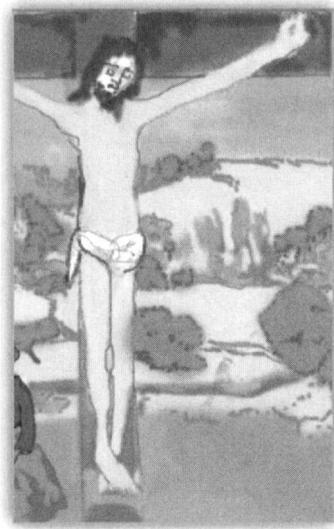


Christ Divided

CHRIST DIVIDED



Liberalism, Ecumenism and Race in South Africa



DAVID THOMAS

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA
PRETORIA

To my parents Garrett and Evelyn, good and faithful servants of their Christ, and also to Professor David Bosch, outstanding Christian and pre-eminent scholar.

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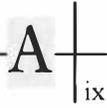
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The ultimate reason for this book being published is the lifework of Nelson Mandela. The epoch-making changes in South Africa during the 1990s – due above all to his courage and vision, among other things – set off a chain of events in the academic world which led to the manuscript being placed before, and finally being accepted by, the Publications Committee of the University of South Africa (Unisa). In that process, Professor Greg Cuthbertson of the History Department of Unisa played a crucial role and profound thanks are due to him and his wife, Mary-Lynne Suttie, for their kindly help, support and encouragement. That so fine a scholar as Gregor Cuthbertson thought my work worth publishing gave me the confidence to believe that it could add something of significance to the literature in the field which it covers. Professor Klippiess Kritizinger of the Theology Faculty was also enormously kind and helpful. My admiration for him and his work is unbounded. I need to say a word of thanks to my brother Edward, currently living in Luxembourg, with whom I disagree strongly on just about every question of philosophy and politics. He has always been willing to overlook what in his eyes are my ideological miscreancies and it was due to him that contacts were initially set up between myself and Professor

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David Thomas
Sydney, Australia
June 2002.

ABBREVIATIONS



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AACC	All-Africa Conference of Churches
AIC	Africa Initiated Church
AICA	African Independent Churches Association
ANC	African National Congress
Azapo	Azanian People's Organisation
BCC	British Council of Churches
BPC	Bantu Presbyterian Church
CCQ	Christian Council Quarterly
CCSA	Christian Council of South Africa
CI	Christian Institute
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CPSA	Church of the Province of South Africa
CWME	Commission on World Mission and Evangelism
FELCSA	Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in South Africa
GMC	General Missionary Council
ICT	Institute for Contextual Theology
ICU	Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union
IMC	International Missionary Council
<i>IRM</i>	<i>International Review of Missions</i>
LMS	London Missionary Society
NG	Nederduitse Gereformeerde
NGK	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk
NGKA	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika
NHK	Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk
NGSK	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PCR	Programme to Combat Racism
PCSA	Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa
PPF	Progressive Federal Party
RCA	Reformed Church in Africa
SABRA	South African Bureau of Racial Affairs
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations

SANNC	South African Native National Congress
SAP	South African Party
SASO	South African Students' Organisation
SCA	Students' Christian Association
SPG	Society for the Propagation of the Gospel
SPROCAS	Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society
UCM	University Christian Movement
USPG	United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel
WARC	World Alliance of Reformed Churches
WCC	World Council of Churches
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
ZCC	Zion Christian Church

Christian Conquest,
Christian Division
in
South Africa

In 1820, the Methodist missionary William Shaw wrote to his London committee that there was only one mission station between his place of residence and the northern extremity of the Red Sea. There were ‘no people professedly Christian, with the exception of those in Abyssinia’.¹ At that time Shaw was living about 40 km south of Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, and as his words indicated, Christianity was then a very minor religion in sub-Saharan Africa, practised mainly by white settlers on the southern margins of the continent.

Had he been able to enter a time capsule and travel into the future, Shaw would no doubt have been gratified by the progress of Christianity in Southern Africa, even during his lifetime. By 1850 12 mission societies were active in the region; by 1900 the number had risen to 30.² Thereafter, their numbers grew at such a pace that some missionaries began to see this as too much of a good thing. ‘When I came here in 1905 I was happy to get acquainted with every new society, thinking the more of these there are the better,’ the Rev J Sandstrom told the General Missionary Conference in 1921. ‘Today, having suffered more severely every new year from rivalry, overlapping and false competition . . .

I wish that God would put half of us in a big aeroplane and drive us to Central Africa.’³ However much people like Sandstrom deplored the exploding number of mission societies, Christian profession expanded enormously among the African population in the mid-twentieth century.

The 1946 census showed that the Christian proportion of the population had passed 50 per cent and the growth continued unabated until 1970 as the figures set out in Table 1 show:

TABLE 1: *Christian population 1946 to 1970*

Year	Christian percentage of African population	Christian percentage of white population	Christian percentage of total population
1946	52	94	63
1960	67	97	74
1970	71	93	75

Thus, 150 years after Shaw had penned his letter, the advance of Christianity in South Africa had been spectacular, particularly when compared with Asian mission fields such as India, China and Japan where it made much less headway against the ancient and entrenched religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. However, perhaps even more significant than this numerical advance was that after 150 years, black⁴ Christians, whose forebears had been the object of missionary work, had finally broken free of that chrysalis, and were throwing off white tutelage and dominance. They were moving into leadership positions in the churches, and taking control of their direction and destiny. Their quest for black ecclesiastical selfhood would also have an important effect on the quest to challenge, and eventually defeat, the political system of apartheid (Afrikaans for ‘segregation’).

This movement can best be appreciated by looking at the way the membership of the leading ecumenical organisation at that time, the South African Council of Churches (SACC), was changing. Developments in South Africa, in which autonomous black churches were emerging to replace the work of mission societies, were far advanced by 1970. It was over the next five years, however, that those developments came to their full fruition. As is detailed later in this work, the significance of the early 1970s in this regard was most clearly encapsulated by the move into full membership of the council by the black *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika* (NGKA) ('Dutch Reformed Church in Africa') in 1975. That signalled that not only had the composition of the Council altered radically, but that it was also ready to move in bold new ideological directions. It is for this reason that 1975 has been chosen as the 'cut-off date' for this work, although the momentous developments in the last 25 years of the twentieth century are touched on in the last chapter.

How would one account to William Shaw for the spread of Christianity in South Africa? No doubt he, along with many modern scholars, would attribute it to the work of missionaries. By the end of the nineteenth century, South Africa had become one of the most intensively worked mission fields anywhere in the world.⁵ However, it was not the plethora of missions which made the major contribution to the expansion of Christianity evident in the figures as cited in Table 1. This is indicated by the fact that the greatest advance of Christianity did not happen during the 'great century of missions' which very roughly coincided with the nineteenth century. During that era, Christianity grew relatively slowly; the 1921 census showed that only about a third of the black population had become Christians by that date. It was over the next 50 years when missions had lost their drive for converting the 'heathen' and were in decline, that the Christian proportion of the black population leapt from 33 to 75 per cent.

Much more important to the growth of Christianity than the missions were the activities of locally based churches; both those of the 'mainline' variety and also the enormous number of 'African Independent' or 'Africa Initiated Churches' (AICs) which emerged as breakaway offshoots of mission societies and major denominations from the late nineteenth century onwards. The mainline denominations, particularly the Anglican and Methodist Churches, as well as the Roman Catholic Church and the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* (NGK), had two major advantages over the mission societies. Firstly, as is detailed in Chapter Two, they were able to deploy much larger resources of personnel and finance. Secondly, they worked on a countrywide basis. Crucially, this enabled them to be active in the burgeoning urban centres, which grew rapidly after the discovery of diamonds and gold, and as a result of concomitant industrialisation. Another major factor accounting for the success of these churches was their dominance of education, which lasted for over a century and which was only brought to an end when the State took it over in 1954. Schools were an extremely effective tool for expanding church membership, and working out of this and a multiplicity of other bases, the churches were able to set in motion a 'snowball effect' of conversion, in which local indigenous people themselves played a major role. An anecdote from the early twentieth century serves to illustrate the point. Canon E Farmer of the Church of the Province of South Africa (CPSA) reported that when he set about organising theological training for Africans in the Transvaal, he found some 60 African men who had been converted to Christianity while working as migrant labourers in urban areas. On returning to their homes, 'instead of falling away, as might have been expected, without a thought of pay . . . they set to work to preach the Gospel to their fellow creatures'.⁶

With nothing like as large resources or as many schools, the mission societies tended to work on a more limited geographical basis, and to focus on rural areas. The AICs, of course, had even

fewer financial resources, but they benefited from the spread of the mainline churches, which prepared a seedbed of Christian belief and organisation, particularly in urban areas. This enabled the AICs to sprout and flourish widely, particularly after industrialisation began to erode the social cohesion provided by tribal structures. Those who found the mainline churches and missions unsatisfying and stultifying could find in the AICs a sense of belonging they had lost as older traditional societies crumbled both in urban and rural areas. The number of AICs proliferated enormously across the country, so that what these churches lacked in financial resources, they more than made up for in their sheer numbers. Thus this movement too was operating from a multiplicity of bases.

That churches rather than missions dominated the South African mission field is a point of major importance. Had this not been the case, the advance of Christianity would probably have been much slower. The domination of the churches set the country apart from mission fields in most other parts of the world and, as will be pointed out, from the missionary movement as a whole. Moreover, it is further argued in this study that the dominance of churches in the South African situation was to have profound consequences for patterns of race relations, not only in the churches, but also in the broader political sphere.

Christ divided

While Shaw might have been gratified that efforts to bring Christ to South Africa had been so successful, he might have been unsettled to find that by the mid-twentieth century Christ was deeply and bitterly divided between opposing blocs of Christians. Those divisions were not based on the old theological and doctrinal divisions of Europe and North America (although they certainly were present). Here the issue centred on the differing responses of missions and churches to a simple yet fundamental question: What is the best, the most 'Christian', way of dealing with racial

and cultural differences among believers? The answer of one group of Christians was that while these differences were real, none the less they needed to be subordinated to the broader unity proclaimed by St Paul when he said: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, bond nor free, for all are one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:11). This theology was realised in unitary church structures which, in theory, were colour-blind and did not take account of racial difference. This may be described as the integrationist or assimilationist position. In contrast, those who held the opposite position believed that ethnic difference had been ordained by God and should therefore be hallowed not only on theological grounds, but also needed to be given concrete, structural expression. In terms of this theology, churches were segregated on racial and ethnic lines and, it is argued by some scholars such as Kinghorn, white politicians took a lead from this model when they created the apartheid State. Thus this can be described as the *segregationist* or as the *apartheid* position.

These are very broad categorisations and each contains within itself many permutations and qualifications. For instance, a major mission theology, which went under the name of the 'three-self formula' and which originated in Britain and the United States of America (USA) during the nineteenth century, promoted the planting of separate ethnic churches not for theological but for purely pragmatic reasons. That approach could not in fairness be described as supporting an ideologically segregationist position, although it did give comfort to more overt supporters of apartheid during the twentieth century. Then there is the difficulty of slotting the AICs into either of the two positions as discussed later. These were exclusively black churches, but again, they could hardly be described as supporters of segregation, let alone apartheid.

In theory, neither the adherents to the integrationist/assimilationist nor the segregationist/apartheid theologies would have claimed their positions to be absolute. Those of the integrationist persua-

sion would not have denied either the existence or the importance of cultural and ethnic difference, and those in the segregationist camp would not deny the need for an overarching unity among Christians. None the less, the seemingly life-and-death nature of the struggle which developed between them tended to make the partisans of both sides absolutise their positions and to accuse each other not only of theological error, but, in time, of actual heresy.

This study, it needs to be said at the outset, does not attempt to be a comprehensive history of Christianity in South Africa. Instead, it focuses on that group of churches which adopted the integrationist/assimilationist position and which came to be comprehended in the term *liberalism*. As is explained in Chapter Three, liberalism in this sense applied to issues concerning race relations and was seen to be the opposite pole to racial segregation or as it later became known, as apartheid. However, the liberalism of these churches was also strongly associated with a philosophy favouring racial assimilation which held up white, Western culture as an ideal type of 'civilisation' to which people of all other cultures were expected to aspire and attain. The investigation and dissection of this brand of liberalism is, as its title suggests, a major objective of this book.

That issue is dealt with mostly on an institutional level. Little attempt is made to delve into personal and individual histories or even the collective history of people at the grass-roots level of the churches and it must be frankly admitted this constitutes a lack. It can only be pointed out to future scholars that an investigation of the thinking and theologies of ordinary members of churches constitutes a rich and colourful tapestry waiting to be woven. This has already been done to some extent for the members of the AICs and the fascination of their stories has already produced a vast corpus of literature. However, although seemingly less 'romantic', the stories of members of the mainline churches should

be no less fascinating because here can be tested whether the meta-Christian narrative propounded by these churches has indeed fundamentally changed the age-old spiritualities of Africa or whether it has been merely a 'berg wind', forcing the grasses of the plains to bow before it, only for them to spring back again once its energy is expended.

The Ecumenical Bloc and liberalism

Table 2 sets out the names of the churches which came to be identified with the liberal position. They are also often comprehended under the collective title of the *English-speaking churches*, since the most prominent among them sprang from the English-speaking, Protestant British Isles. The largest of these were the Methodist and the Anglican CPSA, while the much smaller Presbyterian Church and the Congregational Union of Southern Africa were also of British origin. However, to describe all churches in this grouping as English-speaking would be a misnomer, because a good number of them originated in Continental European mission societies. The earliest of these was that of the Moravians whose activities began in the eighteenth century and who, in time, founded two local Moravian churches, those of the Eastern and Western Cape. Other Continental missions included the Rhenish Mission which established itself in South Africa in 1829, the Berlin Mission (1834) and the Hermannsburg Mission (1854). Between them they founded the four Lutheran churches specified in Table 2, while the Tsonga Presbyterian Church was founded by the Swiss Reformed Mission. None of these missions and churches had any white membership apart from German and French-speaking missionaries. Moreover, while English was the official language and lingua franca of those churches that originated in Britain, it was not the home language of the great majority of their members, who were black.

Rather than language, it is suggested, a more important distinguishing characteristic of these churches is that they subscribed

TABLE 2: *Membership of the South African Council of Churches, 1975*

Black churches founded by mission societies	African independent churches	Multiracial with a black majority	Multiracial with a white majority	White churches	Mission societies
Bantu Presbyterian Church	National Baptist Church	Church of the Province of South Africa	Presbyterian Church of South Africa	Baptist Union*	Paris Evangelical Mission
Evangelical Lutheran Church Cape/Orange	African Baptist Church	Methodist Church of South Africa	Salvation Army	Evangelical Lutheran (Transvaal)*	
Evangelical Lutheran Church South Eastern Region	African Methodist Episcopal Church	United Congregational Church of South Africa	Society of Friends (Quakers)		
Evangelical Lutheran Church Transvaal		Roman Catholic*			
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tswana Region					
Moravian Church Eastern Cape					
Moravian Church Western Cape					
Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika					
Tsonga Presbyterian					
United Methodist					
United Evangelical Lutheran Church of South West Africa*					

Key: * These were observer member churches which while having full rights of participation and speech in the organisation, did not have voting rights on its committees or national conference

to, and were officially associated with, the ecumenical movements, both on a local level and in the international sphere. Thus the collective term I have chosen to apply to these churches is the *Ecumenical Bloc*. It was these churches that were among the core members of the first national ecumenical body – the General Missionary Council (GMC) founded in 1904 – as they were of its successor bodies the Christian Council of South Africa (CCSA) founded in 1936 and the SACC, established in 1968. They also

had strong links to international ecumenical bodies such as the International Missionary Council (IMC), the Faith and Order movement, the Life and Work movement, which emerged in the period between the world wars and, of course, after 1948, with the World Council of Churches (WCC). These ecumenical links have had a continuous and profound effect on the churches of this bloc, but their liberal philosophy and theology also affected the nature of ecumenism in South Africa which tended to run on a parallel, yet distinct, track to that of the international ecumenical movement for most of the twentieth century. This led to a rising clash between the two, which was resolved in the fateful years of the early 1970s as a result of the takeover of the Ecumenical Bloc by black South African churchmen.

What is evident from Table 2 is that by far the majority of the member churches of the SACC had their origins in mission societies, which might seem to contradict what was said before about the dominance of churches in the mission field. However, statistics would show that the membership of the Anglican CPSA and the Methodist Church had always dwarfed that of other missions and churches in the Ecumenical Bloc. It was the theology and mission policy of these two churches that dominated the thinking of that bloc, although the much smaller missions and churches based on Congregationalism and Scots Presbyterianism were also to make a significant contribution to the liberal ideology which emerged in this bloc.

The Ecumenical Bloc, as mentioned earlier, comprised for most of the period under review Protestant denominations and mission societies, and it was these which both on a local and on the international level constituted the driving force of the ecumenical movement. It is for this reason that the Catholic Church hardly figures at all in this study. Although it had done very powerful missionary work in South Africa – which, by 1970, had gained it 1.3 million African members and therefore had to deal with the questions of

ethnicity and culture as much as any other denomination – it was perhaps the most assimilationist of any in the positions it adopted on this score. However, for over a century it did not take any significant part in the debate over racial issues which raged between Ecumenical Bloc churches and those which supported the segregation/apartheid position.⁷ The Catholic Church remained aloof from the ecumenical movement as a whole and also the institutional expressions of that movement until after the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s. Only in 1967 did the Catholic Church begin to associate itself more closely with the Ecumenical Bloc, and then only as an observer member of the CCSA. It did take a much more prominent role in the struggle against apartheid after 1975, but that it falls outside of the timeframe of this book is another reason for the Catholic Church not receiving any major attention in this work.

The Ecumenical Bloc, comprising 40 per cent of all Christians in South Africa, was larger than any of the other three major groupings of churches. These I have chosen to call the *Dutch Reformed Bloc*, the *AIC Bloc* and the *Pentecostal Bloc*. Because the major focus of this study is on the Ecumenical Bloc, none of the other blocs are dealt with in the same historical detail and they are considered only insofar as they impacted on the Ecumenical Bloc itself. However, some basic facts and figures about these blocs need to be set out here.

The Dutch Reformed Bloc and apartheid

This comprised the ‘Afrikaans-speaking’ churches, directly descended from the Reformed Church of the Netherlands brought to South Africa by Dutch settlers and colonists from the mid seventeenth century onwards. It was much smaller than the Ecumenical Bloc, with only around ten per cent of the total number of those who professed Christianity in South Africa. However, in terms of wealth and power it easily matched the resources of even the largest churches of the Ecumenical Bloc, particularly because

after 1948 the members of successive apartheid-supporting Nationalist governments, practically without exception, were members of these churches. The close collusion between Church and State was reinforced by the fact that the leading members of both the Nationalist government and the Dutch Reformed churches belonged to the secret society known as the *Afrikaner Broederbond*, or the 'Band of Afrikaner Brothers'. That body was widely and popularly believed to be the *éminence grise* guiding the policies and particularly the apartheid policies of the Nationalist government.

There were, and are, both black and white churches in the Dutch Reformed Bloc. These were:

The NGK, with two-and-a-half million white members, was the largest of the three. This was, in fact, the oldest, autonomous denomination in South Africa, having become independent of its 'mother church' in the Netherlands in 1824. It commenced mission work among the indigenous peoples of South Africa in 1826, as a result of which the three black churches of this bloc were created. They were:

- The Nederduits Gereformeerde Sendingkerk (NGSK) (the 'Mission Church') which comprised people of mixed race, known both officially and popularly as *coloureds*, founded in 1881, and with a membership of 573 400 in 1970.
- The NGKA for African people, founded in 1963 as an offshoot of the NGSK with a membership of 924 000. In 1994 it should be said, these two churches attempted, once more, to join together in the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa.
- The Reformed Church in Africa (RCA) for Indian people, founded in 1968. Its membership totalled only a few thousand.

From 1959 onwards, these churches were linked in a 'Federal Council of Dutch Reformed Churches', the member churches of

which met for consultation every four years. In 1982 this body was transformed into a General Synod with some limited jurisdiction and which, from then on, met every two years.⁸ As will be seen, its member churches were separated on ethnic lines. This, of course, was very much in line with the doctrines of apartheid, although these ethnic divisions were also in line with that strand of thinking in the international missionary movement which favoured the creation of 'three-self' churches. Still, while they were born of apartheid thinking, in time, the black Dutch Reformed churches were to reject it decisively. This was expressed in the 1994 formation of the Uniting Reformed Church which attempted to bring the NGSK and the NGKA together in one body. However, earlier than this, these churches had made clear their rejection of apartheid by moving into membership with the SACC. They were to play a crucial role in forcing the abandonment of apartheid in both Church and State in the last two decades of the twentieth century.

The two other white churches in the Dutch Reformed Bloc were both offshoots of the NGK. They were the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk (NHK), founded in 1855, the membership of which originally comprised those Boers who had trekked away from the Cape Colony in 1838 and the Gereformeerde Kerk ('Dutch Reformed') (NG) which, in turn, broke away from the NHK in 1857, because it deemed that church to be too theologically liberal. One of its most famous members was President Paul Kruger of the Transvaal, while the last white president of South Africa, F W de Klerk, was also a member of this church.

These churches will receive minimal attention, since they were much smaller than the NGK and their mission work was negligible. The main differences between the three churches were on points of organisation and theology. One issue on which they did agree was in their support of both segregation and apartheid. That put them at odds, not only with the churches and organisations of

the Ecumenical Bloc, but also with international ecumenical organisations in which they held membership. These included the WCC, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) (a grouping of churches with a Calvinist base) and the much smaller, more conservative, Reformed Ecumenical Synod. In time, they were either suspended or felt themselves obliged to withdraw from these bodies.

The AIC Bloc and the search for black selfhood

The AICs began to emerge in the 1880s and a century later comprised almost half of all blacks who professed Christianity in South Africa.⁹ However, while numerically powerful, they were fissiparated among 4 000 and 6 000 different bodies – some, like the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) numbering their adherents in millions, but a very large number having no more than 20 to 30 members. Their history, beliefs and practices have been documented extensively elsewhere and therefore need not be covered here.¹⁰ What is important from the viewpoint of this study is their *raison d'être* and where they fit into the two broad categorisations relating to ethnic and cultural identity discussed earlier.

This immediately indicates the difficulties posed by those categorisations, because as already stated, using them in a simple sense would place the AICs in the segregationist camp, since these churches overwhelmingly saw themselves as exclusively African expressions of Christianity and seldom tried to include any ethnic groups apart from Africans in their membership. However, it could be said that their segregationist approaches were not due to any racist consciousness; rather, they arose from a search for, and as expression of, African selfhood. This did not involve notions of racial superiority or rejection of other races or of churches containing, and even dominated by, members of other racial groups. As will be demonstrated, practically from the outset many AICs sought to associate themselves with ecumenical organisations such

as the GMC and in the later part of the twentieth century, with bodies such as the Christian Institute (CI) and the SACC, even when they were white dominated.

The AICs do not figure largely in this study because, for one thing, they never actively concerned themselves with the great and bitter debates over race and culture which raged between the other two blocs. While especially the 'Ethiopian' sector of these churches did have an impact on the politics of South Africa, their political concerns waned after the 1930s, according to Pretorius and Jafta. Today, they write, the attitude of one of the largest of the AICs, the ZCC, 'of urging its adherents to be obedient citizens represents much political opinion among the AICs'.¹¹ None the less, as will be seen from the following pages, the AICs played an important part as a touchstone which measured changes in thinking of churches in the other two blocs with relation not only to questions of cultural difference, but also to black nationalism, since again, to quote Pretorius and Jafta, 'indigenous church leaders themselves and researchers have demonstrated the influence of millions of AIC members on socio-political developments'.¹²

The Pentecostal Bloc and the quest to be 'apolitical'

Of increasing numerical importance towards the end of the period under study were the Pentecostal and charismatic churches, such as the Apostolic Faith Mission and the Pentecostal Protestant Church. These were white dominated, both numerically and in terms of leadership. While they did develop a significant black following with the passage of time, their teaching and theology were very individualistic, and officially they claimed to be apolitical.¹³ Anderson, however, shows that the Apostolic Faith Mission was strongly racist and that whites retained tight control over it for most of its existence. That meant that this, the largest of the Pentecostal churches, was inevitably giving moral support to apart-

heid. Their black memberships often stepped out of line on this score; a pastor in the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Rev Frank Chikane, became a leading anti-apartheid campaigner, the first director of the radical Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) and then General Secretary of the SACC. That the apartheid government arrested and tortured him, and later targeted him for assassination was just one indication that he had by no means interpreted his Christian profession in the same way as the white leadership of his church.

Still, these churches were mostly silent in the great debates over race and culture between the three major blocs described earlier,¹⁴ which means that they receive no attention in this study.

Whatever the consequences in the form of the divisions described, the advance of Christian profession in South Africa in the 150-odd years after William Shaw was writing to his London Committee, constitutes a notable historical development. Being a man of his time, Shaw might not have been very perturbed to learn that Christianity made its most rapid strides among the black population in that era in which whites exercised dominant political control, something which he would probably have equated with the spread of 'civilisation'. In contrast, many late twentieth-century scholars, particularly those of the neo-Marxist revisionist school, took a much less positive view. They argued that mission work had prepared the ground for white conquest and helped consolidate white control.¹⁵ Mills, for instance, asserts: 'The three Cs (Christianity, civilisation and commerce) were closely interlinked and reinforced each other' and that 'by the end of the [nineteenth] century, Christians were much more inclined to see empire and Christianity as complementary entities than they had been at the beginning.'¹⁶

While it is difficult to deny this point, there is another dimension to this history, because it is also true that the products of missions and missionary work, particularly those of the Dutch Reformed Bloc, were at the forefront of the struggle which wrested political control from the whites in the late twentieth century. This would have surprised Shaw, while Dutch Reformed missionaries would have found it even more disconcerting; it was certainly not something they had anticipated when they set out to ‘convert the heathen to Christ’. However, that endeavour was to produce all kinds of unintended consequences all over the world – perhaps nowhere more so than in South Africa.

Notes

1. G B A Gerdener, ‘The Missionary Situation in South Africa. Paper read before the Christian Council at Johannesburg on 21 January 1937.’ *South African Outlook*, vol 67, no. 816, 1 April 1937, 78–81.
2. J H du Plessis, *A History of Christian Missions in South Africa* (London, 1911).
3. J Sandstrom, ‘Evangelism as the Primary Duty of Missions.’ Report of the Proceedings of the Fifth General Missionary Conference held at Durban, 18 to 22 July 1921 (Johannesburg, 1921), 96–9.
4. The term *black* is used to refer to all people who are not white.
5. Du Plessis, *A History of Christian Missions*, 404
6. O Victor, *The Thin Black Line* (Johannesburg, n.d). The pattern of Africans proving to be the most effective missionaries of all was repeated in many areas of Africa. See also R Gray, *Black Christians and White Missionaries* (London, 1990).
7. While as Walshe shows, pastoral letters of the Roman Catholic Church condemned apartheid from the 1950s onwards and put forward alternatives relating to a wide range of issue, it ‘had a staggeringly long way to go in living up to these ideals’. P Walshe, *Church Versus State in South Africa: The Case of the Christian Institute* (London, 1983).

8. J R Cronjé, *Born to Witness. A Concise History of the Churches Born out of the Mission Work of the Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk) of South Africa* (Pretoria, 1982).
9. H Pretorius and L Jafta, ‘A branch springs out’: African Initiated Churches’, in R Elphick and R Davenport, eds. *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1997), 211–226. In order to avoid the disputes over the best terminology which should be applied to these churches, I have chosen simply to refer to them with the abbreviation ‘AICs’.
10. The stream of publications on the AICs, one of the best known of which is C B M Sundkler’s *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (Oxford, 1961) continues unabated to this day, one of the latest being Allan Anderson’s *Zion and Pentecost. The Spirituality and Experience of Pentecostal and Zionist/Apostolic Churches in South Africa* (Pretoria, 2000). Sundkler and C A Steed point out that a bibliography on AICs in Africa as a whole by Harold B Turner published in 1977 ‘holds 1,906 titles and since then no doubt some thousands more have been added to this bounty’. *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge, 2000), 1 032–3.
11. B Sundkler and C Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, 224. Kiernan states that both the Ethiopian and Zionist strains of the AICs have, by and large, eschewed direct political involvement. The Zionists in particular ‘are not only politically neutral but intensely anti-political’. ‘The African Independent Churches’, in M Prozesky, and J de Gruchy eds. *Living Faiths in South Africa* (London, Hurst and Company, 1995), 116–128.
12. Pretorius and Jafta, *Christianity in South Africa*, 224.
13. A Anderson, *Zion and Pentecost. The Spirituality and Experience of Pentecostal and Zionist/Apostolic Churches in South Africa* (Pretoria, 2000).
14. While there were attempts in the 1980s to change this situation by a small, but influential sector of the Pentecostal movement ‘they did not elicit any widespread support’, says Anderson. *Zion and Pentecost*, 96.
15. For that reason, they tend to be hostile to the missions and as Etherington notes: ‘These days, most hostility to missions comes from within the

clergy and departments of religious studies.' In particular, he mentions the work of Villa-Vicencio, Saayman and Drohan. He might have added Cochrane. See N Etherington, 'Recent Trends in the Historiography of Christianity in Southern Africa'. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol 22, no. 2, June 1996.

16. W G Mills, 'Millennial Christianity, British Imperialism and African Nationalism', in Elphick and Davenport, eds. *Christianity in South Africa*, 337–346.

