

**Religious Communities and South African Politics:
The Case of the South African Council of Churches from 1994 - 2016**

By

Jonas Sello Thinane

**Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Theology with specialisation in Religion Studies
MTh**

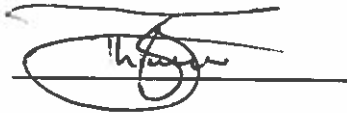
**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION STUDIES
FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION
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DECLARATION

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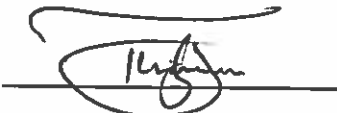


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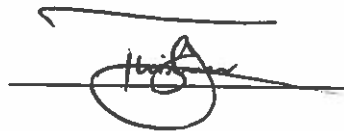


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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Adv	Advocate
AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
AFMSA	Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency syndrome
AME	African Methodist Episcopal
AMEC	African Methodist Episcopal Church
ANC	African National Congress
AO	African Operation
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BCC	Baptist Convention Church
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BMS	Berlin Mission Society
CCSA	Christian Council of South Africa
CI	Christian Institute
CLM	Co-operating Lutheran Mission
ConCourt	Constitutional Court
CRATA	Commission for Religious and Traditional Affairs
CSM	Church of Sweden Mission
DA	Democratic Alliance
DPW	Department of Public Works
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
DRCA	Dutch Reformed Church in Africa
DRMC	Dutch Reformed Mission Church
EC	Eastern Cape
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
ELCSA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa
EMEA	Executive Member Ethics Act
EWN	Eyewitness News
FAS	Free African Society

FELCSA	Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa
FMS	Fish Mission Society
GMC	General Mission Conference
GMCSA	General Mission Conference of South Africa
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HMS	Hermannsburg Mission Society
IMC	International Missionary Council
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MA	Master of Arts
MEC	Methodist Episcopal Church
MP	Member of Parliament
NCSA	National Convention of South Africa
NEC	National Executive Committee
NGK	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (White)
NGKA	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika (Black)
NICSA	National Interfaith Council of South Africa
NILC	National Interfaith Leaders Council
NMS	Norwegian Mission Society
NP	National Party
NRLF	National Interfaith Council of South Africa
NSS	National Security Service
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PhD	Philosophiae Doctor
Rev	Reverend
RMS	Rhenish Mission Society
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SABCB	South African Catholic Bishops Conference
SABMS	South African Baptist Missionary Society
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SATCIC	South African Theological College for Independent Churches
SCM	Student Christian Movements
SG	Secretary General

SPROCAS	Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society
SRC	Student Representative Council
TMALI	Thabo Mbeki Africa Leadership Institute
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNISA	University of South Africa
USA	United States of America
WCC	World Council of Churches

CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Concept: Critical solidarity

An approach by the South African Council of Churches (SACC) to continue its support of the South African democratic government on all initiatives tailored to achieving a just society, while at the same time being resistant and critical of unjust policies and conduct by this democratic government of South Africa.

Concept: State capture

State capture is a system of corruption whereby a group or individuals influence state policies, state decision-making processes and state resources for personal advantage and own enrichment.

ABSTRACT

Despite much research conducted on the case of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) since its inception in the 1960s, with particular focus on its role in South Africa ahead of its first democratic elections in 1994 and subsequently, the overall image painted by theological and secular academic scholars of the SACC is negative. As a result, much doubt has been cast on the role of the SACC in South Africa, in particular the role of the SACC in South African politics since the advent of democracy in 1994. In this study, an attempt has been made to investigate and demonstrate that contrary to popular opinion concerning its role in South Africa, the SACC has remained an instrument and servant of South African churches and has demonstrated true commitment to serving and uniting the people of South Africa, particularly in politics and matters of national concern. By adopting a resolution in 1994 on critical solidarity with the democratically elected government of the Republic of South Africa, it is true that the SACC has changed its approach or scope of dealing with South African politics, but it has not abandoned its commitment to serving the people of South Africa nor is it silent in matters of public concern. Thus the South African Council of Churches (SACC) is still relevant in South Africa. This study employs a multiplicity of methods which includes critical discourse analysis, heuristic method, hermeneutical tradition, hermeneutic phenomenology, literature and historical approach. This is a qualitative research since it will be used to gain more understanding of the work of South African Council of Churches (SACC) and provide perception against the SACC's problem of silence in South African politics since 1994.

Key terms:

Apartheid, democracy, South African Council of Churches (SACC), critical solidarity, ecumenical movements, faith communities, state capture

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Literature shows that prior to 1994 in South Africa the co-existence of religious communities, particularly South African Christian Churches through the voice of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and revolutionary movements such as the African National Congress (ANC) and many others could be seen side by side calling for the end of the apartheid in South Africa (SACC 1997:1). Between the years 1990 – 1993 intense negotiations geared towards ending apartheid were held between the National Party (NP), the African National Congress (ANC) and other political parties in South Africa (Clark & Worger 2013:110-119).

Before the 1994 general elections in South Africa, it was held by many that the outcome of the elections might result in further political instability. Contrary to such views, Nelson Mandela in his victory speech of 2 May 1994 refers to the birth of democracy in South Africa as a “small miracle” (Eeden 2014:28). Along similar lines, Kuperus (2011) argues that the South African transition cannot be dismissed from being a miracle. Underlying this argument is the impossibility to imagine that a country that emerged from a deeply divided political context can have such a stable and peaceful transition into a united, non-racial democracy (Kuperus 2011:280).

Since the start of apartheid, many voices had spoken out strongly against it in South Africa, and one of these many voices was the South African Council of Churches (SACC). This Council of Churches (SACC) was founded in May 1968 when South Africa was still very much under the rule of apartheid government. Church denominations and religious communities before and during this time (May 1968) had spoken out strongly against the apartheid regime. Even though there had been other ecumenical organisations who equally spoke out against the apartheid regime ahead of the year 1968, the SACC came at a time when many missionary agencies were handing over the control of churches to the hands of indigenous leaders in South Africa (SACC 1997:2). As a result, in 1972 the SACC was declared a “black organisation” under the apartheid regime since it was comprised of more black than white members and ever since 1968, the SACC became the most legitimate voice of the oppressed in South Africa (SACC 1997:3). However, theological scholars such as Resane (2017) and Kgatle (2018) have taken to paper to argue that the South African Council of Churches (SACC) has become weak and silent since the advent of democracy in 1994. This study will contend that the voice of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) is neither weak nor silent.

1.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This Study will make use of a combination of various approaches such as Critical discourse analysis, Heuristic method, Hermeneutic phenomenology and Literature and Historical approach. This is a qualitative research since it will be used to gain more understanding of the work of South African Council of Churches (SACC) and provide perception against its alleged problem of silence in South African politics since 1994.

1.2.1 Critical discourse analysis

This method subsumes a variety of approaches within itself, and what unites these approaches is “shared interests in the semiotic dimensions of power, injustice and political – economic, social or cultural change in our societies (Wodak 2001). Discourse analysis is an approach to something that has been produced, circulated and consumed in a society (Blommaert & Bulcaen 2000:2).

The aim of this research is to critically analyze the way ideologies, identities and inequality are presented through the history of a society and the manner in which such ideologies have been circulated and consumed within the social and political context of South Africa, how different powers, particularly the apartheid regime, played a key role in maintaining and legitimizing inequality, injustice and oppression.

Primarily this approach is employed to study the way in which social power abuse is reproduced, legitimized and resisted through written statements and scholarly outputs and public speeches in social and political contexts (Wodak 2001:1). Hence the employment of the discourse analysis in this work is necessary in order to conduct a study dealing with social power abuse by regimes and how such abuse is reproduced at different times in political history and how organisations such the SACC have had to restrict this form of abuse through public speeches, written statements, prayers etc.

Ultimately this method will help this study to spread awareness of what type of language was and should constantly be used by organisations such as the SACC in seeking to build a better South Africa and even advocate for a change in the society based on the analysis of this research. Thus continually seeking to solve issues at the heart of a societal religio-political agenda in an “intuitive and unsystematic manner (Wodak 2001:2).

1.2.2 Heuristic method

According to Romanycia and Pelletier (1985), this method refers to any device used in problem-solving, be it a program or a piece of knowledge. Following heuristic reasoning, before one obtains certainty in a question, one must first be satisfied with a more or less plausible guess (Romanycia and Pelletier 1985), this method greatly concerns human analysis of human behaviour in the face of difficulties. In approaching this research, the heuristic method will be applied since this study involves compiling a history of how the South African Council of Churches (SACC), how it emerged and how it identified itself during the different times in the South African political context. Furthermore, this study seeks to discover the nature, meaning and the role of South African Council of Churches (SACC) within the political contexts of South Africa (Djuraskovic & Arthur 2010:1). And ultimately answer the question of SACC's alleged silence.

The manner in which the South African Council of Churches (SACC) emerged and conducted itself in South Africa tells the story of an organisation in a particular time in history. Thus here the SACC will be used to show the meaning and essence of South African experiences and this alone enables an understanding of the religio-political story of South Africa. As well as being a member of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) the inquiry of the SACC will fully assist the researcher in understanding the origin and position of the DRCA and other churches with regard to the political context of South Africa (Djuraskovic & Arthur 2010:2). Many questions are raised by this study, which will be answered by findings of this very inquiry and will represent scientific research which involves focusing, self-dialogue, tacit knowing, the internal frame of reference, identifying with the focus of inquiry and intuition (Djuraskovic & Arthur 2010:3).

1.2.3 Hermeneutical tradition

Hermeneutic tradition retains its focus of experience of individuals and groups through reading and understanding of texts to create a rich and deep account of a particular organisation (Kafle 2011:187). Hence it is the intention of this study to engage in deep conversation with texts and various forms of literature on the question of South African Council of Churches (SACC). In a similar spirit, this study will inquire about the experience of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) by engaging vast written texts and literature. Thus it remains the goal of this study to go into reading processes through which experience of SACC in particular and the

knowledge of South African history will be influenced to a great extent. This method will assist this study to reveal the value of a possessed knowledge of ecumenical councils, particularly with regard to the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and South African religious-political history. It is therefore important for one not to suspend or ignore the presence of such preexisting knowledge ahead of undertaking this research. Thus, throughout this research one intends to engage the reading process of the texts with prior knowledge.

1.2.4 Hermeneutic phenomenology

Through this research one will come to the realization that this process by its very nature unveils South Africa as experienced by different generations through different periods of history. Thus the history of the SACC through the academic investigative process can be reduced to different generations which existed in different times in South Africa, stories of different people altogether, and in dealing with texts written with the purpose of describing the historical events of South Africa, the context within which the SACC existed. Thus in the process, one realises that different writers have attempted to produce the best interpretation of the SACC history in South Africa which proposes the immense use of the hermeneutic cycle (Kafle 2011:187).

1.2.5 Literature and historical approach

The approach intended by this research is based upon the study of literature in analysing the role played by the SACC in South African politics and this will be achieved through the engagement of texts, letters, speeches, constitutions, including recent articles and other related and relevant literature. According to Holder (2005) once something has happened or existed, it should be placed within the discipline of history to be studied historically. The history of South African Council of Churches (SACC) resonates with the socio-political context of South Africa and as an existing Christian Council in South Africa, it should be studied historically. This approach will assist by providing a description, summary and critical evaluation of the work of the South African Council of Churches (SACC).

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to create an academic space for this research, the researcher has identified a theoretical framework within which this study is to be conducted. According to Borgatti (1999), a theoretical framework is a collection of related concepts and it is there to guide the greater focus of the research and the researcher. And once identified will answer two questions: Firstly, how does this research fit into what has been said and done already? Secondly, how will this research contribute towards the ongoing discussion in the scholarly field? (Borgatti 1999:1-3).

1.3.1 Sociology of religion

The question on the voice of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and South African political context within the framework of religion and politics has become increasingly part of theological discussions. Theological scholars such Resane (2016, 2017), Kumalo (2009, 2014) and Kgatle (2017, 2018) approach the question of religion and politics in South Africa through the interrogation of the interplay between the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and South African socio-political context. The space between religion and politics is the institution of a socio-religious framework. Hamilton (2001) indicates that sociology of religion is concerned with furthering and deepening the understanding of the role of religion within the society, hence the very task at the heart of sociology of religion is to account for the presence and existence of religious beliefs and practices amongst societies (Hamilton 2001:2). Sociology of religion is a research method which strives to show the importance of religion in social life. Sherkat and Ellison (1999) argue that debate about the relevance and the importance of religion in a society is far from being over. He further points out that even though some scholars downplay the importance of religion in politics, long-standing conflicts and issues in politics have distinctive religious roots (Sherkat & Ellison 1999:369). In this study, sociology of religion will help to expand the understanding of the role played by the South African Council of Churches (SACC) within the socio-religious context of South Africa which will ultimately reaffirm the importance of religion in South Africa.

It is the task of this study to explore key terms such as religion, politics, democracy, and the church. These key terms will be continually employed throughout this investigation and accordingly, it is important to make use of correct and relevant definitions, meanings and descriptions of these terms.

1.3.2 Defining religion

The English word “religion” comes from a Latin word “religio” meaning “bond”, “reverence” and “obligation”. Bond points to the bond between man and gods, “reverence” for the gods and “obligation” to serve gods (Tetreault & Denmark 2004:6). The term religion has been employed for many years by both theological and secular scholars in their various research fields, hence there is a rapidly growing literature on the subject religion in the scholarly world. However, the very literature which deals with the phenomenon religion shows no agreement and as a result, one struggles to locate some form of consensus around the very concept of religion. Indeed there are common points which underpin the very definition of religion, and there is much to learn when each and every argument around the term religion is thoroughly and fairly investigated.

James Dow (2007), in his paper “a scientific definition of religion”, speaks of religion as a collection of human behaviour that is only suggesting three stages of the evolution of religion: (1) a cognizer of unobservable agents, (2) a sacred category classifier, and (3) a motivator for public sacrifice. He further emphasises that religion should be understood as complex workings of a human brain which does not respond directly to observable reality, even though it can be examined by psychological science, since through its psychological function it (religion) comforts humanity, seeks to explain complex human situations and many other functions that religion provides to humanity. Thus, religion cannot be seen as one intuition in human life, but rather a multifunctional aspect of humanity. Briefly put, religion in this sense is a human search for meaning (James Dow 2007:1). While Dow (2007) focuses on the realistic face of religion, Hanegraaff (2016) in his illuminating article titled “Reconstructing Religion from the Bottom Up”, he argues that in an attempt to define religion two questions should be asked; Firstly, what kind of entity is a religion? Secondly, where is this entity located? To answer these questions he argues that religion should be perceived as an “imaginative formation’ which located in the human imagination (mind). Thus, unlike Dow (2007), Hanegraaff (2016) advocates for the illusoriness of religion. However, this study combines these two views to arrive at a definition of religion as having been imagined first by humanity and resulted in the human search for meaning. Simply put, this study understands religion as an imagined human search for meaning.

1.3.3 Defining politics

Having understood religion as the root of all human action, this paper will follow the view by Adrian Leftwich which suggests that politics is any human activity that is aimed at ordering society. Politics is viewed in this paper as a human activity relating to the task of a government in a state and further involves any task of ordering society in a public and judicial sense (Leftwich 2015). On his key note address at the Potchefstroom University in 1996 Prof. Paul Marshall sees politics as the art of possible and further adopt expanded definition of politics as given by the French President Jacques Chirac that “Politics is not the art of the possible, but the art of making possible what is necessary (Marshall 1996: 22). Thus this study sees politics as a necessary human activity and process of ordering society.

1.3.4 Defining church

The Greek word that is frequently translated to mean church is “Εκκλησία” this word is a combination of two Greek words; “έκ” (out) and “καλέω” (to call) constituting “the called out ones” and this culminates to other meanings such as congregation, assembly, council and convocation (Newman 2010).

Budiselic (2012), in his attempts to formulate an understanding of the concept of church, starts off by making use of Paul’s view of the church in the epistle of Ephesians as his point of departure. He firstly stresses the importance of seeing the church as the church that exists even beyond the walls of the local church which evangelises, teaches, and testifies for the gospel. And this dimension of the church is more revealed and expressed clearly in the epistle of Ephesians as a cosmic dimension. When Paul speaks of the church as the body and with Christ as her head, he talks about the total number of church communities which constitutes the body of Christ and will subsequently spread across the whole world, and Christ as the head is to rule and govern this living body (church). Nyiawung promotes the view that the church has a prophetic mission to nations; it remains the task of the church to promote principles that seek to bring good morality, justice and care for the poor and the oppressed. And he further outlines the catholicity of the church as revealed in Ephesians epistles as well, since the body (church) has different parts (members) connected to one another which function and even grow as one (Catholic).

Gleeson (2005) speaks of the body as the people of God who are being selected from the pool of the human race to be God’s own people who will carry out his mission. Since these people

have been selected by the Holy God for his holy purpose, that selection alone makes the church the communion of saints, a community recognised with an exceptional degree of holiness. Thus, the church is about a community called the people of God, and underlining this is a history of continuity between Israel as the people of God and the Church as the people of God. This particular community with particular people of God exists as God's choice and selection for a particular task to express his love and mercy to his creation (Gleeson 2005).

In this study, the term "church" will be employed continually, the meaning and the implication behind will be that of a "community of people of God" as the new community. This new community as opposed to the Old Testament community, is as Migliore (2004) puts it; "while flawed and always in need of reform and renewal, the church is nonetheless the beginning of God's new and inclusive community of liberated creatures reconciled to God and to each other and called to God's service in the world. And the obvious task of this community is to praise and serve God in total obedience and response to the gospel of God. The word "church" shall be used interchangeably with SACC throughout this dissertation. Lastly, it is important to mention that in this dissertation "church" will be viewed as both a religious and social body.

1.3.5 Defining democracy

To convey a clear understanding of what is meant by democracy, Dalton et al. (2007) start off their paper by asking the most significant question: "So how do ordinary people understand democracy?", and accordingly, this type of question is a challenge to bring across a definition that would be welcomed and understood by the general public of South Africa.

Dalton et al. (2007) refer to Robert Dahl's seminal writings which define democracy as a process of representative government and institutions, stating that democracy is only realised when citizens participate in peaceful, free and fair elections and even when such elections seek to direct actions of government, and suffice it to say, this has been the case in South Africa since 1994 to date. In support to this view, Carlos et al. (2002) argues that a system of government can be called democracy when its rulers are elected by the ruled (voters) and are accountable to the ruled through a free, fair and competitive elections and where the Rights of the ruled are protected by the Rule of Law, these rights includes freedom of speech and freedom of association. Following the view of both Dalton et al. and Carlos et al. this means that the people as active participants in free and fair elections elect members from within their communities to participate in the decision-making on behalf of the whole society. Thus, "the

rule of the people, by the people and for the people”, the process of free and fair elections is in this manner the mechanism through which the people give others (elected few) a mandate to run the country on their behalf. The current literature on democracy suggests some form of consensus on two forms of democracy, and that is direct democracy and representative democracy, whereby the former (direct democracy) places more power and control in the hands of very few individuals, while the latter establishes intermediary political actors (political parties) to facilitate the decision-making process between an elected individual (state president) and the policy outputs of the state. Thus both forms of democracy still speak to the concept of “the rule of the people, by the people and for the people”. Taking this further, African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) believes that the only way South Africans will experience the true form of democracy is once the constitution recognises Almighty God as Ruler in every sphere of life, including politics (News24 2009). Keywords in understanding democracy are “freedom to vote for the rule of the people, by the people, for the people”. This view will be followed by this study. On his political reflection at the Potchefstroom University in 1996, Mathews Phosa stated that “the young and growing democracy of South Africa can and will not survive if its foundation does not rest on the pillars of sound Christian values” (Phosa 1996:24). Phosa further elucidated that it is important for churches of South Africa to accept their role under the new democratic dispensation and lead the South Africans towards an ethical and honest way of life. He then concluded by maintaining that “the church should no longer blindly follow political leaders and accept their views as correct and true (Phosa 1996:24) in the same conference Rev. Kenneth Rasalabe Joseph Meshoe blatantly declared “I state that the ACDP believes that democracy can only come to its full realisation once there is a transcendent recognition of the Almighty God as Ruler in every sphere, including politics (Meshoe 1996:62).

1.3.6 South African democracy

It is important to develop a basic form of understanding about the meaning and what this research will refer to as it continues to make use of the word “democracy”. The concept of democracy can mean different things for different contexts, it can refer to a specific political procedure or a specific regime. In this study, democracy will refer to a system of government or the manner in which a country/state is governed. To avoid societal frustrations it is important not to overload implications and expectations of democracy.

South Africa's Freedom Charter (1955) makes the declaration that South Africa belongs to all who live in it and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people, and even further advances that *the people shall govern* – “every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws, all the people shall be entitled to take part in the administration of the country, the rights of the people shall be the same, regardless of race, color or sex; all bodies of minority rule, advisory boards, councils and authorities shall be replaced by democratic organs of *self-government*”. Section 19 of South Africa's Constitution states that 3(a) every adult citizen has the right to vote in elections of any legislative body established in terms of the Constitution, and do so in secret and (b) to stand for public office and if elected to hold office (The Freedom Charter 1955). With all these matters being briefly highlighted, it becomes clear that the type of government/democracy in South Africa is very much expressed through its legitimate public documents such as its Constitution and bill of rights, which provides a clear expression of what the majority of South Africans wish for their nation. And these are the very public documents which connect the ideals of democracy in South Africa to become a completely democratic narrative. It is important that this narrative be basic and be understood by everyone in South Africa, and this includes even school children. Hence it is important at this stage to make use of a form of language that would be understood by everyone on what is meant by **democracy**, in particular, **South African form of democracy** and even seek to make such language part of everyday common sense, which can and may be used without many questions being asked and even without posing any challenges, thereby making it a public discourse. In South Africa, democracy refers to “a rule by the people” and the people's will is sovereign. However, it is important to stress that the will of the people is only sovereign when it is fortified by true Christian principles and established within the margins of the will of God.

1.4 HYPOTHESIS

The South African Council of Churches (SACC) has been proven to have played an important role in bringing about democracy in South Africa and ultimately paved the way for a peaceful transition to take place in South Africa in 1994 (SACC 1997:14-15). This study hypothesises that the “South African Council of Churches has never been silent in South Africa”. Against the opinions of various scholars such as Resane (2017) and Kgatle (2018), this study endeavoured to disapprove the argument that the SACC has been silent in relation to South African politics since the advent of democracy in 1994. This endeavour is supported by

Goranzon (2011) in his closing remarks when he asserts that “The prophetic voice [of the SACC] has been articulated! But has anyone listened? If the voice is not heard, the reason could be that the media are listening somewhere else.” (Goranzon 2011:357). This study maintains that the RSA Constitution has limited and hindered the work and the voice of the SACC in South Africa’s politics, this hindrance has disabled the South African politicians in particular and the entire South African society in general to grasp and envision democratic South Africa as imagined by different stakeholders who fought against apartheid prior to 1994. The argument raised by this dissertation is that the democratic movements of South Africa, particularly the African National Congress (ANC), by claiming victory in 1994 over the apartheid system itself robbed other civil societies such as the SACC of their glory and ultimately won the political will to sideline the SACC, hence suffice it to say that the SACC, due to its new position post-1994, had to change its scope of dealings with politics in South Africa. Thus, leaving South Africans with a greater appetite for a better form of democracy. Hypothesis key statement is **SACC is not silent but changed its scope of dealing with politics in South Africa.**

1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT

One would almost be right to think of religion and politics as separate worlds and distinct in their nature, but the common podium for these two is the social reality. Scholars such as Resane (2016 – 2017), Kgatle (2017 – 2018), Pillay (2017) and Johan (2015) agree that historically, the social realities of South Africa brought religion and politics together to engage in dialogue as the co-existence of these two realms was proven to be feasible since they both concerned the same subject matter. Prior to 1994, the co-existence of religious communities and revolutionary movements in South Africa could be perceived together side by side calling for the end of apartheid and freedom of the black people in South Africa. Much has happened in more than 20 years since South Africa achieved democracy in 1994.

Since the period before the advent of democracy in South Africa destined religious communities for South African politics, what message did 1994 communicate to the religious community through the voice of the South African Council of Churches (SACC)? Now that theological scholars accuse SACC of being silent, weak, voiceless and soft, how has this Council of churches from 1994 – 2016, 2017 respectively changed its scope of dealing with the socio-politics of South Africa? Basically, this study is an attempt to understand the role

played by churches through the voice of the SACC in South African politics in the light of the recent political events in South Africa. Thus, it is the intention of this research to investigate how, since the attainment of democracy in South Africa, the SACC has changed its approach to politics in South Africa or the manner in which this ecumenical council has adopted different methods towards South African politics. Further to this, underlying this research is the test of claims by most scholars that since the advent of democracy in 1994 the SACC has become weak in its approach and very silent in South Africa or has been captured by prominent politicians in South Africa. De Gruch points out that one of the problems with the SACC is that its work is sometimes not seen or forgotten simply because it “seems less newsworthy to the media” in South Africa, but in spite of this challenge, the SACC has always been involved in various community projects. Thus the problem that this dissertation seeks to address is to pinpoint the voice of the SACC within South African political context since it has been lost as most theological scholars thought it difficult to locate it in the translation of democracy into reality in South Africa (de Gruchy 2005:113).

1.6 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Having briefly introduced the SACC, this research has three objectives at heart. The first objective is to study the background and nature of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), evaluate its historical reactions towards South African politics since its establishment up to the year 1994 and beyond. Secondly, learn how SACC changed its scope in dealing with South African politics. Lastly, this study seeks to prove that the South African Council of Churches (SACC) has always been vocal and relevant in South Africa. Accordingly, the SACC has succeeded in its objectives, which are as follows:

1. To give expression to the Lordship of Christ over every aspect and area of human life by promoting the spiritual, social, intellectual and physical welfare of all people (SACC 1997).
2. To assist the church, wherever situated, to carry out its mission in and to the world (SACC 1997).

The central aim of this study is to ultimately prove that the South African Council of Churches (SACC) in its capacity has never failed the task of being the legitimate voice of the people of South Africa, and has always done so through its conference resolutions, letters to the South African public and executive committee statements (SACC 1997:3). Secondly, it is important

to analyse the involvement of this Council (SACC) through the critical evaluation of the three presidential periods in South Africa:

1. The “**transitional era** of Nelson Mandela¹” – the role played by the SACC in ensuring that South Africa experience the most peaceful transition from the apartheid government to the democratic government in South Africa.
2. The “**settlement era** of Thabo Mbeki² (the former President of South Africa)” – the role played by this organisation (SACC) in ensuring that democracy manifest or materialise exactly at a level promised by the new government in 1994.
3. The **controversial era** of Jacob Zuma³ (the current sitting president of South Africa) – the reaction of the SACC towards different controversies during the time of Jacob Zuma in presidential office, how this council attempted to raise awareness towards churches and South African society in general, on issues causing both serious political and economic instability in South Africa.

