

## Table of contents

DECLARATION .....	i
SUMMARY .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
<b>CHAPTER 1.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT .....	2
1.3 THE MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION.....	11
1.4 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY .....	11
1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	12
1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY .....	13
1.6.1 Literature study.....	13
1.6.2 Interviews .....	15
1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH .....	15
1.8 SUMMARY .....	16
<b>CHAPTER 2.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>SLAVE RELIGION, BLACK POWER, AND BLACK THEOLOGY .....</b>	<b>18</b>
2.1 INTRODUCTION .....	18
2.2 THE PARADIGM FROM SLAVE RELIGION TO BLACK THEOLOGY IN THE USA .....	18
2.2.1 American slave trade as the point of departure for black theology.....	21
2.2.2 The struggle for justice .....	24
2.2.3 The struggle for love.....	27
2.2.4 The struggle for liberation.....	28
2.2.5 The challenge of hope amid suffering .....	30
2.2.6 By whatever means necessary.....	32
2.3 LATIN AMERICAN ECONOMIC AND PEDAGOGIC INFLUENCES RELATED TO LIBERATION THEOLOGY .....	33
2.3.1 Paulo Freire and the <i>Pedagogy of the oppressed</i> .....	34
2.3.2 Eduardo Galeano and the <i>Open veins of Latin America</i> .....	36
2.4 BLACK POWER AND BLACK THEOLOGY IN THE USA AND ITS IMPACT IN SOUTH AFRICAN THEOLOGY .....	37
2.5 SUMMARY .....	41
<b>CHAPTER 3.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>THE INFLUENCE OF BLACK THEOLOGY ON ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT.....</b>	<b>43</b>
3.1 INTRODUCTION .....	43
3.2 THE ENVIRONMENT THAT SHAPED THE THINKING OF BOESAK AND CHIKANE.....	43
3.2.1 The development of black theology in South Africa .....	44
3.2.2 Black consciousness as a means to genuine humanity .....	50
3.2.3 The Black People's Convention (BPC) and its activities that impacted on Boesak and Chikane .....	53
3.2.4 The Student Christian Association (SCA) and the Students' Christian Movement (SCM) in South Africa .....	57
3.2.5 Ideological influences on Boesak and Chikane .....	59

3.2.6	Black consciousness as the trigger for the political activism of Boesak and Chikane .....	60
3.3	SUMMARY .....	61
<b>CHAPTER 4.....</b>		<b>63</b>
<b>PRESENTATION OF THE ROLE PLAYED BY BOESAK AND CHIKANE IN THE DRAFTING OF ALTERNATIVE THEOLOGIES.....</b>		<b>63</b>
4.1	INTRODUCTION .....	63
4.2	A BRIEF HISTORY OF AFRIKANER RELIGION AND THE RESISTANCE AGAINST THE AFRIKANER RELIGION.....	64
4.3	THE IMPACT OF THE OTTAWA 1982 GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE WORLD ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES (WARC) .....	68
4.4	THE ORIGIN OF THE BELHAR CONFESSION AND THE ROLE OF BOESAK... ..	71
4.5	THE ORIGIN OF THE KAIROS DOCUMENT AND THE ROLE OF CHIKANE .....	76
4.6	SUMMARY .....	85
<b>CHAPTER 5.....</b>		<b>86</b>
<b>THE SILENCE OF THE BLACK PROPHETIC VOICE IN SOUTH AFRICA .....</b>		<b>86</b>
5.1	INTRODUCTION .....	86
5.2	EARLY VOICES OF PROPHECY IN SOUTH AFRICA.....	86
5.3	THE DIFFERENCE IN THE PROPHECY IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT PROPHETIC MINISTRY.....	91
5.3.1	The theology of envy to occupy power .....	98
5.3.2	The message of the kingdom as oppose to the message of the Empire.....	99
5.3.3	Christ is not absolute truth, he is Truth absolutely.....	100
5.4	OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS OF THE TENSIONS OF THE ETHOS AND PATHOS OF PROPHECY .....	102
5.5	CHIKANE'S POST POWER REACTION TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION .....	106
5.5.1	The Polokwane insurrection .....	114
5.5.2	Mbeki "dictatorship": the shift from the RDP to Gear .....	119
5.5.3	Mbeki: the HIV/AIDS denialist .....	123
5.5.4	The strategic defence procurement packages .....	128
5.5.5	The arms deal offsets .....	131
5.5.6	The Seriti Commission .....	132
5.5.7	The final nail in the coffin: the Nicholson judgment .....	135
5.5.8	Mbeki's recall had no political character.....	137
5.5.9	Troubling signs on the distant horizon.....	138
5.6	BOESAK'S POST POWER REACTION TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION .....	141
5.6.1	The re-creation of new humanity in the democratic South Africa .....	145
5.6.2	The ontological implications of Verwoerdian policies for blacks.....	146
5.6.3	The spiritual implications of Verwoerdian policies for blacks.....	147
5.6.4	The moment brings the right prophets or politician .....	150
5.6.5	Black consciousness as the means of deschooling black people .....	155
5.6.6	Shift of responsibility: yesterday's liberator becomes today's oppressor .....	161
5.7	SUMMARY .....	164
<b>CHAPTER 6.....</b>		<b>167</b>
<b>SUMMARY, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONTRIBUTION .....</b>		<b>167</b>
6.1	INTRODUCTION .....	167
6.2	SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS 2 TO 5.....	168

6.2.1	Chapter 2.....	168
6.2.2	Chapter 3.....	169
6.2.3	Chapter 4.....	169
6.2.4	Chapter 5.....	170
6.3	FINDINGS .....	171
6.3.1	Influence of black theology of liberation on Boesak and Chikane. ....	171
6.3.2	Tensions in prophecy and politics: the case of Frank Chikane .....	173
6.3.3	The prophetic Oscillation .....	176
6.4	RECOMMENDATIONS .....	177
6.4.1	Redefining the task of prophetic ministry.....	178
6.4.2	The alternative community. ....	181
6.4.3	Standing where God stands prophetically .....	183
6.4.4	The message of the eighth century prophets for today .....	185
6.5	CONTRIBUTION .....	188
6.6	CONCLUSION.....	190
	Bibliography .....	191

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is to perform a relative analysis of prophecy in public life during both the apartheid and the democratic eras. It is based on the assumption that the prophets of public life have become silent in the post-apartheid era and that they may have missed the essence of their prophetic message because some of them have become absorbed into the system, for example Boesak, Chikane, and many more. The researcher will pay special attention to Allan Boesak and Frank Chikane, interrogating and analysing the prophetic roles of Allan Boesak from the Reformed tradition and Frank Chikane from the Pentecostal tradition, both during the apartheid era and in a democratic South Africa.

The study will centre on the history and the foundation of the prophetic theology in relation to the black theology of liberation with, as a departure point, the time of slavery in the United States of America and Latin America. This account will be linked to Black theology and Black Consciousness in South Africa. The researcher will discuss the theological and political roles played by Boesak and Chikane during the struggle for liberation in South Africa. However, the researcher was particularly struck by the silence of Boesak and Chikane during the democratic era. Throughout this work, the researcher will attempt to answer the question as to what has happened to the prophetic voice in a democratic South Africa.

## 1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The major problem in this research study is the arrival syndrome, which has contributed to the furtiveness of the prophetic voice in South African's socio-political-economic situation. Boesak (2005:243) indicates that in the early 1990s, during apartheid and the first light of the democratic era, there were already signs that the churches, which had played a critical role in the struggle to end apartheid, were beginning to reconsider their stance. There was new and vigorous debate on the participation of the churches in politics in the democratic era with churches, which had been in the vanguard of the struggle, now publicly thanking God that their political role was about to end, thus enabling them to revert to their rightful roles (Boesak, 2005:243). This clearly indicates that the arrival syndrome had a negative impact on the prophetic voice in a democratic South Africa.

However, Tshaka (2009:159) is of the opinion that the silence of the church and its leaders in public issues was surprising in a democratic South Africa. It is nevertheless interesting to observe that this silence of church leaders on public matters is in no way unique to the South African context but has become a worldwide phenomenon (Tshaka, 2009:159). Boesak (2005:243) speculated that the church is not a sociological phenomenon. This is an interesting comment, mainly because of the way in which we express our weaknesses, internal strife and insecurities in the pages of newspapers. Neither are we just another non-governmental organisation which is trying to draw attention to our single-issue agenda. We are the church of Christ, called and mandated by God to speak to the whole of human existence in the whole of society and to seek the Lordship of

Jesus Christ by challenging, subverting and changing structures they adapt to the norms of the Kingdom of God.

Since the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994, the ANC-led government has promised a better life for all South Africans. This promise has, however, been turned out to be a dream deferred with every State of the Nation address since 1994 reminding the masses in South Africa that much has been achieved but that even more needs to be done. The achievements of the government have benefited individuals in the higher echelons of power, while most South Africans have remained poor. It is broadly recognised that there are government officials who have looted the public coffers as exemplified by the 'Nkandla Controversy' that revolved around Jacob Zuma when he was the president of South Africa.

What is troubling in all this is the silence of the prophetic voice that had condemned the corruption and injustices of the apartheid government. This is the fear that motivated the question brought up in a higher place. Why has the church suddenly fallen silent on the injustices that are so often committed in the name of the poor and marginalised? Foundations, such as the South African Council of Churches, once known for its fierce opposition to apartheid, have suddenly gone terrifyingly quiet, prompting critics to refer to label this silence as "the African National Congress at Prayer". At some point during apartheid the Dutch Reformed Church was labelled "the National Party at Prayer". Is the prophet acting contrary to what its condemned during apartheid? The entire church is silent in contrast to the voices being raised in public sphere, for example the Public Protector and other Chapter 9 institutions.

The word prophetic originated from the term *prophet*, which is an Old Testament concept. Both the posture and the behaviour of the democratic faith leaders and faith consultants may be said to resemble those of the Old Testament prophets. Strydom (2000:103–108) maintains that the South African prophets are similar to the Old Testament prophets. Using the case of the prophet Micah, Strydom (2000:113) compares the democratic era prophets with the prophets during the time of Micah, who either remained mute in the face of injustice or chose to prophesy in line with the wishes of the king and/or the government. These prophets were not brave enough to speak out against the king because this could have placed them in danger. For Strydom (2000:108) modern-day prophets are the watchdogs of society, as were the Old Testament prophets, and they are the messengers of God in that they have been directed by God to proclaim His will to his masses. Thus, Strydom (2000:115) concludes that it is incumbent on the prophets in our society to criticise government decision and actions that are not ethical in nature.

The silence of the prophets in public since the advent of majority rule in 1994 has become a source of major concern in public. Strydom (1997:494) highlights that the discourse began soon after the dawn of democracy in 1994. In his article, “Where have all the prophets gone? The New South Africa and the Silence of the Prophets” (Strydom 1997), discusses the voices of prophecy during the apartheid era and how it seemed to be focused because it was possible to identify the enemy with prophecies speaking to issues such as political suppression, maladministration, the debasement of the black masses, economic exploitation, judicial corruption, poor educational facilities and a lack of proper education for blacks, theological, spiritual and ethical hypocrisy, as well as structural crime and

violence against blacks (Strydom 1997:497–501). According to Strydom the satire was the burning issues in the socio-political arena during the apartheid regime and is still part of the new political dispensation under a democratic government (Strydom, 1997:506). Thus, a pertinent question is, “Where have all the prophets gone?” After a lengthy and difficult struggle, which was focused mainly on the white regime and its oppressive atrocities, it would seem the prophets have relaxed and succumbed to the temptations for which they had criticised the apartheid regime. Strydom (1997:510) maintains that we need “is a reflection resulting in prophets taking a stand against what is amiss in society, no matter at what, or whose cost”.

In answer to the question where have all the prophets gone? And the highlighting of the “prophetic silence and the incapacity of religions to take us forward”, Pieterse (2000:82–97) makes several succinct observations. Firstly, he outlines how the church was a force to be reckoned with in its opposition to the injustices of the apartheid system. He highlights the roles played by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Beyers Naude. In his article, he lists at least seven conditions, which are required for prophetic preaching and praxis. However, these conditions are rendering the prophetic voice in public life obsolete. Pieterse (2000:82) highlights the sensitive issue of the economic inequalities that are typical of capitalism. However, there is variety of challenges, which the prophetic voice in public life must confront instead of capitulating to and assimilating such challenges. Pieterse (2000:82) argues:

Since the sixties, until the change in 1994, the prophetic church in South Africa, directed by South African liberation theology, has had enormous influence on people, here and overseas, so much so that the previous



government eventually had to acknowledge this. The prophetic words of Desmond Tutu came true: “They will bite the dust.” We have produced church leaders of the calibre of Tutu and Beyers Naude. The church spoke with a powerful and fearless voice against apartheid, the state theology and the church theology of the eighties (Kairos Document 1986). Whenever prophetic speeches were made, the media carried them throughout the world. We had the support and sympathy of the entire Christian world. How is it possible that the ecumenical prophetic church has suddenly become powerless and apparently can make no contribution to the solution of the country’s enormous social and moral problems?

Pieterse (2000) wrestles with the displacement of the obligations of the prophet from the apartheid era into transitional democracy where the prophets, even Tutu, are silent. The silence of the church under the first president of a democratic South Africa, Nelson Mandela, did not take economic issues seriously during the CODESA negotiations. Secondly, the prophet was silent during the Mbeki era and his HIV/AIDS denial that resulted in the deaths of so many people. Then, there was the disturbing silence during Jacob Zuma’s election as the president despite all the cases he was extending over to the office of the presidential term. Hence, Pieterse (2000) questions how is it possible that the ecumenical prophetic church has suddenly become powerless and is, apparently, not able to make a contribution to the resolution of the country’s enormous social and moral challenges. The researcher in this study is also wrestling with the very same question but has chosen to focus on the reforming and Pentecostal traditions in relation to this silence of the church regarding the social and moral challenges typical of this regime.

In an article she wrote, Masenya (2005:35–45) presents a slight Pentecostal aberration in the discussion on the silence of the prophets. As a good Pentecostal, she supports the notions of sin and salvation as the cornerstones or

foundations of authentic prophecy. Masenya (2005:40) acknowledges that the Pentecostals have emphasised a narrow view of prophecy that centres primarily on individual exigencies and personal anxiety – what the Pentecostals term deliverance. Pentecostal prophets are rarely speaking on socio-economic-political matters and it may perhaps be said that they have influenced complacency and often assimilation with government structures. This dimension requires consideration and broadening. Masenya (2005) sees the Pentecostals as the allies of the government who are paying for government corruption and also the beneficiaries of projects through the faith-based system of the Department of Social Development.

Mayson (2000:55) questions the participation of the prophets in the democratic South Africa by posing the question, where have all the prophets gone? This question is the crux of his statement about the secretiveness of the oracles in a democratic South Africa. He indicated that the prophets, for example Boesak and Chikane, are part of the system and also friends of the government. It is for this reason that the researcher in this study chose to focus on these two prophets. While the aim of this work is to respond to a similar notion, Mayson (2000) provides no concrete and empirical proof of his assumption except to draw conclusions from his observations and opinion of events. Mayson's question, however, reflects the disturbing question raised in the theological and public discourse on the role of prophets since the dawn of democracy in 1994. He warns that religious belief should not regard itself as the only spokesperson of God on earth. While God works through all ordered structures, it would be ridiculous to assume that those who people these structures are as perceptive to the will of God as the prophets should be. Indeed, even the prophets do not

always interpret the will of God correctly. Furthermore, Mayson (2000:62) indicates that the church is demanding a young generation of prophets. It is hoped that this study on Boesak and Chikane will assist in generating a new discourse on the prophetic voice in a democratic society in which the oracles are not isolated. They want to participate in an ethical way in the governmental social organisations while they need to inject inspiration and theological insight into the parliamentary debates in order to help political leaders to create an honest society. There is, thus, a need for a young generation of prophets to drive the prophetic voice further into the novel environment.

Kumalo (2005:99–110) refers to the issue of the viability of yesterday's prophets in today's democratic environment. Many of the prophets against apartheid who then became members of the ANC government suffered from the delusion that they would be able to balance their roles without compromising their prophetic voice. It is also clear, however, that many of them saw their function in government as an opportunity to feed the sense of entitlement demonstrated in many of the liberation activists who viewed their participation in government as payback time. Kumalo (2005:108) calls for the creation of spaces for prophetic activity through Christian training. In the Old Testament no prophet ever prophesied for more than one generation and it is, thus, imperative that education contributes to facilitating the careers of new prophets suited to new environments and dispensations. His reference to Paulo Freire in relation to Christian education calls for a drastic revision of the theological curricula that are preparing the prophetic voices for a democratic South Africa.

Masuku (2014:151–167) argues that the prophetic voice of the churches that were so vocal are now watching over the quiet diplomacy that is being practised. Masuku (2014) re-emphasised what many theologians had stated, namely, that the concept of the church as the voice of the voiceless is now becoming understood. He contends that, during apartheid, religious leaders led mass protests but that, today, their absence is visible. During the apartheid era the South African Council of Churches and other faith-based organisations had a clear direction in respect of events in the state and they provided leadership. However, there is now a deafening silence. In his work on the voicelessness of theology, Amanze (2012:189–204) states:

Theology is presented to people in an abstract, in complex theological terms that make no sense to people who are concerned with dealing with practical and pressing problems of everyday life, namely, disease, poverty, food and shelter. One of the reasons for the voicelessness of theology and religious studies is that they seem to be too abstract and concerned mainly with the afterlife rather than the here and now.

Both Boesak and Chikane are black prophetic theologians were influenced by the black theology of liberation in their contributions in church and society. Basil Moore (1973:5) argues that black theology is a situational theology in the context of black subjugation and hurt. Moore (1973) emphasised that both the context and the situation determine the content of theology and the representatives of the oracles. Mosala (1989:1) argues from the cultural perspective that black theology was a cultural tool of struggle propounded by young South Africans who had been influenced by the new black consciousness movement of the 1970s. However, black theology, as a reaction to the iniquities of apartheid, has since fallen silent in the new dispensation. Its silence points to the dilemma of all liberation theologies in speaking in new dispensations that appears to operate in

their favour. On that point, there are very limited sources and surveys on the combination of Boesak and Chikane, as well as the combination of the two traditions in one research field as a comparative field. This study will involve an investigation into the analytical thinking and deductive reasoning of these two black theological prophets from Southern Africa. For this reason, it was deemed necessary to conduct a comparative analysis in order to fill the existing academic gap.

A common trend in relevant literature is an increasing concern about the death of prophecy in public, particularly in the tradition of Tutu, Boesak, Chikane, Mkhatswa and others. The attempt to answer the question, where have all the prophets gone? Has originated from several directions and involved exploring the connection between black theology and black consciousness throughout the entire discussion. This study should not be seen as a pursuit of the confrontational prophecy of the apartheid era but, instead, an investigation into a prophecy guiding the psychological reconstruction of the oppressed. South Africa experienced political liberation in 1994 and it was, perhaps, assumed that this would impact on every aspect of human life. However, as some scholars have rightly argued, political liberation does not automatically address social, economic, psychological and other associated issues. While prophets speak to the structures of power it is also true that they talked to the state(s). The debate on the sudden death of prophets emphasises prophesying to structures of power but there are few references to prophesying to the masses. Apartheid required a prophetic message to the government of the time. It is possible that, once again, the moment has come for an urgent message to the people. Later on all the people vote the corrupt into power.

### **1.3 THE MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION**

This study seeks to answer the question, “How did the prophets in public life respond to issues of the socioeconomic and political injustices and corruption in the apartheid era and how are they responding to these issues in the post liberation era?” This research question may be divided into the following sub-questions?

- i) How did black theology in the USA and liberation theology in Latin America influence the theological ideas and political activities of Boesak and Chikane in South Africa?
- ii) What was the link between black theology and the black consciousness of Steve Biko in the 1970s?
- iii) How does the Kairos Document relate to the liberation thoughts inherent in the movements mentioned above in relation to opposing the apartheid system?
- iv) How did Boesak and Chikane respond to the iniquities of the African National Congress government in the democratic era?

### **1.4 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY**

The main aim of this research work is to place Boesak and Chikane in the context of the ongoing discourse on the role of the church leaders as a voice of justice in a democratic dispensation. This main aim addresses the following sub-aims:

Aim 1: To provide evidence from relevant literature that the black theology of liberation from the USA and Latin America influenced the prophetic voices during the apartheid era.

Aim 2: To demonstrate that black theology in the USA and liberation theology in Latin America influenced Boesak and Chikane to become the voice of the masses in South Africa.

Aim 3: To show how their participation in the democratic government later presented a crisis of conscience in relation to their roles as prophets against the government of which they had become part.

Aim 4: To demonstrate the futility of prophetic oscillation as Boesak and Chikane tried to reclaim their pre-apartheid roles as prophets in the Kairos tradition.

Aim 5: To show that prophets may present an aberration in the message when they misconstrue themselves as be perpetual voices of God of every era in society.

Aim 6: To demonstrate that new political dispensations will often demand new prophets with a new message and unadulterated anointing.

## **1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

As pointed out earlier this work focuses on the theological ideas and activism of Boesak and Chikane during the apartheid era. It was, therefore, imperative that a black liberation theological framework be utilised for the purposes of the study. These theologies found expression in the context of oppression and injustice and represent an unprecedented benchmark in respect of the way in which other oppressed communities throughout the world responded to the challenge to embrace the contextual theologies that informed how they confronted oppression and unfairness. Indeed, these theologies inspired both black theology and

liberation theology in South Africa. The study of the USA and Latin America, therefore, offers insights into how Boesak and Chikane formulated their theological thoughts in confronting apartheid.

## **1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted the qualitative research approach. Creswell (2013:42–47) defines qualitative researchers “as a key instrument [in that they collect] data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior and interviewing participants”. He further highlights a potential problem in relation to empirical or qualitative research, namely, “qualitative research is a form of research in which researchers create an interpretation of what they watch, try and read. The researchers’ interpretation cannot be distinguished from their own background, history, context and prior understanding”. This study gathered the requisite data using Unisa library, archives and interviews and adopted a qualitative transformative worldview. John Creswell (2014:9) refers to a “transformative worldview” as follows:

A transformative worldview holds that research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political change agenda to confront social oppression at whatever levels it occurs. Thus, the research contains an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher’s life. Moreover, specific issues need to be addressed that speak to important social issues of the day, issues such as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and alienation.

### **1.6.1 Literature study**

There is standard reference material on both these prophetic theologians (Chikane and Boesak) – bibliographies, abstracts, articles in papers etc. The researcher analysed this material with the focus on the prophetic voice. The



literature search uncovered a wealth of literature on black theology and prophetic theology. Nevertheless, the preliminary search revealed no specific information on a comparative study between Boesak and Chikane. There is a special division in the Unisa library, dedicated to the writings, presentations at conferences, public speeches production of Boesak and public documents on him, which the researcher will analyse. Both Boesak and Chikane have also recently published books. The researcher reviewed all the books written by these two key characters. Furthermore, the researcher had observed and listened to how both Boesak and Chikane worked and denounced the ANC government outside of their government service.

The researcher reviewed the information on Boesak and Chikane which he found in the Unisa library and in other libraries. Online and on-site information constituted a major resource in relation to prophetic activity in South Africa. Archive information is important because it may not be available elsewhere. Such material covers a variety of themes such as the language used by these two theologians as well as their power struggles, financial resources, political involvement and attitudes towards apartheid. Investigation archives may be tedious but, once new and pertinent information is discovered, they provide an entirely new perspective. The researcher attempted to retrieve archival material on the political activism of Boesak and Chikane during apartheid from various sources. Furthermore, the researcher also used material from newspapers articles, the SABC and the SACC.

## **1.6.2 Interviews**

The researcher conducted interviews with both Boesak and Chikane to obtain first-hand information and judgments regarding the main research question. During the interviews semi-structure questions were posed. These questions evolved in line with the major trends in the thinking of Boesak and Chikane. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2014:342) provided direction in this regard when they state:

Researchers obtain information through direct exchange with a mortal or a group that is known or expected to possess the knowledge they seek ... one interviews because one is interested in other people's stories ... both parties, the researcher and the participant are thus necessary and unavoidably active and involved in meaning making

## **1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH**

Chapter 1 introduces the research topic and the orientation of the study. The chapter discusses the problem statement, research objectives, research methodology and study population.

Chapter 2 traces the history of black theology in the USA and liberation theology in Latin America and elaborates on how these contextual theologies were developed as a theological articulation of the oppressed in their offices. The chapter will highlight the roles of James Cone and Gustavo Gutierrez as the trailblazers of these theologies of the oppressed.

In chapter 3 the relevance of black theology and black consciousness in South Africa is discussed. The chapter also highlights the impact of liberation theology in Latin America on the evolution of a contextual theology of liberation in South

Africa as well as how that it Boesak and Chikane's theological thinking in the 1970s.

Chapter 4 presents short biographies of Boesak and Chikane and the potential impact of their upbringing on the way in which they practised theology in South Africa. As theologians it is not possible to underestimate the extent to which their own lives how they practised theology. It was in the context of their experiences that questions arose and their religious journeys involved a struggle to make sense of and find answers for the situation that existed around them. In addition, this chapter presents a brief analysis of two documents, namely, the Kairos Document and the Belhar Confession. Both Chikane and Boesak played significant roles in the drafting of these documents.

Chapter 5 discusses the political activism of Boesak and Chikane both locally and internationally during the apartheid era. It demonstrates how the theologies mentioned above influenced their involvement in radical activism in the context of their religious traditions and the contrast of this involvement and their silence post-1994.

Chapter 6, the final chapter, proposes new synoptic directions in prophetic ministry in South Africa as based on the study as a whole.

## **1.8 SUMMARY**

Chapter 1 provided the reader with an overall introduction to the study. As pointed out earlier, the research question revolves around the silence of the prophets in the democratic dispensation. If the injustices during the apartheid era were condemned, why have prophets suddenly gone silent in this new epoch

when the ANC government is in power? Why was injustice unacceptable during apartheid but appears to be acceptable under a black government?

This work focused on two front-runners on two of the leading players in political prophecy during apartheid. Drs Allan Boesak and Frank Chikane were internationally recognised for their contributions in condemning the iniquities of apartheid why did they suddenly become mute when a black government took over power and similar injustices were committed?

The study highlighted how the ethos of prophetic theology – from black theology in the USA and liberation theology in the Latin America – was determined and driven by a sense of biblical justice and not, as the study contended, in the restroom of the political status quo. The study highlighted similarities between black theology in the USA and liberation theology in the Latin America in the context of South Africa and in relation to the research question. The researcher consulted with both Chikane and Boesak and also reviewed and other empirical sources relevant to their political activities both during and after apartheid. In its ratiocination, the study sought to propose new directions for a sustainable and consistent prophetic theology in a democratic dispensation.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **SLAVE RELIGION, BLACK POWER, AND BLACK THEOLOGY**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the researcher explored relevant literatures in order to ascertain how slave religion, black power and black theology influenced Boesak and Chikane to become the prophetic voice and representative of the voiceless during the apartheid era. The researcher reviewed existing literature on black theology and liberation theology and their impact on the prophetic thoughts of Boesak and Chikane in the South African context. The discussion focused on how these contextual theologies developed as the prophetic theological voices of the oppressed in their various situations and how they contributed to the prophetic voice in South Africa.

#### **2.2 THE PARADIGM FROM SLAVE RELIGION TO BLACK THEOLOGY IN THE USA**

There is a strong correlation between Black Theology and Black Power (BP) in the USA and Black Theology and Black Consciousness (BC) in South Africa with the spiritual voices of power and consciousness respectively affecting black theology in both the USA and South Africa. These theologies challenged African and Black theologians to reconsider their theological positions as academics and citizens of countries in which there was oppression and to read the Bible and theology in the context of the times in which they were living. In other words, they reread the Scriptures with a mirror rather than with a lens. Black theologians and clergy, for example, James Cone (USA) and Mokgethi Motlhabi (South Africa) began to reflect on God in the context of the shameful experience of societal,

economic and political oppression. In common with their counterparts in Latin America – Gustavo Gutierrez, Jon Sobrino and others – they saw God as speaking to their impoverishment and the debilitating social and political circumstances imposed on them by the European interpretations of God in the so-called New World. Gutierrez (1988:103) shares this sentiment when he calls for radical liberation as follows:

Radical liberation is the gift which Christ offers us. By His death and resurrection, he saves us from wickedness and all its effects. It is the same God who, in the fullness of time, sends his Son in the flesh, so that he might come to liberate all men from all slavery to which sin has subjected them: hunger, misery, oppression, and ignorance, in a word, that injustice and hatred which have their origin in human selfishness.

The reciting of the Scriptures by these black theologians encouraged them to relook at Christology from a different position and realise that liberation in Christ is a natural endowment and that this endowment is a radical liberation that involves death and resurrection. The liberation is according to Jesus' mission statement as expressed by Mitiri Raheb (2017:30) in his Bible study of Luke 4: 16–21:

- i) Bring good news to the poor.
- ii) Proclaim release to the captives.
- iii) Proclaim recovery of sight to the blind.
- iv) Let the oppressed go free.
- v) Proclaim the year of Jubilee.

This mission statement is highly political containing nothing about the salvation of the souls, instead focusing on liberation. The focus group for Jesus' ministry is not souls but the oppressed. The sympathy of Jesus' mission is to understand his

context. Jesus has played a major role in the evolution of black liberation theology with the historical Christ as the focal point of this divinity. Black theologians took it upon themselves to research the meaning of the religion of Jesus for people who are oppressed, poor, occupied, and exploited and who are standing with their backs to the wall. As James Cone (1993:1) states:

Black religious thought is not identical with the Christian theology of white Americans. Nor is it identical with traditional African beliefs, past or present. It is both – but reinterpreted for and adapted to the life-situation of black people's struggle for justice in a nation whose social, political and economic structures are dominated by a white racist ideology.

In the context of Cone's (1993) definition in the above quote, this chapter focused on the connection mentioned above and how it finally influenced the theologies and political activism of Boesak and Chikane in South Africa, both during and after apartheid.

According to Gutierrez (1988), radical liberation implies that the torso of Christ (the Church) needs to pass from it so that it may resurrect in the form of a raw, social organisation. This is necessary to enable the Christ-like structure to be rebuilt and to replace the corrupt social systems of Western politics and theology with the black theology of liberation as theology that propagates the good word. Cone (1993:1) points out that black religious thought is not the same as white Christian theology and nor is it identical with traditional African beliefs, past or present. Instead, it is both reinterpreted for and adapted to the life-situation of the black people's struggle in a nation in which the social, political and economic structures are dominated by a white racist ideology. In the context of a democratic so-called non-racial South Africa this signifies that the structures are dominated by internalised oppression and domination as well as classicism.

These arguments pave the way for the historical development of the black theology of liberation in the spirit of emancipation in the USA.

### **2.2.1 American slave trade as the point of departure for black theology**

Human beings, as the ultimate point of creation, were not made to serve as a commodity to be corrupted and sold as slaves but, instead, they were created in the image of God. This image is seen only when one looks upon a stranger as if one is looking on oneself in a mirror and not through a lens. Thus, for Calvin it was important that when we look at others, we see that they are made in the image of God. This should encourage human beings to show love to their neighbours and in the process increase their understanding of the word neighbour to include strangers and even enemies (Calvin 1960:52–53). The whites in the USA used the lens to look to black people as strangers and, hence, they did not see them as made in the image of God but, instead, as a commodity which could be bought and sold in the marketplace as was demonstrated in the slave trade with blacks being brought from Africa and sold in the USA.

