to create instability against the apartheid government on behalf of the ANC. As Borer states, Pretoria faced a series of crises that were becoming increasingly difficult to manage. By the 1980s, the apartheid system had become an expensive and inefficient way of holding on to white power.207

The South African economy began its rapid economic decline in the early 1970’s. The country could no longer be sustained by its huge but not limitless mineral wealth. Since economic sustainability required an “increasingly integrated and interdependent economy,” apartheid became the very antithesis of economic growth. Apartheid limited free movement of

206 Borer, 53.
207 Borer, 45.
individuals throughout the country, generated high commuter and travel costs due to the imposed restrictions on mobility of blacks, and supported a large government bureaucratic employment system to enforce apartheid laws.  

Contextual theologians such as Desmond Tutu understood that one of South Africa’s weaknesses was its economy. The Gross National Product (GNP) dropped from an annual growth of 5.8 percent in 1960 to 3.1 percent by 1970. Between 1975 and 1982, GNP only reached 1.9 percent annual growth. Between 1983 and 1989 GNP dropped to 1.4 percent while the African population rate increased to 2.7 percent and the white population rate decreased to 1.3 percent. Still, South Africa maintained “the most unequal income distribution of any nation.” The richest 5 percent of the population owned 88 percent of all individual wealth and 70 percent of blacks lived below the poverty line. Sixty percent of blacks could not read or write as opposed to 0 percent of whites. Forty-five percent of black were unemployed as opposed to 8 to 10 percent of whites, and seven million South Africans found themselves homeless out of a total population of nearly forty million. The reason for such bleak figures was apartheid. Whites held most of the high-skilled and high-salaried occupations while blacks held the lower-skilled and lower-salaried jobs. The economic inequality helped produce a cheap labor supply for South African mining and agriculture. This, in turn, provided a major source of foreign exchange and national revenue for the South African economy.

---

209 Jeff Trost, “Economic Challenges for a Postapartheid South Africa,” in Beyond a Political Solution to Apartheid: Economic and Social Policy Proposals for a Postapartheid South Africa, ed. (Evan S Lieberman. Princeton: Center of International Studies, 1993), 66-7, 69-70. By 1991, South African GNP experienced nearly zero growth. Trost also argues that Import Substitution (IS), created to favor locally produced goods over imported manufactured goods, was modified in the 1920s by white leaders “to be consistent with apartheid ideology.” The economic strategy produced jobs for poor whites and contributed to major industrial growth in the 1950s and 1960s. However, IS involved tariffs and quotas to reduce dependence on imports and promote the increase of domestic
However, after 1960, decreasing mineral supplies and higher costs of both labor and technology contributed to increased mining costs. Agricultural inefficiencies hindered the growth outlook for agricultural raw materials. Furthermore, the mining-focused industrial infrastructure reached top capacity, requiring the need for a trained labor supply. “Unfortunately, the apartheid system denied itself skilled labor by reserving education and training privileges for whites.” In order to establish white economic and political privilege, the government created a huge state bureaucracy – in terms of defense and security spending and in creating numerous social welfare and education ministries – that drew resources away from economic and social investment, and resulted in large inefficiencies in the public sector.²¹⁰

In 1978, over twenty-six billion dollars of foreign capital investment went to South Africa. The British government contributed 40 percent, the U.S. government sent 20 percent, West Germany contributed 10 percent, and France and Switzerland sent 5 percent each. Two years prior, the SACC initiated a study of foreign investment into South Africa. The SACC executive committee directed its justice and reconciliation director, Wolfram Kistner, to organize a commission. Bobby Godsell, a Methodist layman who later became one of the heads of the South African gold mining industry, contributed to an SACC resolution that would call on foreign nations and businesses to reconsider their investment and employment opportunities in South Africa. The resolution did not call for outright sanctions, as it would then fall within the target of the Terrorism Act, which declared it illegal to call for social or economic change manufacturing. Due to these strong government protection measures on the manufacturing industry, IS resulted in producing a lack of incentives to keep up with new technologies and compete in the international market. Ultimately, IS hindered South Africa’s economic independence and limited its economic growth. See also, Borer, 45. See also, Christian Science Monitor, June, 1986. In 1981, the South African economy experienced its worst recession on record.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 67-8.
through the help of any foreign country or organization. However, as Allen states, the resolution became “the basis for a formula that Tutu adopted during the remainder of his time at the SACC: appeal at home and abroad for ‘political, diplomatic, and especially economic pressure in South Africa.’” Tutu then called attention to the five year minimum sentence for a conviction of economic sabotage under the Terrorism Act, and allowed his listeners to make up their own minds.211

At times, however, Tutu did not restrain himself. Angered by forced removals and Botha’s unwillingness to reverse policy on the Group Areas Act, Tutu – while visiting the Netherlands in September 1979 – chastised the Danes on public television for buying coal from South Africa. The South African Minister of Justice, A.L. Schlebusch, and the Minister of Cooperation and Development, Piet Koornhof, called Tutu into their offices a month later and told him to recant his statement, but he refused. His continual intransigence toward the apartheid rulers propelled Tutu’s national and international status among anti-apartheid activists. By 1981, Tutu became the prime target of opposition by “senior government leaders, politicians, and pro-state media.” The police confiscated Tutu’s passport, accused him in Parliament of “supporting subversive elements,” and also accused him of fostering revolution in South Africa. The minister also threatened to ban him. Tutu responded by stating that he would not obey any orders to silence him, and added that the government could only stop him by placing him in jail.212

Mandela – who still remained in prison – liked the small Anglican priest. In a telegram to Tutu in 1980, Mandela wrote that he made an “invaluable contribution in feeding that fighting spirit and hope of victory.” Unlike Mandela, some of the other ANC leaders had reservations

211 Allen, 175-6.
212 Allen, 176, 178. See also, Tutu, Peaceful Revolution, 26. See Also, Borer, 52.
about Tutu and his tactics. However, Oliver Tambo, the ANC’s leader in exile, gives direct evidence of the value Tutu and the church provided to the ANC and to anti-apartheid efforts. Although the ANC leaders questioned Tutu’s methods, Tambo declared in a report that Tutu’s influence could be put to use in “support of [the ANC] struggle, even if not in support of the ANC as such. We must not turn them into enemies.” In Tambo’s view, Tutu and the ANC had much in common, and they both needed each other to end apartheid. In fact, the ANC established a department of religion by the mid-1980s and articles on Liberation Theology started to appear in the ANC’s monthly publication Sechaba.

As unification between the SACC and the ANC appeared imminent, the DRC’s unified support of apartheid began to unravel during the aftermath of the 1976 Soweto Uprisings. Soweto made some members within the DRC reevaluate their stance on apartheid. The church divided into two opposing factions: conservative and liberal. Although the liberals made formal statements against racial injustice and the need for church unity, specifically among the Dutch Reformed family of churches, the DRC as a whole never officially took a direct stance against the government to end apartheid during most of the decade of the 1980s.

The 1979 Cape DRC synod passed a resolution basically stating that racial discrimination did not align with Scripture. The 1980 Reformation Day Witness – written by eight Stellenbosch and Pretoria scholars – promoted mixed race worship services. The 1981 Storm Compass – a book by written DRC theologians – criticized the DRC of over supporting Afrikaner hegemony

---

213 Allen, 182-3. Tambo added in the report that if Tutu, and other popular anti-apartheid activists such as medical practitioner Nihato Motala, and newspaper editor Percy Qoboza – from the South African newspapers Post and Sunday Post – turned against the ANC, then the ANC “can surely neutralize them.” However, Tambo must have known, as Allen states, that in the early 1980s Tutu was more popular than Mandela, at least to the young in Soweto. 214 Walshe, “Christianity and the Anti-Apartheid Struggle,” 394. 215 Pauw, 151.
and having very close ties with the National Party and the Afrikaner Broederbond. The 1982 Open Letter – signed by 123 Dutch Reformed clergy and theologians – denounced any biblical justification of apartheid. However, none of these declarations and documents swayed the DRC leadership into taking a more active stance against apartheid.²¹⁶

In 1979, Tutu addressed the Anglican Church in Southern Africa’s Provincial Synod on behalf of the SACC. Although he unequivocally stated that the SACC avoid confrontation with the state, he pointed out that the SACC leadership and national conference determined to obey God’s laws over “those of man.” In this sense, Tutu urged the church to move right into a collision course with the state. He told the group that God ruled over both the religious and secular realms. Furthermore, as in the post-millennialist tradition, Tutu stated that the church needed to be involved in politics. He said that God’s prophets opposed any form of religiosity that did not take into account the “socio-political” ramifications of religion. In the Liberation Theology tradition, he asserted that although the “most fundamental bondage” is sin, and it is the purpose of liberation to free humankind of sin, Jesus – being a Jew – would not have known about this “ethereal act of God.” Instead, “God’s liberation would have to have real consequences in the political, social and economic spheres or it was no Gospel at all.”²¹⁷

Tutu argued that blacks would be satisfied with neither economic nor social gains if they did not receive a place at the political table. As Mandela, Sobukwe, and Biko before him, Tutu opposed the resettlement of blacks to the “independent homelands.” He affirmed that “no

²¹⁶ Pauw, 151-8. 161. The influential DRC conservative Dr. Koot Vorster, brother to then Prime Minister B.J. Vorster, threw out the original Cape DRC synod resolution which contained much stronger language against racial injustice and racist institutions. Also, less than half of the ministers and theologians who signed the Open Letter were DRC members. However, as Pauw declares, “this still represented the broadest rejection of apartheid from within the DRC at the time, and as such of the government.”

²¹⁷ Tutu, Peaceful Revolution, 27, 29, 33, 37.
security, peace, justice or reconciliation” would take place while these resettlements occurred, which in Tutu’s eyes produced “unnecessary suffering.” This suffering is what convinced Tutu to call upon economic sanctions against the South African government. He dismissed white “altruism” that voiced concern for the further suffering of blacks that would take place if economic sanctions took hold on the country. He argued that many whites had no problem benefitting from the cheap labor blacks provided in current times. Tutu promised to do whatever it took within his power to “muster international support for [economic] pressure to get [blacks] to the negotiating table.”

As domestic and international pressure mounted, Pretoria began making reforms to the apartheid system. The government, however, delivered its reforms through the “Reform / Repression” strategy. This approach is also known as Winning Hearts and Minds (WHAM). The objective was to apply “managed change” by “keeping political expectations within acceptable limits.” However, as this strategy began to fail, the government abandoned the rule of law and leaned toward more violent methods of control. As the “national security” mentality reigned, Pretoria began to use “total strategy” and “total onslaught.” This meant that the state’s survival against “communist” takeover required an increased national security apparatus. Of course, the apparatus cost the South African government a tremendous amount of money to maintain throughout the 1980s. As Borer points out, “South Africa in the 1980s was characterized by the following phenomena: a well-organized and lavishly financed military, secret police, detention without trial, torture, bannings of people and organizations, counter-insurgency operations,  

---

218 Ibid., 38-9.
covert operations, and assassinations.”

Through WHAM, the government stopped the forced relocation of blacks from white areas and allowed blacks permanent residency in urban areas. Pretoria also no longer upheld the law that reserved jobs for whites only. The government even attempted to improve the lives of blacks living in urban areas in order to gain support from the black middle class. However, Pretoria made these superficial reforms mostly to quell the international outcry. Blacks still remained completely politically disenfranchised, and therefore powerless to control their own political, social, and economic destinies.