Now that we are more than 20 years into democracy, the pertinent question asks, is the SACC still playing its role of being a moral affirmer of political deeds in South Africa? And with this being the case, it is the intention of this research to evaluate the manner in which the SACC within its identity of being more than just a vehicle for church unity in South Africa prior the year 1994, to determine how this Council became so deeply involved in South African politics to a point where it displayed an undoubted and total political activism in South Africa during those years (1968 – 1994)? And what was the motive behind this whole display, what really

¹Nelson Mandela was born in 1918 in South Africa, was one of the founding members of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL), he was convicted under the Terrorism Act in 1963 and was imprisoned until 1990. He led the ANC negotiations with the National Party (NP) government which led to the first multiracial elections of 1994. On 10 May 1994 he was inaugurated as the first black president of the Republic of South Africa until 1999. He died peacefully at his home in 2013 December 05
<https://www.nelsonmandela.org/content/page/learners-biography>

²Thabo Mbeki was born in 1942, in 1962 Thabo Mbeki left South Africa while under apartheid to work for the African National Congress (ANC) in different countries. Nelson Mandela chose him to be his Deputy Vice President of South Africa in 1994, in 1999 he was elected as state president of South Africa and resigned in 2008 (Clark & Worger 2013) https://my.aui.ma/ICS/icsfs/Clark_Worger-South_Africa_The_Rise_Fall_of_Apa.pdf?target=9c1558a1-d579-4092-95c9-3515d0e3fb3d

³Jacob Zuma was born in 1942, joined the African National Congress in 1959, spent ten years on Robben Island and worked for the ANC in South Africa and abroad between the years 1970 and 1980, in 1990 he became chairperson of the ANC in the Natal region and the following year was elected as the General Secretary of the ANC. In 2002 he was implicated in a corruption scandal with Schabir Shaik, he served as deputy president of South Africa from 1999 – 2005, in 2005 was accused of rape, he was elected as president of South Africa in 2009 and resigned from office on 14 February 2018 <https://www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/jacob-zuma-5623.php>

motivated this council to take the “Moses” position and lead the oppressed Israelites (South Africans) out of Egypt (Apartheid) into the Promised Land (Democracy)? Now more than 20years into democracy, has this Council ensured the safe arrival of this Nation into the Promised Land? And more than anything, is South Africa today a total reflection of what the SACC imagined ahead of 1994 to being the Promised Land? And if not, what then has the SACC done so far in South Africa to ensure that indeed this nation arrives at the Promised Land? Thus, this whole research aims at evaluating the work done by the SACC post-1994 to ensure that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, Black and White together in harmony.

1.7 VALUE OF THE STUDY (WHY)

The question at the heart of this aspect is whether or not the outcome of this investigation will assist in finding lasting solutions towards social problems facing our societies? Especially in the light of recent political issues in South Africa. In 1995 at the National conference of SACC, Mr. Tokyo Sexwale, a former senior leader in the ANC, asked the church to remain vigilant and be sure to hold the new government accountable on promises it made on the advent of democracy in 1994. He is quoted to have said, “please – you must squat in our offices if we are not providing shelter to the people”. He further pleaded “the church must keep close to us as saliva on the tongue. If you forsake us, if you abandon us – we will sin; we are just human” (Bently 2013:4). Papenfus (1996) agrees with this action in his political reflection when he said “Today there is much emphasis on accountability. Christian communities are part of the electorate of Christian public representative. They should make sure that their voices are heard. They must hold those representatives accountable” (Papenfus 1996:41)

Reading in retrospect all that has been written about South African politics and the case of SACC so far has brought forward the realisation that indeed something is missing from the narrative of South African politics and churches. One notices that fresh information regarding the voice of the church through the SACC has come to light, that there are new perceptions in terms of how the church relates and even engages politics in South Africa, given the change of political events since the presidency of Jacob Zuma in 2009. This dissertation is needed to make sense of the South African political story in relation to the voice of the church through the South African Council of Churches (SACC).

This study seeks to realise sheltered truths about the role of the church through the SACC towards current politics. This research further intends to uncover both old and new challenges

facing the South African Council of Churches in dealing with South African issues, particularly within the political context of South Africa. At the same, time this research will try and outline practical and implementable solutions which are required for the realisation of a better South Africa for all and even leads to the identification of topics that should inform future South African religio-political discussions.

In the end, this research will show that the South African Council of Churches played and should continue to play an important role in South African politics, particularly within the socio-political life of the people of South Africa. And more than anything, this dissertation seeks to challenge the South African Council of Churches to realise its worth and even encourages the church, in particular, to rise to the task of rebuilding South Africa the only way it was imagined by the church through the SACC prior to the advent of democracy in 1994. The year 1994 was the most defining moment for the SACC since it found itself at the crossroad and had to choose whether to be the church of the past or the future of South Africa.

1.8 MAIN QUESTIONS GUIDING THE STUDY

It is important for this study to outline a set of questions that prompt the importance of this research. This will assist in guiding the study towards finding correct answers and formulating true conclusions.

1. What role did the South African Council of Churches play in the struggle against apartheid?
2. If the South African Council of Churches has become weaker in its dealings with South African politics, what could have contributed to this weakening of a once glorious ecumenical council? Is the South African Council of Churches really silent?
3. How did the South African Council of Churches change its scope in dealing with South African politics since the attainment of democracy in 1994?

1.9 CHAPTER ARRANGEMENT

Chapter one will give the introduction to the study, provide the research methodology and theoretical framework according to which this study will be conducted. This chapter will further provide the hypothesis and problem statement upon which this research is based, and will also deal with the main aims and objectives of this study.

Chapter two will provide the background to religion and politics in South Africa, with particular focus on South Africa's socio-political structure before 1994, and how religion shaped South African politics during those years, particularly Christian Churches through the voice of the South African Council of Churches (SACC). Further, this chapter will look at the manner in which South African churches became the only hope and centre of politics, as well as set out the value of this study which highlights the importance of this research during the new dispensation in South Africa.

Chapter three will focus more on the historical background of ecumenical councils in South Africa. These councils include the International Missional Council (IMC), World Council of Churches (WCC), General Mission Conference (GMC) and Christian Institute (CI) culminating into the historical background of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) at the time when it was called the Christian Council of Churches (CCSA). Further, this chapter provides a brief history of the SACC member churches.

Chapter four will deal extensively with the South African Council of Churches under the apartheid regime and how it redefined its relationship under the new democratic government in 1994. It will further provide the introduction and the historical background of the South African Council of Churches. This chapter will also deal with the works of the SACC during the apartheid era of South Africa and its involvement in South African politics. This will be done by reflecting on the Sharpeville massacre, the Cottesloe consultation and the Soweto uprising in 1976. This chapter will further focus on the drafting statements that stood in opposition to apartheid such as a message to the people of South Africa, how apartheid was declared to be heresy and sin by churches in South Africa. Lastly, this chapter will deal with the probe of the Eloff commission into SACC affairs, the bombing of the SACC headquarters and the poisoning of the SACC General Secretary Rev. Frank Chikane.

Chapter Five will deal with how the SACC fared under the democratic government in South Africa, forms of injustices such as xenophobia, and the Nkandla saga under President Jacob Zuma. As a matter of importance, this chapter will deal with issues that led to the weakening

of the SACC in South African politics. Lastly, it will discuss the work of the SACC especially with regard to allegations of State Capture in South Africa and the SACC conference resolutions regarding the state of politics in South Africa.

Chapter Six will provide the conclusion of this dissertation, which will be based on researched findings and will also provide recommendations on how further research should be pursued into completing the narrative of the South African Council of Churches. Lastly, this chapter will seek to formulate some form of directives which will give a guide to South African Council of Churches (SACC) in how to play a more meaningful role within the political life of South Africa.

1.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter briefly introduced the South African Council of Churches by describing its work in South Africa since its establishment in 1968, laid down research methodology outlining various methods to be used in investigating the SACC and such methods include the heuristic method and hermeneutical tradition. It has further identified the theoretical framework as being founded upon the relationship between religion and politics, thus sociology of religion as understood by Hamilton (2001). This chapter has further provided definitions of various key terms which will be continually used in this research and such terms include religion, church and democracy. It also hypothesised that the alleged silence and absence of the SACC, its diminished position and exclusion in South African politics has led to the failure of South African politicians and ordinary South African citizens to grasp and experience democracy as envisioned ahead of 1994 and this came as a result of the SACC changing its scope in dealing with South African politics since 1994 as captured under the problem statement. Lastly, the aims and objectives of this study have been outlined.

CHAPTER 2 : THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND POLITICS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Studies have been conducted to investigate the role of churches through the voice of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) in South African politics prior to and post 1994. Various researchers such as Resane (2017) and Kgatle (2018) have criticised the South African Council of Churches (SACC) on its silence and even lack of action in maintaining critical solidarity with the South African government post-1994. In the words of Resane (2017) South African Council of Churches (SACC) “has undoubtedly gone through a serious slump and decline, lacking leadership and losing credibility” (Resane 2017:2). Contrary to this views, Leigh in his study that seeks to uncover and bring out the full understanding of the concept of “critical solidarity” and the manner in which this concept has been operationalised by the SACC concludes by stating that the SACC has successfully managed to maintain its commitment of being in a critical solidarity with the new government of South Africa (Leigh 2005:1). Similarly, Göranzon (2010) states that through the reading of texts we have seen that the SACC continues the fight after 1994 and the target has changed from apartheid to racism in general, and xenophobia, tribalism, etc. (Göranzon 2010:256). Scholars of various disciplines in South Africa acknowledges that South Africa is facing a serious political catastrophe under the corrupt government of African National Congress (ANC) , which, if not dealt with accordingly, has the potential to take the country back to its undesirably painful past (some form of oppression and dictatorship). In 1996. From the point of departure of this reflection, theological scholars seem to be asking one question: where is the church in this catastrophe? Where is the voice of the South African Council of Churches (SACC)? This very question is what this study seeks to address in the end and ultimately locate the voice of South African Council of Churches.

2.2 RELIGION SHAPING POLITICS IN SOUTH AFRICA

A leader of the ANC in the Western Cape (Rasool 2002: 1) in his article speaks of the important role played by religion in South Africa post-1994. He further states that the role played by religious communities in South African politics up to 1994 was undisputed, and this gave rise to a serious debate on the new role that church in South Africa should play under the new

regime. Rasool observes that in consideration of what happened in New York and Washington DC in 2001 September 11⁴ which left everyone thinking that the relation between religion and politics is bad and should be avoided at all costs. Contrary to this feeling, Kumalo (2009) argues that since denominational conclaves will leave a vacuum in the politics of the country, the church should continue its involvement in the political life of the country through active participation in the development of a culture of democracy in South Africa.

Leigh (2005) acknowledges the role played by the South African Council of Churches (SACC) in raising the “voice of the voiceless” during apartheid in South Africa and further alludes to the commitment by the South African Council of Churches in 1995 to continue the critical solidarity role with the South African government. This investigation seeks to uncover and bring out the full understanding of the concept of “critical solidarity” and the manner in which it is operationalised, this is achieved through comparing the role of the SACC and the SACBC (South African Catholic Bishops Conference) on HIV and Aids, debt and Zimbabwe (Leigh 2005:13). He concludes his investigation by stating that the SACC has successfully managed to maintain its commitment (Leigh 2005:1) and that if these two councils (SACC and SACBC) were to merge resources, this will no doubt strengthen the voice of the church in South Africa (Leigh 2005:90). In the light of both the content and context within which the need for this dissertation emerged, it is clear that Leigh dealt with the SACC differently from how this study proposes to deal with it.

According to Banza on his PhD thesis submitted at University of South Africa (UNISA) in June 2013 under the theme “Transforming Africa: The role the church in developing political leaders in Africa” African churches should seek to transform their own leadership in order to set the stage for transformational political leadership. It further extends the proposal of “comprehensive socio-political discipleship for the transformation of both an individual and

⁴ On September 11, 2001, 19 militants associated with the Islamic extremist group al-Qaeda hijacked four airplanes and carried out suicide attacks against United States. Two of the planes were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, a third plane hit the Pentagon just outside Washington, D.C., and the fourth plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. Because of these attacks 2,996 people were killed, and over 6,000 people were injured, and caused at least \$10 billion in infrastructure and property damage. Additional people died of 9/11-related cancer and respiratory diseases in the months and years following the attacks. <https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/9-11-attacks>

communities”. In a nutshell, Banza’s thesis dealt more with the development of leadership for transformative tasks in Africa. This study evaluates and investigates aims of the church in contributing to the leadership development from “a political-theological perspective”. One question posed by his research is ”what role can the church play to contribute to the development of political leadership for the transformation of Africa?” and the word “church” refers to African Protestant churches such as Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, etc. Banza’s research investigates the contribution by organisations such as African Operation (AO) working for the development of an African leadership for social transformation, and it further investigates the role of TMALI (Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute). This study aims chiefly at defending Christianity by showing its relevance to the question of transformation in Africa, while at the same time he makes use of his study to criticise and reject what he calls “Narrow form of Christianity” (Banza 2013: 1-16).

2.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND POLITICS IN SOUTH AFRICA

John de Gruchy, in an essay focusing on a relationship between politics and Christianity under the theme “Christianity and Democratization”, speaks of the South African period of transition into democracy as a permanent condition, calling democracy a “narrative of an argument”. And in bringing politics and Christianity closer he mentions aspects of Christ’s ministry which demonstrated his political significance: 1. The manner in which Christ continually challenged the authoritarian and patriarchal patterns of Judaism leadership, 2. How Christ was very much concerned about the wholeness of humanity, always seeking to provide humanity with freedom from any form of bondage that appeared to be destroying the quality of life. 3. Lastly, he talks about how Christ openly challenged both the social and economic injustices and even confronted political and religious authorities of his time (de Gruchy 1995: 396 – 397). On the Christian role in combating the system of apartheid de Gruchy expresses a conviction that without the intervention by the Christian community democracy would not have taken place in South Africa. In the end, de Gruchy emphasises that Christianity should continue to contribute to the task of democratic transformation in South Africa (de Gruchy 1995:412). He further states “even if we eventually have a legitimate system in South Africa the struggle for the ideals of the reign of God will not stop” (de Gruchy 1995:409). In a similar way, Resane (2017) argues in favour of God’s word and church involvement in South African politics as important tools to bring about true transformation in South Africa.

2.4 CHURCHES AS THE ONLY HOPE OF SOUTH AFRICA

Father Patrick Noonan (2003) has written a book titled “They are burning the Churches”. In this book, he gives a historical record which seeks to clarify misconceptions regarding the role played by churches in South Africa during the struggle against apartheid. The argument presented in this book is that even though not much credit is given to South African churches for the role they played during apartheid, church communities and their leaders are the ones who encouraged and protected South African people who were caught in the fire of the apartheid regime at a time such as the Sharpeville six trial, the church was there to comfort communities and called for the release of the Sharpeville six (Noonan 2003:43-50), during the 1984 uprising the church stood side by side with communities and condemned the evil doings of apartheid against black people and even gave hope to the people of South Africa up to the fall of apartheid in 1994. Patrick Noonan stresses that the churches of South Africa never left the people in the struggle against apartheid, to a point where Father Patrick himself and other clergymen were arrested (Noonan 2003:238). This account further features much of the work of South African Council of Churches (SACC), for instance, how the SACC representatives have always been present in the life of the communities in South Africa (Noonan 2003:85). So it remains the task of this dissertation to lay a strong foundation for literature accounts such as this one in order to complete the narrative regarding the role played by the SACC and churches in South African politics.

Kumalo (2014) focuses specifically on the impact of mainline churches on the social and political context of South Africa as a symbol of hope for South Africans during the apartheid era and post-apartheid. He evaluates both the political and social context of South Africa and the manner in which South African churches have related to the new political context of South Africa still as symbol of hope for true democracy in South Africa. This paper further looks into the rapid growth and proliferation of Christian churches under the forces of globalisation. Consequently, his article seeks to respond to the question of whether the churches in South Africa post-1994 have remained an asset in a sense of giving hope to South Africans or burden to the new political context of South Africa (Kumalo 2014: 220 – 230).

To take this further, Göransson (2010) speaks of “The prophetic ministry of hope discourse”, his thesis is aimed at studying the manner in which the prophetic voice of the South African Council of Churches especially with regard to the democratisation of South Africa since the

year 1990 (Göranzon 2010: 1) and central to this thesis is the discussion on an idea of the “prophetic voice” from the Old Testament, New Testament and church history perspectives, the manner in which the prophetic voice emerged and utilised by the churches in South Africa to give hope to the oppressed. It further shows how the whole concept of the “prophetic voice” relates to the concept of “reconciliation”, particularly within “apartheid – democracy” in the South African context. In the end, this research redirects the focus to the role played by the South African Council of Churches on the issues of HIV and Aids and its response towards the Zimbabwe crises which existed between 1995 and 1996 (Göranzon 2010:125). In the light of both the content and context within which the need for this dissertation emerged, it is clear that Göranzon dealt with the SACC differently from how this dissertation seeks to engage the investigation of the South African Council of Churches. Thus, maintaining that the church in South Africa has remained the symbol of hope through a succession of years even since the advent of democracy in 1994. This study will employ the “Church” of South Africa as represented by the South African Council of Churches as the only living sign of hope in South Africa. Thus, it is important in this background for this study to advance the argument that the South African Council of Churches (SACC) has remained the symbol of hope for the marginalised and the oppressed people of South Africa. This is captured nicely by Pillay (2017) “The SACC, consisting of 26 member churches, in particular, played a very vital role in the dismantling of apartheid. It became the spiritual home for the oppressed and poor as it gave hope and support to families of those who were killed in prison or while in exile (Pillay 2017:1).

2.5 CHURCHES BECOME POLITICAL CENTRES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Most churches in South Africa left their footprint in the hearts of South African communities during the apartheid era after opening their doors and giving shelter to many political activists. This way the South African churches had not only become a spiritual tool but more of political hope for most black people in South Africa during apartheid. From the time when the African National Congress (ANC) and other active political movements were banned by the South African apartheid government, churches such as Waaihoek Wesleyan Church and Regina Mundi Catholic Church played a significant role in protecting both political activists and the people of South Africa against the harsh treatment of the apartheid government (Oliver 2016:1).

2.6 WAAIHOEK CHURCH AS THE ANC BIRTH-PLACE



The Waaihoek church - picture by Madelene Cronje, M&G

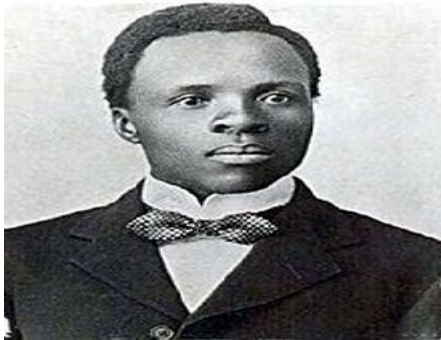
The Wesleyan Church in Waaihoek in Bloemfontein is the birth-place of the African National Congress which was formed in 1912 on 8 January 1912. Black delegations from four provinces in South Africa met in Waaihoek in Bloemfontein to propose means to object to the South African Act which sought to exclude Africans from meaningful political participation. This meeting was the most important meeting in the history of South Africa since it was the first joint meeting by black representatives from four provinces and marked the birth of the ANC. Amongst the delegates were celebrated leaders of the ANC such as Rev. John Dube, Sol Plaatje and Pixley ka Isaka.



Josiah Tshangana Gumede⁵



John Langalibalele Dube⁶



Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje⁷



Pixley ka Isaka Seme⁸

On this historic day (8 January) in 1912, at the Waaihoek Wesleyan Church in Bloemfontein ANC historic leaders such as Josiah Tshangana Gumede, John Langalibalele Dube, Pixley ka Isaka Seme and Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje founded the African National Congress (ANC), then called the South African Native National Congress (SANNC).

⁵ Josiah Tshangana Gumede was born on 9 October 1867 in Healdtown village, Fort Beaufort in the present-day Eastern Cape and died on 6 November 1946

⁶ John Langalibalele Dube was born on 11 February 1871 in Natal at the Inanda mission station of the American Zulu Mission (AZM) and died on 1917 at the age of 44

⁷ Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje was born on 9 October 1876 in Doornfontein near Boshof, Orange Free State (now Free State Province, South Africa) and died on 19 June 1932 (aged 55)

⁸ Pixley ka Isaka Seme was born on 1 October 1881 in Inanda mission station of the American Zulu Mission of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and died on 7 June 1951

2.7 REGINA MUNDI CHURCH GIVES SHELTER TO POLITICAL ACTIVISTS



Regina Mundi Catholic Church, Picture by Gauteng Tourism Authority

Regina Mundi is Latin words for “Queen of the world”, which refers to the Virgin Mary. The Regina Mundi Catholic church was officially opened on 24 July 1962 in the township of Soweto at Moroka as the largest Catholic Church in South Africa with the capacity to seat about 2000 people. The Regina Mundi Church was founded shortly or a year after the Republic of South Africa was founded on 31 May 1961 (Oliver 2016:2) which introduced 30 years of apartheid laws enforcement in South Africa and it was during this very time that the ANC decided to embark on an armed struggle against the national government.

During the apartheid era, the Regina Mundi Catholic Church welcomed anti-apartheid groups and gave shelter to anti-apartheid activists, hence it received the name “the people’s church” or “the people’s cathedral” in 1964 after ANC leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Walter

Sisulu was sentenced to life imprisonment following the Rivonia trial⁹ which took place between 09 October 1963 and 12 June 1964. As the ANC was banned in South Africa they made use of the Regina Mundi Church as a place of gathering and to organise their secret missions (Oliver 2016:3). Regina Mundi opened its doors and gave shelter to political activists who were on constant run from the South African Apartheid police. The police would follow these activists into the church and fire live ammunition. Many were injured and the church itself was damaged badly and left marks on its walls (Oliver 2016:4). The Regina Mundi church continues to be used by different organisations to advance nation-building projects. On 18 May 2017, the South African Council of Churches made use of this church to present its report which pointed to the reality of corruption within South African government and the alleged State Capture (Cezula 2017:20). Following these accounts on Regina Mundi Church, it becomes difficult to dismiss the claim that Churches such as Regina Mundi gave shelter to the people of South Africa in times of need.

2.8 IS THE CHURCH REALLY SILENT IN SOUTH AFRICA?

In his 2016 article, Resane expresses his concern over the silence of the church in South African politics since 1994. Under the theme “The glory had departed in post-apartheid South Africa” he acknowledges the historical fact that during apartheid in South Africa the church’s prophetic voice could be heard through the South African Council of Churches (SACC). Further, he emphasises that the voice of the church in those years was more vocal and audible under the charismatic leadership of church leaders such as Desmond Tutu, Beyers Naudé, Peter Storey, Frank Chikane and many others (Resane 2016:3) to add on this Pillay (2017) said “Prior to 1994, the SACC was an incredibly strong organisation which boasted clarity of vision and theological grounding in its work. It had a strong sense of purpose and direction embedded in an authentic prophetic voice of the oppressed and voiceless (Pillay 2017:1-2).

⁹ The Rivonia Trial took place in South Africa between 9 October 1963 and 12 June 1964. This trial led to the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela, Ahmed Kathrada, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Walter Sisulu, Elias Motsoaledi and the others among the accused who were convicted of sabotage and sentenced to life in prison. The Rivonia Trial was named after Rivonia, the suburb of Johannesburg where leaders had been arrested.

Resane (2016) then shows the difference between three consecutive presidential eras in South Africa since the attainment of democracy in 1994. Firstly, he outlines the era of Nelson Mandela, how he publically acknowledged the immense contribution and the role played by various churches in South Africa during the liberation struggle (Resane 2016:4). Secondly, he looks at the era of Thabo Mbeki, and how he often gathered various religious leaders and sought to involve them in issues of nation-building, reconciliation, and poverty eradication, social and moral deliverance. He further highlights that Thabo Mbeki, during his time as the president of the Republic, criticised churches for not speaking out on issues facing the country since the attainment of democracy in 1994. Lastly, on the era of President Jacob Zuma, Resane expresses the concern that “one hardly hears from these ecclesiastical formations, any prophetic voice rebuking the wayward conduct of politicians and political leaders” (Resane 2016:6), then touches on how some Christian leaders expressed their concern to the government leadership about the level of corruption in South Africa. However, such initiatives were met by rejection from some leaders within the ruling party (ANC). In particular Gwede Mantashe, the then ANC Secretary-General, called such initiatives “mischievous” and “vitriolic”. One can employ biblical scripture and conclude that indeed “the stone which the builders rejected as worthless turned out to be the most important of all” (Luke 20:17). In this part of his article, he raises the worrying concern that the church is conspicuous by her silence since it has lost its prophetic voice and vision (Resane 2016:7). Meanwhile, according to Kgatle (2018) SACC’s Prophetic voice has been weak on national challenges and recent events such as Marikana, State capture and Fees must fall, by “weak prophetic voice” Kgatle refers to a voice which according to him responds only to media without confronting situations (Kgatle 2018:2). One would be justified to ask “what method did Kgatle (2018) make use of to arrive at a conclusion that the prophetic voice of the SACC is “soft and weak”? Since contrary to his observations, firstly on the question of Marikana, the report of Marikana commission of inquiry records that Bishop Jo Seoka the then SACC president (2010-2014) was amongst the first people to arrive at the Koppie Enkel¹⁰ to speak to the strikers, who upon speaking to them (striking miners) asked

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Koppie Enkel is a hill and is located at Dr. Ruth Segomotsi Mompati Municipality, North-West and this is where the Marikana miners had gathered on 16 August 2012. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marikana_killings. Accessed on 13 July 2018.

him (Bishop Seoka) to speak to the Lonmin management on their behalf (Farlam 2015:206-207). Thus, on that very sad eventful day, SACC was in Marikana, present with the striking miners. Beyond the question of Marikana, News24 of 2016 October 19 reveal that the African National Congress ANC accused Bishop Seoka and SACC of encouraging Fees Must Fall violence. Thus it is grossly unfair and strange that scholars like Kgatle (2018) points to the question of Marikana, Fees Must Fall and state capture (an aspect which is covered in chapter five of this dissertation) as the bases to argue for the weak prophetic voice of the SACC.