Historians have written much about the African slave trade in America and elsewhere. Slaves were packed into ships to be sold in faraway countries for a variety of reasons and in response to various demands. Even when the slave trade was banned in the Northern states of America, the Southern states continued with the practice. In his bestselling work, *Slave religion*, Albert Raboteau (1978:4) presents a penetrating investigation into the slave trade in the Americas and the impact or influence of religion on the African diaspora in their quest for freedom. Raboteau (1978:4) explains:



The enslavement of an estimated ten million Africans over a period of almost four centuries in the Atlantic slave trade was a tragedy of such scope that it is difficult to imagine, much less comprehended. When these Africans were brought into slavery in the mines, plantations, and households of the New World, they were torn away from the political, social, and cultural systems that had ordered their lives. Tribal and linguistic groups were broken up, either on the coasts of Africa or in the slave pens across the Atlantic. The most brutal of all, the exigencies of the slave trade did not allow the preservation of family or kinship ties.

There was, thus, a need for a specific theology that could counter white theology that had justified the slave trade. The black theology of liberation in the USA was the response to this challenge as a theology that made both blacks and whites aware of the sin of racism and horrors of the slave trade. Black theology came as a surprise in the USA, especially after James Cone published his work, *Black theology and black power*, in 1969. Never before had traditional white theology been approached and confronted from such a radical perspective. Cone (1969) linked black theology to the notion of Du Bois Pan-Africanism and Negro slavery in the USA. For him, black theology was born out of a synthesis of experience between African-ness and the Christian element in black religion. It is neither of the two but was attempted by both. Cone (1993:1) cites the following from WEB Du Bois, *The souls of black folk*:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One never feels his twoness – an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength keeps it from being torn asunder.

The black consciousness that spearheaded the black theology of liberation reconciled and renewed this dual consciousness to combine it into one strong consciousness known as black consciousness. The evolution of black theology

during the time came with a paradigm shift in terms of thinking from Eurocentric to black Afrocentric thinking.

According to Cone (1993:1), black religious thought demonstrates a pronounced divergence in thinking from white, Eurocentric theology:

There are many similarities between white Protestant and Catholic reflections on Christian tradition. But the dissimilarities between them are perhaps more important than the similarities. The similarities are found at the point of Christian identity, and the dissimilarities can be understood in light of the differences between African and European cultures in the New World.

Cone (1993) argues that, while there is a common Christian identity, there is a conflict in the reading of that identity in the context of race and civilisation. In the main, white people used their identity to suppress others from their dominant cultural perspective while black people used their religious experience to affirm their individuality and to empower themselves. Both are contextual responses to human experience with deep roots in the racial and cultural innuendos of the time. The challenge, for black people, was to detach the “white God” who was seen as an accomplice in the subjugation of the black masses.

Deconstructing the “white God” of racism and oppression became a challenge, which, essentially, sought to “reorder theological themes in black religion”. According to Cone, the development of this reordering revolved around five themes, namely, justice, liberation, hope, love and suffering. The slave trade, which had resulted in the unfortunate situation of black people in the USA, offered an opportunity to deconstruct the white theology of oppression and construct a theology that liberated and empowered black people. The religious belief, which was seen as having led to the persecution of black people since the

days of slavery, now yielded the unintended effect of empowering the blacks to pursue a raw and more human struggle. The theology that emerged was black and agreed that the God of both the Old and the New Testament was a God of justice and, thus, black people, amidst their oppression and suffering, needed to use this theology as an instrument with which to seek justice.

### **2.2.2 The struggle for justice**

As already stated, Cone saw black theology as revolving around five themes, namely, justice, liberation, hope, love and suffering. This theology demands these five themes in order to restore human dignity and to liberate the black people in America. This section focuses on the struggle to attain justice for the blacks in America. Justice, love, liberation and hope were the cornerstones of the black people's struggle for natural selection in the context of slavery and the cheap labour market in the Southern states of America. The love that united the suffering black empowered them to fight for justice with the promise that they would be liberated in their lifetimes.

In his article, Cone shows that the American Negroes sang Negro spirituals and used Christian symbols that were compatible with their experiences in the cotton fields in which they had worked as slaves. The liberation of the Israelites from oppression in Egypt, as related in the Bible, confirmed their strong belief that God was on the side of the oppressed. In the context of their real-life experience, they believed that a just God would inevitably punish the oppressor. Ironically, however, it was the same God who had sanctioned white oppression. For Cone, this was the critical juncture of reinterpretation.

In his recent bestselling work, blockbuster, *The cross and the lynching tree*, James Cone (2011:1–29) links the suffering of the African American people in the days of slavery to the suffering of Christ under the Jews and Roman government of the New Testament times. Cone (2011) highlights the irony of how the same symbol may have different and, indeed, opposite meaning for different people. The cross - meant one thing for the white oppressors and slave owners before the American Civil War (1861–1865) and quite another for the slaves themselves. In a strange paradox, however, the Negro slaves drew both strength and hope from the biblical images often expressed, as mentioned above, in their spirituals.

Cone argues, however, that this did not make intellectual sense because the white oppressors were also professed Christians. Nevertheless, it provided a form of religious escapism for the Negro slaves who were constantly subjected to the cruelty and gross injustices of white supremacy on every tour. Slavery was so endemic and “normal” in the American South that it was even the main cause of the American Civil War revolved. The Northern States sought to abolish slavery while some in the South wanted to cling to the inhumane system, no matter what it cost, even in monetary term. As highlighted by many American historians, the notion of being considered equal to their slaves was unbearable for many white people in the South, whether they owned slaves or not.

This viewpoint was common throughout the world and, indeed, was even one of the causes of the great Boer migration known as the “Great Trek” in South Africa. Many of the Dutch in the Cape could not imagine being equal to their slaves in the Cape Colony and, so, they decided to move inland rather than submit to the “madness” of the emancipation of slaves as the English were proclaiming.

Cone (2011) highlights that the lynching tree stands out in African American history as the principal symbol in terms that the slaves could relate the Christ to their existential anxieties. As indicated by Cone (2011), lynching was a common occurrence in white society in the American South as was crucifixion in Roman history. It was the punishment reserves for insurrectionists who had deviated from the accepted social or racial norms. These insurrectionists were frequently of another race, culture or religious doctrine. Lynching may be said to be one of the harshest punishments inflicted on other human beings by, often thoughtless, people.

With the bitterness of losing the Civil War dogging the minds of many white southerners, the lynching of black people took place under the cover of hoods and in darkness. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) became the most vicious symbol of white supremacy and hate against black people with even white Christians taking part in hideous activities under cover of white masks. Seeing a black man hanging from a tree was often a cause for celebration, watched by both women and children.

The justice component of black liberation theology was an effort to restore a human aspect to humankind and was an act of God to eradicate the disfiguration of the human aspect of the earth (Rieger 1999:301). Gutierrez (1988:81) refers to this human expression as a struggle against misery, injustice and victimisation within which the goal is the foundation of a new man.

### **2.2.3 The struggle for love**

The notions of justice: liberation, hope, passion and suffering overlap in black religious thought. We must love because we were first loved by the God of Jesus of Nazareth and not by the false God of the white oppressors. Slavery and oppression constituted a strident denial of human dignity and, thus, the oppressor would be called upon to account for the sin of injustice. It is important to note that this interpretation did not demonise the white oppressors but, instead, it sought to afford them and their religious theory what Steve Biko (1974) referred to as a more human face.

Love was a somewhat contentious notion in the struggle for justice, hope, love and suffering in the African American community. Malcom X advocated a response that sought to overthrow white supremacy by all means necessary while; on the other hand, Martin Luther King Jr. was an advocate of a non-violent approach to the struggle. These prophets represented the two extremes that marked the African American struggle with black theology in the USA, as it evolved, having to attempt to reconcile the two extremes after the 1960s as both King and Malcolm X had been assassinated.

This tension was also evident in the evolving theology of liberation in South Africa with the emergence of black consciousness and black theology. The liberation movements had already declared the need for an armed struggle against apartheid. Accordingly, the concept of love in the black struggle, in both black consciousness and black theology, had to be redefined as how was it possible, in the name of God, to love those who oppressed you in the name of God?

The concept of the love relation in black liberation theology seen as God is love with God as a loving, benevolent, forgiving and gracious father who is able to deliver slaves and punish their masters. Jesus is seen as the older brother of slaves, He is their Saviour, but also a martyr, who is even there to give assistance. According to Gustavo Gutierrez (1988: xxx), the creation of praxis is love that compels us to attend to the other dimensions of Christian practice, a going out of one's self, a commitment to God and neighbour and a relationship with others. For Gutierrez love is the first and permanent point while theology is secondary. Love will immerse in the struggle to transform society. If there is no friendship with the poor and no sharing of the loveliness of the poor, then there is no reliable commitment to liberation because love exists only among equals (Gutierrez 1988: xxxi).

For Martin Luther love was more than just a battle against evil, proclaiming that there must be retaliation against hate, not with more hatred, but with passion:

If you have weapons, take them home; if you do not have them, please do not seek to get them. We cannot solve this problem through retaliatory violence. We must meet violence with nonviolence ... Jesus still cries out ... "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; pray for them that despitefully use you". This is what we must live by (McClendon 1974:59).

#### **2.2.4 The struggle for liberation**

The struggle for liberation, while deeply rooted in the Negro experience, was not without its tensions and contradictions. As Cone points out, there were many who were contending with the whims of a just God who allowed oppression. This struggle stemmed primarily from the sense or attitude of a white theology, a God who appeared to be ignoring the suffering of the black masses and, worst of all, white Christians who practised oppression in the name of God. The tension

arising from this contradiction was overwhelming and irreconcilable for some Negroes as it has been in many parts of the world where oppression was sanctioned in the name of God by the God of the white religion in the New World. In the spiritual view of black people there was an inconsistency between their religion and the oppression they experienced every day. It was, thus, to imperative to create in their minds a God who understood their plight as opposed to a God who sanctioned oppression.

The black liberation theology seeks the liberation of the masses from the unjust distribution of goods and services whereby a minority of wealthy groups and ruling classes use their power and influence to perpetuate the macro-economic and political structures which exploit the labour and lives of the workers. Thus, it seeks both to eradicate exploitive and oppressive structures and to foster an egalitarian community. This cry for an egalitarian community is also a cry against patriarchal societies, which dehumanise women. In its egalitarian form liberation is committed to the dismantling of patriarchal injustice while opposing militarism as the exercise of force and force whereby non-egalitarian relationships are maintained.

Liberation in the South African context had not yet reached its climax at the time of this study. The wounds incurred as a result of injustice have never healed and it is clear that the injustices of executions and land theft have not been rectified.

Even when the religious songs of the slavery era sounded eschatological, liberation was anchored in self-determination, self-development and self-realisation.



### **2.2.5 The challenge of hope amid suffering**

America's main spokesperson in black religion was Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK). King taught and preached on hope, redemptive suffering and love. What stood out in King's activism was the uniqueness of the prophetic word that sort to create a "beloved community". White religion was known for its separatist tendencies and its incongruence with the very message that it preached. Buried deep in black religion was a desire to bring all of God's people together. According to (Cone 1993:6), King was a product of black religion in the USA.

King's theology was a synthesis of American democracy, biblical justice and liberation as seen in Exodus and the prophets, and in the New Testament notion of love and suffering as revealed on the cross of Jesus (Cone 1993:7). It was this synthesis that prompted him to call America to the world of the beloved community, where everyone would live side by side, with dignity and equality. Extracting from the chief tenets of black religion, he cried out for black people to be freed from a sense of inferiority. It is ironical that this liberation would also liberate white people from their sense of superiority. The crown of thorns and the resurrection of the Christ of God testified to the promise that evil will not prevail over good forever. "Truth crushed down will grow again" he asserted (Cone 1993:7).

However, some black people were uncomfortable with the notion of the beloved community, especially those who Cone calls the Nationalists. These Nationalists were not able to discover any grounds for King's propositions of love and Mahatma Gandhi's form of Satyagraha (nonviolence). It was the seeming contradiction in King's ideas that resulted in the emergence of Malcolm X among

black clergy and theologians and the fertile ground for the origin of black theology in the 1960s in the USA (Cone 1993:11). Martin Luther King was assassinated on April 4, 1968. Nearly three years came the assassination of Malcolm X Shabbaz (MXS).

There is debate as to whether slave religion or black religion was a religion of a code, or the religion was an evasion. When people sang “Nobody knows the trouble I have discovered, nobody but Jesus”, this reflected some code of hope that Jesus would look after them. When they stood firm in the hope that, if freedom, justice, rest, peace and joy are denied in this life, they will be found in the next life this sounded more like an escape religion. McClendon (1974:62) refers to a further constituent of mystical as follows:

As I see it the spiritual has to do with freedom, with salvation and with escape. There is an escape, a freedom and a salvation which is neither otherworldly nor necessarily concretely realised in any immediate situation in this world, though its devotees may desire both and deny neither. I refer to a mystical escape, a mythical flight, not away somewhere, but into the self, in the soul, to God in the soul. This is the religious experience, which produced and is expressed in the spirituals. “My Soul’s been anchored in the Lord”.

Nevertheless, whether the slave religion was cold, escapist or occult, its songs were a reflection of hope and a shout to God for freedom, hope and faith to the emotional and spiritual essence. Their songs expressed in words their pain, loneliness, weariness and grief but also their hope and determination with the strains of hope reflecting the hope for a more hopeful day. For example, one of these songs contains the following words: “Oh, Mary don’t you weep... tell Martha not to mourn... Pharaoh’s army drowned in the Red Sea... Oh! Mary don’t you weep... Tell Martha not to moan.”

Randall Bailey (2010:33) correctly notes “that the spiritual most probably comes from incidents where enslaved Africans saw their Lazarus sold off to other plantations, raped, castrated, whipped to death and the like, and Jesus was not showing up and one was coming out of the tomb. They could identify with Mary and Martha’s tears, so they comforted themselves with a different ground for not calling. Instead of reciting Jesus’ claim that he was the resurrection and the life (John 11:25), they comforted Mary and Martha with the claim that Pharaoh’s army got drowned (Exodus 14:28). In other words, it is the hope of the future killing of the oppressor which enabled them to keep on keeping on”.

### **2.2.6 By whatever means necessary**

The introduction of black theology in the USA resulted from doubt that white theology was a reliable and relevant theology for the blacks in the USA. White theology was the theology of separation and colonisation, while the reformation of Luther (1517) had spread in such a fashion that the Jesus, who was proclaimed as a Saviour, was even linked to nationalities with the churches of Jesus in England, Scotland, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands and divided into languages, for example, French speaking, German speaking and English speaking churches. Malcolm X (born Little), as an advocate of the separatist ideology of black nationalists, warned the black people against the white Jesus and his white religion that divided black and blacks and the chief advocate of the separatist ideology of black nationalism. Cone (1993:10) quotes Malcolm X when he spoke about black nationalism:

Brothers and sisters, the white man has brainwashed us black people to fasten our gaze upon a blond-haired, blue-eyed Jesus! We’re worshipping a Jesus that doesn’t even look like us. Now, just think of this.

The blond-haired, blue-eyed white man has taught you and me to worship a white Jesus, and to shout and sing and pray to this God that's his God, the white man's God. The white man has taught us to shout and sing and pray until we die waiting until death, for some dreamy heaven-in-the-hereafter, when we're dead, while this white man has his milk and honey in the streets paved with golden dollars right here on this earth.

Malcolm X was assassinated by the Ku Klux Klan on the afternoon of 21 February 1965. He had openly called for African-Americans to fight the racist system "by all means necessary". Malcolm's father had been a Baptist pastor who had opposed the American system of domination and racism. At one time, he was an ardent disciple of Marcus Garvey's Pan Africanist movement. In his autobiography, as indicated by Alex Haley, Malcolm X Shabazz narrated the gruelling conditions of his upbringing, how he had ended up in the streets and had eventually served a six-and-half year term in prison. It was during his stay in prison that he converted to Elijah Muhammad's Islam. He then embarked on his own movement and was ultimately shot dead by one of Muhammad's faithful adherents. It was, therefore, a confluence of these issues that finally resulted in the Nationalist Malcolm X Shabazz who strongly believed that racism, as a societal and political system must be destroyed by whatever means necessary. Both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King had a significant impact on teaching and activism of the two theologians who are the subject of this study, namely, Boesak and Chikane.

### **2.3 LATIN AMERICAN ECONOMIC AND PEDAGOGIC INFLUENCES RELATED TO LIBERATION THEOLOGY**

The history of European colonialism in Latin America is well documented. Its impact on the region was similar to its impact on every continent where the invasion of native land took place in the so-called New World. The opposition to

and critique of the injustices perpetrated in Latin America have been well explored.

### 2.3.1 Paulo Freire and the *Pedagogy of the oppressed*

Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and philosopher, testified to the pedagogic crisis, which resulted from the colonial education systems. In his work, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, he details a brilliant teaching method for liberation. Freire (1970:44) defined the humanistic and historical task of the oppressed as follows:

To set free themselves and their oppressors as well. The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. The only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both.

Freire (Freire 1970:44) contended that humanisation is a man's first vocation. His humanisation may be seen as an equivalent of the Ubuntu or Botho, which features strongly in African philosophy. The challenge, however, is the realisation of it in humanity's common good. The tensions and contradictions inherent in the dichotomy of the polarisation between the oppressed and the oppressor reveal themselves in what he calls "false generosity". Freire (1970:44) wrote:

Any attempt to "soften" the power of the oppressor in deference to the weakness of the oppressed almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity; indeed, the attempt never goes beyond this. In order to have the continued opportunity to express their "generosity," the oppressors must perpetuate injustice as well. An unjust social order is the permanent fount of this "generosity," which is nourished by death, despair, and poverty. That is why the dispensers of false generosity become desperate at the slightest threat to its source. True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the "rejects of life," to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands – whether of individuals or entire peoples – need be extended and less in supplication, so that more and more they become hands which work and, working, transform the world.

The false generosity of the oppressors is always displayed when their luxuries are threatened and the need to protect these luxuries arises. The same training system that liberates is the face that was proclaimed by Boesak and Chikane but not from the blackboard. Instead it they proclaimed it from the pulpit during funeral services, and during their street theology – the theology that was proclaimed in the streets of South Africa during protest marches.

Liberation in this context refers to the struggle to restore the humanity stolen from another but the challenge not to impose on the other the humanity the other sought to refuse you. This pedagogy is always challenged by the oppressor's ongoing struggle to emulate and internalise their image of the oppressor while to be is to be like the oppressor in both thinking and pattern. This crisis of identity curtails the actualisation of liberation because it is often vindictive and merely replaces one oppressor with another, sometimes in relation to colour, the white oppressor with a disgraceful one. Thus, Niebuhr's lamentation: "What is to prevent the instruments of today's redemption from becoming the mountain range of tomorrow's enslavement?" (Rasmussen 1988:53).

Freire (1970) brought to the fore the psychological implications of the travesty which a people would have nurtured under oppression. Political liberation will not always liberate the idea. The liberated will often emulate the oppressor because the oppressor is the sole image of freedom which the oppressor has internalised. Thus, Frantz Fanon (1952) wrote of a "black skin in white masks". In his work he presents a scathing analysis of the psychological challenges faced by the oppressed in the ongoing challenge to build their own individuality in relation to that of the oppressor.

This challenge took on a theological tone as black power evolved into black theology. Cone and other black clergy in the USA attempted to undo the psychological impressions of white religion and to express God in the context of the black experience.

### **2.3.2 Eduardo Galeano and the *Open veins of Latin America***

In his work, *Open veins of Latin America*, Eduardo Galeano (Galeano 1973) explores the economic issues associated with the development of the resources in Latin America. As was in the case in all captured land, a combination of Christian propaganda and the encroachment of land went hand in hand. In their plundering of foreign resources, they used the Bible to the extent as they used the lash. Galeano highlights the extent of colonialism as, while the colonialist took over the land and brainwashed the natives, they also exploited their resources. Thus, political liberation without the restoration of the natural resources to their rightful owners are as hollow as it is fabulous. Thus, the Latin American theology of liberation encompassed a crucible of various issues with a similar focus.

Liberation theology in Latin America was informed by the grassroots, that is, the peasants, and the levels of poverty in society, and articulated in the academic corridors of Latin American universities. Scholars, such as Gutierrez and Jon Sobrino, began to reflect on God in the context of their positions while trimming down their symbols and images of Eurocentric and colonial theology. It was this practice that resulted in Gutierrez's well-known work, *A theology of liberation*, which was first published in Lima in 1973. As Gutierrez (1988: xii) explained:

This book is an attempt at reflection, based on the gospel and the experiences of men and women committed to the process of liberation in

the oppressed and exploited land of Latin America. It is a theological reflection born of the experience of shared efforts to abolish the current unjust situation and to build a different society, freer and more humane.

For Gustavo Gutierrez liberation theology in Latin America meant a *critical reflection on praxis*,” which included engagement where nations, social classes, and people were struggling to free themselves from the domination and oppression of other nations, classes and peoples. The liberation theology of Latin America has the same relevance as the black power theology in the USA to the South African political context and to the way in which the black clergy responded to the South African political context. These theologies have all played a major role in creating men and woman who were able to endure. Although there are many such men and woman the focus of this study is on the way in which Boesak and Chikane were influenced by these theologies to become the representatives of the voiceless amid the dissent in the 1980s in South Africa.

#### **2.4 BLACK POWER AND BLACK THEOLOGY IN THE USA AND ITS IMPACT IN SOUTH AFRICAN THEOLOGY**

The term *black power* is usually associated with Stokely Carmichael, a Trinidadian, who was driven to live with his mother in Bronx, New York. His most famous speech was delivered in 1966 to a group of middle-class white students at the University of California at Berkeley. In his article, Churcher argues that Carmichael’s speech was an attempt to articulate black power as a psychological struggle for liberation (Kalen Churcher, 2009). Until 1966 Carmichael was a supporter of MLK’s ethic of non-violence.

However, two events in 1965 and 1966, namely, the assassination of MLK and the shooting of protest leader, James Meredith, forced him to reconsider his



support of MLK's doctrine of non-violence. These events led Carmichael's thinking to the notion of African-Nationalism, alluded to earlier by leaders such as MXS and Marcus Garvey. While working for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) he came into contact with the Black Panther Party. The Black Panthers preached a doctrine of self-defence and revolutionary nationalism. Kalen Churcher (2009) argues that the Berkley speech served more than any other to articulate what Carmichael understood to be Black Power. Carmichael's goal was never assimilation into white society but rather liberation. In this respect, the struggle of black people in the USA resonated with similar themes in the African struggle for liberation. This was also the distinct difference between Malcolm X Shabazz and Martin Luther King's notions of liberation. The former had initially called for a black approach to the eradication of racism while the latter had called for integration and, perhaps, assimilation into white society.

Some would argue that Carmichael's articulation appeared to change in definition from time to time. Nevertheless, at the core of its delivery at all the time; was the notion that the struggle of black people in America was a psychological struggle. Black people had to start doing things for themselves. However, the problem was that, every time they tried, white people were there to show them how. It was this incapacitating presence of white people in the subconscious mind of black people that made it crucial for lines to be drawn between liberal white people and a Black Nationalist movement. Thus, black power represented a psychological recognition that black people wanted to lead the fight for their rights themselves as opposed to following white civil rights organisers. "It boils down to the fact that black people organise black people more effectively" (Kalen Churcher 2009:140). Carmichael saw nonviolence as failure because white violence against the

oppressed would ensure that it would never succeed. By 1968 Carmichael had become convinced that, when white America killed Dr King, “you killed non-violence” (Kalen Churcher 2009:145). Stokely Carmichael (now Kwame Toure) died in 1998. At some point in his life he was married to Miriam Makeba, the South African born singer, who had galvanised opposition to apartheid through her music worldwide while in exile.

According to Cone (1993:11), it was black power that “shook black clergy out of their theological complacency”. Black clergy in the USA began to reassess the relation between their faith, as black people, and white religion. Their dilemma revolved around how they could reconcile the doctrines of MLK and MLX. It was clear, however, that a radical theology of liberation informed by black culture and experience had become urgent and that it had to be a project unpacked by black people. Christian symbols, such as the Exodus narrative, the message of the prophets at various times and the story of Christ, all took on new meanings and were interpreted in relation to the black struggle for liberation and justice.

According to Cone (1984:5):

The idea of Black Theology emerged when a small group of radical clergy began to reinterpret the meaning of the Christian faith from the standpoint of the black struggle for liberation in the United States during the second half of the 1960s. To theology from within the black experience rather than be confined to duplicating the theology of Europe or white North America was the main objective of the new black theology. It represented the theological reflections of a radical black clergy seeking to interpret the meaning of God’s liberating presence in a society where blacks were economically exploited and politically marginalised because of their skin color.

Black theology is, therefore, God in black terms. Just as white theologians had interpreted God in the context of their own culture and experience, black theology

made a reciprocal gesture to encourage black people to take God seriously while stripping the whole notion of God of its western garb.

Cone defends the notion of Black Power and refuses to see it as an anti-thesis of the teaching of Christ. Even more, he robustly links Christ with the lynching tree, which white racists used to murder black people in the American South (Cone 2011). Thus, black theology may thus, be seen as a theological corollary of black power. Cone regarded black people who called for a soft approach to or tolerance of the oppressive structures of society as completely misguided black brothers. According to Cone the agenda of black power in relation to the black church still needed to be exhausted (Cone 1999:3). It is the frightening items on this agenda that introduced his *magnum opus*, *Black Theology and Black Power*, in 1969.

For Cone (Cone 1999:5), black power was a call for action:

Black Power ... is by nature irrational, that is, not denying the role of reflection, but insisting that human existence cannot be mechanised or put into neat boxes according to reason. Human reason, though valuable, is not absolute, because moral decisions – those decisions that deal with human dignity – cannot be made by using abstract methods of science. Human emotions must be reckoned with. Consequently, black people must say no to all do-gooders who say “We need more time”.

Cone argued that black power should not be reserved for the comfort of human reason and that, at some point, it calls for radical action in the heat of the injustice aimed at undoing the evils of white supremacy. It is this assertion that was frightening for the many disciples of tolerance – frightening because buried deep in it is the call to overthrow injustice and oppression by whatever means necessary.

In Cone's view, Christ was crucified precisely because he was a revolutionary. His fiercest confrontations were not with the poor and downtrodden of society but with the elite teachers of the Law who sought to protect the status quo. This is the precise juncture at which black theology emerged from the framework of black power. Thus, black theology may be seen as black power in revolutionary prayer.

Thirty years after the publication of *Black Theology and Black Power* Cone is still relentless in advocating a theology of liberation for the poor. He despises those clergy who deliberately walk away from what he regards as the heart of the gospel of Christ. Cone (1999:12) states:

We must say that, when a minister blesses by silence the conditions that produce riots and condemns the rioters, he gives up his credentials as a Christian minister and becomes inhuman. He is an animal, just like those who, backed by an ideology of racism, order the structure of this society based on white supremacy. We need men who refuse to be animals and are resolved to pay the price so that all men can be something more than animals.

## **2.5 SUMMARY**

This chapter attempted to draw and develop a global picture of liberation theology from the time of the slave religion in the USA to black theology in the tradition of James Cone. It also highlighted Latin American liberation theology in the context of the more global phenomenon of oppression that was not exclusive to the Black context alone. It is possible to safely conclude that the black clergy in the USA, for example, Martin Luther King Jr, Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael and others, laid the foundations for black theology.

Maimela (1983:34) is of the opinion that white American theology has not been involved in the struggle for black liberation and that, essentially, it has been a

theology of the white oppressor, giving religious sanction to the racial extermination of Indians and the enslavement of black masses. From the very beginning to the present day, white American theological thought has been patriotic, either by defining the theological task independently of black suffering (liberal northern approach) or by defining Christianity as compatible with white racism (conservative southern approach). In both cases, theology became a servant of the state, thus involving the death of many black people. It is little wonder that an increasing number of black religionists were finding it difficult to be black and to be identified with traditional theological thought forms.

The appearance of black theology in the American context was due exclusively to the failure of white religionists to relate the gospel of Jesus to the pain of being black in a white racist society. Black theology arose from the need of black people to liberate themselves from their white oppressors. Thus, black theology is a theology of liberation because it is a theology which arose from an identification with the oppressed blacks of America, seeking to interpret the gospel of Christ in the light of the black situation (Maimela 1983:34).

In South Africa black theology was born in the wider context of the emergence of the black consciousness movement. The next chapter traces the evolution of black theology in the 1970s in South Africa and how it created an environment which gave rise to the political empowerment and involvement in activism of Drs Allan Boesak and Frank Chikane.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE INFLUENCE OF BLACK THEOLOGY ON ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 3 discusses the way in which black consciousness and black theology influenced Boesak and Chikane to become proponents of the United Democratic Front. This influence stemmed from the black power and black theology of the United States of America and the liberation theology of Latin America.

Firstly, the chapter researcher provides a brief history of black theology as it was articulated by the University Christian Movement (UCM) and its influence on both Boesak and Chikane. The advocacy of black theology has played a major role to develop Steve Biko's sense making known as black consciousness (BC). Secondly, the chapter illustrates the way black theology and black consciousness became natural supporters in the attempt to deconstruct the psychological and religious constructions of both apartheid and the missionaries in both church and society in South Africa. Maurice Ngakane, Frank Chikane and Cyril Ramaphosa emerged in this time as a rare breed of Pentecostals who opposed a tradition that had resulted in a religious vacuum of political inactivity.

#### **3.2 THE ENVIRONMENT THAT SHAPED THE THINKING OF BOESAK AND CHIKANE**

In the 1970s there was a wind of change in the South Africa environment that shaped the thinking of many students, artists and theologians of the time. Although this environment shaped Boesak and Chikane's theological thinking they were not exceptions. This section highlights events of the time to illustrate

how these events bred the black ideologies such as black theology and black consciousness in South Africa.

### **3.2.1 The development of black theology in South Africa**

In the USA black power had preceded black theology. However, in South Africa the reverse applied with the establishment of black theology preceding black consciousness. This black theology developed from a project of the University Christian Movement led by Basil Moore and later by Sabelo Stanley Ntwasa. Motlhabi (2012:224) reveals that conversations took place between South African theologians and the African-American pioneers of black theology, such as James Cone, regarding their new way of practising theology. Motlhabi (2012:224) contends that:

Less familiar in the BTSA's first phase is the communication that went on at the beginning between the officials of the UCM and like theologians in the United States, especially James Cone. As it was promulgated by the UCM, the early BTSA followed development in the USA closely at the time, and especially the publication of Cone's two books, *Black Theology and Black Power* and *A Black Theology of Liberation*. As a result of these two books, the UCM engaged in ongoing communication with American black theologians and tried to learn as much as possible from them regarding this new method of theology and its vision of human liberation seen from a theological perspective.

The insights gained from black theology in the USA influenced the pioneers of black theology in South Africa to convene a UCM congress in Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape in 1967. The delegates of this congress ranged from almost 90 clergy persons to university students. Basil Moore, a white Methodist minister of the Word and Sacrament, became the first executive president. Winnie Kware, who was a member of the executive during Basil Moore's era, succeeded Basil Moore as the first black president of the Black People's Convention (BPC). This

movement was influential in its five years of existence in most universities and theological seminaries. The second congress of BPC was held in Stutterheim and included 68 per cent black delegates.