Tutu saw right through the governments tactics. In an address given to the Provincial Synod of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa in December 1979, he stated that social and economic progress did not do enough for blacks. The government only gave “crumbs.” Even though social and economic concessions could be substantial, blacks would always be answerable to their benefactor – the white government in Pretoria. Tutu added that “there will be no real security, peace and justice until blacks have a significant part in political decision making in an undivided South Africa. Anything else is really fiddling while Rome burns.”

Again, Tutu urged economic pressure. He ignored whites who cautioned him to consider the negative impact that economic instability could cause the poor blacks. He basically stated that those whites could take back their false altruism. They never complained before when blacks suffered from toiling for whites while receiving little financial gain in return. He said the government could stop these abuses immediately, but did not. Tutu added that “Until they do, I

---

219 Borer, 45-6
220 Tutu, Peaceful Revolution, 26.
221 Ibid., 27, 38.
will certainly do all I can to muster international support for that pressure to get us to the negotiation table."

By 1980, the political situation in South Africa deteriorated considerably. Boycotts and strikes sprouted throughout the country. Clergy had been arrested for participating in an illegal march in Johannesburg in May. The ANC, working outside South Africa, found new resurgence after many youth joined its ranks between 1976 and 1977. The ANC began to launch new sabotage attacks.

The SACC requested a meeting with Prime Minister P.W. Botha to discuss the dire situation. The government approved the meeting to take place between Tutu with a delegation of church leaders and Botha with major members of his cabinet in Pretoria on August 7, 1980. Tutu appealed to Botha to grant him four concessions to help quell the unrest. First, Tutu asked that the government grant all South Africans a single and equal citizenship. Second, he requested that Pretoria abolish the Pass laws. Third, he called for an immediate end of all forced removals. Finally, he asked for a uniform system of education for all South Africans. Unfortunately, little came out of the meeting. Negotiations broke down after Botha invited the church leaders to visit the South African Defense Force bases in Namibia. The church leaders knew that accepting the invitation would be condoning the South African military occupation of Namibia, which they disapproved and believed to be illegal.

The Botha regime’s strategy to derail the anti-apartheid movement involved two simultaneous actions. It produced limited apartheid reforms domestically while also waging a

---

222 Ibid., 39. See also, The Washington Post, February 18, 1990. In 1990, 40 percent of the South African population received less than 10 percent of total income.
223 Ibid., 41.
224 Ibid., 41, 43, 45.
“ruthless program of destabilization” against neighboring countries in order to prevent them from giving aid and supplying military bases to South African anti-government forces. During his tenure as prime minister, Botha—who had been the Minister of Defense prior to becoming South Africa’s latest ruler—enlarged the military security apparatus in South Africa by creating a “national security management system” to defend against the so called “Communist-inspired” aggression from inside and outside South Africa. Pretoria named the SACC as an “internal enemy” and the SACC became one of its targets of investigation and attack throughout the decade of the 1980s. In October 1981, Pretoria issued a commission of inquiry concerning the SACC’s financial management. The inquiry board, known as the Eloff Commission—after the Transvaal judge who led the inquiry, C.F. Eloff—attempted to probe much further beyond the SACC’s finances, and to investigate the whole organization.225

On the religious front, the national conference of the SACC declared apartheid a heresy in June 1982 and refused to hold any further communication with the DRC until it too renounced apartheid as heresy. By declaring apartheid a heresy, the SACC argued that apartheid was not only a political ideology, but a theological ideology as well, a perversion of the biblical scriptures.226 Two months later, on August 25, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), meeting in Ottawa, Canada, also declared apartheid a heresy227 and suspended the DRC and smaller NHK churches. South African journalist Hennie Serfontein stated that “it’s a blow to be knocked out of an international organization as important as the WARC, which is the only large worldwide church body they belong to.” A day later, WARC members elected

225 Ibid., 53-4.
226 Ibid., 73.
Contextual theologian Rev. Allan Boesak president of its world body. The thirty-six year old Boesak became the youngest and first person from a developing country to lead the nearly hundred year old organization.\textsuperscript{228} He also played a key role in the WARC’s anti-apartheid history.

One of the most important contributions to protestant church history since the early days of Nazi Germany was made by Boesak and the DRMC. In the 1982 WARC conference in Ottawa, Canada, Boesak openly urged the delegates that apartheid be declared a heresy. Then he called for a \textit{status confessionis}.\textsuperscript{229} One month after Ottawa in which the WARC also expelled the DRC from its membership, the General Synod of the DRMC met in Church Centre Belhar, Cape Town.\textsuperscript{230} The DRMC issued a \textit{status confessionis} against the DRC. The \textit{status confessionis} declared apartheid as a sin and heresy which made a “mockery” of Scripture. Gustav Bam, professor at the University of the Western Cape, proposed that the synod follow the \textit{status confessionis} with a formal confession – in the spirit of the 1934 Barmen Declaration in Germany.\textsuperscript{231} The synod unanimously passed a resolution to create an ad hoc commission. Allan Boesak, along with Bam and three other well regarded delegates, comprised the commission that would create the Confession of Belhar.\textsuperscript{232}

The Confession would be submitted along with the Accompanying Letter that explained the reasoning behind what Pauw terms as the “contextual nature” of the Confession. Although

\textsuperscript{228} \textit{The Globe and Mail}, August 27, 1982. In 1982, the WARC was comprised of an estimated seventy million members, including one hundred forty-nine churches in seventy-six nations. Boesak was the only candidate considered for president in the history of the WARC. See also Borer, 54.
\textsuperscript{229} Boesak, \textit{Treason}, 8-9.
\textsuperscript{230} Pauw, 189.
\textsuperscript{231} Arthur C. Cochrane, \textit{The Church’s Confession Under Hitler} (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1962), 19. The late theologian Arthur C. Cochrane stated that the German church directed its challenge only partly against Nazism, but more against the “German Christian” party. “From its inception it was essentially a struggle of the Church against itself for itself. It was a struggle to recover the confession of faith and a struggle to remain faithful to it in the preaching and actions of the Church.” The DRMC faced no less of a struggle against its sister church, the DRC.
\textsuperscript{232} Pauw, 192-4.
the Letter states that the Confession was not made “as a contribution to a theological debate,” the third article of the Confession undeniably stresses, as Contextual Theology, that justice is fundamental to God’s will for humanity. 233 The last two bullet points state the following:

That the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream; that the church as the possession of God must stand where the Lord stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others. 234

The 1986 General Synod of the DRMC formally passed and adopted the Confession of Belhar. The introduction and emphasis on justice is the first time ever in a Dutch Reformed confession. The influence of Boesak and Contextual Theology is clearly evident in the Confession. However, the Confession’s overall conciliatory nature helped unify the DRMC’s confrontational and sympathetic groups 235 to both more solidly oppose and marginalize the DRC among the entire world Reformed Church community. Afrikaner nationalists dismissed Belhar as “liberation theology, which they considered a religious veneer of communist indoctrination.” 236

---

233 Ibid., 195, 199.
235 Pauw, 201. In addition to unifying the confrontational and sympathetic camps of the DRMC, the Confession helped with the unification of the DRMC and the DRCA into the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA). The theology that supported apartheid in the DRC kept the younger Reformed churches separated. The Confession of Belhar emphatically rejected that separation. As Pauw explains, the unification of both sister churches “must be understood as part and parcel of the young churches’ critique against apartheid…Belhar had provided much of the impetus for this process of unification.” See Also, The Times, October 23, 1986. In the same year that the DRMC officially adopted Belhar, the General Synod of the DRC declared that apartheid was an “unscriptural error.” The announcement abolished one of the main tenets of the DRC’s dogma. The church also declared its membership and services open to all races – at least “in principle” – racially-mixed marriages acceptable, and racism – although not apartheid per se – a sin. See also, Christian Science Monitor, October 28, 1986. The DRC’s pro-reform theologian, Willi Jonker stated that the anti-apartheid activism of the Coloured church greatly influenced the new theological stance of the DRC. He said, “This put us in a situation where we had to react.” 236 Kinghorn, 153.
However, by the mid-1980’s, the DRC found itself increasingly isolated and the influence its politically tied leaders wielded in South Africa and among the world community through Pretoria’s support significantly decreased.

Contextual Theology came about in South Africa at the time to directly appeal to the urban masses and those who felt disenfranchised for so long. Soweto and Biko’s death produced a worldwide outcry for justice and liberation in South Africa. With the BCM gone from both the South African and world scene, another powerful movement needed to quickly take its place because the nation was heading toward civil war. With Tutu at the helm of the SACC in the late 1970s, the torch of the liberation struggle soon passed from Biko and the BCM to the Christian theologians and the anti-apartheid church movement.

**Christian Radicalization and the Fall of Apartheid**

As evidenced in previous pages, separation between church and state never really existed in South Africa. It has been discussed that the Afrikaner government was closely linked to the DRC. Historically, many members of parliament held leadership positions in the DRC and the DRC influenced and encouraged apartheid policy in the government. However, the Afrikaner government accused religious bodies such as the SACC of combining religion with politics.

Contextual theologians, while biblically instructed to respect secular rule, will use political means, if necessary, to end the abuses that the state – and all agents of power and privilege – wields against the defenseless and oppressed. This is also viewed as a biblical mandate and as obedience to God that trumps obedience to worldly governments when they become corrupt. Tutu provided a reason for church involvement in politics:
If we are to say that religion cannot be concerned with politics, then we are really saying that there is a substantial part of human life in which God’s writ does not run. If it is not God’s, then whose is it?…

... The prophets are deeply involved in politics because politics is the sphere where God’s people demonstrate their obedience or their disobedience…. 

... Christians are not dualists who believe that matter is intrinsically evil, and therefore all God’s created universe, material and spiritual, counts for us. The whole of life is important: the political, the economic and the social. None of these aspects is untouched by religion as we understand it.  

If Tutu argues the importance and necessity of church involvement in politics, Borer argues that elevating an issue in theological terms can sway the religious community to act politically. For example, Borer claims that the mutual declaration of heresy by the religious bodies of the SACC and the WARC became a “watershed” moment for South African “church-state relations.” It moved the churches from entertaining mere theoretical assumptions – about apartheid – toward giving special consideration for concrete political action – against apartheid. In other words, if apartheid is heresy, than it must be politically confronted. The “implicit” call to action – through the declaration of heresy – “became an important rallying cry for Christian resistance.”