Bentley in his 2013 illuminating article makes an effort to investigate and explore shifts in the church's social and political standing in South Africa. His paper is more focused upon two investigative themes: 1. The prophetic witness and 2. The Kingdom of God. It seeks to argue how the church should express prophetic witness within both the social and political environment of South Africa in order for it to remain true and relevant to its call and to the people of South Africa at large. Secondly, he draws attention to the fact that the church has historically adopted an understanding that it is within its own right to speak or stand against any conduct or regime which seeks to undermine and contradict the will of God as it should be on earth as it is in heaven (kingdom of God) in its present reality. To build more on this argument he further draws from the work of Brueggemann, the understanding that prophetic ministry must address public crises, in season and out of season, and on this point the life and work of Moses, his obedience and submission to the will of God facilitated the transformative period of the people of Israel. However, he admittedly outlines the main limitation of tradition in our modern day, that current modern society does not function in the same manner as in the world encountered in both the Old and New Testament scriptures and that the style and fashion of prophetic witness as presented through the Old and New Testament might not be acknowledged positively by society that seeks diversity, complexity, and tolerance within the democratic *Sitz im Leben*, and on this he asks a fundamental question: what authority does the church have to speak? Is there any social recognition for the church to speak? Or has the South African socio-politics destroyed and abolished any possible platform from which the church is able to communicate and convey the message of God?

Bentley (2013) is of the view that the church in South Africa has lost its political relevance and social standing with the advent of constitutional democracy, which gave equal rights and platform to all faith communities in South Africa including Christianity. Secondly, many members of the church who fought against apartheid moved to occupy senior positions in government, including members of the SACC. Lastly, he points to the fact that at the time of

transition the church suffered what he terms “unhealed wounds of division”, which made it impossible for the church to be the forerunner of reconciliation and reconstruction (Bentley 2013:1-7). The question left unanswered by Bentley (2013), is in what precise manner the voice of the church through SACC has been marginalised by the advent of constitutional democracy which accorded the same rights to faith communities.

In 2005 Stephen Coertze submitted his master’s thesis under the title “Challenges facing the African church: South African theologians speak out”. In his introduction, he starts off with the question at the heart of the inquiry of this thesis: “Is the church speaking?” He highlights the historical fact that in South Africa’s past situation of apartheid the church as a whole played a pivotal role in speaking out against powers that endeavoured to refuse African people their heritage right. The church took it upon itself to provide theological meaning and answers to such crises. However, he points to the most disturbing concern that history seems to be repeating itself, in a sense that Africa seems to be experiencing a greater leadership crisis which, if left untouched and unchallenged, would certainly lead to devastating effects for Africa as a whole. Contrary to the historical role played by the church during the political crisis in South Africa, now with challenges facing Africa as a whole, the vigorous voice of the church seems to be dying a slow death. It is worth mentioning here that when Coertze speaks of the church in Africa, he does so on a continental level and not in a specific context. He makes use of selected theologians from the pool of South Africa’s churches, who have spoken through different means to and against issues facing African churches (Coertze 2005:2-23). As much as he has written on an interesting subject, his thesis focus is too broad and general at the same time. He attempted to analyse the churches’ response towards issues and challenges facing the African church, but he did so from the churches’ perspective as opposed to the socio-political perspective. With regard to South African Council of Churches (SACC) and South African socio-political context, one would be justified to level an argument against the views that SACC is silent, weak and soft in democratic South Africa. Having achieved democracy in 1994 positioned South Africa on a different political platform. Under apartheid, the right to vote was denied to black people and consequently, they (South Africans) could not make their voices to be heard. However, **1994 gave the voiceless of South Africa a voice** to speak and be heard through ballot paper. By voting African National Congress (ANC) into power since 1994, South African people have said their choice. One cannot continue to see people who keep voting ANC into power as the “voiceless”. Voiceless people ended with apartheid in 1994, under democracy South Africans have the right to voice their choices.

2.9 THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA (TRC)

To give a fair and complete evaluation of what role churches in South Africa did and should play together with other faith communities, it is important that one recognises the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). During the hearings, various churches and faith communities appeared before the commission to make submissions of what role these communities played during the apartheid era. In the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the moment of faith communities at the commission was a highlight of the TRC Programme (Meiring 2005).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was instituted by the government to assist with hearings of what really happened under apartheid and this was based on the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995. However, Pheko (1996:55) advocates that this commission was established on a wrong premise since it puts both the freedom fighters and the perpetrators of crime against humanity in the same room. According to him, this Commission drifted South Africa from the possibility of attaining true democracy that is based on a just system where there is punishment for any form of crime against humanity. Gibson and Gouws (1999) capture this by saying “the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, with the power to grant amnesty, was the price the liberation forces had to pay in order to rule (Gibson and Gouws 1999:502). They further alluded to the arguments held by many who contended that both convention and international law forbade any granting of amnesty in cases of crimes against humanity, torture and similar offences, these very acts were constitutionalized in South Africa through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

According to Act 34 of 1995, the task of the Commission was:

To provide for the investigation and the establishment of the complete a picture as possible of the nature, causes and extent of gross violations of human rights committed during the period from 1 March 1960 to the cut-off date contemplated in the Constitution, within or outside the Republic, emanating from the conflicts of the past, and the fate or whereabouts of the victims of such violations; the granting of amnesty to persons who make full disclosure of all the relevant facts relating to acts associated with a political objective committed in the course of the conflicts of the past during the said period; affording victims an opportunity to relate the violations they suffered; the taking of measures aimed at the granting of reparation to, and the rehabilitation and the

restoration of the human and civil dignity of, victims of violations of human rights; reporting to the Nation about such violations and victims; the making of recommendations aimed at the prevention of the commission of gross violations of human rights; and for the said purposes to provide for the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, comprising a Committee on Human Rights Violations, a Committee on Amnesty and a Committee on Reparation and Rehabilitation; and to confer certain powers on, assign certain functions to and impose certain duties upon that Commission and those Committees; and to provide for matters connected therewith.¹¹

The Commission had requested different organisations to submit statements at its 140 hearings held in various parts of South Africa and the faith communities were heard at the very last of these hearings. Different denominational pastors, priests, reverends, bishops, and many other faith community leaders were each given the opportunity to tell the stories of their communities and in total, about 41 communities were represented by various leaders at the hearings (Meiring 2005). Each submission was aligned towards answering the following four questions:

1. To what extent has the community or its members suffered under apartheid?
2. Was the community or its members involved in the struggle?
3. Did communities overtly or covertly support the apartheid system?
4. What contribution is the community planning to provide towards the process of nation-building and reconciliation?

At the end of the proceedings, the TRC compiled a report consisting of five volumes¹² comprising a written account of what happened during and under apartheid.

¹¹<http://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/acts/1995-034.pdf>

¹²<http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/report/>

2.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an introduction to the relationship between religion and politics and the manner in which religion shaped politics in South Africa. Secondly, it has illustrated the specific relationship between religions, Christianity in particular and politics in South Africa which resulted in churches becoming the only hope in South Africa during the years of struggle against apartheid and how churches were used as political centres in South Africa. This focused on churches such as the Waaihoek Church as the birthplace of the African National Congress, the Regina Mundi Church which provided shelter to political activists during apartheid in South Africa. This chapter concluded by asking one question at the heart of this study, “is the church really silent in South Africa?” as the accusation is levelled by academic scholars. And lastly, this chapter discussed the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa.

CHAPTER 3 : HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE SACC

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Ahead of the establishment of the SACC in South Africa, there were already a number of ecumenical councils which played an important role in the founding of the SACC or influenced the establishment of this organisation. Thus, in order to fully understand the function and the role played by the SACC in the South African socio-political context, it is important that we briefly look at these predecessors of the SACC in South Africa since they all played an important role in the formation of this organisation.

3.2 INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL

In 1910, which is the same year that the 1910 Union of South Africa¹³ came into being, a world missionary conference was held in Edinburgh, Scotland. This conference was aimed at bringing different missionary societies together to ensure greater impact on non-Christian people; further to unite missionary activities and establish churches because there was no unity of missionary activities and established churches at that time. During 1910 and before and many subsequent years, missionary societies were not tied to any specific denominations. Mission societies were for missionary activities among non-believers while established churches held faithful communities together as per particular denominational beliefs.

Early functions of the International Mission Council (IMC) were to study mission problems and disseminate information; to unite Christians across the world; to organise the world mission conferences and to coordinate missionary activities. The 1910 conference had concluded it was necessary to form an international committee to serve as a medium of communication between all missionary societies and the Edinburgh continuation committee was formed which became the International Missionary Council (IMC). Even though the IMC consisted mainly of

¹³ The 1910 Union of South Africa refers to the Act of Union in 1910 which brought together the previously separated colonies of the Transvaal, Orange Free State, and the Cape to form the Union of South Africa.

missionary societies, there were a considerable number of established churches in its membership, and this was the first international ecumenical body. The IMC was associated with the World Council of Churches (WCC) in the 1930s and only in 1961 did it become the WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism.

3.3 WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (WCC)

Sjollema (1994) in his essay notes that long before the establishment of the World Council of Churches (WCC) there were already a number of Christian movements that had spoken out against racism in South Africa, movements such as the Student Christian Movements (SCM) and International Missionary Council (IMC) from as early as the 1920s.

The history of the WCC goes as far back as January 1919 when the proposal was made in the Holy Synod of the church of Constantinople and the decision was taken to invite all Christian churches to form a league of churches.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) was established in 1948 in Amsterdam¹⁴, which was the same year the National Party (NP) won the “whites only” elections in South Africa. After the 1960 Sharpeville massacre¹⁵, the WCC in its second assembly decided to look closely into the political situation of South Africa (Mufumadi 2011).

On its third assembly, the WCC became clearer in its condemnation of the apartheid regime. Extensive research on this council seems to validate the view that it was from this third assembly that the WCC sent a message to Christians in South Africa, condemning racial inequality and comforting all Christians who had to live under such rule (Hudson 1977). By 1968, during the fourth assembly in Sweden, the race question was still very much debated as the big topic of the assembly.

¹⁴ Amsterdam is the capital of The Netherlands

¹⁵Tom Lodge in his book “Sharpeville: Apartheid Massacre and its consequences” provides us with a clear political history of the Sharpeville massacre <http://overcomingApartheid.msu.edu/multimedia.php?id=65-259-E>

3.4 GENERAL MISSION CONFERENCE (GMC)

In his thesis, Göranzon (2010) outlines that towards the end of the 19th century Christian conferences were held in South Africa since there was a need to enhance the mission efforts. On 13 July 1904 the General Mission Conference (GMC) met in Johannesburg with the focus on cooperation between the different mission societies. The main concerns of this conference concentrated more on the social situation of its members who lived in South Africa than on changing apartheid.

3.4.1 General Mission Conference of South Africa (GMCSA)

This conference was formed by the representatives from the majority of protestant churches in South Africa and its major aim was, as Duncan (2015:3) puts it, “to watch over the interest of Native races and were necessary to influence legislation on their behalf”. However, he further outlines an interesting point that even though this organisation conferred about the social and political context of black people, blacks and females were not part of this organisation¹⁶.

3.5 THE CHRISTIAN INSTITUTE (CI)

The Christian Institute was founded in 1963 and was officially launched on 15 December 1963 in South Africa. The founding of this institute came as a result of the World Council of Churches compelling its member churches in South Africa to seriously reflect on the road of unity across the colour line, particularly after the Sharpeville Massacre¹⁷ in 1960. The CI was instrumental in bringing together the African Initiated Churches into relation with the mainline churches in South Africa (de Gruchy 2005:105) and established a study project on Christianity on Apartheid South Africa (de Gruchy 2005:106) Accordingly, the WCC convened its member churches for a conference in Cottesloe from 7 to 14 December 1960. This conference had set

¹⁶Duncan and Egan (2015) in their article “The Ecumenical Struggle in South Africa” touch more on both GMCSA and CCSA http://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/52811/Duncan_Ecumenical_2015.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

¹⁷ The Apartheid Police had opened fire on demonstrating residents in Sharpeville which is close to Vereeniging, killing 69, injuring hundreds and putting to prison many (Lodge 2011).

out to seek ways to have the WCC member churches to seriously participate in the fight against apartheid and a resolution adopted at this conference reflected a clear rejection of Biblical and theological justification of apartheid. This way the institute became the greatest disturbing prophetic voice which continually spoke out against the apartheid regime.

One of the leading figures within the CI was Dr. Beyers Naudé. He is one of few white Christians whom the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) forced to choose between the CI and the Church (DRC). Consequently, about eleven DRC theologians denounced racial discrimination (Walshe 1977). According to de Gruchy (2005:108), during his trial in 1973, which was the most important trial of any church leader in South Africa, Beyers Naudé presented the aims and objectives of Christian Institute (CI) as follows:

Firstly - to give a more visible expression of the Biblical truth of the unity of all Christians.

Secondly – to establish a relationship between the truth of the gospel of Christ and the question of human daily existence and even make the meaning of this gospel clearer to members of the Christian community and all who wish to know about it.

Thirdly – this organisation was to act as a group of devoted Christians who seek to bring about reconciliation between disunited Christians who are from different churches and colours in South Africa.

Lastly – to assist all churches in South Africa who seek to give and model the full expression of the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.

3.6 CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA (CCSA)

Out of all the ecumenical councils which helped or motivated the founding of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), the Christian Council of South Africa (CCSA) ought to be given special attention. This organisation was supposedly founded to serve the aim which the SACC fulfilled through being a radical organisation. Göranson (2010) indicates the close relationship this organisation (CCSA) had with both the Christian Institutes (CI) and the South African Council of Churches (SACC). And at the same time, he alludes to the interplay relation of these organisations (CCSA, CI, and SACC) and even shows the manner in which the interplay between the roles of these organisations is often misplaced and misunderstood by many scholars (Göranson 2010: 99).

Since the interrelation between the CCSA and SACC is in question, it is the intention of this research to spend some considerable time on dealing with this organisation (CCSA). However, dealing with this organisation in this chapter might be far removed from the “brief introduction” of ecumenical councils which could be seen as the predecessors of the SACC. For the purpose of this chapter, a brief introduction of the CCSA is given below.

According to Göranson (2010), the CCSA was founded on 24 June 1936 in Bloemfontein¹⁸. The CCSA was founded with the aim of promoting missionary cooperation since this task was important for the unity of different churches in South Africa at that time. It is held that even though this council played a pivotal role in the social arena of South Africa, it was not radical enough so as to address the political situation of that time (Göranson 2010:93).

According to Duncan (2015:8), the establishment of this organisation (CCSA) came as the result of the handing over by the GMCSA, since missionaries hoped that this newly established CCSA would truly defend their values.

3.7 MEMBERSHIP WITHIN THE SACC

In dealing with South African Council of Churches it is important to have a brief background of its member churches in order to develop a comprehensive picture of what and which perspectives the SACC is driven. This will not include all member churches of the SACC.

As one reads and learns more about these members and notice some similar trends which would lead to the formation of these member churches and their splits (schisms) and in the end one will certainly realise that these member churches were formed by people who were completely disgruntled with the political, social and economic situation of South Africa and how the mere formation of these churches was more a resistance to the apartheid regime. as a result churches were divided into black, white, Indian and mixed-race sections. South African Council of Churches currently has 36 member churches in total. However, in the interest of time and space, this study will focus on a few selected member churches.

¹⁸The capital city of Free State (one of the nine provinces of South Africa)

3.7.1 African Methodist Episcopal Church¹⁹

In 1787 some members of the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) such as Rev. Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and many others established an organisation called Free African Society (FAS), the first religious community in Philadelphia which held religious services and even provided mutual aid for free Africans and their descendants in Philadelphia. FAS realised how black people in the Methodist Episcopal Church were racially discriminated against and resolved to transform their mutual aid society into an African congregation. In 1794 Rev. Allen was ordained as a Methodist minister and in 1816 he had established and brought AME regional churches together to form an independent black denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) and was elected as the very first bishop of the AME Church.

In 1892 the AME Church was founded in South Africa by Rev. Mangena Mokone, who was born in the Sekhukhuniland, having fled to Durban after his father was killed in the Swazi war of the year 1863. He met Mrs. Steele who belonged to the Wesley Methodist church, who encouraged him to join both the Sunday and night school provided and facilitated by the Methodist church. Rev. Mangena joined the Wesley Methodist church and later was appointed as a probationary minister. In 1892 he left the church citing racial segregation as his main reason for leaving. He then held a founding service of the Ethiopian Church in South Africa. However, after learning about the AME Church through letters written to him by Charlotte Manya, he then decided to invite them to amalgamate with him and form a South African branch of the AME Church. McKenzie (1996) argues that the AME Church was formed as a response to the oppression of black people in the USA during the 18th century, he argues that even though there was theological differences oppression of black lead to the breakaway of AME from MEC.

¹⁹<https://www.ame-church.com/our-church/our-history/>

3.7.2 Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa

Under the excellent supervision of Prof. John de Gruchy in 1989 from the University of Cape Town, Christian de Vet wrote his PhD. thesis on the Apostolic Faith Mission in Africa (de Vet 1989). Church history records that in 1908 a group of people (more or less 17 people in total) from U.S state of Indiana came to Africa in the name of preaching a full “gospel” and one of these people was John G. Lake who was at that time a former member of the Zion City Apostolic Church. John G. Lake played a significant role in establishing the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) in South Africa. (Kgatle 2017:1-2). By 1913 there were about 625 assemblies established by John Lake in South Africa. However, 25 May 1908 is considered as the birth date of AFM, which started as a black people ministry in Doornfontein, Johannesburg, and within a short period of time, many people had joined the AFM church. For the first time in 1910, the AFM printed their first Baptismal Certificates in various languages, and on 2 August 1913, the AFM church was registered as a company and not a church due to the protests of the mainline churches who declared it to be a sect and not a church. It continued to act under the Companies Act only until 1961, and under the Private Law Number 24 of 1961, it was properly given the church status by the South African government. The name “Apostolic Faith Mission”, is in direct relation to the incredible happenings of Azusa Street in Los Angeles, as the Azusa mission was called “Apostolic Faith Gospel Mission”, hence when John Lake and his group arrived in South Africa they were called Apostolic Faith Missionaries. By 1971 there were a number of independent Pentecostal churches both in South Africa and Africa as a whole, and as soon as the AFM was officially recognised as a church, many of these independent Pentecostal churches sought some form of association and affiliation with the AFM Church since this would give them government recognition as well, and from here on the AFM church grew larger both in South Africa and internationally. Kgatle (2017) excellent article studying the relationship between the South African social politics and the ecclesiastical politics highlights that the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM) was divided into four sections of white, mixed race, Indian and black people with unequal power and responsibilities within AFM church.

3.7.3 Baptist Convention Church

The Baptist Church of South Africa was founded in 1869 by Car Hugo Gutsche, a German Baptist who was in South Africa and the very first German Baptist to work among black people. According to Ntombana (2012), the earliest Baptist church was inaugurated at Salem near Grahamstown in 1820 near East London and was known as Tshabo Mission. In 1877 the Baptist Union of South Africa (BUSA) was established and implemented a programme to reach out to the indigenous people of South Africa with the Gospel, and the second church was only founded in 1895 – 1896 by missionary superintendents J.W Joyce and C.W Pearce (Matshiga 2001:56). The church then extended from Eastern Cape to other parts of South Africa, and in 1927 the Baptist Convention of South Africa was formed as the then Bantu church. The name itself “Bantu Baptist Church” would mark the political space in which this church found itself as the church that belonged to the Bantu people and not to a foreign institution imposed on them by foreign powers. Even though this church initially started as the missionary expression of the South African Baptist missionary society (SABMS) in 1987, the Baptist Convention declared its independence from the union due to the institutional racism the church was experiencing at that time (Matshiga 2001:60). Ntombana argues that the structure of the Baptist Union of South Africa (BUSA) and Baptist Convention of South Africa (BCSA) is a reflection of the racial divisions as instituted by the apartheid government and as a result, black people in the Baptist church were treated as second-class citizens (Ntombana 2012:2). The Baptist Convention Church played a significant role collectively with other churches in the struggle against apartheid. In their submission to the TRC, the Baptist Convention Church highlighted the struggles that the church had within itself to declare apartheid as heresy and even recorded that during apartheid in South Africa. The Baptist church was given political platforms within the state organs to preach the incorrect gospel which in their view stood in opposition to the true gospel of Christ. This form of the gospel called for the slave to fully submit to the masters. However, during the very same proceedings, the church submitted for the record its disgust and dismay with the white Baptist church for its support of the apartheid regime, and the submission further made the request to the TRC Commission to consider investigating the relationship between the white Baptist union church with apartheid security since the Black Baptists in South Africa were of the view that white Baptist Union had played a major role in upholding the apartheid killing machine. To bring more clarity, Hale 2006 argues that the Baptist Union of South Africa (BUSA) changed its voice in South African politics over three phases in a sense that the first phase was before 1948 when BUSA opposed racial discriminatory policies and the second phase was after 1948 when BUSA was rather silent and

reluctant to speak against apartheid. And the last phase was in the 1980s when BUSA openly criticised the apartheid government for its divisive policies (Hale 2006:758 – 759). The Liaison Council was formed in 1985 with the intention to merge and improve the relationship between these two churches. However, after numerous meetings, it became clear that these two churches would not reunite (Ntombana 2012:4). At the end of its submission at the TRC, the Baptist Convention of South Africa (BCSA) expressed its willingness to embrace the white Baptist church only on the grounds that they first find each other and reach a common understanding of their past in South Africa.

3.7.4 Lutheran church

The history of this church goes far deep into the eventful day of 1517 October 31, when Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) nailed his 95 theses on the church of Wittenberg. These theses were originally aimed at provoking serious discussion among the Wittenberg scholars. However, they stirred so much trouble for Luther on the one hand, but on the other hand, these theses brought together the masses who saw Luther as their champion and public hero, and this movement evolved from a mere religious community to a political community. Gradually worship communities and doctrinal innovations advocated by Luther emerged in many of the German States and eventually the Lutheran church was formed.

3.7.5 Lutheran Church of South Africa

Shortly after Jan Van Riebeeck arrived in the Cape in 1652, a number of German Lutherans arrived to settle in the Colony. The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) gave them permission to take part in their church services but not to start their own Lutheran church. Only by the latter part of the 18th century under Martin Melck's leadership, could Lutherans obtain the right to independent worship (Garaba & Zarvedinos 2013:10). The Lutheran Church in South Africa started as the work of missionaries and eventually led to the establishment of the indigenous Lutheran Church in South Africa. About ten Lutheran mission societies worked towards the establishment of the Lutheran Church of South Africa. The Moravian church began its mission work in South Africa in 1736 in the Western Cape and in 1829 the Moravian church began another mission work in the Eastern Cape. Even though the Moravians kept their own identity, they have always seen themselves as the Lutheran family (Garaba & Zarvedinos 2013:6). The Rhenish Mission Society (RMS) was established in 1829 in the Cape Colony; Norwegian

Mission Society (NMS) in 1844 in Zulu Land; the Hermannsburg Mission Society (HMS) in 1854; the Berlin Mission Society (BMS) in 1834; the Fish Mission Society in 1854; the Church of Sweden Mission (CSM) in 1876 and the Co-operating Lutheran Mission (CLM) in 1910 and its co-operation was made possible by the Zulu-speaking people. In 1853 a new Lutheran church was formed in Cape Town but was only officially inaugurated in 1861. In 1895 the Western and Eastern Cape churches joined to form a Cape Synod, with other provinces subsequently joining. In 1975, after its Assembly held in Tlhabane Rustenburg was unexpectedly attacked on 18 December, the new formal church was constituted and called the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa²⁰. In 1969 all members of the ELCSA churches decided to establish a multicultural platform and in 1975 the Swakopmund-Appeal was accepted by church leaders which rejected apartheid policies to rule the churches' life (Garaba & Zarvedinos 2013:6 - 8). In 1976 the role of the church in South African politics became a burning issue, and in 1986 the ELCSA rejected apartheid teachings as heresy.

3.7.6 Methodist Church of Southern Africa

This church was formed through the efforts of the Wesley brothers (John Wesley and Charles Wesley). At first, it all started just as a movement that was meant to revive the Christian spirituality in the Church of England (Anglican Church) in the 18th century. During this time the Church of England was considered spiritually depressed by John Wesley together with his followers hence it needed serious spiritual revivals. Under Wesley's leadership, this movement focused on the people who worked at the mines and other labourers. At the time of Wesley's death, he was still a member of the Anglican Church. After his death the movement grew larger hence the formation of the church became a necessity. The word "Methodist" implies the unique or different method of worship followed by this movement.

Between 1813 and 1818 the Methodist missionary society was formed in England and by the year 1876, the Methodist missionaries were sent to South Africa. The Methodist church was

²⁰<http://www.elcsant.org.za/church-profile.html>

later established in South Africa and as it continued to evangelise the indigenous people many joined the ministry and became clergy in the Methodist church. However, the missionary Methodist church did not take into consideration the indigenous people's political, social and economic as well as cultural background and this led to a series of splits within the Methodist church. The Land Act of 1913 was one of the political factors which contributed towards the split of the Methodist church. It was around this period that the saying surfaced "At first we had the land, and you had the Bible. Now we have the Bible and you have the land". Many splits in the Methodist church happened mainly towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century hence this period can be seen as a highlight of the deep problems which existed in the Methodist church. Amongst them was the problem of racism, lack of ordination for indigenous clergy, disrespect of black culture and many others (Madise & Taunyane 2012).

At this point it is paramount to mention that during and throughout the schisms in the Methodist church this church had two streams: the Transvaal district known as Wesleyan church under the Methodist church in England, and the Cape Colony and Orange Free State district also known as the Methodist church, and this one was independent with its conferences hosted in South Africa. However, these two streams united shortly after the overseas conference (Methodist Church of England) took a decision to stop funding the white missionaries and ministers. This resolution was accepted by the Wesleyan church in the Transvaal district in 1928 and united with other Methodists in South Africa.

3.8 UNITING REFORMED CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA (URCSA)

The history of the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA) can be traced as far back as the arrival of Jan Van Riebeeck in South Africa in 1652 when a reformed church was planted at the southern point of Africa. However, this part of history is extensively dealt with in the chapter of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) and its renewed status within the South African Council of Churches as an "observer".

The formation of the URCSA resonates very much with the adoption of the Belhar²¹ Confession in 1986 when the DMRC Daughter Church (Dutch Reformed Mission Church – DRMC) took a lead in declaring and rejecting apartheid as heresy and evil. This resulted in some members of the DRMC (Coloureds) and some members of DRCA (Blacks) coming together to form the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (Mofokeng 2017). According to the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) in its submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 1997, argued that the formation of racially segregated churches such as DRMC, DRCA and RCA was due to a deep form of racism that existed within the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) (Submission of the URCSA to the TRC 1997:2).