Missions and the Law of Unintended Consequences

The great missionary movement which burst out of Protestant Europe and North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries forms a prime example of the workings of ‘the law of unintended consequences’. In the international sphere, for instance, it would be argued that having set out to convert the world to Christianity, Christians themselves (or at least those of the ‘mainline’ variety) were eventually converted to the view that the whole idea of conversion was wrong – a development which is explored further later in this chapter. Certainly, when they started working in South Africa, early missionaries would never have anticipated that their work would lead to the formation of an entirely new brand of Christianity such as that found in the AICs. Moreover, if one takes the revisionist view that the missionary work was the forerunner and consolidator of white control over South Africa, then it is also true that its unintended consequence was that it threw up forces which played a leading role in bringing an end to white control in the late twentieth century.

This is not to deny that in the mid-twentieth century, churches in South Africa by and large supported, rather than challenged, the

apartheid regime which had commenced in full force with the advent of the Nationalist government in 1948. That, of course, was clearly the case with the Dutch Reformed Bloc of churches. While the AICs tended to be politically quiescent, the churches of the Ecumenical Bloc, whose integrationist theology should have made them implacably and actively opposed to apartheid, evinced an ineffective degree of opposition which was confined to words rather than deeds. For this they have been roundly criticised.¹ But while these critiques are valid enough, historians who follow this line are themselves open to criticism for their tendency to reify entities such as the 'English-speaking churches' and bodies such as the SACC and in sociological terms: to adopt a 'structural' rather than an 'action' approach.

While it is often convenient to speak of structural entities as if they are 'actors' directed by an intelligence and talk, for instance, of 'the SACC' doing this or that, the action approach would see the SACC as an arena in which a host of different forces, including abstract concepts such as history, theology and ideology as well as human agents with differing interests, ideas and opinions jostled and contended for recognition and dominance. One of the chief arguments of this study is that the official actions of the SACC have to be understood against a background of its changing composition in terms of its member bodies and the interests, ideologies and theologies of those who dominated in its counsels at different periods. Thus 'the SACC' of 1968 was certainly not the same body as that of 1988; the changed stances of the organisation over that period, it will be argued, were a result of both new and different people and churches coming into it, and of political struggles for dominance within its ranks. No full understanding of the actions – or inaction – of 'the SACC' or, in fact, of any of its predecessor bodies or constituent churches can be gained without knowledge of the factors and forces within them.

One of the forces acting on Ecumenical Bloc churches in South Africa which, I contend, has received insufficient attention from both local and foreign historians are developments in the international missionary and ecumenical spheres. For that reason this chapter is devoted to sketching a history of the missionary movement and its consequences – so many of them unintended – which only incidentally includes developments in South Africa.

The great era of missions

There is abundant literature on the origins of the international missionary movement in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Western Europe and the United States of America. Among recent scholars, Elbourne and Ross (1997) have pointed to economic and political as well as religious motivations.² An aspect that has received increasing attention is the Western assumptions of cultural as well as religious superiority which formed part of the driving force behind the missionary movement. While scholars such as de Kock have cogently argued this point,³ perhaps there is no need to go further than some of the simple doggerel of the famous missionary hymn by Reginald Heber (1783–1826):

Can we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Can we to men benighted
The light of life deny?

From many an ancient river
From many a palmy plain.
They call us to deliver
Their land from error's chain.

In Foucauldian terms, these verses fascinatingly encapsulate that discourse prevalent in the Western world, which both motivated and reinforced missionary effort. Here are all the assumptions

of social and cultural superiority which made Western Christians ('lighted with wisdom from on high') believe they were on an errand of mercy to the inhabitants of the mission fields, who were bound by 'error's chain'.

Still, historically the idea of converting the heathen was nothing new to Europeans. Their forebears had been converted by missionaries who had ventured forth from the old Roman 'civilisation' into the 'barbarian' lands of the north. During the medieval period, religious orders such as the Franciscans and Dominicans saw mission as a primary focus,⁴ while after the charting of sea routes from Europe to Asia and the Americas in the late fifteenth century, Spanish and Portuguese Catholics cited the 'missionary imperative' as a prime justification for the imposition of their rule on enormous tracts of territory. Indeed, when the Spanish State was too weak to enforce its territorial claims, as in California in the eighteenth century, it relied on missions to extend and defend its colonial interests.

After the Reformation, however, the mission idea had been practically forgotten in Protestant Europe and by extension, North America, where priorities centred on the establishment of State churches, the drawing up of creeds and doctrinal formulae, and the enforcement of newly fashioned orthodoxies.⁵ Which is not to say there were no mission impulses among non-Catholics. The German Moravian Georg Schmidt, for instance, established the Genadendal mission station in South Africa in 1737, well before the start of the modern missionary era.

The rekindling of Protestant interest in missions in the late eighteenth century was not met with universal approval. When the young William Carey, later to become one of the most famous missionaries to India, raised the question of missions at a conference of Baptist ministers in Northampton in 1786, he was told: 'Sit down young man. When it pleases the Lord to convert the

heathen, he will do it without your help or mine.⁶

The Anglican Church Missionary Society, which was to become one of the most powerful and influential bodies of its kind in the world, faced passionate opposition from the church hierarchy after it had been founded in 1799. Its leading figures were refused an interview with the Archbishop of Canterbury when they sought to explain to him the aims and objects of their new society.⁷ This resistance on the part of church establishments led to the first of the great unintended consequences of the missionary movement, namely the establishment of new churches in mission fields; many of whom were based either covertly or overtly on ethnic or cultural lines. Herein lay the seeds of much future division.

The 'three-self formula'

As a result of the indifference and opposition of church leaderships to missions, those clergy and laity interested in the subject set up mission societies as para-ecclesiastical bodies which could provide an organisational and financial base for their new enterprises. Similar societies to promote special interests, ranging from the abolition of slavery to the establishment of Sunday schools, were commonplace at the time. Although they would not have been seen as anything extraordinary, in fact, the mission societies were indeed extraordinary in terms of church history. Never before had this type of ecclesiastical organisation existed, and for the next hundred years Protestant Christianity was characterised by a split between what was seen to be the work of the church and that of missions. Thus emerged what became known as the *church/mission dichotomy*. That not only had theological and organisational implications, but also racial implications. *Church* became associated with Christians in the white, Western world and *mission* with people of colour in areas of the world that had been colonised by these Europeans.

The racial division was emphasised by another novel development on the mission fields: the emergence of indigenous churches which were seen as entirely separate entities from the churches of the West. Up to that stage of Christian history, new converts had simply been incorporated into the existing churches. In contrast, the initial opposition of some Protestant churches to missionary work and the fact that several of the mission societies at first operated on an interdenominational basis, meant that converts could not be incorporated into existing structures, but had to be organised into new ecclesiastical entities.

That mission societies had set out to convert the ‘heathen’ without giving serious thought to how their new converts would be organised, is evident, for instance, from the ‘Fundamental Principle’ of the London Missionary Society (LMS) (founded in 1797), which was pronounced to be:

not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy or any other form of Church order or Government . . . but the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God, to the heathen; and it shall be left (as it ought to be left) to the minds of the persons whom God may call into the fellowship of his Son from among them to assume for themselves such form of Church Government as to them shall appear most agreeable to the word of God.⁸

This was an expansive aim, but also a rather ridiculous one. Not only did it wish away denominational rivalries, but the expectation that fresh proselytes would be able to make the judicious choices envisaged was unrealistic to say the least. Thus, once they began working on foreign fields, mission societies found they had to establish new churches to cater for their converts. This proved so successful, that in a comparatively short space of time ‘church planting’ became not a by-product, but a major aim of many missions.

Fairly early in the nineteenth century a well-developed mission theology of church planting emerged, being associated with the names of the general secretaries of the two largest mission societies at that time, Rufus Anderson of the American Board Mission and Henry Venn of the Anglican-based Church Missionary Society (CMS). Although on opposite sides of the Atlantic, the two men were in regular contact and influenced each other's thinking.⁹ Anderson may well have been ahead of Venn; it is noteworthy that when American Board missionaries arrived in South Africa in 1835, they brought with them a fully-fledged theology of church planting.

They concentrated their work in Natal, home of the Zulu people. In terms of their strategy, it was the Zulus themselves who, after being converted, were planned to be the chief agents of the Christianisation of the whole of Africa.¹⁰ However, it was Venn who, in 1854, gave the clearest expression to what became known as the *three-self formula*. The object of the CMS, he declared, was 'the development of Native Churches, with a view to their ultimate settlement upon a *self-supporting, self-governing and self-extending system* [original emphases].¹¹ Once these 'three-selves' had been achieved in any one area, the mission would then be withdrawn and move to new areas. Venn used the expression 'euthanasia of mission' to describe this process.

The euthanasia-of-mission idea was remarkable in that it was based on the assumption that indigenous Christians were perfectly capable of running their own churches without any help from missionaries. In other words, it emphasised what is best expressed by the Afrikaans word *selfstandigheid*, or more clumsily in English, 'indigenous selfhood'. That this idea found wide favour even among non-Christians is indicated by the way it was taken up a century later by both Chinese Christians and the Chinese Communist government who, after 1949, together euthanased missions and then ecumenised their converts by bringing them all

together in one, State-sponsored church. This church was named *The Three-Self Patriotic Movement*. Catholics were organised in a 'Three-Self Catholic Patriotic Movement', from which the word *Roman* was excised – this was seen as a Chinese church which was separate from Rome. The communists, of course, represented a strong undercurrent of Chinese nationalism, and thus the use of the 'three-self' terminology can be seen as part of their emphatic rejection of both Western missions and Western paternalism.¹²

Although, as related later, early efforts to put the three-self formula into practice had largely failed, none the less, over time it did produce some positive results. The formula's emphasis on indigenous selfhood and self-sufficiency meant that in South Africa, those bodies which followed the three-self formula, namely the Dutch Reformed Bloc and the mission societies, produced a visible array of impressive indigenous leaders much sooner than the multiracial churches of the Ecumenical Bloc, which did not follow the three-self formula. Long-lasting white dominance in these churches tended to obscure the leadership qualities of all but a small handful of blacks.

Still, the historical aftermath of the three-self formula produced a plethora of paradoxes. Firstly, as will be demonstrated, the three-self formula fitted in well with the intellectual bases of apartheid and particularly its later form of 'separate development' than the black leaders of the Dutch Reformend Bloc. One such leader was Dr Alan Boesak who 'led the charge' in one of the most critical phases of the anti-apartheid struggle.

There is yet another paradox: while the three-self formula was very congenial to the ideas which unerpinned apartheid, it would also have fitted in very well with the ideas of the black consciousness movement which emerged in South Africa from the late 1960s onwards. Over half a century before this, the General Missionary

Conference in South Africa stated the following at its founding conference in 1904:

This General Conference of Missionaries in South Africa considers that the establishment of Native Churches is the true aim and end of Christian Missions, and these ought to be truly African in character, so as to become the authentic expression of African Christianity.¹³

That the three-self idea resonated among black Christians in the AICs is evident in the way one of their most articulate protagonists in the early part of the twentieth century, the Rev L N Mzimba, used it to justify the founding of 'Ethiopian churches'. Their aim he said, was 'to plant a self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating African Church [which] would produce a truly African type of Christianity suited to the genius and needs of the race, and not a black copy of any European Church'.¹⁴

However, all of this was far in the future. In the nineteenth century, the three-self formula was later subjected to severe theological criticisms¹⁵ and seemingly proved disastrous when Bishop Adjai Crowther, an indigenous West African, was entrusted with the control of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) work in West Africa in 1857.¹⁶ That he did act in accordance with missionary ideas of how this should be done, led to this experiment being adjudged a failure. However, it would be truer to say that on the score of self-organisation, the three-self formula itself was flawed, because like the 'Fundamental Principle' of the LMS cited earlier, it was predicated on the idea that Western forms of organisation and bureaucracy were 'natural' and could easily be absorbed and practised by anyone. Yet as Weber might have pointed out, Western forms of bureaucracy and rational organisation designed to produce efficiency, were rooted in the capitalist economic order of Western Europe.¹⁷

Moreover, the essentially impersonal attitudes required in Western bureaucracy were not easily reconciled with the more communal forms of organisation prevalent in societies outside Europe and North America, where the concept of 'efficiency' was not given high societal priority. However, the CMS experience in West Africa together with another failure of *devolution* (the word used to denote the handing over of control of churches to local, indigenous people) in Tinnevely in South India,¹⁸ contributed to a reaction against the ideas of Venn and Anderson in the second half of the nineteenth century. That reaction was strengthened by other factors such as the onset of a more conservative theological climate¹⁹ and the rise of nationalism and imperialism in Europe which, when reinforced by social-Darwinism,²⁰ often translated themselves into paternalism at best, and crude notions of racial superiority at worst. The convergence of these forces as well as the growth of the mission societies which created increasing bureaucratisation of their structures, inevitably created resistance to the changes demanded by a policy of devolution.²¹

However much it was deprecated in practice, the establishment of 'native churches' remained, in the words of the 1910 World Missionary Conference, 'the hope and aim of all our work'.²² A South African Methodist participant in that conference, the Rev John Gould, reported:

There was great urgency shown for the early recognition of the growing self-consciousness of the young Churches and the importance of these developments as churches indigenous to the soil in which they grew, and not as importations of a foreign religion. The conference recognised the superiority of the native church as a mission agency because . . . the native speaks the language of the non-Christian people . . . knows the minds of the non-Christian people [and] attests to what the Gospel will do for them individually and socially.²³

The Venn–Anderson formula represented the thinking of the British and American-based missions. It was also taken up enthusiastically in South Africa by the NGK, which had begun its missionary work early in the nineteenth century. The three-self formula, as mentioned earlier, provided a very comfortable base for the apartheid theology which developed in this church. This also drew strength and comfort from similar and indeed much stronger ideas to those of Venn and Anderson which had appeared in Europe. These ideas of Lutheran theologians had a particularly Germanic character in that their definition of *indigenous* churches was synonymous with the establishment of ethnically based churches. The first notable thinker in this regard was Karl Graul, founder of the Leipzig Missionary Society, who had even earlier than Venn declared the aim of Lutheran mission to be the establishment of *Volkskirche* ('ethnic churches'). He envisaged that in these churches whole peoples rather than individuals would be converted.²⁴ This thinking was expanded by another German Lutheran, Gustav Warneck (1834–1910), the founder of the new theological discipline of 'missiology' training institutions and the retention of folk customs which were not incompatible with Christian practice.²⁵

This 'ethnic theology' spread beyond the Lutheran missions and, in time, became characteristic of most European continental missions, including the Paris Evangelical Mission and the Swiss Reformed Mission, both of which operated in South Africa. Ethnic theology was even more fully apparent in the German Lutheran missions which, as will be described later, divided their work structurally along ethnic lines.

Although they did not dominate the South African mission field, overworked, European continental missions such as the Berlin, the Hermannsburg Missions, the Paris Evangelical Mission Society and the Swiss Evangelical Mission played a significant role in attempts to Christianise African people. The churches estab-

lished by these missions had a membership of close on a million in 1975 and their ethnic basis is very apparent from the list of SACC churches given in Table 2. The geographical component in the names of each of the 'Evangelical Lutheran' churches reflects that the work of each of these was based on a different ethnic group. The same is true of the two Moravian churches listed and also the Tsonga Presbyterian Church, which took its name from the Tsonga-speaking people on whom the Swiss Evangelical Mission had focused its work.²⁶ Their ethnic base meant that these churches were seen by some in the early twentieth century as falling naturally within the Dutch Reformed rather than the Ecumenical Bloc and, indeed, for a time it was 'touch and go' as to which bloc they would join.²⁷

In contrast to its favourable reception in the Dutch Reformed Bloc, the three-self formula was either ignored or rejected outright by the major churches of the Ecumenical Bloc. Any moves towards the formal establishment of separate indigenous churches or even branches of the two giants, the Anglican and Methodist churches, were actively resisted. One result was that the churches of this bloc became isolated from the international missionary movement in which the results of the three-self theology were to lead to some very important developments as the twentieth century progressed.

Aftermath of the missionary movement

In a global context, the history and aftermath of the missionary movement can be divided into three periods.

The age of comity

In what I have termed the *first phase*, otherwise known as *the age of comity*, mission agencies entered into loose agreements with one another for co-operation and more particularly to sort out spheres of operation between themselves. *Comity* has been de-

scribed as a 'survival tactic' by missions which, very often faced with hostile climates and populations, found co-operation better than competition.²⁸ This gave rise fairly early to missionary 'conferences'; co-operative bodies which met on a regular basis, in both the home bases of missions as well as on the mission fields. The first 'home-based' missionary conference was formed in London in 1819,²⁹ while the first recorded comity agreement on the mission fields was that between Methodist and LMS workers in Tonga in 1830.³⁰ Localised missionary conferences appeared in India in the 1850s and in 1860 the first of a series of international missionary conferences was held in London.³¹ These first-phase co-operative efforts which prevailed during roughly the first century of the missionary movement were based on purely pragmatic considerations; the promotion of organisational unity between the different bodies working on the mission fields was not envisaged.

The 'survival tactic' nature of early efforts at comity in South Africa is evident from the fact that they first emerged in Natal. Not only had the Zulu people there proved highly resistant to missionary efforts, but also since nine out of the sixteen missionary agencies working in South Africa by 1880 were in this territory – it was one of the most crowded mission fields of the subcontinent, with the 'resulting evils of duplication, wasted energies, overlapping and ruffled tempers' in the words of du Plessis.³² Thus in 1881 members of the American Board Mission set moves afoot which led to the formation of the Natal Missionary Conference in 1884; the first of its kind in South Africa.³³ The rush of mission agencies into the country as a whole over the next two decades extended the problem of overcrowding and, once again, the American Board took the initiative in the formation of the GMC in 1904.³⁴ A priority item on the agendas of this body over the next 20 years was an attempt to sort out spheres of influence between the various missions and churches which made up its membership.

The aims of the GMC, as set out in its constitution, were of the pragmatic nature mentioned earlier. They included the promotion of ‘co-operation and brotherly feelings between different Missionary Societies’ and ‘the speedy and effective evangelisation of the Native Races of South Africa’. The GMC’s mode of operation reflected this pragmatic basis. While participants in its conferences were listed under their denominational missionary affiliation, they attended in a personal capacity and not as delegates. For reasons that will be made clear later, this point was strongly insisted on by members of the CPSA, who stayed away from GMC meetings between 1906 and 1912 because the officially adopted constitution of 1906 contained the word *delegates*; they did not return until it had been replaced with the word *members*.³⁵ The meetings of the GMC were purely consultative, the organisation having no executive powers. While an elected Executive and specialist committees met between its general conferences, it had no full-time staff.

The GMC constitution stated one of the five objects of the organisation to be: ‘To keep ever in view the goal of establishing self-supporting and self-propagating Native Churches in South Africa.’³⁶ At its founding meeting, the GMC heard a paper delivered by a French missionary of the Paris Evangelical Mission, the Rev E Jacottet, which he commenced by remarking that it was scarcely necessary to dwell on the principle ‘that the foundation of a Native Church is the aim and end of all missionary work’. Jacottet put forward a typical Warneck model ‘native church’, arguing that it should be separate from white churches and that Europeans should ‘not try to bend the native mind to their own mode of thought . . . but respect his national or racial characteristics’.³⁷ His views, set out at length, met with the approval of the conference as is evidenced by the unanimous acceptance of the resolution lauding the establishment of ‘native churches’ cited earlier.

Opinion among missionaries was not as unanimous as the voting for this resolution might seem to suggest. In the light of what will be argued in the next chapter about the mission theologies of both the Methodist Church and the Anglican CPSA, which specifically rejected separate black churches, it is difficult to understand how their representatives could have voted for this resolution.

Moreover, the Scots Lovedale missionary, Brownlee J Ross, openly opposed Jacottet when Jacottet argued his point on the pages of the *Christian Express*. Ross quoted Cape politicians as saying: 'In the Cape we refuse to consider the colour of a man's skin if he is a good citizen.'³⁸ This was a significant clash of views. Ross as a typical 'Cape liberal' was arguing against what he saw as racial segregation implicit in the idea of a native church. In later years, their opposition to racial segregation brought the liberals into conflict not only with the proponents of apartheid, but also with those of black consciousness. Still, in time, Ross's view prevailed over Jacottet's both in the GMC and later in the CCSA, although Jacottet's views were much more representative of those dominant in the international missionary movement.

The era of councils

On the international scene the onset of 'second-phase' ecumenism can be dated from the holding of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910; a seminal event in modern church history. As had been mentioned, there was a series of international missionary conferences after 1860, which were organised on the same loose and pragmatic basis as the GMC. The Edinburgh conference broke new ground by appointing a 'Continuation Committee' as well as a full-time secretariat, thus establishing a continuous basis for organisational co-operation. Among the steps taken by this Continuation Committee towards providing closer links between those working on the mission fields was the launching of a scholarly publication, the *International Review of*

Missions (IRM). This, in the words of the great ecumenical architect, John Mott ‘from the beginning exercised leadership in its studies of fields and problems, in its . . . contribution of the evolution of the science of mission and its prophetic calls’.³⁹ Mott played a leading role in the inspiration and organisation of the Edinburgh conference, at which he was elected president of the Continuation Committee. After that conference he undertook a tour of mission fields in the Far East, as a result of which several national ‘Christian councils’ were established.⁴⁰ These councils embodied a significant development of the old missionary conferences in that they included churches as well as mission societies in their membership. The Christian councils, equipped with full-time secretariats wielding executive power, represented a much more active and aggressive type of co-operation than that of the era of comity and were, in fact, an expression of the growing strength of Christianity in the mission fields. In 1921 these Christian councils, together with various mission societies, were given a global linkage with the formation of the IMC with Mott at its head.

While this was the first international ecumenical body, its constitution precluded it from including discussions on ‘faith and order’ or matters of doctrine, among its activities. In other words, Christian councils were forbidden to include discussions on church unity in their deliberations. This was largely due to the influence of the Anglo-Catholic Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) – one of the most powerful mission societies in the world which, at that time, was strongly opposed to any moves towards church unity and saw discussion of doctrinal issues as the first step in the direction of such unions.⁴¹ Thus, although second-phase ecumenical unions were stronger and more effective vehicles of united Christian action than their first-phase counterparts, they remained essentially pragmatic and co-operative efforts.

The CCSA, established in 1936, reflected typically second-phase characteristics. Its membership was opened to 15 mission societ-

ies and 9 churches in comparison with the 21 mission societies and only 5 churches represented by members on the GMC. In addition, the CCSA had a full-time secretariat. However, as with the IMC, its constitution laid down that: 'It shall not be within the scope of the Council to consider questions of ecclesiastical faith and order which represent denominational differences.'⁴²

The ecumenical movement

The 'third phase' of the historical development of the missionary movement was characterised by a striving for Christian unity. This contrasted sharply with the 'arms-length' approach of the relationships between different Christian bodies in the missionary councils and the Christian councils in the first and second phases. They were superseded in the third phase by councils of churches. Typical of these was the SACC, the aim of which was stated in its constitution to be: 'To foster that unity which is God's will and gift to his Church.'

This drive for Christian unity was yet another unintended consequence of the missionary movement. It arose from the fact that, for the first time since the Reformation, those on the mission fields found themselves in close touch with other Christians, whose thinking and theology had been a mutually closed book in Western countries. The rediscovery of their commonalities set in train events which were to swing the whole focus away from mission and onto church unity. Besides stimulating co-operation between missions, the Edinburgh Missionary Conference had also given rise to greater efforts towards united action on the part of the churches. In 1925, under the aegis of Bishop Nathan Söderblom of the Swedish Lutheran Church who had attended the Edinburgh conference, the Life and Work movement was founded, which aimed to give the churches a common platform for social service. Two years later, another Edinburgh participant, Bishop C H Brent of the Philippines, launched the Faith and Order movement in

Lausanne, Switzerland, which decisively broke with the bases of the IMC in that it was set up specifically to discuss questions of doctrine with a view to promoting church unity. In 1938 these two movements joined in a WCC-in-formation which, having the two elements of unity and service as its basis, gave the lead on third-phase ecumenism. Its proponents actively sought not only to bridge divisions between churches, but also to promote 'structural unity', that is, to unite churches. The outbreak of World War II prevented the establishment of the WCC itself until a decade later. However, after 1948 it was increasingly to dominate the international ecclesiastical scene.

Here one may note in passing that while developments on the South African scene mirrored the three phases of the international movement, this happened at a much slower pace during the mid twentieth century. Whereas the international missionary movement had entered second-phase ecumenism in 1910, in South Africa that development was not formally recognised until 26 years later. While third-phase ecumenism was effectively launched on the world scene in 1938, it took another 30 years for this to become an accomplished fact in South Africa. This country moved back into the ecumenical mainstream only after black South Africans – the products of missions which originally had followed the three-self formula – took control of the SACC in the last decades of the twentieth century.

The euthanasia of mission

Although the establishment of 'native churches' remained the overall aim of missionary work before World War I, it was seen as a distant goal; the more important immediate object being that stated at the Edinburgh conference, 'the evangelisation of the world in this generation'. In the light of the speed of Christian advance on the mission fields, this was seen as a realistic goal. John Mott, in his final address to the conference as its president, expressed

the confident spirit on the missionary movement with the words: 'The end of the conference is the beginning of conquest.'⁴³

World War I, however, brought what has been termed *the great century of missions* to an abrupt end. Instead of marshalling Christian forces for a final assault on the bastions of heathendom, the Edinburgh Continuation Committee found its major task after the outbreak of war in August 1914 to consist mainly in holding the missionary movement together and providing for 'orphaned missions' cut off from their European bases. Not only did the war disrupt missionary administration; it also fatally undermined the claims of the Christian West to moral superiority over the religions of Asia and Africa. The post-war period was characterised by the burgeoning of liberal theology which called into question the justification for missions.⁴⁴ Non-Christian religions were no longer seen as the main 'enemy' of the missionary movement; rather they tended to be accepted as allies in the struggle against what missionaries perceived to be the threats posed by new forces of secularism and nationalism.⁴⁵

It was in an attempt to co-ordinate missionary thinking in the face of this changed situation that the International Missionary Conference called its first international conference in Jerusalem in 1928. Many changes of emphasis in comparison with the Edinburgh conference were apparent here. One of the most prominent was the place and attention accorded newly emergent 'native churches' which, from that time on, were given the title of 'younger churches'.⁴⁶ This was due to a different basis of representation at the two conferences. While the Edinburgh conference had been a meeting of representatives of mission societies, the one in Jerusalem was made up primarily of representatives of national Christian councils. This difference reflected a rapidly changing world situation. That, in turn, was reflected in one of the major reports of the conference, which focused on 'The Relations Be-

tween the Younger and Older Churches'. One of the IMC general secretaries, W L Warnshuis, noted in this report:

Churches that are in an ecclesiastical sense autonomous now exist in almost all parts of the world. Such names as the Church of Christ in China, the Lutheran Church in India, the Church of Christ in Japan, the South India United Church, the Presbyterian Church in Brazil and the Churches or Provinces of the Anglican Communion in India, China, Japan and South Africa and other titles suggest how the development of ecclesiastical organisation and the growth of Christian Churches in all these lands has resulted in the transfer to these "national" churches of ecclesiastical government and their independent control by themselves of all their own ecclesiastical affairs.⁴⁷

The concept of the *native church* was refined and developed in Jerusalem into that of the *indigenous church*. The conference, in its discussions, 'was reminded again and again . . . that freedom and self-determination were marks of the true life of the Church of Christ, and must be looked for and welcomed'.⁴⁸ In the definition of a *living and indigenous church* agreed to by the conference, there was no mention of the three-self formula. Its concepts were subsumed in the six elements of the definition. Four of these points were largely theological; but the other two are of importance to the theme of this study. The first laid down that the indigenous church would give expression to its Christian faith in its worship and service when its customs, art and architecture incorporated 'the worthy characteristics of the people'. The second was that the church would actively share its life with the nation in which it found itself.⁴⁹ The first point did more than merely echo Warneck's theology; it evidenced the willingness of the missionary movement to concede that there were indeed 'worthy characteristics' in the cultures of non-Western peoples and that, in fact, those cultures were to be as much respected as that of the West. In other words, the Jerusalem conference signalled that Western notions of cultural and, by implication, religious superiority, were

disappearing. The second point reinforced this new trend in that it constituted a blessing of the nationalisms emerging in the Third World. These two points, as shall be pointed out, stood in sharp contrast to thinking in Ecumenical Bloc churches and missions as it was developing in South Africa at that time.