In 1983, the SACC finally started to follow Tutu’s footsteps when it came to direct action against the state and gave more serious thought to economic sanctions. That same year, an International Monetary Fund (IMF) report officially linked apartheid to South Africa’s economic plight, rejecting the long contested notion by the Reagan administration that apartheid was related to political and social politics, and not economics. The IMF stated that shortages in skilled labor resulted from restrictions on travel within the country and limited educational opportunities for blacks. The report also stated that to avoid “serious economic imbalances in the

237 Tutu, Peaceful Revolution, 67, 71.  
238 Borer, 54.
economy over the medium term,” it is crucial that the government relax its restrictions and provide substantial funds “to certain areas of education and manpower training, that to date have been inadequately funded...”\(^{239}\) Although the SACC did not officially call for sanctions, it did pass a resolution requesting that member churches stop supporting businesses in South Africa that upheld apartheid policies. It slowly began supporting boycotts of pro-apartheid institutions and organizations.\(^{240}\)

The Contextual theologians combined the strategy of economic pressure with street protests and campaigns. The SACC, along with its Roman Catholic counterpart, the South African Catholic Bishops’ Conference (SACBC), joined the newly created United Democratic Front (UDF). Inspired by Boesak, the UDF originated in August 1983 to protest the constitution and resist a new system of control over blacks in local communities. The organization elected Boesak and Contextual theologian Father Smangaliso Mkhatshwa as patrons, Tutu served as the UDF’s patron until his appointment as Bishop of Johannesburg in 1985. Naude succeeded Tutu as patron and Chikane became the vice-chairman of the UDF’s Transvaal chapter. The UDF had been organized as a nonracial organization consisting of hundreds of progressive organizations.\(^ {241}\) However, church groups were “the most numerous affiliates” of the UDF.\(^ {242}\) Walshe contends that these Contextual theologians were “inspiring and confrontational…eloquent spokespeople

---


\(^{240}\) Borer 55.

\(^{241}\) Tutu, *Peaceful Revolution*, 85. See also, Borer, 56. See also, Peter Walshe, “The Evolution of Liberation Theology in South Africa,” *The Journal of Law and Religion* 5, no. 2 (1987): 307. Walshe states that the Contextual theologians Tutu, Boesak, and Naude helped legitimize the UDF during its formation. The UDF quickly gathered a mass following and “became an integral part of the broader liberation movement.”

for the Front’s non-racial ideals.” In August 1984, its “first high-profile” campaign against the elections resulted in preventing all but eighteen percent of the eligible Coloured voters and twenty-four of the eligible Indian voters to turn out at the polls.

Borer argues that by 1983 the church leaders’ politicization significantly increased, bringing down the wrath of the government. Pretoria countered the new religious resistance by escalating its repression against political liberation leaders through arrests, detentions, banning, and killings. After the UDF’s formation, the government also targeted Catholic Archbishop Denis Hurley to deter the churches from mixing in politics, and Pretoria ordered the detention of Mkhatshwa. Victims of the government sanctioned atrocities began calling on the churches to “provide leadership and articulation for black South Africans, the vast majority of whom were Christians.”

Instead of solidifying white rule, however, the formal execution of the new constitutional mandates in September 1984 only managed to increase the opposition’s protests and the government’s repression. School unrest broke out, and election boycotts managed to keep more than 80 percent of Coloureds and Indians from the polls. In the Vaal Triangle, blacks attacked

---

243 Walshe, “Christianity and the Anti-Apartheid Struggle,” 394.
244 Allen, 207. See also, Tutu, Peaceful Revolution, 81-4. In March 1982, the National Party’s right wing broke off to form the Conservative Party in expectation of the government’s July announcement proposing a new constitution that would include a tricameral parliament segregated by race. The government attempted to secure white power by opening – albeit very limited – government access to some of South Africa’s non-white races. The new parliament only included whites, Coloureds, and Indians, while blacks remained excluded. Furthermore, the voting process guaranteed that neither Coloureds nor Indians would ever outvote whites. Whites would always have four votes to Coloureds two to Indians one. Tutu considered the proposal shameless and railed against the liberal Labor Party and foreign national heads of state for endorsing the plan as a step toward “reforming” apartheid. Although surprised by England’s support for the constitution, he previously wrote off the Reagan government “as an unmitigated disaster for… blacks.” Needless to say, in elections during August 1983, the white majority in Pretoria approved the new constitution. Two-thirds of South African voters endorsed the constitution in November. See also, Christian Science Monitor, July 18, 1989. By 1989, the UDF had been so influential in the anti-apartheid movement that its leaders held high level strategy meetings with exiled ANC leaders regarding a joint Western-Soviet collaboration to pressure anti-apartheid leaders into talks with Pretoria.
245 Borer 56.
local administrators believed for raising rent and for suspicion of being government collaborators. A work boycott resulted in sixty deaths between September and October as police used lethal force to subdue the protestors. In October, Pretoria called in the military to quell unrest in the townships. The largest political strike in South African history occurred in November. Between September and December, 149 people had been killed. South Africa had not seen this level of violence since Soweto.246

However, one small bright spot for the anti-apartheid movement occurred in late 1984. For the second time in South Africa’s apartheid history, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded its peace prize to an anti-apartheid activist, Desmond Tutu. Obviously, the award helped validate Tutu’s stature and legitimacy as a proponent for peace and justice, and raised his clout on the world stage. Tutu often joked that before the Nobel Prize, no one cared what he had to say. After receiving the award, he had become an “oracle.”247

Canada’s Parliament received Tutu with a standing ovation. He impressed Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. Although U.S. President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher opposed pressuring South Africa, Mulroney and his foreign minister, Joe Clark, persuaded the Canadian Cabinet to apply both political and economic sanctions on Pretoria. After meeting with Tutu in Paris for an international conference on human rights, Prime Minister Laurent Fabio – who opposed economic sanctions – was so moved by Tutu, that remarks made by Fabio on French television inspired the government to declare sanctions on

---

247 Allen, 245.
On December 7, 1984, Tutu, his wife, Leah, and a senior official from the SACC, Dan Vaughan, met with President Reagan, Vice President George H.W. Bush, Secretary of State George Schultz, Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker, U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese III, Chief of Staff James Baker, and National Security Advisor, Robert McFarlane in the Oval Office. This meeting would be the first time Reagan sat in the same room with an anti-apartheid leader. Although Tutu and Reagan agreed that apartheid was deplorable and should be ended peacefully, they disagreed on approach. Despite the breakdown in talks with the U.S., Tutu received Washington’s attention. There is little doubt that the Norwegian nod to Tutu sent a strong message to Pretoria that it, and not its opposition, was on the wrong side of history.

Nevertheless, the apartheid government remained obstinate. In July 1985, the government issued a state of emergency. South Africa had not been under a state of emergency since the Sharpeville Shootings, twenty-five years prior. Once again, Pretoria gave its security forces nearly unlimited powers to arrest, silence, and control public gatherings. Guerilla attacks increased as did violence within black communities, as merciless “necklace” killings took place on suspected government collaborators. The repressive government response met with increased international criticism. The American Chase Manhattan Bank hastened the South African economic crises by suspending loans to South African establishments. The world banking community refused to give South Africa credit and prevented it from rolling over its existing debts. “South Africa became starved of capital;” it used its foreign-exchange earnings to repay its...
loans, thus resulting in an outflow of capital.\textsuperscript{250}

The financial situation became worse when P.W. Botha, expected to give a speech about radical reform measures, instead gave a negative scathing speech that brought down the value of the rand to record levels. The Johannesburg Stock Exchange stopped trading and the government froze foreign dept repayment to safeguard its overseas exchange assets. Subsequently, white business leaders broke ranks with the government and traveled to Zambia to meet with banned ANC leaders. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) formed in November 1985. It immediately endorsed economic disinvestment.\textsuperscript{251}

Although the government declared the UDF an “affected organization” – which made it unable to receive international financial aid – and twelve hundred political killings occurred between July 1985 and July 1986, it can be said that 1985 was the turning point in the anti-apartheid struggle because the churches, or at least the Contextual theologians, took the offensive. For example, the Boesak inspired UDF helped the anti-apartheid movement maintain the longest sustained protests since Soweto.\textsuperscript{252} As unrest swept across black townships in South Africa, the UDF implemented low-level defiance methods, such as labor strikes and school boycotts. Due to this and other resistance within the country, Pretoria imposed a state of emergency in order to attempt to divide the black leadership through selected arrests and curfews. Undeterred, the UDF persisted in its demands for the removal of security forces and the release of Mandela. As part of the liberation struggle, the UDF “succeed[ed] in turning world

\textsuperscript{250} Tutu, \textit{Peaceful Revolution}, 97-8. “Necklace” killings involved the horrific act of placing a tire soaked in gasoline around the victim’s neck and lighting the tire on fire. See also, Trost, 68-9. Economic scholar Jeff Trost contends that unilateral actions taken by world banks had a more devastating affect on the apartheid government than economic sanctions.

\textsuperscript{251} Tutu, \textit{Peaceful Revolution}, 97-8. See also, Borer, 60.

\textsuperscript{252} Borer, 60.
opinion against apartheid.”

During this time, Naude, now the new General Secretary of the SACC, encouraged the churches to take a more proactive stance toward civil disobedience. The SACC issued a resolution that called for economic sanctions and pressure. This was considered a significant act of disobedience by the churches because discussing economic sanctions, let alone calling for sanctions, was illegal.

The SACC’s “Call to Prayer for an End to Unjust Rule” on June 16 had what Borer calls “serious implications for church-state relations.” The document called not to pray “for” the government, but to pray “against” it. Frustrated with its requests for reforms falling on deaf ears, and the political environment in the country growing worse, the SACC now found itself declaring a type of open revolt against the government.

In the meantime, the newly ordained Bishop of Johannesburg, Desmond Tutu, took his new Nobel laureate credentials to the Political Committee of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Tutu declared that the time for apartheid reform had ended. “Apartheid cannot be reformed. It must be dismantled. You don’t reform a Frankenstein – you destroy it.” In meeting the Contextual Theology requirement of social analysis, Tutu appealed to the Assembly’s conscience by describing how the South African authorities detained, beat, and killed South African youth. A three year old had been killed by a rubber bullet. The police put an eleven year old in jail with violent adult criminals just for throwing stones. They had also kicked out the teeth of a teenager, while another teenager had been tortured in detention until rendered

254 Borer, 60.
255 Ibid., 61.
in a vegetative state.\textsuperscript{256}

Tutu complained that the world listened more to the oppressors than to the oppressed. Taking the side of the victims – as Contextual Theology demands – he argued that although whites claimed that the situation in South Africa was improving, only the victims, “not the perpetrators, … must say whether things are better or not.” He called for ending the state of emergency, the end of apartheid, the return of all exiles, and a conference of all legitimate representatives of each part of South African society.\textsuperscript{257} Again, reform no longer existed in Tutu’s vocabulary; only the abolishment of apartheid would suffice. He stated:

We must not be fobbed off with high-sounding expressions about common citizenship and a united South African universal franchise which turn out only to be a rehash of apartheid with some poor plastic surgery done on it. The run on the rand has concentrated minds wonderfully, so that private-sector leaders have gone to talk to the ANC because they were being hurt nonviolently, peacefully, where it hurt most, in their pocketbooks. I want to suggest that here is a fairly easy, but quite effective method. Let the [foreign] bank loans be renegotiated on a clear basis that credit will be extended only when the conditions I have mentioned above have been met. Otherwise, the credit must not be extended…And remember that two surveys have shown that over 70 percent of the blacks believe that sanctions of some sort should be imposed.\textsuperscript{258}