The BPC has a significant impact on the thinking and behaviour of students in respect of the apartheid system. As Goddard (2015:122) indicates, race and theological problems had been incorporated into the agenda of the Student Christian Movement (SCM) and the predominantly white Student Christian Association (SCA), ultimately leaving black Christians without either a voice or a role in the decision-making processes. The UCM then bridged the chasm and adopted a political stance that the SCA and SCM evaded and created a platform for black theologians and black students.

According to Motlhabi (2012:224), it was under the auspices of the UCM that initiatives of an *exploratory* nature were undertaken with black theologians and clergy in South Africa seeking to understand and to relate their experiences under apartheid to their faith in Christ. The UCM encouraged reflection on the black experience. Steve Biko, the father of BC, also made a contribution to this regard. Black Consciousness found a natural religious ally in black theology. It was during this time that Manas Buthelezi (1973:55–56) identified the role of the church in the context of black theology in South Africa as follows:

It is now time for the black man to evangelise and humanise the white man. The realisation of this will not depend on the white man's approval, but solely on the black man's love for the white man ... For this to be a reality it is imperative for the black man to reflect upon the Gospel out of his experience as a black man. The black man needs to be liberated from the white man's rejection, so that the white man's rejection may cease to be a decisive factor in the process of the black man's blackness as a gift of God, instead of the biological scourge which the white man's institution



have made it to be. The future of evangelism is tied to the quest for a theology that grows out of the black man's experience...from this theological vantage point...the black man will contribute his own understanding of Christian love and its implications for evangelism.

The focus emphasised above gave birth to different thinking and movements, including the South African Students Organisation (SASO) in 1968. When SASO was established it included a black theology desk, which had, as its aim, the conscientising of black clergy in order to strengthen the UCM, which was already conscientising the clergy through the Black Theology Project (BTP). The BTP, the Black Community Programmes (BCP) and the SASO initiative on black theology were all running concurrently and feeding each other. SASO with its BC understood itself as conscientising black ministers and not the other way around. Biko (1978:54) indicated that there had been something wrong with the missionaries and the God they had presented to the Africans. BC, as a psychological tool, was well placed, in collaboration with black theology, to deconstruct the constructed concept of God that the missionaries has propagated. The black clergy were also well positioned to facilitate the process of deconstructing this concept. However, in order to do this, they had to familiarise themselves with the basic tenets of black theology.

When highlighting the deconstruction of this concept of God and Christianity to the African, Biko (1978:59) contended that black theology was a situational interpretation of Christianity in Africa in general and South Africa in particular. It sought to relate the prevailing black humanity to God within the given context of black humanity's suffering and human attempts to escape from this suffering. Black theology shifted the emphasis of a human being's moral obligations from avoiding wronging false authorities by not losing their reference book, not stealing

food when hungry and not cheating the police when they are caught eradicating all causes of suffering as arising from the deaths of children from starvation, outbreaks of epidemics, poverty and thuggery and vandalism in townships. In other words, it shifts the emphasis from petty sins to major sins in society, thereby ceasing to teach people to suffer peacefully.

It is commonly known that Africans are religious beings and being understood as notoriously religious had been regarded as being in a religious coma. Karl Marx referred to religion as *the opium of the masses*. Karl Marx concurred with Ludwig Feuerbach when he maintained that religion is a projection of a person's wishes in the sense that a human being creates God in his/her own mind. Human beings attribute all the good characteristics to God but, in reality, these good characteristics reflect human wishes. In order to liberate human beings from alienation human beings should abolish religion as it creates illusions (Keshomshahara, 2008:170). Biko was aware of this notion from a philosophical perspective but maintained that, as Africans are naturally religious beings, it is imperative that religion is used in a proper way to liberate the black people in South Africa. This was not an indictment against religion but against the conforming stupor from which the black religious community had to be awakened with the black clergy as the key to this initiative.

Ernst Bloch (1885–1977) is a philosopher who significantly influenced the theology of Jürgen Moltman. Bloch was a philosopher who, on one hand, supported Marxism but, on the other hand, criticised Marxism as being incomplete since it did not recognise the role of religious hope in social transformation. Jürgen Moltman observed that, for atheists such as the Marxists,

Ernst Bloch is recognised as religious although religious people such as Jews and Christians regard Bloch as an atheist (Keshomshahara, 2008:173). This was how the South African government, which saw itself as a Christian government, viewed Biko although Biko, as a religious person, recommended that religion should be the vehicle to liberation and social transformation. Biko (1978) urged ministers of the word and the Sacraments not to practise their ministry in a vacuum but, instead, to practise it in a socio-political context. Just as the missionaries had practised their ministry in the context of their own cultural and colonial backgrounds, it was imperative that the black clergy should reinterpret scripture and practise their ministry in the context of their own situation. The challenge facing BTSA as Africans was, therefore, not to relinquish the “white” God but to reinterpret God and the scriptures in the context of the black experience.

In doing this the black clergy would first have to address the structural and administrative situation in their own churches. White ministers led the black churches while the majority of the congregants were black people. White clergy also occupied the positions of power and, thus, the black clergy had to mobilise the delegates to conferences to elect black church leaders. There was an awareness that the English-speaking churches, although generally sympathetic to the plight of black people, did not take leadership among them seriously. As Elphick (2012:4) wrote:

Most English-speaking missionaries, though expressing doubts about black administrative and leadership abilities, held much more liberal social and political views than the majority of white settlers.

The challenge, therefore, for the black clergy was to reverse that order and to replace white leadership with black leadership that understood the agenda of BTSA and BC (Biko 1978:55). The other dimension, according to Biko, was for the black clergy and theologians to consciously start referring to biblical themes that were relevant to the black experience of oppression. A people's faith or religion was crucial in reinventing new, subconscious models of God. Black people would not win the struggle while they still perceived God using European psychological models of God. Biko (1978:60) concluded:

I would like to remind the black ministry and, indeed, all black people that God is not in the habit of coming down from heaven to solve people's problems on earth.

The kingdom of God was already on earth to solve the problems of the people while the people of God who followed the example of the historical Jesus were in a position to stand where God stood whenever there were problems that needed to be solved on earth. Here, Biko touched on the eschatological hope that needed to be realised in the here and now. When comparing Moltmann's theology and the philosopher Keshomshahara (2008:178–179) indicates that Moltmann's concern about the future eschatology as a proper and necessary aspect of contemporary theology and the Christian faith has resulted in Christianity appealing the modern day man. Moltmann's theology of hope does not confine Christian eschatology to the socio-political and economic situations of the present day but, instead, places socio-political changes in the context of the ultimate hope of the church in terms of which God is expected to bring about a new creation. This theology of hope agrees with the contemporary thinking on the aspect of addressing and solving the contemporary problems of humankind on

earth, thus implying that the hope which humankind possesses should not allow them to escape the reality of the problems they encounter in life. Instead, the hope that awaits the manifestation of God's promise must encourage humankind to contradict and protest against all forms of oppression. The present should not be separate from eternity because the present is part of the eternal as the eternal present (Keshomshahara, 2008:178–179). This is the theology which Biko proclaimed and advocate and which the members of the clergy were required to take seriously in their preaching and practice and in life in order to assist with and solve the problems of the day.

### **3.2.2 Black consciousness as a means to genuine humanity**

The black theology, which encouraged the establishment of the black consciousness, has as its sole purpose the recreating a new humanity. The black theology has influenced the development of black consciousness in South Africa, and the themes that ministers and students in SCM and SCA espoused stimulated much socio-political debate. According to the proponents of BC, the political void, which has arisen as a result of the banning of the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in the 1960s, had triggered the black consciousness movement (BCM) in South Africa. The dissatisfaction of Steve Biko and many university students with the white liberal institutions, such as the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and which had prompted them to take it upon themselves to speak for black people triggered the establishment of the BCM. In 1968, disheartened by the oppression, marginalization and treatment of black people as non-persons, Steve Biko, Barney Pityana, Abram Onkgopotse Tiro,

and others initiated the inauguration of the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) at the University of the North (Turfloop) in July 1969.

In an interview with Gail Gerhardt on the intellectual impetus and the reason or need for a black consciousness movement in South Africa Biko (1978) stated:

We have to see this evolution of black consciousness side by side with other political doctrines in the country, and other movements of resistance. I think a hell of a lot of this is attributable to the sudden death of the political articulation of ideas within the black ranks, which came because of the banning of all the political parties. In addition, here I think the operative feature is that the only people who were left with some sort of organisations from which to operate were white people. Between 1912 and 1960 blacks could speak through one form of organisation or another, be it ANC, trade union movements, or later the CP (Communist Party) and other political parties. So, when they were banned in 1960, effectively all black resistance was killed, and the stage was left open to whites of liberal opinion to make representations for blacks in a way that had not happened in the past, unaccompanied by black opinion.

Biko defined the BC as an “attitude of mind and a way of life” (Biko 1978:91). BC was intended to correct the mistaken internalised perception that black people were inferior to white people. Thus, one important dimension of BC was a deliberate psychological break from the way in which black people were perceived and defined by white people and how they perceived and defined themselves. In a polarised society, such as South Africa, blackness was always defined using whiteness as a frame of reference, even by blacks themselves. To be black was to be a white person in a black skin – what the Boers had earlier termed black Englishmen (Elphick 2015:5). As Freire (1970:28) had observed in the Latin American context, to be liberated meant to do to the oppressed what the white man had done as the oppressor. Among the other incongruities of a racially polarised society It was this internalisation of whiteness that the BC philosophy sought to correct. Black people were black people by right of divine creation, but

more than 300 years of colonialism and imperialism had left an imprint on the black psyche that had, hitherto, not been probed, at least on a philosophical or psychological level.

BC evolved in South Africa in parallel with the politically tumultuous 1960s in the USA. In America there were the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Panther Party and others whose slogans were taken up in the BC movement. As Stokely Carmichael and others shouted “Black Power!” the sound of it echoed in South Africa. Nevertheless, leading proponents in SASO would have us believe that the BC ideology was a philosophy whose time would have come, with or without the American influence. Charles Msibi (1970), a vice-president of SASO at its inception, was reported to have said:

If there was no Black Power Movement in America, SASO would still be born, but the call gave us a psychological advantage, and this explains the reasons for the large following we have built up in a relatively short time.

Ranwedzi Nengwekhulu (1976), a full-time SASO organiser, affirmed Biko’s sentiments about the origins of SASO:

The 1972 Policy Manifesto of the South African Students Organisation (SASO) defines Black Consciousness as “an attitude of mind, a way of life whose basic tenet is that Black must reject all value systems that seek to make him a foreigner in the country of birth and reduce his basic human dignity. The concept of Black Consciousness, therefore, implies an awareness of and pride in their blackness by Black people who should and must appreciate their value as human beings.

Biko admits, with reservations, that BC had been influenced solely by the African-American struggle for liberation, preferring to credit the writings of others, such as Frantz Fanon, for providing the underpinning of what became the BC philosophy. Although there were many similarities and parallels between the two, BC would

have emerged because its time had come and not because of the Civil Rights Movement or the Black Power movement led by Stokely Carmichael. The black struggle for liberation in America had tended to revolve around assimilation into white society. It was MLK's dream to see white children and black children being judged on the content of their character rather than on the colour of their skin. However, in many parts of Africa, the cry was for a total switch of political power from colonialism and racism to the African masses. Barney Pityana's slogan of "*Black man you are on your own,*" also charted the way forward for a movement that had emerged from the dearth of political opinion in the 1960s (Magaziner 2009). Rev Ernest Baartman (1973:18) defined black consciousness as follows:

It is the black man saying "No" to white racism in all its forms, oppressive and paternalistic. Black Consciousness is the black man saying "YES", he says yes to who he is in Jesus Christ. He affirms all that Christ affirmed. Christ says yes to health; he healed the sick, lame, the deaf and dumb. He said yes to food; he fed the multitudes. He said yes to freedom because he came to set the prisoner free. He came to say yes to Love. Love God, love your neighbor, love your enemy, love them that curse and abuse you. Black consciousness awakens the black man to all that is his.

### **3.2.3 The Black People's Convention (BPC) and its activities that impacted on Boesak and Chikane**

In the late 1960s there was an intense consciousness of blackness in South Africa. Whether it is admitted to or not, this consciousness ran parallel with the events unfolding in the USA at about the same time. The African-American influence or impact, if at all, on black people was not new as there were Africans who had studied in Europe and the USA and then returned home armed with academic qualifications that had prompted them to challenge the political status quo. DDT Jabavu, a graduate of Yale University, returned with an obviously positive impression of Booker Washington's trend of thought. W, E. B. Du Bois



and Marcus Garvey may have influenced Dr SM Molema when he wrote *The Bantu past and present* while Sol Plaatje may have attended the Pan Africanist conferences of 1919 and 1921 where he would have come into contact with Du Bois and the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) (Walshe1987:82). Much later, there were other black people who studied abroad, including Dr Allan Boesak in 1976, and whose theses contained a significant emphasis on BTSA (Motlhabi 2012:227).

The developments cited above influenced the establishment of the BPC in the 1970s. At the beginning of the 1970s an umbrella organisation of the BC inspired organisations began to come together. The first President of the Black People's Convention was Mrs Winnie Kgwere who was elected at a BPC conference held in Hammanskraal (probably St Peter's Theological Seminary) on 16 and 17 December 1972. By 1974 the leadership of the organisation had been taken over by Nkwenkwe Nkomo, Mahlomolo Skosana and others who called the 1974 meeting. Kgwere's election in 1972 was probably the first indication of the movement's attitude towards women. Although her husband was the rector of the University of the North (Turfloop) this did not prevent her involvement in student politics and other engagements relevant to the struggle for liberation in South Africa. The majority of such activities and campaigns were joint ventures because the enemy was too powerful to be attacked in isolation or by individual movements.

The Black People's Convention joined hands with the Black Renaissance Convention to champion the recreation of a new humanity in South Africa. An interesting phenomenon developed in 1974 which may have been the influence

both BC and black theology in South Africa (BTSA). The BPC and the Black Renaissance Convention (BRC) called separate meetings at the same venue and on the same dates. These meetings were held on 13 to 16 December 1974 at the St Peter's Theological Seminary in Hammanskraal, a popular venue for BC adherents at that time. According to a report, drawn up by Smangaliso Mkhathshwa in his capacity as secretary of the BRC, there was a group of rowdy young people who wanted to disrupt the meeting of the BRC. They were later identified as members of SASO or BPC. They were concerned that another organisation was being formed to represent black opinion. Maurice Ngakane, as chairperson or president of the BRC, reprimanded the group and the meeting continued as normal. The BRC had probably been called together under the auspices of the South African Council of Churches and there was a large representation of leaders from various denominations including Fatima Meer, Smangaliso Mkhathshwa, Allan Boesak, Stanley Mogoba, John Thorne (President of the SACC at the time), Rev. E Tema, Dr Manas Buthelezi and Maurice Ngakane.

Ngakane, a former lecturer at a Pentecostal bible school in Rustenburg, who had become disgruntled with Assemblies of God USA teachings, was probably the convener of this meeting as the leader of the SACC Mission and Evangelism desk. He had previously been involved in the Student Christian Movement (SCM), a politically toothless evangelical organisation that had sometimes sympathised with the plight of black people in South Africa but which had been repelled by the notion of black consciousness or black theology. Ngakane, Cyril Ramaphosa and Frank Chikane had also been part of the SCM and had

struggled to get the organization to view matters from a BC perspective. Ngakane resigned from the SCM in 1973 (Goddard 2015:127).

The 1974 BRC report refers to Ngakane as the president and Smangaliso Mkhatswa as the scribe. According to Motlhabi (2012:227), a meeting of the BRC was called in Lesotho in 1978. It is not clear whether other meetings were called between this meeting and the one held in 1974 in Hammanskraal. These two parallel meetings may have signalled a connection between the BTSA and BC, an alignment which are gaining strength at the time. According to the 1974 Mkhatswa report, the BRC convention meeting had a wide representation across the socio-political spectrum as well a significant number the clergy or church related workers. Admission to the conference was strict and limited to black people only. White journalists who had planned to attend were unceremoniously turned away.

At the conclusion of these meetings one thing had become clear, namely, that black theology had become the religious expression of black consciousness, and vice-versa. It was, however, not clear whether the two meetings had merged although there the BPC had been represented at the BRC meeting. Dr Manas Buthelezi, an early participant in the evolution of BTSA, had presented an articulation of black theology as a liberation theology in South Africa (Mashabela 2014:20–44).

Overall, it may be said that black theology and black consciousness in South Africa grew in parallel and alongside each other with one being the political expression of the other, and the other being the theological expression of the

other. The fundamental tenets and focus of both were the same, namely, undoing the psychological whiteness of the black psyche.

For Chikane, with the Institute of Contextual Theology (ICT), and the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) for Boesak respectively, an aberration in black theological and consciousness thinking had been introduced. The focus of these organisations had shifted from a sole emphasis on race and they had begun to accommodate white liberals who were sympathetic to the struggle for the liberation of black people in South Africa. Participants in the ICT projects now included individuals such as Professor Charles Villa-Vicencio of the University of Cape Town and others such as Albert Nolan. In many ways this shift in emphasis broadened the themes of liberation under consideration at the time.

#### **3.2.4 The Student Christian Association (SCA) and the Students' Christian Movement (SCM) in South Africa**

The struggle for the recreation of a new humanity was approached from all facets of life, for example, churches, seminars, universities, schools, the workplace and the streets of the townships. The SCA and SCM were also vehicles in the recreation of a new humanity with rights and dignity. Goddard (2015) wrote extensively in his PhD thesis on the SCA and SCM in South Africa. Maurice Ngakane, Frank Chikane and Cyril Ramaphosa were heavily involved in the SCM which was the black evangelical student movement involved in high Schools and universities throughout the country in the 1970s. The two movements were characterised by a heavy evangelical bias and tended to endlessly debate apartheid and its policies but avoid all confrontation and safeguard their evangelical doctrines. In view of their British and American connections, there

were some white leaders who were not comfortable with institutions such as the World Council of Churches (WCC) the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and Africa Enterprise (AE) led by Michael Cassidy. These movements were all ecumenical and, therefore, doctrinally dangerous to what the SCA and the SCM stood for. The SCM and SCA were moving in the opposite direction to that of the UCM and SASO in the universities. While some members of the organisations were sympathetic to the struggle for liberation in South Africa, they did not go far enough as leaders while the funders of the organisations, both locally and abroad, imposed limitations on their participation and involvement in the struggle for liberation in South Africa (Goddard 2015).

As mentioned earlier, the members of the SCM included Maurice Ngakane, who later joined the SACC, and Cyril Ramaphosa, Lybon Mabasa, Frank Chikane and others. Lybon Mabasa and others were at the forefront of the BC movement even after BC movements were banned in 1977. They later launched the Azanian People's Party (AZAPO), which became the political expression of BC thought after 1977. Frank Chikane and Cyril Ramaphosa went on to become, as we shall see later, members of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983.

The black leaders of the SCM had obviously been influenced by the BC movement and sought to distance themselves from white SCA moderates who considered their political stance as too extreme. Cyril Ramaphosa and Frank Chikane were students together at the University of the North (Turfloop) and were involved in the SCM at about the same time.

### 3.2.5 Ideological influences on Boesak and Chikane

It is clear that black consciousness impacted on all corners and all people in South Africa, thus Boesak and Chikane were not unique in this regard. Both Allan Boesak and Frank Chikane emerged in an era when black consciousness and black theology prevailed. Allan Boesak was involved in the early initiatives of the BRC (1974) while he was studying in the Netherlands. His thesis, *Farewell to innocence* (1976), represented the zenith of the environment that shaped his thinking. As we shall see later, his political activism led to his election as president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC).

Chikane later became the General Secretary of the Institute of Contextual Theology (ICT) in Braamfontein, which, like its theological predecessors, sought to reflect on the context of oppression in South Africa. The ICT was open to theologians and academics of other persuasions in its efforts to develop a more contextual theology. It was also open to contributions by other theologians who were not black and, thus, it may be said to have introduced an aberration from the BTSA projects that preceded it.

Both men were motivated in their theological persuasions by a deep desire to practise a prophetic theology that was detached from their own experiences, and those of the people whom they served as pastor. This chapter has shown that these men were active in the development of a contextual theology that spoke prophetically to their times. Chikane was dedicated to the struggle for liberation. This motivated him to write a book, *No life of my own*. Opposing apartheid was dangerous with many of the opponents of the draconian regime being killed.

Boesak, on the other hand, wrote several books, after his *Farewell to Innocence*, in condemnation of apartheid and its policies. In August 1982 he delivered a paper in Ottawa, Canada, which led to the WARC signing an unprecedented document against racism in South Africa.

### **3.2.6 Black consciousness as the trigger for the political activism of Boesak and Chikane**

The black consciousness, that was a vehicle to recreate a new humanity that would be close to God and their neighbour, had pushed both Boesak and Chikane to the forefront of South African politics. In 1983 Boesak and Chikane were instrumental in the launching of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in Mitchells Plain, Cape Town. The UDF was launched in response to a call by Boesak for a united front of churches, civic associations, trade unions, student organisations and sporting bodies to fight apartheid. Conspicuous in their absence were organisations that regarded themselves as the custodians of the BC ideology prevalent in the 1970s.

The UDF brought together all races in South Africa to defy the apartheid regime. It stood for justice. The UDF comprised approximately 600 organisations. Boesak argued against the representation of a so-called tricameral parliament by stating that the only way to oppose government was to form a united front of all the organisations that opposed apartheid, namely, churches, civic organisations, trade unions, student organisations and sporting bodies. It promoted a non-racial state, undiluted by racial or ethnic considerations, as the only constitutional solution for South Africa. The church struggle now aligned itself firmly with the liberation struggle as the only way in which to achieve the aim of ending

apartheid. This created a theological shift in the church debate from theological arguments to plans of action against apartheid and its various forms of institutionalised racism.

The UDF accommodated people and organisations of all persuasions. Both Chikane and Boesak were keynote speakers at the historic meeting that brought people together people from all over the country. The 1980s witnessed a significant shift in the thinking of Boesak and Chikane that had marked their ideological persuasions in the 1970s. Race was no longer the determining factor in political activism.

### **3.3 SUMMARY**

The background sketched in this chapter was important in arriving at some understanding of the main research question posed in this study. Post 1994 the prophetic voices that had spoken against apartheid fell silent. While much has changed politically and otherwise, the need for a prophetic voice in both the church and society has also grown under the leadership of the ANC. Over the years several schisms have occurred within the ANC. The people in the townships continue to demand basic services and, in many ways, the cries emanating from the poor, women and children echo the apartheid era. Yet, amid all this is the missing prophetic voice that spoke so vigorously and eloquently against apartheid.

The question demands an answer because the democratic era that was ushered in post-1994 held out numerous promises to the poor majority in this country. What is concerning is the silence and almost absent prophetic voice that had



condemned apartheid, both locally and internationally, so enthusiastically and so furiously. What has happened to the prophets of the apartheid era and where are they?

However, before the question may be answered, it is important to discuss aspects of the pre-1994 South Africa during which both Boesak and Chikane played important roles in the struggle for liberation. This is particularly important in relation to two documents, namely, the Kairos Document and the Belhar Confession, which made such an impact in their contributions to the demise of apartheid.

The next chapter contains a brief analysis of these documents as the study seeks to argue and focus on the main research question.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PRESENTATION OF THE ROLE PLAYED BY BOESAK AND CHIKANE IN THE DRAFTING OF ALTERNATIVE THEOLOGIES**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapters examined the formation of the theological ideologies of Boesak and Chikane in the context of the black consciousness movement (BCM). By the time the (UDF) was formed in 1983 both these activists had shifted from a liberation theology determined purely along racial lines to one that embraced every person who took a stance against apartheid, black or white. This chapter focuses on both the Belhar Confession and the Kairos documents as an alternative theology and also on how their thinking had shifted to help us understand the theological and ideological basis now underpinning the social activism of both Boesak and Chikane beyond the BCM era.

Boesak was a member of the commission that drafted the Belhar confession in 1982. It was ultimately adopted within the Reformed tradition in 1986. Chikane's thoughts become clearer as we analyse "The Kairos Document" in whose publication he played an important role in his capacity as General-Secretary of the Institute of Contextual Theology (ICT) in Braamfontein, Johannesburg in 1985 or 1986.

Boesak and Chikane were both born in the poverty of black locations in South Africa. While the apartheid government had tried to use the wedge of coloured superiority over Africans, both these activists had found common ground in the definition of blackness as promoted in the BCM.

In the final analysis, both understood that the struggles for political liberation in their communities were similar and connected in all respects. They were faced with a common enemy in the policies of apartheid and lived out by those who represented the apartheid ideology. This analysis will help us to place Boesak and Chikane's social activism before 1994 (during apartheid) in contrast to whom they became after 1994 (after apartheid). In addition, this analysis should help us grasp how their prophetic voices were drowned by the euphoria of liberation after 1994 in response to the question as to why the church became silent after 1994.

#### **4.2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF AFRIKANER RELIGION AND THE RESISTANCE AGAINST THE AFRIKANER RELIGION**

In the pre-democratic South Africa there was no separation between the apartheid governance and white Afrikaner theology. Furthermore, the theology of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) was closely intertwined with the apartheid theology. In order to understand the theology of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) and its relation to those who condemned such theology, it is important to sketch a brief background of the history of what Moodie (1975:21) called the Afrikaner civil religion. This relationship was the source of confrontations between Black, Boer and Briton on South African soil. The British settlers occupied the Cape, thus forcing the Afrikaners to explore opportunities to confiscate the land that belonged to Africans in the hinterland of South Africa. The confrontations were many and dead bodies littered the African wilderness from the wars that were waged between the Afrikaners and the Africans. The theology of land and occupation (Afrikaners religion) has cost the lives and dignity of many black Africans in this country.

While the Afrikaners differed on many levels regarding their interpretations of European Calvinism, they all agreed on the fact that Afrikanerdom was “willed by God” and, hence, their survival of both English oppression in the Cape and the onslaught by African warriors as they trekked into the hinterland of the country and beyond during the Great Trek of 1834 (Davenport 1991:48). Moodie has written extensively about an Afrikaner civil religion and how, at the end of it all, the Boers believed that they were a nation willed by God despite the attempts by their enemies to annihilate them. While some mouthed about the equality of all people, they believed that every race had been ordained to pursue its own destiny (Moodie 1975:52).

The major problem for the Dutch settlers revolved around how the English and other European missionaries sought to treat baptised black people as equals and who sometimes used former slaves against them, as in the well-known Slagters Nek Rebellion (Davenport 1991:36). It reached its peak when the slaves were declared to be equal standing with whites based on their baptism and some slaves expected and insisted upon being treated as equals by their former Dutch slave owners.

According to Elphick (2012:2):

Most missionaries in South Africa did not straightforwardly advocate an extension of racial equality from the spiritual to the social realm. Black Christians, on the contrary, tended vigorously to assert that equality in the eyes of God should evolve into social and political equality. The white missionary’s relationship to the doctrine they had introduced was an immensely complex and intricate interplay of advocacy, subversion, and even downright hostility. Most significantly, the broad vision of apartheid, designed explicitly to thwart the drive toward racial equality, originated, in part, among missionary leaders of the Dutch Reformed churches.

There were many ferocious wars during the “treks” as various groups left the Cape at different times with fierce and atrocious confrontations with both the British and African, culminating in the Anglo-Boer Wars (Davenport 1991:180). It was this history, confirmed and given theological articulation by some ministers of the Word and Sacrament of the DRC, such as Dr DF Malan, that, ultimately, drove home the belief that the Afrikaners were a nation chosen and protected by God on the southern tip of Africa (Elphick 2012:39–51).

Despite the fact that, in 1829, a DRC Synod rejected discrimination based on colour, the church continued to practise prejudice, racism and racial discrimination against the “natives”. Notwithstanding the DRC’s evangelical inclination and the fervent evangelisation of Coloureds and Africans, there were many disputes about equal participation in worship and other church activities, such as Holy Communion. In 1857 the DRC instituted separate services for the Coloured members due to the “weakness of some”. Thus, the DRC, in its history, always had to grapple with the desire to evangelise the so-called “natives” but, at the same time, to maintain a sense of the divine and racial superiority of the Afrikaner.

The Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) was established in 1881 by five Coloured mission churches that met in Wellington, Cape Town. However, despite the decision in Wellington, the white DRC still held the power to veto decisions made by the mission churches and insisted on all DRMC buildings being registered in the DRC’s name. The DRC was rooted in the colonial system of land invasion and capital accumulation and it came as no surprise when history revealed connections between the Reformed dominant classes who had also

African, Coloured, and Khoi-san slaves. As pointed out earlier, after its formation in 1881, the DRMC struggled with the mother church and there were many disputes over the years, especially about race and the Eucharist or Holy Communion (Plaatjies-van Huffel, 2014:301). The white reformed members oppressed the other race groups but were, themselves, discriminated against by the English in various ways, especially after the latter's occupation of the Cape in 1795 and 1806. Worship often became a battleground between intense race ideologies under the guise of the perverse and perverted theology of white supremacy (Elphick, 2012:39–51).

The late, world-renowned and respected Dr Beyers Naude, who was rejected by the white DRC and who joined the DRCA and was a member of the Belydende Kring (BK), played an important role in the introduction of a theology that opposed white supremacy in the white DRC in South Africa. The BK, which comprised mainly Indian, Coloured and African members within the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA), had reached a crisis point with the mother church that sought to stifle, throttle and oppress them. For the first time, in 1973, a gathering of 100 African ministers issued a statement rejecting apartheid, stating, among others, that the BK would “take seriously the prophetic task of the church regarding the oppressive structures and laws in our land” (Van Rooi 2011:173). According to Plaatjies-Van Huffel (2014), the BK influenced the original drafting and acceptance of the Belhar Confession that was, ultimately, embraced by Presbyterians and Congregationalists in South Africa. Plaatjies-van Huffel (2014) points out that the Belhar Confession was, ultimately, the result of many deliberations on different platforms within the Reformed tradition. Plaatjies-van Huffel (2014) wrote:

The Belhar Confession is, indeed, the culmination of a variety of factors, processes and efforts in the DRMC, DRCA, BK and Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in Southern Africa (ABRESCA).

This theology formed theological giants, such as Allan Boesak, who lived, learned and fought for this theology in all spheres of life. Boesak, the pastor, emerged as both a poet and prophet in the 1970s – prophets are often poetic at heart, creating with their words pictures and scenes that make God’s Word come alive and also new worlds of doom or possibility and new worlds of meaning or disillusionment. Their life stories as messengers of God are, for the most part, lost in the shuffle of people and society. Boesak’s powerful imagery revealed a man who was intimately acquainted with the majesty and the might of God. Dr Robra (2014:96) identifies such poetry in Boesak’s speech:

If there is no justice; there will be no peace Today the world has motion, but no direction. Passion but no compassion; production, but no equitable distribution. Religion but no faith; laws, but no justice. Goods but no God, each new economic advance gives birth to new moral pain, each technological discovery to new fears from the seas as much as from the skies.

Through his intellectual abilities and poetic talent, Boesak became one of the most influential people in the Black Reformed circles, as a member of BK. Boesak’s knowledge, skills and abilities afforded him an opportunity to be one of the delegates in Ottawa where apartheid was declared and reaffirmed as heresy.