One of the most important trends in theological and ecclesiastical developments highlighted by Jerusalem was summed up by an official IMC rapporteur when he pointed out that the world mission of Christianity was more 'church centric', with foreign missions 'dropping into insignificance', because Christian work and service were increasingly related to the church.⁵⁰ This was an early pointer to the resolution of the mission/church dichotomy and its importance lies in the fact that it was the 'younger churches' of the Third World which were of the main driving forces behind the development. The representatives of those churches made such a strong impression in Jerusalem, that a participant from South Africa, the Rev Max Yergan (who was actually an African – American sent to work with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in South Africa for a number of years), afterwards reported that they comprised half the delegates present although they, in fact, constituted only a quarter of the gathering.⁵¹ As J H Oldham, one of the secretaries of the IMC and a leading figure in the ecumenical movement, stated, there could no longer be any doubt that these churches 'had acquired experience, maturity and leadership to make them equal partners in the work of evangelisation in non-Christian lands'.⁵²

An equally significant development was that noted by the president of South Africa's GMC, the Rev James Dexter Taylor of the American Board Mission, at its 1928 meeting. The Jerusalem conference, he stated, had made it clear that the emphasis in the missionary movement was no longer geographical. Old missionary attitudes had passed, as had the slogan 'the evangelisation of the world in this generation'. The new, broadened view of evangelisation

included the responsibility of the church 'to touch and save the whole of life, and not merely that which is called soul'. For South Africa this meant that the focus of attention had swung away from the older missionary preoccupations with the distribution of mission territory and resources; the world church, as the Jerusalem conference had shown, was 'interested to know how South Africa was meeting the test of Christian brotherhood in her inter-racial relationships, what impact the Church was making upon the problems of social injustice'.⁵³

The movement of the 'younger churches' into the centre stage of the international missionary scene was given further emphasis at the next conference of the IMC at Tambaram, India, in 1938, the central theme of which was 'the upbuilding of the younger churches as a part of the historic Christian community'.⁵⁴ This time, 250 of the 471 participants were drawn from the younger churches⁵⁵ and it is noteworthy that neither the titles of the five main topics for discussion at Tambaram nor of the twenty subsections under these headings contained the word *mission*, while *missionary* appeared only once. Even the term *younger churches* was already going out of fashion, as was noted in a group which stated that to discuss some technical questions 'we may need to use such terms as older and younger churches, but our whole emphasis must be on the universality and the solidarity of the church of Jesus Christ'.⁵⁶ Thus long before the next great IMC conference held at Willingen, Germany, in 1952, the IMC had already pronounced against the dichotomy between mission and church, although it took a long time for the idea to be fully accepted. At Willingen, for instance, the term *younger churches* was used at the head of a statement especially prepared by delegates from those churches who said:

We are convinced that missionary work should be done through the Church. We should cease to speak of missions and churches and avoid this dichotomy not only in our thinking but in our actions. We should speak about the mission of the Church.⁵⁷

The IMC of course, did not represent ‘the Church’ – it represented second-phase Christian councils which had mission work as their *raison d’être*. However, until the WCC was established in 1948, the IMC remained the chief international ecumenical body on which these churches were represented, albeit indirectly, through national Christian councils. Even after that the IMC – drawing its constituency from the old mission fields – was far more representative of indigenous churches in the Third World than the WCC which, having been founded in Europe, was dominated by Western churches.

In South Africa, there was very little evidence of the growth and strength of indigenous churches which were visible in the IMC. This thought occurred to several South African participants at IMC conferences. The Tambaram conference, for instance, inspired Dexter Taylor to express ‘some criticisms’ of the CCSA in an article in the *South African Outlook*.

Our worst weakness as a Council in my opinion is the small scope we give the African church in our affairs. We have not a single African on our working Executive and only two I believe on the larger.⁵⁸

The continuing divergence between thinking in South Africa and that in the outside world was evident in the fact that the crucial Willingen conference of 1952 attracted practically no attention in South Africa itself. Even the *South African Outlook*, which proclaimed its purpose to be ‘a journal of missionary affairs’, carried no reports on Willingen other than a preliminary notice about its date and venue, in contrast to its very full coverage of earlier IMC conferences. The fullest reporting on Willingen was made in the *Christian Council Quarterly* published by the CCSA, a rather dull four-page leaflet which circulated to barely a thousand readers.⁵⁹ The secretary of the CCSA, the Rev Arthur Blaxall, who was one of the two South African delegates at Willingen, confirmed the

lack of local interest, and reported that after his return from the conference, he received only two invitations to speak on it from local churches.⁶⁰

After the formation of the WCC in 1948, indigenous Third World churches were increasingly attracted to its membership, which offered them direct representation as individual bodies, and this fact was calling into question the conciliar basis of IMC membership.⁶¹ In addition, the 'younger churches' were also having a profound impact on theology in the IMC, as is evident in their statement quoted earlier which urged an end to the separation of mission and church. All this pointed to a readiness to contemplate, if not the 'euthanasia' of missions, then at least to the 'euthanasia' of the IMC. The WCC formed an obvious replacement body for that organisation. In fact, the two had been working closely together ever since 1937, when the IMC general secretary, J H Oldham, arranged the Oxford Life and Work Conference which led to the establishment of the WCC-in-formation the following year. In 1946 they had established a joint Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, began co-operative social service through the WCC's Department of Inter-church Aid in 1952, and two years later integrated their study departments.⁶² In 1949 they were jointly responsible for creating the East Asian Christian Conference, a regional counterpart of the WCC in that area, as well as for the creation of another such body for Africa in 1958, the All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC).

These moves made the logicity of a merger between the IMC and the WCC on an administrative level obvious; such a merger was also becoming imperative in terms of theological developments. In July 1957 a joint committee, established to consider a merger, stated that the motivation for the move arose from the discovery of a 'long-forgotten truth that the *unity* of the Church and the *mission* of the Church both belong, in equal degree to the *essence* of the Church' [original emphases].⁶³ Thus the major item

on the agenda of the final IMC conference held in Ghana in 1958 was that it merge with the WCC. Although this met with some opposition, it was agreed to by a large majority. The merger finally took place at the WCC's third world assembly in New Delhi in 1961; the IMC being incorporated as the *Division of World Mission and Evangelism*, a name later changed to the *Commission on World Mission and Evangelism* (CWME) and finally to the *Commission for Dialogue with People of Other Living Faiths*. The significance of that shift will be explored in a moment.

Here it might be remarked that the questioning of the church/mision dichotomy which led to the IMC/WCC merger was based not only on theological issues, but also resulted from a drive to eliminate the issues of geography and race which had led to the dichotomy developing in the first place. Thinking here was encapsulated in the title of the CWME's first international assembly held in Mexico City in 1963, namely *Mission in Six Continents*. That pointed to the fact that Europe and North America were now seen to be as much of a mission field as Asia, Africa and Latin America.

That South Africa lacked the vigorous leadership role being taken by Third World churches in the IMC and later the WCC, was noted by a leading black Methodist, the Rev E E Mahabane after attending the final meeting of the IMC in Ghana. That was closely followed by the founding assembly of the AACC which, as noted earlier, was a joint creation of the WCC and IMC. While the 'erst-while dark continent is on the march,' wrote Mahabane on his return 'Africa south of the Zambezi is lagging behind, culturally, theologically and ideologically.'⁶⁴ Another Methodist, the Rev W Ilsley, spelt that out more explicitly:

It was obvious from the representation from other parts of the continent that they have advanced much farther than South Africa in placing responsibility on Africans for ecclesiastical leadership. Sir

Francis Ibiam, president of the Nigerian Christian Council, presided at that Conference with dignity and ability. Similar qualities were revealed in African Bishops, Canon and Ministers as well as those without handles to their names.⁶⁵

The AACC made clear its belief that the same qualities of leadership were present in South African blacks by appointing one of them, Dr Donald Mtimkulu of Fort Hare University, as its first general secretary and Mahabane as one of its vice-presidents. The Rev Arthur Blaxall, the secretary of the CCSA, wrote in his report, of a

general atmosphere of new found freedom, combined with intense struggle for even fuller life, which seemed in some way to affect the Assembly itself, the great part of its deliberations being concerned with realising that those who were called 'the younger churches' at Tambaram, in India, in 1938 are no longer young, they have come of age.⁶⁶

Blaxall, however, made no comment on the fact that there were practically no young South African indigenous churches present at this gathering.

The impact of Third World churches on the international ecumenical scene grew, if anything, as a result of the IMC/WCC merger in 1961. After that date it was evident that the centre of gravity in the WCC was moving away from the West. Reflecting this was that by 1968 almost two-thirds of the members of the 120-strong Central Committee of the WCC were drawn from these churches.⁶⁷ Third World churches in particular brought a new focus of attention on the nationalisms which were bringing the colonial era to a rapid close. This was evident in the words of an official rapporteur at the final IMC conference who observed:

It was stated by an African in our group: 'We want to be Africans, not black Europeans,' and an Indonesian said: 'We want to show that we are good nationalists and revolutionaries.'⁶⁸

Sentiments of that kind were not unwelcome in the WCC even during its first decade of existence when it was dominated by Western Churches. Many of its leading figures had been involved in resistance movements in German-occupied territory during World War II⁶⁹ and one of the greatest theologians of that era, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, was hanged nine days before the end of the war because of his participation in the 1944 bomb plot against Hitler. For this reason, nationalist revolutionary ideas emanating from the Third World Christians involved in anti-colonial struggles found a fertile seedbed in the WCC.

They were reinforced by new theological currents, particularly that which went under the name of *missio dei* ('mission of God'). This had arisen during the 1950s out of the struggle to reformulate mission theology in the light of questionings of liberal theology and the emergence of the younger churches outlined earlier.⁷⁰ In terms of this theology, missions to non-Christian peoples were seen simply as one part of 'God's mission' which operated through secular as much as religious historical movements. 'No slogan was more often repeated during the 60s than the phrase "God is at work in the world",' observed Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, secretary of the IMC at the time of the WCC merger and later a leading figure of the latter body. 'Yet it could too easily be used to convey the idea that whatever seemed to be the dominant trend in society was in fact the work of God.'⁷¹

Against the background of the Vietnam war and the armed struggles against colonialism in Portuguese Africa and the then Rhodesia, one of the 'dominant trends' during that decade was the idea of violent, nationalist revolution. The WCC conferred unprecedented respectability on this idea at its Church and Society Conference held in Geneva in 1966. This conference, called up by the WCC to examine 'the problems of society in the modern world from the perspective of God's call to man [which would] help to develop a body of theological and ethical insights which

will assist the churches in the witness in contemporary history', was not made up of churchmen, but of 'experts' in social, political and economic fields, who had the task of speaking to the churches rather than for them. One of the major conclusions of this conference was that since political and economic structures were the most important determinants of human existence, revolutions aimed at replacing unjust with less unjust structures could not be automatically condemned.⁷² The IMC's Willingen conference of 1952, for instance, had pointedly raised the question as to whether there was a connection between the idea of Christian mission and practical concerns. Its theological study group had asserted that among the ways in which it was possible to see God exercising his sovereignty in the world was '*in the movements of political and social life, where He both shows His judgement and also confronts whole societies with new opportunities for living*' [original emphasis].⁷³

Thus it was not accidental that the major thrust of the theology of revolution in the WCC should have come through the CWME, which it will be remembered, was the old IMC. Theologians from the world outside Europe and North America dominated the WCC's 'theology of revolution'. Particularly noteworthy in this regard was an Indian theologian, M M Thomas who, among other activities, chaired the 1966 Church and Society Conference, and who was elected to chair the Central Committee in 1968. Thomas had first introduced the idea of revolution as a theological concept in the 1950s and, noted a commentator in the *International Review of Missions* in 1973, 'his political theology is through and through a missionary theology'.⁷⁴

The CWME's political theology was most clearly stated at its second international conference held in Bangkok in 1973. With the theme of 'Salvation Today', the conference defined *salvation* as meaning, among other things:

1. Salvation works in the struggle for economic justice against the exploitation of people by people.
2. Salvation works in the struggle for human dignity against oppression by their fellow men.

The CWME played a major role in the actualisation of that theology with the establishment of the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) in 1970 to aid organisations struggling against racial oppression, whether those struggles were violent or not.⁷⁵ Two years later, the PCR caused something of an earthquake in both ecclesiastical and theological circles by making grants to groups fighting militarily to overthrow white colonial rule in Portuguese colonies in Africa as well as in Rhodesia. While the scope of the aid given through this programme was world-wide, the major donations were to 'liberation movements' in Africa.⁷⁶ This evoked a growing swell of positive response from black churchmen in South Africa, who were taking control of the major local third-phase expression of ecumenism, the SACC which played a significant role both in opposition to, and the final defeat of, apartheid.

While all this, once again, points to a major unintended consequence of mission, equally significant was the changing of the name of the CWME to that of the *Commission for Dialogue with People of other Faiths*. 'Mission and evangelism' had now been finally euthanased in a move that embodied a historical judgement on the missionary movement. Finally, the spiritual descendants of those Protestant Christians who had set out to convert the world, had themselves been converted and come to the conclusion that it was not the 'heathen' who had been bound by error's chain, but the missionaries themselves.

However piquant that unintended consequence of mission work, of more direct relevance to this study is that, as has been argued, it was the vigorous and radical influences of indigenous churches

planted on the old mission fields, which exercised a transforming influence on the WCC. However, it was precisely these influences which had been, if not lacking, then not very forcefully felt or expressed in the South African situation in the 1960s and early 1970s. A major reason for that was that while the number of indigenous Christians had grown enormously, the older, white-led denominations were the major players in bodies such as the SACC, which was still under the control of white liberals. Only when the 'three-self' idea was fully realised in a crucial group of ex-mission churches, which allowed indigenous people to take the reins of power in ecumenical bodies, did the Ecumenical Bloc begin to move back into the international mainstream and duplicate the radical stands of the WCC. At that stage the products of mission in South Africa had not only decisively begun to challenge the political and military superiority of the whites, but were equally decisively rejecting white claims to moral and religious superiority. While, as already remarked, most early missionaries would have been appalled, proponents of the 'three-self' idea would have had less reason to be so: the working of the law of unintended consequences is likely to be most clearly in evidence after the application of euthanasia.

Notes

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10. NA Etherington, ‘The Rise of the Kholwa in South East Africa. African Christian Communities in Natal, Pondoland and Zululand, 1835–1880’ (PhD dissertation Yale University, 1971), 76–77.
11. G Hewitt, *The Problems of Success. A History of the Church Missionary Society, 1910–1942* (London, 1971), 320.
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19. Hewitt, *The Problems of Success*, 421.

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21. S Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (London, 1960), 510–11.
22. H Lefever, 'The Preparation of Missionaries, 1910 and 1960', *International Review of Missions*, vol 60, 282.
23. *The Methodist Churchman*, vol 11, no. 7, 16 August 1910, 1.
24. D J Bosch, *Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*, 134.
25. Lefever and Beyerhaus, *The Responsible Church and Foreign Mission*, 45–9.
26. P Harries, 'Exclusions, Classification and Internal Colonialism: the Emergence of Ethnicity Among the Tsonga-speakers of South Africa,' in *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, ed. L Vail (London and Berkley 1989).
27. Why they decisively turned away from the Dutch Reformed Bloc after World War II is detailed in Chapter Five.
28. Bosch, *Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*, 134.
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The Marginalisation of the Mission Societies

The growth of indigenous churches in numbers, strength and influence was, as remarked in the previous chapter, one of the most noteworthy developments in bodies such as the IMC and the WCC in the decades following World War II. In South Africa this was also a period characterised by the replacement of mission societies with new and vigorous indigenous churches. Here, however, this development – surely one of the most important in ecclesiastical history – evoked a minimum amount of interest or attention. Typical of that was the almost farcical event surrounding the application for membership in the CCSA, of the Moravian Church, Western Cape, in 1955. This was the first indigenous church to come into membership for more than three decades, which in itself constituted a significant development. It had even greater importance in that the new church represented the fruits of the earliest missionary endeavour in South Africa. As already mentioned, it was the Moravian Georg Schmidt who founded the first mission station in South Africa in 1737, long before the modern missionary era had begun. When the Moravians re-established it as *Genadendal* in 1792, they were, once again, the first mission agency to enter South Africa as that era commenced in earnest.¹ Thus, when the Moravian Church

applied for membership of the CCSA, it was a historic occasion. The secretary of the CCSA, the Rev Arthur Blaxall, marked it by losing the application papers, which meant that formal acceptance by the Executive had to be delayed until the president, the Anglican Archbishop Geoffrey Clayton, had an opportunity hastily to scrutinise its constitution. Other than that, the event passed without comment.²

That stood in sharp contrast to the special steps taken by the CCSA in 1937 to mark the bicentennial of the arrival of Schmidt in South Africa. Then the CCSA was still dominated by missionaries, who were very aware of the significance of the anniversary. In 1955 an earlier generation of missionaries had passed into history and the CCSA was dominated by the Anglican and Methodist churchmen for whom the history of missionary societies was of no great consequence. Their failure to recognise the dimensions of the change which the membership of the new Moravian church betokened, graphically illustrates the way missions had been marginalised in church life in South Africa. This had wider implications, because it also meant that the focus on indigenous churches, which was central to much of the international missionary and ecumenical movement, had also been marginalised in South Africa. Of the best pointers to that phenomenon were developments in South African first, second and third-phase ecumenical bodies, that is, the GMC, the CCSA and the SACC.

Anglican/Methodist dominance

The process by which missions were steadily pushed to the margins of ecclesiastical life, particularly within the Ecumenical Bloc, was well established by the end of the nineteenth century, even though the representation in the GMC of 21 mission societies compared with only 5 churches, might have given a different impression. According to du Plessis's statistics, by 1900, 2 churches – the Anglican CPSA and the Methodist – between them con-

tained 51 per cent of all African Christians.³ If census figures are accepted at their face value, that share increased in the first two decades of the twentieth century; the 1921 census showing that the proportion of the total number of African converts in the two churches in question had risen to 59 per cent. That figure must be treated with caution, because the African independent churches were not enumerated in that census and when they were, the percentage share of the CPSA and Methodist Church decreased sharply. Another reason was the rapid growth from the 1920s onwards, of the number of converts of both the NGK missions and those of the Roman Catholic Church, the latter actually surpassing the CPSA as the denomination with the largest African membership after the Methodist Church by 1950. Still, both the NGK and the Catholic Church played a minimal role in the Ecumenical Bloc, where the fact that the CPSA had the largest white membership (294 000 adherents in 1921) and the Methodist Church the second largest (102 000 adherents) gave them an unchallengeable numerical supremacy.

This, it will be argued, is a very important point which had far-reaching consequences not only in the ecclesiastical sphere, but also for thinking race relations. It might be remarked in passing that the way in which most scholars and commentators refer to the 'English-speaking churches' might give the impression that all such churches were of equal size and standing, and therefore exercised equal influence. However, the two other major English-speaking churches which are usually included under this appellation, the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa and the Congregational Church, never came anywhere near to matching the power and influence of the CPSA and Methodist churches. Not only was their white membership much smaller, but their black membership was minute compared to that of the two 'giants'. Du Plessis's statistical table of 1910 gave the number of African adherents of the Presbyterian Church as 1 750. While, according to his figures, the numbers of Africans in the LMS – the chief in-

strument of Congregational mission work in Southern Africa – was much larger, standing at 75 344, most of whom were located in Botswana (then known as Bechuanaland).

That South Africa was following a different course from that taken by the rest of the missionary movement was apparent to the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910. One of its documents described South Africa as a ‘home mission field’ – by which was meant that ‘though European and American Missionary Societies still carry on extensive operations, there is a great and increasing work done by the Colonial Churches’.⁴ Since neither the Presbyterian nor the Congregational Church had any significant work at that stage, the ‘Colonial Churches’ could only be the CPSA and Methodist Church. Both were churches in which blacks and whites were incorporated in overarching unitary structures. In this lies one explanation for the lack of attention to the emergence of autonomous black churches already mentioned; these would have seemed small and insignificant compared with the CPSA and Methodist Church. Nor was it only the comparatively small size of the younger ‘mission churches’ that determined attitudes towards them. Another factor of crucial importance was the mission methodology and theology of these two churches, which never experienced the reactions from the mission fields which were to have such an important effect on the mission societies. As noted earlier, it was the difficulties and dangers encountered in the mission fields that encouraged the idea of comity and first-phase ecumenism, among other things.

While the problems were not any less severe for the CPSA and the Methodist Church, as an outgrowth of overseas denominations, they were better able to cope on their own since they were backed by extensive administrative infrastructure in their home bases and were able to command large resources of money and personnel, which the mission societies lacked. The CPSA could draw not only on the resources of its regular clergy to staff its

mission stations and minister to Africans in urban areas (an important advantage as urbanisation advanced during the twentieth century), but also on the services of several orders within the church, particularly the Community of the Resurrection and the Society of the Sacred Mission.⁵ The Methodist Church had very nearly equal numbers of clergy in England to staff its missions and, in addition, was equipped with a highly effective structure of lay leadership which had been designed in the eighteenth century for a largely illiterate membership, and could therefore easily be transplanted to a situation such as that of the South African mission field. In Methodist statistics, the number of full-time clergy was always dwarfed by that of lay preachers, evangelists and ‘class leaders’, that is, local leaders who were given pastoral charge over a group of about a dozen converts. These leaders not only held congregations together, but also carried out missionary work on their own account. The report of the Methodist Missionary Society for 1906, for instance, showed that while there were 97 ordained African ministers in the church, there were over 4 000 African local preachers and 5 000 class leaders, some of whom had ‘formed themselves into mission bands and gone forth carrying the Gospel to the heathen around. In this way, many of the “Reds” had been brought into the Kingdom of Christ’.⁶ [‘Reds’ being Pondo people who traditionally wore blankets stained with red mud].

The home bases of the two denominations were also responsible for pouring large amounts of money into the work in South Africa. This was especially true of the CPSA, whose founder bishop, Robert Gray, took full advantage of his close association with the long-established and wealthy SPG – of which he had acted as a local secretary while serving as a parish priest in England – to channel monies to the work of the church and its missions in South Africa.⁷ In fact, South Africa, along with India, became the chief recipient of SPG contributions to missions,⁸ and the scale of the funds that came into South Africa was indicated by the

Archbishop of Canterbury at the time of the bicentenary of the SPG in 1901, when he stated that it had given over £820 000 (probably over R1 000 million in today's terms) to South Africa to that date; to which was added another £30 000 from the bicentennial offerings.¹⁰ If £1 in 1901 can be surmised to be worth £100 in 2001, this would amount to over R9 000 million in today's values.

Thereafter the inflow of money from the SPG continued at a high rate. In 1931 one of the leading missionary authorities in the CPSA, Father Osmund Victor of the Community of the Resurrection, stated that of the £40 000 spent annually by that church on missions, £20 000 came from the SPG.¹⁰ Besides such regular grants, the SPG also made lump-sum payments for specific purposes. In 1963, for instance, it gave £460 000, its largest-ever grant, to alleviate the effects of the Group Areas Act on the CPSA.¹¹

The pattern in the Methodist Church was somewhat different, since the emphasis was on local financial self-support. Up to 1882, the Missionary Committee of the church in England had been making grants of around £14 000 a year. As the church moved towards the attainment of autonomy in 1883, it was agreed to reduce this amount progressively and by 1902 the grants had ceased.¹² That had no effect on the rate of growth of Methodist African membership. As the Methodist historian Whiteside observed: 'It is not a little surprising that as the grant decreased missions increasingly prospered.'¹³ Thus, while by 1902, the amount raised for mission work from local sources, £10 951, was well below the amount of the 1882 grant, the membership among Africans had more than trebled, rising from 20 742 in 1882 to 66 436 in 1902.¹⁴ Growing membership was naturally also a source of growing income and by 1916, the missionary section of the Methodist Church had become wholly self-supporting.¹⁵

The role of education

The CPSA's and Methodist Church's far greater infrastructural resources gave them an advantage, not only in straightforward mission work, but also in the vital field of African education, which was probably the best recruiting area of all for converts. The dominant role played by the churches and mission in African education up to the passing of the Bantu Education Act hardly needs stating. They had built and run 4 961 (85%) of the 5 870 African schools in existence in 1954.¹⁶ What is significant is that the CPSA and Methodist Church dominated this sphere in the same way they dominated the ecclesiastical sphere. In 1939 they controlled 63 per cent of all African schools, which numbered 2 747 at the time. With 1 110 schools under its control (40%) the Methodist Church was far and away the leader, the CPSA with 627 schools (22%) coming next.¹⁷ A study on African schooling published not long after showed that the CPSA and Methodist schools between them contained 33 per cent of all scholars in the missionary schools at that time,¹⁸ which compares with the 37 per cent of all African Christians contained in those two churches according to the census of 1946. The close affinity between the two figures seems to be more than coincidental. It is also notable that after the government takeover of African education in 1954, the growth of the Methodist Church declined considerably, according to its records. Whereas in the decade 1950 to 1960 its African membership grew by 26 per cent, between 1961 and 1970 the growth rate dropped to 4 per cent.¹⁹

The CPSA, with its much more devolved diocesan structure, did not keep anything like the reliable statistics of its national membership as did the Methodist Church, and thus it is difficult to tell whether this church experienced the same decline. Census figures after 1954 indicate that there was no decline in its rate of growth. However, they also show no decline in the growth rate of the Methodist Church, which stands in sharp contrast to the declining trend indicated by the Methodist Church's own records

which, owing to the tight organisational structure of that church, are probably the most trustworthy of all denominations. It is not unreasonable to assume that the CPSA rate of growth also declined after it had been deprived of its schools as a recruiting ground for members in 1954.

To summarise: the three ingredients of abundant money, personnel and schools conferred enormous success on the CPSA and Methodist Church in terms of converts. It might be noted that the NGK and the Roman Catholic Church, which also had great success in gaining converts, similarly had large resources, personnel and finance they could pour into the mission fields. Mission societies in South Africa, in contrast, were never able to match the churches in these respects and therefore never garnered converts on the scale of the churches, as will be demonstrated shortly.

The divided Christ of Anglicanism

References to the three-self formula and indigenous church planting which ranked so highly in the nineteenth century in the international missionary movement are largely lacking in Methodist and Anglican documents. Indeed, that theology was specifically rejected by the CPSA – the position of which demands closer attention in this regard. A crucial fact about the CPSA is that it was completely dominated by Anglo-Catholic theology. Its very name – the *Church of the Province* – betokens that. This was Catholic rather than Anglican terminology and is a pointer to the deep division between its ‘high-church’ and ‘low-church’ wings which developed within Anglicanism in the nineteenth century. Those on the ‘high’ or Anglo-Catholic side of the divide had their origins in the Tractarian movement which emerged in Oxford under the influence of Bishop John Newman in the 1830s. The basic premise of Anglo-Catholics was that the Anglican break with Rome during the Reformation had been a mistake which needed to be reversed. Anglo-Catholics therefore moved to adapt their worship and prac-

tice as closely as possible to that of the Catholic Church. Newman himself moved into the Catholic Church where he became much more famous as Cardinal Newman than he had ever been as Bishop Newman in the Anglican Church.

Anglo-Catholic theology was to have important consequences for ecumenism. They believed that all Christians should reunite under the Pope in the Roman Catholic Church. They therefore deprecated and opposed any moves towards church unity which did not include the church of Rome. Moreover, they refused to contemplate structural union with churches which they claimed, lacked the historic legitimacy of Apostolic Succession, that is, a clergy tracing its sacred commission back to the Apostles who, in turn, it was believed, had received their commission from Jesus Christ himself.

However, Anglo-Catholics were unable to realise their aims of unity with Rome because this was implacably opposed by 'low' Anglicans, otherwise known as *Evangelicals*. Their following more than balanced that of the Anglo-Catholics in the Anglican Communion. They remained strongly Protestant and opposed to Catholicism, and their worship and practice were much closer to that of Protestant non-conformist churches and the divisions between the two wings of the church remain sharp, even to this day. One of the most powerful 'low-church' Anglican dioceses in the world is that of Sydney, Australia, where its Archbishop caused a storm of controversy in 1984 when he refused to see even Bishop Desmond Tutu during a visit to Australia because he was seen as an Anglo-Catholic.²⁰

Both wings of the Anglican Church became deeply involved in mission work in the later nineteenth century, although open clashes between them were avoided on the mission fields by an unwritten understanding which divided different areas of the world into 'high-church' and 'low-church' spheres. High-church mission work was

carried out by the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (USPG) and due to the fact that the first Anglican primate in the country, Bishop John Gray, was a committed Anglo-Catholic, South Africa became a USPG field of work. The name was later shortened to SPG.