In 1994, after efforts of finding unity within the DRC family failed dismally²², this resulted in the formation of the URCSA. Thus, it is important to see the URCSA as the offspring of the two DRC daughter churches being the DRMC and DRCA, which amalgamated on 14 April 1994 to form a United Reformed Church. One would in fact still be correct to take this further by saying that this church became the first mixed-race and multicultural church within the DRC family in South Africa. Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa (URCSA) has about seven regional synods in South Africa, with every region consisting of presbyteries in groups of congregations. There are two forms of synods in this church: general synod and regional synod, the former being responsible for determining and formulating church policies and the latter is to ensure the full implementation of policies.

²¹ Mr. E.M. Mofokeng has written his MTH mini-dissertation on Belhar Confession and Liturgy:

https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/63034/Mofokeng_Belhar_2017.pdf?sequence=1

²²PROF L J MODISE from the University of South Africa has shed some light in contextualizing Belhar confession within the DRC and URCSA churches: <http://www.scielo.org.za/pdf/she/v42n2/03.pdf>

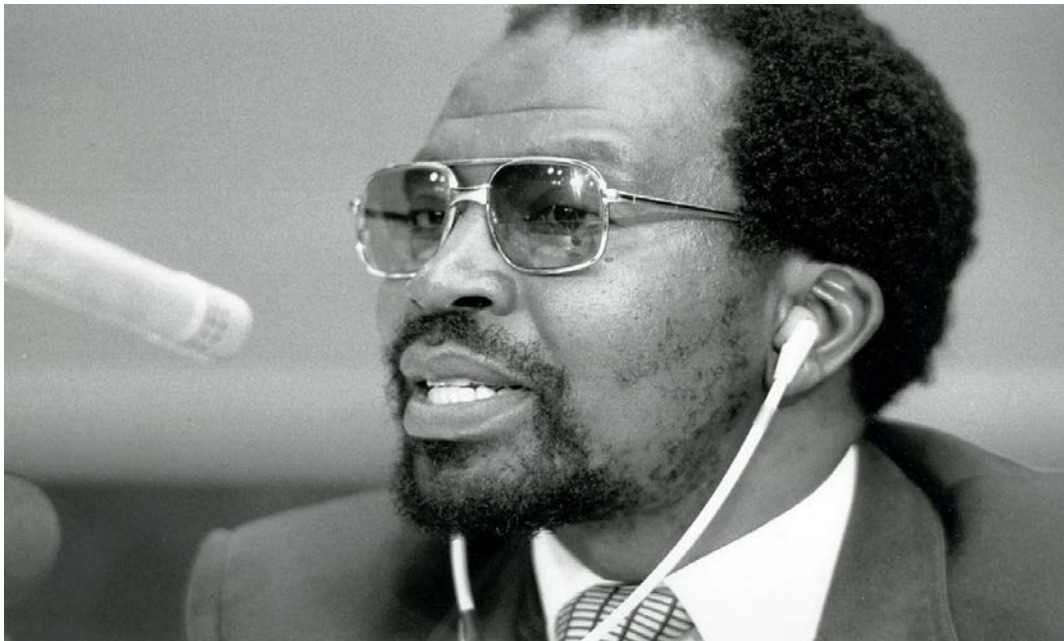
3.9 SELECTED FIGURES WITHIN THE SACC

In giving the historical background of the South African Council of Churches it is important to briefly give a background of some selected leaders of the SACC. This study will here explore and reflect on their contribution during their time as leaders within both their respective churches and the South African Council of Churches.

Selected names

1. Dr. Manas Buthelezi
2. Dr. Frank Chikane
3. Dr. Beyers Naudé
4. Bishop Desmond Tutu

3.10 DR. MANAS BUTHELEZI SACC PRESIDENT SACC PRESIDENT 1983 – 1991



Dr. Manas Buthelezi, picture by Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Archives

Dr. Manas Buthelezi, as one of the figures who contributed with their lives in the fight against apartheid, is counted amongst the great leaders of South Africa and South African theologians who worked to develop black theology in response or as some form of theological reaction against the evil system of apartheid. Mashabela (2016) refers to Dr. Manas Buthelezi as a researcher, public activist, an academic, servant of the people and unsung hero (Mashabela 2016:1).

3.10.1 Background and education

Dr. Manas Buthelezi was born in KwaZulu-Natal at the place called Mahlabathini in 1935 on February 08. He grew up and went to school in Mahlabathini and then proceeded to complete his high school education at the Roman Catholic institution at Marian Hill (Mashabela 2014). In 1958 he went to do his theological training at Eshiyane and Umphumulo theological college, and on completion of his studies with Umphumulo College, he went to study for his Masters in theology at Yale University in the United States in 1963. He enrolled for his doctoral degree at Drew University in the United States and returned to South Africa in 1968 at the age of 32. Upon his return, the Umphumulo theological college appointed him as a lecturer. In February 1970 Dr. Manas Buthelezi resigned from Umphumulo College citing lecturers' unequal salary as his reason for leaving (Mashabela 2016:2).

3.10.2 Ministry and Christian bodies

Dr. Manas Buthelezi is said to have held many positions in various church/Christian bodies both in South Africa and abroad. He worked with Dr. Beyers Naudé on the progressive bulletin called Pro-Veritate which was critical of apartheid government policies, he was a regional director of the Christian Institute of Natal in the years 1972 – 1975. In 1975 he was elected the general secretary of the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa (FELCSA), and was elected the president of the South African Council of Churches from 1983 – 1991, and the many movements he served included the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), World Council of Churches (WCC) and many others (Mashabela 2016:1-5).

3.10.3 Political involvement

His political involvement began with his conviction in demonstrating the relevance of the Christian gospel for South African black people who were oppressed for their blackness. He then engaged in theological methods which focused its interpretation of the Christian gospel as a “liberating event”. Even though Dr. Manas Buthelezi acknowledged his calling to the ministry, he could not ignore the troubling political context of South Africa. As Lüdemann (2016) puts it, “even when he (Manas Buthelezi) had on the background of his earlier calling for Christian ministry to take a clear decision for the way of the church, the commitment for a prophetic outreach into the fields of politics and social engagement for the community never

lost his attention” (Lüdemann 2016:157). Dr. Manas Buthelezi contributed much in South African politics through organisations such as the South African Students Organisation and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) (Lüdemann 2016:5).

In 1972 the scope of his involvement in activities expanded as he received a call to become the Natal regional director of the Christian Institute (CI) and his home church realised him to this special call. During this time he worked closely with Dr. Beyers Naudé, who gave him what he called “political baptism and political platform” from the first day of working with him, Dr. Manas Buthelezi began addressing different political gatherings. Shortly after the events of 16 June 1976, Dr. Manas Buthelezi was engaged in the founding of the Black Parents Association (BPA) with the mandate of finding students who disappeared during the upheavals of 16 June 1976 (Lüdemann 2016:6). In 1977 as he was elected the first bishop of the new Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa (ELCSA), a position during which he got involved in many socio-political scenes. In 1983 he was elected as the president of SACC and it was during this period that he interacted immensely with representatives of many liberation movements in exile. He completed his presidential term of SACC at around the time of the unbanning of liberation movements and the release of many political prisoners. Lüdemann (2016) notes that on 10 May 1994, as Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the very first black president of the republic, Dr. Manas Buthelezi and other theologians who were involved in South Africa’s politics felt that they had done their task in the political arena and had to shift their focus onto other pressing ministry matters (Lüdemann 2016:150).

3.11 DR. BEYERS NAUDÉ SACC GENERAL SECRETARY 1985 – 1987



Dr. Beyers Naudé, picture by Media24 Archive

Dr. Beyers Naudé is recognised by most of his writers as a prophet of white South Africa, one who came out strongly to warn white South Africans about the inevitable history of South Africa. Through his unfailing courage, he became one of the churchmen who received recognition for their struggle against apartheid in South Africa and one who fully expressed true love for both the Afrikaner people and Black people in South Africa.

3.11.1 Background and education

Dr. Beyers Naudé was born in 1915 on 10 May in Roodepoort, Transvaal to Jozua and Andriana Naudé, and in 1921 they moved to the Cape Province in the Karoo region where he attended the Afrikaans Hoërskool (Afrikaans High School) and matriculated in 1931. During his time at school, he did not read many English books but his parents always encouraged him to become fluent in English. Already as a youngster, Beyers had developed the capacity to question everything he did not understand. By 1932 he went to study theology at the University of Stellenbosch and that is where he met his wife Ilse Naudé. As the child of a minister he qualified for a theology bursary, hence he opted for it and graduated in 1939 with an MA in languages and theology. In 1937, while at Stellenbosch, Beyers was elected onto the Student Representative Council (SRC) and served as its president. He spent most of his University time with many Afrikaners who were to attain top positions both in the church and political sphere of South Africa, such as the future prime minister of apartheid South Africa John Vorster.

3.11.2 Ministry and Christian bodies

Dr. Beyers Naudé was initially inspired by a sermon his father delivered in May and June 1930 and decided to give his entire life to Christ and as a result, he enrolled for theology at Stellenbosch in 1932. He completed his BA in 1934 and the following year received his MA. By 1943 he was called to serve as a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in Loxton, Karoo and moved to the Transvaal to minister in the Pretoria South congregation. While with the DRC Dr. Beyers Naudé attended various Synodical Commissions and accepted any nomination to serve in the leadership of the church. In 1958 he was elected to the moderator of the Transvaal Synod as Vice Chairman. In 1959 he received a call to a church the Aasvoelkop church in Northcliff, north-west of Johannesburg and this for him would be the heart of cultural and political life. He was later nominated to represent the NGK in the Cottesloe conference which took place from 14 to 17 December 1960. According to many writers, this was his Damascus since this would be his eye-opener. The Cottesloe conference resolved to make a call to all churches in South Africa to take a stand against the apartheid system (Van der Merwe 2010). This resolution was rejected by the Dutch Reformed Church through its various Synods, but Dr. Beyers Naudé would choose to stand by the conference resolutions (Ryan 2005).

In 1963 Dr. Beyers founded the Christian Institute (CI), which functioned as a research engine for the will of Christ through study circles and discussion groups and even called on Christians in South Africa and abroad to oppose and reject apartheid. Later this very institute would expose Dr. Beyers to other political and ecumenical organisations such as the ANC and SACC (Ryan 2005).

During the years of his banning in 1985, Dr. Beyers was elected General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) succeeding Archbishop Desmond Tutu. It was during this period that he formed an open relationship with the African National Congress and even called for the release of political prisoners such as Nelson Mandela (Ryan 2005). While secretary general of the SACC he experienced heart problems and then underwent a heart operation in November 1986, and in July 1987 he stepped aside as general secretary of the SACC and was succeeded by Rev. Frank Chikane (Ryan 2005).

3.11.3 Political life

By the nature of his stand against apartheid in South Africa, as one of the few white South Africans who opposed the apartheid system, Dr. Beyers stood at the centre of politics. His interest in politics could be traced back to the time when he joined the editorial staff of the

student newspaper “Pro-Libertate” while in Stellenbosch, which was launched in 1932 by liberal-minded senior students who sought to challenge the Afrikaner culture and politics which existed at Stellenbosch.

During his struggle against apartheid, Dr. Beyers Naudé would meet with the leading political figure Steve Biko, and help young people within the ANC to flee and even help to spread ANC literature (JC Pauw 2005). In the end, he was seen to be siding more with black people’s political aspirations in South Africa (Ryan 2005).

3.12 DR. FRANK CHIKANE SACC GENERAL SECRETARY 1987 – 1994



Dr. Frank Chikane, picture by Masi Losi/ Independent Media

Being one of the people who dedicated the best of his life to both ministry and politics in South Africa, Dr. Frank Chikane played a huge role in shaping the SACC from the era of apartheid right to the attainment of democracy in 1994. It is important for this dissertation to briefly give his historical background in order for us to understand the masterminds behind the formation of the South African Council of Churches.

3.12.1 Background and education

Dr. Frank Chikane was born in on 3 January 1951 in Johannesburg at No. 7 Orlando East and stayed there with his mother until 1957. At the time when he was ready for school, he went to live with his father in No. 869 Tladi Soweto. He went to Hlolohelo Primary School until 1962 and between 1963 and 1966 he went to Tau Pedi Higher Primary School. This is where he developed an interest in maths and science. He later went to study science at the University of the North in the hope of becoming a physician. At this very university, he stood in the centre of students' faith and political lives by being involved in various faith bodies and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). He later led the students' protests against apartheid which resulted in him being suspended from the University without a degree.

3.12.2 Dr. Frank Chikane and Christian bodies

In 1972, when Dr. Frank Chikane was to start with his university studies, a senior pastor from his church, Pastor Mhlongo, approached him and told him that he suspected that the Lord could be calling him to the ministry. Towards the end of 1974, Dr. Frank Chikane approached his church to inform them of his intentions to join the ministry. He later enrolled at a theological training institute, completed the course in 1979 and was ordained in 1980. In 1981 he was suspended from his church (AFM) due to his political activities.

Immediately after his suspension in 1981 Dr. Frank Chikane joined the Institute for Contextual Theology and in 1985 he became one of the leading figures in the promotion of the Kairos Document. According to de Gruchy (2005:199), the Kairos document rejected apartheid as heresy and challenged the legitimacy of the apartheid state and responded critically to the crisis facing South Africa at that time. Later from 1987 to 1994, Dr. Frank Chikane became the general secretary of the South African Council of Churches (Chikane 2012).

3.12.3 Political involvement

While a pastor in Kagiso, Rev. Frank Chikane was detained about four times: first in 1977 between January and February, second in June 1977 to January 1978, third in November 1980, and lastly from November 1981 to July 1982. In the 1980s he became involved in the United Democratic Front (UDF) and became the vice president of the Transvaal region from 1983 to 1985.

He became a member of the African National Congress from 1997 to date, and served on its National Executive Committee (NEC) and was the Director General of the Presidency under the former President of South Africa Thabo Mbeki.

In 1988 Dr. Frank Chikane wrote an autobiography titled “No life of my own”. In this book, he gives a background of his childhood and how he grew up under apartheid, his political life and ministry. In July 2012 he published a book titled “The Chikane Files”. In this book, he speaks of his ministry, his running of the presidential office right up to September 2008 (the unseating of Thabo Mbeki), detailing the developments which led to the African National Congress National Executive Committee (NEC) of that time taking a decision to recall Mbeki as the President of the country.

In 2012 on 15 March, Dr. Frank Chikane launched yet another book titled “Eight Days in September: The Removal of Thabo Mbeki” and here he gives a detailed account of how Thabo Mbeki was removed from office.

3.13 BISHOP DESMOND TUTU SACC GENERAL SECRETARY 1978 – 1985



Bishop Desmond Tutu, picture by Gallo images/Oryx Media Archive

3.13.1 Background and education

Desmond Mpilo Tutu is a South African Social rights activists and retired Anglican bishop. Desmond Tutu was born on 7 October 1931 to Zachariah and Aletha Tutu in Klerksdorp. As a boy Desmond Tutu appeared to be full of life (Mpilo), hence his grandmother gave him the name Mpilo. Desmond Tutu grew up during difficult economic situation in South Africa in a multi-ethnic household. His father was a Xhosa man from the Eastern Cape (EC) and his

mother was from a tribe that spoke Tswana, hence Bishop Tutu has the ability to learn and speak about eight languages in all (Crompton 2007:8).

Bishop Desmond Tutu had two sisters and when his older sister Sylvia Funeka enrolled at the Anglican high school the Tutu family converted from Methodist to Anglican. And this discussion impacted Bishop Tutu's life.

During Tutu's youth, very few black South Africans attended high school, but Desmond Tutu attended Johannesburg Bantu high school. At the age of 19, he decided to follow the footsteps of his father who was a teacher by profession. After completing his studies at Bantu high school Desmond Tutu went to Pretoria Bantu Normal College for teacher training in 1950. And in 1954 he graduated from the University of South Africa (UNISA).

In 1956 Desmond Tutu left teaching since he could not agree with the new syllabus which aimed low and did not encourage the development of higher faculties (Crompton 2007:24). After only three years of teaching, he began his theological studies and was ordained as a priest in 1960. He devoted his energies to furthering his theological studies and obtained his Master's in Theology in 1963 handed to him by Queen Elizabeth as she was chancellor of the university. Returning to South Africa in 1967 he worked in the town of Alice in the Eastern Cape (EC). He left South Africa to lecture at the University of Botswana in the mountain kingdom of Lesotho, lecturing on the Old and New Testament. In 1972 he was offered the position of associate director of theology education for Africa based in London but with regular tours around African continent and funded by the Anglican Church.

3.13.2 Ministry and Christian bodies

Desmond Tutu was first ordained as a priest in 1960 and in 1975 after the death of the archbishop of Johannesburg the new bishop asked him to be the new dean of Johannesburg, a position according to the Anglican hierarchy is the second highest appointment to that of the bishop. In 1977 Desmond Tutu was asked to become general secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), the same year during which Steve Biko died. He started his new job as SACC general secretary in 1978. In his book, Crompton (2007:4) alludes that even though Desmond Tutu would occasionally preach, his new job as SACC general secretary consumed much of his time and energy.

In 1985 Desmond Tutu was elected to the position of the Anglican bishop of Johannesburg. Crompton (2007:62) alleges that a few white church members left the Anglican church since to them blacks were to remain inferior, meaning they could not understand how Tutu (a Black man) could be elected to such a high position. In 1986 Desmond Tutu occupied the most senior position in South Africa's Anglican hierarchy, becoming the archbishop of Cape Town and in 1987 and 1992 respectively Desmond Tutu became president of the All Africa Conference of Church (AACC).

3.13.3 Political involvement

When Desmond Tutu became the General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) in 1978, he led as the representative of the liberation theology in South Africa. During those years South Africa was in turmoil with the imminence of the Soweto uprising in 1976. Under his leadership as SACC Secretary Desmond Tutu broadened the non-violence strategy within the South African political sphere. Pillay (2017) maintains that the SACC embraced liberation theology and having insisted that God is on the side of the poor, the SACC joined hands with the poor people of South Africa to fight for justice and human rights (Pillay 2017:1). At the time when the African National Congress (ANC) was banned, Desmond Tutu became an instrument for Black protest in South Africa by standing in opposition to the Group Areas Act and at the same time advocating for the withdrawal of foreign investments from South Africa. Through his connections, he involved the international community in the fight against apartheid through the sanctions campaign. This was based on a moral argument. Sanctions were the strategy to force the South African government to go to the negotiation table with liberation movements, this way South Africa would be saved from an impending bloodbath. Under his leadership, Desmond Tutu built the SACC into an important institution in both the spiritual and political life of South Africa. With the withdrawal of foreign investments, Desmond Tutu thought this was the only way to put more pressure on the government of South Africa.

3.13.4 Nobel Peace Prize

Alfred Nobel was a very successful businessman who was born in Stockholm in 1833 to his father Immanuel Nobel and Mother Andriette Nobel. While young he received first-class education by special tutors. At the age of 17 he could speak at least five languages; English, Swedish, French, German and Russian. He studied chemistry in Paris under the famous Professor T.J. Polouze and built laboratories around the world and 90 factories in about 20 countries. When Alfred died in 1896 December 10 he had left a great deal of fortune behind. In his will, he had allocated most of his fortune to rewarding outstanding work in chemistry, medicine, physics, literature, and peace (The Nobel Foundation 2017). According to Lundestad (former secretary of the Nobel committee), the Nobel Peace Prize is the most respected Nobel Prize. The first Nobel Peace Prize was awarded in 1901 to Frédéric Passy and Henry Dunant — who shared an award (Lundestad 2001).

In 1984, on 16 October Desmond Tutu was honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize for his opposition to South Africa's brutal apartheid regime. The award recognised the role he played in unifying the people of South Africa in the fight against apartheid. On receiving this award Desmond Tutu followed Chief Albert Luthuli who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1960 for his advocacy of nonviolent resistance to racial discrimination in South Africa as the then President of the banned African National Congress.

In 1993 the then President of South Africa, F.W de Klerk, jointly with the then anti-apartheid activist who would ultimately after the 1994 general election become the State President of South Africa (Nelson Mandela), were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of their efforts in attaining a peaceful transformation from the apartheid regime to democracy.

The Nobel Peace Prize added more value to Tutu's international standing and contributed to the struggle against apartheid since he became the living symbol in the struggle for freedom, as one who could descriptively articulate sufferings and expectations of the oppressed in South Africa.

CHAPTER 4 : THE SACC AND THE APARTHEID GOVERNMENT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of the South African Council of Churches, there are occasional events that caused political curiosity in South Africa. One of such events was a conference in 1949 where Chief Albert Luthuli, the then leader of the African National Congress (ANC), was present and contributed to the discussions of that day and who wrote one of the first ecumenical theological statements against the policy of apartheid (SACC 1997).

Shortly after the National Party (NP) won elections in 1948 it overhauled South African society along racial lines in order to deliver on its pre-election promises introducing the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 and the Immorality Act of 1950 signalling the end of any form of interracial relations between black and white South Africans. The ecumenical council (CCSA) opposed the new government on its laws (Government Gazette 1985).

4.2 THE COTTESLOE CONSULTATION: SHARPEVILLE MASSACRE

Sharpeville was set up by the South African apartheid government for blacks who would travel to work in nearby cities. Sharpeville is located to the west of Vereeniging and was built in the early 1940s (Maylam 2010:1). Towards the end of the 1950s, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) continually challenged the African National Congress (ANC) to take a firmer stand against apartheid on behalf of the black people of South Africa. During this time the ANC had little support in Sharpeville and in December of 1959 collectively ANC and PAC announced the anti-pass campaigns for the following year and in March 1960 the PAC took a more militant stance by organising protests against pass laws. On Friday, 18 March 1960 the then PAC leader Robert Sobukwe announced that the campaign would begin on Monday, 21 March 1960 whereby people would meet at various points to surrender their passes. Over the weekend prior to 21 March, which was the date set for the rally, the PAC activists moved from door to door informing residents about the scheduled protest. In this manner, the PAC activists were able to gain support for the protest. During the night of that weekend, there were random demonstrations and clashes with police in Sharpeville. Poor information and organisation on both the side of the police and protestors set the stage for disaster. On the side of the police, there was a false belief that the crowd intended to attack (Maylam 2010: 1-10).

On Monday morning most Sharpeville residents joined the rally outside the police station. In total there were about 18000 to 25000 people. At around 1.30 pm that day white police opened fire on the large crowd, killing and injuring many. Most victims were shot in the back as they fled from the police. After the shooting the police ransacked Sharpeville making arrests. Many were beaten for no apparent reason and thrown into prison. This was a disaster for South Africa's government since it damaged its international reputation. The international reaction to the killing was powerful and extensive. This massacre sparked a major economic crisis which lasted for about eighteen months (Maylam 2010:6).

4.2.1 The Cottesloe consultation in 1960

Shortly after the events of Sharpeville, the World Council of Churches began a process which led to the Cottesloe conference of 1960. The Cottesloe conference was held between 7 and 4 December 1960 at the Cottesloe hostel of Witwatersrand University consisting of member churches of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in South Africa with the intention to consult about the social and racial situation in South Africa (Vosloo 2010:1-2). This came as a response to the public outcry against the Sharpeville massacre. Shortly after the outcry, the WCC issued a letter inviting its member churches in South Africa to take part in a consultation which was to deal with political issues in South Africa, in total eight member churches of World Council of Churches were in attendance. In its report, the "consultation" refused to call such a sitting a "conference" but rather decided to call it a consultation (WCC 1960:1). This consultation was convened by the WCC because at that time (December 1960) in South Africa there was no active ecumenical council or organisation to which the WCC member churches belonged. The consultation member bodies were urged to persuade the South Africa government to include black people in political office. This consultation further adopted a statement which rejected the unjust system of apartheid and made a call to churches in South Africa to get involved in the struggle against apartheid (Van der Merwe 2010:1). The following year (1960) this consultation was followed by fumed responses from the media and was perceived to be posing a challenge to the apartheid government. Delegated Transvaal and Cape synods of the Dutch Reformed Church outwardly rejected the consultation's declaration at their synod meetings in 1961. The Dutch Reformed Churches (DRC) withdrew from the World Council of Churches in that same year (Vosloo 2010:2).

4.3 THE SACC AND THE SOWETO UPRISING 1976

In analysing historical origins of the Soweto uprising there are important factors to be taken into consideration. The first of such is the ideological role of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction; the youth subcultures in Soweto in the 1970s; and the transformative role of black consciousness as well as the revolutionary role of various liberation movements during various struggle years in South Africa. The 1976 June protest is etched dearly into the story of modern South Africa, the day to remember is 16 June 1976 when the Soweto students demonstrated against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in South Africa. On that fateful day Soweto school children held placards with messages such as “Away with Afrikaans”, “Power to the People”, and “Away with slave education” and other messages pointing to the disgruntlement with apartheid policies as they were marching towards Orlando stadium for a mass meeting (Rakometsi 2008:188-189).

Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in South African schools was enforced during the early 1970s. In 1973 the Bantu education department issued a policy document, Circular No.2 of 1973 entitled ‘medium of instruction in secondary schools in white areas’. This document accorded English and Afrikaans a 50:50 status as official languages of instruction. In 1974 the Bantu education department in the Southern Transvaal issued a policy stating that Afrikaans was to be used as a medium of instruction for social studies classes. In Soweto, in 1976 the secretary of Bantu education instructed that schools should implement Afrikaans as a medium of instruction.

There had been clear signs of unrest, especially around the language question in 1976. On 8 May Desmond Tutu had written an open letter to the Prime Minister as a warning of the imminent unrest. This warning was equally echoed by other Soweto church leaders, priests, and ministers but was ignored by the apartheid regime until June 16th became a scene of confrontation.

On the night of 16 June, the SACC general secretary John Rees issued a statement condemning the government and the police for the situation in Soweto (Duncan 2017:9-10). Not only the SACC but also the Christian Institute (CI) made calls for the police to withdraw from the township since their continued presence made the situation worse. To this end, the chief magistrate of Johannesburg served both the SACC general secretary Mr. John Rees and Dr. Beyers Naudé of the Christian Institute with restraining orders for “interference in Soweto” (Duncan 2017: 9).