#### **4.3 THE IMPACT OF THE OTTAWA 1982 GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE WORLD ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES (WARC)**

Boesak, as one of the delegates from the DRMC WARC general assembly to the Ottawa General Assembly of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, used his poetic ability and theological knowledge of the Afrikaners’ religion and the theology of resistance to move the assembly to a point where it took a decision to

affirm its solidarity with South Africans. He received international recognition in August 1982 when the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) met in Ottawa, Canada. The DRMC sent a delegation to Ottawa and Boesak introduced a motion in which the WARC suspended the membership of the white DRC. The motion moved that the WARC must declare apartheid as heresy and contrary to both the Gospel and the Reformed tradition. The Alliance adopted the declaration on racism, suspended the membership of the white DRC from South Africa and unanimously elected Boesak as president of the alliance. He held the post until 1989. The world body represented approximately 150 churches of the Calvinist tradition in 76 countries with a combined membership of more than 50 million people. This base of international support subsequently protected Boesak against some forms of government repression in South Africa.

As mentioned above, it was at this meeting that Allan Boesak called for the suspension of the white DRC from the world body for giving apartheid a biblical basis and justification. The DRC's sister church, the Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (NHKA), was also suspended during the same year and for the same reasons.

The international ecumenical movement played a critical role in the anti-apartheid struggle and the ultimate decision of the DRMC during their synod in September 1986. During the 1980s, the DRMC became a member of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC), the World Council of Churches Programme (WCC), the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) as well as the South African Council of Churches (SACC). Dirkie Smit represented the DRMC on the Commission for Human Rights of the SACC.<sup>2</sup> The ecumenical movement influenced the discourse on race relations in the black Reformed churches in South Africa and, ultimately, the formation of the Belhar Confession. For example, the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism was extensively discussed at the DRMC synod in 1982, and it had a bearing on decisions made regarding racism and apartheid at the same synod. The DRMC



sent a full delegation, spearheaded by Dr Allan Boesak, to the WARC general assembly which met in August 1982 in Ottawa, Canada (Plaatjies-van Huffel 2014:301).

This call followed the call made as early as the 1960s at the World Council of Churches Cottesloe Conference in Johannesburg by the Anglican Archbishop, Joost de Blank, to suspend the DRC from the World Council of Churches for justifying apartheid on a biblical basis. Beyers Naude attendance at this meeting was a catalyst for his ostracisation from the DRC.

In an address to the meeting, Boesak persuaded the WARC to relook at its stance towards apartheid and to formulate its own stand against apartheid even though it supported for the WCC in its efforts to combat racism. Boesak (1987:1) stated:

Since its meeting in Nairobi in 1970, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches has not really given much attention to the issue of racism. Granted, it may have taken a deliberately low profile on this matter because of its desire to support the World Council of Churches in its efforts to combat racism. Or it may have wanted to give its member churches ample opportunity to give such support. It may have argued that duplication of such efforts is not necessary. Be this as it may, I am convinced that the time has come for the World Alliance to take a firm stand on the issue of racism, a stand which will be its own, based on its concern for and solidarity with those churches within its fellowship who suffer under racism, and based on its own understanding of the gospel and the Reformed Tradition.

Boesak outlined at least six reasons why it was important for the WARC to take its own stand over and above its support for the World Council of Churches (WCC). Such a stance, coming from the Reformed family of churches around the world, was important, given the DRC and NHKA's association with the world movement. Silence on the part of the WARC, in the face of such a blatant misconstruing of biblical scripture, would have meant and, indeed, would have

been interpreted by the oppressed within its ranks, and others who sympathised with their cause, as consent. As mentioned earlier, the WARC moved in 1982 to suspend the membership of both the white DRC and its sister church, the NHKA, and elected Allan Boesak as its President.

The WARC declared, with the black Reformed Christians of South Africa, that apartheid (separate development) is a sin, and that the moral and theological justification of it is a travesty of the Gospel and, in its persistent disobedience to the Word of God, a theological heresy.<sup>5</sup> The WARC consequently suspended the membership of the DRC as well as that of the Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk in Afrika (NHKA) in South Africa (Plaatjies-van Huffel 2014).

Boesak's well-crafted and theologically informed speech undoubtedly contributed enormously to this historic decision. His speech pointed out, in direct and no uncertain terms, the direction the WARC had to take – it had to affirm the convictions of the DRMC that apartheid was “irreconcilable with the Gospel of Jesus Christ”. Under such circumstances, Boesak argued, “this situation should constitute a *status confessionis*”. Apartheid was to be declared a “heresy, contrary to the gospel and inconsistent with the teachings of the Reformed tradition, and consequently rejected as such” (Boesak1987:9). The decision of the WARC paved the way for the DRMC to draft the Belhar Confession, following the declaration of *status confessionis* which preceded the confession. The Belhar Confession was born out of this situation.

#### **4.4 THE ORIGIN OF THE BELHAR CONFESSION AND THE ROLE OF BOESAK**

The role Boesak played in Ottawa created a conducive environment for the drafting of the Belhar Confession while the role he played, both in the background and at the forefront, in the drafting and acceptance of the Belhar Confession

make this confession important in the context of this research study. The Belhar Confession provides a clear indication of the ideological and theological thought of Boesak during the apartheid era in South Africa, particularly, article four of the Belhar Confession. The researcher admits that, for years, he was one of the people who thought that Boesak had been the sole originator of the Belhar Confession. However, he was not the sole originator but a member of the commission of five led by Prof. Gustave Bam together with Prof. Dirkie Smit, Prof. Jaap Durand and Rev. Isak Mentor (Plaatjies-van Huffel 2014:301–309). John de Gruchy (2013) refers to the Belhar Confession as a “prophetic and confession that stood the test of time”.

A revised version of the Belhar Confession stated:

We believe in the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who gathers, protects and cares for the church through Word and Spirit. This God has done since the beginning of the world and will do to the end.

The opening article of the Belhar Confession confesses God as all-encompassing and all-embracing of all humanity. This was contrary to the many synod resolutions of the DRC which had bestowed upon itself the right to determine whether “others” in God’s creation, determined along racial lines, had to be included in the worship of their creator or in the remembering and celebrating of the Christ which the DRC itself had introduced to them in the Holy Communion. The debates of these synods are well documented by scholars in the history of the DRC, the Mission Churches and others within the Reformed tradition.

The document continued:

We believe in one holy, universal Christian church, the communion of saints called from the entire human family.

The Belhar Confession did not see the Reformed Tradition as the only ordained tradition in Christendom. In a sense, the confession recognised that the pluralism of Christian traditions were human designs but that, ultimately, there had to be surrender to the absolute authority and interpretation of the infallible Word of God. The confession repudiated stance assumed by the DRC of reserving the right to its own unique understanding and interpretation of God's Word, moulded largely in its history of racial, cultural prejudice and Afrikaner religion.

The Belhar Confession acknowledged that "Christ's work of reconciliation is made manifest in the church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one another". The white DRC, in its different synods, always regarded others as heathen or gentiles, based on the exclusive principle of being non-Afrikaner, thus considering themselves as the chosen ones of God on the same level as the Jewish nation. However, the Belhar Confession turned that notion upside down with a reminder that all non-Jewish nations are gentile and are brought into the community of believers on the basis of the reconciling work of Christ on the cross. Thus, much of the DRC theology was founded on a flawed exegesis that had given rise to a flawed hermeneutic.

The Belhar Confession offered hope in the unity of believers when it declared:

- that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe that separation, enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has already conquered and, accordingly, that anything which threatens this unity may have no place in the church and must be resisted;

- that this unity of the people of God must be manifested and be active in a variety of ways: in that we love one another; that we experience, practise and pursue community with one another; that we are obligated to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one another; that we share one faith, have one calling, are of one soul and one mind; have one God and Father, are filled with one Spirit, are baptised with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink of one cup, confess one name, are obedient to one Lord, work for one cause, and share one hope; together come to know the height and the breadth and the depth of the love of Christ; together are built up to the stature of Christ, to the new humanity; together know and bear one another's burdens, thereby fulfilling the law of Christ that we need one another and upbuild one another, admonishing and comforting one another; that we suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness; pray together; together serve God in this world; and together fight against all which may threaten or hinder this unity;
- that this unity can be established only in freedom and not under constraint; that the variety of spiritual gifts, opportunities, backgrounds, convictions, as well as the various languages and cultures, are, by virtue of the reconciliation in Christ, opportunities for mutual service and enrichment within the one visible people of God;
- that true faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition for membership of this church.

With its emphasis on unity, the confession practically dismantled apartheid's dogmatic pillars of racism. The Immorality Amendment Act no 21 of 1950 and 1957, and similar laws, were suddenly left with no theological foundation. These and similar laws forbade marital or extra-marital sexual and other engagements between black and white in South Africa with these laws being blessed by the DRC's skewed hermeneutics of racism (Plaatjies-van Huffel 2014).

The unity clause also spoke vigorously to the repeated backward and forward discussions on the Lord's Communion and its openness to people of all races. However, it was not for the synods to make this decision as it already had its foundation in the Word of God. The confession was emphatic on the fact that

human bias, prejudice and preference had to surrender to the ultimate authority of God's Word.

As one of the architects of the Belhar Confession, Boesak demonstrated an unwavering commitment to fighting injustice in all its forms. His speeches, both locally and abroad, attest to his commitment and willingness to lay down his life for what he believed. However, as we shall see later, with the advent of democracy in South Africa and his active role in politics, his role as prophet began to be compromised. In fact, it is his position after 1994 and the silence that followed, even as the government of the ANC gradually slid into corruption and depravity, that prompted the main research question in this study.

Boesak was not alone in the forefront of prophetic activism in South Africa, often walking alongside Frank Chikane and others. Indeed, both Boesak and Chikane were instrumental in the launching of the United Democratic Front in 1983. Their prophetic role in both church and society during the apartheid era was beyond question, thus making their prophetic silence, post-apartheid, even more deafening as they and others, such as Father Smangaliso Mkhathshwa, actively took part in the new government, albeit on different levels. The concerns raised in the main research question are further highlighted when we consider a brief background to Chikane's prophetic social and political activism pre-apartheid.

The researcher concludes this section by indicating that Dr Allan Boesak is a black, prophetic theologian whose voice judges society in terms of justice and in terms of the way in which the poor are treated. He offers undivided loyalty and allegiance to Christ only. Boesak is a gifted, radicalised, well-trained, committed

and articulate black theology prophet – his prophetic voice is that Jesus Christ is the Life of the World and will have the last word, Jesus Christ is not a beast that stamps its feet and issue threats to the children of God.

His prophetic writings addressed the crucial questions facing the oppressed people of South Africa and warned of the perceived judgment of God on the oppressors. Those people who are not convinced that Boesak is a black prophetic theologian are those who conservatively judged him harshly over the years. Yet, the people, the masses loved to hear and to follow Dr Allan Boesak as he read, quoted, preached from the bible, sometimes allegorising, at times spiritualising with revolutionary force, in a way similar to that in which the former plantation Christianity of the black slaves in the United States tended to use the Scriptures. In this sense, Boesak is a model for emerging prophets whom need to raise the voice of the Lord amidst corruption, poverty, landlessness and oppression. Boesak did not stand alone and the Reformed circles were not alone in the struggle for a free and fair South Africa. Ecumenical efforts played a role with Dr Frank Chikane emerging as a Pentecostal black prophet and theologian.

#### **4.5 THE ORIGIN OF THE KAIROS DOCUMENT AND THE ROLE OF CHIKANE**

It is importance to provide an outline of the life of Frank Chikane in order to highlight the way in which the life development of a person influences his/her socio-religious-political-economic life. Like the life of Boesak, the life of Frank Chikane influences his political activism from a theological perspective. Chikane, like Boesak, had an interest in the ministry from a very early age. His father, who

was a pastor in the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), probably influenced him.

Frank Chikane (1988:7) described his church as follows:

Our church is a classical Pentecostal Church, where small congregations start mostly in houses and, in some instances, under trees in rural areas. Services of worship are participatory. People sing together, share their individual experiences during the week, and pray with and for those who are sick. The pastor, elder or deacon selects a text, preaches on it and then let as many members of the congregation as possible express their views about the text or respond to it.

The AFM was an offshoot of the AFM (312 Azusa Street, Los Angeles) and the healing ministry in Chicago of John Alexander Dowie. Dowie was a Zionist forerunner of Pentecostalism in the USA and in South Africa. John G. Lake and a group of 13 other Pentecostal missionaries arrived in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1908. Lake, who had a Dowie Zionist background, influenced the Johannesburg white Zionists to break away from Dowie and to form the AFM in South Africa (Motshetshane 2015). Naturally, he was the first leader of the church (1908–1913). Offshoots of Azusa Street used the name AFM almost everywhere they bourgeoned.

Le Roux, who led the AFM in South Africa for thirty years after Lake's departure (1913–1943), was originally a missionary of the DRC, from the young Andrew Murray in the Cape. He was sent to Wakkerstroom on the border of southern KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga until soon after the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902). He was recused from his duties after a healing controversy triggered by an ailment of his 15-month-old daughter and his growing interest in Dowie's religious empire with multiple healing centres in Europe, Australia, New Zealand and the USA. (Motshetshane 2015).



After Lake's departure in 1913 the AFM introduced race policies similar to those of the DRC into Pentecostalism. Effectively, the AFM became the DRC "speaking in other tongues". This move was not totally unexpected because a significant portion of the church was made up of Boers in the early mining town of Johannesburg who were not able return to their farms that had been scorched by the English during the Anglo-Boer War. These Boers had been former members of the DRC before they joined Dowie Zionism and later converted to Lake's version of Pentecostalism in Johannesburg (Motshetshane 2015).

Thus, Chikane grew up in a racially polarised church. Later, as a pastor, he was victimised by the white leadership of the AFM and suspended from active participation in the church for his political activities against apartheid. His story is captured in his book, *No Life of my Own*, originally published in 1988. In this book he narrates the struggles, psychological and spiritual, which became part of his journey in the AFM. He wrote of the difficulty of balancing the God with whom he was confronted in his own church and the God of biblical scripture. The tensions and contradictions he faced were many and resonated with much of what was taking place across the socio-political landscape in South Africa. Opposing the system of apartheid resulted in threats, repeated incarceration, torture and the possibility of death, sometimes at the hands of fellow white Christians in the AFM.

Despite the fact that Chikane followed a Pentecostal spirituality he never espoused outworld spirituality or a "pie in the sky" spirituality. Chikane (1988:7) identified his spirituality as follows:

Our spirituality was a holistic form of spirituality, with no differentiation between the spiritual and the social. Our services of worship, our spiritual

activism, were launched within the very social dynamics of our society...if a tragedy happens in a family. God must be involved, negatively or positively. If someone is unemployed or dismissed from work, God must be involved. If an accident happens to a person, God must be involved. For the African, God cannot just be a spectator in the war that is raging between the evil spirits and the spirits of righteousness, between God and the devil.

He later became the General-Secretary of the Institute of Contextual Theology (ICT) in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. It was at the ICT that he and others, such as Father Albert Nolan, facilitated discussions on and, ultimately, the publication of The Kairos Document in 1986. Ironically, he later became the youngest General-Secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) despite the fact that his church was not a member of the organisation.

A brief analysis of the Kairos Document will clarify Chikane's stand against racism during the apartheid era in South Africa. Like Boesak in relation to the Belhar Confession, the Kairos Document the product of many minds but Chikane was at the centre of the discussions and the ultimate publication.

The publication of the Kairos document represented the concerns of Chikane and other theologians about the situation in South Africa at that time. The Kairos document impacted and influenced political theology in South Africa. It also provided the alternative theology as opposed to state theology and church which the Kairos document suggested for pre-democratic South African. The opening statement of its preface reads as follows:

The KAIROS Document is a Christian, biblical and theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa today. It is an attempt by concerned Christians in South Africa to reflect on the situation of death in our country. It is a critique of the current theological models that determine the type of activities the church engages in to try to resolve the problems of the country. It is an attempt to develop, out of this perplexing situation,

an alternative biblical and theological model that will in turn lead to forms of activity that will make a real difference to the future of the country (Kairos 1986:2).

In the first instance the Kairos Theologians assumed that their theological model would be the right one compared to the “current theological models that determine the type of activities the church engages in to try to resolve the problems of the country”. However, in so doing they resorted to a myopic hermeneutic like the very one they criticised. While their hermeneutic was reflective it assumed its own righteousness over the other. Conceivably, this was not totally unexpected in a polarised country in which the interpretation of biblical scripture would, necessarily, be informed by contextual experiences.

While all the theologians who took part in the discussions were South African, black and white, many came from the townships – a context that was radically different from that of the white participants as the processes of contextualisation unfolded. This thin line of difference would imply that interpretation would be more experiential for some as it was, perhaps, empathetic for others. However, as stated earlier in relation to BC, this was significant in the shift in Chikane’s thinking from a theology determined purely along racial lines, as in black theology, to one that embraced criticism of apartheid, even by those who benefited from it. The document, however, went on to state that it was an “attempt to develop an alternative biblical and theological model” aimed specifically at making a “difference in the country” and thus absolving itself of the type of divine anointing which apartheid theology bestowed on itself.

The document continued:

We, as a group of theologians, have been trying to understand the theological significance of this moment in our history. It is serious, very serious. For very many Christians in South Africa this is the KAIROS, the moment of grace and opportunity, the favourable time in which God issues a challenge to decisive action. It is a dangerous time because, if this opportunity is missed, and allowed to pass by, the loss for the church, for the Gospel and for all of South Africa will be immeasurable (Kairos 1986:2).

The document was prompted by what the “Kairos Theologians” considered to be a crisis moment. Something had to be said, and said at that precise moment in time, not earlier and not later. The document communicated an urgency that implied a type of impending divine judgement had what was said not been said at that time. In that sense, it was a document desperate to seize the moment in a true prophetic sense.

The theologians rightly recognised that the “Church” was divided but they failed to acknowledge that their understanding of the word prophetic was one interpretation in a myriad of many and sometimes contradictory interpretations. John de Gruchy (1987:62) points out that prophecy is a complex phenomenon which is understood differently in the many branches of religious Christendom: “prophecy in the Old and New Testaments is a very complex phenomenon which lends itself to a variety of interpretations”.

The theologians themselves came from various backgrounds but were linked by the common denominator of issuing a joint statement on a social malady that was impacting them in different ways, regardless of the way in which they understood prophecy as interpreted in their different Christian traditions. Thus, the Kairos Document was a unifying factor which emerged in opposition to apartheid and its

theological sanctions and which had formulating its own understanding of Christian and prophetic.

The first attempt was a scathing hermeneutic on the apartheid state theology which was based on Romans 13: 1–7, its use of the notion of law and order, and its sweeping use of the term communist and, finally, its use of the name of God.

Kritzinger (1989:66) had the following to say about the Kairos document:

It was not written by one or two “experts”, but emerged out of a series of group discussions, and drafts were circulated for comment before it was finalised. It grew out of the deepening experience of crisis among Black Christians living in a beleaguered township during the State of Emergency. Out of that sense of crisis it first delivers a razor-sharp critique of “State Theology”, and then proposes a Prophetic Theology which expresses itself in liberating deeds.

Allan Boesak (CD 001-02-23) confirmed, endorsed and accepted the Kairos document as prophetic when he stated: “When Kairos was written people call it ‘Street Theology’”. If nothing was happening at street level than one wonder whether we would have had Kairos. Kairos instructed that the church needed to conduct a social analysis of the situation and where it found itself in South Africa. The Kairos document is far more of a sermon than a theological statement but does not take it seriously enough. We are far too concerned about the criticisms that come from the upper class and the upper class theologians. The Kairos document would need a paragraph in which it unashamedly states: Look, we begin by stating that the church in this country is divided, these are the reasons for the divisions but, for me, this division is serious enough to raise another question, namely, Who can speak on behalf of whom? When you criticise the Kairos document, you can really only do so from within, not even from the

perspective of your own risk of full participation in the struggle for people for justice and peace. Those people who do not bleed with us, those people who does not share our pain, those people who do not want to go to jail with us, those people who do not feel the whip against their backs as we do, and who distance themselves from us quite deliberately have no right to ask critical questions about our reflections of what the gospel said, especially those who have used the gospel and the name of Jesus Christ to justify and sanctify our oppression. In that sense the Kairos document needs to be radicalised. We are not going to be engaged in fruitless academic discussions. We can only talk meaningfully to each other from within the shared context of pain and aspirations and hope and joy and suffering. Those who then stand beside us and ask the question will be answered. Other people, I think, must go and ask those questions, they must have that debates, and they must hold their symposiums, but you will not find me there. I will not go because I will not respond to such things. And, I think it is so essential to our own liberation to be honest enough to say this to these people it is also essential to their liberation that we begin to understand that it is no longer possible to take the pain of a people and make of it a sentence in an academic debate that you may dissect and that you may draw conclusions from as that would mean nothing. This is part of the South African reality in practising theology that we have not addressed sufficiently. It has to do with who have earned the right to speak. It is a document for the oppressed people who make their own because it reflects what they feel. People who want to understand that, people who hope to understand the document can do so only if they have learnt to stand with us where the blood flows, and when you have stood knee deep in blood with other people who are bleeding and you know that you may be the next one who

will bleed, then you will understand the language of the Kairos document in its real sense. We ought to be honest about that – we have to say to those theologians who come with their criticism from the other side of the fence, that this is where we are. We need to say a few things more clearly and, again, I say this within the context of teaching our own people and of opening up the word of God for our own people to understand in a different way from the traditional way – this ecclesiastical new colonialism under which we have been suffering for so long and which we still have not fully been able to share. When we talk about prophecy our people must know what it means. Prophecy is not some mystical unveiling of the future or pre-telling even of the future, but prophecy, real prophesy, marks itself in that it contradicts the present upon a vision of the future.

According to the document, it cannot be disputed that there will always be a need for some form of secular authority in every state. What is disputable is, however, is whom that authority serves – the people or God. Apartheid clearly served its architects and, despite its theological sanctioning, it was the “beast” of the books of Daniel and Revelation. While government is God’s will, the apartheid rule was in violation of that will and warranted disobedience.

The understanding of the Kairos moment underpinned Chikane’s social and political activism. Indeed, it was the basis for the prophetic voices of his time that refused to accept apartheid’s corrupted hermeneutic of what the proponents of apartheid believed to be the Word of God. With this theology, as preached in the Kairos Document, embedded is his conscience and as a preacher of the Gospel Chikane was willing, although in fear and trembling, to sacrifice his life for righteousness.

#### **4.6 SUMMARY**

Boesak and Chikane, despite their not so different religious backgrounds, were inspired by a hermeneutic grounded deeply in their socio-political environments. Boesak was completely Reformed while Chikane espoused a type of Reformed tradition that had evolved into what is popularly known as classical Pentecostalism.

Their silence after the dawn of democracy in South Africa raises many questions regarding the participation of social prophets in the structure of government. This confirms an observation by Stanley Hauerwas (1985:36) on the various ways in which prophecy is interpreted and how it is often influenced by one's position in relation to one's social environment. Hauerwas (1985:36) wrote:

One cannot assume that the current understanding of "Prophetic" is, in fact, synonymous with the role of prophets in Hebrew Scriptures. For instance, prophets are often treated as social radicals who were willing to overthrow their social order in the interest of justice. Yet one is increasingly aware that many of the prophets were profound social conservatives who were seeking not to overthrow the status quo, but to maintain it, or even to return to a prior way of life.

The next chapter focuses on the silence of the church in the new dispensation after 1994s. The chapter seek to respond to the main question regarding the way in which the Kairos prophets of the period before 1994 appeared to be swallowed up in a black hole of corruption and crass materialism and, arguing, as we shall see, that old prophets will always find it a challenge to speak to a new era.



## CHAPTER 5

### THE SILENCE OF THE BLACK PROPHETIC VOICE IN SOUTH AFRICA

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters attempted to show how Boesak and Chikane were part of the prophetic voices that had condemned apartheid and its injustices. They were at the forefront in preparing for the dawn of democracy. This chapter introduces and engage theological literature to show how prophecy, for better or worse, has always been part of the political landscapes in South Africa and elsewhere. It will argue that balancing the different prophetic trajectories is no easy task, especially when the prophets attempt both to be part and to stand beyond their situations of prophecy, as in the case of Boesak and Chikane. The early prophesy in South Africa will be the springboard to levelling the field for the shift from silence to vocal prophesy vice versa.

#### 5.2 EARLY VOICES OF PROPHECY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The church was very prophetic even before apartheid. It is, however, ironical that, during apartheid, the black churches were silent and individual prophets were vocal, not on behalf of the church, but on behalf of God. No one can dispute the fact that the voice of the church was very audible, for better or worse, before the advent of apartheid in 1948. The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) had played a major role in endorsing a Christianity that was nurtured by race and cultural insinuations from the first time the Dutch first landed in South Africa in 1652. Krotoa (or “Eva”), Jan van Riebeeck’s Khoisan housekeeper, was the first to suffer from the religious and racial prejudice of the Dutch. When her white, officer

husband died on an expedition she was banished to an island because she had sunk into drunkenness and prostitution. According to Elphick (2012:1), this was all recorded as the act of a “dog returning to her vomit”. Although Krotoa had been the first convert in Dutch settlers’ Christianising efforts, she would never be what she was not predestined to become, at least according to early DRC Calvinism. The apartheid era was born out of this civil religious aberration when its architects sought to sanctify the birth of a “new people”, as DF Malan termed in 1938, resulting from the Boer victory against the Zulu, one hundred years earlier (Moodie 1975).

Almost immediately after the introduction of apartheid in 1948, dissident voices were raised within the Reformed family of churches. As early as 1955 Professor BB Keet, a DRC theologian in the Cape, warned: “Our colour prejudice is probably the greatest factor in producing non-white agitators and revolutionaries” (Elphick 2012).

Professor Keet spoke against a biblical basis for apartheid. There were others in the Reformed tradition, such as Albert Geyser and Beyers Naude, who, in the 1960s, were victimised and ostracised by their colleagues because of their stance against apartheid. They later played an important role in the formation of the Christian Institute, a body of Afrikaner theologians in the Reformed tradition who opposed apartheid (Walshe 1983:7).

While there was some element of racial equality in the Cape under English jurisdiction, there were also early voices in the church that opposed any legal frameworks that suggested white or colonial supremacy. As early as 1844 the

Rev Elijah Makiwane edited an African Newspaper, *Isigidimi Sama Xhosa*, as a mouthpiece for African dissatisfactions and a mobilisation tool among literate black people. In addition, the Rev Walter Rubusana edited an African newspaper, *Izwi Labantu*, which had significant impact on the African communities of his day (Walshe 1987:3).

More than any other factor, at least according to Walshe (1983) and Elphick (2012), it was missionary education that contributed to the political consciousness of early African leaders in South Africa. Several of them were educated overseas, for example, the Rev. J Dube (USA), while others such as Rev. HR Ngcayiya were well travelled and had been exposed to what was happening abroad regarding human rights and the relationship of the British with its colonial empire (Walshe 1987:1–25). The emergence of the Ethiopian Movement in the 1800s represented dissatisfaction with the mission churches that demonstrated the heavy imprint of colonialism.

Even more significant was the contribution made to the formation of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) by individuals such as John Langalibalele “*Mafukuzela*” Dube. The Rev. Dube, a resident minister of the American Zulu Mission at Inanda, was elected in absentia as the first president of the SANNC, which was formed in 1912. The SANNC later became known as the African National Congress (ANC) (Elphick 2012:124).

As discussed in previous chapters, in December 1974, a meeting of the Black Renaissance Convention was called in Hammanskraal, near Pretoria. Again, the participation of clergy was prominent with the presence of Maurice Ngakane,

Allan Boesak and Smangaliso Mkhatswa (December 13–16, 1974). As indicated in earlier chapters, the 1970s saw a rise of black theologians inspired primarily by James Cone's *Black Theology*. Mokgethi Motlhabi provides a timeline of the beginnings of black theology in South Africa and details the numerous individuals who represented the voice of the church in different ways in the black consciousness environment in the volatile days of apartheid (Motlhabi 2012:223). This may have been a response to a sentiment expressed by Steve Biko before his death on 12 September 1977:

Here then we have a case for Black Theology. While not wishing to discuss Black Theology at length, let it suffice to say that it seeks to relate God and Christ once more to the black man and his daily problems. It was to describe Christ as a fighting God, not a passive God who allows a lie to rest unchallenged (Biko 1978:94).

In the 1970s a bolder breed of churchmen and women emerged who chose to speak directly to government officials rather than using public platforms to air their dissatisfactions. In 1979, Allan Boesak (1984:94) wrote a letter to the then Minister of Justice, Mr. A Schlebusch stating that:

...It is my conviction that, for a Christian, obedience to the state or any authority is always linked to the obedience to God. That is to say obedience to human institutions is always relative. The human institutions can never have the same authority as God.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu also wrote to the Minister of Law and Order, Louis le Grange:

Mr Minister, you are not God. You are merely a man. And one day your name will only be a faint scribble on the pages of history while the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord of the church, lives forever (Boesak 1987:107).

As mentioned earlier, the United Democratic Front was launched in Mitchell's Plain, Cape Town in 1983. Frank Chikane and Allan Boesak were at the forefront of this move to establish a united voice against apartheid. Archbishop Tutu, Allan Boesak, Frank Chikane and others were frequently seen in the front lines of protest marches in the townships as the apartheid security forces murdered and maimed civilians in many parts of the country. In many cases the South African Council of Churches (SACC) became a vibrant platform where churchmen and women could unite against apartheid. Indeed, two of the SACC's General Secretaries, Tutu and Chikane, were probably the Council's most vocal voices before the demise of apartheid in 1994.

The international call for economic sanctions against apartheid South Africa reached its zenith in the early 1990s. It is difficult to see how this campaign would have made an impact without the voices of Tutu, Chikane and Boesak on international platforms. While they did not escape the wrath of apartheid, for reasons that are not entirely clear the apartheid government was careful not to interfere with them adversely, as it was keen not to further tarnish its already tainted image in the international community.

De Gruchy (1979) and others have elaborated on the difficult, and often two-faced, role of the English-speaking churches in South Africa during apartheid. In some sense, while they did criticise apartheid they also enjoyed its protection. In other words, they spoke out vehemently against apartheid but also enjoyed its benefits.

Pentecostals, across the board, were silent on the issue of apartheid. Until 1996 the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) had openly supported apartheid and even implemented systems of racial discrimination against its majority black membership. Others, such as Bhengu from the Assemblies of God, made a conscious decision not to openly criticise apartheid but, rather, to work within the denominational structures to undo its evils (Motshetshane 2015:227).

Perhaps the first exception was Maurice Ngakane, a former teacher at an Assemblies of God Bible School in Rustenburg, who became a member of the SACC. Ngakane was among the trailblazers in the black consciousness movement and inspired younger men, such as Frank Chikane and Cyril Ramaphosa, in their anxious struggles through a Pentecostalism that did not speak to the socio-political issues of the day. Thus, until 1994, the voice of the church was heard in almost every sphere of social life in South Africa. However, this study was concerned about the silence that followed 1994 and, hence, the question: Why has the church suddenly become quiet?

It was therefore important to briefly explore the role of prophetic ministry in order to understand how Boesak and Chikane seemed to move from differing roles in respect of the prophetic in their ministry in South Africa.

### **5.3 THE DIFFERENCE IN THE PROPHECY IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECIC MINISTRY**

Prophecy, as John de Gruchy (1986:61) points out, is not a fixed phenomenon and the interpretations are as fluid as the myriad of prophets we find in the prophetic landscape. This study adopts the definition of prophecy that was proposed by the Kairos theologians of 1985 or 1986 in South Africa.