He changed his previous position of calling for an end to apartheid within two years. He now agreed with the British Commonwealth of Nations that the timetable allotted should only be six months. Otherwise, he would call on the world governments to apply “punitive economic sanctions.”\textsuperscript{259} On February 27, 1985, Allan Boesak told a group of UDF members that Western European countries were supporting the anti-apartheid movement by calling for or actually applying pressure and disinvestment on South Africa.\textsuperscript{260}

\begin{exp align*}
\textsuperscript{256} & Tutu, \textit{Peaceful Revolution}, 99, 101. \\
\textsuperscript{257} & Ibid., 101-2. \\
\textsuperscript{258} & Ibid., 102-3. \\
\textsuperscript{259} & Ibid., 101. \\
\textsuperscript{260} & Boesak, \textit{Treason}, 77-8.
\end{exp}
In the United States, for example, over five thousand demonstrators marched from the Washington Monument to the State Department demanding that the Reagan administration place sanctions on South Africa. The crowd included New York Mayor Ed Koch, Coretta Scott King, Imam Sultan Muhammad, Rabbi Andrew Baker, Judy Goldsmith from National Organization for Women (NOW), Benjamin Brooks from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and various other political leaders, religious leaders, Hollywood actors, and organizations. The administration was reluctant to place sanctions, preferring a “constructive engagement” or “quiet diplomacy” approach.\textsuperscript{261}

Although the administration argued that sanctions could undermine American influence on South Africa and lead to further repression of blacks, Congress voted in favor of sanctions in 1985. In July, the Senate, led by Edward Kennedy, passed the measure 80 to 12. The Senate version banned new U.S. bank loans, computer sales, and nuclear technology exports. It also required U.S. companies of more than twenty-five employees working in South Africa to apply a tighter version of the “Sullivan principle,” which ordered desegregation, pay raises, and job advancement for black employees. The House bill banned private investment and import of krugerrand gold coins.\textsuperscript{262}

The United Kingdom took a similar stance to the Reagan administration, to Tutu’s dismay. However, Great Britain did stop sending South Africa weapons in compliance with a mandatory UN Security Council resolution, banned the import of the krugerrand, and prevented

\textsuperscript{261} The Washington Post, August 13, 1985. NOW is the National Organization for Women. NAACP is the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People.

\textsuperscript{262} The Washington Post, July 12, 1985. The Senate bill also considered the House version, but only as additional sanctions if South Africa did not move to end apartheid within eighteen months.
granting funds for trade missions to South Africa. Also, lesser-known figures such as British businessman Michael Young, skillfully managed closed door negotiations between South African business leaders and ANC leaders to bring apartheid to a quicker end.

In that same year, 152 theologians convened to discuss and evaluate how the churches responded to the socio-political crisis in South Africa. Theology and ethics professor Bonganjalo Goba, states that prior to 1985, the mainline churches tended to give the “typical, liberal” (cautious) response to the political situation in South Africa, with the exception of the CI, UCM, and BCM. He states that the theologians present for the Kairos meeting knew that the “prevailing theologies of [their] churches exhibited inadequacies and limitations for helping the Christian community to engage in the struggle for liberation.” In September, the theologians released the heavily Contextual theologically influenced Kairos Document. Kairos openly dared to bring to the attention of the Christian community and anti-apartheid allies that apartheid was a “state-sponsored theology.”

Goba believes that the churches contributed to the apartheid problem, yet he also believes that some church leaders, through Kairos, could help contribute to the solution. He makes the following observation:

The whole repressive legal order is buttressed by a theology of the state which not only legitimates its role before the eyes of the Christian community in South Africa, but

---

264 Michael Young, “Michael Young Interview,” interview by Stephanie Overby, PBS, Masterpiece Contemporary, Endgame, October 25, 2009, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/endgame/watch.html (accessed October 31, 2009). The site includes a short biography of Willem de Klerk – a Dutch Reformed theologian, anti-apartheid activist, and brother to the former South African Prime Minister F.W. de Klerk. Willem was in the secret talks sponsored by Young. There is wide speculation that Willem persuaded his brother to meet with Mandela in prison. See also, Christian Science Monitor, July 14, 1985 and September 6, 1985. Some Contextual Theologians eyed the business community with skepticism. For example, UDF representative Father Mkhathwa railed against the businessmen, stating that, “They are trying to boost their own interests…They are not really against apartheid.” Mkhathwa stated that churches only focused on the racial component of apartheid and not the economic corruption. He branded apartheid and “monopoly capitalism” as first cousins.
which is vigorously promoted by the Dutch Reformed Church. I believe this is a very important issue which many secular analysts of the South African problem tend to miss…

…[However], no one can afford to ignore the role certain church leaders can play in the shaping of the new South Africa. To do so would be to misunderstand the political significance of religious movements in the process of political education and programs for radical change…For too long, Christianity has been used to defend political tyranny, particularly by the so called Afrikaner Christian leaders in both church and society…The Kairos Document is an invitation to struggle for liberation – a final commitment to dismantle apartheid.266

Therefore, Kairos took on the status quo directly, stating that apartheid cannot be reformed; it must be destroyed. Kairos declared that compromise is not possible in all types of conflicts. In some cases, a line must be drawn between right and wrong. Anything else is considered a betrayal of Christian principles in light of Scripture.267

The document went further than the SACC’s “Call to Prayer” statement that called on its church members to pray “against” the government. Kairos stated that attempts to reform the government would not work since it was despotic and immoral, and therefore “illegitimate.” The document also criticized the SACC and the SACBC for being too cautious and urged those bodies to become fully engaged in the liberation movement. Kairos called for Christian involvement in political strategies and political engagement. It became “a charter for radical Christian praxis as opposed to the moderation and pietistic non-involvement of even ‘progressive’ churches.” At the same time, the charter “challenged the churches to respond with a theology of confrontation and resistance.”268

Although section 5.5 of the Kairos Document stressed non-violent civil disobedience,269

266 Goba, 317, 325.
267 Ibid., 314, 324. Kairos is a Greek word which translates to “…moment of truth. A compelling moment in history which demands a radical response.” See also, Borer, 62, 109, 111.
268 Goba, 321. See also, Borer, 62, 109, 110.
269 Goba, 324.
Borer states that it also addressed the issue of the use of violence in the liberation struggle head on. The document argued that the structural problems inherent in South Africa were created and maintained by those at the top, and could not or would not be reformed by them. Real change could only come from the bottom up. As such, violence could be justifiable, but only in certain cases. The document discarded the churches’ view of absolutist stance on non-violence. It distinguished between state violence and violence used for self-defense. Violence used against the state for self-defense could not be rejected outright.²⁷⁰

At this stage, it is important to note that Contextual theologians did not reject the use of violence outright.²⁷¹ Those, through religious conviction or who studied the writings of Martin Luther King, Jr., such as Allan Boesak, tended to side on the argument of non-violent resistance. However, Boesak, as King, was neither a pacifist nor an advocate of non-violent resistant purity. Boesak stated that there could arise certain unavoidable situations where “retaliatory violence is forced upon the oppressed and no other avenue is left open to them, we do so with a clear hesitancy, knowing full well that it will probably prove a poor ‘solution’ and that violence can never be justified.”²⁷²

Likewise, Tutu stated unequivocally – in 1982 to the Eloff Commission – that the oppressed had their limits “and desperate people will use desperate methods.” At the UN General Assembly in 1985, he condemned the West’s hypocrisy on the issue of using force as a means of

²⁷⁰Borer, 109-10.
²⁷¹John R. Pottenger, The Political Theory of Liberation Theology: Toward a Reconvergence of Social Values and Social Science (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 144-5. Political scientist, John R. Pottenger notes that Liberation theologians disagree with the “just war theory” because it does not directly confront social injustice. Liberation theologians prefer a “just revolution theory,” whereby violence is morally justified not just against “particular agents of repression,” but against “faceless economic and political institutions.” However, in the late 1980s, Liberation theologians had yet to sort out the complete details for a just revolution theory.
²⁷²Boesak, Farewell to Innocence, 70. Boesak noted that although King did not approve of violence, he “never made an ‘eternal principle’ out of nonviolence.” King understood full well that the oppressed would result to violence as their last option.
liberation. He said that he, like many in the West, honored German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a “modern-day saint,” although the Nazi’s arrested and executed Bonhoeffer as a conspirator to assassinate Adolf Hitler. Yet, Tutu pointed out that when it came to “black liberation, the West wakes up and suddenly finds it has become pacifist.”

Similar to the SACC, Tutu condemned the use of force, yet left room for it when exhausting all other means. Allen points out that unlike Gandhi and King, Tutu never disavowed the use of violence under all circumstances. Gandhi’s and King’s tactics required a military or police force hesitant to kill a mass number of protestors. Tutu, contrarily, believed that the South African government had no qualms in killing as many street protestors as necessary. However, Tutu maintained non-violent tactics as long as possible. He believed that economic pressure through disinvestment and sanctions were the only means, short of force, to help end apartheid. In an interview in Maputo, Mozambique he said that he would let the world know when “[black South Africans] must use violence to overthrow an unjust system.” He added, “I do not believe we are there yet…I will announce the day I believe we have reached the end of the tether.”

However, the churches maintained a non-violent policy, but kept the threat of force opened as an option. The Kairos Document, with its call to greater church political radicalism quickly became a popular church topic of discussion nationally and internationally. South African Church leaders dramatically escalated their participation after Kairos, especially in illegal marches. Not surprisingly, Naude – who signed the document along with Chikane and

---

273 Tutu, *Peaceful Revolution*, 72, 100. See also, Luthuli, 113. It is important to note here that although Luthuli, a devout Christian, believed that the ANC would not use violence – at least during his tenure with the ANC prior to 1960. Similar to Tutu and Boesak, Luthuli suggested that when pushed too far, the non-whites would revolt violently: “It will be simply the result of unendurable provocation, of trading for too long on a patience which has its limits. If the whites continue as at present, nobody will give the signal for mass violence. Nobody will need to.”

274 Allen, 172, 175, 184. See also, Tutu, *Peaceful Revolution*, 129-30.
Mkhatshwa – and Boesak led a march that included three hundred church leaders to Parliament. They demanded the removal of the police from the townships, but the authorities arrested 270 protestors, including Naude and Boesak. In Durban, Archbishop Hurley led a march of three hundred people to a prison to protest the imprisonment of UDF members charged with treason.  