The mission work of the low church was in the hands of the CMS. As was pointed out earlier, the Rev Henry Venn, one of the initiators of the three-self formula, was a leading figure in the CMS, and that society naturally became a 'torch-bearer' for the establishment of indigenous three-self churches in the mission fields. However, the high-church wing, with its doctrine of 'one, holy Catholic Church', totally rejected the three-self formula, 'since this suggested a distinction between Christians of the same Faith living together, which destroyed the idea of the word "Church"'.²¹ The strong feelings on this score among high-church Anglicans can be gauged by the rejection of a suggestion, put forward at a synod during the early years of the twentieth century, that assistant bishops be appointed specifically to look after African members of the church. That, pronounced Bishop Alan Gibson of Cape Town in 1908,

certainly does seem, on the face of it, to be uncatholic and utterly at variance with the unity of the Church. We are told that "the function of the Episcopate is the safeguarding for the faith, and the preservation of the unity of the Church". To establish an Episcopate based solely on race or colour would appear to be as much as if one were at the same time to arm it with a knife, and bid it to kill the very thing which it existed to maintain.²²

The Anglo-Catholic tradition in the CPSA laid down by Gray was to continue for almost a century, reinforced by the fact that the church relied for so much of its financial support on the SPG.²³ While their concern for missionary work moved the Anglo-Catholics closer to other churches and mission societies, and they were

prepared to co-operate with other Christian bodies in pragmatic first-phase and second-phase ecumenism, they rejected its third-phase aspect. This lay behind the already-mentioned refusal of the CPSA to participate in the GMC until its constitution acknowledged that its scope was confined to the most elementary kind of co-operation. The same kind of pressure, albeit latent at that stage, would have ensured the insertion of clause four into the CCSA constitution of 1936 which forbade discussions on faith and order. There was no more adamant upholder of that clause than the head of the CPSA, Archbishop John Darbyshire, who was also president of the CCSA between 1943 and 1948. He not only declared himself to be ‘stubbornly and deliberately opposed to any talk of church union’, but stated he would withdraw from the CCSA ‘if the Council were to conceive of its function as either sponsoring a scheme of reunion or trying to become a Pan-Protestant Vatican’.²⁴ This phrase was the Anglo-Catholic equivalent of the *Roomse gevaar* (Afrikaans for ‘Roman danger’) in the NGK and was constantly used by Darbyshire, who displayed typical Anglo-Catholic suspicion of the international missionary and ecumenical movements. For instance, in response to a suggestion on regional groupings of churches in Africa made by the IMC office in New York in 1943, he wrote:

The difficulty is that I am just floored and don’t know what it is all about. The truth is that I have never been properly “received” in the Pan-Protestant-Vatican-in-America and don’t understand being instructed as to my duty by somebody or Some Body in America.²⁵

Archbishop Geoffrey Clayton, his successor in the see of Cape Town and the presidency of the CCSA, was also a strong Anglo-Catholic.²⁶ That Anglo-Catholic attitudes were still widely prevalent in the CPSA was evident in a remark made by Bishop Bill Burnett, himself later to be general secretary of the SACC and Archbishop of Cape Town, when he first joined the bench of bishops in 1957; ‘ecumenism was a dirty word’.²⁷

A lack of understanding of international missionary developments by Anglo-Catholics was reflected by the Rev Arthur Blaxall who, as secretary of the CCSA, helped to hold it together during its most difficult years in the 1950s. Although he never professed rigid Anglo-Catholicism and, in fact, tended to have a Quaker-like tolerance of other churches and other religions, nevertheless had come into the Anglican ministry through the SPG²⁸ and spent most of his working life in the Anglo-Catholic ethos of the CPSA. Although he attended the International Missionary Conference's Willingen conference, he seems to have felt out of his depth there, while he also showed little understanding of developments relating to the emergence of younger churches when he wrote to the Bishop of Zululand in 1959:

We notice that in a recent issue of the DRC paper 'Kerkbode' Dr Gerdener, a leading missionary professor of the DRC stated that it is becoming more and more clear that white missionaries must hand over the control of their churches to African leaders . . . What concerns some people is how to bring home to the authorities that not all branches of the Christian church accept the same method of organisation as that followed by the DRC.²⁹

The article to which Blaxall was apparently referring was a report by Gerdener on the 1959 meeting of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Brazil, in which he noted that one of the themes was that 'the sending churches and their representatives must be prepared to diminish and take on a servant role for the sake of the increasingly autonomous young churches'.³⁰ Although a strong supporter of apartheid, Gerdener was not in this case laying down policy guidelines, but was merely reporting on trends in the missionary movement. As someone who had attended the 1910 Edinburgh conference, served on the Central Committee of the WCC for six years and who had recently published an important work on missions in South Africa, *Recent Developments in the South African Mission Field*, he was well qualified to assess those

trends.³¹ Still, Blaxall was correct in drawing attention to Gerdener's notions, given the crucial role that Kinghorn attributes to him in the formulation of the doctrines of separate development outlined in the next chapter. This underlines the paradox that the NGK was much nearer to the thinking of the IMC than was Blaxall, the representative voice of the Christian Council which was supposed to be the IMC's local embodiment in South Africa.

It should be clear that the theology of the CPSA placed it squarely in the integrationist/assimilationist category when it came to dealing with differences of race and culture. It is interesting to speculate what might have been the effect if the 'three-self' CMS and not the SPG had dominated Anglican missionary effort in South Africa. Certainly, the CMS would have had more in common with Gerdener than did Blaxall, and that leads to the conclusion that the application of CMS theology would very likely have resulted in a different approach to race relations than that of the 'colour-blind' multiracialism which characterised the CPSA and, by extension, the CCSA in which it played such a dominant role in the mid-years of the twentieth century. This theme will be pursued at greater length later in this study.

Methodist non-theology

Unlike the CPSA, the Methodists had no strong theology of the Church. In the eighteenth-century 'evangelical awakening', the emphasis had been on individual conversion rather than on ecclesiology, and while the Methodist Church developed perhaps the most elaborate and tightly controlled structure of any Protestant denomination, it was not based on theological or Biblical models, but rather on pragmatic considerations forced on John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, by the exigencies of establishing a church among a largely illiterate membership in the face of hostility of both the established church and the State. In conformity with this pattern of low priority being given to theological formu-

lations, there was little that could be called an ‘ecclesiology of mission’ among Methodists, despite their very extensive missionary work. There is as little reference to the Venn/Anderson/Warneck theologies of church planting in Methodist literature as there is in Anglo-Catholic, all converts being simply incorporated into the Methodist Church itself. On the rare occasions when something resembling a mission theology was stated in Methodist circles, it reflected a belief that the thee-self formula had been achieved within the structures of the Methodist Church. In 1933 the president of the Methodist Conference, the Rev Fred Homes, in a major address on ‘The Church and the Bantu’ referred to an article in the *IRM* in which a writer ‘ably set forth three lines of development to be aimed at in Native work’:

1. The training of leaders according to their capacity.
2. Sharing the administration and church discipline.
3. Making the work self-supporting.³²

All that and more had already been accomplished in the Methodist Church, said Homes. Reflecting Methodism’s penchant for acting on a pragmatic rather than theological basis, he added that this had happened ‘not indeed, as the result of a carefully thought-out plan, but rather as a wise adaptation to circumstances’.

Black leaders in the church tended to take a less sanguine view. In a letter to its newspaper, *The Methodist Churchman*, in 1925, the Rev A Mtimkulu pointed out that Africans had no direct representation on its Finance Committee, no direct representation on the Stationing Committee (which controlled where ministers were placed) and were ‘hopelessly in the minority in the Conference’ (the church’s supreme body which met annually).³³ It was at the Conference of 1925 that another outstanding black Methodist, D D T Jabavu, raised the issue of creating an autonomous black church under the aegis of the conference, a proposal which was very much in line with the ideas of Venn and Anderson. After a

day-long debate, the proposal was turned down.³⁴ Jabavu was one of the South African representatives at the Jerusalem conference three years later, where ideas on the development of younger indigenous churches similar to his were accepted as the norm. He raised the concept once more in a pamphlet entitled 'An African Indigenous Church' published in 1942. Its aim was stated in the sub-title: 'A Plea for Its Establishment in South Africa'. He pointed out that in Jerusalem in 1928 'there were frequent references during the discussions as to the desirability of establishing more indigenous churches elsewhere in the world' and that discussions were illuminating 'to those of us who had never thought to the subject' – a surprising remark in the light of his advocacy of autonomous churches in 1925, although perhaps he was using the word 'us' in a charitable sense to avoid giving offence. He went on to advocate the formation of a united African church, which had also been suggested by the African National Congress (ANC), and pointed out that 'independence does not mean separation'.³⁵

Although widely accepted in the outside world, this was a fairly subtle point which was even less likely to be accepted by the church in 1942 than in 1925. Paradoxically, this was because the church had been involved since the 1920s, in an increasingly bitter struggle against racial segregation in South African political and social life, and the indigenous church of the kind being pleaded for by Jabavu would have appeared to be conforming to the segregationist pattern. Ten years later, when he was president of the CCSA, another leading Methodist, E W Grant, expressed this viewpoint in a booklet entitled *South Africa: What of the Church?* Under the heading of 'A True Indigenous Church', Grant wrote:

The Missionary ideal of an "indigenous" church is accepted. But in multi-racial South Africa that church must include within its fellowship all the races of the country, for scarcely is any one of them more indigenous than others.³⁶

Thus although it approached the issue of an indigenous church from a very different theological standpoint to that of the CPSA, the Methodist Church took the same deprecatory attitude towards the concept.

Dichotomy in CPSA/Methodist unity

Despite their theoretical and theological objections to separate, ethnically based churches, neither church tried to accommodate blacks and whites in a single structure. Both reproduced the mission/church dichotomy by separating their 'church' work for whites from the 'mission' work among blacks. The Methodist Church actually gave the name of the *Methodist Missionary Society* to that sector dealing with blacks, even though this was simply a department of the church.³⁷ The racial segregation of 'circuits' or local groupings of churches compounded the segregation of blacks in the 'mission' sector. While the annual synods of the 'Districts', the regional groupings of churches, as well as the annual Conference were integrated, as Mtimkulu pointed out in his letter of 1925, blacks were very much in a minority in these bodies and it was not until 1946 that the 'Laws and Discipline' of the church were changed to make parity of black and white representation mandatory.³⁸

The CPSA pattern was also one of church/mission segregation running along racial lines. This was formally incorporated in the structures of the church in 1892 when a Provincial Missionary Conference was established, while in 1898 a Provincial Board of Missions was established to provide co-ordination and co-operation between the various diocesan missionary efforts.³⁹ In the early years of the twentieth century, the Provincial Missionary Conference recommended the appointment of assistant bishops in each diocese specifically to deal with African affairs. The debate on this issue at the Provincial Missionary Conference of 1906 indicates that feelings among the African sector in the church were

not very different from those voiced two and three decades later by Jabavu. At that conference

two parties, one in favour and one opposed to distinct organisation of Native and European work soon appeared. Let no one imagine separation was aimed at. It was disclaimed even when special bishops for Native work were asked for, as it was predicated that they were to be under the diocesan bishop. Fr Bull, S S J E, read a weighty paper on the need of maintaining of the unity of the whole Catholic Church, white and black, yet native after native called for specialisation. One said: "How can we think we are welcome in the white man's synods when we are unwelcome in their railway carriages?" . . . The bishops were sympathetic with the idea of assistant bishops where necessary for Native work only, but the Bishop of Pretoria (Carter) was cheered when he said that diocesan bishops had no desire to cease to be Fathers in God of all Christians, black and white.⁴⁰

Although the resistance of figures such as Bishop Carter and Bishop Gibson quoted earlier ensured that no assistant bishops were ever appointed, another recommendation of the Provincial Missionary Conference that diocesan missionary conferences be established, was accepted. As Victor explained in his book on the missionary work of the CPSA, *The Salient of South Africa*, these were additional assemblies to the diocesan synods 'in which purely African questions can be discussed in more leisurely fashion and by those whom they immediately concern'. A diocesan missionary conference was deliberative and not legislative, and 'if it has recommendations to make it is to the diocesan synod that it will send them'. That was where the power lay; in synods – whether provincial or diocesan – 'the self-government of the Church finds expression; for synod is a legislative body'. Victor set out the mission policy of the CPSA as follows:

In dealing with the missionary work of the Church of the Province, it is important to distinguish between its *fundamental principle* and

its practical *working policy*. A fundamental principle is the unity of all mankind in Christ; while its practical policy is one of partial segregation. In other words, there is a differentiation which finds its expression in separate churches and congregations for black and white in separate mission districts and in separate administration, especially where finance is concerned [original emphases].⁴¹

As in the Methodist Church, the concept of supra-racial unity found expression in diocesan and provincial synods; but also, as in the Methodist Church, they were dominated by white majorities.

However, it could also be said that in adopting this pragmatic structure which separated blacks and whites, the CPSA and Methodist Churches were, in fact, conforming to at least some of the tenets of the three-self formula which they either ignored or rejected on a purely theological level. Although whites dominated the controlling bodies of Ecumenical Bloc churches, the mission/church dichotomy enabled blacks to adapt the structures and circumstances within those churches to their own cultural/religious patterns to a considerable extent. As was pointed out by the Rev Mmutlanyane Mogoba, who became the first general secretary to the Methodist Church in 1982, internal women's and youth groups as well as men's associations in that church were entirely black run and managed from their inception. That indicates that a powerful black leadership developed in these organisations although, as remarked earlier, it was never very visible because it was largely confined to the missionary wing of the churches, which had the status of a 'poor relative' and therefore never attracted much attention.

The church/mission dichotomy also provided a good framework in which African manifestations and interpretations of Christianity could evolve. Mogoba points out that in an organisation such as the Methodist women's *manyano*, one of the largest women's

groups of any kind in South Africa, ‘meetings are conducted in a way that is very different to what happens in a white Methodist Women’s Auxiliary’.⁴² In 1973 *Ecunews* – bulletin of the SACC – reported a black Presbyterian minister, the Rev Luther Mateza, making the same point about youth groups. Explaining why black youth in his church were holding a congress at the same time as a multiracial youth gathering, he said ‘this was only logical’. Entirely separate black and white women’s associations and men’s groups in the church acted independently of each other. *Ecunews*, describing the black Presbyterian youth gathering in July 1973, reported that ‘although the activities included conventional Bible quizzes and a communion service, there were items on the programme which would certainly be foreign to most white youth groups, such as the staging of a beauty competition and holding of all-night prayer services’.⁴³ Their willingness to adapt Christian practice and liturgy to local cultures was undoubtedly one reason why, as argued earlier, blacks were probably the most successful missionaries of all. In this regard, while neither the CPSA nor the Methodist Church officially subscribed to the three-self formula, their black memberships effectively showed how perceptive was the idea of the ‘self-propagating’ church. It might be remarked that while the AICs have generated a huge literature, very little similar attention has been done on the equally remarkable spread of Christianity among blacks in the mainline denominations.

The ‘downside’ of the mission/church dichotomy, as suggested earlier, was that the missions were considered to be the poor relatives of the churches and black members as ‘second-class citizens’. Most aspects of their church life, ranging from the buildings they used to the salaries of their full-time staff, were invariably much inferior to those of the whites. Despite their enormous and growing numerical superiority, the mission wings were considered far less important than the church wings. This explains the paradox that while Methodist and Anglican missionaries played a leading role in the GMC and CCSA, the whites who dominated

denominational power structures remained largely indifferent to those two bodies because they were seen as mission organisations. The weakness of the mission wings was particularly evident in the CCSA's crisis of 1940, described in Chapter Three, when the Methodist and Anglican missionaries were unable to prevent the withdrawal of their churches' support from the CCSA. When that decision was reversed, the two churches quickly moved into a dominant position in the CCSA because leading figures of their 'church wing' entered the life of the CCSA. The strategic position these two churches commanded in the CCSA is evident in the fact that the post of president was held uninterruptedly by either an Anglican or Methodist incumbent between 1941 and 1956, while the even more vital post of secretary was also held by Methodists and Anglicans between 1941 and 1961.⁴⁴

The stunting of three-self missions

That success on the mission field in terms of numbers of converts was very much dependent on the investment of money and personnel by missions or churches, emerges from a comparison between the growth of the CPSA and Methodist Church, and that of mission societies in the Ecumenical Bloc. One of these, the Berlin Mission, was the largest mission agency working in South Africa. Another was the American Board Mission, while much smaller and less successful ones played an important role in the GMC and the CCSA, something also true of the United Free Church of Scotland mission. That none of them were ever able to match the resources of the CPSA and Methodist churches, meant that they remained comparatively small, one result of which was that they lacked much influence when it came to advancing the three-self formula of church planting in the GMC and CCSA. The one major mission effort which did match that of the two 'giants' was that of the NGK. However, for reasons given later, its actions and attitudes, if anything, strengthened resistance in the CCSA to the idea of autonomous, indigenous churches.

The self-marginalisation of Lutheran missions

After its commencement in 1834, the work of the Berlin Mission was the most successful of any mission society in South Africa (as distinct from churches), according to du Plessis's statistics. That it was ploughing significant resources into South Africa is evident from the fact, as du Plessis showed, that it had slightly more white workers in the field than the CPSA.⁴⁵ From 1914 onwards, however, the operations of this mission were severely restricted by both money and personnel shortages. World War I cut it off from financial help from its home base in Germany, while post-war inflation in that country, the Great Depression and the accession of the Nazis to power in 1933 – after which it was practically impossible to send money out of Germany – kept it in a state of chronic financial crisis.⁴⁶ From 1914 onwards too, there was an acute shortage of personnel, which was worsened during both world wars by the restriction or internment of missionaries. The effects of these factors can be seen by comparing the growth of the Berlin Mission with that of another German Lutheran agency, the Hermannsburg Mission, which relied on sources outside Germany for both personnel and money.⁴⁷ Whereas in 1904, according to du Plessis, the mission had 22 760 converts compared with the 48 360 of the Berlin Mission, by 1938, according to the *Christian Handbook on South Africa* published under the auspices of the CCSA in that year, the numbers in the two mission were: Berlin – 44 640 and Hermannsburg – 44 692. In other words, the deprecation of its resources as a result of World War I, meant that the Berlin Mission had actually shrunk in size.⁴⁸

Still, although dwarfed by those of the CPSA and Methodist Churches, these were not inconsiderable membership figures, and they continued to grow at a very fast pace. The 907 000 black Lutherans in South Africa at the time of the 1970 census were the products of Lutherans missions. These black converts, as noted in Chapter One, were organised into a number of different churches based on ethnic groupings, both because of geographi-

cal factors relating to where the missionaries started their work but also in line with the ‘missiology’ propounded by Graul and Warneck.⁴⁹ The success of this strategy might have been expected to give Lutherans and their theology a fair degree of influence in ecumenical bodies. Yet while they were members of both the GMC and the CCSA, they chose to keep their distance particularly from the latter. They felt ill at ease in the CPSA/Methodist-dominated CCSA in which the emphasis was on ‘colour-blind’ multiracialism and took very little account of ethnicity. Writing on the subject of ‘indigenous churches’ during the preparations for the Tambaram conference in 1938, H J Grosskopf of the Berlin Mission stated in the *South African Outlook* that he was surprised that ‘so many people . . . simply take it for granted that we have only to bring our form of Church and doctrine to the peoples of the mission lands’. He argued that it was imperative to study the racial characteristics and religious life of the people who were being missionised, and quoted Warneck’s ‘programme for the formation of national – indigenous – Churches (*Volkskirchen*)’, which needed to be ‘rooted in the *national order of life* of a particular people.’⁵⁰

In fact, this ‘ethnic’ approach meant that the Lutheran missions had much more in common with the proponents of segregation/apartheid than with those of multiracialism. It is no accident that one of the leading architects of apartheid in the 1950s was Dr W W M Eiselen, whose father was a German missionary. Eiselen’s sympathy for ‘ethnic theology’ of the German mission societies was clearly set out by him in an article entitled ‘Duitse Sendingwerk in Suider-Afrika en die Bantoevolkseie’ (‘German Missionary Work in Southern Africa and the Bantu National Identity’), which appeared in the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs (SABRA) magazine, *Journal of Racial Affairs* in April, 1957. The article was defensive in tone, arguing against the new trends in Lutheran theology which ignored racial and ethnic divisions.⁵¹ There can be no doubt that the ‘ethnic theology’ of the Lutheran

missions played a significant role in the formulation of apartheid ideology, along with the theology of the NGK.

Another factor tempering the Lutheran relationships with the CCSA was their theology, which laid down a strict separation between Church and State. Thus they had little sympathy for the CCSA's emphasis on socio-political affairs which arose from its aim of establishing a 'Christian social order' in terms of the postmillennial theology which, as Mills points out, had become dominant in missionary circles.⁵²

A typical example of the German Lutheran rejection of Christian social activism is found in a letter sent by the superintendent general of the Hermannsburg Mission on the instructions of his Board in response to a statement issued by the Biennial Meeting of the CCSA following the Sharpeville shootings in 1960. The statement had called, among other things, for the reinstatement of the rule of law and for the appointment of a judicial commission 'representative of our multiracial society' to investigate the causes of the unrest.⁵³ The Hermannsburg Mission stated it felt unable to 'confirm' this statement. The Mission had joined the CCSA to have 'contact with the church of the other Christian churches in this country. We are however, unable to subscribe to any steps dealing with the political life'. Nor did the Mission want to create an impression that it participated in actions which were known to be directed against the government.⁵⁴

Even had they wanted to, the German missions would have been precluded from exercising any great influence on the CCSA as a result of the world wars which, as noted earlier, seriously affected their work. World War II not only damaged their administration and infrastructure, but also devastated their ethnic theology because of its apparent resemblances to Nazi racial ideology.⁵⁵ In the years following the war, local German missionaries found themselves at odds not only with the CCSA but also with their own

headquarters in Germany, which had been taken over by a new and fiercely anti-racist group of administrators.⁵⁶ Their reaction was to withdraw from public affairs to an even greater extent than beforehand. When Dr Hans Florin wrote his study on *Lutherans in South Africa* in the early 1970s, he found that despite their numerical strength it was 'somewhat difficult to sketch a portrait of the Lutheran image in South Africa because in proportion to the general Christian image in the country, there is embarrassingly little to report'.⁵⁷

As will be made clear later, the new generation of German missionary administrators who began moving into South Africa in the 1960s and 1970s were to play a much larger role in the SACC. They also strongly urged the local Lutherans to abolish their ethnically differentiated structures. They found a willing audience among blacks, who had produced leading thinkers on black theology such as Dr Manas Buthelezi. They rejected ethnic approaches because they so nearly resembled those of apartheid philosophy⁵⁸ and when they took control of the churches, blacks acted to eliminate the ethnic divisions between them. In December 1975 the four separate Lutheran churches united to form one 'Evangelical Lutheran Church of South Africa', which signalled the eclipse of the theology of Graul and Warneck in this country.

The American Board Mission

The Lutherans were not the only standard bearers of the three-self formula within the Ecumenical Bloc. Another, was the American Board Mission which, under the leadership of Anderson, as noted earlier, had taken a lead in the creation of that formula. In terms of that theory, the American Board Mission founded the Bantu Congregational Church early in the twentieth century. However, although it produced some outstanding individual figures such as John Dube and Chief Albert Luthuli, who headed the ANC and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, it was never very successful as an organisation. By 1935, after a century

of mission work, it had a mere 8 000 members and the number had barely passed the 10 000 mark 30 years later. While it became a member of the CCSA in 1961, its exact status and even its name remained uncertain right up to the time when it was absorbed into the United Congregational Church in 1968 along with the LMS and the Congregational Union.⁵⁹

One of the reasons for its lack of success was that, unlike the CPSA and Methodist Church, the founding mission suffered from an ongoing lack of personnel and financial resources. Thus, in 1850, 15 years after the mission had commenced work in South Africa, there were only 13 missionary families in the field, and that number decreased progressively. In 1885 there were 10 ordained missionaries and only 8 in 1910. Financial resources forthcoming from the United States of America to support the mission were correspondingly meagre, rising from around \$US7 000 in 1885 to \$US13 000 in 1910. So desperate was the financial position that in 1897 missionaries had to accept a cut in salary and ‘respectfully refused’ a request for another from the mission authorities in 1899. The reason for the shortage of funds was simply that the initial resistance of the Zulu to conversion made it not seem worthwhile to sink more money into the work in Natal. Other, more productive fields in terms of converts, such as Turkey and India, enjoyed far greater financial support.⁶⁰ Inevitably, the small investment by the American Board in South Africa was reflected in equally poor membership returns. It was not a shining example of the success of the three-self formula.

However, one of its missionaries, James Dexter Taylor, played a crucial role in the CCSA, but there his priorities were focused on using the organisation as vehicle for the propagation of liberal multiracialism, not indigenous selfhood among black Christians. Apart from his remarks about the lack of black participation in the CCSA made after the Tambaram conference, he said little or nothing in its counsels on this issue.

The Scots Presbyterian mission

The mission of the United Free Church of Scotland also deserves attention in the context of the three self-formula because it produced an indigenous church at an early stage. Its mission centre was in Tembuland in the then Transkei, but it is better known for its famous school in Lovedale in the Eastern Cape. Many of its leaders too, played a vital role in the CCSA. Among them was R H W Shepherd ('Shepherd of Lovedale'), who was moved to Lovedale after serving in Tembuland for seven years.⁶¹ Another important figure was the Rev John Lennox; he pleaded for the establishment of separate 'native churches' at the GMC meeting of 1909. Dr A Wilkie, principal of the Lovedale School and Dr Alexander Kerr, principal of Fort Hare University, founded in 1915, were also well-known members of this group.

All strongly supported the establishment of the first 'young church' to emerge from mission work in South Africa, the Bantu Presbyterian Church (BPC).⁶² The early emergence of this church was due to developments in the various Presbyterian churches in Scotland during the nineteenth century. In 1900 two of these churches, the Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterian Church, merged. Both churches had undertaken missionary work in South Africa and had mission stations in the Eastern Cape. In 1920 the United Church sent representatives to this country to attempt to effect unity between these missions. One of the options they canvassed was a merger of both missions in the local Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa (PCSA). That was strongly resisted by the group mentioned earlier, who, on the basis of the pattern in other white-dominated churches, thought that black mission converts would become 'second-class citizens' in the white-dominated PCSA.⁶³ They argued in favour of an autonomous church being established and won the day. Thus, instead of receiving a large influx of new black members, the PCSA actually handed over one of its regional 'presbyteries', that of Kaffraria, to the BPC.⁶⁴

Another aspect of the solution finally decided on was that the mission organisation of the United Free Church of Scotland (the product of the 1900 merger) would continue as a separate entity, not to carry on mission work, but to provide the administrative and financial support for the large ‘plant’ – the school, the hospital, the Bible school and the teacher training college at Lovedale, as well as the young Fort Hare University.⁶⁵ The mission was moreover, responsible for several hospitals and institutions in other parts of South Africa. It was for this reason that the mission was still in existence in the membership of the SACC in 1972, long after most other mission societies had undergone their ‘euthanasia’.

The BPC proved to be a disappointment; it grew very slowly in numbers and in financial self-support, and after a few years its ruling bodies were so racked with dissension that Shepherd, who had been its moderator at one stage, resigned and joined the PCSA, as did Wilkie and an African minister, the Rev J J R Jolobe,⁶⁶ who was destined to become the first African moderator of the PCSA in 1972. Shepherd, in his history of Lovedale, published in 1943, admitted that over the previous 20 years the BPC had had ‘a chequered history and did not always retain the confidence of the African rank and file’.⁶⁷ As will be made clear in the next chapter, the Lovedale missionaries, standing at the centre of the liberal missionary tradition, had very different priorities from those of encouraging the establishment of ‘younger churches’ when they worked so hard both to bring the CCSA into being and to keep it in existence. Even if they had been strong proponents of the idea of church planting, the record of the BPC would scarcely have given them credibility.

The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk opts out

The NGK, as a member church of the CCSA between 1936 and 1940, was another body which was in a position to focus attention on younger, indigenous churches. Unlike its English-language

counterparts, it was involved in the classical missionary activity of church-planting, not only inside South Africa, but also beyond its borders. It had established foreign missions in Malawi (1888), Zambia (1899), Mozambique (1908), Zimbabwe and Nigeria (1911). In South Africa it had, of course, already established the NGSK for 'coloured' people, (i.e. those of mixed race) in 1881, although its motives in that case were not the same as those of the mission societies involved in church planting, but were rather to entrench racial segregation. The NGK saw the Sendingkerk not so much as a church moving towards autonomy, but rather as a 'coloured department' of the mother church.⁶⁸ In this it reflected the church/mission dichotomy of the Methodist Church and the CPSA. Although the NGK established its Federal Council in the 1940s, it had no single, multiracial body to express the unity of the church. While the motives for establishing 'daughter churches' were initially based on racial considerations, they were later justified in terms of the three-self formula which, of course, was also applied to the indigenous churches founded by the NGK outside South Africa. References to the work of Venn and Anderson abound in its missionary and theological publications, while Warneck's prescriptions had the missionary historian J H du Plessis as one of their leading proponents.⁶⁹ Still, these were not seen as a model for church planting by the NGK, which placed the emphasis on the salvation of individuals rather than on the salvation of whole peoples, as laid down by Warneck.

Despite the NGK's segregationist approaches it was not seen, either by itself or by other Christian bodies, as standing outside the mainstream of the missionary and ecumenical movement. Its interest in, and acceptance of, both first-phase and second-phase ecumenical bodies were reflected in its large representation at meetings of the GMC; on the international scene it was not only well represented at the 1910 Edinburgh conference but a member of its delegation, Professor J I Marais of Stellenbosch, was appointed to the Continuation Committee.⁷⁰ The missionary sector

of the NGK also played a leading role in the formation of the CCSA, although its motives for doing so were very different from those of the English-speaking liberal missionaries. Those motives were set out by the missionary secretary of the NGK in the Cape, the Rev A Murray when, as is recounted in Chapter Three, he joined the Lovedale Presbyterians in pleading with the IMC for Oldham to be sent on a second visit to South Africa in order to establish a Christian Council.

To point out some of the reasons why mission in South Africa has, to some extent, been a failure, and why it is that at the present time there are still 3 million heathen in South Africa who are being evangelised very slowly.⁷¹

These were traditional missionary concerns of the kind which had prevailed in the international missionary movement before World War I and contrasted with the much greater drive towards socio-political activism evident at the Jerusalem conference of the IMC in 1928 and in the postmillennial approaches of the liberal missionaries in the GMC during the 1920s. Although the direction of the GMC fell increasingly under the control of those missionaries in its later phases,⁷² the 'missionary wing' of the NGK was closely involved in the meetings arranged during Mott's visit in 1934 to discuss the establishment of the CCSA. The fact that the Cape synod never joined the CCSA although invited to do so, indicates that as in Ecumenical Bloc churches, the missionaries of the NGK in the Cape did not have a great deal of influence. The position was different in the Transvaal, where the moderator of the synod, Dr William Nicol, was vitally interested in missions. His influence ensured that both the white and the African synods in that province became members of the CCSA, although no other NGK synod did so.