De Gruchy (1986:61) indicates:

To refer, then, to the “prophetic tradition” as though its meaning is self-evident to and beyond the realm of debate, will not do. Like the “Kairos” theologians we have to be much more specific and indicate as precisely as possible what do we mean and, therefore, what we intend when we speak of prophecy.

De Gruchy (1986:63) refers to Brueggemann’s reference to the Mosaic and Davidic trajectories of prophecy. In the Davidic trajectory prophets are supportive of the monarchy and urban privileged whereas the Mosaic trajectory is more inclined to liberation. In the Mosaic tradition the focus is on God’s righteousness, justice, concern for the poor and a commitment to social transformation while the Davidic prophetic trajectory is more protective of the monarchy and is characterised by the nationalism of Judaism.

As we shall see below, these two prophetic trajectories characterised the voice of prophecy in South Africa since the arrival of the Dutch in the Cape. The dilemma in this study is how the prophets in the Mosaic tradition could, so very quickly, become the same prophets who protect the royalty at the expense of their former liberation message and the people on whose behalf they had spoken as Mosaic prophets. As the study unfolds, we will see how Boesak and Chikane were seduced from being Mosaic to Davidic prophets and, perhaps, then back to Mosaic. As Davidic prophets, Boesak and Chikane reverted to the Mosaic prophecy when they, on different and personal levels, became disappointed with the ANC as the processes of democracy unfolded.

The chapter will first provide an overview of the way in which both the Davidic and Mosaic trajectories of prophecy played out in the context of the South African

political landscape, followed by an analysis of the role of the church in prophetic ministry. The chapter will then focus on the Christ as the absolute and ultimate determining factor in the ethos and pathos of prophecy. This study proceeded from the assumption that prophecy is, by its very nature, intended to be transcendent. It is, however, when it is captured in the Davidic that it loses its profound Mosaic intentions.

Mayson (2000) argues, rather incorrectly, that state and religion are not mutually exclusive. While this study agrees that the one is not “superior” to the other, it assumes that God finds expression more in religion than in state. State is more horizontal than religion and often spiritually insensitive to the capacity to communicate the oracles of God, whether social or otherwise, that are possible only in a religious and vertical relationship with God. This distinction is important in relation to the politician and the prophet where the former’s aspirations are driven primarily from a social context. The prophet speaks to a social context but their message cannot, though it often does, compromise the vertical and spiritual relationship with God (Mayson 2000:56). The strength of prophecy is that it is free to speak beyond the stipulations of political demands because it must speak on God’s behalf. Indeed, this is the context in which we are able to respond to the question: Where have all the prophets gone? Prophecy, as defined in the Kairos tradition, is a preoccupation and prerogative of religion and not the state.

It is in the context of the tensions and contradictions of this irony that the church in South Africa is sometimes found to be prophesying in its sleep, sometimes speaking and sometimes silent. In this chapter the researcher will illustrate how Boesak and Chikane, in common with many others, slipped into a disturbing



quietness in the post-apartheid era that nevertheless required a prophetic voice in the context of what Thabo Mbeki called, in the words of Langston Hughes, *A dream deferred* (Gevisser 2007:xxxi).

Indeed, scholars at the Research Institute for Theology and Religion at the University of South Africa started asking the question, where have all the prophets gone? scarcely ten years into the new democracy in South Africa. Various scholars attempted to answer the question from different perspectives. Mayson (2000:55) opened the presentation of his paper with a sharp observation that “[t]he prophets have been promoted”. As this study will show Mayson was right in relation to Boesak and Chikane. Their prophetic predicament began only when they became part of the new dispensation in South Africa. This promotion of the prophets, as attested to by Chikane in an interview, made it difficult to speak out against the corruption of a government of which he had become a part. As we shall see later, it was only when he was recused from his responsibility in that government that he began to prophesy again. This study will later address this problem of what I call prophetic-oscillation, especially in relation to a situation that has deteriorated into immorality and corruption. The study assumed that perhaps the situation would have been saved had the prophets spoken earlier.

Recently it would appear that Boesak and Chikane have woken up from their stupor to speak out again against a political oligarchy of which they had been part in the unfolding democratic process since 1994. Perhaps it is in these two prophets that we may see the possibility of how the prophetic message, while it is assumed to be from God, may oscillate between the Mosaic and the Davidic, as will be shown below. I argue that it is this prophetic oscillation that ultimately led

to the silence of the church in the face of the burgeoning corruption in a democratic South Africa.

This chapter briefly discusses and analyses Chikane's *Eight days in September* in the context of the definitions of prophecy cited above. It is here that the tensions and contradictions of prophetic-oscillation become clear. In the past, as was evident in the situations of Boesak and Chikane, the church relegated its task and ministry to individual such as the actors in this research study.

This study assumes that the immediate and urgent priority in prophetic theology is relevance to context. At the end of Christ's ministry on earth the disciples asked him the following question, Acts 1:6 "Lord, are you, at this time, going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" The Davidic question was contextual but was obviously on their minds and had been for some time. They had been witnesses of everything except Christ as a "political liberator;" at least in the tradition of Judas, the Maccabee (Ferguson 1987). Jesus' answer implied a "first-things-first" attitude, thus indicating that there was something more urgent that had to receive attention with the *Message of the Kingdom of God* taking precedence over the *message of the Kingdom of Israel*. This conversation between the disciples and Jesus highlights the tension between the *Mosaic* and the *Davidic* as far as prophecy is concerned, at least in the thinking of Brueggemann. Does the context determine the message, or does the message determine the context? In the context of this study Mosaic prophecy implies the vertical connection a prophetic message has in transcending the stipulations and demands of the Davidic. As mentioned earlier, Davidic prophecy is determined when the prophet's message is guided or determined by the demands of the government of the day.

As relentlessly pointed out, a troubling question in the subject of inquiry is: Do we trap prophecy in culture, or do we let prophecy liberate culture? We assume that, when prophecy is trapped within culture, it becomes an instrument of the empire/government. In this sense it ceases to speak on God's behalf and promotes the message of the empire/government as if it were a message from God. The problem is well documented in the history of Christianity and probably reaches as far back as Martin Luther's confrontation with the Pope of his day. We speak on our own behalf and baptise prophecy with the name of God. This is Brueggemann's lamentation – what he says about the Church in America may also be attributed to the church in South Africa. Brueggemann (2001:1) wrote:

The contemporary American church is so largely enculturated to the American ethos of consumerism that it has little power to believe or to act.

Almost all the prophets in the Old Testament spoke to some socio-political context. In every instance the "message" had two dimensions, namely, the vertical and the horizontal. The prophet was often sent to speak on behalf of God in the context of the socio-political ambiguities raised in the context of his situation. While the prophet was a participant in the context the message was expected to transcend the context. To be sure, the vertical dimension of prophecy was expected to speak to the horizontal, otherwise the prophecy was false. Brueggemann (2001) speaks to the possibility of the falsification of the message by the prophet to suit the derelictions of the "Empire".

Prophecy is neither social analysis nor is it criticism. Although it may entail elements of such it must insist on the righteousness of its cause. It stands above and in judgment of the milieu and unapologetically imposes direction without

seeking permission or desiring approval from its context. A prophetic message is absolute because God is absolute. To be sure, prophecy is God's undisputable word to the human situation. In principle, almost all the prophets prefixed an oracle with the words "*Thus saith the Lord*". In other words, they spoke on behalf of God.

This transcendent element of prophecy is the vertical dimension that makes it stand above and speak within any given socio-political context with divine authority. Thus, it stands above the human biases inherent in the unfolding processes of history and summons all to the higher standard of the divine. Good contextualisation – as a situational hermeneutic – must proceed from this exegesis otherwise the prophecy is false.

Prophecy may be seen to embody a condescending attitude because it calls the situation back from the pathos of its context to the divine ethos from which it has either deviated or into which it has introduced a moral aberration. Biblical Israel was called to repentance more times than she was restored.

Bergmann (2003:1–18) is convinced that "Theology today ought to be contextual". He concludes that this "is an inevitable challenge to the whole interpretation of Christianity". The argument is that position is understandable but it is shortsighted because it ignores the tensions and contradictions of the Davidic and the Mosaic in any situation of contextualisation. Prophecy in the New Testament cannot be understood in isolation from the concept of *The Kingdom of God*. The Christ of God is all prophecy fulfilled. God in Christ reconciled humanity

to God. Christ stood within history and yet transcended history; that is the indelible mark of all true prophecy.

### **5.3.1 The theology of envy to occupy power**

Often, in its attempt to unpack God in rational terms theology has lost the very God it sought to understand. One assumes that much of this fallout may be attributed to the hermeneutic and psychological aberrations in contextualisation. Like Pavlov's dogs we end up salivating at the sound of the bell even when the food has been removed (Pavlov 2003). The psychological temptation is often obvious between the Mosaic and the Davidic prophecy. As we shall see later with Boesak and Chikane, we remain with a context emptied of God in the name of God. To be sure, as Mosaic prophecy slowly evolves into the Davidic, the prophet gradually loses the consciousness or spiritual sensitivity that made his/her Mosaic message vital and dynamic for its time.

Contextualisation – to the extent that it determines the Christian message – is theology with a sectarian agenda. It is the same agenda on which Christ imposed the kingdom imperative of Matthew 6:33, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”. When prophetic religion loses its vertical dimensions it becomes just another voice of sanction or opposition – it ceases to be the voice of God.

Our prophetic and ecclesiological challenge, in an era that has shifted from the Mosaic to the Davidic, is to redefine the *Message of the Kingdom of God* in juxtaposition with and pre-eminence in relation to the message of what Brueggemann, Villa-Vicencio, and others have termed the “Empire.”

### 5.3.2 The message of the kingdom as oppose to the message of the Empire

It has already been indicated that there has been shift from the Mosaic era to the Davidic era of prophesy in which prophets bless the corrupt state at the expenses of “Thus say the Lord”. What is the message of the *Kingdom of God in this context*? This question elicits a myriad of responses because every context has its answers. However, these answers in turn give rise to more questions. It is important at this point to note the difference between the Christian message and what Christ called the *message of the “Kingdom of God”*. The former evolved into various interpretations of God in the context of human experience and empire (Davidic) while the latter interprets human experience and empire in the context of God (Mosaic).

The Christian message interprets and participates within the limitations of history and time while the message of the *“Kingdom of God”* participates in, transcends and redeems history. Liberation in this sense is spiritual before it may be socio-political. This is the vertical dimension missed by the prophecies inspired by the virtues and vices of the empire.

Bergmann’s (2003) proposal is not new. For much of its history Christianity has been contextual and, to the extent that it was determined by its context, evolved into religion. Christianity is strong to the extent that it speaks from within the current and diverse realities of a situation. Nevertheless, its strength is always depleted when the issues it speaks to are spent. In this sense it is rendered obsolete and, ultimately, it marches on as a religion devoid of the power it claims to proclaim.

### **5.3.3 Christ is not absolute truth, he is Truth absolutely**

This study focuses on Boesak and Chikane during the up and downs during their prophetic movements from Mosaic to Davidic and from Davidic to Mosaic prophesy. It is imperative with Christ as the prototype of the prophesy in the New Testament, the followers of Christ are “*Tupos*” with the pattern of Christ in their prophesy being the truth in absolute. God was not a problem for the custodians of Jewish Law, Christ was. Not only did he claim to be the Christ of God, he was God, and he and God were one. Even the uninformed is capable of recognising the tensions and contradictions of such a claim and it is this that has since formed the basis of present day arguments in relation to the rejection of the Christ of God. Believing that Jesus was the Christ of God is a risk that his milieu either had to take or not to take. It is also a risk that every subsequent generation must seriously consider whether to accept or to reject. That is why it appeals to faith more than it does to reason.

For the prophet of Christ, the question of truth is settled in the Christ of God – he is Truth absolute. He is not validated by the truth he teaches, but the truth he teaches is authenticated in him as Truth. It is this absoluteness that establishes the *message of the Kingdom of God* as the prophetic message to which all of humankind is invited to return. Prophecy is marked chiefly by a call to repentance because there is no era in human history that has ever or will ever escape absolution from one form of sin or another.

A Christ who is shared with the overtones of an empire is as irrelevant as a Christ who focuses totally and wholly on the aspirations of others within a context. Such a Christ is reduced and limited to the terms and conditions of the locality which

prescribes his existence. A Christ who is unable to spread the message of the Kingdom of God to the other towns also does not live up to the universal mandate of the Christ of God and is, thereby, rendered obsolete.

Rosemary Ruether (1983) and Mary Daly (1973) reflected extensively on *Sexism and God-Talk: toward a feminist theology* and *Beyond God the Father: toward a philosophy of women's liberation*. Letty M Russell (1974) had become weary of discriminating language in the church and she wrote about God and "*The Generic Nonsense*." Gustavo Gutierrez (1988), and other liberation theologians in Latin America, would not understand Christ unless he spoke the language of the poor. James Cone (1969) presented a Christ touched by the pain of African Americans and, so, "*Black Theology*" was born. Max Weber (2002) carved a God of Capitalism, while Karl Marx (2017) saw a God who drugged exploited workers into subservience. In every instance God was interpreted within and through human experience. While such contextualisation is imperative, it is rendered obsolete when its agenda has been exhausted.

When Christ is given a local and exclusive flavour, then we must keep asking, as in Luke 7:19, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" The Christ of God did not pretend that he was not Jewish, precisely because it is not possible to live in a cultural vacuum but, nevertheless, he carried a message that transcended cultural and geographical boundaries. The Message of the Kingdom of God is a universal message. While prophecy is intended to speak to a context it must have a Mosaic and universal consistency that must always condemn and restore fearlessly and without favour wherever and whenever aberrations in relation to the message of *the Kingdom of God*



emerge. We argue that it is this consistency that was lacking in most of the contextual theology that drove prophets of Boesak and Chikane's calibre into silence when the context was changed or became different. It is clear from both the above argument and the sections that define Boesak and Chikane as prophets that they have not stood the test of time as prophets in the likeness of Christ but, instead, they have been moving inconsistently from Mosaic to Davidic and from Davidic to Mosaic as the context demands, but not as God demand.

#### **5.4 OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS OF THE TENSIONS OF THE ETHOS AND PATHOS OF PROPHECY**

This background highlights a historical theological problem in our attempt to unpack the Message of the Kingdom of God – what Brueggeman (2001) terms Mosaic Prophecy. Firstly, we reject it because it does not identify with the prophetic ethos of the Kingdom and, secondly, because, as we package it in acceptable designs within the pathos of the situation, we are not able to back the tide of the Davidic prophecy.

As we shall see later in the case of Chikane, this prophetic-oscillation also introduced a crisis of conscience and identity. When the lines of Mosaic prophecy are not clearly drawn out it is impossible to play out Mosaic and Davidic at the same time. We are confronted with what Moltmann (1974:7) termed the "identity involvement dilemma." In marrying the spirit of a new era we inadvertently become political widows without a voice in the next era. In our preoccupation with the spirit of our times and because we switched the cross for a cause in history, we lose the Spirit of Christ, which transcends all times. When history finally

overthrows its tyrants we are left with a yawning vacuum in which there is a yearning for deeper and more dynamic experiences.

It is not possible to consider the *Message of the Kingdom of God* in an experiential or existential vacuum. However, experience or context should not be the criterion against which the message is measured but, instead, the message should be the criterion against which experience is measured. As Moltmann (1974:2) says: “It is not the experiences which are important, but the one who has been experienced in them”.

Christ in God is the experience in which every other experience must be experienced or measured. *Kingdom*, in the context of biblical Israel was geographical – a space on earth in which Israel would determine her own direction, free from imperial intrusion. When Christ spoke of the *Kingdom*, he meant one thing but his hearers understood another. This problem is as old as it is forever new. Our crisis lies in trying to reduce the *Message of the Kingdom of God* to the tensions and contradictions of the “Empire”.

There was a degree of urgency about this *Kingdom* assignment – God seemed to have been looking from above the situation and, in his omniscience and omnipotence, decided that an intervention in the crisis of human history was inevitable and urgent. As Paul wrote, Galatians 4:4 “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law” – Christ came, not as an offspring of his environment, but as a messenger of hope from God. Prophets are sent by God. Christ was not only the Word from God, but also the Word that was with God, and the Word that was God.

Religion has always struggled with the tensions and contradictions found in the paradox of John 1:1, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"*. Many have readily accepted the historical reality of Jesus of Nazareth but experience problems with the claim that he is God and from God – all rolled into one. However, the tension between the divine and human nature of Christ is resolved in the Pauline epistles, and was settled at the Council of Chalcedon. Nevertheless, it has continued to relentlessly plague human intelligence.

For the Pharisees and the other teachers of the Law, Jesus represented a case of shattered utopias; he was nothing like what they had thought the Messiah would be. They had hoped for a Messiah from God who would be touched by their infirmities but on their own terms. This is the precise point at which Christianity negated the very message it intended to spread. He must come in recognised garb, otherwise we will miss him. The question arises as to which one is the Christ in the many designs we have presented over history and time.

To be sure, God in Christ is God revealing God to humanity in human form, but not on human terms. The revelation of Christ was the only plausible way in which humanity could come know anything about God in both Word and in physical terms. Only he was from God.

The Matthew 6:33 Imperative introduces us to a kingdom journey of tensions and contradictions, and it is these tensions and contradictions in hope that keep the journey alive. Our hope is not only in what we hope for, but also in him who calls us to hope. The challenge is not in conforming him to the rational patterns and

designs within our grasp but to allowing ourselves to participate and to be transformed in the Christ experience. The prophetic hope in the Christ of God is centred in humanity's reconciliation to God.

There are very few theologians in public life in South Africa who have defined prophetic ministry as did Boesak. In his address to the Victoria University and Emmanuel College in Toronto Canada in 1983, he devoted much of the time to the subject of Church and Politics (Boesak 1987).

Boesak's ecclesiology was right when he defined the church as:

... the people of God, those who confess not only that they believe God exists but also that in his Son Jesus Christ they have found new life, new meaning and, indeed, have become a new creation (Boesak 1987:13).

Thus, this definition of Boesak's isolates the true *ecclesia* from the denominational taint that had come to define the word Church. The people of God are found in every denomination and may be identified by a common confession in the Christ of God. It is these people who are called to a Mosaic prophetic ministry. Yet again, the history of Christianity has shown that the same people of God will, more often than not, find themselves on opposite sides of the political divide. Prophets sometimes allow the conditions into which they should prophesy to dim their prophetic insights. Thus, the question, where have all the prophets gone in South Africa? Is raised somewhere in between.

When Allan Boesak and Frank Chikane were able to identify apartheid as their enemy, their prophetic roles were clearly defined. The problem arose came when they became part of the new democratic dispensation after 1994. Chikane, for example, was a high-ranking official in the governments of both Nelson Mandela

and Thabo Mbeki. His prophetic stance during apartheid, his tenure in government and his resignation after Mbeki's political demise in Polokwane are clear. This may, perhaps, suggest that no prophet is a prophet for all generations. Some analysis of one of his recent books, *Eight days in September*, may be helpful in driving this point home.

## **5.5 CHIKANE'S POST POWER REACTION TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION**

This section will focus on Chikane's reaction after he was expelled from government by the ANC. Is it tenable to prophesy to a political situation in which one participates? Almost without exception, the prophets in the Old Testament spoke to the political situations of their time. But, what is it that distinguishes a prophet from a politician? One is inclined to believe that a major distinction lies in the Message with prophets communicating oracles while politicians disseminate knowledge. In addition, a prophet's message is not a consensus message, while a politician's message must be a consensus message. One speaks to the people on God's behalf and the other speaks to people on the people's behalf.

As has been endlessly pointed out, during apartheid South Africa had its own share of prophets here and abroad, for example, Dr Beyers Naude, Rev. Frank Chikane, Dr Allan Boesak, Rev Motlalepule Chabaku, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Sister Bernard Ncube, Father Smangaliso Mkhatswa and others. Their directive was clear – apartheid was a moral and theological heresy, and it had to go. Arguably, these men and women, more than any others prodded the world's conscience to fight for the dismantling of apartheid. It was the religious communities of the world who mobilised their people to stand against racial

discrimination in South Africa even when some western governments – Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan come to mind – were reluctant to act. Bishop Tutu, for example, was an outspoken apostle of disinvestment, and many governments and private companies heeded his call (Danaher 1984).

Apartheid finally ended and, since 1994, the people of South Africa have elected what is commonly known as a government of the people by the people. Mandela's ideal was recognized in 1994 and the country embarked on a path towards the realisation of the dream for which many sacrifices had been made. However, more than 20 years later that dream is gradually disintegrating into a nightmare. The biggest threat to the ideal was not from those who opposed it, but from those who, in covert and overt ways, have been clawing for their own share of the spoils and, in the process, it is squashed in their hands. Government officials and public servants continue to indulge in corrupt activities, there is widespread abuse of state agencies and crass materialism, However, when the people find they have harvested a whirlwind they are astonished with nobody seeming to know what has gone wrong.

As the situation unfolded it had its keen observers and critics, among others, Dr Reuel Khoza. His widely criticised comment of political leadership in South Africa was a significant indication of a growing concern in many quarters of the new dispensation that government was losing direction.

Khoza (2011) lamented:

In our model constitutional democracy, we observe the emergence of a strange breed of leaders, determined to subjugate the rule of law and override the constitution.

Khoza's fears about a return to the past are not far-fetched. African history to the north of the Limpopo River is peopled with yesterday's liberators who became today's oppressors. It cannot be disputed that the ANC boasts splendid credentials in championing the liberation of the oppressed in South Africa and, yet, it is not immune to the absolute corruption that often comes with absolute power. Indeed, there are many who fear that the ANC is yielding to temptation and descending into a maelstrom of misdirection, dictatorship and crass materialism.

Given these possibilities, what is the place of prophecy in politics, or what is the place of politics in prophecy? This question implies that there must be a point at which the two overlap. A corollary to that question is which one penetrates deeper into the territory of the other and when? The tensions and contradictions at the confluence of prophecy and politics are not easy to resolve depending on which side of the divide one stands.

These tensions are clear in Chikane's book as he describes his attempt to be prophet and politician simultaneously. There had been a time when he had not had to wrestle with these tensions and contradictions because the lines were clearly drawn. The crisis was introduced at the intersection of the two Venn diagrams. How do you sustain the sensitivity of a prophetic conscience (Mosaic) in a political game that mocks the institutions and processes of a democracy that represents and protects the will of the people?

In his work *Moral man and immoral society* (1932), Niebuhr demonstrated what an impossible task this is. In this early work he revealed the difficulty, if not

impossibility, of playing prophet and politician at the same time. The following quote from Niebuhr's thesis formed the premise on which the argument in this paper is based (Niebuhr 1932:xii):

Individual men may be moral in the sense that they are able to consider interests other than their own in determining problems of conduct, and are capable, on occasion, of preferring the advantages of others to their own. They are endowed by nature with a measure of sympathy and consideration for their kind, the breadth of which may be extended by an astute social pedagogy. Their rational faculty prompts them to a sense of justice which educational discipline may refine and purge of egoistic elements until they are able to view a social situation, in which their own interests are involved with a fair major of objectivity. But all these achievements are more difficult, if not impossible, for human societies and social groups. In every human group there is less reason to guide and check impulse, less capacity for self-transcendence, less ability to comprehend the needs of others and, therefore, more unrestrained egoism than individuals who compose the group reveal in their personal relationships.

Niebuhr's thesis suggests that, as human beings, we are more inclined to do justice if we stand alone than if we stand together. Of course, "No man is an island". However, there have been moments in history that called for a voice of dissonance. While prophets are intended to be society's voice of conscience and morality, politicians are society's administrative machine and, ideally, they carry out the will of the people in the structures of power. However, the empirical witness of history is that politicians often go against the will of the people they represent. The 2011/2012 upheavals in the Middle East that led to the overthrow Hosni Mubarak are a good example of this – liberators may very easily turn into tyrants, especially if they misconstrue themselves as the embodiment of all that a people are.

After 1994, Chikane, a veteran in the struggle for liberation in South Africa, took part in the new government. In a sense, he has been present whatever the



direction taken by South Africa. While the book, “Eight days in September” (2012) is a record of personal experiences in government, it does also provide us with a cycloramic view of ANC operations in power, post-1994.

The first issue that Chikane highlights in his story is that he was an insider but with a very vibrant presence, and in the centre of things for thirteen and a half years. He was secretary of cabinet and Director-General of the Presidency and, therefore, strategically placed to at least participate in the implementation of government programmes and policies.

Chikane’s vocal participation in parliamentary proceedings was limited because he was not able to any contributions, either as a politician or as a prophet. Effectively he was a manager tasked with the running of everyday parliamentary logistics. Inconsistent traces of his influence emerged from time to time, especially in Mbeki’s speech, but that was as far he could go. Effectively, as he says, he was an observer, a “fly on the wall”. Why then did he write the book?

There are many theories as to why he wrote his book. This research study assumes that Chikane could no longer live with his conscience. Given his legal limitations, he must have bottled up much emotional during his involvement and his participation in the everyday transactions of government business. The book may be seen to be an emotional catharsis of the crisis through which he went in trying to balance the tensions and contradictions of prophecy and politics.

Apartheid had been created by others. Chikane found it easy to oppose it as one who was affected. However, it was more difficult to oppose injustices that may have occurred within the Mbeki government because Chikane had become part

of the system. In addition, his emotional affiliation to Thabo Mbeki made it more difficult for him to see the deficits in the president's public policy. After all, Mbeki had given him a job (Gevisser 2007:660).

This inside perspective compromised the ethics of his intentions in writing the book, especially after Thabo Mbeki's leaving office at Polokwane. The initiative may have been a case of disappointment ("sour grapes") instead of, as he argues, the text he intended to provide for studies in public administration. Why else would he so passionately defend Mbeki's policies, despite the widespread dissatisfaction with his policies from many quarters? These policies, which elicited so much dissatisfaction, were many; for example, GEAR (Growth, Employment, and Redistribution macro-economic policy) had serious loopholes, at least according to the Trade Union movement, COSATU, in particular. In addition, Mbeki's denialist attitude towards HIV/Aids received condemnation, locally and internationally, while his policy of *Quiet Diplomacy* towards Zimbabwe came close to Chester Crocker's deplored Constructive Engagement during apartheid (Danaher 1984).

Chikane's story revolves around the removal of President Thabo Mbeki from office. As may have been expected this initiative met with anger and disapproval from the NEC of the ANC. It is not implausible to suspect that the ANC would not want the book to be written because of the fear that it could expose how the movement operates behind closed doors. The post-Polokwane cabal knew that Chikane did not support its political sentiments and there was, therefore, every possibility that he could uncover things that would not be pleasant to the rank and file of the ANC membership or to the people of South Africa. This is the reason

why Secretary-General, Gwede Mantashe, was widely quoted in the press calling for caution among ANC members when reading the so-called *Chikane Files*.

I am sure that a large portion of the membership of the ANC was not that gullible. Nevertheless – typical of post-Polokwane shrewd diplomacy – Mantashe assumed overall omniscience and competence in distinguishing between truth and untruth. Although many within the ANC and beyond may have sat on their consciences, they were far from naïve. It is not necessary to protect people from exposure to information, especially if you have nothing to hide. Such behaviour is comparable to behaviour during the medieval eras in history when books were burnt because the individual in power was afraid of intellectual challenges posed by others. The apartheid government had tended to ban vast amounts of information, whether spoken or written. However, this merely succeeded in generating a sense of curiosity in those who wanted to know what it was that the government was hiding. It seemed that all this behaviour was emerging from a paranoiac and chronic sense of insecurity. On the whole, people are able to make up their own minds while sound decisions may be made only when every dimension of truth is known.

Chikane was a man of conscience, whether directed or misdirected. With such people it is very difficult to tell what the next step will be. A worrying factor in every game of secrecy is what lies hidden behind the veil. Why did the Polokwane cabal find it necessary to defend every atom of criticism against the ANC as it now stands? It is only natural to assume that the ANC is not perfect, thus implying that sound, rational will, from time to time, criticise the movement, whether such criticism is valid or invalid.

At some point in the past the ANC, as a liberation movement, does not need to be defended because it defended itself. People knew what it stood for despite the trickle of information that were coming through. Those who were in South Africa at the time may not have known what was happening in Lusaka and other faraway places but they knew that the ANC, wherever, stood for the liberation of the oppressed in South Africa. However, now that it was here – as a political party – people would be exposed to the other side of what they did not know existed.

Chikane was at pains to explain to all and sundry the reasons why the book had been written. Nevertheless, these explanations lay a hidden fear of an ogre that was now silently and surreptitiously consuming its own children. In a strange twist of events, he placed his efforts during the struggle for liberation on the same moral pedestal as his current efforts. He was as afraid, post-Polokwane, as he had been during apartheid and, yet, he would not be deterred just as he had not been deterred then. In a sense, he was confronting the same demons in the ANC that he had confronted during apartheid. His fear was justified as the intoxications of absolute power leaves little discretion or direction with the dragon breathing fire on anyone who threatens its survival. Nevertheless, the question arises: Why was he quiet as the situation was deteriorating?

Chikane's anxieties exposed a disturbing element in African history, namely, the tendency of autocrats to rule by instilling fear in people's hearts. The threat of being victimised was very real in the ANC. Deviation from popular belief is quickly transformed into enmity and, once a person is seen to be an enemy, nobody knows what the outcome will be. It is all in the tradition of the Impimpi culture of

eliminating those who go against popular opinion (SAPA 1997). The methods may have changed but the attitude had remained the same.

Chikane feared, among other things, the loss of employment opportunities and non-participation in the boards of private companies. It could have been worse as he also feared for his life. This revealed a misnomer for a movement whose champions continuously mouthed the platitude “A better life for all.”

### **5.5.1 The Polokwane insurrection**

Polokwane took the country by surprise because it played out on national television – a frightening sight of the ANC. While there may have been skirmishes and disagreements in the ANC while in exile, after Mandela’s release the ANC was presented to the South African public as a united front. All the internal structures born during apartheid – the UDF in particular – were willing to dismantle and join the ranks of the people’s movement. There was no question about whom the people’s leaders were and everyone created space for the returnees to take their rightful places.

In Polokwane, the voice of reason was drowned by hustlers who insisted on nothing but their own way. This was a drastic departure from the image of erudite men in suits conducting dialogues in the interests of reaching a settlement with the apartheid regime during the CODESA negotiations. These seemed to be an unreasonable, misdirected and late response to Radio Freedom’s call to make situations ungovernable. People booed when they did not agree with what was being said. During Mbeki’s long and tedious speech, they had already made up their mind that he should go.

The voice of reason is not always heard, especially if it is suppressed in the corridors of power. Mbeki had been too powerful for his opponents and so, naturally, they exploited every avenue to get rid of him. Chikane was always more fascinated with the person than the politics of the person. Politics is rarely about personalities – it is always about power and power is poison, whether it be political or economic (Niebuhr 1932). Polokwane was not about people, it was about power and how one person could succumb to the temptation of centralising power around his personality and ego.

Mbeki was increasingly becoming a dissonant voice within a collective. It is not, however, in the mechanics of the group behaviour of individuals to dissent and still be embraced. Worse still, Mbeki took some with him and left others out in the cold. In respect of his economic policies, he embraced Shilowa from COSATU and sidelined Vavi, he took in Nqakula from the SACP and sidelined Nzimande. Even for some of his supporters within the ANC he moved too fast and too far and, sooner than later, he became a prophet in the wilderness (Gevisser 2007).