In December 1985, the WCC and the SACC sponsored an emergency meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe to discuss the Kairos Document. The churches invited political organizations and trade unions to discuss their thoughts on the origins of the current problems facing South Africa. The clergy also asked the organizations and unions how the churches could be used to help. At the conclusion of the conference, the delegates backed the Kairos Document. As Borer states, no longer would there be a difference between “prayer and political action.” She adds that the Harare delegates also “reconfirmed contextual theology’s insistence that apartheid could not be reformed but had to be completely abolished.” The proclamations made at the conference in Harare became known as the Harare Declaration. It called for the churches within and outside of South Africa to support the liberation movements, the end to the state of emergency, the release of political prisoners – including Nelson Mandela – and the unbanning of all anti-apartheid organizations. Furthermore, Harare called for the international community to apply economic

---

275 Borer, 62,121. Both Catholic Alan Nolan and Apostolic Faith Mission church member Frank Chikane of the ICT helped draft the document. Wolfram Kistner, director of the SACC’s Justice and Reconciliation Division and who also helped write the document, signed it, but only as a constituent of the Lutheran Church. Both Naude and Mkhatshwa also signed the Kairos document as individuals, but neither on behalf or as representatives of the SACC and the SACBC, respectively. One hundred fifty-six Catholics (many who were members of the SACBC) signed the charter. No Catholic bishop, however, signed the document. Tutu, believed the charter went too far with its accusations against the churches, also did not sign.
sanctions in order to suspend foreign debt refinancing to South Africa.  

In Harare, Tutu stated his approval for the use of violence by individual Christians in order to end apartheid. He warned the delegates that the churches risked alienation if they solely urged non-violence against an unchangeable and violently oppressive system. He added that peace advocates were becoming irrelevant against the government’s use of “rubber bullets, live bullets, teargas, police dogs, detention and death.” Therefore, Harare succeeded where Kairos failed in persuading the SACC to take a more radical stance against the South African government. In 1986, the SACC’s National Conference passed the Harare Declaration. Borer states that the SACC now also called for economic sanctions, not just pressure, “as the only remaining nonviolent method for ending apartheid and forcing the regime to negotiate.”

The Lusaka Statement reached farther than the Harare Declaration. In May 1987, the WCC once again sponsored a conference in Lusaka, Zambia of nearly two hundred representatives of churches, exiled liberation organizations – including the banned ANC and PAC – the United Nations, and other international delegates. The Lusaka Statement officially proclaimed the South African state illegitimate. This pronouncement made a tremendous impact on the SACC. Declaring the state illegitimate now allowed the SACC to consider that the use of physical force by the secular liberation movement was justifiable. The Lusaka Statement freed the churches from having to decide on an all or nothing approval of violence. The churches could keep its non-violent stance while supporting groups that did use violence. The churches could approve of the aims of the struggle without approval of the means that anti-apartheid groups

276 Borer, 62-3, 111.
277 The Times, December 5, 1985.
278 Borer, 63.
used.\textsuperscript{279}

In 1987, the SACC’s National Conference passed the Lusaka Statement. The adoption of the statement positioned the SACC from having an indeterminate theological stance on the issue of violence to seriously considering force as an option in the liberation movement.\textsuperscript{280}

Furthermore, the church had previously been timid in showing open support for organizations such as the ANC, due to the ANC’s support for violence to dismantle apartheid. However, the SACC’s “new understanding of the use of force allowed for a growing cooperation and indeed, a united front between” the SACC and the ANC, as well as other organizations, such as the UDF.\textsuperscript{281} With the SACC’s adoption of the Lusaka Statement, many of the English-speaking Protestant churches fully integrated as a co-partner with other South African anti-apartheid organizations, thus solidifying and strengthening the liberation movement against the state.

Meanwhile, Pretoria did not concede to any of Tutu’s demands. In January 1986, Tutu met with Roger Smith and W. Michael Blumenthal – chairmen of General Motors and Burroughs Corporation, respectively, to discuss how to end apartheid through economic pressure. General Motors and Burroughs Corporation invested in South Africa, but their leaders stated that they wanted their firms to stay in the country to help end apartheid by forming alliances with anti-apartheid business leaders in South Africa. Tutu and the chairmen disagreed on methods, as Tutu preferred disinvestment to apply pressure on U.S. companies in South Africa.\textsuperscript{282}

\textsuperscript{279} Ibid., 67.
\textsuperscript{280} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{281} Ibid., 67, 112.
\textsuperscript{282} Christian Science Monitor, March 18, 1986. Tutu remained skeptical of U.S. business interests in South Africa. He stated in a rally that, “U.S. corporations were in South Africa to make money and U.S business leaders should not ‘insult us’ by saying they are in South Africa to help blacks.” See also, The Times, August, 4, 1988. England also remained reluctant to apply economic sanctions on South Africa. Well into 1988, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher stated that large foreign companies helped dismantle apartheid through their mixed housing and merit payment
Economic sanctions had been a controversial issue with the Anglican Church, and Tutu, a staunch advocate of sanctions, found himself nominated to become the Archbishop of Cape Town and Metropolitan in 1986. Understanding that his promotion as the Anglican head of South Africa could be at stake, he decided to call for economic sanctions anyway. Tutu stated that no other non-violent method could be utilized successfully but for economic pressure from the international community. He insisted that in the past he called for “economic pressure” and never for “economic sanctions.” He said that “each country should surely decide for itself the nature of economic pressure it wishes to apply.” However, on April 2, 1986, no doubt remained of his intentions when he announced that the international community should “apply punitive sanctions against [the South African] government to help [the liberation movement] establish a new South Africa – nonracial, democratic, participatory and just.” 283

In the summer of 1986, a senior official of the Uniting Church in Australia, Rev. David Gill, called for pressure on South Africa. He urged study and prayer on the apartheid issue, along with disinvestment in companies that do business with South Africa, and a boycott of South African manufactured goods. Gill stated that the church held a specific responsibility to ending apartheid because although the system originated in the Judeo-Christian religions, it developed through “a perversion of the Christian faith.” 284

In June 1986, Tutu visited several places in Canada to urge sanctions. The venues included Queens Park – which comprised of an anti-apartheid festival, rally, and march – the Holy Blossom Temple synagogue, Trinity-St. Paul’s United Church, and St. Paul’s Anglican

---

Church. Canadian politicians and union officials joined Tutu in calling for sanctions against South Africa.\textsuperscript{285} Despite his support for international sanctions, the Anglican Church elected Tutu the first black Archbishop of Cape Town – officially known as the Church of the Province of Southern Africa – and enthroned him on September 7, 1986.\textsuperscript{286}

Nevertheless, unrest persisted into 1987 as the government’s security forces increased their onslaught against the non-white population. In June, Pretoria restored the state of emergency, which was temporarily suspended in March 1986 to garner the support of conservative Western governments. Pretoria arrested between ten thousand to twenty-five thousand protestors. The government security forces and rival blacks killed an estimated 2,400 others. The crackdown virtually eliminated all anti-government rallies, black school boycotts, and funeral protests.

However, encouraged by Tutu’s “blend of rhetoric that first roused and unified crowds, then channeled their anger into creative, peaceful action,” the masses often followed the example of their Contextual theologian leaders. Although the police tear-gassed a crowd as they left the restricted funeral service of Ashley Kriel – an ANC guerilla fighter killed by the police in July 1987 – the mourners and funeral organizers made a second church a rallying location. They started to sing hymns which turned into freedom songs. Tutu and Boesak made fun of the police, thus alleviating the anger of the crowds and avoiding unnecessary casualties.\textsuperscript{287}

Despite the set-back for the anti-apartheid movement, Tutu proclaimed, “We are winning the struggle.” Indeed, some forms of boycotts and black unrest still persisted. In a \textit{Christian}

\textsuperscript{285} The Globe and Mail, June 2, 1986.  
\textsuperscript{286} Tutu, \textit{Peaceful Revolution}, 105, 109, 111, 113.  
\textsuperscript{287} Allen, 284-5.
Science Monitor interview, Boesak stated he did not believe that the struggle had been halted. He said, “The state of emergency has not only strengthened the original opposition, it has created a new opposition.” Boesak’s words seemed prophetic. In February 1989, the church leaders provided one of the greatest contributions to the anti-apartheid protest movement. They helped three hundred hunger striking political prisoners secure the release of hundreds more political leaders. The leaders were crucial to the success of the second Defiance Campaign that took place later that year.

In addition, economic sanctions made their impact. Although some analysts feared that economic sanctions would destabilize South Africa by provoking extremists to isolate moderate South Africans who sought a peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy, the sanctions kept South Africa out of foreign markets and limited sources of imports such as oil, defense equipment, and chemicals. This in turn, generated higher prices of inputs relative to the international market and made it difficult to sell exports overseas.

However, talks between anti-apartheid groups and the Botha government broke down. Although Botha met with Mandela in prison to negotiate apartheid policy and the future of South Africa, the negotiations broke down. Botha accused Tutu of preaching under a communist flag. Tutu denied the allegation, and the talks continued. Pretoria also banned students from the Youth Christian Student (YCS) organization, leading a YCS spokesperson to say, “The recent detention of... YCS members clearly shows that the South African government undermines the strategic role Christians should play in [South Africa].”

---

289 Tutu, Peaceful Revolution, 156.
290 The Washington Post, November 10, 1987. See also, Trost, 68. The effect of economic sanctions on helping dismantle the apartheid system has always been debated. Although sanctions did impede South Africa’s ability to effectively compete in the world market, they simultaneously accelerated the development of domestic industries, resulting in decreased dependence on foreign goods and permitting South Africans to run formerly owned foreign businesses and keep the economic gains within the country.
291 Rhodes, May, 1988. In 1988, Tutu and government discussions went no where. Botha accused Tutu of preaching under a communist flag. Tutu denied the allegation, and repeated his demand that Botha lift the state of emergency, unban political organizations, allow exiles to return, and call for the meeting of legitimate leaders of every section of society to end apartheid and create a new constitution acceptable to all South Africans. Pretoria continued to arrest and convict student activists -- some involved with the churches -- sentencing them to at least seven years in prison for alleged terrorism. See also, Rhodes, August, 1988. Pretoria also banned students from the Youth Christian Student (YCS) organization, leading a YCS spokesperson to say, “The recent detention of... YCS members clearly shows that the South African government undermines the strategic role Christians should play in [South Africa].”
Africa, COSATU leaders distrusted Pretoria’s sincerity and Mandela’s ability to negotiate from prison. Since most anti-apartheid groups were unable to function under the severe government imposed restrictions, COSATU took the lead role in organizing protests.292 Meanwhile, Tutu openly criticized the soon-to-be president F.W. de Klerk of attempting to drive a wedge between the ANC and Mandela. De Klerk insinuated that the ANC was not as willing to pursue peaceful negotiations as Mandela. Tutu blasted de Klerk by stating, “It is his government which forced the ANC and PAC to turn to violence by banning them and it is his government which must unban them and create conditions conducive to negotiations.”293

The Mass Democratic Movement (MDM),294 a one million member movement, formed from COSATU and elements of banned UDF members and other groups, organized an open defiance campaign in August 1989 to protest against the apartheid laws and the upcoming September general election for the tricameral parliament. Nine national church leaders endorsed the MDM and the new Defiance Campaign. The clergy inspired six weeks of open defiance in Cape Town. On August 2, the political leaders released during the February hunger strike declared that they would refuse to obey government mandated restriction orders. Young protestors illegally displayed ANC flags at a funeral service for two members of MK, the military wing of the ANC. On August 6, at the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church in Hazendal, Cape Town, clergy supported an illegal rally led by the town’s leaders. Two thousand people came to the rally, breaking curfew in direct defiance against authorities.295