The clash of Afrikaner and British nationalism, which had led to the bitter and destructive South African War of 1899 to 1902,

was a cause of deep underlying tension between the Afrikaner NGK and the English-language churches. The question of black/white relationships constituted another area of deep discord since, as noted earlier, the NGK was committed to racial segregation, the English-language churches to multiracialism. While its racial approaches did not exclude the NGK from the missionary mainstream, there were few illusions about the difficulties their differences over the racial question would cause between the NGK and the other churches in the CCSA. However, the British and American missionaries who were eager to establish the CCSA had no option but to accept the presence of the NGK in its ranks because without it, the new body would not have had enough credibility to persuade the church wings of the CPSA and the Methodist Church to join. For this reason too, the NGK was accorded a prime role in the CCSA, Nicol being elected as its first president and one of its young ministers, the Rev Murray du Toit, as its secretary. That there were grave misgivings about this appears from a confidential memorandum submitted to the IMC by Kenneth Grubb, a representative of the World Dominion Press, a leading British church publication house. Grubb, a respected commentator on missionary affairs, attended the founding conference of the CCSA and commented: 'Some think . . . that too high a price has been paid for Dutch co-operation . . . there was evident effort at Bloemfontein as far as possible to limit the influence of the Lovedale group; indeed, Shepherd did not get a fair deal.'⁷³ Shepherd was certainly more deserving of the post of general secretary of the CCSA than Murray du Toit, having been the organiser-in-chief of Mott's tour in 1934, which led to the formation of the CCSA. He had taken over the secretaryship of the Continuation Committee when the original secretary, Dr H G F Kuschke of the Berlin Mission, found it impossible to continue.⁷⁴ However, Shepherd and the 'Lovedale group' referred to by Grubb were too liberal to be acceptable to the NGK; Mott's own preference for the secretaryship of the Continuation Committee, Edgar Brookes, had been set aside for the same reason. Kuschke was accepted as a

compromise.⁷⁵ Instead of becoming general secretary of the CCSA, Shepherd was merely made literature secretary, although the *South African Outlook*, which he edited, was adopted as the official journal of the CCSA together with the NG journal *Die Koningsbode* ('King's Messenger'). Grubb believed that the appointment of Murray du Toit had a near disastrous effect on the CCSA. He was, wrote Grubb, 'a young man with practically no experience of the ministry and none of mission work' and he described him as 'an intelligent and tactless man, and quite inefficient at business'.⁷⁶ In a later discussion on the CCSA with IMC officials, recorded in a private and confidential minute, Grubb repeated his charge of incompetence against du Toit, complaining that 'he does not seem to have the capacity to draft far-seeing policies nor has he the authority to place things before either the Dutch Church or the Government'.⁷⁷

That the alliance between the NGK and the English-speaking liberal missionaries in the CCSA was bound to be difficult was frankly recognised by Nicol in his first presidential address to the CCSA in 1936. He pointed to the lack of bilingualism in the English-language-dominated CCSA as a fundamental difficulty, but even more serious were differences on 'almost all questions that affected the natives'. This applied, for instance, to education, where the 'new view' represented by the English-language missionaries advocated providing equal education for Africans and whites, while the 'old view' in the NGK 'used to be unfavourable [towards] all education for natives beyond the minimum requirements of Evangelism and would not have originated secondary and university education for them.' There was no sign of any drawing together on social contact ('the older view is determined to maintain complete social segregation') or on political matters, a sphere in which the 'older view' had been gaining ground, having been formulated and entrenched in legislation. Despite these 'painful admissions', said Nicol, he still thought it necessary for the two schools of thought to get together in the CCSA for the sake of Christian unity.⁷⁸

Moreover, Nicol appears to have had a long-term strategy designed to counter the influence of the liberal missionaries in the CCSA. That strategy was based on an assumption that seven NGK synods would enter the CCSA where they would be able to combine their influence with that of the conservative, anti-liberal German mission societies.⁷⁹ This plan had been frustrated by the failure of any of the NGK synods outside the Transvaal to take up the offer of membership in the CCSA, while the Lutheran missions refused to take any kind of activist role.⁸⁰ Nicol thus found himself isolated in the CCSA. For their part, the English-language missionaries were becoming increasingly impatient of having to compromise their views in order to accommodate those of the NGK. In a letter of April, 1939, the principal of the Lovedale School, A W Wilkie, complained to Rheinnalt Jones, founder of the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) and by then a 'Natives Representative' in the Senate of the South African parliament:

I wish to say quite frankly that I am distressed at our impotence to express as a "Christian Council", the views which are held so strongly by all the Churches other than the Dutch Reformed Church . . . Our pronouncements to be "unanimous" have to be so watered down as to be practically useless. We are continually compromising to attain unanimity.⁸¹

Further evidence of increasing tension appears from a private and confidential letter to an IMC official, Miss J H Gibson, from Shepherd dated 7 May 1939. The CCSA, wrote Shepherd, had come near to 'a mishap of no ordinary kind' when the secretary du Toit 'turned up' in Cape Town a month before the biennial meeting of that year and tried to arrange a meeting of local members of the 'committee' [probably Executive] at short notice to set up a report-back meeting for South African delegates who had attended the IMC's Tambaram conference the previous year. When this proved impossible, he proceeded with some of his friends

[‘mostly Dutch and without connection to the Council’] to arrange segregated report-back meetings. ‘For weeks Cape Town has been seething with racial feeling owing to the segregation proposals,’ wrote Shepherd. ‘If we had held such meetings, I think the Council would have been doomed.’ Du Toit’s plan was frustrated both by the refusal of the Moravian Church to allow a segregated meeting on its premises and by protests from different parts of the country, reported Shepherd.⁸²

When eventually the Tambaram report-back meeting was held, the NGK participants refused to speak anything but Afrikaans, despite a plea that they give the gist of their speeches in English for the benefit of missionaries from outside South Africa who could not understand Afrikaans. Tensions on this point came to the surface when, after a request that the speech by Professor Ben Marais ‘be made known in English’, the chairman remarked ‘that bilingualism is the cross of South Africa,’ adding that while ‘he could not bring pressure to bear on speakers, anyone who wished to repeat himself in another language might do so.’⁸³ The invitation appears not have been taken up by anyone.

Nicol’s term of office as president in the CCSA ended in 1939, although he remained on as vice-president. By then it was clear that the attempt to ignore the divide between the integrationist/assimilationist and the segregation/apartheid positions in the CCSA had not only failed, but was exacerbating the divisions. The English/Afrikaner split and party-political tensions caused by South Africa’s entry into World War II was probably the final straw which prompted Nicol officially to withdraw NGK participation in the CCSA in May 1940, although he gave the familiar reasons relating to the lack of bilingualism, differences on the colour issue and the imminent formation of a new body, the NGK Federal Mission Council, for doing so.⁸⁴

It is significant, none the less, that during the period when the NGK played a major role in the CCSA that that body experienced its closest involvement in an international missionary conference; that of Tambaram in 1938. The CCSA gave careful attention to the composition of the South African delegation which, numbering 13, was the largest ever sent to an IMC conference from the country. It included four 'nationals', that is, blacks, at the request of the IMC president, John Mott. One of them was Chief Albert Luthuli, who attended as a representative of the Natal Missionary Conference.⁸⁵ The CCSA further prepared the ground by arranging two conferences – one for missionaries and churchmen at the Adams Mission in Natal, which was attended by over 100 participants and aroused much enthusiasm.⁸⁶ An earlier conference on the theme of 'The Younger Church in South Africa' was held at Lovedale specifically for African ministers. Perhaps because it took place almost a full year before the Tambaram meeting itself, it attracted only 16 participants. Another reason for the lack of black interest in this conference may be that the arrangements were largely in the hands of white missionaries, and the documents they drew up were both paternalistic and prescriptive in tone, laying what the missionaries thought would be good for the 'younger churches' and containing little or no reflection of the thinking of blacks themselves.⁸⁷

Both the preparations for, and reports from, Tambaram were extensively covered in the *South African Outlook*, and besides the report-back meeting in Cape Town in 1939 referred to earlier, there were also direct report-backs by delegates to the CCSA Executive. It was the Tambaram conference, as has also been noted, which was a revelation to Dexter Taylor at least, of the way the CCSA was falling behind as far as black participation in its councils was concerned. Had this kind of 'input' from the international missionary movement continued, as it would very likely have done if the NGK had continued to play a major role in the CCSA, the emphasis on younger, indigenous churches might have been greater.

In the final analysis, however, the presence of the NGK in the CCSA probably had the opposite effect. The NGK-imposed ‘impotence’, to use Wilkie’s term, would inevitably have been coupled in the minds of the English-language participants in the CCSA with the mission theology favoured by the NGK. Here would be another reason for their rejecting any theology or organisation such as that prescribed by the three-self formula, which seemed to smack of segregationist approaches.

Conclusion

The marginalisation of the mission societies and of three-self indigenous churches was due to three factors. Firstly, there was the dominance of the mission field by the CPSA and Methodist Church, both of which stood outside the missionary mainstream. Secondly, there was the deliberate ‘self-marginalisation’ of the largest mission societies, the Berlin and Hermannsburg missions, which were closer to that mainstream. Thirdly, the experience of Ecumenical Bloc churches in working with the NGK in the CCSA could only have caused a negative reaction against the theology of indigenous church-planting theology, which the lack of success among the early black, independent ‘younger churches’ would have done nothing to counter. A fourth and even more decisive factor, the dominance of the CCSA by the proponents of liberalism, deserves a chapter to itself.

Notes

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3. J du Plessis, *A History of Christian Mission in South Africa* (London, 1911), 464.
4. World Missionary Conference, *Report of Commission VII. Missions and Government* (Edinburgh, 1910), 81.

5. E Strassberger, *Ecumenism in South Africa 1930–1940*, 25 September 1966. The CPSA newspaper *Seek* listed the existence of 11 other orders in South Africa in 1966, although not all of them were involved in educational work. *Seek*, vol 4, no. 9, 4; 9–10.
6. Methodist Church of South Africa. Methodist Missionary Society. *Annual Report*, 1906, 27 and 29.
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8. H P Thompson, 'The Anglican Missionary Societies II. The S P G.' *The Church Overseas*, vol 7, 1937, 58–71.
9. D Lewis and G E Edwards, *Historical Records of the Church of the Province of South Africa* (London, 1934), 134.
10. V Osmund, *With One Accord in South Africa. An Interim Statement Circulated by Permission, before the Provincial Missionary Conference, 1933* (Johannesburg, 1933), 14.
11. *Seek*, vol 2, no. 1, January 1963, 1.
12. J Whiteside, *History of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa* (Cape Town, 1906), 416.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Methodist Church of South Africa. Methodist Missionary Society, *Annual Report*, Secretary's Report, 1903, 7.
15. G B A Gerdener, *Recent Developments in the South African Mission Field* (Pretoria, 1958), 161.
16. *Summary of the Report for the Socio-economic Development of the Bantu Areas Within the Union of South Africa*. UG 61/1955 (Pretoria, 1955), 20.
17. Schedule Showing the Number of Native Schools Registered in the Name of Each of the Religious Denominations. South African Institute of Race Relations Archive, AD 843, 70.1.7.
18. R E G Hope, *Native Schools* (Unpublished thesis). (no place, 1941), 187–8.

19. Methodist Church of South Africa. *Minutes of the Annual Conference*. General Schedules: 1950, 23; 1960, 28; 1970, 27.
20. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, May 1984.
21. D Lewis and G E Edwards, *Historical Records of the Church of the Province of South Africa* (London, 1934), 218.
22. A Gibson, 'The Organisation of the Native Section of the Church of the Province of South Africa.' *The East and the West*, October, 1908.
23. Lewis and Edwards, *Historical Records of the Church of the Province of South Africa* (London, 1934), 24.
24. S G Pitts, *The Christian Council*, Unpublished manuscript, (n.d.).
25. Ibid.
26. A Paton, *Apartheid and the Archbishop: The Life and Times of Geoffrey Clayton, Archbishop of Cape Town* (Cape Town, 1973), 19.
27. Interview with the author, 1977.
28. A W Blaxall, *Suspended Sentence* (London, 1965).
29. SACC archive, AC 623 9/4 (e) i.
30. *Die Kerkbode*, vol 84, no. 13, 30 September 1959, 512.
31. Gerdener reported on the Edinburgh conference for the *Christian Express*. See the issue of 1 August 1910, 142. See also Gerdener, *Recent Development*, 186.
32. 'The Church and the Bantu. The President's Address to the Representative Session.' *Methodist Churchman*, vol 39, no. 44, 8/5/1933, 1.
33. 'Our Native Church.' *Methodist Churchman*, vol 23, no. 195, 6/4/1925, 8.
34. G B A Gerdener, *Christian Express*, vol 23, no. 195, 6/4/1925, 160.
35. D D T Jabavu, *An African Indigenous Church. A Plea for Its Establishment in South Africa* (Lovedale, 1942), 16.
36. E W Grant, *South Africa: What of the Church?* (London, 1952), 18.

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37. International Missionary Council. *The Growing Church* (London), 3.
 38. *A Manual of the Laws and Discipline of the Methodist Church of South Africa* (Cape Town, 1946), 52–3.
 39. CPSA archive, AD 785, Board of Missions.
 40. Lewis and Edwards, *Historical Records of the Church of the Province of South Africa*, 214.
 41. O Victor, *The Salient of South Africa*. Revised ed (London, 1948), 64.
 42. Interview with the author, 1983.
 43. *Ecunews* 20/73, 13/7/73, 2.
 44. The occupants of the presidency were: 1941–33: the Rev Arthur Wellington, Methodist; 1943–1948: Archbishop Darbyshire, CPSA; 1948–1950: the Rev A T Whalley, Methodist; 1950–1952: the Rev E W Grant, Methodist; 1952–1956: Archbishop Clayton, CPSA; the next incumbent, Dr R H W Shepherd, who served between 1956 and 1960, was a Presbyterian, but was very much in the missionary tradition of his predecessors. The final break with the tradition of CPSA/Methodist leadership was the election of the Rev Brown, a Congregationalist, to the presidency in 1960.

The occupants of the secretary's post were: 1941–1945: the Rev E W Grant, Methodist; 1946–1950: the Rev S G Pitts, Methodist; 1951–1961: the Rev A W Blaxall, CPSA.
 45. Du Plessis, *A History of Christian Mission in South Africa*, 464.
 46. D N van der Merwe, *Van Paternalisme tot Selfbeskikking: Die Berlyanse Sendinggenootskap en Kerkrigting in Transvaal, 1904–1962*. (DLitt et Phil thesis, University of South Africa, 1980), 280.
 47. G B A Gerdener, *Recent Developments in the South African Mission Field* (Pretoria, 1958), 82.
 48. These two missions contained 73 per cent of all black Lutherans in South Africa in 1936, according to the *Christian Handbook of South Africa*. This was the last detailed breakdown of mission membership statistics ever published.

49. G Scriba with G Lislud, 'Lutheran Missions and Churches in South Africa,' in *Christianity in South Africa*, ed. R Elphick and R Davenport, 173–194.
50. H J Grosskopf, 'Indigenous Churches. (Reflections Suggested by the Adams Conference).' *South African Outlook*, vol 68, no. 811, October 1938, 225–7.
51. W W M Eiselen, 'Duitse Sendingwerk in Suid-Afrika en die Bantoevolksei.' *Journal of Racial Affairs*, no. 3, April 1957, 113–20.
52. W G Mills, 'Millennial Christianity, British Imperialism and African Nationalism', in *Christianity in South Africa*, ed. R Elphick and R Davenport, 347–369.
53. CCQ no. 58, Second and Third Quarters, 1960, 2.
54. SACC Archive, AC 623/6. Letter from Dr W von Krause, Superintendent General and T F R Otto, General Manager of the Hermannsburg Mission, to Dr A W Blaxall, Secretary/Treasurer, CCSA. 3 August 1960.
55. Van der Merwe, *Van Paternalisme tot Selfbeskikking: Die Berlynsse Sendinggenootskap*, 265.
56. Eiselen, *Duitse Sendingwerk in Suid-Afrika* remarked apropos this development: 'Veral vir objektief denkende sendeling . . . nl. die Duitse sendeling in Suid-Afrika het 'n moeilike tyd aangebreek. Sy hoofbestuur oorsee eis dat hy hom skik na die eise van die tyd maar dit kan hy nie met sy eie ervaring . . . versoen nie . . . Ons simpatie gaan uit na hierdie sendelinge . . . Hulle pad is vandag donker.'
57. H Florin, *Lutherans in South Africa* (Durban, 1967), 67.
58. *Ecunews*, 32/73, 10/10/1973; 5, 6/74, 4/3/1974, 3.
59. A F Christofersen, *Adventuring with God: The Story of the American Board Mission in South Africa*, ed. R W Sales (Durban, 1967), 104.
60. L E Switzer, *The Problem of an African Mission in a White-dominated Multi-racial Society: The American Zulu Mission in South Africa*. (DPhil thesis University of Natal, 1971), 47–50.
61. G C Oosthuizen, *Shepherd of Lovedale* (Johannesburg, 1970), 101–2.

62. R H W Shepherd, *Lovedale, South Africa. The Story of a Century, 1841–1941* (Lovedale, 1940), 340–45.
63. This and several facts in this paragraph were supplied by Professor Calvin Cook, now emeritus professor of the Theology Faculty at Rhodes University, Grahamstown.
64. Gerdener, *Recent Developments in the South African Mission Field*, 66.
65. Interview with Professor Cook.
66. Professor Cook supplied the information on the Rev Jolobe. It might be mentioned that, in time, Shepherd rejoined the BPC and after being elected its moderator, was also elected moderator of the Church of Scotland in 1958.
67. Shepherd, *Lovedale, South Africa*, 344–5.
68. N J Smith, *Die Planting van Afsonderlike Kerke vir Nie-blanke Bevolkingsgroepe deur die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika*. (Cape Town, 1974), 206.
69. *Ibid.*, 208.
70. Joint . . . archives. Folder – the Rev J du Plessis (Stellenbosch), Box 1227, m–f [hereafter referred to as ‘mf’] 134.
71. Joint . . . archives. File – visit by J H Oldham, 1925/6. Box 1127, mf. 134. Letter dated 12 March 1926.
72. Refer to Chapter Three.
73. The Joint International Missionary Council/Conference of British Missionary Societies Archives. Africa and India: 1910–1945. [hereafter referred to as the ‘Joint . . . archives’] Box 1226; South Africa, Mission General File. File – visit by Kenneth G Grubb, 1936. A report of a visit to South Africa, June/August 1936, 52. Box 1226, mf 130–1.
74. CCSA. Minutes of the Meeting of the Continuation Committee, 4/9/35/ SACC archive, AC 623/17.4 (c).
75. R C Mackie, *Layman Extraordinary* (London 1965), 88.
76. Joint . . . archives, 1936 Box 1226, 52.

77. Notes on the discussion with Mr Kenneth Grubb on the South African Christian Council. Joint . . . archives, loc. cit.
78. *The Star*, 19 January 1937, 16.
79. This strategy was set out by Nicol in an address to the missionary study circle of the Student Christian Association (SCA) of the University of Pretoria in October 1943. See R H W Shepherd and E W Grant 'The Christian Council of South Africa.' *IRM*, vol. 33, July 1944, 258–266.
80. Strassberger, *Ecumenism in South Africa*, 186.
81. SAIRR archive, AD 843 70.1.7.
82. Joint . . . archives. File – Rev J M du Toit; Christian Council Secretary. Box 1225, mf. 117.
83. *South African Outlook*, vol 68, 112.
84. Gerdener, *Recent Developments in the South African Mission Field*, 175.
85. CCSA. Executive Minute no. 117, 5/7/1938.
86. *Et Alias* [CCSA newsletter]. Year 2, September 1938, 12.
87. *The Younger Church in South Africa. A Contribution to Missionary Work in South Africa and to the International Missionary Council at Madras, December 1938*. Joint . . . archives (printed material) Box 1225, mf. 127.

Assimilationist Liberal Ideology in the Ecumenical Bloc

The unitary, ‘colour-blind’ pattern which came to dominate the churches of the Ecumenical Bloc dovetailed very neatly with, and indeed probably contributed to, an emergent strand of liberal ideology in South Africa which emerged in the 1920s. Liberal thinking, of course, was well entrenched in South before then. ‘Cape liberalism’ had been a feature of the politics of the Cape Colony, then under British rule – and from the outset this needs to be distinguished from late twentieth-century liberalism outside South Africa, where it is generally associated with advocacy of economic prescriptions relating to open markets, free trade and small government, and where it is mostly thought of as the hallmark of conservative business interests, political parties and governments. Economic issues were not the major issue for white South African liberals who, in Davenport’s terms, were inheritors of the European liberal tradition in ‘the four fundamental fields [of] access to justice in the broadest sense of the term, to freedom of speech, economic freedom, and political rights’.¹ One of the outcomes of this tradition was the institution of the ‘Cape franchise’ which allowed blacks limited opportunities both to vote for, and to enter, the parliament of the colony.

Cape liberalism was to form the basis of the much more systematised and disciplined ideology which, as mentioned earlier, emerged in the 1920s. Its proponents hoped it would be advanced through two institutional vehicles, these being the SAIRR, and also the CCSA. In fact, as will be argued, the driving force behind the CCSA was much more the advancement of the new liberal ideology than were the missiological concerns of the IMC.

Perhaps the clearest statement of this new liberalism was advanced in 1927 by its foremost protagonist at the time, J D Rheinallt Jones. He was a devoted churchman (a Presbyterian), but as a layman, was also very active in purely secular organisations. He was the registrar of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg during the 1920s and became a senator in the South African parliament in the 1930s. Between those two occupations, he was the first secretary of the SAIRR after that body had been formed in 1929. He had also been the moving spirit behind that organisation's precursor, the Joint Councils which began from 1921 onwards to bring blacks and whites together for discussion and action in various areas of South Africa. In 1927 he addressed the Natal Missionary Council on 'the foundation of missionary policy', putting forward five propositions:

1. That mankind [sic] is one species.
2. That all races have fundamentally similar customs and institutions.
3. That these have their roots in common principles of thought.
4. That the most advanced races have emerged from the primitive stage of life and thought.
5. That all races would eventually assimilate the standards and ideals of the most advanced.

That last proposition, he said, applied particularly to the 'Bantu' in South Africa whose culture was by no means as primitive as was generally thought; its backwardness being due to African servitude to animist beliefs. The world was rapidly approaching the

day of a common civilisation, which could be a Christian civilisation because of the ‘amazing power’ of Christianity to overcome racial barriers.²

Several important issues emerge from this statement. Firstly, it is focused on racial issues and hardly touches on the ‘four fundamentals’ of liberalism put forward by Davenport earlier. In that regard, point 5 is particularly important because it sets out the basic feature of the new liberalism: its ascription to racial, cultural and religious assimilationism. That, in turn, arose from a continuing belief in the normative nature of white, Western culture. Conversely, the assertion of the essential oneness of humankind stood in sharp contrast to the bases of the three-self formula and naturally to its extension into the ethnic theology of European continental missions and of the NGK. On this score Rheinallt Jones stated that he viewed with suspicion

every movement for confining the Bantu to their own culture, for almost invariably it has cloaked a real desire to withhold from them the wider benefits of civilisation . . . To sum up, I see nothing but to preach the essential unity of mankind, and that in the words of Cicero . . . “there is no race which cannot attain virtue”. In the light of this faith we must renew our determination to Christianise and civilise the Native people; we must oppose all measures that have for their purpose the setting apart of the Natives from the common good of the country, the setting up of barriers against their full and free development as individuals and as citizens of the state.³

The idea of the ability of backward peoples to be assimilated into advanced cultures was not a new one. Marks and Rathbone in their introduction to *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa* argue that the cluster of concepts centred on optimistic Victorian ideas of ‘progress’ and ‘improvement’, with their strong implication of the individual ability to be assimilated, lay at the base of the Cape liberal tradition.⁴ While they argue that this idea ‘had its roots in the practicalities of Free Trade imperialism’, the

much more forcefully and explicitly stated doctrine of the cultural ability to be assimilated as set forth by Rheinallt Jones was based on 'scientific' conclusions arising out of research in fields such as anthropology, sociology and psychology.

Rheinallt Jones's commitment to formulating a systematic ideology dated back to the period immediately following World War I, when he was strongly influenced by a Ghanaian visitor, Dr Kwegyir Aggrey, who came to South Africa under the aegis of the American Phelps-Stokes Commission which was investigating race relations world-wide. Rheinallt Jones later recounted how Aggrey had approached him 'to unburden his heart about the racial situation in Johannesburg as he saw it'. Aggrey was appalled by the bitterness towards whites which he discovered among the African population. Rheinallt Jones, also deeply disturbed, listened willingly to Aggrey's suggestion that joint councils of whites and blacks on the pattern of those set up in the USA, should be established in South Africa. Later, as Aggrey was being escorted to an office in Johannesburg, a white attendant tried to prevent him from entering the lift. 'That incident confirmed for me a personal responsibility for helping to bring about happier relationships,' wrote Rheinallt Jones.⁵

That, of course, was just one incident which spurred Rheinallt Jones and others who thought like him into action to counter the rising tide of white, segregationist sentiment they saw in South Africa. Kinghorn states that it was in these years that the 'era of apartheid dawned'. This was after a racially defined ideology of nationalism had been imported from Germany, Spain, Portugal and Italy. It taught that 'humanity is genetically divided into inferior and superior groups. White superiority could be considered a fact of nature'.⁶ Kinghorn points out that this new ideology also claimed to be founded on 'scientific principles' and had the leader of the Afrikaner nationalists, General J B M Hertzog as its most formidable proponent. Long before he became prime

minister in 1924, Hertzog had been propounding the virtue of, and necessity for, segregationist policies of a much more sweeping nature than anything that had been contemplated until then. Hertzog and his followers argued for the maintenance and extension of segregation on the grounds that black culture and civilisation were permanently inferior to white, Western civilisation. 'As against the European the Native stands as an eight-year-old child next to man of greying experience,' wrote Hertzog in 1926, 'a child in religion, in moral conviction; without art and without science; with the most primitive requirements and a most rudimentary knowledge of how to supply these needs'.⁷

That a need to challenge this notion of the permanent inferiority of Africans had become uppermost in Rheinallt Jones's thinking is evident from the article quoted above, which he wrote in 1926 for the *South African Journal of Science* and which was entitled 'The Need of a Scientific Basis for South African Native Policy'. In the light of what was said earlier about the 'scientific' basis of segregationist ideology, the choice of this journal was significant. It is evident from that article that he and others had been doing a great deal of 'scientific' research into racial questions. Among those mentioned by him were the historian Macmillan and he also noted:

Our universities are now being organised to undertake a study of Native life, so that the moment seems opportune to suggest lines of research through which the Universities can contribute even more richly than they now do, to political thought and practice in South Africa.⁸

After about five years of research and planning, it seems that by then Rheinallt Jones felt confident enough about the new liberal ideological weaponry to launch his strategy for organising the liberal forces in South Africa. Thus Legassick dates the emergence of a new strain of liberalism to 1927 when the Johannesburg Joint

Council of Europeans and Non-Europeans gave evidence before the Select Committee on the Hertzog 'Native Bills' in which they insisted that the land issue had to be considered separately from the franchise and not only demanded a better land deal for Africans but rejected the abolition of the Cape African franchise as a quid pro quo.⁹ The next step was to convert the Joint Councils into the SAIRR, which happened in 1929.

To this secular organisation Rheinnallt Jones and his fellow liberals hoped, would be added a Christian Council to replace the GMC, something which had been mooted for a number of years. In 1929 he wrote to Dexter Taylor about the proposed Christian Council:

It seems to me that a great deal of the work of the Christian Council is done by the Joint Councils and the Missionary Conferences in South Africa, and I do not see any reason why one organiser could not carry on the duties of a Federation of Joint Councils and the present Missionary Conference. It might be possible to arrange that the bodies meet separately and together in the same town and at the same period. Thus, say, the next meeting of the Missionary Conference might be held at the beginning of one week, followed by a joint conference of missionary bodies, joint councils, and other bodies interested in native affairs . . . which in turn would be followed by a conference of the Federation of Joint Councils (with a view to action on the resolution passed at the combined conference).

I feel that we must have the separate organisations in order to bring in people who would not be attracted to one or to the other.¹⁰

In the same year he was co-opted to the Executive of the GMC, as happened again in 1933 when both he and Dr Edgar Brookes, another noted liberal, were co-opted as representatives of the SAIRR.¹¹ Rheinnallt Jones was present at both the final conference of Mott's visit to South Africa in 1934 at which the decision to

establish the CCSA was taken, as well as at the founding conference in Bloemfontein in 1936.

That the CCSA and the SAIRR were still seen as complementary agents despite the disappointment at the former's performance during its first few years of existence, is evident from the notes of the confidential discussions between Kenneth Grubb and IMC officials in 1938, already alluded to, during which Grubb remarked:

With regard to the Institute of Race Relations and the Council there are aspects of the Institute of Race Relations' work which could be taken up by the Council if it were more adequately staffed. At the present time they would not be dealt with adequately. Mr Rheinallt Jones had hoped that the Council might relieve the Institute of certain aspects of his work.¹²

The disappointment about the record of the CCSA evident in the last sentence arose out of its paralysis caused by the conflict between the NGK participants and the liberal missionaries in its ranks described in Chapter Two.

The liberal missionaries

Elphick remarks that 'the question of Christian links to liberalism is central to understanding the liberal tradition in South Africa' and that 'in the interwar years an extraordinarily high proportion of so-called liberals were intimately related to churches and missions'.¹³ Thus it was natural that Rheinallt Jones's organisational strategy as well as his ideological formulations of the late 1920s would be welcome to a group of missionaries who, at that time, were becoming dominant in the GMC and who were later to form a key group in the CCSA. Among these was the Shepherd of Lovedale, while other important figures were the Rev John Lennox, Dr A Wilkie, principal of the Lovedale School, and Dr Alexander Kerr, principal of Fort Hare University. To the Lovedale Presbyterians may be added the missionaries of the important Methodist

school at Healdtown and those of the Anglican St Matthew's mission at Keiskammahoek. This was the heartland of the liberal missionaries.

A mission not located in that heartland, but which played an equally important part in the GMC and the CCSA, was the American Board Mission of which the Rev James Dexter Taylor was the leading representative, while other American Board Missionaries also made important contributions to the ecumenical movement. Another mission which needs special mention in connection with the GMC and the CCSA was that of the Swiss Reformed Church working among the Tsonga-speaking people in the Northern Transvaal. One of its missionaries, Dr H P Junod, recognised as a leading anthropologist in South Africa, was also a leading figure in the CCSA during the 1930s and 1940s.