While individuals may not agree with the insinuations of a collective they tend to go along with it until sufficient opposition has been mobilised to overthrow it (Niebuhr 1932:xii–xv). Power may be opposed only with power, and Polokwane presented a powerful opportunity for a collective within the collective to remove a dissident from popular opinion. Chikane's book represents a voice from the other collective within the collective that was not able to mobilise sufficient support for its sentiments among the majority.

Chikane's book represents an open opposition to what he calls the Polokwane project. Since his ejection – or resignation – from the king's palace, writing his harrowing story was the only universal, unrestricted and powerful option available to him. Under law some things were better left unsaid but he said enough to unburden his heavy soul.

Chikane insists that nothing should be done to impact negatively on Mbeki's legacy in the interests of the advancement of African politics (Chikane 2012:19). However, this was precisely the problem; Mbeki was gaining popularity as an international statesman at the expense of his political office at home. He was more of an African than a South African. Although his contributions to the continent are admirable, they did come at a cost.

It is well known that South Africans are often accused of being conveniently African but Mbeki's various initiatives did much to correct this erroneous perspective – We are all Africans all of the time. It is however plausible to argue that, while crisscrossing Africa and the world, Mbeki lost touch with the political heartbeat on home soil.

If, as widely bandied around, Zuma was the victim of a conspiracy, then Mbeki was a victim of a fermenting partisan political insurrection. The brewing dissatisfaction had been started by Zwelinzima Vavi when he wrote a letter to COSATU's alliance partners about a conspiracy against Jacob Zuma. In the letter an assumption was made that someone was trying to stop Zuma from becoming the next president of the ANC and, therefore, the next president of the country. Zuma's rape and corruption trials only served to add fuel to fire. Although it was

never proved it was widely assumed that Mbeki was at the heart of the conspiracy.

It is possible that both the insurrection and the recall of Mbeki were relatively minor issues given that Mbeki's terms in both the ANC and in government were nearly at an end. A more frightening prospect for his opponents was the possibility of his serving a third term in the ANC, which meant that he would continue to influence political direction from Luthuli House. If Mbeki was, indeed, behind the conspiracy, then Polokwane and his recall from government was the time to show him that he was not the absolute embodiment of the ANC.

Mbeki was notorious for sidelining even the most important people in his life. On occasion, he would even snub Mandela and not return his telephone calls. He was not very impressed with Winnie Mandela. He publicly reprimanded Archbishop Tutu and had never publicly acknowledged the contribution made by religion to the liberation of this country.

According to Gevisser (2007), Mbeki was not interested in being loved; all he wanted was to be respected (Gevisser 2007). Nevertheless, he had a strange way of earning the respect he seemed to want because the further he pushed people away from him, the farther away they were. Polokwane was a rude awakening for him of how those he needed the most had been alienated. While "everybody needs to be respected," said Einstein (n.d.), "no one must be idolised." However, Mbeki wanted more than respect, he wanted to be the idol of African politics.



A recall of the Polokwane magnitude was unprecedented in South African politics. Effectively the move implied that ANC government officials were not allowed to think for themselves. One was safe for as long as one echoed the sentiments of Luthuli House. With Mbeki in power it would be impossible to run the government from Luthuli House but, then again, he was Luthuli House.

Mbeki himself had established the recalling model when he had centralised the deployment and recalling of the so-called cadres in the provinces. Patrick “Terror” Lekota was the first victim when he was recalled as premier of the Free State province in 1996. Since then calling and recalling has become a pattern for the way in which the ANC runs the country. Ironically, the recalling of both Mbeki and Lekota had much in common. They were both accused, among other things, of a lack of consultation with their constituencies (*Mail & Guardian* 2006). In Polokwane, the chickens came home to roost.

When Mbeki was recalled serious constitutional considerations were violated and, when, Zuma was elected into power serious, moral considerations were overridden. Unfortunately, such events are all part of the sometimes-dirty game of politics, highlighting the need for a democracy. In a democracy if the electorate is not happy the incumbents are voted out of power.

Although there were some people who were not disturbed by the removal of Mbeki from office per se, they were disappointed by the way in which it was done. Polokwane could be seen as setting a dangerous precedent in politics in South Africa. If people had felt Mbeki needed to be removed from office, then there were due processes in place to do this. There was no need to be boisterous

about it. The undermining of the democratic processes is a very strong indicator that a country is on the brink of political chaos – a very frightening possibility after Polokwane.

There is little doubt that Zuma's rise to the highest office happened on the crest of a wave of spiteful insurgence – the same spite that Malema demonstrated when he started singing his “shower” song. Insurgence may be said to be like a boomerang – it flies into the distance only to fly back to strike the person who threw it. Many observed the ANC 2017 meeting in Mangaung closely as they thought it may be that Zuma would get his comeuppance there.

The book's objective and objectivity is compromised by an intense pro-Mbeki insider bias. Chikane sings Mbeki's praises with emotion and unquestioning loyalty. His book is undeniably a treatise written in defence of Thabo Mbeki's legacy. However, that was hardly the issue at the heart of Mbeki's dismissal. In the process it undermines certain key events in South African history that may have contributed significantly to Mbeki's ultimate political demise.

This chapter interrogates only two issues in an enigma of many tentacles, namely, GEAR and HIV/Aids, which were two, among others, of the most controversial issues during Mbeki's administration.

### **5.5.2 Mbeki “dictatorship”: the shift from the RDP to Gear**

Without going into too much detail suffice it to say that COSATU and the SACP were not pleased with Thabo Mbeki's shift from the RDP policy to GEAR. The former was a tripartite alliance agreement preceding the 1994 elections while the latter was imposed as a non-negotiable. The RDP was a source of vexation for

Mbeki who did not like anything that did not bear his stamp of approval. In 1996 the RDP office was shut down and Mbeki rolled out his high-handed solutions to the economic problems of the country (Gevisser 2007:670). The Tsar from Sussex University in the UK wanted to implement economic policies that made philosophical sense to him and his clique even at the expense of alienating significant stakeholders such as COSATU and the SACP.

Democracy assumes consultation unless a key role player undermines the intelligence or influence of others. This was Mbeki's Achilles heel. Why did he ignore the input of labour and the SACP in the build-up towards GEAR? The answer is simple – he underestimated Zwelinzima Vavi and Blade Nzimande's influence in their respective constituencies. This was, however, hardly surprising given Trevor Manuel's belief that economic policy could not be developed by consensus (Gevisser 2007:664). Trevor had been handpicked by Mandela as Minister of Finance after Chris Liebenberg and was retained in the Mbeki administration. Both Mbeki and Manuel believed that non-consultation with regard to GEAR was the best possible option.

This signified the introduction of *laissez faire* economics in the post-liberation political landscape. It was also, however, the beginning of the end of Mbeki's political career. Mbeki's downfall would soon be orchestrated by people who had not been part of the "under the tree meetings" which had transformed previous opponents of GEAR into Mbeki supporters (Gevisser 2007:672). At the forefront of this insurrection was none other than Zwelinzima Vavi and Blade Nzimande with Julius Malema also being involved as a rigorous palliative.

The point is not whether GEAR was impeccable or flawed – no economic policy is perfect – but the important fact was that Mbeki and Trevor Manuel imposed it on the ANC's alliance partners with this arrogance alienating COSATU and the SACP. In hindsight, the architects of GEAR have conceded that imposing GEAR on the other members of the alliance was not wise (Gevisser 2007:665). Manuel called it “sour grapes”. However, the problem with “sour grapes” is the realisation that, in retrospect, they may have been sweet.

While some aspects of GEAR were economically positive, 113 000 actual jobs were lost in the projected 126 000 to be created and GDP dropped by 2% in 1997 (Marais 2012). These figures affirmed COSATU and the SACP's fears and their resentment about an economic policy that had not been negotiated with them escalated. The economy may have been working but working for whom? As in all capitalist systems it was working for a few of the “anointed” ones while the rest were struggling.

Mbeki and Manuel's GEAR and BEE created what has been termed the “first and second economies”, Multimillionaires emerged overnight. The so-called “second economy” remained on the periphery of a growing economy that benefited a hand-picked few only, or those who, by some stroke of fortune, happened to be in power when the decisions were made.

This move effectively re-imposed the age-old and resented division into the haves (1st economy) and have-nots (2nd economy) in South African society. The men and women in power and in the corporate world were once again making decisions for the man/woman in the street. It is naïve to think that the creation of

new economic overlords – by virtue of colour – will ever stimulate an interest in the poor. The best they do is to engage in philanthropic initiatives for public consumption but they would never consider the interests of others above their own (Niebuhr 1932:3).

An unexpected offshoot of GEAR and BEE was the introduction of a breed of politicians riding on the rising wave of corruption and crass materialism (Gevisser 2007:696). Political office became the quickest way to fulfil surreptitious ambitions and ensure personal aggrandisement. The poor, as always, were left languishing on the peripheries of abundance – as one man said on national television, “My party wins but I always lose”.

Mbeki’s economic policies did nothing more than increase dependency and incarcerate the poor through the system of social grants. While some of these grants, for example, old age pensions, may have been appropriate, others, such as child grants, sent the population explosion spiralling out of control in the townships. Young girls in the townships continued to have one baby after another in order to raise enough “mphiwafela” to survive. In the long term, either overtly or covertly, a nation of beggars has been in the making for a while.

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka’s ASGISA, introduced in 2006 to address unemployment, did not deliver and has since vanished. In fact, in his book Chikane does not refer to it all. There were, after all, a host of reasons why it would never succeed. Chikane appears to be under the impression that Mbeki’s initiatives aimed at addressing poverty would have eventually eradicated. However, this perfect solution was a pipedream.

In fact, it may be said that Mbeki's GEAR signified a return of the apartheid system, albeit in hidden ways. The contention at the heart of the struggle was not about power only, it was also about privilege. White people had had more economic privileges than black people. GEAR simply switched white faces and mixed them with some black ones. Although there was a fundamental transfer of power from black to white, the economic infrastructure served only to broaden and create a wider base of the privileged and underprivileged. The worn out cliché still holds true in South African society – the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. Perhaps the greedy should heed Albert Einstein's (n.d.) warning, "An empty stomach is a very poor political advisor".

### **5.5.3 Mbeki: the HIV/AIDS denialist**

Mbeki's views on HIV/Aids are well known and his confrontations with the TAC and other activists have been well documented. For him this was a philosophical matter, as was everything else. It may be that the urgency of it was clouded by the fact that, on his own admission, he had never seen anyone die of Aids.

Gevisser (2007:723,737), however, argues that, during the Mandela government, Mbeki had been the champion of government HIV/Aids initiatives. This interest, however, was short lived, especially when he received dissident dossiers from Anthony Brink and Anita Allen, which capitalised on the toxicity of Azydothymidine (AZT). Mbeki's apprehension in relation to big pharmaceuticals was understandable as, in common with all multinationals, their sole focus is money and profit. Nevertheless, suspicions about "Big Pharma" were ill timed.

In a five-page letter to Bill Clinton in 2003 (IOL News 2003) it was obvious that HIV/Aids was part of Mbeki's agenda or idea of an African Renaissance. If there were going to be a solution for HIV/Aids in Africa, then it would come from the African continent. He asserted South Africa's right to consult with dissident scientists on the question of HIV/Aids. He deplored the campaign of intellectual intimidation and terrorism waged by others and compared it to the racist apartheid tyranny we opposed.

The truth is that losing a loved one or watching the person die is not a philosophical or political matter in many households in South Africa; it is a painful reality with which they live every day. The problem with Mbeki's views was that they were the tide of national and international opinion. Any argument against HIV/Aids, justified or not, was like arguing against the reality of the bubonic plague – Black Death – that had ravaged Europe and Asia in the 14th century.

According to Chikane (2012:134–135), the question of HIV/Aids had become a tired stick to use against Mbeki. The government had moved on to take the necessary corrective measures and, in many instances, its programmes were superior to most of the programmes implemented in other African countries. However, Chikane fails to say that the government's response was in reaction to the escalating opposition, both local and international, to Mbeki's views. Mbeki has not been proactive with regard to this matter, or if he were, it was in the wrong direction. Even when corrective measures were taken he remained aloof. For him Africa was the bigger agenda.

This negative image was compromised even further by Manto Tshabalala-Msimang's prescription of a highly controversial, nutritious vegetable salad. She even came to be known as Dr Beetroot because of the way in which she constantly kept prescribing her vegetable concoction in the face of the sick and dying. Thabo Mbeki's wrath against those who opposed his policies was very obvious in the dismissal of Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge in 2007. Unlike Mbeki and Manto-Msimang, Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge had seen people die of Aids, some of whom had been family members. However, opposing Manto-Msimang as Madlala-Routledge did frequently, especially with regard to HIV/Aids, was tantamount to opposing Mbeki himself. He and Manto had a history together and, in fact, the nutritional vegetable innovation was Mbeki's furtive idea (Gevisser 2007:727) of addressing the poverty issue in South Africa which he related to HIV/Aids.

Mbeki confessed he had never seen anyone die of HIV/AIDS. However, there were many others who had lost a loved one to the disease, including some ANC members. People were dying from HIV/AIDS all around the world which had become a controversial issue internationally. For Mbeki and Shabalala-Msimang, HIV/AIDS had become a political or philosophical matter which was clouded by their abhorrence of the profiteers of "Big Pharma". Although they may have a point about big pharmaceuticals making profit they were waging the war was waged on a wrong and desperate platform. Only in 2003 did the South African cabinet approve a treatment programme which implied a major policy shift from Mbeki's denialist position (Marshall, 2004). However, this was not before his reputation, locally and abroad, had been badly damaged. How had the ANC managed to get their moral priorities so wrong?



For Mbeki, the arguments about the prevalence of HIV/Aids in the west were just another imperial ploy to mislead the world. According to Chikane (Cullinan 2010), in some mysterious sense, Mbeki was defending the historically disadvantaged against racism by his stance and, more importantly, he was defending his right to think independently of Europe and the United States of America.

These suspicions of imperialism were strong in Chikane himself, as he admitted that one of the reasons he had written his book was that he wanted to avoid being a primary source for European researchers (Tabane 2012). In his case this may have been noble for him but, for Mbeki, it was the wrong answer to a universal question. Mbeki was propagating a philosophical answer to a moral question. It is not the philosophy which is to be questioned but the ethics. Many people had died because he refused to change his view until it was too late. This struggle did not merit any casualties; it was rank carelessness with people's lives.

HIV and Aids are, in a secondary sense, an intellectual challenge and primarily a pandemic. HIV and AIDS represent more than just a call for Africans to prove their competency in research or intellectually, instead they pose a universal question which requires a universal response and answer. This answer must come from an international synthesis of every effort to curb the pandemic.

Mbeki did, ultimately, capitulate to the pressure with regard to HIV/Aids. This was due to the efforts of Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. In the process the image of the Mbeki/Tshabalala-Msimang alliance had been dealt an irreparable and severe blow. Just as Mandela had passed the responsibility onto Thabo Mbeki when he had felt uneasy about HIV/Aids (Gevisser 2007), so Mbeki passed it on to his

deputy. Mlambo-Ngcuka who took advantage of the absence of Tshabalala-Msimang during her prolonged illness and shifted the perspective of the Mbeki paradigm to render it more acceptable, even to the international community.

The decision to procure sophisticated armaments was made as the ANC government was claiming it could not afford ARVs for the thousands of people who were living with the HIV and dying from AIDS. Health Minister, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, had announced that the government could not afford to distribute the life-saving drug, Azidothymidine (AZT). More than 300 000 people died whose lives could have been saved by the government on whom their hopes were pinned (Rijn: 2006). It appeared that how the pandemic would impact on the economic situation in South Africa was not even taken into account (Dixon, Mc Donald & Roberts: 2002).

The HIV/AIDS saga, like the arms deal, had become an issue that the ANC government was not able to ignore, especially as the Treatment Action Campaign was underway (Grebe: 2011). As already mentioned, Dr Manto Shabalala-Msimang was dubbed Dr Beetroot because of the concoction of vegetables that she recommended for people who were living with HIV/AIDS. She maintained that they had to do was to consume substantial amounts of vegetables and their health issues would be resolved – a lightweight solution for a heavyweight problem. In addition, some of these people were probably not even able to afford the beetroot concoction she was prescribing.

#### **5.5.4 The strategic defence procurement packages**

On its website Corruption Watch, a reputable corruption watchdog, noted that the multi-billion-rand military acquisition project known as the Strategic Defence Procurement Packages (SDPP) and popularly known as the Arms Deal, had been signed off by Trevor Manuel in December 1999 on behalf of the ANC-led government in South Africa (Botha 2003). This was five years after the introduction of a historical democracy that sought to undo more than 300 years of political and economic oppression. The Arms Deal, first introduced to government in 1996 by the Minister of Defence, Joe Modise, raised many questions, moral and practical, in respect of a government that had promised a better life for the oppressed people of South Africa (Obiyo 2006). “If the allegations of large-scale bribery and corruption” would prove to be true, stated Corruption Watch, this would be the “biggest corruption scandal in the country’s history involving public money lost to bribery and other irregularities” wrought not under apartheid but under an ANC-led government (Sehlapelo 2002).

In a telephonic interview with Corruption Watch Andrew Feinstein said:

I describe the arms deal and both the corruption in the deal and the efforts to cover up that corruption as being the point at which the ANC lost its moral compass, and I believe that, as the years have gone by, that contention has only been reinforced (Gordon 2008:75).

Feinstein was a senior ANC MP who had resigned after the government had moved to curtail a probe into the deal. He was ultimately dismissed on 29 January 2001 from his post chairperson of the ANCs parliamentary accounts committee because of his appeal to the government to launch a probe into the arms deal.

It, eventually, became clear that the arms deal was the first sign of corruption in what was to become the pervasive behaviour in ANC political and business dealings, just as Feinstein had predicted. In its more than twenty-years in government the ANC has become known more for corruption than for the better life for all it had promised to those who had voted the party into power since 1994. At the time of this thesis, 2017, corruption has become the greatest threat to the ANC winning elections in 2019, at least according to the media.

Many other parliamentarians who could not live with their consciences have suffered a similar fate to that of Feinstein. His assertion that the ANC had lost its moral compass did not, after all, prove to be unfounded judging by the number calls, related to corruption, for President Zuma to resign made by ANC parliamentarians recently in a no confidence vote introduced by opposition parties in parliament.

Dr Makhosi Khoza, an ANC MP, finally resigned from her beloved party after bravely making an impassioned plea in the media for Zuma to step down. Indeed, she was echoing the sentiments of many who felt that the only way to save the ANC from obliteration was to let its President Zuma go. "It is time for the one who fires others to be fired," said one ANC MP. The motion failed, as many others had previously, but not before it had exposed the troubling signs of dissatisfaction within the ruling party itself as well as the total lack of introspection that had developed during Zuma's presidency.

As pointed out earlier, the Arms Deal had raised many moral and practical questions that could not be answered, at least not as openly had been promised

by those seeking power during electioneering and handing out food parcels to the poor in return for their votes.

At the time the arms deal had been introduced South Africa was not under any threat of war, regionally, continentally or internationally. Why then was this deal championed and protected so passionately?

The deal involved billions of taxpayers' monies despite the fact of those who had been voted into power understood the conditions of poverty their voters were living in because they, themselves, had been born into poverty. Why then were the poor not considered as a priority? Were they not, after all, the reason why the ANC had been voted into power? Why was a government schooled primarily in guerrilla tactics so impressed by sophisticated weaponry that others considered to be totally unnecessary?

Prior to this massive deal, the ANC had not been in government and, thus, it had no experience in relation to the very armaments it was seeking to replace. If anything, the armaments were more sophisticated than anything the ANC had ever known. However, the deal suggested that there was more to it than the safety of a nation on the southern tip of Africa. The apartheid regime had already been a tyrant in the region with its old weapons while no amount of threats from neighbouring countries, or elsewhere in Africa, would be proof against the armaments that the ANC sought to replace. There were more questions than answers while the poor millions in South Africa were depending on those whom they had voted into power to make intelligent and morally informed decisions in

government on their behalf. Many were of the opinion that there were more urgent issues at hand.

#### **5.5.5 The arms deal offsets**

The arms deal involved what were termed offsets – apparently for every rand spent abroad as a result of tenders, an equal amount would be spent in South Africa in creating jobs and boosting the economy. It was these tender offsets, given to companies abroad, that were used to convince the South African government of the urgency of the arms deal. Paul Holden (2014) points out that offsets are a particularly controversial issue and are prohibited by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) although they are, however, allowed in relation to developing countries.

The finance charges relating to the arms deal would only be settled by 2018, thus implying that every annual budget, since the arms deal, had to take this debt into account. According to the Corruption Watch, newspaper reports from 2001 estimated that the interest alone was calculated at R23 billion.

Corruption Watch highlights how Terry Crawford-Browne, an Anglican Church and Western Council of Churches representative, at one *Defence Review* meeting in which he represented the Anglican Church, indicated the numbers of people who were not impressed by the offsets and reminded the government of its priorities. He stated that the immediate priorities in a post-apartheid South Africa included education, health, housing and job creation. One may, in fact, argue, that the conviction that the ANC would address these issues was the reason why the ANC had been voted into power in the first place in 1994.

Another church voice was that of Archbishop Desmond Tutu in a letter he co-signed with FW de Klerk to then president Kgalema Motlanthe in 2008. Their call for an independent inquiry on the matter was rebuffed.

#### **5.5.6 The Seriti Commission**

It turned out that Browne's voice was probably the first voice of the slumbering church to object to the arms deal. He was, indeed, the one persistent activist who took the government to the Constitutional Court and which resulted in the appointment of the Seriti Commission. Of course, the findings of this commission were considered by many, including Patricia de Lille, to be a ploy to protect the involved. Patricia de Lille was the first whistle-blower in parliament, who knew it was out there to protect those implicated. Many people were disappointed with the outcome that insisted there was not a shred of evidence to support the allegations of bribery and other allegations of corruption in the arms deal. This was despite other people having served prison sentences on charges of corruption in respect of the arms deal.

As pointed out above, the findings of the Seriti Commission, conducted over four years, were presented to the public by President Zuma who appeared to have a clear conscience about the matter. The Commission found no evidence of wrongdoing in the procurement arms deal in 1999, this despite the fact that both Schabir Shaik and Tony Yengeni benefited from the arms deal and served prison sentences for it. These two cases destroyed the credibility of the judicial system in South Africa as the two men did not even serve their full terms in prison. In short, thus, the findings of the Commission were found to be hopelessly

inadequate, especially in view of the fact that key witnesses such as Feinstein and Holden had withdrawn as the processes began to unfold.

Thus, in light of the situation described above, South Africa and its prophets may have been overwhelmed by the new freedom and lost in the stupor and whirlwind that often accompanies with wealth, especially if the people concerned have suddenly become who they had always aspired to be. Clearly, Paulo Freire's (1970) thesis in his book, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, that "for the oppressed to be free is to be like the oppressor" proved to be true.

The Commission, it turned out, was a complete farce. It appeared that its sole aim was to ensure that the controversy surrounding the arms deal disappeared but it did not go away. Above all else it affirmed the fears that President Zuma always controlled the commissions he appointed. This, of course, would be a gross miscalculation of the intelligence of the people of South Africa.

It is not possible to deny the tensions and contradictions of the overt and covert "talks about talks" which led to the Congress for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) in December 1991 (Pillay 1992). Mbeki and Zuma had, previously and then, played different roles in what, ultimately led into South Africa's day of liberation in April 1994. As related by Mark Gevisser (2007) and Jeremy Gordin (2008), the tensions and contradictions. Mbeki and Zuma both played important roles in this explosive precursor of events. The election in 1994 was the first ever general election that included the black oppressed majority of South Africa. It was both gripping and emotional for the many who had never dreamt that such a day would ever dawn. The election attracted the attention of the whole world as the



final bastion of white oppression in Africa capitulated to the demands of the African majority with South Africa entering a new political era since Boer and Briton had agreed on political and economic concessions at the signing of the Treaty of Vereeniging after the gruesome and costly Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902 (Evaldson 2002).

What stood out as a sore thumb in the deal was that black people were excluded from the political dynamics of their own country despite their participation in the War (Porter 2002) (Lodberg 2008). This was despite earlier British concessions in the Cape to accommodate black political aspirations the “Treaty” left them out in the cold without any form of political representation. This was, from then on, voiced on many platforms leading up to the formation of the South African Native National Congress of 1912 that became the forerunner of the ANC.

Indeed, 1994 appeared to be an awakening from a dream that had finally become a reality. The promises of the new era were many while, for those who trusted the face-value ethics and ethos of the ANC a new moment had begun, as encapsulated in the Freedom Charter of 1955 (Suttner 2015). The church, including Tutu, Boesak and Chikane, like everyone else, welcomed the new epoch, which many had so tirelessly and bravely prophesied (Lodberg 2008). It seemed that the struggle, that had lasted for so many decades and demanded so many sacrifices, was bearing fruit (Dominy 2013).

This struggle had always been waged in the name of the oppressed majority and had never been about individual egos and political aspirations, even as it was represented by an African religious elite, much along the lines of their African

American counterparts (Strange 2011). As the new democracy degenerated into pockets of corruption covered in the robes of power, it was as if Mandela needed to remind leaders on all levels within the ANC of the words he had spoken much earlier into the new democracy:

The history of liberation heroes shows that, when they come into office, they interact with powerful groups: they can easily forget that they've been put in power by the poorest of the poor. They often lose their common touch, and turn against their own people (Sampson 1999:xxv).

Mandela, in his typical plagiaristic manner, repeated or paraphrased words written by the psychiatrist, Erich Fromm (1968), in his classic *Escape from Freedom*. However, he made the words his own because they contained a self-explanatory truth that had reverberated in the liberation struggles throughout Africa and in other oppressed communities of the world. The champions of liberation struggles have often, very quickly, turned to oppressing in covert, or sometimes overt, ways the very people they sought to liberate. The charge levelled against the ANC in South Africa would almost represent an oxymoron to the millions of the oppressed who had voted for them. As several other issues of corruption unfolded over the years on all levels of government, many continued to repeat the tired sloganeering used in all the political campaigns in the poor communities after 1994, namely, a better life for all.

#### **5.5.7 The final nail in the coffin: the Nicholson judgment**

It is now a well-known fact that Nicholson's judgment was thrown out in the Supreme Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein. It is, however, interesting to note the lightning speed at which the Polokwane cabal leveraged the space between the judgment and its overturning. If the judgment had, indeed, constituted the basis of

Mbeki's dismissal, at least people would have stayed their intentions until after the appeal. It would be doing to Mbeki what they wanted Mbeki to do them. Then again, Zuma's dismissal from government had been based on another case related to the convicted fraudster, Schabir Shaik and it may have been that Zuma's supporters wanted to establish similarities between the two dismissals.

Why was Mbeki actually dismissed? Chikane, like all of us, is clutching at straws. It is, however, clear that those who wanted Mbeki to go were not willing to compromise in any way. For example, Julius Malema threatened to mobilise his forces at any hint of Mbeki completing his term. He had to go and go now! According to the media Malema was not the only one who felt like as there were some seasoned ANC leaders, such as Lindiwe Sisulu, Tokyo Sexwale, Jeff Radebe, Blade Nzimande and others, who shared these sentiments. Their reluctance to support Mbeki's staying on implies that there was a deep rift between the president and them. Indeed, some of them had had personal quarrels with Thabo Mbeki before. The Nicholson judgment provided them with an opportunity to retaliate.

Mbeki had dismissed several people during his tenure as president, culminating in Zuma in 2009. Madlala-Routledge had been conveniently dismissed for taking an illegal trip. The reason for her dismissal was not very convincing to many people, including the international community. While some dismissals were genuine, others were highly questionable. However, it must be borne in mind that politicians are known for their diplomacy and not their honesty. Although Mbeki himself was not a yes-man, he appeared to be comfortable surrounding himself with men and women who agreed with him, or just towed the line. Many agreed

with him just because they were simply indulging his ego and, also, it was to their benefit. Otherwise they could be either dismissed or sidelined.

The rift, covert or overt, between those who wanted Mbeki to go and those who stood by him provided a clear demonstration of the – often-denied – crack within the ANC itself. The formation of COPE may have provided a slight indication of the simmering differences between ANC leaders and which are often swept beneath the carpet of complicity and compliance. The ANC is divided and it is well-known fact that a kingdom divided against itself will not stand, if not because of outside invasion but from internal disintegration.

#### **5.5.8 Mbeki's recall had no political character**

If, as Chikane (2012:156–157) argues, Mbeki had a legal option to ignore the recall, why did he not do so? Many ANC members pride themselves on being disciplined cadres of the movement. By implication, disciplined members do not question the organisation's decisions about them, whether these are positive or not. It is assumed that every decision made is in the interests of the party as a whole. Lekota may not have been happy with Mbeki's decision to recall him as Premier of the Free State but he complied. Likewise, Mbeki may have been deeply hurt by the decision to recall him from government but he complied.

When Mbeki had relieved Zuma of his duties he (Zuma), with the help of his allies, had staged mounted a vehement campaign against what was considered to be a conspiracy. Julius Malema had behaved in a similar way when he and his comrades had disagreed and he had reacted with vindictiveness and outrage against the ANC's move to dismiss him. He accused them of using him like a

condom, stating that now they had no more use for him he was being thrown away. What had happened to the principle of disciplined cadres of the movement?"

Character lies at the heart of any organisation and, thus, it goes without saying that character is embodied in the people who represent such organisation. In capitulating to the demands of the ANC leadership Mbeki had demonstrated character. In a sense, he understood, even more than many who mouth the platitude, that no one is bigger than the organisation itself. His removal from power was a very strong indication of how some within the organisation were willing to plunge the country into political chaos because of ill discipline and personal whims (Chikane 2012:25).

History is littered with men and women who were prepared to bathe their countries in blood for the sake of gratifying their own voracious lust for power, as long as they could pretend to be a tool for patriotism and an instrument of revolutionary fervour (Niebuhr 1932:17). People often state that every struggle has its casualties. More often than not this statement is made by those with a guilty conscience although, ironically, it would appear that those who make such statements never become the casualties themselves.

#### **5.5.9 Troubling signs on the distant horizon**

In the 1980s when the ANC was still in exile many people sat through the night listening to calls broadcast over Radio Freedom in Lusaka to make the country ungovernable. Young people all over South Africa responded and the country caught alight. The archetype of impimpi was prevalent and many people lost their

lives, for example, Maki Skhosana who was necklaced in full view of the international media. This pattern of violence may be said to be returning to haunt the South African political scene with Polokwane, perhaps, as a disturbing signal in such a direction.

There were troubling signs on the distant horizon. What would have happened had Mbeki won a third term as ANC leader? To answer this question one must listen to the rancorous crowd who drowned out the voice of reason in Polokwane. This trend in politicking is uncontrollably rampant even among the ANC structures on the ground. People have been stabbed, maimed, murdered and only God knows what else. The organisation is gradually consuming itself from within.

Khoza's (2011) charge of a "strange breed of leadership" is valid and merits attention, not reaction. The Polokwane cabal is doing little to gain the confidence of people in South Africa because they, themselves, are reactionaries. ANC conferences are marked more by lectures on what people already know but with very little vision being articulated. Indeed, it would often appear that they often go against the self-righteous platitudes they that they mouth on national media and other public platforms. The angel of darkness is presented as an angel of light but with the dragon spitting fire at unsuspected moments.

It is imperative that ANC undertake a thorough introspection of itself, especially regarding its worn-out symbols and archetypes. It is a new day in South Africa and the situation must be allowed to develop its own symbols. Polokwane was Mshini wami exploding in our faces, and the shower song was a direct offshoot of

this. It must be remembered that those who sow violence will necessarily reap violence.