4.4 A MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA

At the time when South Africa was confronted by a serious crisis, the council felt the need to issue a strong statement on theological grounds pertaining to the churches' position with regard to South Africa's situation. The intention was to oppose apartheid not only on pragmatic grounds but also on theological grounds. The message was not from the SACC alone, but this document was drawn up by a commission put together by the then CCSA (SACC), as it was previously called, and the Christian Institute. During the early 1960s the Christian Council of South Africa (CCSA) was politically ineffective in South Africa, not prepared to deal with the situation at hand and as a result this council was not taken seriously by its member churches, hence the Christian Institute (CI) had to shoulder most "church and society responsibilities at that time (de Gruchy 1989:115). In 1966 the CCSA relocated its head office from Cape Town to Johannesburg and widened the scope of its work under the leadership of Bishop Bill Burnett. In 1968 it changed its name from Christian Council of South Africa (CCSA) to South African Council of Churches (SACC) as a way to emphasise that it was established by and for churches of South Africa. However, at this stage, there is a need to look at what value it provided for South Africa or how it retained its relevant position in as far as South Africa's situation was concerned and even made it a symbol of prophetic leadership (de Gruchy 1989:117).

In 1966 the World Council of Churches (WCC) held its conference on "Church and Society" in Geneva. This council questioned South African churches on their participation in the revolutionary struggles of that day and delegates such as Bishop Burnett of CCSA and Beyers Naudé of CI were influenced greatly by this question. Shortly after the Geneva conference, collectively the CCSA and CI sponsored regional consultations which were held across South Africa, discussing the significance of the Geneva recommendations on the South African situation (de Gruchy 2005:117). In the same year as the Geneva conference, the CCSA jointly with the CI brought together a theological commission to explore the will of God about the church in the South African situation. This commission consisted of a number of theologians who discussed the theological position of churches in the apartheid situation (Spong & Mayson 1993:28). This commission was responsible for preparing the *A message to the people of South Africa*. They examined the word of God in relation to the political and social situation of South Africa. At its 1968 meeting, the CCSA (SACC) received the draft of *A message to the people of South Africa*, and it was agreed that this message should be published in the name of the council. Upon its publication in 1968, the SACC made national headlines. As one of the people appointed by the council, the then Rev. John de Gruchy as director of publications and

ecumenical studies, had the task of writing and distributing *A message to the people of South Africa*. By January 1969 more than fifty thousand copies had been printed and distributed to the people, and to all clergy, throughout South Africa (Molantwa 1998:30) the message was first aired at a conference on Pseudo Gospel convened by the SACC in May 1968.

In *A message* the council sees itself under obligation to confess true commitment towards the universal faith of Christians and the salvation gospel in Christ. It explained that according to the true gospel of Christ God has broken down the walls of division between man and man and that God is reconciling humanity to himself and each other, therefore division based on race and nationality have no place in Christ. Thus, the South African separation (apartheid) is false and in conflict with the gospel of Christ. The message attempted to reveal that apartheid was contrary to the gospel of Christ. It made clear that “excluding barriers of ancestry, race, nationality, language, and culture have no rightful place in the inclusive brotherhood of Christian disciples” (de Gruchy 2005:117). In this manner, the council is of the view that anyone who stands in support of apartheid policies is in opposition to Christ and the word of God. According to Göranson, the statement established separate development in opposition to the hope of reconciliation, though it promised peace and harmony in South Africa (Göranson 2010:325). There were churches which held strong views against *A message*, but a number of churches in South Africa displayed a great deal of agreement with its content.

4.5 APARTHEID DECLARED AS HERESY

The term heresy applies to ecclesiastical concerns and it is invoked whenever the central truth of the church is threatened. In this sense heresy is a church defence against any attempts to change the identity of the church into something that it is not. Following de Gruchy (1983) heresy is the distortion of the truth as revealed in Jesus Christ, and something that leads to division and false witness in the world (de Gruchy 1983:81).

It has been indicated that during apartheid in South Africa many churches stood in firm condemnation of racism. The National Party’s 1948 manifesto claimed that the apartheid policy was “separation on Christian principles of justice and reasonableness” giving the impression that apartheid principles were derived from Christian principles. Churches and ecumenical councils challenged this claim but ran short of calling apartheid a heresy at first.

In 1956 Father Trevor Huddleston of the Anglican Church called apartheid an “inherent blasphemy” – which is against the nature of God since he created humanity or all humans in

his own image. Father Huddleston felt the need to denounce a claim by the NGK that apartheid is a biblical principle not only as false but heretical. The implication of his statement was that people who stood in support of apartheid could not continue to see themselves as Christians but rather in opposition to Christian principles and values. However, at this stage, it is important to mention that even though people such as father Huddleston had called apartheid a heresy, they had done so in their personal capacity and not as official church condemnation of apartheid at that time.

In 1978 at the South African Council of Churches (SACC) annual conference there was a heated debate over a resolution condemning apartheid. Dr. Donald Veysie, the then President of the Methodist conference, called upon the conference to make its condemnation of apartheid specific and declare it to be both a theological and moral heresy. In the end, out of more than a hundred delegates of whom two-thirds were black, only about thirteen people voted to declare apartheid a heresy.

In 1982 at its meeting in Ottawa, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches called special attention to the racial situation in South Africa. The general feeling of the council was that apartheid in South Africa posed a unique challenge to the church, particularly to the reformed tradition. Especially since the Afrikaans reformed churches of South Africa defended apartheid policies as a faithful interpretation of the will of God and reformed understanding of the church in the world. However, the Ottawa meeting was of the view that this approach would result in the serious division of Christians at the Lord's Table as a matter of practice, and this was in total betrayal of the gospel of Christ. And the council declared, together with Black Christians of South Africa, that apartheid was a sin and that its theological and moral justification was contrary to the gospel of Christ and in total disobedience to the word God. Thus a theological heresy.

According to de Gruchy (1983:40-41), Tutu writes "apartheid contradicts the testimony of the Bible categorically, whereas the Bible says God's intention for humankind and for his entire universe is harmony, peace, justice, wholeness, fellowship; apartheid says that human beings are fundamentally created for separation, disunity, and alienation. The apologists of apartheid have sometimes used the story of the Tower of Babel as divine sanction for their ideology of separate development and ethnic identity". Further in de Gruchy (1983:42), he says "the Old Testament knows of only one legitimate separation among persons and that is the separation between believers and pagans. Every other kind is sinful". By implication, these statements motivate that apartheid policies should be rejected as heresy. Once it had been established that

apartheid was a heresy, sinful and morally wrong, the church of South Africa made it its own duty to obey God more than human beings by challenging apartheid laws which made it difficult for Christians to live together in harmony.

4.6 STUDY PROJECT ON CHRISTIANITY IN APARTHEID SOCIETY (SPROCAS)

Shortly after “*A message to the people of South Africa*” the SACC launched the Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society (SPROCAS), now that apartheid was rejected as being a sinful and unchristian ideology. Through *A message to the people of South Africa*, Christians all over South Africa had to engage in the search for an alternative form of society which will be friendlier to the people of South African in general in order for Christianity to remain relevant in South Africa, an important advance from the message (Balila 1989:38). SPROCAS was sponsored by the South African Council of Churches (SACC) together with the Christian Institute (CI). This project was launched in 1969 and six commissions were appointed: 1. Church Commission, 2. Economics Commission, 3. Education Commission, 4. Law Commission, 5. Politics Commission, and 6. Society Commission. These commissions were tasked with studying patterns of education, the context of poverty in South Africa, law and justice, state and church relationship, the process of social change, power and privilege and many other political and theological alternatives to apartheid (Walshe 1977:457 – 479). These political alternatives involved proportional representation, acknowledgement of African trade unions, campaigns for literacy, new tax structures and improved education for black people of South Africa (Walshe 1977:463). The first phase of these studies was called SPROCAS and this found a follow-up in SPROCAS 2. The duty of SPROCAS 1 was basically to analyse the South African society and indicate areas where change was possible and urgently needed, and SPROCAS 2 rallied forces that were identified in SPROCAS 1 as potential agents of change in South Africa (Bucher 1973:505 – 512). The results of SPROCAS were that, at the time it ended, fresh and new revolutionary ideas emerged, and the new form of theology for Black people of South Africa became more passionate in claiming their own political destiny and humanity hence the discovery of Black Theology. Even though all these happened beyond the limits of the SACC and CI, the results had much influence on the SACC and its member churches (Spong & Mayson 1993:112).

4.7 THE BELHAR CONFESSION

The resolution of the Ottawa Assembly (1982) was an indication of the coming theological confrontation between the NGK and its daughter churches such as the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC). In its September 1982 synod meeting at Belhar, the DRMC declared that since “the secular gospel of apartheid” is totally opposed to reconciliation in Jesus Christ and unity of the church, calls for *status confessions* for the church of Jesus Christ (Plaatjies Van Huffel 2018:11). DRMC also accepted a draft of confession which rejected any defence of apartheid on both theological and moral grounds. In 1986 when the synod met again it officially adopted the Belhar confession as a reflection of its doctrinal standards (Balía 1989:129). This confession pleaded that unity in God should be made visible. Therefore, any doctrine which intended to promote the separation of people was to be seen as being in opposition and a hindrance to the true unity of Christ. Thus the Belhar Confession rejected any teaching which gave support or promoted apartheid policies. Since God is for justice and peace, this confession challenged the church to take its rightful stand and defend the destitute, the poor and marginalised people of South Africa against the unjust laws of apartheid or any ideology which sanctioned forms of injustice and even doctrines which refused to resist the apartheid ideology in the name of the gospel (Balía 1989:130).

4.8 THE ELOFF COMMISSION

On 20 November 1981 the State President of South Africa, Marais Viljoen, appointed a commission to investigate the affairs of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), how and why this council was formed, the development, objects and any information regarding the history and activities of this council, the manner in which the SACC solicited and made use of money. The general feeling of the state was that the SACC was controlled by its donors to shape and influence the politics of South Africa. This commission was led by the late honourable Mr. Justice C. F Eloff of the Transvaal province division of the Supreme Court, who was the chairman of that commission.

This commission became imminent as soon as the tension between the SACC and the South African government increased. This began when the SACC strongly opposed the apartheid government policies of separate development. It increased even more shortly after the publication of *A message to the people of South Africa* in which apartheid was categorically rejected as unchristian, unjust and evil.

The commission began its hearings in March 1982 and concluded its work at the end of 1983 but only presented its report in parliament early in 1984 (Spong & Mayson 1993:73). Here the apartheid government went out of its way to close the SACC through all available legal channels, hence it used the case of Bishop Mokoena as a platform from which to appoint the Eloff Commission. In December 1978 the SACC had appointed Mr. Eugene Reolofse to rescue the SACC from serious mismanagement. In April 1979 he submitted to the General Secretary of the SACC four reports which contained evidence pointing to irregularities and the mismanagement of funds by senior staff of the SACC. Bishop Isaac Mokoena was chairman of the South African Theological College for Independent Churches (SATCIC) over which the SACC had control. Evidence included photographic evidence of forgeries committed by Bishop Mokoena by signing SATCIC cheques. The SACC decided to deal pastorally with Bishop Mokoena. However, in October 1979 Bishop Mokoena was prosecuted and found not guilty on eight counts of fraud. Meanwhile in February 1979 "The Nation" newspaper reported on dissatisfaction due to the SACC's failure on the part of overseas donors to present financial statements reflecting the usage of money donated, thus attracting public attention on SACC affairs (Eloff Report 1984:18). The Star newspaper of 4 November 1981 recorded "there is nothing wrong in principle in appointing judicial commissions of inquiry, when funds may have been misused." Following new allegations over the finances of the SACC the Citizen of 5 November 1981 stated "we are pleased that the Government has appointed a judicial commission to investigate the South African Council of Churches particularly in respect of the receipt and appropriation of funds (Eloff Report 1984:11).

The SACC agreed to co-operate with the commission and indicated its readiness to avail itself to answer all questions and make submissions (Spong & Mayson 1993:73). To conduct the investigation, the chartered accountants firm Theron Van der Poel was appointed, the Institute for Contemporary History of the University of the Free State to make sense of the history and development of the SACC in South Africa, and the Human Sciences Research Council to prepare the content analysis of the main activities of the SACC. In 1982 the commission invited the World Council of Churches (WCC), through which funds were channelled to the SACC, to submit a memorandum. The WCC vowed its support to the SACC and was prepared to subject itself to the commission but refused to make available information on financial matters since Swiss law prohibited them from passing financial information to non-nationals (the headquarters of WCC were in Geneva) (Eloff Report 1984:18).

In the early stages of the investigation, it was alleged that the former General Secretary of the SACC Bishop Tutu received some monies in his individual capacity. But since the SACC was not willing to have him prosecuted, another forum was designated to deal with his case separately. In October 1982 Bishop Tutu testified on the SACC's theological perceptions. According to the Eloff report, Desmond Tutu admitted to having waged "a massive psychological war against the country and promoted political fights for liberation (Molwantwa 1998:52). In most of his speeches to the commission Desmond Tutu kept with one theme throughout; "the unremitting evil of apartheid must cease", moving from the theological realm into politics with the single principle at heart "abolition of apartheid", ensuring that his political voice was not consumed by any fear but rather being as clear as his theological messages (Tomain 1986:547-549).

In the end, the commission accused Desmond Tutu of being conspicuous in a sense that he conducted propaganda through his speeches and public pronouncements and endeavoured to discredit both the State and its institutions. Further, the commission accused the SACC of poor administration and failure to expose crime. It was found that the SACC neglected its finances as of 1975 onwards, making it possible for the SACC executive officers to steal from its purse. However, there was no evidence of the SACC being manipulated by its overseas donors. Generally, the commission found that the SACC could not be declared an affected organisation in terms of the provision of section 2 of Affected Organisation Act No. 31 of 1974. As a result, the SACC could not be rendered ineffective or declared a threat to the State (Eloff Report 1984:430-431).

4.9 KHOTSO HOUSE IS BOMBED

The SACC has its headquarters in 42 de Villiers Street in Johannesburg called Khotso House. Khotso is a Sesotho word meaning peace. In dealing with this theme Molwantwa in his MA thesis advances the title "Making war on peace house" which speaks directly to the feeling of many people in South Africa during the time of the incident. The SACC was now considered an enemy of the state and all the methods of dealing with SACC had yielded no results, even the Eloff Commission had failed to put pressure on the SACC. The government, in its desire to close the SACC down, resorted to harassing the organisation and its officials and on 30 August 1988, Khotso House was bombed. The bomb went off in the basement garage of Khotso House shortly after midnight on the morning of 31 August destroying everything from the basement to the rooftop of the six-floor offices. The windows of the surrounding buildings were also destroyed, burning and scattering SACC files (Spong & Mayson 1993:95). This

bombing of the SACC headquarters was not only an attempt to disrupt the functioning of the SACC but a move to wipe out all those who sought an end to apartheid and sought a just society (Molwantwa 1998:51). This act was committed despite the risk of putting the lives of people in and around the building in danger. SACC leaders saw this as a deliberate strategy by the apartheid government and its support institutions to stand against the legitimate activities of the church, hence this bombing exacerbated the already growing tension between the SACC and the apartheid government. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) found that P.W Botha was personally responsible for instructing Mr. Adriaan Vlok, the then minister of law and order, and Johan van der Merwe, the then police commissioner, to destroy the SACC head office occupied by anti-apartheid activists (Hopkins 2003:291). Not only the SACC head office was bombed by the apartheid government, but six weeks after the SACC head office's bombing the headquarters of the S.A Catholic Bishops conference was also destroyed, its general secretary was detained and tortured, its apartheid activist Father Michael Lapsley received a parcel bomb and lost both his arms and an eye. Later the then SACC General Secretary Rev. Frank Chikane suffered strange attacks of sickness due to poisoning.

4.10 REV. FRANK CHIKANE IS POISONED

Rev. Frank Chikane was elected as SACC General Secretary in July 1987. At that time the SACC had gained prominence in South Africa and was seen by black South Africans as an instrument of both change and hope. However, the apartheid government held a different view altogether, it saw the SACC as a serious threat to its existence. Thus Rev. Frank Chikane had to lead the SACC through its most crucial and trying times in the history of the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. In the midst of it all Rev. Frank Chikane, who was much respected within both the political and ecclesiastical spheres of South Africa, became very outspoken against apartheid and as a result by the late 1980s the state plotted to get rid of him. In 1989, while travelling on his trip to Namibia on diplomatic missions, he suddenly battled with respiratory problems, nausea, sweating and abdominal pains. He was flown back to Johannesburg and was discharged from the hospital without any indication of what exactly was wrong with him. Later that very month he left for the USA where he was to meet church leaders in Washington DC, and became ill once again, was hospitalised and yet again discharged without reasons for his sickness. And he was repeatedly hospitalised more than three times in six weeks and on each occasion he was using clothes from his luggage. A brief observation revealed that his luggage was contaminated with poison (Spong & Mayson 1993:96 – 97). In

2006 at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Adriaan Johannes Vlok, the then apartheid minister of law and order and correctional services, admitted that the National Party (NP) government involved him in the assassination of anti-apartheid activists, with Rev. Frank Chikane being one of them. At the TRC, in a dramatic gesture, he is reported to have washed Rev. Frank Chikane's feet and apologised for his actions.

4.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the historical background of the South Africa Council of Churches by briefly looking into the ecumenical predecessor councils which gave rise and shaped the establishment of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and has as well discussed the founding history of the SACC. Further, it has provided an overview of selected member churches of the SACC and gave a historical background of selected former leaders in the shaping of the SACC. In conclusion, this chapter has shown that the church of South Africa under pressures of apartheid laws has stood side by side with the people of South Africa in their resistance against apartheid. To express this view in explicit terms, Dr. Frank Mdlalose of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) as early as in 1996 emphasised that "Black South Africa was not broken by apartheid and the spirit of resistance to apartheid lived in the hearts and minds of Black people. The elevation of Black leaders and Black political organisations to exalted positions where they alone were seen as leading the struggle, waging the struggle and writing history, is wrong" (Mdlalose 1996:30). It is the view of this study that when political organisations of South Africa, in particular, the African National Congress, claimed victory over apartheid to itself alone, it did not only rob the SACC of its glory, but beyond this it robbed the church and the poor South Africans of the opportunity to experience a true form of democracy as envisioned by the SACC and other civil societies in 1994. As a result in more than 20 years into democracy, yet South African people have not yet arrived at the "Promised Land" or experienced the form of democracy that organisations such as the South African Council of Churches could have hoped for in 1994.

CHAPTER 5 : THE SACC AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Before 1994 freedom of religion was not a constitutional right in South Africa. In 1994 a new constitution was adopted and only finalized in 1996, and for the first time in the history of South Africa freedom of religion was given space in the constitution (Coertzen 2008:1). Thus, under the new dispensation religions, churches and other faith organisations such the SACC had to redefine their role in society. This dissertation has shown that prior to 1994, jointly with churches in South Africa and abroad, the SACC had its focus on issues of racism, violence, and inequality in South Africa. The ecumenical vision of the SACC was to seek the kingdom of God and a just society in South Africa. Through financial support, meetings, and statements other ecumenical councils and churches expressed their solidarity with the SACC. The SACC served the people of South Africa by leading the struggle against apartheid, which in the view of the SACC did not aspire to conduct itself according to the vision of the kingdom of God, consequently, the SACC did not cooperate with the apartheid government. Having defeated apartheid in 1994 meant that the SACC had to redefine its identity and the new role it was to play in the new dispensation. This meant that not only the SACC but churches in, general, had to relate to the new democratic realities of South Africa.

5.2 THE SACC REDEFINES ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE RSA GOVERNMENT

In its 1995 conference in Vanderbijlpark, the SACC redefined its relationship with the state as one of “critical solidarity”. This meant that the church through the voice of the SACC would continue its support of all initiatives that seek to promote justice, peace, and democracy while at the same time it would continue to criticise and protest against unjust policies (Kumalo 2009:255). The SACC was no longer an enemy of the state as it had been under the apartheid government, rather the church through the voice of the SACC was “a friend of the democratic state” and following this new relationship many prominent leaders left the SACC and occupied either academic, ecclesiastical or government posts. In words of Kgatle (2018) the RSA government system swallowed the prophetic voice of South African Council of Churches (SACC) when “the SACC leaders joined the government with good intentions of transforming the system from the inside out” (Kgatle 2018:3). The new government of South Africa was

inaugurated in April 1994 in a ceremony that was blessed by various religious representatives from diverse faiths of South Africa. Along similar lines, Göranzon (2010) states “it is natural that the SACC now regards the government as at least a potential partner” (Göranzon 2010:288). Prominent religious leaders such as Desmond Tutu prayed for the new government, in his prayer he prayed that God bless South Africa. After the closing of the ceremony on the stairs of the Union Building Desmond Tutu is quoted to have said: “now I am going back to the church to do the real business of the church and leave politics to those well qualified to do it”. As well the then former President of the SACC Dr. Manas Buthelezi at his farewell function in 1997 is quoted as having said: “now I am going to serve the real church”. Along similar lines Lüdemann (2016) highlights that at the inauguration of Nelson Mandela in 1994, leaders such as Dr. Manas Buthelezi “felt that they had done their job in filling the political vacuum as spiritual leaders in the political arena”, hence leaders such as Manas Buthelezi would shift their focus from political liberation theology to Lutheran teachings of *solus christus, sola gratia, sola fide and sola scriptura* (Christ alone, grace alone, faith alone, and scripture alone) (Lüdemann 2016:150). Theological thinkers such as Rev. Frank Chikane, Molefe Tsele, and Allan Boesak started to work for the government, with Rev. Frank Chikane working as the Director General (DG) in the office of the then Deputy President Thabo Mbeki and even served the National Executive Council (NEC) of the African National Congress (Kumalo 2009:250). According to Resane (2016) under the administration of Nelson Mandela RSA government was open and welcoming to the South African Council of Churches (SACC) due to the role it played during the liberation struggle. Kgatle (2018) speaks of this period as when “armchair theology” was introduced and practiced, the time when the mentality of ‘we have arrived’ developed (Kgatle 2018:3). It goes without saying that these open withdrawals by prominent SACC figures from SA political involvements of the SACC due to either institutional needs of the church or government institutions hindered the development of new SACC leaders and even compromised the independence of the church in South Africa and ultimately this would lead to the weakening of SACC. It is enough to call the 1994 – 1999 period of the SACC a “transitional period” since it had to engage the process of reforming its identity and even establish its new role of helping the democratic government with nation-building projects. However, Resane (2017) is of the view that high profile Christians in government failed to influence political power in South Africa.

5.3 SACC IS WEAKENED IN SOUTH AFRICA

As most scholars such as Kgatle (2018) believes that the departure of prominent leaders from the SACC was part of the reason leading to the weakening of the SACC in South Africa. However, what could have added more fuel to this problem was the emergence of other bodies such as the National Religious Leaders Forum (NRLF) and the National Interfaith Council of South Africa (NICSA). The formation of the NRLF as per the request of Nelson Mandela for religious bodies to form a forum was to enhance dialogue between religious societies and government and participate in the national building projects in South Africa. In 1997 the then President of South Africa Nelson Mandela had told religious leaders that in their isolated capacities as both political and religious organisations they would not achieve their objectives should they continue to act separately, hence Resane (2016) would support the view that the Mandela administration was more welcoming to South African Council of Churches (SACC) than the Mbeki, Motlanthe and Zuma administrations.

This was as Pillay (2017) might be correct in pointing out that while the SACC relaxed its voice in South Africa, other voices such as the NRLF began to fill the gap by calling consultations with regard to the South African situation. This organisation could work with the RSA government through the office of the president. The dialogue between the government and the NRLF continued with President Mbeki after he succeeded Nelson Mandela in 1999. Under his presidency, the NRLF together with the SACC could freely raise concerns and actively participate in government activities that were geared towards nation building. Suffice to say, under Thabo Mbeki generally the church of South Africa and the SACC, in particular, could continue to speak in the South African political and government context. And the SACC continued to be in favour of the Mbeki administration even though the concern emerged that government did not include religious forums and the SACC in discussions of policies but rather needed more support and approval of such policies from the SACC. Some of these issues involved violence against woman, increasing levels of crime, leadership lack of accountability, economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe, governance crisis in some government institutions and violence against foreign nationals (Pillay 2017:3). Mbeki understood the SACC concerns and attempted to pay more attention to these matters. Thus, generally, the relationship between the South African churches, religious communities and the Mbeki administration remained in good standing.

On 20 September 2008, President Mbeki announced that he would resign as State President of South Africa after being recalled by the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the African

National Congress (ANC). The SACC questioned events that led to this decision, particularly the ANC Polokwane conference events. The SACC further opposed publicly the appointment of President Jacob Zuma as Mbeki's successor, who in the SACC's view was the most corrupt candidate and did not qualify to hold such high office in the land (Pillay 2017). However, Jacob Zuma became the State President of South Africa after brief acting of Kgalema Petrus Motlanthe as interim President of South Africa between 25 September and 09 May 2009 following the resignation of Thabo Mbeki. Kgalema Motlanthe was then appointed as the Deputy President of South Africa by his successor Jacob Zuma. During his presidency, it became clear to the SACC that it would be sidelined by the presidency.

The slow decline of the NRLF between 2004 and 2007 led to the consideration of alternative organisations. The Commission for Religious and Traditional Affairs (CRATA) convened on 27 November 2008 where President Jacob Zuma spoke and appealed to religious leaders to organise themselves and form a unity with the government to ensure reconstruction, development, and progress. The result was that faith leaders in attendance called for a leadership summit in 2009 to consider a partnership with the government. In 2009 the leadership summit decided to form a new faith organisation and call it the National Interfaith Leaders Council (NILC) and in August 2009 this new organisation met with President Jacob Zuma who then described it as "the holy revolution of the people of God". Initially, the SACC had welcomed the NRLF but expressed its dissatisfaction with the formation of the NILC. In the SACC's view, this was an attempt by the Commission for Religious Affairs to have the monopoly over the ecumenical space in South Africa. The SACC its response made a decision to call upon all Christian ecumenical bodies to unite in one voice and witness since it was of the view that beyond the attempt by the Commission for Religious Affairs the RSA government wanted to fragment the ecumenical voice in South Africa in order to solicit religious support to itself. By now the SACC had learned the hard way that everything went well with the government only when religious communities offered support without being critical and questioning of the presidency (Pillay 2017:4). Thus, it was important for the SACC and religious communities not to lose focus on the work that should be done for the poor and marginalised people of South Africa. Despite its views about the NILC the SACC in part agreed to join hands with the NILC but further stated that it would keep a reasonable distance from the newly formed religious organisation without being its member.

5.4 XENOPHOBIC ATTACKS AND THE VOICE OF THE SACC

South Africa is a nation on its journey to healing the wounds of the past and on the road to realising democracy through nation-building. However, for the past years since the inception of democracy, South Africa has been faced with many challenges and one of the main challenges was xenophobia. Xenophobic violence can be referred to as collective violence by local communities targeting foreign nationals just because of their being foreign (Misago 2016:444). To portray this issue in more simple terms, Solomon and Kosaka (2013) describe xenophobia as fear and hatred against foreigners, in this sense it starts as fear of losing “citizen benefits”. Such fear develops into hatred embodied in discriminatory attitude and culminates in the violence of different forms.