An important point as far as these missionaries were concerned, is that they did not place much emphasis on 'converting the heathen'. Instead, post-millennialism had become central to their thinking and they subscribed to a strongly contextualised theology. In the international sphere, the new trend was strongly evident at the Jerusalem conference of the IMC. That meeting, the Rev Max Yergan, the South African representative of the YMCA, told the GMC in 1928, 'was . . . clear and convinced as to the social implications of the Gospel'. Among its major findings was one on race relations which stated, among other things:

Contacts between economically more powerful and weaker races, frequently lead to exploitation, resulting in widespread injustice and suffering. It is imperative that Christians, and especially those in the immediate areas concerned, should take steps to end these conditions by creating, informing and influencing public opinion and by presenting their constructive plans before responsible administrative authorities, and should press, where necessary, for legislative action

In a situation in which races existed side by side, the Jerusalem conference agreed, churches and missions should strive to

establish the utmost practicable equality in such matters as the right to enter and follow all occupations and professions, the right to freedom of movement and other rights before civil and criminal law, and obtaining and exercise of the functions of citizenship without discrimination between men on grounds of race or colour, subject always to such general legislation as may be necessary to maintain the social and economic standards of the community as a whole.¹⁴

These points are interestingly congruent with the ‘four fundamentals’ of liberalism of Davenport although there is no hint of assimilationist philosophy in the Jerusalem conference statements. Still, locked in their struggle with segregationist philosophy and practice in South Africa, the liberal missionaries welcomed this sort of theological ammunition from international Christian forces. In addition, the idea of establishing a ‘Christian social order’ which was strongly advocated at the Jerusalem conference, provided an invaluable ideological framework to set up an alternative to the situation of racial discrimination and economic exploitation prevailing in South Africa.

Liberalism under threat

The liberal missionaries had already taken control of the GMC by 1932. The Executive elected at the last GMC meeting held in that year was headed by the Rev John Lennox of Lovedale, while its secretary and treasurer was R H W Shepherd. Dexter Taylor was the associate secretary and the Methodist missionary E W Grant was the recording secretary.¹⁵ It was to this Executive that Rheinallt Jones and Edgar Brookes were co-opted in 1933. The collusion established between Rheinallt Jones and the nascent CCSA at that time lasted for close on two decades. It is most evident in the fact that during the 1940s, CCSA Executive meetings were planned to coincide with those of the SAIRR, both as to

date and place since so many Executive members of the CCSA also served on the Executive of the SAIRR.¹⁶ This was exactly what Rheinallt Jones had recommended in 1929 and indicated that his strategy planned at that stage had worked in at least this respect.

The possibility of establishing a Christian Council was first raised by the secretary of the IMC, J H Oldham, when he visited South Africa in the early part of 1926. The idea found a ready response among missionaries of all persuasions, particularly the 'liberal missionaries' described earlier. Their feelings were set out in a letter sent with the official sanction of the Board of the Lovedale Institution by one of their number, Dr Alexander Kerr (the first principal of Fort Hare) to the IMC requesting that Oldham be allowed to return to South Africa to help with the establishment of a Christian Council. Kerr wrote to the IMC:

The missionary situation must always be peculiarly difficult in South Africa because of the relatively large European population, the majority of whom may be said to be decidedly hostile to Missionary effort. The Natives are also beginning to throw up their own leaders, some of whom are not always careful to state the case for the native people with discretion. The Government is introducing legislation which will raise discussions ranging over the whole field of race relationships.¹⁷

An analysis of the points set out by Kerr reveals how defensive the motivations he put forward for the formation of a Christian Council were and, equally important, that it was secular pressures rather than theological aspirations which formed the basis of his plea.

Kerr's letter reveals three major areas of concern. Firstly, that the majority of whites were 'decidedly hostile to Missionary effort'. That, of course, went all the way back to the events surrounding the 'Black Circuit' of 1812 and Kerr's concern on this score is

echoed by several other missionary sources. For instance, at its 1906 meeting, the Rev A E Le-Roy told the GMC:

Long before the eager watcher catches his first sight of South Africa he has been told over and over again, and always by those who profess to have the most intimate knowledge of the Native, that the missionaries are the curse of South Africa.¹⁸

The accusation had been openly made in the halls of the Natal parliament, said Le-Roy. Similar concern about attacks on missionaries was expressed almost 20 years later by the Lovedale missionary, Brownlee J Ross, who observed in the *South African Outlook* that 'instructing missionaries' was a favourite pastime in South Africa, practised by 'the ignorant farmer . . . the new come English graduate profoundly ignorant of the principles that regulate missionary life' while worst of all, 'the red kaffir who does not know X from A lifts up his sweet voice to join the chorus'.¹⁹ In 1916 *The Star* in Johannesburg had felt constrained to reprove a public prosecutor who had remarked during a forgery case in which an African was involved that 'this seems to be the results of education at Lovedale college'.²⁰ It was a typical anti-missionary jibe and the persistence of this kind of attack made the position of particularly the liberal missionaries, with their reputation as 'the friends of the Native', seem very insecure.

The second major area of missionary concern expressed by Kerr, was that the African people were 'beginning to throw up their own leaders'. In the light of their resentment of the AICs, described in Chapter Four, it is not surprising that missionaries also resented the fact that blacks were voicing their own political and economic grievances independently of their missionary 'guardians'. A report of the Commission of Survey and Occupation given to the 1912 meeting of the GMC had noted a 'disquieting increase' of educated, but unconverted, Africans and the general demand among them, 'daily growing more vocal', for political rights.²¹ The

undermining of black confidence in, and respect for, the missionaries was summed up by Professor J H du Plessis in a memorandum covering developments in the South African mission field between 1913 and 1923 sent to the IMC at its request. World War I had had a profound influence on African attitudes, he wrote, since the sight of professedly Christian powers engaged in exterminating one another had undermined ordinary moral sanctions. This, together with economic pressures, had resulted not only in the mineworkers' strike of 1919, riots in Port Elizabeth and the Bondelswarts Rebellion in the former South West Africa (although du Plessis did not mention it, the Bulhoek massacre could have been added to this catalogue of events), but most disturbingly of all for the missionaries, in a riot at Lovedale itself in April 1920, during which damage amounting to more than £2 000 had been done to buildings and stores.²² When an appeal against the sentences imposed on 200 students after this affair had been lodged in the Supreme Court, it was turned down by three presiding judges who agreed that, in fact, the sentences imposed were very lenient. Mr Justice Sampson described the outbreak as 'not a sudden frenzy caused by great provocation, but a long-nursed and premeditated act of lawlessness of the most serious character'.²³

Apart from the alarm caused by these violent actions, the missionaries were also disturbed by the militancy of those 'Native leaders' who, according to Kerr, were 'not always careful to state the case for the native people with discretion'. He probably had Clements Kadalie of the Industrial Commercial Union in mind, and in an attempt to understand the new trends in black political activity better, the Natal Missionary Conference in 1922 invited Jabavu to address it on 'Native Unrest in South Africa'. A basic cause, Kerr said, was that the people were slowly emerging from barbarism, 'or to use a more correct expression out of their African civilization'. While they had remained docile because of their trust in the essential goodness of Englishmen

a remarkable change has come over things; white men both locally and in Britain have become hardened, while on the other hand the black man himself, under the guidance of an ambitious younger generation, has developed intelligence and some feeling of independence that has made him less easy of management. The general result is that since the accomplishment of Union in 1910 there has been a steady feeling of discontent which has been fanned into active unrest during the last four years.²⁴

When, as is recounted in more detail later, the Rev Henry Dyke at the 1912 GMC meeting spoke about missionaries spending their lives in the service of 'the Natives', his words were greeted with applause. The idea that the 'Natives' were turning against 'essentially good white Englishmen' and the missionaries, could only have been viewed by the latter with resentment and apprehension.

Threatened by this rising tide of black nationalism, the missionaries were also acutely aware of the threat posed by the advent of the Nationalist-Labour pact government of 1924. Dr R H W Shepherd, editor of the *South African Outlook* for more than 30 years and also principal of the Lovedale institution, summed up the crucial nature of this development in his history of Lovedale by stating that not only did the policy of the new government emphasise segregation in both the political and economic spheres, but that the Cape liberal policy was being attacked again and again, while legislation that was its 'plain antithesis' was passed through parliament.²⁵ As early as August 1924, the *South African Outlook*, then under the editorship of Shepherd's predecessor Dr D A Hunter, published an editorial in which it stated that while it did not wish to strike a note of alarm,

we should fail in our duty if we did not express the feelings of deep anxiety and apprehension that are oppressing many hearts over what may be portended to the Native people in some recent speeches of the new Government.²⁶

Similar warnings were evident in the denominational press. In September 1924 *The Methodist Churchman* asserted that the policy of the new government would 'restrict the black man indefinitely to a sphere of national life that would deny him the privilege of making the best use of his powers and which cannot be regarded as in harmony with Christian principles'.²⁷ Although the missionary statements quoted professed alarm about the effect of the policies of the Nationalist–Labour government on the black population, it is also likely that the British missionaries who made them were uneasy about the growing strength of Afrikaner nationalism which had brought the National Party to power with the help of the South African Labour Party in 1924 and which was to raise it to even greater heights of power in the general election of 1929.

Against the background of the three factors mentioned in Kerr's letter of 1926 to the IMC, there was little to lighten the gloom of the South African scene for liberal missionaries after World War I. A pervading sense of pessimism among them struck J Merle Davis, director of the Research Department of the IMC, when he visited South Africa in 1932. 'In the Union the missionaries and friends of the Native are a discouraged group,' he stated at the end of his visit.²⁸

The uncertain beginnings of the Christian Council

As stated earlier, the threats to the political fortunes of 'colour-blind' liberalism caused some of the important motivations for the founding of the CCSA in 1936. The missionaries hoped that that body would be a more effective instrument for defending their values than the loose and unrepresentative structures of the GMC. It took a long time to bring the Christian Council idea to fruition. The IMC secretary, Oldham, was never able to come to South Africa despite the urgent repetition of the pleas of Kerr and by the 1928 meeting of the GMC. Probably because the concept of a Christian Council was so new (the first such council in

Africa was formed in the Congo only in 1924) local churchmen in South Africa did not have the confidence to put it into practice by themselves.²⁹ It was not until the visit of the president of the IMC, John Mott, in 1934 that definite moves in this direction were launched. Mott was received with acclaim wherever he went in South Africa, presiding over a series of regional conferences and a final general conference in Bloemfontein in June 1934, which took the decision to establish the CCSA. That conference set up machinery to give effect to its decision and two years later at an even larger conference, also held in Bloemfontein, the CCSA officially came into existence.

However, there was by no means a triumphal advance to that point. It seems that the euphoria generated by Mott's visit soon evaporated. While the churches joined in the general adulation of Mott during his visit, they were nothing like as enthusiastic about the idea of a Christian Council. A correspondent 'H W G', writing about the formation of the CCSA in *The Methodist Churchman* in July 1936, reported: 'After Dr [sic] Mott's departure the vision faded somewhat, the difficulties loomed above the horizon and "the hearts of many were failing them for fear"'.³⁰ Several churches which had been invited to do so, failed to join the CCSA, including the Baptist Union, five synods of the NGK and most crucially, the Synod of Bishops of the CPSA. They decided that the church as a whole would not take out membership, but would leave the decision to individual dioceses. The majority on the bench of bishops, the Bishop of Pretoria wrote to the Archbishop of Cape Town in 1939, that he 'doubted the value of the Christian Council . . . and felt that they were not justified in using their scanty funds available in a cause in which they had little faith'.³¹ Only three out of fourteen dioceses decided to affiliate.³² Even the membership of the Methodist Church was not representative of that denomination as a whole, but rather of the Methodist Missionary Society.

Moreover, as related in Chapter Two, the liberal missionary strategy went awry at the founding conference of the CCSA when the ‘deliberate attempt’, in Grubb’s words, to exclude the Lovedale group was successful. However, the liberal missionaries had no alternative but to accept the situation. NGK missionaries had been as keen on the idea of a Christian Council and as active in its formation as they had been. The NGK was closely involved in the meetings arranged during Mott’s visit to discuss the formation of the CCSA. Indeed, the NGK sent the largest delegation of any church to the last general conference, while a member of the Cape Synod, Ds A F Louw, was elected convenor of the Continuation Committee set up to do the spadework necessary for the establishment of the CCSA.³³

The years of success

Although the liberated missionaries were excluded from the seats of power in the CCSA at its founding in 1936, they played a crucial role in keeping it together once the NGK had left. While that development might have been welcomed by the liberal missionaries, in the short term it seemed it would have disastrous consequences for the CCSA. The NGK withdrawal raised an even bigger problem, because it immediately prompted the participating Anglican dioceses also to withdraw on the argument that without the membership of the NGK, the CCSA could not hope to be effective. That, in turn, prompted the Methodist Church seriously to consider withdrawal and, in the meantime, it halved its financial contributions to the CCSA, which was already in a state of financial crisis because of the NGK and CPSA withdrawals. Communicating this fact to Mott in a letter of 8 November 1940, Dexter Taylor, who was then acting as the secretary/treasurer of the CCSA, wrote that ‘the prospects are not good . . . the Council is still in rather a desperate state but we shall try hard to keep in alive’.³⁴

He expressed their strong motivation for doing so at an Executive meeting called on 29 January 1941 to discuss the future of the CCSA. He pointed out that the NGK was about to form its own Federal Mission Council 'which would inevitably seek to influence the policies of the Government in Native matters along the lines of its own views'. If the CCSA ceased to exist, there would be no united Christian body representative of the 'so-called liberal point of view'. According to a fuller report of the discussion appended to the minute of that meeting, he further pointed out that although weakened by the withdrawals of the NGK and the CPSA, the CCSA still had behind it a very influential section of South African missionary work centred on Lovedale and Fort Hare.³⁵ There he located what was earlier termed the *liberal missionary heartland*.

However, it was Dexter Taylor, not the Lovedale and Fort Hare missionaries, who proved to be the salvation of the CCSA. This he accomplished by persuading the Anglican primate, Archbishop John Darbyshire, to throw his weight behind the organisation. Dexter Taylor had direct contact with the archbishop through the Natal Missionary Conference and also as a result of their common participation in work among Italian prisoners of war. He directed a stream of pleas to Darbyshire to support the CCSA and Darbyshire, who was very interested in missionary work, finally responded favourably.³⁶ He turned his doubtless considerable powers of persuasion on his bench of bishops who, in December 1941 voted to reaffiliate their church to the CCSA. This time the church as a whole, and not merely individual dioceses, came in.³⁷ That, in turn, persuaded the Methodist Church to withdraw its threat of disaffiliation and, assured of the backing of these two major denominations, the missionaries behind the CCSA launched it on a vigorous and successful phase of existence.

Darbyshire's commitment to the CCSA was sealed by his being elected its president in 1943 at its biennial meeting. He proved to be a major acquisition. E W Grant, in his secretarial report given to the biennial meeting of 1943, wrote that the election of Darbyshire 'gave universal satisfaction. He has closely identified himself with the work of the Council, is in complete accord with its aims, and possesses those qualities of leadership which its growing work demands. Under his guidance a period of continued development is assured'.³⁸ Darbyshire was a forceful personality and a typical 'prince of the church'. His 'liberalism' may be judged from the following passage from an article he wrote for the *IRM* in 1944 under the title of 'The African in South Africa.' Although he began by giving a long description of the disabilities suffered by Africans, he also wrote:

The African is by no means a fool. He is naturally clever at languages; he is an apt workman, although perhaps inclined to be spasmodic in his efforts; he likes in towns to ape the smart set and is eager to follow European fashions: he wants to learn. One of the things he has learnt is nationalism and the white man has done a great deal to provoke the more intelligent and perhaps one should say, more prosperous Africans into a strong anti-white complex . . . only a small number of Africans are as yet qualified to be leaders in a general advance in civilized life.³⁹

That this evoked no comment or reaction from the missionaries ('the friends of the native') in the CCSA is indicative that they found Darbyshire's views unexceptionable. In any case, he was far too valuable an acquisition for the CCSA to be the target of criticism from within its ranks. The 1943 biennial meeting left no doubt that the organisation was once again well established. Grant reported that there were 24 churches and mission societies in its membership, together with 8 missionary associations and interdenominational bodies.⁴⁰ This meant that with the exception of the NGK and the Berlin Mission (which had virtually ceased to

function because of the war), its pre-1940 membership was intact. Over the next decades the membership was to grow steadily, coming to include such diverse elements as the Baptist Union (which joined in 1947) and the Interdenominational African Ministers' Federation; the membership of which was entirely black.

To signal the re-birth of the CCSA, a large and successful conference on Christian reconstruction was held at Fort Hare in July 1942, which attracted 135 participants and a large amount of publicity. That conference led to the CCSA launching its own journal, the *Christian Council Quarterly*, and to the establishment of a Social and Economic Research Committee in Johannesburg, as well as a Political Emergency Committee in Cape Town.⁴¹ The latter wrote to the prime minister, Smuts, drawing his attention to the findings of the Fort Hare conference. As a result, Smuts consented to see a CCSA deputation under the leadership of Darbyshire to discuss malnutrition, the recognition of black trade unions and parliamentary representation for Africans. He declined to consider the last-mentioned subject saying, 'I don't despair of malnutrition and such like things, but here you come on a rock on which so many founder', but still told the delegation that its representations were not resented and that he welcomed the co-operation of the churches very sincerely. Although, according to Darbyshire, the deputation was afterwards 'rebuked for receiving his reply so meekly,' the interview received wide publicity 'and added to the growing impression of the Council as a militant body' the Rev Stanley Pitts, later wrote to the general secretary of the CCSA.⁴² The organisation was proving itself an effective platform for united Christian action and in this way was fulfilling the best hopes of the missionaries who had taken such a large role in its formation and its preservation in 1940.

The biennial meeting held in Durban in May 1945 was well attended (38 delegates representing 25 bodies) and was marked by

a spirit of optimism.⁴³ Later that year, when Grant retired from the honorary secretaryship, the Methodist Church seconded one of its ablest young ministers, the Rev Stanley Pitts, as full-time secretary and agreed to pay his salary.⁴⁴ Pitts took up his duties in January 1946 and reports drawn up by both Darbyshire and himself over the next two-and-a-half years showed that they were well satisfied with CCSA's progress. Addressing the 1947 biennial meeting, Darbyshire stated there was no doubt that the CCSA could give a good account of its stewardship since 1945:

Our conference at Fort Hare, the regional conferences of two years later, our united presentation of evidence regarding Mission Hospitals, our attitude to Christian Education, our perhaps rather meagre protests to government on political questions, our Home Life campaign, our output of literature and our attempts to rouse youth and enlist the co-operation of women are all cases in point.⁴⁵

Pitts, writing in the *Christian Council Quarterly* in March 1948, Pitts echoed this confident spirit, stating that if 'system be a mark of maturity then the Christian Council is moving rapidly to the development of a mature organisation'.⁴⁶

The success of Dexter Taylor in persuading Archbishop Darbyshire to support the CCSA and consequently re-establishing the backing of the CPSA and the Methodist Church was a notable one, because it at last enabled the missionaries to use the CCSA as a platform for Christian liberalism in a way they had planned ever since Oldham's visit in 1926. The feelings of the liberal missionaries on this score were expressed by Grant and Shepherd in an article on the CCSA written for the *IRM* in 1944, when they stated 'the Council has passed out of the shallows of limited effectiveness and rides buoyantly on the open sea'.⁴⁷ The 'good-riddance' feeling about the departure of the NGK was even more explicitly stated by Grant in the *Christian Council Quarterly* in 1944, when he wrote that the presence of 'the school of thought which would

isolate non-Europeans and their interests from the purely European section of the Church' had faced the CCSA with 'virtual stultification'. Since the departure of the NGK and as a result of the Fort Hare conference of 1942, the influence of the CCSA had grown steadily and was finding a greater response among European lay men and women, that is, among the non-mission section of the churches.⁴⁸ In a letter to L S Albright, assistant secretary of the United States of America section of the IMC, Grant was even more optimistic. Striking changes were taking place in South African public opinion on race relations, he asserted, and claimed 'that since our own Council lost its illiberal elements it has grown markedly in power and influence'. Referring to changes in the structure and financing of African education announced by Hofmeyr just one week before, he stated that a great battle had been won and that 'our liberal forces are acquiring strength daily'.⁴⁹

The Fort Hare Christian Reconstruction Conference of 1942 gave the 'liberal forces' their first opportunity to express the ideological underpinnings of their position through the CCSA. The findings and resolutions of that conference covered a fairly wide range of issues, but it is significant that 'race relations' were given the greatest attention of all. The findings here commenced with a statement urging Christians to ponder the implications of Smuts's own observation that the population of South Africa consisted of ten, and not merely of two million people. It went on to deny that any naturalistic teaching of national or racial superiority was compatible with Christianity and a key paragraph read:

We believe that the true interests of white and black races in South Africa do not, in the long run, conflict. Trusteeship should be the spirit in which Europeans should act towards the more backward non-Europeans bearing in mind that the ward is coming of age and then trusteeship must become partnership.⁵⁰

The denial of racial superiority coupled with an affirmation of temporary racial backwardness among ‘non-European wards’ was the essence of Rheinallt Jones’s liberalism and underlining its identification with that was a resolution which gratefully commended the work of the Joint Councils of the SAIRR. Indicating the trend of the CCSA’s political thinking was a paragraph which stated that the time was ripe for Africans, coloured people and Indians to be given increased responsibilities through representation on local government bodies and in parliament.⁵¹

This line of thinking in the CCSA continued throughout the 1940s. The CCSA submitted that in its evidence to the Fagan Commission (the Native Laws Commission of Inquiry) in 1947:

We strongly support the principle expressed by one speaker at the conference held at Fort Hare in July 1942: “The ideal order of society will educate its people for a common citizenship of the State.” It will progressively share its civilisation with the uncivilised. It will welcome the advancement of individuals of any race and will accept them for what they have become, without regard to what they were originally.⁵²

Another gloss on the concept of trusteeship was given by a conference on human rights convened by the SAIRR and the CCSA in Cape Town in 1949, at which the belief was stated

that for the present, the welfare of the country and the maintenance of Western civilisation depend on the continuance of European responsibilities and initiative. [We] also look to the progressive assumption by the Non-European peoples of the standard of Western Civilisation and of the duties implicit in the acquisition of fundamental rights as the only way in which, in the long run, Western Civilisation can be preserved in South Africa.⁵³

In accepting this assimilationist liberal ideology, the liberal missionaries who dominated the CCSA were in fact diverging signifi-

cantly from thinking in the international missionary movement where concepts of superior and inferior cultures began to disappear after World War I. Indeed, the permanent validity of non-European cultures was implicit in the three-self formula, and had become explicit by the time of the Edinburgh conference of 1910, with its recognition of the superiority of the 'native church' as an agent of evangelisation. The utilitarian approach of the Edinburgh conference to indigenous churches had changed by the time of the Jerusalem conference, where the 'younger church' was seen as having validity in its own right and not merely as a tool for the furtherance of Christianity. This idea was even more strongly stated at the 1938 Tambaram conference, one of the findings of which was that

today African, Chinese, Indian, Japanese and other indigenous expressions of the Christian religion are taking shape . . . It is not wrong in principle or illegitimate that there should be, as interpretation of the Gospel, many forms of Christianity.

Often, especially in countries where there are 'younger churches', we hear Christianity and the Christian Church criticised as being importations from foreign lands or agents of Western imperialism . . . These imputations . . . are serious at all times, and not merely in days of growing nationalism.

An indigenous church . . . is a church which spontaneously uses forms of thought and modes of action natural and familiar in its own environment . . . Every younger church will seek further to bear witness to the . . . Gospel with new tongues also; that is, in direct and close relationship with the cultural and religious heritage of its own country.⁵⁴

The moves towards resolving the mission/church dichotomy in the international missionary movement was one outcome of the kind of thinking evident in the above statement, in which the validity of non-Western cultures and worship forms was explicitly recognised. The thought of 'backward' cultures progressing by

assimilating into 'advanced' cultures, basic to liberal philosophy in South Africa, was a foreign concept in the international missionary sphere where the rise of Third World nationalism made the Western notion of superiority unacceptable. The view that all cultures were equal grew apace and it is perhaps not necessary to do more than illustrate the continuity of this approach to racial differences in international ecumenical bodies than to refer to the findings of the WCC's Salvation Today Conference in Bangkok in 1973, which deplored the fact that in the history of Western missions 'the culture of those who received the Gospel was either ignored or condemned', and went on to state that 'racial and cultural identity are divine gifts and human achievements to be taken up into Christian identity'. The universality of the Christian faith did not contradict its particularity and a diversity of responses to the Christian message was seen to be essential because they were related to particular situations.⁵⁵ That approach to race and culture was not very different from Jabavu's thinking as set out in his booklet *An Indigenous Church* published in 1942. The liberal missionaries' reaction to the application of segregationist policies in South Africa made them deaf to that kind of plea.

The decline and demise of the CCSA

The history of the CCSA during the 1940s supports Legassick's view that the liberals reached their apogee during the years of World War II. Legassick dates this to the speech made by the prime minister, General Jan Smuts, to the SAIRR in 1942 when he declared that 'segregation has fallen on evil days'.⁵⁶ In the following year the meeting between Smuts and the CCSA delegation under the leadership of Archbishop Darbyshire received wide publicity, but the greatest success in CCSA eyes was the acceptance by Smuts's United Party government in 1944 of the recommendations on the control and financing of African education, suggested by the missionaries and others as far back as 1926. It was this which prompted Grant's observation to Albright quoted earlier, that 'our liberal forces are acquiring strength daily'.

This was far too optimistic an assumption. Leggasick points out that liberalism was already in decline in the face of a less-sympathetic perception by the Smuts administration after 1945, while in 1948, two events dealt a stunning blow to the fortunes of the CCSA. Firstly, there was the sudden death of Darbyshire and, secondly, and much more seriously for the CCSA, was the election of the National Party government on a platform of apartheid a month earlier.

The loss of Darbyshire deprived the CCSA of one of its most effective *entrées* to the church sector. This was to have deleterious long-term effects. Despite its successes of the early 1940s, the CCSA had never overcome the indifference of the church sector of its constituent denominations to its work. The lack of interest in the organisation was a regular theme in the speeches made by its office-bearers. In 1952, the Rev E W Grant, its president, compared the favourable situation of the British Council of Churches (BCC) with that of the CCSA. During a recent visit to Britain, he said, he had seen that the leaders of churches made a point of being present at BCC meetings and gave 'great weight' to its pronouncements. Something similar was needed in South Africa if the CCSA was to be more effective, he said, also noting that the CCSA 'was probably far better known and heeded overseas than it was in its own country'.⁵⁷

The Rev Arthur Blaxall, who succeeded Pitts as secretary of the CCSA in 1950, made the same observation after returning from a tour which included the Willingen conference.⁵⁸ That indication of different perceptions of the CCSA inside and outside of South Africa reflected the divergence between the ecumenical movement here and that in the outside world. Whereas observers overseas saw the CCSA as a typical second-phase ecumenical organisation and expected it to act as such, it was not seen in this way by churches in South Africa which tended to see the CCSA as a first-phase missionary organisation, despite its second-phase trappings.

This is not surprising; after all, the first major object of the CCSA was stated to be ‘to foster fellowship, in united thinking, interceding, planning and action on the part of the Christian Missionary forces’ in its constitution.⁵⁹

Still, while they were not overly enthusiastic about the CCSA, the churches continued to give it important support. When Archbishop Darbyshire died, he was replaced as president of the Methodist Church, with the Rev E W Grant who, in turn, was followed by the CPSA’s Archbishop Geoffrey Clayton. He, however, was nothing like as committed to the CCSA as Darbyshire. When he retired from the CCSA presidency four years later, he frankly admitted to the 1956 biennial meeting that during his term of office ‘very little had been accomplished’. He devoted his presidential address of that year to a searching analysis of the weaknesses of the CCSA which, he said, was not able to do much more than ‘tick over’.⁶⁰

Clayton complained that not only had the CCSA failed to promote inter-church co-operation, but it had also allowed itself to be sidelined by other organisations, particularly the Federal Mission Council of the NGK, which had held three notable conferences on racial affairs in 1950, 1953 and 1954. Representatives of the English-language churches as well as from the WCC and IMC had been invited to the last two, as had observers from the CCSA.⁶¹ In 1954, a Continuation Committee had been formed to arrange further conferences on both regional and national levels.⁶² Clayton’s observation that the CCSA had allowed other organisations to supplant its basic functions was to be given even more substance in the later 1950s, when besides the Federal Mission Council, several other bodies arranged large conferences on the racial issue. These included the Interdenominational African Ministers’ Federation which, in 1956, brought 400 people together in Bloemfontein to discuss the Tomlinson report, which would lead to the creation of ethnically separate ‘Bantustans’.⁶³ As a fol-

low-up to this, another large conference held to discuss the racial situation was arranged by an independent committee of church and political leaders in 1957 and drew 1 000 participants together at the University of the Witwatersrand.⁶⁴ In 1956 the WCC initiated a study on Christian Responsibility Towards Areas of Rapid Social Change among its six South African member churches and that was the theme adopted for another major conference in 1959 arranged by the Continuation Committee mentioned earlier.