A vibrant democracy is important but it cannot exist if the institutions of justice are constantly being violated. The recent calls by the ANC to change the constitution smacks of stealthy treachery. The ANC recalled Mbeki now it would appear they are about to recall the constitution – a game of political stupor covered by the false garb of astuteness. This type of interference with the institutions and structures of justice cloud the prospects of a future South Africa.

In celebrating 100 years of the ANC's selfless struggle, the ANC may be laying the foundation for a further 100 years of selfish struggle. If this, indeed, proves to be true, then the movement shall have betrayed its own legacy. The tragedy is that those who inherit the legacy 100 years after the centennial celebration will not be the same people who created it. History will judge us very harshly if the legacy we present to the coming generations is not the legacy we received or better.

Those who force their way into power – whether overtly violence or using covert strategies underwritten by personal agendas – must remember that history tends to overthrow its tyrants. When absolute power has corrupted absolutely it brings with it its own demise. The ANC may be bigger than its membership but it is not bigger than the people of South Africa. It is the people who, ultimately, have the final word, and who knows how this will be expressed.

## **5.6 BOESAK'S POST POWER REACTION TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION**

This section will focus on Boesak's reaction after he was pushed out of government by the ANC. Boesak was a prototype for Chikane in that when he left government, he reacted in a similar way to Chikane in terms of the publication of his book – this will also be discussed in this section.

A change of mindset, while it is a process, is important in affirming one's identity and, therefore, it often plays a crucial role in the building of an emerging democratic nation. It is a lack of this identity, often left too wide open by the Freedom Charter, that I will use in the discussion on the prophetic voice that was driven into silence in a post-apartheid South Africa. This section will, therefore, explore liberative ways of revitalising black theology and the prophetic voice amid the corruption and poverty in South Africa. This will be done in the context of analysing one of Boesak's books, *Running with the Horses* (2009), discussed below. The book was written soon after his departure from government structures as he sought to re-establish himself as a prophet in the unfolding processes of a post-democratic South Africa.

Like Chikane, Boesak, after participating in government structures after 1994, disappointed at what was happening in a democratic South Africa for which he had prophesied so passionately during the apartheid era. The previous chapters highlighted how he had started his prophetic ministry within a context of oppression. He then participated in a new democratic dispensation after 1994, only to end up disappointed in many and different ways. It was after these disappointments that he began to reassess his participation in the new



democratic dispensation and, perhaps, to formulate new ways of speaking, again, to a new situation.

The researcher will analyse the ideology or philosophy that guided this movement and its relevance for a post-apartheid South Africa. It will seek to argue that, while the BC movement was part of a multidimensional approach to the struggle for liberation in South Africa, its emphasis from the late 1960s up to the late 1970s was more psychosocial in relation to its more pragmatic predecessors or counterparts of the ANC and the PAC. Until then, the ANC and PAC had chosen to wage an armed struggle against the oppressive white regime of the day. Early in the 1960s the ANC and PAC had decided that they would, from henceforth, fight the white government using the guerrilla tactics used in other parts of Africa. These small-scale, and often clandestine, tactics of war were not new in South Africa as they were used by the Boers against the English during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902 and, indeed, were used in many parts of Europe and Africa.

The researcher will argue that the call for psychological emancipation, so vehemently emphasised by the BC Movement and black theology in the 1970s is more relevant today than it has ever been in the unfolding processes of the incomplete agenda of a post-liberation struggle in South Africa. While old political structures have collapsed, old thinking patterns still prevail. As pointed out above, it is these thinking patterns, internalised by the oppressed from the oppressor, that have driven/are driving the behavioural and moral crisis that has plunged the new democracy into a form of corruption that is often disguised and defended in the name of poverty, women and children. It will further argue that the church, until recently, was silent, largely due to prophets who had no message because

they had intended to speak to a new political epoch in terms formulated during the apartheid era. This crisis was not limited to the church only; it was also the problem of a new government that was not able to articulate a new vision in a new dispensation.

The ANC, the researcher argues, has spent most of its human and financial resources, and rightly so, in trying to correct the mistakes of the apartheid past, but without due consideration of the need for new ideological or philosophical directions in a new era. In this context, a vacuum of ideology and vision has been created in which politicians and prophets have focused more on addressing apartheid mistakes and feeding self-aggrandisement. Many will retort that the Freedom Charter provided such a philosophy or ideology for new directions and, yet, even the Charter itself has been violated and undermined on many levels by greed, corruption and crass materialism in the process of attempting to create a new South Africa. Even worse, it would appear that nobody seemed to know how the “New South Africa” would really look, even as the historical processes of a new democracy unfolded.

Every epoch in biblical prophecy had its own message and its own prophets. In a sense, this study concludes that the Mosaic prophets of the apartheid era have become obsolete and redundant and are not able to prophesy in the new dispensation with the same prophetic robustness as they did prior to 1994. Apartheid, as a social and theological heresy, was easy to identify and, hence, the need for a robust prophesy. The silence of the church, and the often-total absence, in the new era was caused, among others, by the fact that the prophets of the old system had become part of the new system. It is not possible to

prophecy against a system in which one participates. As pointed out in the previous section, Chikane had agreed that he had not been able to speak during his time in government precisely because he was part of the system. Boesak, before joining politics was warned by Archbishop Desmond Tutu that it is not possible to be both prophet and politician simultaneously.

Thus, a democratic South Africa, as it unfolds, demands new prophets with a new message. This new message, although informed by the stupidity of the Davidic and the bravery of the Mosaic prophecy of both the past and present evolving processes of history, must speak to its own times. Indeed, it must be vehemently marked by new and vibrant historical directions. As mentioned above, a new consciousness and theology born in this context must be informed by both the past and present as they speak to the unforeseen issues of a new era. However, while doing so, this new consciousness and new theology must, in true prophetic style and Mosaic ethos, continue to provide a vision for the future.

A Mosaic prophet of these times may be seen as dependable because they have no past scores to settle, as in the case of both Boesak and Chikane, but is a messenger of God drawing from the past but informed primarily by his/her own times. Thus, this section concludes, prophetic-oscillation is not an option, one is either a politician or a prophet and the motivations for either emerge from different sources and inspirations. Prophecy stands above politics because it speaks in the name of God. The challenge for the new prophet is to develop a sensitivity to the Mosaic prophecy that is not blunted but is, instead, sharpened by previous prophetic times. In a true Hegelian mode of thesis and antithesis the new prophet must develop a Mosaic prophetic synthesis of speaking to the

present and yet articulating directions for the future. Mosaic prophecy must, at all times, resist the temptation to be part of a political or cultural hegemony.

### **5.6.1 The re-creation of new humanity in the democratic South Africa**

Freedom demands one to be born again to the image of God, thus implying that a dehumanised being must be humanised through human dignity and right. True liberation for both the oppressor and the oppressed will begin when all involved resurface and re-engage our mental models of what it is to be truly human. Blacks must rise where Dr Verwoerd sought to bury them in South Africa. Now, more than ever before, Blacks need to join Biko (1978: 98) on another long walk to freedom:

We have set out on a quest for true humanity, and somewhere on the distant horizon we can see the glittering prize. Let us march forth with courage and determination, drawing strength from our common plight and brotherhood. In time, we shall be in a position to bestow upon South Africa the greatest gift possible – a more human face.

Biko was not under any illusion that a true humanity was a short-term project. Clearly, it is not possible for 300 years of entrenched models of colonialism to be dismantled in just 23 years. However, the process must at least begin before the whirlwind runs out of control. Freedom is the unfolding project of the human spirit in the context of existential exigencies. Freire (1970: 39) suggests that the process must begin with a pedagogy of the oppressed:

No pedagogy, which is truly liberating, can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in their struggle for their redemption.

According to Tillich (2000:41–62), Verwoerdian policies attacked blacks' self-affirmation on three levels with blacks being attacked ontologically and spiritually (morally). To be sure, black humanity was at stake, blacks would either accept their fate within the demarcations determined by others over them, or die. It is well known and documented that the people who dared to cross the line were often either killed or sentenced to long-term imprisonment. The levels, referred to by Tillich (2000: 41-62), will be discussed in the next section in order to ascertain how they have influenced the humanity of the black people in South Africa and how can the researcher may convert this challenge into an opportunity for a new, prophetic theology in the democratic South Africa.

### **5.6.2 The ontological implications of Verwoerdian policies for blacks**

It is important to note that, under the apartheid philosophy, the being of Blacks in South Africa was under serious attack. Verwoerd attacked the ontological infrastructure of their being. He sought to undermine the belief that blacks are created in the image of God and, therefore, that blacks are no less human than any other human being. The “relationship to God and natural surroundings” to which referred Biko the starting point in reaffirming our humanity. It confirms our place in the wider scheme of things. Each one of us is here on earth, not as an appendage of another, but as determined and destined by the Creator in the unfolding processes of creation. We all have an equal right to be here.

In affirming his own being Verwoerd negated that of others. Thus, a liberating pedagogy of the oppressed must start with resurfacing the mental models entrenched in their oppression before they may build empowering new ones. However, in seeking to affirm their own being they must not negate that of others.

This is the lesson of an ancient African maxim, “Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu.” African “Ubuntu” understood that, in affirming your own being, you affirm that of others, and your own being is negated in the negation of the being of others.

Freire (1970:75–118) argues that being *human* is being neither the oppressed nor the oppressor and, instead, it is the emergence of a new being in a dynamic dialectic that occurs at the confluence of the two polarities. Liberation is more than an event, which occurred on a particular date in the distant past, but, instead, it is the unfolding process of harnessing the powerful lessons of the synthesis between the old and the new order.

The problem with mental models entrenched over time is that they are difficult to recall. While those in power may be a catalyst and facilitator in the process, the process must begin as an individual initiative before it may successfully become corporate or collective (Senge 1990:175).

It is well established in psychology that each one of us is a product of his/her environment. We find it difficult to question deviations because what we know is all we have ever known and, even worse, it is what we have known over extended periods of time.

### **5.6.3 The spiritual implications of Verwoerdian policies for blacks**

According to Paul Tillich, religion is a state of being ultimately concerned (Church 1987). It is not the traditional perceptions we have of rituals and ceremonies celebrated by sinners to appease an angry God. It is, rather, the universal atmosphere in which men and women wrestle with the exigencies and

contingencies which arise in the ambiguities of human existence. In this sense, religion is universal because this existential struggle is universal.

Boesak and other religious leaders have decried the ANC's indifference towards the contributions of religion to the struggle in South Africa. This indifferent attitude is typical in Africa where the liberators consider themselves to be the sole and absolute custodians of a people's liberation. In the final analysis, the people may even become the liberator's personal property. Mugabe, in his standoff with the former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, echoed a deep weakness in African leadership when he stated, "Let me keep my Zimbabwe" (*Daily Mail* n.d.). This may well be the reason why Africa's leaders want to stay in power forever because they mistake political leadership for village chieftainship.

However, it is impossible to ignore religion in Africa, especially the relentless 19th century phenomenon now known as Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism may have its unsettling aspects but it appeals to the spiritual aspect of our being that affirms the courage to be (Tillich 2000). While it may be a complex and difficult phenomenon to explain, this spiritual aspect of it may clarify why it attracts millions of people around the world. Its emphasis on the relationship between the divine Spirit and the human spirit must be explored instead of being condemned from so many quarters.

Tillich (2000:41) maintains that "[n]on-being threatens our spiritual self-affirmation relatively in terms of emptiness and absolutely in terms of meaninglessness". Existentialists, such as the psychiatrist Frankl who wrote *Man's search for meaning* (1984), believe that the principal spiritual task in human existence is a

search for meaning. However, according to the apartheid philosophy, blacks did not have spirituality and, they did, then that spirituality could be manipulated within the demarcations of the apartheid Dutch Reformed theology.

Afrikaner spirituality was informed by a sense of superiority. In some mysterious ways the blessed status of ancient Israel had been conferred on Afrikanerdom so that everyone else, even though created of God, had been less created (Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom, Apartheid, and Afrikaner Civil religion* 1975). In affirming their own spirituality, Afrikaners denied others the right to do the same. Yet, in a strange twist of events, there were those among both the oppressed and the oppressors who affirmed a liberating spirituality in the context of a spirituality that sought to deprive the oppressed of self-actuating spirituality.

Tillich's analysis mentioned above is important because it highlights the invincibility of the human spirit. However, the other side of Pentecostalism or Charismatics in present day South Africa (and one dares to say since its inception) seeks to deny its adherents a genuine sense of self-actuating spirituality. On many levels, people are driven to depend on an individual prophet who claims to be the sole connection between God and the people.

The fallibility of such prophecy is that it introduced apartheid theology through the back door. As mentioned earlier, apartheid theology, endorsed by several synods in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), sanctioned the superiority of the Afrikaner in the name of God. However, instead of affirming a people's humanity and identity created in the image of God, Pentecostalism makes it to revolve around individuals. It, thus, introduces narcissistic tendencies that subjugate people's



sense of spiritual self-actualisation and render them dependent on one individual who claims to represent God. The numerous times that such prophecy has been abusive, for example from instructing followers to eat grass to being sprayed with pesticides to satisfy demands for capital, have been circulated in the media recently and need not be repeated here.

#### **5.6.4 The moment brings the right prophets or politician**

Boesak (2009), in his book *Running with horses: reflections of an accidental politician*, focuses on three issues, namely, his past, present and future political activism and career in South Africa. The book is divided into four parts with each part opening, to varying degrees, a window on different episodes in the struggle for liberation in South Africa.

Boesak landed back in South Africa just one month after the Soweto Uprising in 1976. The whole country was on fire. The wave of dissatisfaction started in Soweto but it became a nationwide phenomenon. Afrikaans was at the centre of the Soweto Uprising although the whole system of education was in question. Education for the so-called non-whites was inferior in every sense and underpinned by sinister ulterior motives. With his doctorate from the hub of Reformed theology in the Netherlands, as Mohammed Bouazizi's self-immolation had triggered the Arab Spring in December 2010 and Rosa Parks who has played her role in starting the Civil Rights Movement, Boesak was the man "for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14). He participated in a movement that had started without any personal influence on his part. However, the moment had come and he became one of the movement's most ferocious spokespersons.

There often comes a time in history when a people are no longer prepared to endure the injustices of an oppressive political system. When this moment comes the will to survive supersedes the fear of death. It is an unexplainable spirit which arises from the depth of one's being to take back one's humanity from those who have conferred upon themselves the right to own one's very soul. Boesak was thrown into such a moment.

He had already a background in Reformed theology from the University of the Western Cape but the Calvin he met at Kampen was the direct opposite of the Calvin to whom he had been introduced in the theological corridors of the Coloured university. The Calvin at Kampen was both a radical and a theologian of public life while the other Calvin at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) had been intended to transform him into a "geleerde hotnot" (Boesak, 2009: 23, 35). The Kampen experience was overwhelming, to say the least. It provided him with some answers to the penetrating existential questions asked by Aunt Meraai Arendse earlier in his ministry.

Boesak's pre and post Kampen experiences highlight an interesting aspect in relation to the reason why Soweto had rejected Bantu Education. Education for black people in South Africa was part of a bigger programme of what Paulo Freire (1970: 27) termed dehumanisation. Every class held was intended to fulfil Dr Hendrik Verwoerd's well-known vision for the so-called Bantu, articulated as early as the 1950s (Boddy Evans n.d).

There is no place for [the Bantu] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour ... What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? That is quite absurd.

Education must train people in accordance with their opportunities in life, according to the sphere in which they live.

Verwoerd had decided – the Bantu were inferior culturally to white people and the best way to inculcate this into the very essence of their being was through education. Coloured people suffered a similar fate although the apartheid government also tried in various ways to instil in them a sense of superiority over Africans. Don Mattera (1987) captures in vivid ways how black people were dehumanised and, in most instances, resorted to seeking expression in the dangerous streets of the African and Coloured townships.

The process of inculcating inferiority into black pupils was not an overnight phenomenon and, instead, it was a long-term project. As a qualified psychologist, Verwoerd must have known that the best way to seal the fate of the oppressed was through education. Steve Biko later reiterated this conclusion. Verwoerd's move to target education was strategic, beginning with a black child's formative and developmental years and then extending into high school and tertiary education.

The fortunate ones who progressed to what others called glorified high schools or bush Universities know how difficult it was to obtain an examination entrance grade, let alone pass a science related subject. If, for some reason, a black person had sufficient self-confidence to want to pursue mathematics or physical science related careers, they had to obtain ministerial consent to do so. In the case of Africans, it was the Minister of Bantu Education himself who had to approve such your ill-considered aspirations and an individual's dreams could be destroyed at the stroke of a pen.

If well implemented the final product of Bantu Education would be a well-polished black person prepared to play a subordinate in the white economic system. In Verwoerd's mind, black people were created to serve white people. Occasionally, blacks could benefit from the crumbs that fell off the master's table. Like biblical Lazarus of old, black people grew accustomed to watching the rich man's table for food scraps they could not afford.

However, for the blacks, there was nothing particularly wrong with these crumbs because, somewhere in their subconscious, they had accepted their place as "oorskiet-mensies" (Boesak 2009:11). Verwoerd's experiment was gradually yielding the expected results.

Some picture would occasionally question the system but this was dangerous. From the majority of the townships emerged great stalwarts of the struggle against these dehumanising psychological images. Men such as Godfrey Pitje, Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo are known for their fight against Verwoerd's psychological warfare. However, for most African adults, it was far easier better to just get drunk on a form of African beer known called "skokiaan" or have some "skop-die-donner" than fight battles that could never be won. Opposing apartheid meant rising above certain forms of ontological fear; even the fear of death.

The Soweto Uprising represented a moment in history when it was if a one small movement in the icy mountains of oppression became a catalyst for a roaring and overwhelming avalanche of social change. The national youth insurrection of 1976 was triggered by a "business-as-usual" statement made by the government about Bantu Education (Boddy-Evans, n.d.), namely, "It has been decided that,

for the sake of uniformity, English and Afrikaans will be used in our schools on a 50-50 basis". The schools in townships referred to black schools while uniformity meant a law had to be passed to balance the use of English and Afrikaans in the schools as the medium of instruction in most schools was English. For the children in Soweto the question was, Uniformity for whom, and who decided? With these questions in mind, the point of no return had been reached. The children of Soweto hated Afrikaans and its implications in respect of their oppression. The majority of the Coloured communities in South Africa spoke Afrikaans, except perhaps in Natal where most Coloureds spoke English. As Boesak and others later came to demonstrate in the Black Consciousness Movement, the language was not the issue, instead the bigger problem revolved around the oppression of so-called non-white communities by the apartheid government. The language issue in Soweto sparked off a deep and hidden resentment against apartheid as a political system, whether African, Coloured or Indian.

As if everything that had happened was not enough, the apartheid government now wanted African children to speak its language. It was almost as if they were being asked to participate in their own oppression. The children responded that they will reject the whole system of Bantu Education whose aim is to reduce us mentally to hewers of wood and drawers of water.

That statement, made by the Soweto Students' Representative Council, reversed the tide in Verwoerd's vision as the children in Soweto had cracked his secret code of oppressive deception. As mentioned earlier, Afrikaans was not the problem but the whole apartheid system's racist and sinister motives were.

Soweto in 1976 was a catalyst of how a courageous youth throughout South Africa rose up to reaffirm and take back their humanity. Their parents and great-grandparents had raised similar concerns in various ways long before they had been born but Soweto was the final indignity.

When history determines to overthrow its tyrants, there is no force that may turn back the tide. No one is able to explain or claim to know how it happens. Instead, it is all determined in what Reinhold Niebuhr called “the wider scheme of things”. In the case of Boesak – as had happened with Martin Luther King – the hour had met the man! Nothing had been planned but the processes of history were unfolding.

#### **5.6.5 Black consciousness as the means of deschooling black people**

The Bantu education schools established in line with the Verwoerdian policy did not meet the international standards for the education of a state and, therefore, through the Black Consciousness Movement, Biko called for the de-establishment of the Bantu education schools which would be replaced with people’s education. People’s education would target the liberation of the people of South Africa in totality and would be aimed at restoring the human dignity and human rights of the Black people of South Africa. For Paulo Freire (1970) and other existentialists, the incomplete task of the human project is the perennial goal of becoming fully human. Every person – universally – is driven by the ontic quest for self-actualisation. However, this quest to be fully human has been constantly harassed throughout human history by the presence of others and the possibility of being dehumanised by others. Historically, as seen in the trajectories of human existence in recorded history, there has always been those

who consider their humanity to be more important than that of others, even to the point of baptising that with a sense of godliness, as was seen with apartheid. For the reassertion of the being of Black people, Boesak, in his book, was, in some ways, calling the people back to Biko often reminding blacks of Biko's powerful words "The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" (Biko, 1978: 92). Why else would Verwoerd use education to subjugate people? As mentioned earlier, this man was a highly qualified psychologist, trained in nationalism in Germany and well-travelled psychologist and social scientist who understood the short and the long-term implications of his statements and actions. However, he was expecting the national explosion of resentment that occurred.

Biko (1978:19–26) spoke of "black souls in white skins" when referring to white liberals who claimed to be touch by the oppressed plight of black people. However, at the time of this study the political landscape had changed in South Africa and we are now faced with a pathological state of "white souls in black skins". Fanon (1967) decried black people who emulate the oppressive tendencies and practise the values of a past of which they may or may not have been a part. It may be more appropriate to use the phrase black skin with a white mask.

We are seeing the emergence of a breed of black people who define themselves in terms of oppressor values and systems. As Paulo Freire (1970: 30) so ably argued in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, to be free is to be like the oppressor, perhaps not in colour but in mimicry and patterns of behaviour. For example, the black madam, heavily intoxicated with the spirit of the white missies, has turned

against her own doing to her maid what the white missies used to do to her mother or grandmother. The black corporate heavyweight who is seated on profit side of the negotiating table now argues heatedly against demands of the union that put them where they now are. The tired and worn-out corporate cliché of the business of business is business now falls readily from the lips of black executives more often than we care to count. The struggle is no longer marked by the golden rule that marks the humanity of most religions; namely, *do unto others, as you would have them do unto you*. The Marikana Massacre in 2012 was a gruesome example of how black Lonmin executives and black officers in the South African Police Services (SAPS) collaborated to murder, in typical apartheid style, their own people (Marinovich 2016).

Fanon (1967:8–9) words are apt:

The black man who wants to turn his race white is as miserable as he who preaches hatred for the white man.

It is here that Mandela's ideal showed signs of gradually degenerating into a terrifying nightmare. Those who were tasked with the responsibility of delivering the people's dream are either keeping it all to themselves or shred it into little irretrievable pieces in a contest driven by greed and corruption. As the new democracy unfolded, the poor were constantly fed with empty promises of development Programmes riddled with ever shifting goals. The blue and white papers, true to their chameleon nature, never sat quite the same thing. First it was the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of Mandela's government, and then the poor were informed by the Mbeki government that, although the spirit of the RDP had been, it is the letter that got it all wrong. Thus,



the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative – South Africa was introduced by Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, then Vice-President in the Mbeki government. However, it died a natural death soon after its introduction. At the time of the study we have the National Development Plan (NDP) with its vision 2030. According to the NDP, life in 2030 will be totally different compared to when the ANC was voted into power in 1994. However, nobody ever anticipated the extent to which all these plans mentioned above would be compromised by the corruption and selfishness of their architects.

The macro-economic prophets of optimism and utopia first promised to totally eradicate poverty and unemployment by 2014, and then 2020. Now the aim is 2030 on the road to 2050 while the poor are still assured that “We have made some progress since 1994, but a lot still needs to be done. Our people must be patient ...”, this despite their gnawing hunger-pains every day. In some mysterious way, the poor are made to believe that the same structures that oppressed them will now deliver their liberation.

It is all very easy to try to encourage people who are living in poverty with promises of a better tomorrow when those making such promises are living in comfort. The problem is tomorrow never comes and the poor are growing increasingly impatient. As during the oppressive times of apartheid, many among the poor are beginning to ask soul-searching questions such as “Aren’t we being used as a ladder for the personal indulgence and aggrandisement of our leaders?” As time passes, in common with Marie Antoinette during the French Revolution, those who are making unfulfilled promises may start wondering why the people started a rebellion for bread when they could eat cake. “Hunger” said

Einstein (n.d.) “is a very poor political advisor”. As in all systems those who propose solutions today will not be the ones who inherit the problem tomorrow (Senge 1990). Such a prognostication does not require a Nostradamus.

The irony of every macro-economic experiment in South Africa is that the poor are moved ever closer to the peripheries of economic obscurity. As mentioned earlier, in the process, it would seem that the poor become the ladder to the personal enrichment and self-aggrandisement of the leaders. There may be scattered, frivolous, little pockets of generosity or philanthropy, especially around election time, but these are never sufficient so that the poor are still kept waiting for liberation and for the promises made to them to be fulfilled.

They ask for more from those who have bestowed on themselves the right to be the dispensers of goodwill. What the philanthropists fail to realise is that economic injustice involves the inequitable distribution of wealth and not poverty – poverty is a consequence of deliberate economic disparities. The fact that some are empty because some have plenty is design not destiny.

What we see is not the tangibles fulfilment of the promises made in the glossy documents that are constantly thrown at the poor but, instead, we see a bunch of hoarders who are driven by economic greed and egoism. By the time this country has been bled dry all the philanthropists will do what they do best – they will be on the next jumbo jet leaving South Africa and seeking asylum wherever the country’s billions have been hidden. The poor who will be left behind be either dead or licking their wounds and, perhaps, even regretting the moments when they maintained a silence which bordered on stupidity (Galeano 1973).

As pointed out earlier, the Marikana Massacre in 2012 at the Lonmin mine in Rustenburg was a sobering picture typical of the apartheid era with the reality of it not being so far-fetched. The response of the police and the comments made afterwards by the spokespersons of the Police Services were almost *verbatim* what members of the apartheid regime would have said when confronting an uprising. It was served as a vivid reminder of the death of Andries Tatane in Ficksburg in the Free State who was murdered by the police during a service delivery protest. As usual, business was concerned not so much with the loss of lives as a result of Marikana as it was with investor confidence and loss of profit. As in all systems characterised by short-term solutions for long-term problems, Jacob Zuma, Bheki Cele and Susan Shabangu were not present to face the consequences of their well-articulated Shoot to kill policy.

Marikana and Ficksburg were both examples of how the poor and the oppressed become victims, so often, of violence they did not create. As Freire (1970:40–41) points out:

Any situation in which “A” objectively exploits “B” or hinders his pursuit for self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression. Such a situation, in itself, constitutes violence, even when sweetened by false generosity, because it interferes with man’s ontological and historical vocation to be fully human.

The oppressed are not often violent although they will always revolt against the surreptitious violence that is visited upon them by Adam Smith’s (1994) invisible hand of injustice. They live in in poverty and appalling living conditions when the politicians, captains of industry and policy makers trip over each other’s egos in the ivory towers of parliament or giant multinationals. The miners in Marikana had

two forces against them that were characteristic of an oppressive regime, namely, the police and economic forces.

When women with toddlers on their backs, as seen all over the media, brave live ammunition to support their men in the struggle to survive, this means there is something radically wrong with the way in which the new rich have started to think about the humanity of the poor. Even more tragic is the way in which the new rich may have forgotten their own roots and reached a level of not even recognising the immorality of their new ways in their oppression of the very people they sought to liberate.

In dark and hidden ways Verwoerd, although he has been dead for quite some time, continues to live in surreptitious ways in the minds of the very people he sought to oppress. Despite the fact that the political structures have all been overthrown since the advent of democracy in 1994 the grip on the mind of the liberated continues. As it often happens with the oppressed everywhere, the shadow of the former oppressor continues to loom over those who profess to be free (Freire 1970: 31). It may be that the struggle is not so much with the shadow as it is with the internalisation of the oppressor. The oppressed, when liberated, often emulates the oppressor in the very core of our being, albeit in hidden ways buried deep in the subconscious.

#### **5.6.6 Shift of responsibility: yesterday's liberator becomes today's oppressor**

Oppression as traditionally defined is between those who wield power—politically and/or economically—and those who are victims of the powerful. Colour played a predominant role in past colonialism but that paradigm has long shifted. In the

2010 Arab uprisings it was a case of Arab oppresses Arab while the Irish struggle for liberation is white against white. Africa itself has demonstrated how yesterday's liberators quickly turn into today's oppressors. Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos were Filipino when they oppressed their own people. This reversal of roles is not new. As Fromm (1969:1) observed, it is a psychological problem which characteristic in the histories of all liberation:

Classes that were fighting against oppression at one stage sided with the enemies of freedom when victory was won and new privileges had to be defended.

Thus, the possibility of being oppressed by the erstwhile liberators is not that remote. However, it is often very difficult to see when the devil pretends to be an angel of light. In South Africa Einstein's words are being realised sooner than we would like to concede. He said, "I believe it to be an invariable rule that tyrants of genius are succeeded by scoundrels" (n.d:3-4). Political rascals never learn because their platforms are used for self-enhancement.

Like Boesak, there are many who believe that what is happening in the political landscape in South Africa is not what our ancestors fought and died for. Nevertheless, their descendants are using their names in designing and implementing clandestine structures for the oppression of the very people they had sought to liberate.

I argue that it is not possible for a liberative theology and consciousness to ignore the psychological implications of a new era. It is, therefore imperative, that every prophet in every era makes a deliberate attempt to revise the way in which history may have informed and therefore shaped his/her thinking. It may be that,

in the excitement and spirit of liberation Boesak and Chikane lost some of their original Mosaic prophetic direction, However, they serve as a stern warning of how prophetic-oscillation is always a possibility and, even worse, it has the potential to lead Mosaic prophets into the temptation of being wrapped up in the Davidic prophecy and, therefore, engulfed by the very evils their ancestors had prophesied against.

For Biko (1978:91) “black consciousness is an attitude of mind”. The struggle for freedom is not so much political and/or economic as it is psychological. It is vital that political and/or economic freedoms are the corollaries of a change in mindset during the process of expelling the entrenched mental models of oppression (Freire 1970). If this does not happen, the oppressed will curse ourselves with blessing we fought so hard to win. The polarities of black and white in Biko’s time were dictated to by the racial political context of the time. However, this is now evolving into an economic polarisation of the rich and poor while the poor are still predominantly black. Indeed, Biko exposed an aspect of the struggle for liberation that has been exhausted, namely, how an individual’s mindset may surreptitiously invade and destroy the very moral fibre of a just cause when those who were oppressed do not engage vigorously with the models which they internalised from the oppressor as they enter a new epoch. It would appear that, in his book, Boesak is reminding us this aspect of Biko’s thinking. He is under no illusion that this will be easy and, like all noble causes, it will have as its opponents – yesterday’s liberators who have, consciously or otherwise, gradually become today’s oppressors.

Boesak and other valiant opponents of oppression have challenged how this has happened in the history of South Africa. Hamlet's (Shakespeare 1992) soliloquy "To be or not to be ..." expresses the tensions and contradictions of the human journey in many of the socio-political contexts, especially those characterised by racism. Tillich (2000) spoke of the challenges of being and non-being and the courage to confront these challenges. In his hierarchy of needs Maslow (1999) affirmed the existential issue of actualisation that has plagued all ages in human history. According to Biko (1978:92), "[f]reedom is the ability to define oneself with one's possibilities held back, not by the power of other people over one, but only by one's relationship to God and natural surroundings". The challenge in the new directions in black theology is to redefine our own humanity and consciousness. However, this cannot be done in relation to the same structures that historically dehumanised the oppressed.