The unprecedented form of violence against foreign nationals in South Africa in May 2008 left political analysts, government officials, politicians, civil society and churches at a loss for words to describe and complete the narrative of a Rainbow nation. Incidents such as these proved once more that democracy as an ideal in South Africa was far from being realised. Organisations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) intervened to stop these ongoing violent attacks targeted at foreign nationals in South Africa and worked to prevent the recurrence of such incidents in the future. However, in 2011 findings pointed to the fact that the attitude towards foreign nationals in South Africa had not changed. In 2011 alone about 120 foreign nationals were killed, five burned alive and 100 seriously injured. In 2012 incidents of violent attacks on foreign nationals increased with about 140 of them being killed and 250 sustained serious injuries (Kinge 2016:44). The former president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, in 2001 at the annual celebration of Africa Day attributed xenophobia to the lack of knowledge and understanding of African-continental relations and called for teaching and learning at all levels of education to focus on African countries (Solomon & Kosaka 2013:9)

In attempt to broker peaceful living between the local people of South Africa and foreign nationals from as early as 2005 when signs of serious attacks on foreign nationals were evident, the South African Council of Churches (SACC) played a vital role in mediating xenophobic attacks which had broken out in Gauteng (Adjai 2010:128). The SACC continued to condemn and speak out against xenophobic attacks in South Africa and even expressed its concern and care towards foreign nationals at the Eloff commission in defense of the church against attacks leveled at the SACC. Desmond Tutu argued that the SACC and South African churches reserved the right to condemn anything inconsistent with the conscience. In April 2015 the

SACC met with the minister of Art and Culture in South Africa, Mr. Nathi Mthetwa, to discuss xenophobic attacks. Present at this meeting were about 30 churches leaders led by Archbishop Thabo Makgoba of the Anglican Church and the then acting Secretary General of the SACC, Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana, and what became clear at this meeting was the observation that some communities in South Africa had been angered by the manner in which some foreign nationals conducted themselves (SACC 2015).

The SACC continued to call on South Africans to realise the road to democracy which will bring the fulfillment of a true and just society (SACC 2015:2)²³. Together with interfaith communities the SACC engaged in community dialogue and emphasised the need for a National Indaba²⁴ as an initiative of the SACC action plan. This analysis alone can be seen as evidence that the SACC as an ecumenical association indeed continued to play a vital role in bringing the voice of different churches together in the fight against any form of crime and successfully expressed its prophetic ministry in the socio-political situation of South Africa. Mugambi (1997:93) observes that during apartheid in South Africa different churches had different theological responses towards the question of apartheid, while some stood in support of the apartheid system, others opposed it and others avoided contamination of their piety with politics. However, the current ecumenical should see to it that in solid and one voice the church continues its active participation in the public and political life of the South African society.

²³ SACC update on Xenophobic Attacks in South Africa

<http://sacc.org.za/news/the-sacc-update-on-the-xenophobic-challenges-in-south-africa/>

²⁴ SACC Calls for National Indaba on Xenophobia <http://sacc.org.za/news/the-sacc-calls-for-national-indaba-on-xenophobia/>

5.5 NKANDLA REPORT AND THE VOICE OF THE SACC

On March 2014 the Public Protector, Adv. Thulisile Madonsela released a report titled “Secure in Comfort”. This report had investigated allegations of maladministration and unethical conduct regarding upgrades by the Department of Public Works (DPW) at the private residence of President Jacob Zuma at Nkandla in the KwaZulu-Natal Province.

This investigation was conducted under section 182 of the RSA Constitution which accorded the Public Protector, Adv. Thuli Madonsela, powers to investigate allegations of improper conduct in state affairs. This was also done in terms of the Executive Member Ethics Act 82 of 1998 which gives the Public Protector powers to investigate any allegations that relate to the violation of Executive Ethics Act (Madonsela 2014: 5).

As early as 4 December 2009 the *Mail and Guardian*²⁵ newspaper had reported that about R65 million was to be spent on President Jacob Zuma’s private residence in Nkandla. However, on 03 December 2009, the office of the Presidency came out to deny such allegations and further denied that taxpayers’ money would be spent to fund such projects.

Between the period 13 December 2011 and November 2012 the office of the Public Protector had received about seven complaints requesting an investigation into allegations as published in the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper of 11 November 2011.²⁶ Following this media report on improvements at the private residence of President Jacob Zuma in Nkandla at state expense of about R65m more items were added, which increased the amount to be spent from R65m to a total cost of R246m (Madonsela 2014: 6).

According to the Presidential Handbook²⁷ published in November 2015 in support of the RSA Presidents, it is the task of the Department of Public Works (DPW) to determine reasonable and permissible costs for the maintenance and physical security measures of both the RSA President and his Deputy in consultation with the National Security Services (NSS) (The

²⁵ Zuma’s R65m Nkandla splurge: <https://mg.co.za/article/2009-12-04-zumas-r65m-nkandla-splurge>

²⁶ Nkandla Upgrade: <https://mg.co.za/article/2011-11-11-bunker-time-for-zuma>

²⁷ The Presidential Handbook of 2015: <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/content/presidential-handbook?page=12>

Presidential Handbook 2015: 11). The state through the DPW provides the RSA President with state-owned houses to use as an official residence in Cape Town, Pretoria and Durban. The costs for furnishing and maintaining these houses are for the account of the Department of Public Works (The Presidential 2015:13).

Accordingly it has always been understood by the South African general public that the private residence of the RSA President is fully entitled to security upgrades, but for such upgrades to cost R65m and more was just bizarre in the eyes of the South African public, how can such an amount of money be spent on private residence security upgrades only! Something was absolutely wrong with the process. Immediately this raised serious suspicions of misuse of state funds to benefit a private individual. And these allegations provided the Public Protector Adv. Thuli Madonsela with grounds to conduct the investigation (The Presidential 2015).

The findings of the Public Protector showed that the excessive cost of the Nkandla project was not due to security upgrades but for the purpose of beautifying the private residence of the president and add comfort to its infrastructure (Madonsela 2014:407). The Public Protector found that there was absolute maladministration in respect of the manner in which the project was conducted. With this, Adv. Thuli Madonsela recommended that President Jacob Zuma should pay a percentage of the cost of the upgrades and this would be determined by the National Treasury together with the Department of Public Works (Madonsela 2014:442).

5.6 SNAKE CHURCHES AND THE VOICE OF THE SACC

After the attainment of democracy in South Africa in 1994, its newly reformulated Constitution recognised the right to freedom of religion, belief and opinion under chapter 2 of the RSA Constitution (RSA Constitution 1996:7). However, the continuous realisation of this right appeared to be trampling on and being in conflict with other human rights in South Africa. In Soshanguve, a township of Pretoria in South Africa, a church called “End Times Disciples Ministries” then led by 24-year-old Tshepo Mnguni referred to as “Prophet Penuel” in 2015 brought the South African Faith Communities into total confusion when he made the claim that under God’s command he had turned snakes into chocolate and instructed members of his congregation to eat them. In reaction towards this act the Soshanguve community, together with the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), took it upon themselves to strongly oppose Prophet Penuel. It was reported by the Eyewitness News (EWN) of 9th August 2015 that the EFF together with the community of Soshanguve burnt the End Times Disciples Ministries tent

when they could not speak to Prophet Penuel. However, on 10 August 2015 according to News24, the EFF denied allegations of torching the church tent.

Still, in Pretoria, a church called Rabboni Ministries led by Lesego Daniel, referred to as Prophet Lesego, in 2014 instructed members of his congregation to eat grass and drink petrol as a symbolic way of accessing God. His congregants ate grass claiming that it tasted like biltong and drank petrol only to claim that it tasted like apple juice. Speaking of these strange activities Khanyile (2016) make use of the words “oddities-worthy of criminality”. He argues that churches such as End Time Disciple Ministries are a perfect example of extreme Neo-Pentecostal exhibitions in South Africa (Khanyile 2016:17). Further, he writes that End Time Disciples Ministries is “an institutional space that projects discourses of radical and militant Christianity. These discourses are able to regulate police, control and subjugate bodies within the ambits of those institutional spaces” (Khanyile 2016:59). Activities of End Times Disciples Ministry raised serious questions and angered faith communities together with the South African public (Khanyile 2016: 24).

In response to media reports about the misuse of religion, in 2015 the South African Commission for the promotion and protection of the rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Commission) as one of the Chapter Nine institutions in terms of section 181 of the RSA constitution launched an investigative study on what was termed “Commercialization of religion and the abuse of peoples’ belief systems. In March 2016 the commission issued its report and submitted the final version to the parliamentary portfolio called “Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs” (COGTA). This report called for regulation of both religious organizations and practitioners in South Africa (CRL Commission Report 2017:8). The commission proposed that there should be “Peer Review Council” which will have a peer representation from every religious community in South Africa as an umbrella council. Under this council, there will be a number of peer review committees from every religion which will play the religious dispute resolution role and make recommendations to the umbrella council. The umbrella council will play a policing role and have disciplinary powers over religious organizations and practitioners, then recommend granting or withdrawal of licenses to the CRL Rights Commission. Thus the CRL Rights commission will remain an arbiter in all cases as recommended by the peer review committees and peer review council (CRL Commission Report 2017). To support this call, Mokhoathi and Rembe (2017) wrote an article titled “Religious liberties and the constitution of South Africa: a call for religious accountability”. This article looked at the abuse and violations of human

rights in South Africa by religious establishments. Mokhoathi and Rembe argue that “even though these acts are claimed to be of faith, they demoralize and undermine the rights of the congregants.” They (Mokhoathi and Rembe) further add that acts of by such pastors infringe upon human rights and continues that pastors who are responsible for perpetuating the violation of human rights in South Africa should be held accountable. Lastly, Mokhoathi and Rembe (2017) concur with CRL commission by pleading with the government of South Africa to “bring some form of control or monitor the exercise of such religious liberties” (Mokhoathi and Rembe 2017:5). Taking this further, Kgatle (2017) has written an informative article on “unusual practices by Neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa”, Kgatle is of the view that these churches “idolise the miraculous, healing, deliverance, success and the enactment of bizarre church performances often performed by charismatic and highly influential spiritual leaders”. Further he highlights that some of the Neo-Pentecostal churches of refuse to join the South African Council of Churches (Kgatle 2017:2). Kgatle (2017) refers to Resane (2016:2) who concurs with the view that most of these “churches are mostly charismatic with Pentecostal features such as casting out demons, healing the sick, with proclivity towards deliverance from any form of bondage such as poverty, unemployment, marital needs, promotion at work, childless, bewitchment, etc.” referring to Lesego Daniel who instructed members of his congregation to eat grass and drink petrol as a symbolic way of accessing God. After one of the congregants came out to defend the pastor by saying “pastor is the son of God who was sent to heal people’s souls”. Kgatle expresses his shock that it is surprising that in South Africa there are people who still support the pastors who commit illegal acts which pose danger to humanity. On the side of pastors, Kgatle (2017) is of the view that such unusual practices are a sign of anti-intellectualism perpetuated by isolation from real academic activities of the theological field. Following Resane (2016:5) unlike (Mokhoathi and Rembe 2017) Kgatle (2017) recommends that instead of government as the sole regulator of religion, the government should support religious councils to manage different religions. According to him the CRL Commission should make churches accountable and responsible by belonging to a Christian council like the South African Council of Churches (Kgatle 2017:7).

The South African Catholic Bishop’s Conference (SACBC) expressed doubts that these recommendations will see the light of the day. The SACBC was of the view that if the commission’s recommendations were to be implemented they would limit freedom of religion and association in South Africa. The SACBC argued that already there are various state institutions and legal mechanisms that can deal with corruption, exploitation and other forms of religious abuse by religious communities without hindering freedom of religion and

association (SACBC 2016). Along similar lines, a non-profit organization (NPO) by the name “Freedom of Religion South Africa” (FORSA) argues that control of religious organizations and practitioners by extensive national structure will result in “state capture of religion”, and this will give the government the power to silence churches on issues that reflect negatively on the state (FORSA 2017). One must admit that both SACBC and FORSA developed a strong argument against the recommendations of the CRL Rights Commission. However, these arguments fail to consider the point that the role of CRL Rights Commission is not only to promote rights of religious communities but as well the CRL Rights Commission has the inherent obligation to protect the rights of South Africans. Thus, the implication of “Promotion and Protection of Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities” need a close consideration on the one hand. On the other hand, even though CRL Rights Commission formulated its recommendations from serious concerns about the unfolding direction of religion in South Africa, one can reach the conclusion that the CRL Rights Commission seems to have completed its work which comprised of hearings across all nine provinces of South Africa in a surprisingly short space of time, Seven months to gather public opinion on an important question of religion is never enough. It is important to allocate more time in dealing with sensitive matters such as religion. It goes without saying that if not handled correctly, the question of regulating religion in South Africa can, on the one hand, lead to serious public backlash, and on the other hand this can result in a regrettable interreligious enmity. Table 5.6 A. Will illustrate this opinion. Space prevents a further discussion on this matter, it suffices to mention that the question of regulating religion in South Africa is under-researched. Thus, serious attention on this question is necessary particularly on the part of South African policymakers, lawyers and academics to reconcile the gap between the idea of the constitutional guaranteed religious freedom and the manifestations and realization of such freedom of religion in South Africa.

Table 5.6 A

Province	Date
KWAZULU-NATAL	14-15 OCTOBER 2015
GAUTENG	3-6, 9, 16, 17,18,20,24 NOVEM-BER 2015, 2 DECEMBER 2015 AND 16 MAY 2016.
KWAZULU-NATAL	1-2 FEBRUARY 2016
WESTERN CAPE	12 FEBRUARY 2016
LIMPOPO	16 FEBRUARY 2016
FREE STATE	25 FEBRUARY 2016
EASTERN CAPE	1 MARCH 2016
NORTH WEST	9 MARCH 2016
NORTHERN CAPE	16 MARCH 2016
MPUMALANGA	23 MARCH 2016

In 2016 in Limpopo, a 24-year-old man referred to as Prophet Lethebo surprised the South African public when he sprayed Doom on the faces of members of his congregation claiming that it had healing powers. The department of health in Limpopo approached the court in an application of court interdict to stop Prophet Lethebo from spraying members of his congregation with Doom and later the Limpopo high court ordered the pastor to stop using Doom on members of his congregation and any member of the public. However, after the court ruling, many members of his church came out in his defense by claiming that he is the son of God with powers to heal HIV and Aids, epilepsy and ulcers²⁸At a launch of the National Convention of South Africa (NCSA), a forum established with the aim of discussing these issues in 2017 at a national level, the South African Council of Churches (SACC) reprimanded and condemned all churches for using both the name of religion and of Christ to achieve corrupt purposes. De Gruchy (2005:113) points to how the SACC had always sought to provide true church leadership towards every challenge faced by South Africa and how newly established churches had challenged and weakened the voice of the SACC in South Africa. The SACC Secretary General (SG), Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana leveled his criticism against all churches

²⁸ Pastor Sprays Doom on Congregants: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pxl-6rM_2E0

that were abusing the spiritual vulnerability of poor people in South Africa. He said such conduct sought to undermine the national project of a just society and the Bill of Rights.

Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana further admitted that the church made a huge mistake after 1994 of leaving the question of public values in the hands of politicians and with this, he called on all religious communities and the churches to unite in informing and formulating public values and moral standards in South Africa (SACC 2017). On the question of morals, Mugambi expressed the concern that the project of nation-building did not give enough recognition to the quality of a person with a good moral standard and a sense of accountability. Therefore he maintained that the church should deal with this grey area of the RSA democracy to ensure that in the end, the country had a morally sensitive and committed leadership (Mugambi 1997:125-126). This means that the question of morality cannot be excluded from the democratic discussion of South Africa²⁹ and it further emphasises the fact that on logical grounds there is no compelling reason to suggest that there was inactivity on the part of the South African Council of Churches, but rather this gives us every reason to believe that the SACC has always been vocal on matters of national importance in South Africa but was not given the right platform to form and shape the moral body of democracy.

5.7 THE SACC RECOMMITS TO SUSTAIN HOPE FOR SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is a country where there is inequality in terms of race and gender, while corruption is on the rise and is manifesting across all sectors of government. This is done through the abuse of power and misuse of public funds by the very leaders the people of South Africa have elected into power in 1994. The unemployment rate is increasing while the public purse is being hijacked by top politicians in the country. An analysis of this kind compels one to conclude that there seems to be no hope for South Africa's tomorrow (SACC 2015).

In December 2015 the South African Council of Churches held a special reconciliation day service in Johannesburg to launch "The South Africa we pray for" campaign which was aimed

²⁹ SACC Slams churches that use gimmicks to take advantage of the congregants
<https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2017-08-29-sacc-slams-churches-that-use-gimmicks-to-take-advantage-of-congregants/>

at resurrecting hope, healing, and reconciliation in South Africa. This service was attended by all member churches of the SACC and about 46 church leaders were present (SACC 2015).³⁰

The SACC Senior Vice-president, Rev. Frank Chikane opened the service by emphasising the need for a true form of reconciliation in South Africa, followed by the SACC President Bishop Ziphozihle Siwa who spoke passionately about the need for one reconciled nation, emphasising that South Africans need to be true and honest with one another in the process of reconciliation. Towards the end of the service the General Secretary of the SACC Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana stood to lead the recommitment statement on behalf of the SACC which read: “*We the South African Council of Churches reaffirm our commitment to the people of South Africa in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, whose mission in the world is our solemn mandate, we rise at a time such as this in our nation, to proclaim the message of him who said ‘I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly; I am the good shepherd (SACC 2015)’*”.

In the end, all churches stood to commit their prayer in five critical pillars³¹. De Gruchy records a history of how the SACC in 1986 called on its member churches to pray for the end to unjust rule (de Gruchy 2005:202). On prayer, Rosscup advocated that in the situation where there is any form of imbalance and injustice the church leaders must remedy such imbalance through teachings and emphasis that brings the elements of the society together in prayer (Rosscup 1995:95). Prayer in this sense is not asking God to take away the troubles, but rather believers here ask God to give them the strength and ability to stand the ground as spiritual soldiers so that they can corporately as the body of Christ stop the wickedness that has poisoned society.

1. Pray and act for healing and reconciliation: committing to continue to pray for the true healing of wounds created by the history of South Africa and praying for true reconciliation in terms of race and ethnicity.

³⁰ 46 church leaders witness SACC commitment <http://sacc.org.za/news/46-church-leaders-witness-sacc-commitment-sustained-hope-sa/>

³¹ SACC on Five Critical pillars: <http://sacc.org.za/news/46-church-leaders-witness-sacc-commitment-sustained-hope-sa/>

2. Pray and act for the destruction of poverty and inequality: committing to continue praying and engaging in actions which are aimed at eradicating poverty and inequality in South Africa to ensure true realisation of democracy in the narrative of a better life for all.
3. Pray and act for economic transformation: committing prayers for the improvement of the economy in South Africa, seeing the need for true economic transformation to take place in the process of realising democracy.
4. Pray and act for the restoration of family fabric: committing to continue with prayers and act towards building a family lifestyle, where each will live in harmony with one another, in order to be able to draw a full picture of a reconciled future generation in South Africa.
5. Pray and act towards anchoring democracy: committing prayers and actions towards realising democracy in South Africa where there will be no corruption, unemployment, inequality, poverty and all other elements which seek to undermine the cause for struggle and create gaps in the narrative of democracy in South Africa.

5.8 THE SACC AND ALLEGED STATE CAPTURE

Chapter two of this dissertation has shown that in South Africa corruption is very much institutionalised. In their article, Martin and Hussein speak of state capture as a situation where groups or individuals influence state policies for personal advantages (Martin & Solomon 2016). Along similar lines, Vesna Pesic defines state capture as an act by any group external to the state having influence over state institutions and state policies for their own private interests and against the public common good. Secondly, he sees state capture as the root of widespread corruption and he further draws from recent literature in defining state capture as the seizure of law for the benefit of the few through influential political links in parliament and government. He highlights that it is important to differentiate the concept of state capture from corruption actions ('administrative corruption'). In this situation, the legal system of the state is compromised in a sense that it starts to work for or benefit the illegal interests which are masked in legal form (Pesic 2007: 2). Pesic further defines state capture as any group that is external to the state but exercises influence over state institutions and policies for its own good against the public interests.

5.9 SERMON BY ANGLICAN ARCHBISHOP THABO MAKGOBA³²

Ruin (1983) speaks of how preachers should be mouth-pieces of God following Calvin's view of preaching since he (John Calvin) regarded or understood preaching as a living and saving event (Runia 1983:32). According to Johan (2015) "Prophetic Preachers" in South Africa have always addressed political issues from the pulpit. Pointing to renowned "Prophetic Preachers" such as Dr. Allan Boesak, Bishop Desmond Tutu and Dr. Beyers Naudé. Johan (2015) argues that these preachers challenged political structures fearlessly from the pulpit during apartheid and that these preachers believed in the transforming power of the word of God. Thus they made use of the Bible to articulate a picture of an alternative society in South Africa (Johan 2015:373-374).

For most Christians in South Africa, Christmas is a time reserved to commemorate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ observed normally on 25 December each year as a religious and Christian cultural celebration. For many Christians in South Africa this a time for family, friends, social gatherings and a time for gifts to be exchanged by the loved ones, but more importantly Christmas is a time for the gift of love to our friends and family. With this in mind, the Anglican Archbishop Thabo Makgoba and Chairperson of SACC heads of member churches on 25 December 2017 gave a Christmas sermon at the Anglican Cathedral Church in Cape Town and in this sermon he called for the African National Congress (ANC) National Executive Council (NEC) to recall President Jacob Zuma!

Archbishop Makgoba started his sermon by highlighting an observation that the people of South Africa were now living in changing times, where they were confronted by an unsettling state of politics and for Christians, this was a challenge as it was the task of placing the birth of Jesus Christ in the same context as our situation. Kings came from far away to worship him. "The true Christmas story is about smallness, humanity, and servanthood". With this said he challenged his congregants to redirect their thoughts and start thinking differently, especially about the poor and the marginalised in South Africa, that these people looked upon them as their leaders to bring about a new world in South Africa and give the birth of Christ a new

³² Archbishop Thabo Makgoba Christmas Sermon: a plea to recall Jacob Zuma <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/full-text-archbishop-makgobas-christmas-sermon-a-plea-for-a-new-president-for-sa-20171225>

meaning (Makgoba 2017). Tutu 1990 advocated that the church is for the poor and the marginalised, the very people who are without power and voice in society, and it remains the task of the church to empower them and “help them help themselves” so that they can enter the heritage of the freedom of children of God (Tutu 1990:87).

He then pointed to the promise made by Cyril Ramaphosa in his first speech as the party president of the African National Congress (ANC), whereby he promised that his party (ANC) would be more responsive and accountable to the ordinary citizens of South Africa and as the ANC leadership they were ready to deal with corruption and other economic crimes. Responding to this promise Archbishop Makgoba alluded to the assumption that President Cyril Ramaphosa knew very well that he first needed to deal with Jacob Zuma and his cohorts of corruption who were acting as though they owned the public purse of South Africa and had gone out of their way to bring South Africa to its economic knees. On this, he declared unequivocally that the Treasury of South Africa did not belong to the few corrupt, but rather was the common property of all South Africans and should be deployed for the common good of South Africans. He further preached that Christmas should give Christians a lens through which to see each other and even see God. And in the same way that the birth of Christ gives Christians a new hope and new beginnings, Christmas should bring hope and new beginnings to the political situation of South Africa as well, and since bringing a new life involves cutting the umbilical cord immediately after birth, accordingly the new ANC NEC should cut the umbilical cord which ties them to the Zuma era, for this had led the ANC to a “paralysis in decision making and implementation of policies. It is time to say enough is enough” and replace Jacob Zuma as president of the country (Makgoba 2017)³³.

5.10 ALLEGATIONS OF STATE CAPTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA

On 18 March 2016, on behalf of the Dominican Order of Catholic Priests, Father Stanislaus Maybebe wrote a formal petition calling on Public Protector Advocate Thuli Madonsela to

³³<https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/full-text-archbishop-makgobas-christmas-sermon-a-plea-for-a-new-president-for-sa-20171225>

investigate claims of corruption and illegal administration in the government of President Jacob Zuma which links reports that the family of Guptas who were alleged to be influencing appointments of ministers in the government to their own advantage. This petition was compiled out of concern by priests that there were serious allegations of this nature and the order of Catholic priests thought that it was necessary for the Public Protector to conduct an independent investigation into these allegations (Madonsela 2016:4).

In the same spirit on 18 March 2016 on behalf of the Democratic Alliance (DA), the DA President Mmusi Maimane urged the Public Protector Adv. Thuli Madonsela to launch an investigation into allegations of power abuse by President Jacob Zuma after claims that he had allowed the Gupta family to appoint and dismiss ministers from the cabinet. Accordingly, Adv. Thuli Madonsela was to determine whether or not President Jacob Zuma had broken the Executive Ethics³⁴ Act by exposing himself and his office to conflict of interest since he used his official powers to enrich himself and the Gupta family (Madonsela 2016:4).

5.11 POWERS OF THE PUBLIC PROTECTOR IN SOUTH AFRICA

The office of the Public Protector along with other chapter nine institutions³⁵ was established to strengthen the constitutional democracy of South Africa and to promote the rule of law by ensuring good governance. All chapter nine institutions are independent and only accountable to the National Assembly of South Africa (RSA Constitution 1996:92).

According to section 182 of the Republic of South Africa's Constitution, the functions of the Public Protector are the following:

The Public Protector has the power, as regulated by the National legislature to investigate any conduction in the state affairs, or in public administration in any sphere of government, that is alleged or suspected to be improper or to result in any

³⁴<http://www.pprotect.org/legislation/docs/EXECUTIVE%20MEMBERS%20ETHICS%20ACT%2082%20OF%201998.pdf> (according to this code an Executive may not mislead the legislature to which they are accountable or use the position entrusted to them to improperly benefit themselves or any other person)

³⁵ State institutions supporting constitutional democracy <http://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/constitution/SACConstitution-web-eng-09.pdf>

impropriety or prejudice and further states that the Public Protector is obliged to report on that conduct and take remedial actions (RSA Constitution 1996:93).

5.11.1 Investigations of state capture allegations

Following allegations of corruption and illegal administration in government by President Jacob Zuma, the Public Protector Advocate Thuli Madonsela combined complaints and conducted an investigation under section 182 of the Constitution of South Africa and under section 3 of the Executive Members Ethics Act (EMEA) which does not allow the Public Protector any discretion as to whether or not to consider and investigate the matter under his/her jurisdiction and accordingly this investigation was to be concluded within 30 days.