At this conference the Continuation Committee was charged, among others, with the task of working towards the formation of a Council of Churches in South Africa which would bring together churches within the CCSA and those of the NGK's Federal Mission Council.⁶⁵ This constituted the best hope after nearly two decades that the breach between the NGK and the English-language churches would be healed. It was a hope without foundation; although the debates had been polite and contacts cordial at the conferences of the 1950s, they had shown that the gulf between the proponents of apartheid in the NGK and those of liberalism in the English-language churches was as wide as ever. The far more tenuous relationships established between the two sides than those which had existed in the CCSA before 1940 were as incapable of withstanding a national crisis in 1960 as they had been 20 years earlier.

The CCSA, as indicated, played a minimal role in the establishment of these later contacts and was little more than a spectator of the attempts launched by the 1959 Continuation Committee to create a wider council of churches.⁶⁶ However, nothing indicated the CCSA's decline into obscurity and ineffectiveness more than the fact that it was completely sidelined and had no part in the crucial Cottesloe conference called by the WCC to discuss the racial situation in South Africa with its member churches after the Sharpeville massacre in 1960.

In fact, by this time the CCSA had been completely overshadowed by the WCC as a vehicle for ecumenism in South Africa. The WCC was a vigorous and growing international organisation which embodied the excitement of the newly dawned third-phase ecumenical era and was far more impressive than the struggling CCSA. When the WCC was established in 1948, six South African denominations had been founder members. They included not only the four major English-speaking churches, but notably also the Transvaal Synod of the NGK and the NHK, which had absolutely refused to be part of the CCSA. This raised the hope that the WCC could succeed in bringing about a *rapprochement* between the Ecumenical and Dutch Reformed Blocs. At the Cottesloe Consultation a need was expressed for the establishment of a South African counterpart to the WCC, and it was obvious that delegates did not see the CCSA as the natural vehicle for that. Instead, members of the Cottesloe Continuation Committee proposed the establishment of another Council of Churches which would exist alongside the CCSA.⁶⁷ This would probably have been a death-blow to that organisation, and while it was averted, as is recounted in Chapter Five, the writing was on the wall for the CCSA.

Political failure

The CCSA's church and mission constituency might have been more interested in, and supportive of, it had it proved to be an even marginally successful political pressure group. However, for reasons that will appear shortly, the 1948 accession to power of the Nationalist government on a platform of apartheid was an ultimately fatal blow to the CCSA. The Nationalist election victory immediately set alarm bells ringing in the CCSA constituency. Particularly disturbing was a statement made by the new prime minister, D F Malan, that his party intended removing the coloured people from the common voters' role and abolishing African representation in parliament. At their conferences and synods held in the second half of 1948, The CPSA, Methodist,

Presbyterian, Congregational and Baptist Churches issued statements of protest; the Roman Catholic Bishop J H Henneman issued a pastoral letter which was read in all the churches of his vicariate on 5 September, protesting against the intended move and describing apartheid as 'noxious, unchristian and destructive'.⁶⁸ In November, the Social Welfare Section of the CCSA discussed the statements and suggested that they should be laid before the prime minister 'personally by representatives of the Churches concerned'. After some prevarication, Malan refused to see any CCSA delegation. His private secretary wrote:

As the views your proposed deputation obviously hold are already sufficiently and capably represented in the field of party political discussion and further with a view to the Prime Minister's recent renewed attempt to have the Native question dealt with on a non-party basis, he does not think that the proposed interview can serve any useful purpose.⁶⁹

This was the first of many rebuffs the CCSA was to receive from the new party in power. It was not deterred; the correspondence with Malan was published in full, while a proposed conference on education scheduled for mid-1949 was converted into a conference on the racial situation under the title of 'The Christian Citizen in a Multiracial Society', which was held in Johannesburg in July 1949.⁷⁰ Among those who addressed that conference was Chief Luthuli who spoke on 'The Christian and Political Issues'. Among the findings of the conference were the following:

- God has created all men in His image. Consequently beyond all differences remains an essential unity.
- When individuals have moved from a primitive social structure to one which is more advanced, this change should be given recognition.
- At this stage in the affairs of our country, we accept the principle of trusteeship.
- We believe that the real need of South Africa is not 'Apartheid' but 'Eendrag' ['Unity'].

We consider that in principle adult persons of all races should share in the responsibility of the government of the country. This implies the exercise of the franchise. We recognise that at present many such persons are not ready for this responsibility. We therefore agree to a qualified franchise.⁷¹

It was a classic statement of that brand of assimilationist liberalism, which not only differed fundamentally from the apartheid philosophy of the Malan government, but also diverged significantly from developments in the international missionary movement which had discarded ideas of ‘primitive’ and ‘advanced’ social structures put forward earlier. Nevertheless, since the findings were so strongly anti-racist, the IMC, the Conference of British Missionary Societies and the WCC all responded favourably; something which was pointed out in an article in the *Christian Council Quarterly*.⁷²

Yet, there is no evidence that the National Party government took any notice of the conference. The NGK mouthpiece, *Die Kerkbode* (‘The Church Messenger’), which interpreted the conference as an attack on the NGK, provided an insight into Afrikaner Nationalistic reaction:

In this sort of thing we learn to know the dark background from which many of the grievances against us arise; and it must become clear to all that Communism is becoming more and more the way of life for all foreign influences in our country. Its voice may be clearly recognised here too.

When the CCSA sent a letter protesting against these charges, *Die Kerkbode* refused to publish it and, instead, sent a private letter to the secretary which expressed the hope that those within the CCSA would ‘ponder on the fact that your views on race relations have found so much approval in Communist circles’.⁷³

Despite that setback, the CCSA continued attempting to influence government policy, particularly on racial affairs. In line with the aim stated in its constitution of helping to create a 'Christian social order' this, as Clayton noted in his address to the biennial meeting of the CCSA in 1956, had comprised the great majority of its activities. During the 1950s, a stream of statements was issued on a wide range of government legislation, ranging from the Mixed Marriages Act to the Bantu Education Act of 1954 and the Separate Representation of Voters' Act in 1955. There were also direct representations to government. In 1955, for instance, a CCSA delegation did succeed in seeing the prime minister, J G Strydom, on the subject of migrant labour. Dr Hendrik Verwoerd, probably the most hardline proponent of apartheid in the government and then Minister of Native Affairs, was also present and did most of the talking.⁷⁴ The interview was a long one and ended with Verwoerd displaying his characteristically unbending attitude when he said that the government shared the churches' concern for a stable family life, 'but it must always be remembered that it is the first duty of the South African government to preserve white civilization'.⁷⁵ In their efforts to stem the tide of apartheid legislation, said Clayton in his presidential address, the churches and the CCSA had generally found themselves on the defensive and had done little more than 'protest against this thing and that thing which is being done and . . . state why we consider such things to be inconsistent with Christian principles'. In spite of this 'faithfully borne witness', the CCSA's influence on public policy was minimal, the Archbishop remarked.

That, in fact, meant that the CCSA had been deprived of much of its *raison d'être*, which was to defend and extend the liberal assimilationist ideology. Moreover, the power base of the liberal missionaries who espoused this ideology was very narrow. Even within the CCSA it was weak, as indicated by the failure of its leaders to persuade the non-mission sectors of the CPSA and Methodist churches fully to participate in its work, while as has

been pointed out, they were regarded with suspicion by the Lutheran missions. In addition, from the late 1920s theologically conservative missions represented in the GMC were increasingly alienated by the liberal missionaries, willing acceptance of the new 'social gospel' ideas such as those promulgated by the Jerusalem conference of the IMC.

Besides failing to extend their power base in the ecclesiastical sphere, the liberal missionaries made no attempt to extend it by linking up with political groupings of liberals. There were several probable reasons for that. For one thing, there was at this time a theological climate which, despite the trend towards greater Christian socio-political activism, still discouraged direct associations with the political process. Thus there was never the same close collusion between the CCSA and Jan Hofmeyr – recognised at that time as the chief proponent of liberal views in the South African parliament – as there had been with Rheinallt Jones, even though Hofmeyr was a practising Christian and there was much admiration for him on a personal level among the liberal missionaries.⁷⁶

Another factor in the failure of the liberal missionaries to associate more fully with the liberal political groupings around Hofmeyr was probably their physical isolation from the main urban centres which formed a crucible for political developments. In any case, it seems that rather than looking to an alliance with figure liberals overtly involved in the political process, they believed that the CCSA would be effective in its own right as an instrument for exerting political pressure. The encouragement they received from the Smuts administration after 1940 would have reinforced that view. It took the coming of the Nationalists to power to show in reality how weak and isolated the liberal missionaries were. The isolation of the CCSA from the political arena continued into the 1950s, there being no reference at all in its records to the small

Liberal Party or to the larger Progressive Party, which was formed after a split in the parliamentary opposition in 1958.

Moreover, the missionary liberals themselves were disappearing from the scene. Prominent Lovedale figures Lennox and Wilkie had died in the early 1940s; Dexter Taylor retired in 1948 after nearly 50 years of service with the American Board Mission in South Africa. Rheinallt Jones died in 1952, while E W Grant retired in 1955. While liberalism certainly did not die with them, no one took up the torch of their particular brand of assimilationist ideology. The last two influential figures of that generation were Shepherd and Blaxall. Shepherd's involvement with the CCSA was limited by his duties at the Lovedale school, 1 000 km away from the CCSA's headquarters in Johannesburg. Blaxall was hardly a torch-bearer for the ideology of the missionary liberals. He was appointed part-time secretary of the CCSA when the Methodist Church withdrew the full-time services of Pitts on the plea of a shortage of personnel in its ministry. He had little experience of the mission field or knowledge of missionary theological developments. He was near to the end of his working life in his own denomination, the CPSA, when he took over the CCSA secretaryship. Besides his parish work, his major involvement was with the Enzenzeleni school for blind African people at Roodepoort outside Johannesburg. Thus, as his autobiography indicates, the CCSA did not come at the top of his priorities.⁷⁷ That no one besides the already-overburdened Blaxall was willing to carry the burden of its secretaryship says much about the standing of the organisation in the eyes of its constituency. So, despite this, when the CCSA found itself in a position, once again, to employ a full-time secretary after 1958 as a result of a grant from the BCC and because of a lack of any other candidates, it had to ask Blaxall to take on the job once more even though he stated his utmost reluctance to do so.⁷⁸

Perhaps the most telling pointer to the failure of the brand of missionary liberalism discussed in this chapter to make any lasting impact is that the CCSA receives no mention at all in texts on South African liberalism such as Robertson's *Liberalism in South Africa* and the compendium on *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa* edited by Butler, Elphick and Welsh. That may be as much a reflection on the compilers of those works as it is on the CCSA. However inadequate an ideology and a political force it was, it none the less represented a historically noteworthy development of liberal philosophy. While its institutional embodiment died, it was bound to have an influence on later liberal thinking in the Church and ecumenical sphere. As will be indicated in Chapter Four, it needs to be taken into account in any attempt to understand liberal thinking in the SACC in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Notes

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52. Christian Council of South Africa. Memorandum to the Native Laws Commission of Inquiry, 1.
53. Conference on Human Rights Convened by the South African Institute of Race Relations and the Christian Council of South Africa held in Hiddingh Hall, Cape Town, on 17 and 18 of January 1949.
54. IMC. *The World Mission of the Church*, 30–1.
55. Report of Section II of the Bangkok Conference, op. cit.
56. M Legassick, *The Rise of Modern South African Liberalism*
57. Secretary's report for 1952, op. cit.
58. E Strassberger, *Ecumenism in South Africa 1936–1960*, (Johannesburg, 1974)
59. H G Kuschke, and R H W Shepherd, *The Christian Council of South Africa. To the Churches and Missionary Societies of South Africa* (Lovedale, 1935).
60. CCQ, no. 41, March 1956, 1–3.

61. Strassberger, *Ecumenism in South Africa*, 202.
62. *Ibid.*, 212.
63. T Karis and G Carter, *From Protest to Challenge. A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa; 1882–1964. vol iii. Challenge and Violence* (Stanford, 1977), 76–7.
64. *Ibid.*, 300.
65. Strassberger, *Ecumenism in South Africa*, 214–5.
66. The fact is that the CCSA had little option other than to adopt this role because of NGK objections to it. As the acting CCSA president stated in 1961: ‘It was almost certain that if the Christian Council took any initiative in this matter this would be rejected by the Afrikaans-speaking churches.’ SACC archive, AC 623/17.1.
67. CCSA Executive Committee Minutes, 29/11/1958, 2.
68. SACC archive.
69. SACC archive, AC 623/7.
70. CCSA. *The Christian Citizen in a Multiracial Society. A Report of the Rosettenville Conference, July 1949* (Cape Town, 1949), 7–8.
71. *Ibid.*
72. *CCQ*, no. 24, October 1949, 2–3.
73. *CCQ*, no. 25, December 1949, 3–4.
74. Writing to Blaxall on 14 September 1955, Archbishop Clayton stated that he ‘almost’ regretted he was not present at this interview, ‘though of course the Minister makes it impossible for anyone else to say anything’. SACC archive, AC 623/6.
75. *CCQ*, no. 40, December 1955, 6.
76. A Paton, *Hofmeyr* (Cape Town, 1964), NR.
77. A W Blaxall, *Suspended Sentence* (London, 1965)
78. CCSA Executive Committee Minutes, 29/11/1958, 2.

White Liberals and Black Aspirations

The liberal tradition was based on a humane and generous philosophy. Unlike the segregationists, liberals did envisage the eventual creation of a South African societal order in which all, irrespective of colour or race (to add gender would be a solipsism) would enjoy equal rights and equal access to political power and economic prosperity. For that very reason, liberalism never made much headway among whites, most of whom believed that any loosening of their grip on power could only be to their detriment. However, liberalism was never able to make much headway among blacks either. It is unlikely that blacks, with their concept of *ubuntu* – humaneness, love of one’s neighbour – rejected liberal philosophy as such. (No doubt, some did, just as many whites both in South Africa and in their countries of origin in the Northern Hemisphere, rejected it on philosophical as much as on pragmatic grounds). That blacks subscribe as much to Davenport’s ‘four fundamentals’ as white liberals, seems clear from the way South Africa developed as an open, tolerant and democratic society since the ANC attained power in 1994.

This was, no doubt, due to some extent to the influence of liberal thinking, which should not be underestimated. However, the fact

is that liberal organisations and political parties have never attracted significant black support. Of course, since white liberals comprised only a tiny minority of the population, they never had much opportunity to put their philosophy into practice in the secular sphere. Thus it is impossible to say to what extent political success might have broadened their appeal to black people. Yet, in the ecclesiastical sphere and particularly in the Ecumenical Bloc, liberals did enjoy a long period of dominance. That means that the bodies which form the focus of this study, namely the GMC and the CCSA, and the early period of the SACC, can be seen as a 'test bed' for liberal ideas in practice.

Missionary/liberal paternalism

Both Elphick, and much earlier McCrone, saw missionary work as being one of the main contributory factors to the Cape liberal tradition.¹ In the face of white hostility, liberal missionaries in particular, saw themselves as 'friends of the Native'. While as pointed out earlier, revisionist historiography has demonstrated that many missionaries were also friends of the extension of white rule and economic control, revisionists have perhaps been guilty of going to the opposite extreme and too heavily discounting missionary commitment to what today would be called social justice. Mills describes missionary thinking as being based on 'postmillennial theology', in terms of which missionaries saw themselves as called not simply to 'save souls', but to 'strive, through political action, to eliminate social evils such as slavery, drunkenness and prostitution.'² However, missionaries had much wider concerns than this. In late twentieth-century terms, they can also be said to have had 'contextual' theology. In the words of the late, and very lamented, Professor David Bosch of the Theology Faculty at the University of South Africa (Unisa), contextualisation 'means relating the gospel message to the entire existential context of a group, . . . Contextualisation deals with the life issues of a given society.' He quoted the Latin American Orlando E Costas,

who defined contextualisation as ‘theologians applying ethical standards to their own historical reality in terms of the political, economic and social circumstances in which they find themselves.’³ A little less than a decade after Bosch had penned these words, another gloss on contextual theology burst on the South African scene in the form of the ICT, which was established in 1985. The definition of contextual theology put forward by those who founded and ran this organisation (in particular the Dominican Fr Albert Nolan) was rather less purely theological and much more focused on the particular apartheid context in which Christians found themselves at the time. In the words of Speckman and Kaufmann:

Contextual Theology . . . became one of the powers that applied pressure to the apartheid devil. It (together with other progressive forces) opposed the dehumanising political system that was legitimated by theology.⁴

It would, of course, seem to be an anachronism to apply this definition to the situation which existed in South Africa before 1948 when apartheid became official government policy. Probably the same holds true of the definition advanced by Bosch, since that type of contextual theology emerged only in the second half of the twentieth century, which was very late in the period covered by this study. None the less, the concept has become too useful to be discarded because of these chronological niceties and it will be used in this study to refer to any theology which provides, or provided, a basis for Christian socio-political activism aimed at furthering social and economic justice as well as bringing about human equality.

The circumstances under which the missionary movement arose and the directions it took led, especially the British-based churches and missions, to accommodate such a theology. While those missions had strong ‘pietistic’ elements and preached a spiritualised type of individual salvation, the British and American missionary

movement was also closely involved in the anti-slavery campaigns and the philanthropic movement which involved them in practical issues of politics and economics.⁵ The same was true in areas into which they moved where the interests of their indigenous converts, and indeed of the inhabitants generally, clashed with those of European settlers. A prime example was South Africa itself where, as Macmillan observed in his *Bantu, Boer and Briton*, the British takeover of the Cape in 1806 was ‘almost less of a fundamental shock than the arrival at the same time of missionaries to the Hottentots’.⁶ The subsequent clashes between leading figures of the LMS and the white colonists, leading to incidents such as the ‘Black Circuit’ of 1812, hardly need recounting. While other giants of the LMS in the later nineteenth century such as Dr John Philip and David Livingstone extended the missionary tradition of acting as advocates of the rights of black people, as Hinchliff noted, ‘even quite obscure representatives of the Society were willing to try their hand at a direct approach to government on behalf of those whom they regarded as oppressed’.⁷ The obloquy these efforts drew on the heads of the missionaries from the white colonists caused them to assume a lower profile in the later nineteenth century. That they had by no means lost their desire to promote the social and political cause of the black peoples by the time the GMC was founded in 1904, is clear from one of the objects of its constitution, namely: ‘To watch over the interests of the Native races and, where necessary, to influence legislation on their behalf.’⁸

It would be a mistake to make too much of this. The GMC was a loosely structured body meeting at irregular intervals, and while it had the interests of black people among its stated objects, it was at first mainly concerned with missionary and ecclesiastical affairs. At its first three meetings in 1904, 1906 and 1909, socio-political matters hardly figured on its agendas, although in 1906 it resolved ‘to make representations in the proper quarters of the necessity for adequately securing the rights of the natives in

framing the new constitutions of the Transvaal and Orange River Colonies'.⁹ Similarly, in 1909 the GMC urged those framing the constitution of the nascent Union of South Africa to ensure 'that some general provision be made for native representation with reference to matters specially affecting natives'.¹⁰ The almost exclusively white character of the GMC (only 1 out of 70 people present at its 1909 meeting was black and only 6 out of 134 in 1912) indicated that it was out of touch with such weak impulses towards African nationalism as existed before the Union in 1910.

The creation of the Union of South Africa, composed of the four major territories in the subcontinent, did allow for the imposition of a common policy throughout the country. Concern over that situation led the thin stratum of educated and politically aware Africans to form the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), later to become the ANC, in 1912. As Kuper remarked, the movement towards Union 'heightened the tension, born of fear, that united European power over Africans would mean, if not open slavery, then something like economic strangulation'.¹¹

That the missionaries of the GMC shared African fears to some extent was evident in the first post-Union meeting of that body, held in 1912. The Rev R H Dyke of the Paris Evangelical Mission asked in his presidential address what the coming of Union would mean 'for the Natives, to whom we are sent and for whom we are spending our lives?' His reply was in the form of an attack on a public speaker who had stated a few days previously that the Union was made for whites and not for blacks and that South Africa was destined to be a white man's country. That generally accepted doctrine, said Dyke, meant not only that the gulf between the races was being widened and deepened, but also that the 'Coloured races' were being forced into a union of their own 'which ere long (for good or ill) may shape itself into a stronger confederation'.¹² This oblique reference to the SANNC was explicitly taken up by the meeting at a later stage when it passed a motion recognising

that body as a 'moral, social and spiritual force' and welcoming its assistance in solving 'those problems with which we are grappling'.¹³ This was an indication that their mutual resistance to the advance of racially discriminatory policies created the possibility of a congruence between the missionary movement and black political movements, even though a black churchman like the Rev John Dube, who had been elected president of the SANNC, appears to have had no contacts with the GMC before World War I. Dyke further recognised the advent of a new era for the GMC following Union when he stated:

Whether we will it or not, and however much we may dislike the idea of being mixed up in what may appear to be party politics, the purely social aspect of the Natives' case is so prominent that we cannot escape the responsibility of taking our legitimate share in the safeguarding of the welfare of the people.¹⁴

In line with this thinking, the 1912 meeting of the GMC paid much more attention to socio-political issues than its predecessors. For instance, it unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the proposed Native Settlement and Squatters Bill (forerunner of the 1913 Land Act) as wrong in principle, since it would operate 'most harshly and unjustly on the Natives', forcing on them a form of serfdom which would place a 'dangerous strain upon their loyalty'.¹⁵ In response to increasing urbanisation, the conference also addressed a memorandum to municipalities asking them to establish black townships 'where opportunity for wholesome family life . . . fixity of tenure and a measure of self-government shall be secured'.¹⁶ The executive was asked to consider in the intervals between GMC meetings, any legislation affecting blacks and to make representations to government on such putative laws.¹⁷

However, this stated concern for African rights must be balanced against the fact that as the records of the GMC show, missionary

liberalism was strongly paternalistic. As noted earlier, its first meeting in 1904 was composed entirely of white representatives and a suggestion that blacks be accepted into membership gave rise to what appears to have been a heated debate. The Rev James Dewar of the United Free Church of Scotland mission moved that 'the conference consist only of Europeans', since white missionaries had sufficient knowledge of the 'Native mind' to make the attendance of Africans unnecessary. 'We do not need them here to ask their opinion; we bring it with us. Although it would be a good thing for as many Africans as possible to attend meetings in a spectator role, that was 'in order that they may listen.' Among those who disagreed with Dewar was the famed Dr Stewart of Lovedale, a fellow Scots missionary. That there was this difference of opinion between two Lovedale figures indicates the lack of ideological uniformity among missionaries at that time. Stewart's opinion proved to be that of the majority and Dewar's motion was lost, the conference agreeing that its membership should be open to 'such ordained Native ministers as may from time to time be sent by Churches or Societies represented at the Conference by European missionaries.'¹⁸

The last clause was introduced to prevent a situation in which, in the eyes of Stewart, 'the whole of the Ethiopians might come down on us.' The reference was, of course, to the burgeoning AICs, and indicates that the missionaries were very conscious of them. The missionary attitudes to the AICs revealed at this conference are illuminating, not only from an ecclesiastical point of view, but also because of their political implications. One of the papers read at this meeting was entitled 'Ethiopian Movement and Other Independent Factions Characterised by a National Spirit' written by the Rev F Bridgeman of the American Board Mission. He dated the emergence of the AICs to only ten or twelve years before, attributing it to a new spirit among blacks which had produced a disposition to say to the 'white brother "Hands off, let us plan for ourselves".' Knowledge of the AICs was extremely limited, said

Bridgeman, and the 'animus' of the movement had to be gathered 'largely from what we know of the native mind and incidental indications'. Missionary hostility to the AICs was summed up in Bridgeman's twofold charge that they promoted schism and that their members were guilty of 'low morals'. He also saw the AICs as placing an 'unhappy emphasis on the colour line' and stated the belief that the movement had an inevitable political trend which raised the 'horrid specter [sic] of a native uprising'. The emergence and poor record of the AICs, said Bridgeman, was acting as a retarding factor in the process of the euthanasia of missions, since 'to relax our hold upon the present work would not only be to leave the churches to an uncertain fate, but it would also involve the loss to the advance movement of the base of its campaign'.¹⁹ A long resolution was proposed which was debated paragraph by paragraph because some missionaries thought it too mild. The final product is worth quoting in full.

In view of the importance of the Ethiopian movement as affecting the progress of God's Kingdom in this land, and remembering the wide spread [sic] public interest in this question, the first General Missionary Conference of South Africa deems it desirable to make the following statements:

The Conference understands Ethiopianism to be the effort in South Africa to establish native churches independent of European missionary control and hostile to it on racial lines.

The quickening power of the Gospel and the inevitable contact of the natives with European civilisation have produced an awakening among the natives throughout South Africa. Ethiopianism is largely a misdirected use of this new born energy. For the present at least it seems to require not so much repression as careful guidance.

This conference deplores: First. The fact that the Ethiopian bodies should so often display an utter lack of regard for the principles of Christian comity by entering a field already occupied and proselytising therein. Second. The lowering of the standard of Christian morals through lax discipline, and by encouraging schism in the Church of Christ. Third. The intensification of mutual distrust existing

between the two great races of this land and the emphasis of Ethiopianism on the colour line.

While not wishing unduly to minimise the impression of any danger arising from the Ethiopian movement, this Conference is of opinion that perhaps too great importance has been assigned to the political aspect of the movement.²⁰

The resolution in favour of the establishment of 'native churches' given in Chapter Three needs to be balanced against this one. Although the support of GMC missionaries for the concept of the separate 'native church' seems surprisingly advanced for its time, it is clear that they envisaged such a church as being under their control and operating within their ethos; they showed nothing but hostility towards any indigenous church not established on those lines. It is noteworthy that Jacottet, whose paper gave rise to the resolution in favour of the establishment of 'native churches' quoted in Chapter One, disapproved strongly of the AICs. It was at his insistence that the words 'and hostile to it' were inserted into the second paragraph of the resolution above.²¹

The paternalism of the missionaries in matters ecclesiastical was also present in their attitudes towards secular affairs, where they arrogated to themselves the position of exclusive spokesmen for black people. The Rev Henry Dyke, in his 1912 address to the GMC mentioned earlier, was greeted with applause when he rhetorically asked:

Who knows the Native better than those who live among them? Who have their confidence, and who are best to voice their sometimes inarticulate desires? . . . Representation is denied them in the assemblies of South Africa. Their voices cannot be heard, but the missionary associations can.²²

As has been argued earlier, that politically conscious and articulate blacks by no means shared this point of view was a source of deep concern to missionaries. Their resentment of African

‘independentism’ outside missionary control could hardly have endeared them to more the nationalistic segment of the black population.

In passing, it might be noted that the liberalism of the missionaries within the GMC was also characterised by an initial acceptance of territorial segregation as being in the best interests of the African people. This had been pleaded for by Philip himself, and that it continued to draw favour in missionary circles, is evident in the fact that the *Christian Express* (forerunner of the *South African Outlook*) supported the 1913 Land Act which gave 87 per cent of the land to the white minority and left the large black majority with only 13 per cent. Its reason for doing so was fear that those who were advocating the breaking up of the African reserves which comprised the 13 per cent and throwing them open to white settlement (a policy that the then Prime Minister Louis Botha had publicly advocated)²³ would succeed. This standpoint was out of line with that of the GMC’s attacks on the proposed Squatter Bill in 1912 and, moreover, earned the *Christian Express* some bitter criticism from Sol Plaatje in its correspondence columns.²⁴ Like J T Jabavu, the *Express* based its support for the Land Act on the fact that it was piloted through parliament by the liberal J W Sauer and expressed what, in hindsight, was naïve faith in the good intentions of those who framed the Bill towards the African people.²⁵ That this view evoked criticism from within the GMC was another indication that there was by no means uniformity of opinion among the liberal missionaries on questions of racial policy.

However, apart from the specific issue of the Land Act, territorial segregation continued to be an accepted wisdom in liberal circles until well after World War I, as is evident in the views expressed by Dr Edgar Brookes in his *History of Native Policy* based on his doctoral thesis of 1923. Segregation was also accepted at two important church conferences called during the earlier 1920s to

discuss the racial issue. The first was convened in 1923 by the NGK and unanimously adopted a resolution favouring 'differing development of the Bantu'. Although complete segregation was pronounced to be neither possible nor desirable, 'partial possessory segregation (that is, segregation based on prescriptive and other rights of the occupation of land) . . . is a useful subsidiary measure tending to facilitate administration'.²⁶ In September 1926 another conference on the 'Native question', attended by leaders of the Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist churches, as well as the NGK, agreed that 'it is not necessarily contrary to Christian principles to seek to develop and uplift Native life separate from European life'.

The acceptance by many in the GMC of segregationist thinking indicates that at this stage the divisions between them and the Dutch Reformed Bloc were narrower than the division between the Ecumenical Bloc and the AICs.

Post-war activism

The tendency towards greater interest and involvement in socio-political affairs shown by the GMC in 1912 was strongly influenced after World War I by both theological and secular forces. As has been recounted, a worldwide trend towards post millennialism and socio-political activism among missionary organisations was evident in bodies such as the IMC. Those involved in the GMC followed this trend and were further influenced by both economic and political developments in South Africa. Under the influence of Dr James Henderson, principal of the Lovedale institution, the GMC paid particular attention to economic issues during the later 1920s. Henderson himself was influenced by evidence of increasing rural poverty, which he saw among the people living near Lovedale deep in the countryside of the Ciskei. In a major address entitled 'The Economic Life of the Natives of South Africa in Relation to their Evangelisation' delivered to the 1925 meeting of the GMC, he pointed out that eco-

conomic regression was evident all around Lovedale. Children who went without clothing throughout the winter were more in evidence than ever, while 'this Native rural area is vastly worse off for housing accommodation than the worst town slum'.²⁷ Such conditions were not only deplored by missionaries in their self-appointed role as the guardians of African rights but, as Henderson stated, were hampering attempts to Christianise the black population as well as undermining moral standards among those who professed Christianity.