## **5.7 SUMMARY**

It may be that the answer to the question raised above will be found, not in the old prophets trying to renew their strength, but in the birth of new prophets. Boesak appears to yearn for the past when the church prophesied with deep insight into the evils of the apartheid era. There is no doubt that the prophetic role made a major contribution to the dismantling of apartheid and the dawn of a democratic era in South Africa. However, it would seem that the church is refusing to admit that those days are gone, not to be forgotten, but gone. While the task of prophecy is never exhausted, the task of a prophet is always limited to a particular era.

Like the ANC, the prophetic voice during apartheid spoke to the present in the context of the future with the “now” addressing issues of the “not yet”. Mandela’s ideal looked forward into the distant future and so did the church. This vision, while some credit the Freedom Charter for its articulation, had been voiced much earlier with the founding of the South African National Native Congress (SANNC) in 1912. What is needed now is not so much a return to the past as is a prophecy with deep insight into the depth and distance of an unfolding and robust democracy. Yesterday’s visionaries created history. However, today’s politicians are, above all else, engaged in personal aggrandisement or in destroying that for which others made so many sacrifices. The dearth is to be found in the obsessive preoccupation with what Mandela called crass materialism that has come to characterise the political terrain in this country.

Molefe Tsele was right in saying that “We must run away from an incestuous cohabitation with government” (Boesak 2005:169), However this is easier said than done. Prophets are mortal and will always be trapped in the limitations of mortality. What has rendered prophets in the tradition of Boesak and Chikane obsolete is that they spoke for a certain time. Their disappointment with the existing political system emerged only after they had fallen out of favour with those from who they had expected favours. When Chikane was still in the government structures, he said very little about the concerns he is now raising. The same is true for Boesak. The weakness of all mortality is to pursue its own interests at the expense of the rest.

The church is silent because its prophetic voice has been tainted in various ways. It may be times have changed and that new prophets need to identify new



directions that speak to the prevailing situation. Of course, such initiatives will be informed by the old patterns of challenging prophecy during apartheid but they cannot speak to the situation in the same way in which they spoke to apartheid. If, at some point, they now say what was said during apartheid, then there is something dramatically wrong with the new dispensation in South Africa and that yesterday's liberator is gradually evolving into the oppressor from whom they sought to liberate themselves. That is a challenge for the new prophets and not for old ones who are trying to renew their strength.

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONTRIBUTION

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study undertook the task of understanding why the church, that had spoken out so vigorously and vociferously against apartheid, had suddenly gone silent in the face of the corruption dogging the unfolding democracy in South Africa since 1994. This issue had been addressed at a UNISA and Stellenbosch conference on society and religion scarcely ten years after the new ANC government had been voted into power with the following question being raised, namely, Where have all the prophets gone (Cilliers 2015:367). While the new government has made progress and has, undoubtedly, done much good work in the more than 23 years since it came into power, this concern, raised so soon after 1994, suggested that some people were beginning to observe troubling signs of moral inconsistency within the ANC.

At the inception of this research study South Africa had had four presidents, namely, Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, Kgalema Motlanthe and Jacob Zuma. Motlanthe, in a sense, served as a caretaker president between Mbeki and Zuma during troubled times between the ANC and its allies. He could be regarded as a compromise candidate as the party struggled to pave the way for Zuma to succeed Mbeki in what one may call a battle of political egos. By the end of the research Cyril Ramaphosa had been elected as the fifth president of South Africa since 1994.

This chapter presents a summary of the study, the study findings as well as recommendations in the context of the main research question and the conclusions. The main research question focused on silence of the church in the face of the corruption and the lack of austere governance during the presidencies of Nelson Mandela and Jacob Zuma.

## **6.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS 2 TO 5**

### **6.2.1 Chapter 2**

Chapter 2 explained black theology, black power and black consciousness which had their origins in the work of black theologians such as James Cone with their South African counterparts starting to rethink the scriptures in the context of their own oppression. Ironically, these same scriptures had been used to justify the slavery and oppression of black people in the USA and to promote white supremacy in both South Africa and the USA since the Atlantic and Pacific Slave Trade (Shlomowitz, 1987). The chapter highlighted that the struggles for love, justice, liberation and hope on the continent and in the diaspora are one and that there are many parallels.

Freire (1970), Galeano (1973), and Gutierrez (1988), provided a more global perspective of oppression in relation to its pedagogic, economic and theological implications in the Latin Americas. The notion of humanisation was central to their arguments and shows several similarities with the African philosophy of Ubuntu/Botho. There is no doubt that the liberation of the oppressed is intertwined with that of their oppressors. In other words, if the oppressors suppress the oppressed down, then they must stay there with them.

### **6.2.2 Chapter 3**

Chapter 3 revealed that, in the 1970s, there was a connection between the theologies and ideologies of the struggles of African-Americans and black South Africans. Indeed, some of the discussions in South Africa in the 1960s were prompted by what was happening in the USA in relation to black theology. While the advocates of black consciousness do not readily admit to the influence of black power; the two ideologies had fundamental similarities in relation to their emphasis on the need for a form of identity that affirms ethnic awareness. However, while this is of utmost importance, the two ideologies recognise that it must not be achieved at the expense of instilling ethnic or racial superiority. In fact, as Steve Biko (1974) said, it must be a journey to restore a more human face to racial interactions.

### **6.2.3 Chapter 4**

Chapter 4 discussed the shift in Boesak and Chikane's theological and ideological thinking in the 1980s with this shift culminating in the formation of the United Democratic Front in 1983 in the interests of a more racially embracing political ideology. Two theological documents were particularly important in this era, namely, the Kairos Document as initiated by Chikane, and the Belhar Confession of Boesak. These documents established a firmer and more racially inclusive theological basis for the struggle for the liberation of black people in South Africa. While the Kairos document garnered more support from diverse theological traditions in South Africa, the Belhar Confession was endorsed by the international Reformed community as an important document representing its

understanding in relation to Christ and the poor, not only in South Africa but around the world.

#### **6.2.4 Chapter 5**

Chapter 5 introduced the dilemma raised in the research question, namely, that, as the political processes began to unfold after 1994, it became obvious that South Africa was suffering from a moral decline of sorts. Politicians were hastening to enrich themselves using government platforms for personal aggrandisement. Millionaires were created almost overnight through various economic processes under the guise of Black Economic Empowerment programmes. Gradually a culture of self-beneficiation evolved and continued unchecked by various government offices and officials. A so-called second economy was created as the poor, who did not have the privilege of being in power, began to be marginalised in both the public and private sectors. Billions of rand of taxpayers' money were channelled into dubious economic ventures and corruption in high places with these projects ultimately benefitting a few individuals at the expense of the masses who had voted them into power. As we saw with the Arms Deal above; it soon became obvious that the South African government was losing its moral compass as well as the ethics and ethos that had guided the liberation struggle and degenerating into a morass of crass materialism.

The irony of the situation was that many of the people who had spoken out against apartheid were silent, including the prophets who had spoken out so vehemently against white racism and its political and economic corollaries. Thus, the question, where have all the prophets gone? was raised soon after 1994. It

was becoming increasingly clear that corruption in high places was invading the government structures on every level and yet no one was saying anything about it. If the politicians were quiet it was, at least, expected that those who had prophesied against apartheid in the name of God would speak up. Sadly, however, they were sitting at the sumptuous dinner tables that became a regular feature of the post-apartheid government and they did not speak.

### **6.3 FINDINGS**

The research findings discussed below realised the aims of this study.

#### **6.3.1 Influence of black theology of liberation on Boesak and Chikane.**

According to Motlhabi (2012:227), Boesak and Chikane entered black theology during phase three of the history of black theology in South Africa. Phase one had been a period of exploring black theology. During this period the University Christian Movement (UCM) had communicated with black theologians in the United States such as James Cone, who had written books on black theology, black power and the black theology of liberation. The main focus of most of the black theology of liberation writings during this period was that God was on the side of the oppressed (Motlhabi 2012:224). Phase two of the black theology of liberation in South Africa was a period of conscientising, a fight against racism, contextualisation and addressing the socio-political and economic ills of the day with a particular interest in Steve Biko's book *Black consciousness and the quest for a true humanity* (Motlhabi 2012:225).

The US experience of the black theology of liberation focused on the social context of pain, humiliation, degradation, and oppression while the South African

context was that of racial oppression, subjugation and discrimination which had led to a loss of human dignity and identity. Black theologians, such as James Cone and others, identified that “either God is for black people in their fight for liberation and against the white oppressors” (Maimela 1983:36). Boesak and Chikane realised that the two black societies in South Africa and the United States shared racist history, class contradictions and theological traditions. Thus, for them, black power was an action word with a political stance advocating the closing of ranks between blacks to ensure unity and strength.

Both Boesak and Chikane used the black liberation theologians in the USA as their models in the struggle for liberation in South Africa. James Cone (1969:22–36) stated: “Black Theology is a theology of community whose daily energies must be focused on physical survival in a hostile environment. The black community spends most of its time trying to make a living in a society labelled for whites only. Therefore, the central question for black people is how are we going to survive in a world which deems black humanity as an illegitimate form of human existence!” Boesak echoed Cone’s sentiments when he stated that “Black Theology is a situational theology. It is the black people’s attempt to come to terms, theologically, with their black situation. It seeks to interpret the gospel in such a way that the situation of blacks will begin to make sense” (Maimela 1983:37).

Boesak admitted this influence when he stated: “Black Consciousness, Black Power and Black Theology merged and emerged as the key which unlocked the door to the future for the oppressed people of South Africa at a time when most of us thought that all was lost. It rekindled the almost decayed hope in the hearts

of the downtrodden, reasserted the faith of the people in the liberation God of the Exodus, the prophets and of Jesus of Nazareth. It reclaimed the gospel for the poor and the oppressed; rediscovered, rewrote the vision and ran with it as the prophet Habakkuk enjoins us to do, unleashed the tremendous energies of a people who, long before Thabo Mbeki discovered it, knew that they were born of a people who would not tolerate oppression. It came at a most opportune time, a *kairos* moment, to put it biblically, and it paved the way for the decisive phase of the struggle during the eighties as it found expression in the United Democratic Front. It became a spiritual force without which resistance to apartheid would have remained singularly ineffectual” (Boesak 2005:10).

### **6.3.2 Tensions in prophecy and politics: the case of Frank Chikane**

Is it tenable to prophesy to a political situation in which one participates? Almost without exception, the prophets in the Old Testament, whether Davidic or Mosaic, spoke to the political situations of their time. What is it that distinguishes a prophet from a politician? One is inclined to believe that a major distinction is in the message with prophets communicating divine oracles while politicians disseminate knowledge. A Mosaic prophet’s message is not a consensus message while a politician’s message is often a consensus message. In Mosaic prophecy the prophet speaks to the people on God’s behalf while in “Davidic” prophecy the prophet speaks on his behalf and often in support of the powers who offer him protection for political correctness.

As endlessly reiterated in this study, during the apartheid era there were several prophets, here and abroad, including Dr Beyers Naude, Rev. Frank Chikane, Dr Allan Boesak, Rev. Motlalepule Chabaku, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Sister



Bernard Ncube, Father Smangaliso Mkhatswa and others. Their directive was clear, namely, apartheid was a moral and theological heresy, and it had to go. Arguably, these men and women touched, more than any other, the conscience of the world in respect of a world response to the dismantling of apartheid. It is the religious communities of the world who mobilised their people and their churches to stand against racism in South Africa despite the fact that some western governments, for example, those of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, were reluctant to act. Bishop Tutu, for instance, was an outspoken apostle of disinvestment with many governments and private companies heeding this call and either withdrawing from South Africa or disinvesting.

As mentioned earlier, at the demise of apartheid in 1994, the people of South Africa elected what is commonly known as a government of the people by the people. Mandela's ideal was recognised in 1994 and the country started on a path towards the realisation of the dream for which do many sacrifices had been made.

Given these possibilities the question arises, namely, what is the place of prophecy in politics, or what is the place of politics in prophecy? This question implies that there must be a point at which the two overlap. A corollary to the question is which one penetrates deeper into the territory of the other? The tensions and contradictions at the confluence of prophecy and politics are not easy to resolve, depending on which side of the divide one stands.

These tensions are clear in Chikane's book in his attempts, as a prophet, to be politician. There had been a time when he had not had to wrestle with those

tensions and contradictions because the lines between prophecy and politics had been clearly drawn. However, a crisis arises at the point of intersection of the two. How is it possible to sustain the sensitivity of a prophetic conscience in a political game that mocks the institutions and processes of a democracy that represents and, supposedly, protects the will of the people?

This study affirms Reinhold Niebuhr's 1932 thesis – *Moral man and immoral society*. This thesis reveals the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of playing prophet and politician at the same time. Niebuhr argued:

Individual men may be moral in the sense that they are able to consider interests other than their own in determining problems of conduct, and are capable, on occasion, of preferring the advantages of others to their own. They are endowed by nature with a measure of sympathy and consideration for their kind, the breadth of which may be extended by an astute social pedagogy. Their rational faculty prompts them to a sense of justice which educational discipline may refine and purge of egoistic elements until they are able to view a social situation, in which their own interests are involved, with a fair major of objectivity. But all these achievements are more difficult, if not impossible, for human societies and social groups. In every human group there is less reason to guide and check impulse, less capacity for self-transcendence, less ability to comprehend the needs of others and, therefore, more unrestrained egoism than individuals who compose the group reveal in their personal relationships (Niebuhr 1932:xii).

Niebuhr's (1932) thesis suggests that we are more inclined to do justice if we stand alone than if we stand together. Of course, "No man is an island" and, yet, there are moments in history that call for a voice of dissonance. While prophets are society's voice of conscience and morality, politicians are society's administrative machines and, ideally, they execute the will of the people in the structures of power. However, the empirical witness of history is that politicians often go against the will of the people they represent. The 2011/2012 upheavals in the Middle East are a good example of this, showing that the liberators may

very easily turn into tyrants, especially if they perceive (wrongly) that they are the embodiment of all that the people are.

In his book Chikane (2012) provides a perfect example of the dynamics at play in the tensions and contradictions of prophecy and politics. While the book is a record of personal experiences in government, it also gives us a cycloramic view of operations of the ANC post-1994.

### **6.3.3 The prophetic Oscillation**

As the study concludes it reveals the fallacy and futility of what I have termed prophetic-oscillation. Indeed, this is seen in the lives of Boesak and Chikane as they finally fell out of favour with the ANC government and sought to re-establish themselves as Mosaic prophets. In this process they had to walk the thin line of weighing the advantages and disadvantages of “re-prophesying” and personal vendettas.

Their writings after their tenure in government reveal prophets speaking against a government in the name of prophecy and yet lamenting its less than expected delivery as recounted in individual terms. In some ways, to use the poetic words of Langston Hughes so loved by Mbeki: “Their own dreams had been deferred”.

As pointed out earlier, the study concluded that every epoch must have its own prophets. Prophetic-oscillation, from Mosaic to Davidic to Mosaic, is neither feasible nor plausible in the evolving processes of human history simply because the times and role players are different. In every epoch there must be a new role for new prophets with a new anointing for new times.

As the researcher spoke and explored the material produced by Boesak and Chikane after their tenure in government, the assumption grew more and more grounded that they were speaking for themselves and not in the Mosaic trajectory for which they had always been known before apartheid. Boesak started revealing how the ANC had sold out during the CODESA meetings as Chikane sought to rally around him an army of veterans who wanted to restore the ANC to its previous ethic and ethos of liberation. In both situations, these prophets spoke for themselves and exposed weaknesses in the movement they had once cherished. This is far removed from the Mosaic trajectory of prophecy that spoke on God's behalf to the government of the day. Instead, it smacked of personal agendas that had not been met when these prophets were part of the ANC led government.

It would appear that, in the main, the church has been asleep in the face of all the corruption, perhaps occasionally speaking in its sleep. By and large, much of the corruption evolved as Boesak, Chikane and other prophets of the struggle for liberation had been taken up in the ANC political machinery of governance. Willingly or otherwise, their roles switched from Mosaic to Davidic as they became part of the corruption of a system against which they were in no position to prophesy.

#### **6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The research study makes the following recommendations.

#### **6.4.1 Redefining the task of prophetic ministry**

The task of the prophetic ministry is to “bring back the claims of the tradition and the situation of enculturation into an effective interface” (Brueggemann 2001:2). I assume he means a prophetic Hegelian dialectical of the thesis and antithesis that must yield an effective prophetic synthesis of a situation. If not, the message of the tradition will be irrelevant because it belongs to another era.

I have relentlessly argued throughout this study that this is the task of new prophets with a new anointing. However, this does not, necessarily, mean that the “old prophets” cannot speak to new situations but they will probably lack the credibility and authentic sharpness with which they spoke in their times. In a sense, the old prophets such as Boesak and Chikane have been compromised by their participation in the corruption in the structure of powers of which they became part. Their writing beyond their tenure in these corrupt structures and their insensitivity to what was happening has contributed to the predicament in respect of the silence of the church. There is no doubt they were not able to speak because they were also benefiting from the amassing of wealth by the government of which they were part. Although it is possible that they did not benefit materially or otherwise, they could not speak to the situation because they were part of the political practices of corruption, whether overt or covert.

According to Brueggemann (2001:2), any study of Old Testament prophets must take into consideration “the discernment of contemporary scholarship and what the tradition itself seems to tell us”. The tensions will be unavoidable, precisely for the reasons of prophetic-oscillation discussed above but they should not be ignored. While informed tenets of good research and scholarship are important,

prophecy cannot be practised in a socio-political vacuum. It was, after all, to the socio-political situation of their times that most prophets spoke during the apartheid era.

Ultimately, it is the tradition itself that must provide a blueprint of what the prophetic ministry entails, especially in respect of its task of future-telling (Brueggemann 2001:2). A prophecy that is devoid of warning the present about the dangers of the future is as blind as the prophetic message that emphasises personal trepidations in the name of God and which are so prevalent in the charismatic churches, particular. Thus, an authentic prophetic ministry must facilitate the creation of new visions and new directions. Essentially, a genuine prophetic ministry must, among other things, embrace future judgements of persons and nations that insist on prophetic aberrations in the name of God. Thus, Brueggemann (2001:3) insists that the task of a prophetic ministry is to

... nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us.

An authentic prophetic ministry must refuse to be domesticated, instead insisting on standing above and within the situation in which it proclaims divine oracles. In addition, prophetic ministry must facilitate the processes of developing a new consciousness in every epoch of its calling. As noted above, the main weakness of prophetic-oscillation is its insistence on speaking to the new situation in terms of an older era.

Although the consciousness of the new era may bear some resemblance to that of the old era, it must stand alone and not seek to return to what was held and

interpreted to be truth, especially as it's lost identity. Such loss of identity suggests that it cannot be placed with sufficient trust in the new era.

Their speaking beyond their tenure in government raised many questions about Boesak and Chikane. Would they have spoken if all things had gone according to their expectations? Why did they speak only once the corruption in government had been exposed – corruption which took place in their very presence? Chikane recalled lashing out at Mbeki on the HIV/AIDS question and calling it a “tired stick”, thus betraying his emotional affiliation to the president at a critical moment in history and underplayed the international impact of HIV/AIDS and the international negativity against Mbeki as a result of his denialist stance. It is, perhaps, in the brief analysis of Chikane’s book, *Eight days in September*, that we see how difficult it is to be prophet and politician at the same time.

#### **6.4.2 The alternative community.**

Walter Brueggemann (2001:1) states:

A study of the prophets of Israel must try to take into account both the evidence of the Old Testament and the contemporary situation of the church. What we understand about the Old Testament must be somehow connected with the realities of the church today.

He goes on to say that “the contemporary American church is so largely enculturated to the American ethos of consumerism that it has little power to believe or to act” (Brueggemann 2001:1). This observation of his of the American situation is just as true, at least in relation to the research question, as the situation of the church and its Mosaic prophets in South Africa. This study argues that the issues of corruption around the silence of the church in this country may be ascribed, primarily, to an adaptation to an ethos of entitlement and consumerism, both in the church and in society. This study has confirmed that the majority of the prophets of the Kairos Tradition fell silent because they had been consumed by the emerging and evolving culture of consumerism and corruption that became so characteristic of the ANC government after 1994.

As Brueggemann points out so decisively, that problem is not a government problem only as it also permeates society and its different echelons. To be was to have, as the ethos internalised from apartheid oppressors became the demon we inherited, internalised and actualised. The priorities of government as well as personal priorities changed instantaneously and people hurried to hoard and seize the new wealth opportunities that had come with the new epoch. The church and its prophets, consciously or otherwise, were drawn into the whirlwind of profiteering at the expense of the poor. This was especially evident in the



consumerism so fervently espoused by the so-called charismatic churches in the Pentecostal tradition. According to Brueggemann (2001:1), “our consciousness has been claimed by false fields of perception and idolatrous systems of language and rhetoric”.

The problem, Brueggemann argues, is that, in the process, we have lost “identity through the abandonment of the faith tradition” (Brueggemann 2001:1). Consciously or otherwise, we have begun to swim against the tide of history as we began to depreciate memory and ridicule hope with our culture being threatened by energising memories and radical hopes.

The study concludes that this loss of identity was primarily responsible for the silence of the church in the face of corruption – as the prophets became politicians, their radical message of hope for the oppressed was lost. Again, consciously or otherwise, the church and its prophets suffered amnesia as they lived unauthorised lives of faith and practised unauthorised ministries – unauthorised because the church and its prophets did what they did during their period of “amnesia” in the name of God as they sought to undo during their Kairos moments of prophecy.

How then do the Kairos prophets climb out of this black hole and re-find their place in prophetic ministry? Brueggemann (2001:2) affirms that:

The church will not have power to act or believe until it recovers its tradition of faith and permits that tradition to be the primal way out of enculturation.

Brueggemann may well have cried out: “Remove not the ancient landmarks which thy fathers have set” (Proverbs 22: 28). As he states, this is not a call for

*traditionalism* but an indictment on the depreciation of the authenticity and credibility of the message such as we find in what I have termed prophetic-oscillation. This study has sought to demonstrate that, as Boesak and Chikane sought to re-establish themselves as prophets, they spoke more for themselves and their apprehensions about the ANC than for God.

#### **6.4.3 Standing where God stands prophetically**

If we are to be theologically and prophetically correct in the future, it is imperative that we adopt the Belhar Confession of the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa. The Belhar Confession is a call for the church “to stand where God stands and is always to be found, namely, on the side of the poor and the oppressed, the weak and the excluded” (Boesak 2005:157). The poor and the dispossessed are the privileged ones in God’s kingdom (Gutierrez 1984:9). Segundo (1993:125) expressed this as follows:

I do not believe that there is any other way of expressing the option of the poor concretely than to say it is God’s compassion for the most afflicted.

The poor and the oppressed are never violent although they always rise up against the surreptitious violence that is visited on them by what Adam Smith terms the “invisible hand of justice” (Smith 1994). They live in dire poverty and in appalling living conditions while the politicians, captains of industry and policy makers feed each other’s egos in the ivory towers of economic forums or in the sumptuous boardrooms of the giant multinationals. Marikana provided unambiguous evidence of how the poor and oppressed became victims of violence they had not created. As Freire (1970:40–41) points out:

Any situation in which “A” objectively exploits “B” or hinders his pursuit for self affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression. Such a situation, in itself, constitutes violence, even when sweetened by false generosity, because it interferes with man’s ontological and historical vocation to be fully human.

Theologically and prophetically “to stand where God stands” demands true liberation for both the oppressor and the oppressed when we resurface and re-engage our mental models of what it means to be truly human. We must rise where Dr Verwoerd sought to bury us.

To stand where God stands is an identification with a “preferential option” for the poor. It is vital that the church and its theology concretely express and demonstrate an option for the poor. If God is unequivocally on the side of the poor, the church cannot afford to be on a different side (Buffel 2007:11).

#### 6.4.4 The message of the eighth century prophets for today

Niebuhr (1935:22) states that:

The ethic of Jesus is the perfect fruit of prophetic religion. Its ideal of love has the same relation to the facts and necessities of human experience as the God of prophetic faith has to the world.

In short, Niebuhr is saying that God is involved in all dimensions of the unfolding processes of human history. Generally speaking, human relations on every level do not pay attention to this and human agencies resort to either their own stupidity or astuteness to resolve the crises of conflict. Yet, as Niebuhr (1932:1) again observes:

For all the centuries of experience, men have not yet learned how to live together without compounding their vices and covering each other "with mud and blood." The society in which each man lives is at once the basis for, and a nemesis of, that fullness of life which each man seeks.

If Niebuhr is right, then conflict is a perennial factor in human existence and history has not proven otherwise. Most of the champions of a good cause in the human situation are, implicitly or explicitly, ultimately speaking for themselves. This is a demonic aspect of human history that cannot be overridden by rationale or a mere appeal to decency. According to Niebuhr (1932:1) "*Man, unlike other creatures, is gifted and cursed with an imagination which extends his appetites beyond the requirements of subsistence*".

If considered in the context of this Niebuhrian perspective, then Boesak and Chikane's prophetic mission is wanting. They ignored the fact that conflict is always form part of human relations. They totally undermined the effects of the human impulse on the "will to power" (Nietzsche, Adler). Power is at the centre of

human conflict, and human beings in pursuit of power will leave no stone unturned, even if this to their own detriment.

As prophets, Boesak and Chikane ought to have known that the problems witnessed in the social and political arenas are part of a wider problem, namely, the human predicament in the human situation. As human beings, we are unable to rescue ourselves and every effort in the human enterprise provides empirical evidence of this failure. This is the juncture of prophecy because it transcends the human situation. Thus, as Paul warned (Romans 2:1): “You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else for, at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself because you, who pass judgment, do the same things.” It is not possible for a situation to successfully be its own measure by comparing itself to itself.

Chikane’s book is a record of the absolute disillusionment and revulsion he feels in respect of those who sought to nullify Mbeki’s legacy. We may never know the truth behind either the firing of Madlala-Routledge or Zuma’s expulsion from parliament, just as we may never know the truth about the factors that contributed to the build-up to the Polokwane insurrection and Mbeki’s final recall from parliament. The truth lies deep in the subconscious of the perpetrators of these actions and the rest of us may only wonder. These actions, including Chikane’s own actions, are not foreign to human behaviour.

Chikane’s moral woes are compounded by the fact that he is a professing Christian and, therefore, he owes allegiance and loyalty only to Christ. His defence of Mbeki is almost idolatrous and, in the process, his prophetic mission is

severely compromised. Genuine prophecy is marked by its ability to stand above the situation in which it manifests. Both Boesak and Chikane were caught up in the exigencies of the political arena and the transcendent element of their prophecy was overwhelmed. There is no perfect solution for the exigencies of human existence and, thus, even democracy, albeit necessary, is not perfect. However, an imperfect democracy makes a Mosaic prophecy indispensable.

A prophet represents God in the human situation and, thus, a prophet's ethic must be rooted in the ethic of Jesus. The ideal of *agape*, even as a possible impossibility (Niebuhr 1935:135), has become a desperate imperative in human relations. Martin Luther King's words are still as relevant today for South Africa as they are for the world community:

We must all learn to live together as brothers (and sisters) or we will perish together as fools. This is the great challenge of the hour. This is true of individuals. It is true of nations. No individual can live alone. No nation can live alone.

An astute pedagogy, as Niebuhr (1932:25) argues, is not the total answer to the woes of the human situation although it does enable people's natural capacities to flow in harmony with others. A prophet who participates in the situation on which they must prophesy loses all credibility as a prophet. Society is divided and a prophet must reconcile, first to God and then to others. However, this role is compromised when the prophet is adorned with the robes of a political party.

Prophecy can be very controversial and dangerous, especially in situations in which it goes against the popular political tide. Nevertheless, it must maintain its

position both ahead and beyond the situation. Polokwane revealed to South Africa that South Africa was gradually sliding into political chaos. It is vital that both Boesak and Chikane resolve the crisis of their political and prophetic roles in society; otherwise they will lose integrity in both. Although it is incumbent on Christians to participate in politics not every Christian is a prophet. Are Boesak and Chikane prophets or politicians? In their writings after their tenure in government, they speak as politicians in the guise of prophets. In the final analysis they, like all politicians, spoke for themselves.

## **6.5 CONTRIBUTION**

This study focused on two prophets, namely, Allan Boesak and Frank Chikane, as the subject of inquiry in the context of the main research question. Why did they fall silent when the situation was obviously spiralling out of control? What happened to the God they had championed in the Kairos Document and the Belhar Confession? Does God change when the oppressed overthrew the oppressors to become the new forces of power in the name of the masses who had voted them into power? Worse still; why did they begin to speak out only once they had fallen out of favour with a government of which they had become part. What are the implications of such ironies, tensions and contradictions for a prophetic theology inspired by standing where God stands, as implied in both the Kairos Document and the Belhar Confession?

As South Africa heads for elections in 2019, this study submits that a major crisis in the new dispensation is presenting the challenge to map out new political directions after 300 years of political oppression. It is vital that this void is addressed and that new and dynamic questions are asked in relation to mapping

a way forward. The year 1994 saw the realisation of a vision that had been articulated earlier by the stalwarts of the liberations struggle in the past. However, the new ideologies and theologies need to be forward looking while also articulating a vision for the next 100 years. This, I submit, is the task of a new prophetic theology that looks deeply into the future and tries to avoid the mistakes of the past. Such a theology must be informed by the social, political and economic contexts in which it seeks to prophesy. However, while it is contextual, it must also transcend its times. This, the study ascertained was the weakness of prophetic theology in the times of Boesak and Chikane.

It is anticipated that the study will contribute towards a theology informed by the economic perspectives of the future. In many quarters the following question is being posed, namely, "Does democracy have a future?" The very architects of democracy are now questioning the democratic models that promised peace, liberty, and prosperity for all. As some historians (Schlesinger, 1997) are asking about the universalisation of liberal democracy, "Did not the same hope accompany the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century?" How is it then that the most terrible hundred years in Western history are now being threatened by people of the likes of President Trump and his associates? What will be the prospects of politics and prophecy in the evolving economic processes of Africa as a continent? There are no longer threats being posed in the form of western imperialism or colonialism, but China is increasingly encroaching on and occupying the economic landscape in Africa (O'Shea 2012; Turner 2013). Can Africa afford to continue to see herself again in the geographical fragments which were imposed upon her by western colonialism and imperialism? Is the call for an African Renaissance (Zeleza 2009), made by former President Thabo Mbeki, still



valid? These are new questions that demand dynamic and new directions in both politics and prophecy (Lisakafu 2017).

## **6.6 CONCLUSION**

The point of prophetic-oscillation has been argued vociferously in the previous chapters. This study has demonstrated that no prophet is a prophet for all seasons. Indeed, this is, in fact, an affirmation of scripture, namely, every era had its own prophets. The problem that characterised both Boesak and Chikane was their attempts to prophesy for all seasons. The study concluded that, as a new democratic dispensation unfolds, it will demand its own prophets. However, much as these prophets must be informed by the past, their oracles will also be determined by a new socio-political context. It is, therefore, important that prophets in any era do not consider their message as a message of all times. Thus, the prophetic imperative of older prophets must create space for newer prophets with a new message. It is, therefore, clear that the church was not able to speak to the corruptions in the new political dispensation because the older prophets and politicians could not articulate a new vision and, therefore, they did not have a new message for the time. Their challenge lay in ensuring that the vision articulated by earlier generations was delivered intact. In the process, however, this vision was almost destroyed.

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