The office of the Public Protector was to investigate whether or not the RSA President Jacob Zuma had breached the Executive Members Ethics Act by allowing members of the Gupta family³⁶ and his son Duduzane Zuma to interfere with the business of government and influence powers of his office.

Between March and April 2016 the RSA Public Protector Adv. Thuli Madonsela wrote a letter to President Jacob Zuma informing him about the investigation and provided him with copies of the two complaints and he was also invited to comment on the allegations. However, President Jacob Zuma did not reply to this letter. On 13 September 2016 Adv. Thuli Madonsela sent President Jacob Zuma another letter asking for a meeting in order to brief him on the developments of the investigation. The urgency of this investigation of state capture allegations was that firstly the 30 mandatory days for the Public Protector to make a report on allegations in terms of section 3 of the Executive Members Ethics Act had passed, secondly the term of the Public Protector Adv. Thuli Madonsela to hold office was nearing the end (Madonsela 2016: 42).

On 06 October 2016 Adv. Thuli Madonsela met with the president and his legal team to make a briefing. In this meeting, the President's legal advisor argued that the matter should be given

³⁶ An Indian family that migrated to South African in 1993 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gupta_family

to the next incoming Public Protector for a conclusion, and this meeting was postponed to 10 October 2016. However, on 10 October 2016 Adv. Thuli Madonsela received a letter from the presidency informing her that the meeting had been cancelled and the presidency was requesting a list of key witness, statements, affidavits, and transcripts of every oral testimony (Madonsela 2016: 42) and requested an undertaking from Adv. Thuli Madonsela that she would not yet conclude the investigation. In response to this, the office of the Public Protector gave the President extra time to answer questions put to him by not later than 11am Thursday 13 October 2016 in order to enable the investigation to be concluded.

The investigation as reported in the Public Protector's state capture report No. 6 of 2016/17 found that indeed President Jacob Zuma might have breached the Executive Members Ethics Act by exposing himself to a situation of conflict of interest and used his office to enrich his own family and that of the Guptas, and furthermore the report instructed the president to appoint a commission of inquiry within 30 days and such commission should be headed by a judge selected by the Chief Justice of South Africa Justice³⁷ Mogoeng Mogoeng since it was not advisable for the president to do so for he was involved in the investigation (Madonsela 2016:453 – 454).

5.11.2 SACC on the state capture reports

After the release of the state capture report by South Africa's Public Protector Adv. Thuli Madonsela the general expectation by South Africans was that the African National Congress would act swiftly to probe investigations into allegations leveled at its party President Jacob Zuma and the Gupta family. However, while at the party level the ANC indicated to be taking the allegations of state capture very seriously, at the same time it lacked the ability and courage to follow up these allegations and confront President Jacob Zuma. At the same time president Jacob Zuma described the state capture report as fake politics to the extent of challenging the Public Protector's report in court with the claim that the report had many irregularities and as

³⁷ Courts and Administration of Justice in South Africa

<https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/full-text-archbishop-makgobas-christmas-sermon-a-plea-for-a-new-president-for-sa-20171225>

a result he would not be able to set up any commission of inquiry as the report recommended until the matter was clarified in court.³⁸

The South African Council of Churches (SACC) began compiling the report after the ANC failed to investigate allegations of the state capture report by launching what it called the “unburdening panel” at the Regina Mundi church in Soweto. The unburdening panel was to offer a safe space and become a listening facility to victims and individuals who would confess how these victims and individuals were pressured to participate in corruption. The SACC 2017 panel was to be chaired by the SACC President Bishop Siwa and would involve a retired Constitutional Court Justice Yvonne Mokgoro, former general secretary of the SACC Dr. Brigalia Bam, Bishop Mosa Sono, together with a team of lawyers and researchers. It is important to note that the SACC has a history of establishing initiatives such as this for the sole purpose of correcting and healing ills of the society. De Gruchy (2005) points to such instances during apartheid when the SACC made a call to its constituency to confess and acknowledge its guilt and participation in perpetrating apartheid policies in South Africa (de Gruchy 2005:225).

Interested people who wanted to participate in the unburdening processes were to firstly indicate their willingness to tell their stories through the office of the general secretary Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana, and they would then be referred to the lawyers who would listen to their stories and group cases according to their likeness. Such information would then be used for advocacy in the anchoring democracy pillar or be released for the South African public to know what happened or be given to a constitutional body of South Africa including any of the chapter nine institutions. As many came to the unburdening panel with various stories of corruption, a lot of them refused to sit with lawyers but rather they insisted on talking to the SACC general secretary Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana on a priestly consultation level since they feared being found out and being victimised by corruption masters. Soon the SACC panel realised that the elephant in the room was actually bigger than they had imagined. The matter exceeded mere corruption and forced the SACC to change the approach to *SEE – JUDGE – ACT* (SACC 2017).

³⁸ Jacob Zuma Challenges State capture report in court: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2017-10-24-zuma-challenges-public-protectors-recommendation-on-state-capture-report/>

5.11.3 SEE – JUDGE – ACT method

Even though the SACC had its own interpretation and meaning of the SEE – JUDGE – ACT method it is not new at all but has always been used throughout the history of the church. Thus, it is important to pause here and further explore this method to expand the understanding of what is meant by the SEE-JUDGE-ACT method.

The method of SEE-JUDGE-ACT is as old as the Old Testament in theory since this method had been followed and practised by the Old Testament kings, prophets and priests. Cezula (2017) mentions that the South African Council of Churches made use of this method within the tradition of biblical prophets (Cezula 2017:21). Whenever prophets identified a problem in society, they prayed and asked God for a solution. However, the name of SEE-JUDGE-ACT was coined by the Roman Catholic cardinal and the founder of young Christian workers, Joseph Leo Cardijn, after realising that in a social situation there was always something to be observed, and the observed was always problematic and that observation would then be followed by the search for practical and workable solutions (Sheppard 2017:103). The aim of this method is to ensure that leaders of communities have the correct facts of the situation at hand in a logic that what they SEE (observe) is true and what they JUDGE (discern) is based on substantial evidence so that when they ACT (actions) they are informed by the truth (Sheppard 2017: 104).

For the SACC the SEE-JUDGE-ACT means SEE (observation) will be done through rigorous research in order for the SACC to have a full understanding of matters at hand and JUDGE (discernment) by making use of the gospel as the true word of Christ as the only authoritative judgement on what happened. In 1978 in a Kairos article regarding politics Desmond Tutu maintained that the church must be critical of all political systems and test them against what the gospel of Christ stands for. The only time that the church should obey the state is if and when the state remains in its legitimate authority. And lastly the ACT (actions), the SACC National conference resolutions will enable the SACC to act accordingly now that they have at their disposal the true facts of what really happened (SACC 2017).

5.12 SACC LETTER TO CHURCHES OF SOUTH AFRICA

In May 2017 after the consideration of the unburdening processes, the SACC wrote a letter to the churches of South Africa, particularly its member churches, with the scriptural quote “you are the salt of the earth.....you are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:13-15). Mugambi advocates that the church cannot disengage itself from political involvement since the church itself consists of members of the society who are citizens of their country, so it is important for the church at all times to provide exemplary leadership by being the salt and light of the world (Mugambi 1997:34).

This letter started by greeting member churches in the name of the resurrected Christ and referred to a hope expressed in 1 Peter 3:15 emphasising that this hope convinced the SACC to the effect that every experience of death should be overcome with new life (SACC 2017:1). What the SACC meant by this phrase can only be understood when this letter is read along with the SACC conference resolutions in June 2011. In line with this action, Alder points to the 1972 letter written by the World Council of Churches asking its member churches to face up to tensions rooted in centuries of injustice (Alder 1994:49). The Church should constantly offer hope to the people, hope that is based on faith as the confident assurance that such hopes will be realised. Thus the church’s participation in the reconstruction of the social and political life of South Africa is indeed not in vain (Mugambi 1997:47). According to Cezula (2017), the SACC in its letter to the congregations outlined three prophetic modes: truth to power in honesty, engender hope through positive actions, and the spirit of penitence (Cezula 2017: 21). To demonstrate “truth to power” the SACC in its Triennial National Conference in June 2017 concluded in honesty that President Jacob Zuma through his corrupt and misleading actions as the state president had caused parliament, government representatives and the people of South Africa as a whole to sin, hence the SACC called on all South Africans to “act positively” and repent (Cezula 2017: 21).

It remains the task of this dissertation to discuss the content of this letter by the SACC to churches in South Africa, and it is important to explore and examine from the context in which it was written by leaders of the South African Council of Churches. It is thus important for this letter to be read in the existing political context of South Africa. This letter contains important points that I discuss and deal with here below:

1. Signs of the times: this very first theme is based on Matthew 16:2-3. This passage is about opponents of Jesus Christ; the Pharisees and Sadducees who tested Jesus by

asking him to perform a miracle for them. This request came after Jesus had performed various miracles in the eyes of everyone, thus such a request was but bizarre in the eyes of Christ. But in response, Jesus criticised his opponents for not being able to read and interpret the signs of the times. Even though this criticism was directed towards the Lord's opponents, on the flip side of the script it was directed to the Lord's disciples as well and had to reflect on their own ability of reading the signs of times as well. Thus in this letter the SACC is challenging the churches in South Africa to reflect on their ability to read the signs of the times as well, that even though there is so much corruption in South Africa, that does not mean at all that there will never be a better tomorrow, hence it is important for Christians in South Africa to continue living a life of prayer, especially in times such as this, where our country is faced with various challenges (SACC 2017: 1).

2. Ambassadors for Christ: on this second theme the SACC recommits itself to being the true ambassadors for Christ by being the eyes and the ears of what Christ is saying about the political situation of South Africa, and further the SACC recognises the platform they have within the Society of South Africa, a platform of leading common Christian action which will work for the common good of South Africans (SACC 2017:1).
3. Unburdening report: this part of the letter refers to the report on the unburdening panel which was released on 18 May 2017. Here the SACC seeks to reassure South Africans that by engaging the pastoral process of the SEE-JUDGE-ACT method. On the "SEE" part the SACC has seen and noticed with much concern the extent of the damage done by allegations of corruption and state capture in South Africa. The SACC has worked with various research organisations in ascertaining its work and findings with regard to corruption and state capture and this process was to be followed by a theological JUDGE process leading to the SACC national conference which was to have taken place on 06 -08 June 2017, after which the conference resolutions would have constituted the ACT state in the SEE-JUDGE-ACT process (SACC 2017:2).
4. Purpose of report release: The SACC here expressed the sole purpose of releasing the SEE part of the SEE-JUDGE-ACT process, being that member churches who attended the SACC National conference in June 2017 would be ready and equipped to engage the debate on the disturbing picture of the state of governance in South Africa which led to a more disturbing conclusion that the South African government had lost its moral standing due to corruption and the serious allegation of state capture (SACC 2017:2).

5. The South Africa we pray for: here the SACC reports on the gathering of member churches of the SACC in Johannesburg on Reconciliation Day on 16 December 2015 where churches prayed for true healing, reconciliation, fabric of family lifestyle, end to inequality and poverty, economic transformation and anchoring democracy, which included serious concerns about corruption and the loss of the public trust in the government of South Africa (SACC 2017:2). Having met each year to reflect on the state of the nation of South Africa, the South African Council of Churches (SACC) committed to pray for the Synchronisation of democratic South Africa with attributes of the Kingdom of God. The SACC endeavoured this process with an understanding that its prophetic ministry should be aligned with its civic responsibility (Cezula 2017:18-19).
6. Promise of post-apartheid RSA: The SACC recommitted itself to continue working and praying for the attainment of the “promised land” of South Africa, where the people of South Africa would enjoy the benefits of a just nation, reconciled as one and free from any form of inequality and racial discrimination and that was the type of South Africa the SACC prayed for (SACC 2017:2).
7. Unburdening panel facility: Here the SACC seeks to clarify to its member churches the reasons as to how and why the unburdening panel was established and for what purpose, explaining that it was provided to the people of South Africa as a safe space and hearing facility for those who were pressured to participate in corruption activities by top politicians and corruption masters in South Africa (SACC 2017:3).
8. The Jonas-Mentor revelation: Here the SACC informs its member churches that the unburdening panel came as the result of a revelation by the former Deputy Minister of Finance, Mcebisi Jonas, and Ms. Vytjie Mentor as the first people to report the allegations of state capture in South Africa. Here the SACC employs the word “revelation” to mean on human level the process of uncovering or disclosing something that was previously hidden and which had shocked and changed the way the SACC previously thought about South Africa (Migliore 2004:20-21). And as soon as the SACC created the listening facility called “the unburdening panel” various people came forth with various stories of corruption and allegations of state capture, and such stories would help the process of eradicating corruption in South Africa (SACC 2017:3).
9. What we see now: Here the SACC presents its view that mere corruption allegations are just for the purpose of creating confusion while President Jacob Zuma together with his circle are busy ensuring that the project of state capture becomes a success story.

Thus here the SACC urges its member churches to not only focus and fix their eyes on allegations of corruption but rather start to see it as just a mask of the great damage that is being done by President Jacob Zuma and his circle (SACC 2017:3).

10. The common Body of Christ: Here the SACC speaks to the churches of South Africa and makes use of the “Body of Christ” metaphor to describe the type of relationship that exists between churches as a whole with Christ as their head. In this way the body should follow the example of Christ and be sure to act collectively as one holy church of South Africa which is not broken into any form of political, racial and class factions (Migliore 2004: 250), but rather be the people of God full of compassion for the poor and the voiceless in South Africa (SACC 2017:4). In speaking of the role of the church in societies, Mugambi maintains that the church as the body of Christ, a community that gathers together in the breaking of bread, should, in the same way, come together, committed to the task of ensuring the survival of the society and make the project of nation building a success story.
11. Prayer network power: On this, the SACC expressed its gratitude for all prayer events taking place in South Africa for the purpose of praying for the country from the beginning Easter time. One of such prayers was the mass gathering³⁹ in Als Farm just outside Bloemfontein where about 1.7 million people gathered to pray for South Africa.⁴⁰ The SACC recognises such prayer gatherings and encourages their continued occurrence (SACC 2017:5).
12. Ascension and Pentecost focus: The South African Council of churches further urges its member churches to take advantage of Ascension Day. According to Christian commentaries Ascension Day, which is also known as Holy Thursday, is the 40th day of Easter. This day is universally celebrated by Christian communities since they hold that it was on this day, the 40th day after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that he was taken up to heaven (Luke 24:50 – 53). After this day the Lord’s disciples or his apostles would remain in Jerusalem following Jesus Christ’s instruction ordering them not to

³⁹ Pictures of the prayer gathering near Bloemfontein:

https://www.google.co.za/search?q=pictures+of+als+farm+prayer+gathering&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewiw6-Cfz7LYAhXmJ8AKHa5YB_cQsAQIw&biw=1320&bih=722

⁴⁰ Masses gather in Bloemfontein for prayer: <http://ewn.co.za/2017/04/22/masses-gather-in-bloemfontein-to-pray-for-sa>

leave Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit. After 10 days of their waiting the Holy Spirit descended upon each of them on the day of “Pentecost”, a Greek word meaning the 50th day. The SACC here urges churches in South Africa to make use of these normal festival gatherings to use this time for praying for the political situation of South Africa (SACC 2017:6).

13. The Mystical Body of Christ: In this part of the letter the SACC explains to its member churches that the purpose of this letter is twofold. On the one hand it serves to inform churches about what is happening in South Africa and on the other hand the SACC wishes to use this letter to urge churches in South Africa to consider such political developments in the spirit of repentance and shame by applying three prophetic modes: truth to power in honesty, engender hope through positive action that builds and takes ownership of the sinfulness that is happening in South Africa and embody the Mystical Body of Christ which will give churches courage to speak on behalf of God (SACC 2017:6).
14. Humanity and contrition: The SACC indicates here the fact that the church in South Africa should actually take the blame when societal morality fails, for it remains the solemn responsibility of the church to instill good values in society, and this includes all levels of the nation. Thus it is important for the church to realise that the church itself is part of the very societal problem it seeks to find a solution to (SACC 2017:6).
15. Kingdom values: The SACC further encourages churches in South Africa to realise that the world would not under normal circumstances see the world through the eyes of the church, rather the church should at all times anticipate serious challenges in the process of instilling godly values or heavenly principles on earth, and members of the church should recognise that as humans they are sinful and full of faults just like every living human being (SACC 2017:7).
16. Dual identity of the church: The church is here is urged to realise its dual identity in society. That while the church is called to be the salt and light in the world, at the same time the very members of the church are in the dark, through their participation in unjust activities and corruption, so in this way even though the church as the body of Christ is considered to be holy, member of the church are not as holy as the church itself (SACC 2017:6).
17. Prophetic responsibility of the church: According to the SACC, it is important for the church to realise that its prophetic responsibility in South Africa is threefold. Firstly, it remains the prophetic duty of the church to proclaim the love of God in South Africa

and imitate the prophets of the Old Testament by confronting leaders of society for any form of wrongdoing. Secondly, through the example of Prophet Daniel, the church has the serious prophetic responsibility of taking upon itself the sinfulness of the nation and pray for society as a whole. Lastly, the church should imitate the example of Prophet Jeremiah by maintaining the prophetic duty of bringing hope to the hopeless situation of South Africa (SACC 2017:6). Father Patrick alludes to the emphasis made by Pope John II on 10 January 2001 to his general audience that “the voice of the prophets echoes, again and again, to remind us that we must commit ourselves to liberating the oppressed and to working for justice. Without this commitment our worship is not pleasing God” (Noonan 2003:276). According to Resane (2017), the church of South African should keep playing its prophetic role by participating in the country’s politics and call on South African politicians to make a “U-turn” to God, the original constitution of the land and to open dialogue.

5.13 SACC TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE RESOLUTION ON RSA PARLIAMENT⁴¹

The South African Council of Churches (SACC) held its triennial conference in the Kopanong Hotel and Conference Centre, Benoni, Gauteng on 06 – 08 June 2017 under the theme from the book of Nehemiah 2:17 “*Come let us build and we will no longer be in disgrace*” (SACC, 2017).

About 25 major churches in South Africa were present at the conference and represented all church traditions and denominations from all corners of South Africa. Amongst the attendees of the conference were the representatives of the World Council of Churches (WCC); President of WCC in Europe, Archbishop Anders Wejryd from Sweden; President of WCC in Africa, Prof. Mary-Anne Plaatjie; President of the Botswana Council of Churches, Bishop Metlhayothle Beleme; Mr. Emmanuel Makubekube from the Council of Churches of Lesotho; SACC former Presidents, Bishop Peter Storey, Bishop Mvume Dandala and Bishop Jo Seoka;

⁴¹ SACC calls for dissolution of RSA Parliament: <http://sacc.org.za/news/sacc-calls-dissolution-parliament-elections-fresh-mandate/>

two SACC former senior vice Presidents, Mrs Thabisile Msezana and Rev. Joy Faith Kronenberg (SACC, 2017).

The theme of this conference expressed the SACC’s determination and inspiration to help with the work of rebuilding South Africa to become a fully functional and equitable democracy, and, as former US president Barak Obama put it in his 2008 victory speech, to work in the remaking of the nation the only way it has been done in the past, “block by block and brick by brick” (Obama, 2008). Thus, in the same manner, the SACC wishes to express its motivation to restore the image of South Africa back to how the drafters of the RSA Constitution imagined it, and as (Wiechers 1996:65) put it, assuming the task of enriching and even protecting our fragile democracy in South Africa. The conference then elected its new National Executive Committee under the presidency of Bishop Zipho Siwa and his Deputy Rev. Frank Chikane (SACC 2017), below is the SACC’s new NEC:

Table 5.12 A

Name	Church	SACC Office
Bishop Ziphozihle Siwa	Methodist Church of Southern Africa	President
Rev Frank Chikane	Apostolic Faith Mission	Senior Vice President
Ms Sonto Magwaza	Ecumenical Service for Socio Economic Transformation	Vice President
Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana	Ethiopian Episcopal Church	General Secretary
Dr Kobus Gerber	Dutch Reformed Church	Conference Elected Member
Dr André Bartlett	Dutch Reformed Church	Conference Elected Member
Rev Mzwandile Molo	Methodist Church of Southern Africa	Conference Elected Member
Mrs Ndidi Mpye	African Methodist Episcopal Church	Conference Elected Member
Bishop Charles May	Anglican Church of Southern Africa	Conference Elected Member
Ms Karabo Mamabolo	The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa	Conference Elected Member
Advocate Palesa Ncholo	Anglican Church of Southern Africa	Conference Elected Member
Dr Gustav Claassen	Dutch Reformed Church	Conference Elected Member

The SACC conference discussed important matters in its special commissions regarding all areas of “South Africa we pray for” campaigns, such as poverty and inequality, family life, economic transformation, healing, reconciliation, and governance of South Africa including challenges that are facing aspirations of democracy (SACC, 2017). In its plenary, the SACC discussed issues such as killings of woman, children, lesbians and people with albinism in South Africa, and the conference resolved that the church as the moral authoritative figure of

society should take up the struggle against such evil and against gender-based violence in South Africa. In emphasising this, the SACC President, Bishop Siwa said: “As the Church of Christ, we will pause and pray against the wanton killings of lesbians, people living with albinism and women. What is the current church rhetoric on these issues when God’s heart bleeds?” (SACC, 2017).

The SACC conference during its plenary session noted with much growing and serious concern that on the matter regarding Nkandla, President Jacob Zuma and other top officials in government have seriously undermined their oath of the office and breached public integrity. According to the Constitution of South Africa, before the president, ministers and their deputies can start to perform duties of the office they must first swear and affirm faithfulness and obedience to the RSA Constitution and the people of South Africa (RSA Constitution 1996: 50). The same SACC conference was of the view that the RSA National Parliament in its inability to hold President Jacob Zuma accountable for all his wrongdoing failed in its obligation of holding the executive accountable, and that way Parliament has displayed total moral bankruptcy in exercising the responsibility of upholding the laws of South Africa, thereby allowing the President of the country to sin against God. As a result, this unchecked and unpunished sinful behaviour of President Jacob Zuma has caused Parliament, government officials and the greater number of the people of South Africa to participate in sinning against God. Just as (Dlamini 1996:69), in his evaluation of the constitutional dispensation, saw the abuse of power as sinful and a perpetual problem.

In the light of all the political developments in South Africa the SACC, in terms of the SEE-JUDGE-ACT method, is fully aware of what is happening in South African politics. It has seen the extent to which corruption has taken over top officials in government and completed its social analysis task through serious research (SEE). Accordingly, the SACC has had to reflect theologically on matters that concern the future of South Africa and discern church and biblical teachings regarding challenges in South African politics – JUDGE. Adler (1994:49) advocates that churches should not shy away from political involvements, but rather understand that the church exists in a social and political context and such, should become an agent for the radical restructuring of society. Consequently, the SACC deliberated and decided on what should happen in South Africa (ACT) through its resolutions (West 2010:14). The SACC conference resolved that the South African Parliament should be dissolved and “fresh national elections to be held to secure a fresh mandate on acceptable values and integrity” (SACC, 2017). However,

it remains the task of this dissertation to evaluate the possibility of this resolution in the light of the RSA Constitution procedure, for both provincial and national legislature.

5.13.1 Dissolution of Assembly before its expiry

According to the RSA Constitution the National Assembly can be dissolved by the RSA President if a majority of members of the Assembly vote to adopt a resolution that Parliament should resolve OR the RSA Acting President can dissolve the National Assembly when there is a vacancy in the office of the President and the Assembly has failed to elect a new President within a period of 30 days of the vacancy (RSA Constitution 1996:28). Similarly; in terms of section 109 of the RSA Constitution, the Provincial Assembly can be dissolved by the Premier if a majority of its members vote to adopt a resolution to dissolve the Assembly OR the Acting Premier can dissolve the Provincial Assembly if there is a vacancy in the Premier's office and the Provincial Assembly has failed to elect the new Premier into office for 30 days since the vacancy (RSA Constitution 1996:57).

This means there are only two instances that will make the SACC conference resolution possible and see the dissolution of the RSA Parliament, and that is through the majority vote for the dissolution itself and/or vacancy of more than 30 days in the office of the President/Premier, provided the Assembly has failed to elect the new person into that office. And since the RSA National Assembly has only 400 total seats, that means 200 + votes will constitute a majority in Parliament. So in a constitutional sense, this will need the support of all members of opposition parties (151 in total) plus at least 50 members of the ANC (249 in total). And this would surely happen only in a healthy and normal democratic Assembly, but not in the power, patronage and gatekeeping politics of South Africa (Beresford 2015).

5.14 SACC CALLS FOR JACOB ZUMA TO RESIGN, FAILED MOTIONS

Calls for President Jacob Zuma to resign came from form various important public figures and organisations which include ANC veteran Mr. Ahmed Kathrada, former finance minister and minister in the Presidency Mr. Trevor Manuel, the ANC Sefako Makgato Branch. Churches and the South African Council of Churches have numerous times expressed their disappointment in the leadership of President Jacob Zuma and after failed attempts of meeting with the ANC NEC Top Six the SACC subsequently called on President Jacob Zuma to resign

(SACC 2016). However, this call seemed to have fallen on deaf ears since President Jacob Zuma did not resign from office.

In addition to these calls by various organisations and people in South Africa, political parties have called on President Jacob Zuma to resign as well, and have further made attempts to have him removed from office through motions of no confidence. According to section 102 of the South African Constitution members of the National Assembly are allowed to remove the President once they have lost confidence in him, but this can only be done through a motion of no confidence by a majority (200+) in the National Assembly and if this motion passes, the President together with his ministers and their deputies must resign (RSA Constitution 1996:52). Since President Jacob Zuma took office in 2009 he has survived more than five motions of no confidence in him, three being voted on, one amended and one withdrawn.

On 18 March 2010 members of the Congress of the People in Parliament, and the former president of the South African Council of Churches, Bishop Mvume Dandala, brought a motion of no confidence against President Jacob Zuma for his failure to live up to the expectations of the people of South Africa. A member of the African National Congress (ANC), Mr. Ngoako Ramatlhodi in Parliament, opposed this motion and amended the motion to say that the house had full confidence in the leadership of President Jacob Zuma. Strangely in November 2018, the same minister told the commission of inquiry into state capture that the ANC was paralysed when President Jacob Zuma refused to leave the office. When the chairperson of the commission, Deputy Chief Justice Ramond Zondo, asked Ramatlhodi as to why it took such a long time to act against President Jacob Zuma, Ramatlhodi responded by saying that the faction in the ANC NEC in support of Zuma dismantled views of other members (EWN 2018). 235 members of Parliament voted in favour of that amendment, 88 voted against it and 5 abstained from voting, and as a result the House had to vote on the new motion that “the house has full confidence in the leadership of President Jacob Zuma”, 242 voted “Yes”, 83 voted “No” and 6 abstained (National Assembly 2010:517-521).