Two days later, a multitude of church leaders and scholars held an illegal gathering

293 The Sowetan, July 24, 1989.
294 Christian Science Monitor, January 23, 1990. Since its inception, the MDM helped promote dialogue between its academics and leaders with white professionals in South Africa.
295 Tutu, Peaceful Revolution, 169-70.
outside of St. George’s Cathedral to protest against the authorities efforts to prosecute those people held under confinement. The police started arresting and charging the confined on August 17. Tutu, Dean Colin Jones from St. George’s Cathedral, and Professor Charles Villa-Vicencio from the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town began to lead 150 protesters from the cathedral to the police station. Two blocks from the station, a band of police women stopped the marches from continuing. The police women attempted to convince the marches to turn back. The protestors refused for an hour. Finally, they returned to the cathedral, but the confrontation produced no arrests. 296

August 19 saw hundreds of protestors march toward the whites-only beaches. North of Cape Town, police used whips and batons to drive off the protestors from the beach at Bloubergstrand. White bystanders yelled insults at the protestors. Tutu prevented a full blown riot and blood bath by negotiating with the lead police officer. The officer agreed to stand down his troops, and then Tutu called the demonstrators back. The day after, the UDF and other anti-apartheid organizations declared themselves unbanned in front of four thousand supporters at a Tutu sponsored service. Dean Jones secured a court order preventing police from breaking up the service. 297 However, the police arrested approximately 170 women, including Tutu’s wife, Leah, as they attempted to march from the Metropolitan Methodist Church to the British Embassy on August 30. The marchers attempted to deliver a letter addressed to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, appealing to her as a “wife and mother” in protest against executions and detentions in South Africa. 298

296 Ibid., 171-2
297 Ibid., 171-4
298 Ibid., 179.
On the night of September 4, the police stormed into St. George’s Cathedral attempting to arrest anyone there. They also went to a Methodist church in Central Cape Town to prevent Naude from preaching at its service. The police blockaded the church doors with a Casspir armored vehicle. The authorities arrested Dean Jones, Naude, Tutu, and others for condemning the blockade. Ninety minutes later, the Supreme Court allowed the church leaders to be released after it overturned the ban on the service. Soon after, the church leaders freed the people inside the church. However, bystanders reported seeing police beat people on the streets during the night.299

Police brutality escalated on election day as the police killed over twenty people in the Cape Town townships. A Coloured police lieutenant testified to the horrible police violence in the townships. The mayor of Cape Town, Gordon Oliver, told a journalist that he would join the march that both Boesak and Tutu called for to take place on September 13. Boesak and Tutu also met with diplomatic delegations from twelve countries including western ambassadors from the U.S., Britain, France, West Germany, Canada, and Australia, urging the diplomats to condemn the police violence and monitor the protest march. At the same time, Johan Heyns, head of the 1.7 million member DRC, requested a meeting with Boesak and Tutu. Although Heyns refused to join the march, he wanted to join the anti-apartheid churches in petitioning the government to allow the protest.300

299 Tutu, Peaceful Revolution, 185.
300 Christian Science Monitor, October 12, 1989. See also, The Washington Post, March 11, 1989. Seven months prior, in a rare conference among the Dutch Reformed “family” of churches, the DRC made a “confession” of guilt and asked to be forgiven for helping to uphold the apartheid system. The DRC’s moderator, Johan Heyns, read from a prepared statement that the DRC confessed, “with humility and sorrow the participation of [the DRC] in the introduction and legitimatization of the ideology of apartheid and the subsequent suffering of the people.” The DRC, however, stopped short of calling apartheid a heresy, and the convention did not desegregate the churches. Nevertheless, many delegates viewed the DRC’s declaration as a step in the right direction for ending racial
Meanwhile, as the illegal September 13 protest loomed closer and as inflation soared due to government continual expenditure on defense, the country waited to see if its new incoming president, F.W. de Klerk, would crack down or allow the march to proceed. Newspapers reported that morning that de Klerk decided not to intervene against the protestors. Thirty thousand people marched from St. George’s Cathedral to City Hall. The government ceased to ban peaceful marches after the Cape Town march. From then on, large marches continued throughout the country “with church leaders in the front ranks.” De Klerk wrote later that he did not back down but allowed the march to take place for the sake of democracy. However, Pauw contends that Pretoria realized that large scale violence would erupt if it did not allow the marches to proceed.

In October 1989, de Klerk proceeded to remove apartheid’s shackles from South Africa’s victims when he ordered the release of the “Rivonia trialists,” which included Mandela. Also in October, de Klerk and his minister for constitutional negotiations, Gerrit Viljoen, met with church leaders which included Tutu, Boesak and Frank Chikane, now the SACC general secretary. After the meeting, Tutu said that the talks did not give the specifics required to “satisfy the constituencies from which we come.” Nevertheless, Tutu conceded that the new president

separation. It is crucial to keep in mind that almost all the members of the government were also members in the DRC. See also, Courier-Mail, March 10, 1989. Most of Parliament’s cabinet – 80 percent of government legislators – are members of the DRC. Ostensibly, the increasing pressure for Pretoria to dismantle political apartheid now likely came from its own political leaders who were tied directly to the DRC. Furthermore, the DRC’s request to meet with Boesak and Tutu is clear evidence that the Contextual theologians helped force the DRC and, therefore, the government closer to the negotiation table to end apartheid.

Tutu, Peaceful Revolution, 186-7. 191.
F.W. de Klerk, 130, 149, 159-160. Botha suffered a stroke on January 18, 1989. De Klerk officially became president on September 14, 1989. De Klerk wrote that, “Tutu…now claims that it was the march which precipitated the whole transformation process and that we simply bowed to the pressure that had been brought to bear on us. That is simply not true. We decided to allow protest marches and rallies because they were essential for the democratization process that we envisaged.”
Pauw, 129.

124
seemed to seriously want to negotiate. On February 2, 1990, de Klerk unbanned the ANC, the PAC, and the SACP, meeting some of the demands of the church leaders in the October meeting. The government released Nelson Mandela on February 11. After ten long years of church direct action and protest against the government – and for the first time in apartheid’s history – Pretoria began to move toward the negotiation table with its opponents.

Also, for the first time since Cottesloe, the largest ecumenical church gathering took place in Rustenburg, fifty miles north of Johannesburg in November 1990. Two hundred delegates from eighty-one domestic and foreign churches and forty other religious groups met to seek reconciliation in a conference themed “Towards a United Christian Witness in a Changing South Africa.” The delegation included the pro-government DRC, the anti-apartheid SACC, as well as non-political Evangelical and Pentecostal organizations. In an unprecedented act, theologian Willie D. Junkers from the Afrikaner Stellenbosch University veered from his prepared speech to apologize for apartheid on behalf of the DRC. Prominent Afrikaner cleric Pieter Potgietersrus stated that Junker’s confession reflected the official stance of the DRC.

306 Ibid., 192. See also, *The Times*, January 22, 1990. Interestingly, the month before de Klerk’s announcement of Mandela’s release, international sporting leagues continued to join the anti-apartheid movement. England’s Manchester Olympic Bids Committee (MOBC) and Manchester City Council (MCC) declared in a world wide press release that it refused to enter into any sporting event or compete with South African teams until the abolition of apartheid. See also, *Christian Science Monitor*, May, 25, 1990. Due to the success of the new Defiance Campaign, the government desegregated at least 246 provincial hospitals in the summer of 1990.
307 *The Washington Post*, November 6 – 8, 1990. Although the English-speaking church Contextual theologians quickly forgave the DRC, the sister churches of the DRC were not as conciliatory. After Jonker’s speech, Tutu rose from the audience and stated “we forgive you.” Frank Chikane, co-chairman of the conference, declared that Jonker’s statement must be taken seriously. However, DRMC and DRCA leaders – Nicholas Apollis and Sam Buti, respectively – did not readily accept Jonker’s confession. Apollis argued that the apology was not “honest and sincere” and amounted to a “cheap confession” since the DRC still refused to officially call apartheid a heresy. Buti stated that Jonker and Potgieter did not offer true “repentance.” The anti-apartheid churches sought for reconciliation through reparations (including land) for damages done by the apartheid system. See also, *The Washington Post*, November 10, 1990. The conference demonstrated that politics still played a large role in church affairs, and proved that politics and religion always intertwined when it came to apartheid. On November 9, the conference issued the Rustenburg Declaration, which declared the churches’ support of and role in apartheid as
However, apartheid did not end with decrees from de Klerk or the DRC. Mandela called on the international community to maintain economic sanctions on South Africa until the complete dismantling of apartheid. It still took de Klerk another year to announce abolishment of the “pillars of apartheid”: the Population Registration Act – which categorized all South Africans by race from birth – the Group Areas Act, and the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts. Not until March 1992 did de Klerk win a landslide referendum vote that finally allowed him to completely scrap the apartheid system. In the meantime, the nation once again plunged into escalating violence as negotiations involving the formation of a multiracial democracy collapsed in June between the ANC, the National Party, and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) – under Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi in Natal.

The Rustenburg Conference contributed to the establishment of a peace process in the attempt to end the increasing violence that enveloped South Africa. The Rustenburg Conference produced the Rustenburg Declaration, which committed the churches to establishing a committee

heresy. See also, Christian Science Monitor, October 12, 1989. Not surprisingly, as recently as the previous year, DRC church leaders refused to acknowledge apartheid as a sin, but instead preferred to call it an error. See also, The Washington Post, November 10, 1990. Despite Jonker’s and Potgieter’s confession, the DRC withdrew its support from large sections of the declaration, issuing a statement of its own. The DRC objected to the declaration’s stance against the military draft, and its call for a democratic voting process, a constitutional assembly, and interim government, arguing that these issues are best left to politicians rather than the church. The conference attempted to accommodate the DRC’s complaints, but the DRC did not sign the declaration. Buti accused the DRC of bowing to pressure from its ultra-conservative wing. The white Conservative Party leader, Andries Treurnicht, issued a statement that rejected Jonker’s and Potgieter’s confessions, and former president Botha denounced Jonker’s apology.

309 Chicago Sun-Times, March 18, 1992. With 85.7 percent voter turnout in all fifteen election districts, de Klerk won 68.7 percent of the vote. He lost only one district but won four traditionally pro-apartheid districts. Upon the election results, the Netherlands – a long time anti-apartheid supporter – lifted economic sanctions on South Africa. 310 Chicago Sun Times, October, 1992. The South African government historically favored Buthelezi and the IFP over the ANC because it saw Buthelezi as an anti-communist. He also supported separate development because he dreamed of a separate Zulu homeland. See also, Sasha Polakow - Suransky, The Unspoken Alliance: Israel’s Secret Relationship with Apartheid South Africa (NY: Pantheon Books, 2010), 183-6. Under pressure from Tutu and the anti-apartheid movement in 1985, the Israeli government – then allied militarily with South Africa – wanted to make an overture to South African blacks. Fearing that Israel might take the side of the ANC and other left-wing organizations, Pretoria encouraged Israeli diplomats to meet with Buthelezi instead.
that would bring leaders to help end the political violence. De Klerk’s proposal to host a Peace Summit between May 24 and May 25, 1991 upset the ANC. The ANC considered de Klerk responsible for the political violence and distrusted his intentions. The peace process nearly unraveled until Contextual theologian Frank Chikane from the SACC and former Atomic Energy Board chairman Louw Alberts – a lay church person with connections to Afrikaner church leadership – facilitated a committee “in which all potential participants in a peace conference would have confidence.”

On June 22, 1991, a “preparatory meeting” took place in which Tutu helped set the ground rules. He said that all the delegates could go home if they started to turn the peace meeting into a political circus. U.S. Institute of Peace delegate Peter Gastrow stated, “The authority and standing of Archbishop Tutu were such that the politicians and all of us present accepted these ‘guidelines’ without opposition.”

Gastrow also adds that Chikane and Alberts “played key roles in the peace process.” Chikane searched for representatives acceptable to the ANC, PAC, COSATU, AZAPO, and SACP, and other left leaning organizations. Alberts searched for representatives acceptable to the National Party, businesses, and the IFP. Chikane’s and Albert’s efforts helped broker the National Peace Convention (NPC) on September 14, 1991. The delegation included representative members from all pertinent parties. The NPC produced the NPA, which proposed to end the rampant political violence, support the democratization process, and assist in the

312 Ibid., 25. See also, Christian Science Monitor, March, 18, 1991. In a two hour meeting in March, Chikane and Alberts also persuaded de Klerk to reconsider his previous rejection of land reparations to 3.5 million blacks over forty-three years of apartheid.
313 Ibid., 27, 29, 30.
socio-economic development of the nation. Twenty-seven political, government, and trade union leaders signed the document.\footnote{Ibid., 29, 33. On the political left, the PAC, the AZAPO, and two Africanist organizations did not sign due to their non-alignment policy with the government, but declared their support for the intent of the accord and promoted it. On the extreme right, the Conservative Party, the Herstigte Nasionale Party (Reestablished National Party), and the Afrikaner Weerstands beweging (Afrikaner Resistance Movement) also did not sign the document.} The NPA ultimately helped set South Africa on a course to creating a new constitution\footnote{Ibid., 94-5.} which guaranteed democratic freedom for all its citizens. This proved once again that Contextual Theology and Contextual theologians played no small part in officially ending the insidious apartheid system.
CONCLUSION

Theology, especially in a nation that declares itself Christian, is a powerful force. Covenant Theology for the early Dutch settlers provided a sense of spiritual community. However, the internal holiness doctrine, with its teaching of salvation from birth – for particularly white or European individuals – allowed for a racist bias to arise against Africans since the early period of South African history. During the Great Trek, Boers came to believe that they were a special people with an equally special mission – a mission similar to the biblical story of the ancient Israelites. They compared the Trek to the crossing of the Jews from Egypt to Canaan, the Promised Land. This pilgrimage helped instill in the Boers a sense of uniqueness and superiority over the African natives they encountered in the interior.

After the British took control of South Africa, European missionaries approached the Africans with a paternalistic attitude. However, the missionary work of societies such as the LMS converted and educated whole groups of African people – the Khoikhoi and Xhosa are just two examples. The missionaries also brought with them their own theologies. Pre-millennialism, with its hands-off approach to government affairs, appealed more to conservative Christians. While post-millennialism, on the other hand, sought for state intervention, when it came to curing societal ills, and influenced liberal church tradition. Late twentieth-century South African Contextual Theology had much in common with post-millennialism. The European churches, by no means non-racist in their early period, had an open policy of inclusion in worship services and in education of Africans.

Afrikaner Dutch Reformed Theology, on the other hand, slowly began to subject its
African converts to segregation. The segregation began in the churches. The synod of 1857 forced Cape DRC Coloured and black congregants to separate buildings known as *gestichte*. DRC churches in the Afrikaner republics contained all white congregations. Those churches did not concern themselves much with converting the native population, and thus left the proselytizing to the European missionaries. However, the DRC developed closer ties to the government, especially when regarding race laws.

The DRC influenced Afrikaner politicians in merging the concept of nationalism with that of family. The word “nation” began to mean a racially common people who spoke a common language. This new notion of nationalism altered the socio-political order for native Africans. Furthermore, the Afrikaner church’s adoption of the nineteenth-century European Dutch Theology known as Kuyperian neo-Calvinism essentially dismissed the concept of modernism and reinforced the need to maintain the God-ordained hierarchal structure. Afrikaners also interpreted Kuyperian neo-Calvinism to mean the unification of the Afrikaner community in South Africa – set apart from other nations or races. Afrikaner Christians adopted the concept of “natural theology” in interpreting scripture through their own historical, cultural, natural, and rational experiences. They selected biblical texts to justify their reasoning behind the separation of the races, and even justifying their rule over them. The acceptance of the concept of “pluriformity” and “cosmos of nations,” which encouraged the separate development of nations, helped solidify the DRC’s relationship with the state in the 1950s. Kuyperian neo-Calvinism Theology became entrenched in church polity; the theology justified the church’s proposal of apartheid legislation.

The general election of 1948 ushered in the racist National Party into power, and with it,
the period of Grand Apartheid. Pretoria reinforced or imposed restrictions on non-whites through legislative means in almost every area of public and private life. The most popular anti-apartheid organization, the ANC, sought to combat the apartheid government through non-violent means until the 1960s. Frustrated with the ANC’s vain attempts to overturn the apartheid system, Nelson Mandela and others in the ANC formed their militant offshoot, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, in the attempt to force the government to the bargaining table. However, Pretoria arrested or banned most of the leaders from the ANC and PAC, and also banned their organizations from South Africa.

Meanwhile, the churches played a slowly evolving role in the anti-apartheid movement. As Elphick states, the Social Christians of the inter-war years did not purport to be “prophetic.” As opposed to Contextual theologians of the 1980s, “their goal was not to demolish a repressive structure, but to let God transfigure society through the slow gestation of Christ’s Kingdom in its midst.” The Tuskegee model of Social Christianity, with its paternalistic and elitist views failed to help the advancement of black Africans. The elitists tended to distance themselves from the black masses. Thus, when Pretoria eliminated any chances for black enfranchisement after 1948, Social Christians found themselves alienated from the masses and thus unable to form a popular resistance movement. The Social Christian experience in South African can be compared black Tuskegee airmen experience in the United State. The airmen believed that “reasonable men” in the post-1945 Southern society would accept them as equals once they proved their service to their country. However, entrenched racism and Jim Crow laws persisted upon the airmen’s return to the home-front. Only with the more radicalized Civil Rights movement, led by

---

316 Elphick, 368.
Black theologians, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ralph Abernathy, did Jim Crow end. Similarly, Tuskegee Social Christian indoctrination proved a failure in South Africa when more entrenched white Afrikaner determination to maintain the status quo among blacks persisted after 1948. It would be left to the Contextual theologians, such as Desmond Tutu and Allan Boesak, to help dismantle the apartheid system in South Africa.\textsuperscript{317}

In the 1940s and 1950s, white clergymen took up the mantle to resist apartheid legislation. Ministers, such as Anglican Trevor Huddleston, heroically fought the Pass Law enforcement in Johannesburg, while Michael Scott, through his Campaign for Right and Justice, attempted to build coalitions with political organizations – including the Communist Party – in order to confront the apartheid government. However, as the Social Christians before them, the churches of the 1940s and 1950s still did not include more black Christians in church leadership roles. Black leaders would have brought to the mainline churches the radicalization needed to confront the apartheid government. In addition, the churches’ inability to connect with or relate to leftist groups hindered their ability to build strong anti-apartheid alliances. Contextual theologians avoided the same mistakes of the Social Christians by taking leadership roles in their churches and ecumenical groups and allying themselves with political groups such as the ANC, the South Africa Communist Party, and the UDF. Congregationalist and ANC president Albert Luthuli encouraged church participation against the apartheid system. To Luthuli’s frustration,

\textsuperscript{317} Ibid., 365. The reason why apartheid lasted a few decades longer in South Africa than Jim Crow in the southern U.S. is due to many factors. However, one salient factor is perhaps because South Africa “was far weaker in its ability (and willingness) to administer and provide services to its poorer citizens” than the industrialized and more secular U.S., Britain, and Canada. Therefore, the Tuskegee modeled Social Christianity maintained a longer influential socio-political discourse than in secularized countries – with tendencies to provide more social services and aid to its poor. Ironically, Elphick contends that industrial Social Christianity may well have unintentionally advanced secularization in the industrialized nations. Nevertheless, well into the 1970s and 1980s, travelers to South Africa were surprised to find how much influence churches still had on civil life, and “by the use of Christian language by all sides in the struggle over apartheid.”
the churches usually reacted cautiously. However, the Sharpeville Shootings of 1960 galvanized the churches to act in a more proactive manner.

That same year, the WCC convened the Cottesloe Consultation with the hope of bringing about a more concerted multi-denominational effort on the issue of race relations in South Africa. Cottesloe declared that no one could be excluded from any church due to race and asserted that everyone, regardless of race, should have equal political and social rights. However, Cottesloe collapsed the following year, and with it all hopes for English-Afrikaner ecumenical relations. The WCC revoked the DRC’s membership when the DRC refused to reject apartheid.

Aside from Cottesloe, two international ecumenical events drew the attention of the South African churches in the 1960s. First, the Second Vatican Council took place between 1962 and 1965. During this council, the Catholic Church allowed for more Latin American church leadership participation in major Catholic conferences. Latin American Catholic theologians and priests, such as Gustavo Gutierrez, Leonardo Boff, Clodovis Boff, and Luis Segundo contributed to the theology that focused on the suffering and eventual liberation of the oppressed. However, this theology did not fully develop not until 1968, by the time of the Medellin Conference. Second, the WCC sponsored the Geneva Conference on Church and Society. Taking a more radical course than Vatican II, the Conference called for direct engagement in struggles for social justice and revolutions. Out of this meeting, the WCC’s Program to Combat Racism (PCR) arose.

The 1960s also saw Naude and his fellow anti-apartheid ministers launched the *Pro Veritate*, the theological journal that fostered dialogue between Afrikaner ministers and DRC members to discuss apartheid, the Bible, and ecumenism. Naude and his colleagues also
cofounded the independent CI in August of 1963. This organization provided ecumenical study and discourse for members of different Christian denominations. Naude preferred to stay with the CI rather than keep his prominent leadership position in the DRC.

After participating in the WCC’s Geneva Conference, Naude returned to South Africa with the commitment to end apartheid. In 1968, the CI joined the SACC and together both organizations issued *The Message to the People of South Africa*, a document which declared that the Gospels supported neither the concept nor the practice of apartheid, and that the Kingdom of God meant equal justice for all, including justice within the realm of public policy. In the same year, the CI and the SACC also co-sponsored the Study Project of Christianity in Apartheid Society (SPROCAS), a program geared toward the emphasis on education, the economy, social issues, politics, law, and religion. However, the paternalistic attitude of this program resulted in its failure to attract non-whites. The CI and the SACC had yet to have the key ingredient that bound all the anti-apartheid forces – Contextual Theology.