The following motion of no confidence in President Jacob Zuma was brought by the President of the Democratic Alliance (DA) opposition party in Parliament, Mr. Mmusi Maimane, on 17 March 2015, citing reasons that under the leadership of President Jacob Zuma key independent institutions were being politicized and weakened, the unemployment rate had increased, the economy of South Africa had weakened, access to quality education had been violated, and corruption had increased (National Assembly 2015:462). But this motion failed since only 133

members of Parliament voted “Yes”, 221 voted “No” and 8 abstained from voting (National Assembly 2015:462-463).

On 3 March 2015 the deputy president of Agang SA, Mr. Molapi Plouamma, brought a motion of no confidence against President Jacob Zuma, citing that under his presidency the RSA economy had collapsed, violent crimes had increased, corruption was on the loose and national unity was being compromised. However, Mr. Plouamma asked the speaker of Parliament, Mrs. Baleka Mbete, to recuse herself from the chair. After the Speaker of Parliament refused, Mr. Plouamma declined to move the motion, and his motion was withdrawn under Rule 102 of the National Assembly (National Assembly 2015:269).

Again on 1 March 2016 the leader of the opposition party, Mr. Mmusi Maimane, brought another motion of no confidence against President Jacob Zuma, moving that President Jacob Zuma’s reckless leadership had damaged the economy of the Republic of South Africa, and as a result, the rand currency weakened. This motion was unsuccessful as well since only 99 members of the National Assembly voted in favour, 225 against and a total of 22 abstained from voting (National Assembly 2016: 7-8).

On the 10 November 2016 the leader of the opposition party, Mr. Mmusi Maimane, brought another motion of no confidence against President Jacob Zuma, moving that under the leadership of President Jacob Zuma key institutions of the state had been captured, state resources had been mobilised to shield corrupt interests from public scrutiny and President Jacob Zuma’s poor leadership had collapsed public confidence in both government and the office of the President. This motion was also unsuccessful since only 126 members of Parliament voted in favour of the motion, 214 voted against and 1 abstained (National Assembly 2016:273-274).

Following the controversial cabinet reshuffle by President Jacob Zuma, where first in March 2017 he fired some ministers from his cabinet including the Minister of Finance, Mr. Pravin Gordhan and his deputy Mr. Mcebisi Jonas, replacing them with the former Minister of Home Affairs Mr. Malusi Gigaba and Sfiso Buthelezi. On 17 Oct 2017 President Jacob Zuma further reshuffled Dr. Blade Nzimande as minister of higher education and replaced him with Prof.

Hlengiwe Mkhize.⁴² In response to this opposition parties wrote a letter to the Speaker of Parliament, Mrs. Baleka Mbete, requesting a secret ballot in the vote of no confidence against President Jacob Zuma. However, Baleka Mbete refused and argued that she did not have powers to prescribe a secret ballot vote. Opposition parties took this matter to the Constitutional Court and having heard the matter on 22 June 2017 the Constitutional Court ruled that the Speaker of Parliament had the powers to prescribe a motion of no confidence by secret ballot (ConCourt 2017:37). This ruling concurred with Wiechers (2009) emphasising that the task of the Constitutional Court was to protect the interest of democracy through deeper and fundamental constitutional rules and principles.

5.15 SACC MESSAGE TO MPS REGARDING MOTION OF NO CONFIDENCE

In its message, the SACC encouraged MPs to make use of this motion to uphold the interest of the people of South Africa, in a sense the SACC urged members of Parliament to put first the interest of those who elected them to Parliament. The SACC further pleaded with ANC MPs to lead the corrective action and vote according to their conscience and not follow party politics. The SACC then noted that it was clear that President Jacob Zuma together with his cabinet did not want to take responsibility for the maladministration of government in South Africa, otherwise they would have resigned long ago without being forced through motions (SACC 2017:3). In closing the SACC said: “Now is the time for the national interest to take precedence! Now is the time to change the trajectory of our country for the common good! Now is the time to arrest impunity and set the stage for an open, transparent, and accountable government that will honestly direct resources to the neediest of our society. This is our call” (SACC 2017:4). This call seems to have validated an understanding that it remains the obligation of the church to pray that political leaders in South Africa should at all times have wisdom in order to make the right decisions so that there will be peace and harmony in South Africa.

⁴² Jacob Zuma Cabinet reshuffle: <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/breaking-zuma-reshuffles-cabinet-20171017>

5.15.1 Jacob Zuma survives the 5th motion

On 08 August 2017 the motion by the leader of the opposition party in Parliament, Mr. Mmusi Maimane, was read where he expressed that the house did not have confidence in the leadership of President Jacob Zuma (National Assembly 2017:1). Voting on the motion took place only to have 177 MPs voting for President Jacob Zuma to be removed, 198 saying “No” and 9 members abstaining.

A summary of failed motions of no confidence against President Jacob Zuma below is given in the table:

Table 5.14.1 A

DATE:	Zuma must Go	Zuma must Stay	Abstain	Motion Results
18 Mar 2010	242	83	6	Fail
17 May 2015	221	133	8	Fail
01 May 2016	225	99	22	Fail
10 Nov 2016	214	126	1	Fail
08 Aug 2017	198	177	9	Fail

The numerous failed motions of no confidence against President Jacob Zuma confirmed and even validated what (Mbeki 2017) said in his speech at the OR Tambo Centenary celebration when he gave an analysis that by the 1940s the African National Congress(ANC) was faced with the threat of destruction and members of the ANC stood to save it. Again in the 1960s, the ANC faced yet another threat of destruction, and once again the members of the ANC united to save it from such threat. However, in 2017 the African National Conference is facing another threat to destruct the ANC and this has left the ruling party with very few options to save it from itself (self-destruct). Since the ANC has failed to defeat the problem of having members who occupy positions only for their selfish and corrupt intentions within its ranks and has allowed itself to be influenced by corrupt leadership, it is unable to self-correct (Mbeki 2017).

5.16 SACC APPLAUDS THE RSA JUSTICE SYSTEM

On 24 October 2017, the Pretoria High Court heard an application by President Jacob Zuma asking that the Public Protector’s remedial actions on the state capture report be set aside (Pretoria High Court Dec 2017:1). The Public Protector, Adv. Thuli Madonsela, in her state capture report had directed that President Jacob Zuma should establish a Commission of Inquiry and recommended that the RSA Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng appoint a judge that

would preside over that commission since President Jacob Zuma, even though as the RSA President he had the prerogative to appoint a commission, at the same time was implicated in the state capture allegations. However, President Jacob Zuma argued that the Public Protector's recommendations were unconstitutional since only the RSA president was the only person with powers to establish a judicial commission of inquiry. In its judgment the (Pretoria High Court 2017:2) expressed the view that even though the RSA President had the power to appoint a commission of inquiry, such powers should be exercised within the restrictions of the RSA Constitution and not within pressures which might bring him as the State President into conflict of interest with his constitutional obligations (Pretoria High Court 2017:2). The court further reiterated the Constitutional Court order that the powers of the Public Protector were binding (ConCourt 2017:33), and subsequently the application by President Jacob Zuma was dismissed and the Pretoria High Court declared that the remedial actions of the Public Protector were binding and instructed President Jacob Zuma to appoint a commission of inquiry as per the Public Protector's recommendations within 30 days (Pretoria High Court 2017:4).

On the following day, 14 December 2017, the South African Council of Churches (SACC) welcomed the judgment of the Pretoria High Court. In its statement, the SACC reiterated that the President was obliged to establish a commission of inquiry without any form of delay, and the SACC further urged President Jacob Zuma not to extend the matter through appealing the ruling of the high court since such actions would not be ethically correct. Again the SACC cautioned that any obstruction to establishing a commission of inquiry would cause the failure of the justice system to act *prima facie* on the state capture allegations. Further, the SACC registered its concern on the failure of the RSA government to act in the best interest of the people of South Africa but was more committed to protecting the personal interest of President Jacob Zuma. The SACC applauded the instruction by the Pretoria high court and the Public Protector for the Chief Justice to select the judge (SACC 2017). Finally, the SACC emphasised that crimes of state capture had to be prosecuted urgently.

5.17 THE SACC AND THE ANC ELECTIVE CONFERENCE

From 16 to 20 December 2017 the African National Congress (ANC) held its 54th elective conference in Johannesburg at the Nasrec Expo Centre under the theme "Remember Tambo: Towards unity, renewal, and radical socio-economic transformation". After the conference elections were held for the National Executive Committee (NEC) top six: Cyril Ramaphosa as

the new President of the ANC, David Mabuza as Deputy President of the ANC, Gwede Mantashe as the ANC National Chairperson, and Ace Magashule as General Secretary, Jessie Duarte as Deputy General Secretary and Paul Mashatile as ANC Treasurer General.

On 20 December 2017, the South African Council of Churches issued a statement congratulating the newly elected leaders of the ANC, particularly its new President Cyril Ramaphosa. However, at the same time the SACC expressed its concern and disappointment on how the ANC conference had excluded women from its top six positions, noting that in the outgoing NEC there were at least two women and instead of this situation to improve it has become worse and there is only one woman in the top six panel. Women should be recognised as the strength of society since they could do much in community and nation-building projects. Such ability was fully expressed on how women nurture families and pass societal culture from generation to another. Desmond Tutu said on women: they are the “sculptor who can see the beautiful sculpture in a block of stone, they have the capacity to cherish any good and bring it to fruition, and this shows that women are needed in every sphere and level of society in order for them to give societies faith in humanity once again” (Tutu 1990:92). In his book, de Gruchy points to the history of the SACC on how it always spoke the truth in all situations whether or not people liked its stand (de Gruchy 2005:129).

The SACC further promised to support and engage the new leadership of the ANC on critical matters with the aim of restoring public trust. The letter further maintained that the SACC expect leadership to uphold sacred values which were held by former leaders of the struggle against apartheid and assumed that the future generations would enjoy the fullness of freedom in South Africa. The SACC further expressed the hope that the new NEC of the African National Congress would recover the glorious heritage of the ANC and restore faith and trust that the South African people had in the ANC to lead the country forward.

Again the SACC reminded the new NEC that South Africans as custodians of democracy together with the SACC and other civil societies would work to recover the promises of post-apartheid South Africa, promises of a just, peaceful and reconciled society that is free of corruption, racism, xenophobia, and prejudice. This way the SACC together with the people of South Africa would ensure that the country’s public values were not surrendered into the hands of self-serving politicians. Philip Potter in his essay titled “The task ahead” argues that it remains the task of the church and ecumenical council to ensure a total advancement of the people’s wellbeing and establish a just and peaceful society (Potter 1994:116). Lastly, the SACC called on President Cyril Ramaphosa and his team to indicate how ready they were and

how soon they would deal with the cancerous disease of corruption, state capture allegations; and promote transparency and accountability in the ANC-led government, and how they would raise the quality of education as a social good. The SACC expect these questions to be answered in the January 8th statement of the ANC. And gave the message from 1 Peter 5:2-3: “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be, not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve, not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being example to the flock (SACC 2017).

5.18 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed state capture as a political element that provoked much condemnation from the SACC. It has also discussed the manner in which the SACC has dealt with the allegations of state capture in South Africa and the SACC triennial conference resolutions regarding the then/current South African political situation. This chapter has further explained the SEE – JUDGE – ACT method. As it has discussed the South African Council of Churches’ letter to the churches of South Africa. As well this chapter discussed the content of SACC’s message to RSA National Assembly’s Members of Parliament (MPs) regarding the motion of no confidence against President Jacob Zuma. The SACC triennial conference resolution on the RSA parliament is discussed, as well the attempts by SACC to call for President Jacob Zuma to resign and failed motions of no confidence and even how the SACC applauded the RSA justice system on its dealings with President Jacob Zuma. And lastly, this chapter discussed the SACC’s view of the African National Congress (ANC) elective conference of 20 December 2017. The SACC has indeed succeeded in its objectives, which are, to give expression to the Lordship of Christ over every aspect and area of human life by promoting the spiritual, social, intellectual and physical welfare of all people (SACC 1997 and to assist the church, wherever situated, to carry out its mission in and to the world (SACC 1997).

CHAPTER 6 : CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Since its founding during the 1960s, the South African Council of Churches along with liberation movements in South Africa spoke out strongly against the apartheid regime. Since the advent of democracy in 1994 scholars have taken to paper to accuse the SACC of being silent and lifeless towards the democratic government. It is one thing to accuse the South African Council of Churches of having lost its prophetic role, but it is wrong to accuse it of being silent.

The main intention of this study was to determine how the South African Council of Churches changed its approach to politics in South Africa or the manner in which it adopted different methods towards South African politics general. Underlying this study has been the aim to put to test the claim by most scholars that the South African Council of Churches has become weak in its dealings with the government since the advent of democracy in 1994. This it did with two objectives at heart: first was to study the background and nature of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), and the second objective was to analyse the involvement of the SACC through the critical evaluation of three presidential periods in South Africa, namely the transitional era of Nelson Mandela, the settlement era of Thabo Mbeki and the controversial era of Jacob Zuma.

In a process to formulate the best answers and arrive at true conclusions about the South African Council of Churches, this study attempted to answer four guiding questions, namely: 1. What role did the South African Council of Churches play in the struggle against apartheid prior to the 1994 first democratic general elections in South Africa? 2. How did the South African Council of Churches change its scope in dealing with South African politics since the attainment of democracy in 1994? 3. Did the attainment of democracy in South Africa communicate a different message about the kind of relationship that the SACC should have with the democratic government of South Africa? 4. Has South Africa arrived safely in the promised land of democracy as envisioned by most South African churches and SACC in 1994?

6.2 CHAPTER REVIEW

Chapter One provided an introduction to the study and gave Research Methodology. It further provided various approaches such as Critical discourse analysis, Heuristic method, Hermeneutic phenomenology and Literature and Historical approach as qualitative multimethod. It identified sociology of religion as study's theoretical framework and it has further defined religion and other key terms such as politics, church, and democracy. Lastly, this chapter introduced the study hypothesis and problem statement.

Chapter Two gave the background of how religion and politics in South Africa related ahead of 1994 and the manner in which religion shaped South African politics, particularly Christian Churches through the voice of the South African Council of Churches. Further, this chapter described the manner in which churches in South Africa became the only hope and centre of politics. It also provided the value of this study which highlighted the importance of this research during the new dispensation in South Africa.

Chapter Three focused more on the historical background of ecumenical councils in South Africa which includes International Missionary Council (IMC), World Council of Churches (WCC), General Mission Conference (GMC), Christian Council (CI), and Christian Council of South Africa (CCSA). As well this chapter briefly discussed selected SACC's member churches background within the pool of South African churches. Lastly, this chapter discussed the background of selected leaders of the SACC such as Dr. Manas Buthelezi, Dr. Beyers Naudé, Dr. Frank Chikane, and Bishop Desmond Tutu.

Chapter Four dwelled more on the historical involvement of the South African Council of Churches in South African politics. This reflected on the Sharpeville massacre, the Cottesloe consultation, the Soweto uprising in 1976, drafting of *A message to the people of South Africa*, the declaration of apartheid as sinful and heresy by the SACC and how such declarations led to the drafting of the Belhar Confession and the appointment of the Eloff commission to inquire into the affairs of the South African Council of Churches, the bombing of Khotso House and the poisoning of the SACC's then General Secretary Rev. Frank Chikane

Chapter Five dealt at length with the South African Council of Churches under the democratic government of South Africa, the manner in which the SACC redefined its relationship with the new democratic government in 1994 and how the departure of prominent leaders of the SACC could have weakened the voice of the SACC in South African politics, even how the establishment of random religious councils such as the National Religious Leaders Forum

(NRLF) and others undermined the existence of the South African Council of Churches. Further, this chapter dealt with how the SACC raised its voice against human injustices such as xenophobic attacks in South Africa, the Nkandla saga by President Jacob Zuma and his allies, false churches in South Africa and how the SACC attempted to revive hope in South Africa. Lastly, this chapter dealt extensively with how the SACC played an important role in awakening the South African population towards the alleged state capture in South Africa.

6.3 CONCLUSIONS

This study has concluded that counter to the widely expressed view by scholars that the South African Council of Churches has been silent since advent of democracy in 1994, that rather the SACC has remained vocal both in South African politics and towards government, but this it did within the limited platform accorded to religious communities by the RSA Constitution.

In terms of its problem statement, this study has shown that somehow the accomplishment of democracy in 1994 disordered the relationship between South African politics and religious communities, Christianity and churches in particular seem to have distanced themselves from South African politics. It has been established that at the mere attainment of democracy suggested to most leaders of the church in South Africa, that since the number one enemy of the people (apartheid) had been defeated, it was time for them to leave politics in the hands of South African politicians and attended or completely return to ministerial obligations in their respective churches, and since organisations such as SACC had much confidence in the political leadership of the African National Congress as the ruling party, SACC then changed its focus and scope of dealing with South African politics. This change led to the adoption of a new form of relationship with South African politics by being in critical solidarity with the government.

This study has concluded that once the democratic movements of South Africa, in particular, the African National Congress, claimed victory over apartheid, they did not only rob the SACC of its glory, but beyond this they robbed the church and the poor South Africans of the opportunity to experience a true form of democracy as envisioned by the SACC and other civil societies in 1994. As a result in more than 20 years into democracy but South Africans have not yet arrived at their promised land or experienced the form of democracy that organisations such as the South African Council of Churches could have hoped for in 1994. With the cancer of corruption that has swept the RSA government and the alleged state capture in South Africa,

the true form of democracy seems to have become more distant and remains far away from being realised by the poor and the marginalised in South Africa.

This study concludes that both the Mandela and Mbeki administrations were friendlier, open and accepting towards the work of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), while the Zuma administration was more hostile and rejecting towards the work of the SACC.

This study further concluded that the establishment of religious forums such as the National Religious Leaders Forum (NRLF) and the National Interfaith Council of South Africa (NICSA) has hugely contributed to the disruption of the relationship between the RSA government and the South African Council of Churches.

This study has established that within the interval years of 1994 to 2017 the South African Council of Churches has been very vocal in opposing injustices such as xenophobic attacks, the immoral conduct of fake pastors claiming to possess healing powers only to mislead the South African population and besmirch the name of Christ. It can thus be correct to conclude that the CRL commission was right in its recommendation to the church of South Africa and the RSA government to establish a serious authoritative regulatory structure that will set rules, guidelines and directives to maintain orders in the ministry and prevent the spread of misleading churches in South Africa.

The South African Council of Churches played an active role in awakening the South African people towards seeing the alleged state capture for what it is in South Africa by organising and launching the “unburdening panel” to offer a safe space and become a listening facility to victims and individuals who would confess to how they were pressured to enable state capture in South Africa. With regard to South African Council of Churches (SACC) and South African socio-political context, one would be justified to level an argument against the views that SACC is silent, weak and soft under the democratic government of South Africa. Having achieved democracy in 1994 positioned South Africa on a different political platform. Under apartheid, the right to vote was denied to black people and consequently, they (South Africans) could not make their voices to be heard. However, 1994 gave the voiceless of South Africa a voice to speak and be heard through ballot paper. By voting African National Congress (ANC) into power since 1994, South African people have said their choice. One cannot continue to see people who keep voting ANC into power as the “voiceless”. Voiceless people ended with apartheid in 1994, under democracy South Africans have the right to voice their choices, so it

is important for South Africans together with organisations such as the SACC to rise up to the task of protecting their young democracy against any form of evil and wrongdoing.

Further this study concluded that the accusations that the SACC has become silent in state politics since 1994 are far from the truth, instead it took a stand on the presidential election of Jacob Zuma as state president, the Nkandla saga, realisation of the looming corruption in government sectors and the alleged state capture, during all of which the SACC remained critical about the RSA government. The only problem with most people who have been accusing the SACC of being silent and having lost its prophetic stand since 1994 is that they have failed to comprehend that being in “critical solidarity”, denoted different approaches altogether compared to the manner in which the SACC related with apartheid government in South Africa prior to 1994. The SACC remained critical and stood in total opposition to apartheid policies. However, being in critical solidarity with the democratic government would mean the friendlier and open approach to political matters or government policies. To support this argument in his closing remarks Göranson (2010) argues that other than prophetic engagement, the SACC is much involved in constant dialogue with the democratic government of South Africa. Thus the SACC remains in critical solidarity with the RSA government. As de Gruchy argues that being in critical solidarity means to continue resistance to an unjust and false world for the benefit of what is just and true in society (De Gruchy 1997:24).

Lastly it has been established in this work that even though some leaders of the South African Council of Churches left the organisation to occupy higher posts in government, this was a positive move since such leaders through their personal involvement with South African politics, could strategically play an active role in the process of the democratization of South Africa. Thus this move may ensure many South Africans that the church’s position is well represented in government and the political context of South Africa.

6.4 IMPLICIT FINDINGS

Most of the SACC’s former and current leaders have actually spent most part of their lives devoting their time and energies not only to studying biblical scripture but studying politics so as to be informed about the current affairs of their country and gain a better knowledge of the political situation and circumstances.

The 1994 drafters of the Constitution failed the church by granting it equal status with other religious communities even when the struggle history of South Africa records that churches played the most important role in the struggle against apartheid. The RSA Constitution does

not give the church a platform to fully play its role in shaping and building the RSA democracy. As a result, the church is unable to participate in its own dream of a democratic South Africa. Further, the Church of South Africa does not have an authoritative regulatory structure that is recognised by the RSA Constitution, hence there is an increase in false prophesy and misleading churches in South Africa.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has indeed revealed and created possible areas for further study into the work of the South African Council of Churches that will help the process of correcting the false narrative that the SACC has been silent about South African politics since the advent of democracy in 1994. Further investigation into the South African Council of Churches in relation to South African politics will be useful in reviving the focus on how faith communities, Christians, and particularly South African churches, should and can have a relationship with the government of South Africa.

Specifically, an important avenue for further study would be around exploring the meaning and implications of the concept of “critical solidarity”. Once more study is geared towards this direction it will help South African churches to realise their place and the role that they should play in a democratic South Africa, but in addition to this, the SACC will improve on its role in South African politics. Without further study of this nature, the new form of relationship (critical solidarity) as adopted by the SACC will remain a mystery in South Africa. As well it will be helpful to conduct an in-depth exploration of how certain leaders who left the South African Council of Churches to join the day-to-day business of government conducted themselves in a way that could be satisfying or contrary to the church’s agenda and the interests of the SACC.

It is important for churches of South Africa to call for the amendment of RSA constitution so as to give the church of South Africa a platform to fully play its role in participating and helping to build the better and new South Africa. The Church of South Africa, in its capacity as the church through the SACC, should be added to being one of the chapter nine institutions to ensure and maintain the moral standing of both government and its people, to assume the church under the wing of “The commission of the promotion and protection of the rights of cultural, religious and linguistic communities does not fully represent the fact that the church has a great following in South Africa”. In support of this Duncan reasons that the RSA

Constitution should reflect the historical fact that the church remained loyal to the people of South Africa during the apartheid era (Duncan 1996:66). This way the church will become the moral body of our country.

6.6 CONCLUSION

This study has indicated that the history of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) runs far deeper than its apparent inauguration of May 1968. The umbilical cord between the Christian Council of South Africa (CCSA) and the birth of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) cannot be dismissed. Further, this study has broadly introduced and discussed the background of the South African Council of Churches and has shown that the SACC has played a very important role in the past political life of South Africa and has validated this fact by making use of available literature on South African Council of Churches, books, academic articles, presentations and written statements on the SACC. Both Chapter one and two introduced the SACC and have shown the gap in the knowledge body of the SACC which became the stage upon which this study was developed. Chapter three has gone deep into the history and the formation of the SACC by presenting figures and organisations that played a role in finding, forming and shaping the SACC as early as in 1968. Chapter four dealt with the history of the SACC under the apartheid government in South Africa, while Chapter five further bridged the misconceived gap in the works of the SACC between 1994 and 2017. Contrary to scholarly criticism levelled at the SACC this chapter has shown that in fact the South African Council of Churches has been very vocal and ensured that it maintained “critical solidarity” relationship with the South African government by being involved in dealings with daily politics of the country. It seems to this study that most scholars who accused the SACC of being too soft and silent in relation to South African politics failed to grasp is that being merely critical of a government and being in “critical solidarity” with the RSA democratic government has different meanings. In this way, this study has completed the misplaced narrative of dealings that involved the South African Council of Churches since 1994 – 2017 successfully. In conclusion, the heartbeat of this study has been in its hypothesis as articulated in Chapter one that the RSA Constitution seem to have limited the work and the voice of the SACC in South Africa’s politics, and this has disabled the South African politicians in particular, and the entire South African society in general, to grasp and envision democratic South Africa as imagined by different stakeholders who fought against apartheid prior to 1994. This whole dissertation has been about the task of proving the hypothesis that the SACC has

never been silent in relation to South African politics. Drawing on the work done by this study, one can fully conclude that indeed the hypothesis of this study has been proven to be correct.

Accordingly, this study has shown that since the inception of the South African Council of Churches in 1968 this Council was faced with many political challenges in South Africa. From the onset, the SACC was faced with the challenge of defining its existence and even survive serious suppression by the apartheid regime, as a result in the early 1970s the SACC was declared by the apartheid regime as “a black organisation”. Secondly, the SACC from the early 1970s to 1990s endured the hostile fight against apartheid system which robbed black people of South Africa the right to exist. Still, the SACC identified with the oppressed people of South Africa to the attainment of democracy in 1994. Currently, more than 20 years into democracy the SACC is faced yet again with the challenge of government that consists of corrupt men and women who can be bought with money and constantly seek to silence the church, in particular, the South African Council of Churches. And this study has shown that against all odds the SACC is still critical of the South African government and in the same spirit still identify with the marginalised, oppressed and poor people of South Africa.

This study has indicated that the full history of South African Council of Churches (SACC) in its entirety is a descriptive account of an umbilical cord between the church and the evolving socio-political context of South Africa. This study has demonstrated in many instances that the South African Council of Churches stood in defense of people’s rights in South Africa. Finally, this study finds it appropriate to assert unequivocally that the South African Council of Churches has never been silent nor weak. The SACC is necessary under the democratic government in the same way as it was under the apartheid government, it should be given a fair opportunity play its role in the process of attaining a true form of democracy in South Africa just as it did in 1994.

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