Liberation Theology had just started to make its way into the South African churches, or at least into the minds their leaders, as a way to biblically justify confrontation with the government. In addition, there remained a crucial piece required to fully implement Liberation Theology in South Africa –black clergy in positions of ecclesiastical power. Before 1968, no concrete theology of liberation existed. For this reason, the churches remained ineffective to combat apartheid.

Therefore, between 1964 and 1968, no effective anti-apartheid political organization remained that challenged the South African government. However, the late 1960s ushered in the young and extremely talented Stephen Biko, and the BCM, which included mainly young
college-age activists. Many leaders in the BCM came out of English-speaking churches and seminaries. Black Theology, a subset of Liberation Theology and an import from Civil Rights leaders in the U.S., made an impact on many BCM members. Led by the charismatic Biko, the BCM grew in popularity and filled in the anti-apartheid movement vacuum left by the ANC. However, the anti-apartheid movement received a blow when the authorities killed Biko and banned the BCM in 1978. Once again, the movement was left without a leader and a solid political organization to confront the government. However, Contextual Theology trained church leaders stepped in that same year.

Only in the 1970s did the CI begin to change its attitude toward black activism as it noticed successful engagements against the state by black trade unions and the BCM. Meetings with black Christian leaders in the BCM such as Oshade Phakathi, Manas Buthelezi, Barney Pityana, and Allan Boesak proved fruitful. The Special Program for Christian Action in Society - 2 (SPROCAS-2) formed out of these discussions. This program produced a more symbiotic working relationship between whites and blacks that eventual proved successful in their struggle to end apartheid in the 1980s.

Another significant event happened in the mid-1970s that contributed to the churches’ increased activism in the anti-apartheid struggle. As the English-speaking churches leaned toward supporting the anti-apartheid movement, their church leadership structure changed considerably. Many white clergy left to find sanctuary in conservative churches, leaving a substantial void in the church leadership. Blacks and Coloureds – some with education in Liberation and Black Theology – quickly filled these positions. By the time of the Soweto uprisings and Biko’s death, the English-speaking churches, with their new Contextual Theology
trained black and Coloured leaders began to take over the front lines in the anti-apartheid struggle. The 1970s and 1980s saw a significant increase in non-white clergy taking prominent leadership roles in the churches and church institutions. Furthermore, the establishment of the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) contributed to an upsurge of Contextual Theology training, particularly among church clergy.

Contextual Theologians filled that much need vacuum after the banning of most anti-apartheid political groups. As equally important, Contextual Theology radicalized and politicized the churches and particularly the South African Christian masses and ecumenical organizations, to lead the anti-apartheid movement that helped dismantle apartheid by the end of the 1980s. This combination was missing during the 1940s and 1950s, when clergy such as Huddleston and Scott made little success in ending apartheid. Scott’s alliance with the Communist Party proved a failure because they did not trust each other. Contextual Theology, with its borrowing of certain Marxist principles, related to the left-leaning political groups and movements in the 1980s. Contextual Theologians found common ground with the oppressed masses and anti-apartheid political organizations such as the ANC. As Borer adequately states:

> Without these new ideas, church initiatives, in the form of challenging repressive governments and actively working towards social justice, would never have been possible. The old “universe of discourse” simply would not have allowed it, indeed might never have imagined it. When liberation theology was applied to the South African case, the results were profound. Indeed the question of legitimacy of the state could not have occurred without new thinking about such concepts as poverty, violence, and action. In fact, the theoretical underpinnings of the legitimacy declaration were not even considered “religious” issues in the previous discourse of “church theology.”

Also, Contextual Theology could not become fully realized until non-whites took up

---

318 Borer, 13.
positions of leadership in the churches and church institutions. Contextual Theology “works with” not “works for” the oppressed. In South Africa, the oppressed were considered the non-whites and the poor. In addition, non-white leaders obviously had the trust and following of the non-white masses more than their white counterparts. Therefore, two important impediments prevented the churches from becoming more politicized in the 1960s and early 1970s anti-apartheid struggle, especially after Sharpeville. First, the churches signed the Cottesloe declaration, yet they did not follow-up with any direct action against the oppressor, in this case the state, as Contextual Theology requires. The churches began to gain the concept of Liberation Theology only in the late 1960s. Second, the churches still lacked the appointment of black clergy to prominent leadership positions in the churches. As a result, the churches could not have succeeded with any sustained street protests or political actions against the government without the leadership of non-whites – the oppressed themselves – before the late 1970s.

By the 1980s, however, the South African English-speaking churches and their Christian institutions began taking on an increasingly confrontational, and successful, stance against the apartheid government. As Elphick argues, the South African version of Social Christianity found itself “impotent” against the repression of the apartheid state and began to wane in popularity as more radical prophetic Christianity began appearing on the scene in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{319} After the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, the churches could have radicalized against the state, but instead issued condemning statements against apartheid through the Cottesloe Consultation. The churches neither condemned nor confronted the state itself. Even during the Soweto riots, the churches, particularly the English-speaking churches, made little to no direct action against the

\textsuperscript{319} Elphick. 364.
Only after churches and ecumenical organizations began appointing Contextual theologians to prominent positions of power did the churches, or at least the black Christian masses within the churches, become increasingly politicized and radicalized. The SACC made Tutu general secretary of its organization in 1979. The Anglican Church kept electing Tutu to higher levels of power until he became archbishop in 1985. The WARC elected Boesak as president in 1982. Naude – a white Contextual theologian – made great strides as director of the CI. Chikane took over as SACC’s general secretary after Tutu left in 1984.

The Contextual theologians contributed greatly within their new positions of power against the apartheid system. They kept taking the churches to more radical levels of engagement with Pretoria throughout the decade of the 1980s. Tutu and Boesak called for economic sanctions in their international travels. Their appeals helped garner support from powerful Western nations, such as Canada and France, as well as the reluctant U.S. and England. Tutu, Boesak, Chikane, and Naude, led mass rallies and protests in South Africa, filling in the vacuum left by political organizations such as the ANC, the PAC, and the BCM. They relentlessly kept the pressure on Pretoria.

At the same time, the WARC declared apartheid a heresy and suspended the DRC and smaller DRC churches in 1982. Boesak and the Coloured DRMC – one of the sister churches that the DRC established in the 1950s and 1960s after the DRC began to expand into African areas – made a significant contribution to anti-apartheid church history. In 1982, Boesak and the DRMC also called apartheid a sin and heresy in their status confessionis. This statement led to the declaration of the Confession of Belhar in 1986, with Boesak as one of its authors. Although
the DRMC split along lines of confrontation and sympathy toward the DRC, the Confession unified these two groups to oppose the DRC and marginalize it among the world Reformed Church community. This also made an impact on Pretoria’s international relations since its delegates no longer wielded much diplomatic influence on other nations when it came to the issue of support for the apartheid government.

Likewise, the Contextual theologian-led churches and ecumenical organizations maintained their pressure on Pretoria. The 1985 release of the Contextual theologian authored Kairos document declared no compromise with the government until the total dismantling of apartheid. The document went as far as to call the government immoral and illegitimate. The document also urged the churches to increase their levels of confrontation and resistance – without ruling out violence – against the state.

That same year, the Harare Declaration called for the adoption of the Kairos Document and for the churches inside and outside of South Africa to support the anti-apartheid struggle within South Africa, and for the international community to apply economic sanctions to suspend foreign dept refinancing to South Africa. Harare also succeeded in persuading the SACC to take a more radical stance against the South African government. In 1986, the SACC’s National Conference passed the Harare Declaration and called for economic sanctions against apartheid.

In 1987, the Lusaka Statement took the Harare Declaration a step further. The WCC sponsored conference in Lusaka, Zambia gathered nearly two hundred representatives of churches, exiled liberation organizations – including the banned ANC and PAC – the United Nations, and other international delegates. Lusaka officially declared the South African state illegitimate. The pronouncement allowed the churches to approve the aims of the anti-apartheid
struggle without approval of the means – even if that meant violence – that some anti-apartheid groups used. The SACC’s adoption of the Lusaka Statement allowed many of the English-speaking Protestant churches to partner with other South African anti-apartheid organizations, such as the ANC underground, thus solidifying and strengthening the liberation movement against the state – an accomplishment that prior religious leaders, such as Michael Scott, in the 1940s could not do.

With Pretoria increasingly under sustained foreign sanctions, domestic unrest, and a teetering economy, de Klerk made strides to abolish apartheid soon after he took over the presidency from Botha in 1990. De Klerk unbanned the anti-apartheid political groups and released Mandela from prison. However, the apartheid to democracy transition years between 1990 and 1994 saw a level of increased violence as the major players – the ANC, the National Party, and the IFP – wrestled for political power in the new South Africa.

Once again, Contextual theologians provided a means to save the nation from reverting back to the dark apartheid years. The 1990 Rustenburg Conference and Rustenburg Declaration provided for Chikane to meet with DRC lay leaders, and South African business leaders to help form a committee of representatives from the civil society that all political groups could trust during the 1991 NPC. The subsequent NPA helped set South Africa on the road to creating its new constitution guaranteeing equal rights and privileges for all South Africans, regardless of race.

Kuyperian neo-Calvinism theology ended when Contextual Theology came onto the scene in South Africa. For over a decade Contextual theologians played a crucial role in ending and guaranteeing the end of apartheid in South Africa by contributing to the political
radicalization of the churches. Although the Afrikaner powers essentially eliminated all the major anti-apartheid political leaders from the public arena, and banned their organizations from openly influencing the population within South Africa by the late 1970s, the churches filled the vacuum. Contextual Theology, along with the increase of non-white clergy to powerful leadership positions, brought that much needed activism for the churches and church organizations to effectively confront and defeat the apartheid system through international calls for sanctions, street protests, and finally, facilitating the peace process through the transitional years from apartheid to democracy.
REFERENCES

Primary Sources


Courier-Mail, March 10, 1989.


Forward, May 1963.

Forward July 1964.


Grassroots, October 1980.


The Sowetan, July 24, 1989.

The Sunday Mail, July 13, 1986.


The Times, September 27, 1985.

The Times, October 30, 1985.

The Times, December 5, 1985.

The Times, October 23, 1986


The Times, January 22, 1990.


The Washington Post, November 10, 1987


The World Council of Churches, “The WCC and the Ecumenical Movement,”

Tutu, Desmond. The Rainbow People of God: The Making of a Peaceful Revolution, with a

____________. and John 1952- Allen. God is Not a Christian : And Other Provocations. Edited

World Alliance of Reformed Churches. “Where Do We Come From?”

Atheneum, 1981.

Young, Michael. “Michael Young Interview,” interview by Stephanie Overby, PBS,
Masterpiece Contemporary, Endgame, October 25, 2009.
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/endgame/watch.html (accessed October 31,
2009)

Secondary Sources


and State President 1978-89.”

About.com. “Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd: Leading Apartheid Ideologue, Professor of Psychology, Editor, and Statesman”


South African History Online. “Labour Party (LP).”