By this time, differences within the GMC over the Land Act seem to have been eliminated and the meeting passed a strong resolution about the effects of the Act. The GMC professed itself to be 'grievously distressed' that after 12 years on the statute book provisions which might have benefited the African population had never been implemented while 'the suffering and injustice imposed on them by its restrictive provisions daily become more acute'.²⁸ The theme of the 1928 conference was *The Realignment of Native Life on a Christian Basis* under which major topics relating to African education and health were discussed while Henderson delivered an address expanding on the theme of rural poverty. In 1929 the executive committee of the GMC adopted a number of resolutions on this issue at Henderson's urging, asking the government to institute an inquiry into the economic condition of the African population as recommended by the Economic and Wages Commission of 1925.²⁹

Its concern about economic conditions was one factor which made the GMC take a keen interest in the activities of African political and workers' movements, particularly the ANC and the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU). The concern about developments and activities among the black population was reflected in the fact that, whereas before World War I, blacks played a minimal role in the GMC, from 1925 not only did their numbers present at its meetings increase, but several black leaders of

the ANC including D D T Jabavu, Z R Mahabane and the Rev John Dube, first president of the ANC, delivered papers at these gatherings. In 1928 the president of the ICU, Clements Kadalie, addressed the GMC, which was remarkable in the light of the scorn he had earlier poured on missionaries and missionary efforts.³⁰ He told the meeting that the ICU was the fruit of black unrest and not the cause of it, and that his organisation's one aim was to secure living wages for black workers together with living conditions which promoted a healthy existence.³¹ Further evidence of the interest with which the GMC viewed the black movements was reflected in the *Yearbook of South African Missions* published under its auspices in 1928. Included in that compendium was an article on African political organisations written by Dube, while Kadalie was also asked to contribute a chapter, although he failed to do so.³²

This was one indication that the GMC never established the fairly close links with the leadership of the ICU that it had with leading ANC figures. Indeed, Walshe argues that it was its contacts with white-dominated organisations such as the Joint Councils with which the GMC was also closely associated, that blunted the appeal of the ANC among the African population in the 1920s.³³ Its leaders at that stage could hardly be called nationalists; they rather looked to the creation of a multiracial state based on the model of the pre-Union Cape Colony, in which blacks would gradually be absorbed into the political structure and so establish their right to their 'fair shares'. It was not a compelling platform and writing in the *Yearbook of South African Missions* Dube confirmed Walshe's argument about the lack of ANC appeal by painting a discouraging picture of division and weakness in its ranks.³⁴

The interest displayed by the GMC in black political movements in the 1920s did not betoken any approval or support for them. It rather indicated a considerable degree of unease about their emergence and, as argued in Chapter Three, this was a strong con-

tributary factor to the formation of the CCSA as the successor body to the GMC in 1936.

Parting company with African nationalism

The interest in African political movements as evinced by the meetings of the GMC was not duplicated in the deliberations of CCSA, which, in fact, lost touch with black political thinking to an ever greater extent over the next three decades. There were two major reasons for this. First, as has been argued, the CCSA was created as a platform for missionary liberalism; but in the very year that it was formed, militant black opinion began turning its back on the white liberals owing to their failure to halt the 1936 legislation which removed African voters from the common roll in the Cape Province.³⁵ There was no official reaction from either the GMC or the CCSA to this legislation, since all their attention and energy were directed at that time to the creation of the CCSA. Even when the latter was accomplished, it is probable that the strong NGK presence in its ranks would have prevented the CCSA from saying anything. However, that the churches of the Ecumenical Bloc emphatically rejected the abolition of the black vote in the Cape was clear from the strong reaction of particularly the CPSA and the Methodist Church. The equally strong feelings of the missionary liberals was expressed by the Lovedale-based *South African Outlook* which continuously attacked the proposed legislation before it was passed. When it became law in 1936 the *Outlook* commented bitterly that 'this was the price of fusion, and General Smuts has entered the arena committed to a policy of spoliation of the rights of citizenship, a policy which he had no real heart to defend'.³⁶

At that time, General Jan Smuts was leader of the parliamentary opposition to the segregationist government under Hertzog, which had come to power in 1924. When in 1926 Hertzog's government first tried to disenfranchise those blacks in the Cape who had earned the right to vote, the refusal of Smuts and his South

African Party (SAP) to support the legislation deprived the government of the two-thirds majority it needed under the South African constitution to accomplish this. Yet, unlike the missionaries, Smuts was not committed to defending the Cape franchise at all costs. He stated that he had never been wedded to it and based his opposition to Hertzog's attempts to abolish it in 1926, 1929 and 1930 on the argument that no adequate platform for African views was being offered as a *quid pro quo*.³⁷ However, that stand implied a willingness to bargain and when Smuts entered a coalition government in 1933 to 1934 following the global monetary crisis caused by the Great Depression, Hertzog's position was much stronger since the merger offered new possibilities for gaining the two-thirds majority he had sought since 1926.

Still, when legislation was published in 1935 to remove Africans from the common roll in the form of two Bills, – the Natives Land and Trust Bill and the Representation of Natives Bill, – it was not clear what the attitude of Smuts would be.³⁸ The Bills offered an extension of the area of the African reserves demarcated under the Land Act of 1913, the establishment of a Natives' Representative Council and white representation for Africans in the Senate. The flaw from Smuts's standpoint was that it made no provision for African representation in the House of Assembly. This objection was overcome in February 1936 when Hertzog announced that after meeting a delegation from the All-Africa Convention, he would introduce a new Natives Representation Bill which provided for the election of three white representatives for Africans to the House of Assembly and two to the Cape Provincial Council. Smuts declared the necessary *quid pro quo* had been obtained, which meant that the passage of the Bill with a two-thirds majority through a joint sitting of the Assembly and the Senate was assured.

The difference between Smuts and the liberal missionaries on the issue was that between principle and pragmatism. As a pragmatic

politician, Smuts was aware that his position on the Cape franchise was crumbling. Even before the 1933 merger, the right-wing faction of his SAP with Heaton Nicholls of Natal as its chief spokesman, had argued as forcefully as Hertzog for the abolition of the Cape franchise.³⁹ Smuts realised that if he persisted with his opposition to the new Natives' Representation Bill in 1936, the United Party would split and that the Heaton Nicholls faction would be unlikely to follow him into opposition. With a diminished following he would find himself in a political wilderness from which any return would be difficult.⁴⁰ Thus politically he had strong motivations for colluding in the abolition of the Cape franchise, to the disgust of the liberal missionaries, although as will be related shortly, they later had reason to be thankful that Smuts did not take the 'wilderness option' in 1936.

Black nationalism on the rise

Having been 'sold out' by Smuts in 1936, the weakness and political isolation of the liberals were starkly clear and thus black political organisations had little reason to repose any confidence in them. That blacks were ready to defend their interests on their own account had already been signalled in 1935 when the All-Africa Convention, which drew together several black organisations, including the ANC, had been formed to resist Hertzog's 'Native Bills'. For several years before that, African political activity had been minimal. Kadalie's ICU had collapsed as a result of power struggles and administrative chaos in 1931; the ANC had been hard hit by state action against several of its leaders a year earlier and was practically moribund.⁴¹ Reaction to the prospect of the passage of the 'Native Bills' helped to resuscitate the organisation from 1936 onwards.

If those Bills were the spark that rekindled the flame of black political activity, changing demographic patterns resulting from increasing industrialisation provided the fuel to keep the fires burning. The ANC was destined to outlast the All-Africa Conven-

tion as the main vehicle of black nationalism and its increasing militancy must be seen against the background of a quickening tempo of urbanisation in South Africa. The point is argued by O'Meara in his studies of the 1946 mineworkers' strike, in which he underlined the significance of the fact that the black urban population trebled between 1921 and 1946, and the number of black workers in secondary industry very nearly equalled that in mining at the end of the period. African protest and mobilisation between 1936 and 1946, states O'Meara, 'occurred almost exclusively within the capitalist mode of production'. The 1940s saw a burgeoning of black trade unions, even though they had no legal standing and an interaction between them and the ANC was established. In 1941 the ANC convened a conference which led to the formation of the African Mineworkers' Union. That union played a leading role in the 1946 miners' strike; the swift and ruthless suppression of which provoked a militant reaction from even moderate Africans. This was most evident in the way the Natives' Representative Council set up in terms of the 1936 Natives Representation Act, adjourned itself *sine die*. That move reflected the anger its members felt about the refusal of the Smuts government to consider the African mineworkers' grievances. Thus, as O'Meara points out, there was a merger of 'most of the elements of African opposition into a class alliance articulating a radical nationalism' in the aftermath of the strike. With the virtual collapse of the trade union movement as a result of state action in 1946, leading African trade unionists moved into important ANC leadership positions.⁴²

The significance of post-1946 developments in the ANC lay, as O'Meara says, in its move in the direction of a more definitely formed nationalism over against the mild nostrums and pleas for a 'fair go' of its earlier period. The formation of the Congress Youth League in 1943 was more significant in these terms than even the organisational reforms introduced by Dr A B Xuma after his election to the presidency in 1940, which gave the organisation

a much stronger structural underpinning. The adoption by the ANC of the Programme of Action sponsored by the Youth League in 1949, turned the organisation in the direction of seeking to establish majority rule at the same time as committing it to 'immediate and active boycott, strike, civil disobedience, non-co-operation'.⁴³ This paved the way for the Defiance Campaign of 1952 which, although halted by the threat of harsh punitive measures by the state, provided an enormous stimulus to ANC growth, the organisation reaching a peak membership of 100 000 after the campaign.

While the broadening base of resistance to the white regime was evident in the formation of the Congress Alliance which drew together the ANC, the Indian congresses, the Coloured People's Organisation and the white Congress of Democrats, and in the adoption by that body of the Freedom Charter in 1955, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) saw itself in the vanguard of African militancy after its formation in 1958. In part a reaction to the dilution of 'pure' African nationalism in the ANC as a result of its participation in the Congress Alliance, the PAC demonstrated its militancy in both the anti-pass campaign of 1960 which led to the Sharpeville shootings and the violent Poqo uprising in Paarl, Cape Province, in the following year.⁴⁴

The changing demographic patterns of the African population after 1930 which so fundamentally affected the ANC, form the second major reason for the divergence between the CCSA and black nationalism right up to the early 1970s. While the fast growth of Christian profession in South Africa was probably one of the results of the urbanisation process, the missionaries and churchmen who dominated the CCSA lost the close contact they had with African political leaders in the early years of the century. The liberal missionary 'heartland' was located in the rural Eastern Cape and while that area, rich in missionary educational and publishing establishments, acted as a matrix of modern African intellectual

life,⁴⁵ the centre of political gravity, as argued by O'Meara, had moved to the urban areas by the 1940s, leaving the missionaries in a relatively isolated position, both physically and psychologically.

Even though most militant younger black nationalists such as Anton Lembede, the leading thinker of the 'Africanist' wing of the ANC in the 1940s which resolved itself into the PAC in 1958, and Robert Sobukwe, president of that organisation, were devout Christians, they did not have the same close contact with white missionaries as the older generation of ANC leaders such as Dube, Calata, Mahabane and Jabavu had in the 1920s. Another factor in the growing gap between the missions and churches and the African political movements is that, apart from Dr Ray Phillips of the American Board Mission, there was never another clerical economist of the stature of Dr Henderson after he had died in 1931, and Phillips was never as closely involved in the GMC and the CCSA. While conditions continued to deteriorate in the reserves and urbanisation resulted in great social dislocation in the major centres, there was no one forcibly to draw the attention of the CCSA to this fact which was galvanising both the black trade unions and the ANC into action in the 1940s.

Liberal delusions

The CCSA, increasingly out of touch with black political thinking, like other white-dominated liberal institutions during the early 1940s, were beguiled into thinking that the liberal gradualist formula was being accepted by the Smuts administration, which came to power in dramatic circumstances after the outbreak of World War II in September 1939. The missionaries in the CCSA – their organisation newly revived itself under the leadership of Archbishop Darbyshire – found the new administration to be open and friendly to their representations and thus their hostility to Smuts caused by the passing of the 1936 legislation, disappeared. The CCSA, led by British-born missionaries, was now inclined to

adulate Smuts and his administration, who had taken South Africa into the war against Nazi Germany, in the same way as the English-speaking population in general who formed the backbone of his United Party. Smuts and his government reciprocated these feelings. Not only did Smuts grant the 1943 interview with CCSA leaders recounted in Chapter Three, but in the following year the CCSA was euphoric about moves on African education announced by the liberal Minister of Education and Finance, J H Hofmeyr. In line with recommendations made by mission societies and other bodies, the government had accepted the principle of transferring the control of African education from the Native Affairs Department to the Union Department of Education and that, instead of being financed from taxes raised from the African population, African education would in future be paid for on the same per capita basis as for other population groups. These moves, stated the *Christian Council Quarterly*, constituted victories 'in the long campaign carried on by the missionary churches and others concerned for the welfare of future generations of Native people'.⁴⁶ In contrast to the 1920s when the missionaries were deeply disturbed by governmental racial policies, the CCSA in the 1940s expressed mostly uncritical admiration for the United Party administration. For instance, in July 1944 the *Christian Council Quarterly* observed of the recently published official review of the Department of Native Affairs:

It reflects the markedly sympathetic and helpful attitude of the Department towards its great constituency of African people which has characterised the administration of Native Affairs during recent years. In missionary circles keen appreciation of this attitude is often expressed.⁴⁷

In similar vein, the *Christian Council Quarterly* wrote of Dr D L Smit, secretary for Native Affairs, when he was about to retire in 1945, that his period of office had been marked by 'wide sympathy and understanding of the needs of the people, and by astonishing progress in the promotion of Native welfare'.⁴⁸

The liberal missionaries had reason on one account for their praise of the Smuts government. It undoubtedly made significant advances in the sphere of social services for African people who, during the war years, became the recipients, for the first time, of benefits such as old-age pensions and disability grants. The changes in the structure of African education in 1944 which prompted such rejoicing among missionaries have already been mentioned, while in 1946 Smuts was speaking of the extension of African political rights 'to a certain extent'.⁴⁹ The groping towards a new and more liberal direction of policy for the African population was embodied in the proposals of the Fagan Commission put forward early in 1948.

Yet there was another side to the picture. Margaret Ballinger, commenting on aspects such as the continued denial of bargaining power and the right to strike on the part of the rapidly expanding African labour force and the tightening of influx control which involved a wide extension of the pass laws, observed that while under the Smuts regime there had been impressive gains in the direction of social services for Africans, there were also 'dangerous losses' of personal freedoms and democratic rights.⁵⁰ The anti-pass campaign of 1944 and the reaction of the Natives' Representative Council to the mineworkers' strike of 1946 indicated that the African population was by no means as happy with the Smuts regime as the liberal missionaries. There is little or no evidence that the latter took proper cognisance of this dark side of the United Party's record. As already suggested, the missionaries were increasingly out of touch with African opinion, whereas Mrs Ballinger and the other Native Representatives were far more aware of African thinking. In contrast to their stand, the CCSA was silent about the mineworkers' strike of 1946 and said nothing about the crisis in urban housing which caused enormous shanty towns to proliferate around the urban centres of the Witwatersrand in the mid-1940s.

The CCSA and the ANC

Although from the 1920s onwards the GMC and CCSA reacted vigorously to the actions of Afrikaner nationalism in government, it is also evident there was little or no positive feeling among liberal missionaries about African nationalism. Thus, what is absent from CCSA documents and statements during this period is as significant as what they contain. One such significant omission is any mention of black political organisation and particularly of the ANC. It is true that there is no mention of white political organisations either, but apart from Rheinallt Jones and Brookes in its early period, the CCSA did not have any leading white political figure on its executive committees. In contrast, leading black political figures such as Jabavu, Z R Mahabane, Calata and Dube were all closely associated with the GMC/CCSA, while in 1945, Chief Albert Luthuli was elected Vice-President of the CCSA,⁵¹ a position he continued to hold until his banning in 1953. As already noted, Luthuli's associations with the CCSA went back to 1938 when he was selected as one of the delegates to the IMC's Tambaram conference. Yet in all those years there is not one mention in CCSA documents of his association with the ANC. His election as president of that organisation in 1952 passed unremarked in the CCSA and although the executive issued a strong protest at his banning, it again made no mention of his ANC connections.

However, the only recorded instance of Luthuli himself advancing the cause of the ANC in the CCSA and trying to enlist it as an ally was during the Defiance Campaign. In his autobiography *Let My People Go* he wrote that it was his insistence which overcame the doubts of the Executive about issuing the statement on the campaign given on page 138.⁵² In the records of the CCSA there is no reflection of this, or of other, contributions he made to its deliberations. Even his speech to the 1949 conference of the CCSA, while attacking the concept of trusteeship, as recorded earlier, was characterised by views which would have seemed unremark-

able to his liberal audience, and it was out of discussion on his paper that the resolution supporting a qualified franchise arose. Luthuli and other blacks involved in the CCSA represented the 'old' ANC view, which leads Robertson to describe them as liberals themselves (although it might be said that this 'old' view indicated that the liberals by no means had a monopoly on liberal values).⁵³ The new Lembedist views of the 'Africanist' section of the ANC, which led to the PAC breakaway of 1958, were not represented in CCSA counsels.

The missionaries and churchmen involved in the CCSA were largely unaware of African nationalist developments in both the 1940s and 1950s. The one occasion on which the CCSA was forced to respond to these was during the Defiance Campaign of 1952, and even then it was not so much in response to internal pressures as to those from overseas churches. Thus, at its Biennial Meeting held in January 1952, the CCSA issued a statement 'in part to answer the question often asked by overseas Churches and Councils relating to matters of wide concern in South Africa: 'Why does the Christian Council of South Africa not speak forth on the issue?' The statement called for a national convention and, while recognising that this was not capable of immediate achievement, appealed to the authorities to refrain from legislation or administrative action which could aggravate racial tension and to 'all others to abstain on their part from exacerbation of feelings by anything in the nature of organised resistance'.⁵⁴ The last sentence was clearly a reference to the Defiance Campaign but was so obscure as to have been hardly noticed. Blaxall reported on his return from Willingen in 1952:

While the meetings were in progress the Passive Resistance campaign started in South Africa, paragraphs appearing in the columns of the English, Dutch, German and French newspapers. Interest aroused is astonishing, but once again it meant difficult questions. At Willingen, and subsequently in Holland and England, I was constantly asked why it is that churches do not come out solidly in

moral support of the resisters? In my replies I stressed the practical difficulties of our country in getting agreed expressions of views, but I said that probably most of the churches would make statements at their annual conferences.⁵⁵

It should be noted that Blaxall made no reference to the January statement of the CCSA, issued with the full weight of the Biennial Meeting, its supreme policy-making body.

In January 1953 the Executive of the CCSA issued another statement, the background of which was described by Blaxall as having arisen from a feeling that the churches associated with the CCSA should express their views on the 'somewhat thorny subject' of the Defiance Campaign. After considering the views expressed by the churches themselves (which 'appeared to differ to some extent') the Executive stated that while it had 'profound sympathies with the non-European Christians' and understanding of the motives which had given rise to the Defiance Campaign, it nevertheless felt 'bound to point out that obedience to the law is a Christian duty, and that disobedience is only justified when such obedience involves disobedience to the dictates of conscience'.⁵⁶ Its last point, that there should be consultation between the government and representatives of the blacks, was reiterated in a statement on the Criminal Law Amendment Bill and the Public Safety Bill introduced to contain the Defiance Campaign through heavy punitive action. The CCSA Executive questioned whether a situation justifying such legislation had arisen and protested that the sentences to be imposed under the legislation were altogether too severe.⁵⁷ No reference was made to the situation which was a direct cause of the legislation, and nothing was said about the justification or otherwise of the Defiance Campaign.

Although Blaxall remarked on the differences between the statements on the Defiance Campaign issued by major constituent churches of the CCSA, in fact, its own statement represented a

fair reflection of the church statements. It is significant that only two Christian bodies, both black, came out in direct support of the Defiance Campaign. One was the Bantu Presbyterian Church, the ministers and elders of which issued a statement declaring that 'since our people are not in the possession of the political instruments which make for peaceful change . . . we are compelled to see a certain necessity in their choice of passive resistance as the only way open to them'.⁵⁸ Another statement was made by the Port Elizabeth African Ministers' Council and the Cape Midlands Non-Denominational African Ministers' Association, which were both affiliated organisations of the Interdenominational African Ministers Association (formerly Federation), the secretary of which stated that African churches in the Eastern Cape would take their stand in support of the campaign.⁵⁹ These unequivocal declarations of support for a directly political action were typical of the stands being taken by 'younger churches' in the Third World on the issue of nationalist movements, and contrasts with the ambivalence and contradictions of the statements made by the white-dominated and liberal-dominated CCSA on the same issue.

Liberal ambivalence

Although during the remainder of the 1950s activities such as the 1955 Congress of the People and the 1958 Treason Trial continued to give the ANC a fairly high profile, the CCSA never again found itself being called on to take a stand in response to the rising tide of black nationalism. There is no evidence to suggest that if it had taken such a stand, its attitude would have been any less ambivalent than during the Defiance Campaign. There are two pointers in this direction, embodied in the outlook and actions of the last two survivors of the liberal missionary generation, Blaxall and Shepherd. As the secretary of the CCSA, Blaxall was obviously in a position to exercise a major influence on the thinking and direction of the organisation. Shepherd also played a crucial role both through his presidency of the CCSA between

1956 and 1960, and equally importantly through his editorship of the *South African Outlook* between 1932 and 1964. These two figures represented two poles of missionary liberalism with regard to its reactions and attitudes to African nationalism.

Missionary concern about the growth of black nationalism continued to be reflected with remarkable consistency during the period of Shepherd's editorship of the *South African Outlook*. It is not necessary to trace this over the whole period, but the trend of thought is immediately evident in the *South African Outlook* in the period from 1950 onwards. In that year it reprinted in full an article which had appeared in the daily Johannesburg newspaper, *The Bantu World*, deploring an attempt by the ANC to get Africans to stay away from work on June 26 in protest against the passing of the Suppression of Communism Act. *The Bantu World* was highly critical of the ANC on this point and in its introductory comments the *Outlook* wrote that the 'protest day' was chiefly notable for the 'sane reaction' of the African people, the vast majority of whom had refused to heed the ANC call because of a realisation among the rank and file that it was they and not the leaders who would suffer.⁶⁰ The May 1952 issue of the *Outlook* took a slightly different line with regard to the 'leadership' of the nationalist movements behind the Defiance Campaign, praising them for the orderliness of the gatherings which marked its launch, but also noting that in Cape Town 'a large, orderly meeting weakened the effect of its protest by passing resolutions in regard to the affairs of individuals such as Sam Kahn, Simon Zukas and Seretse Khama'.⁶¹

On the same page two other editorials appeared, one quoting the Rev P M Ibbotson, organising secretary of the Federation of African Welfare Societies in the then Southern Rhodesia who had pointed out 'the unwisdom and danger of extravagant African statements being made in Northern Rhodesia' which seemed to show 'undiscriminating distrust' of the government and of the whites

there. A second editorial depicted African Christian leaders as 'standing in the need of prayer' as they found themselves subjected to a double pressure of heathenism fighting a desperate last battle and 'the less familiar pressure of a vehement nationalism, which, as is the way of nationalism, would push religion into a secondary place, if not off the landscape altogether'.⁶²

As already indicated, the *South African Outlook* tended to view the Defiance Campaign sympathetically in its early stages. In July 1952 an editorial deprecated 'any attitude of blind and stupid hostility in Europeans towards protesting non-Europeans';⁶³ it was the right of every man to protest against injustice which hampered him and the appeal for the understanding of the protesters' cause was repeated in September.⁶⁴ However, this attitude changed after a riot at New Brighton outside Port Elizabeth during which a white Catholic nun was killed. The assistant editor of the *Outlook*, Osmund Bull, in a special article wrote that the 'heartbreaking savagery' had shaken the country with its blind irresponsibility and vicious brutality, particularly in the light of the previous discipline and uncomplaining acceptance of penalties by those participating in the Defiance Campaign in the Eastern Cape. The tragedy was 'eloquent of many things to those who have ears to hear', wrote Bull. He continued:

it sends a clear challenge to the leaders of the resistance movement to call their present protest off . . . they must be frank and admit that their control over the people is not able to embrace all the elements which are to be found among them . . . We believe that a cessation of the protest would be a right and wise policy, as Gandhi himself proved on occasion.⁶⁵

Disapproval of the ANC leadership decisions was again visible in the reaction of the *South African Outlook* to the call to boycott schools in 1955 in protest against the Bantu Education Act. The opposition of 'some African leaders', notably Dr Xuma, former

ANC president, of 'Bantu newspapers' such as *The Bantu World*, and of Dr D L Smit, secretary of Native Affairs in the Smuts government, were quoted to support the *Outlook's* own rejection of the boycott.⁶⁶ The opposition to the boycott by these figures indicated that the *Outlook* did not stand alone, but it would appear that while someone like Xuma was questioning the tactical wisdom of the boycott, the *Outlook* was hostile to the ANC *per se*. This may be deduced from its pronouncement, for instance, on another ANC boycott attempt in 1958 when the organisation urged African workers to support a call to stay at home at the time of the general election of that year. The *Outlook* attributed the failure of this call, as in 1952, to the 'good sense' of the workers 'who have been asking questions concerning those who benefit by such strikes and demonstrations'.⁶⁷ The ANC's own explanation of the failure of the strike, namely governmental threats and pressure, was dismissed as naïve; internal divisions among ANC leaders (a reference to the PAC breakaway) which had torn the organisation and made it almost powerless were more likely causes, said the *Outlook*.

The hostility to the nationalist leadership indicated how far the *Outlook* was out of touch with the black political organisations. In 1952 it did publish an article on 'African National Organisations' by R V Selope Thema, one of the early ANC leaders who was part of the African delegation that went to Versailles in 1919 to plead for the recognition of black rights in South Africa before the Peace Conference of that year. Later he became editor of *The Bantu World*. The founders of the ANC, stated Thema, were men of vision; however, at the emergency conference organised to fight the Hertzog Bills in 1935 a number of Indians and coloureds, 'mostly of the Left-wing school of thought' who were not so much interested in opposition to the legislation as in 'confusing the minds of African leaders in order to capture the minds of their followers for international organisations they represented, namely the Communist Party and the Fourth International', had come to the fore.

Although the Communist and Fourth International participants later quarrelled with each other, the former had gained and maintained a dominance of the ANC which, said Thema, had resulted in a rift and led to the formation of a 'National Minded Bloc', the main object of which was 'to save Congress from the clutches of Karl Marx, which is foreign to our way of life and traditions'. The 'communist takeover' was due to Africans, who were drowning in a sea of repressive laws, being willing to 'hold even on to sharks to save themselves'.⁶⁸

The validity of this analysis was soon to be undermined by the revelation that the 'National Minded Bloc' of which Thema approved, was a government-sponsored front.⁶⁹ In any case, his accusation of Communist dominance was hardly supported by the election of the strongly Christian Luthuli as president of the ANC later that year. That the *South African Outlook* became steadily more out of touch with political developments among the African population over the next few years is indicated by its reporting of the Sharpeville shootings of 1960 which it described as a riot 'seemingly directed against the reference books which were recently introduced in an endeavour to minimise the nuisance of a multiplication of documents which had to be carried by Africans'.⁷⁰

In contrast to Shepherd's hostility to African nationalism, Blaxall, at the other pole of Christian liberalism in the 1950s, was in closest touch with both the ANC and PAC. He was named by Luthuli as one of the few church leaders prepared to 'share our troubles with us'.⁷¹ He appears to have become involved with the ANC in about 1954⁷² and a year later was present at the 1955 Congress of the People at Kliptown when the Freedom Charter was approved. He was arrested and searched along with other participants and although released immediately, his briefcase was confiscated. At the end of his career after he had retired as CCSA secretary, he was arrested and brought to trial in October 1963 on charges under the Suppression of Communism Act. He pleaded guilty to

four of the charges, two of which related to his having received money from overseas sources and distributing it to members of the PAC in South Africa and also to the leader of that organisation, Potlako Leballo, in Lesotho.⁷³ Only his advanced age (73) and his poor state of health saved him from serving a seven-month prison sentence.

However, Blaxall's close associations with the black nationalist movement did not betoken an identification with them. In evidence in mitigation given at his trial, Bishop Alpheus Zulu, the first black CPSA bishop in South Africa, stated that Blaxall's motivation for becoming involved in the activities of the ANC originally stemmed from his pacifism since 'he wanted to impress upon the African leadership that non-violence was a method which could be used in resolving differences'.⁷⁴ Probably the best explanation for his involvement with the PAC is provided by a confidential memorandum he presented to the CCSA on 28 February 1961 after an overseas trip. On his way back he passed through Dar-es-Salaam where he came across numbers of black political exiles from South Africa. There is no hint of anything conspiratorial about these contacts in his autobiography, and in his memorandum, he mentioned several other exiles in London and Accra between whom he hovered 'like a moth caught in a glare of light, the only difference being that the moth is drawn irresistibly to its doom while I may still be permitted to be of some small use at a strictly humanitarian level'.⁷⁵ The last three words sum up his feelings about his relationship with the exiles, about whom he appears to have been somewhat naïve; at the trial he stated with bowed head that he regretted his actions.⁷⁶

His ambivalence on this score in 1961 was entirely consistent with that of almost a decade earlier during the Defiance Campaign in which his approach was one of remaining detached from the black nationalist organisations while supporting their overall aims. In an article on the campaign which appeared in the *American*

magazine *New Republic* he stated that he was satisfied that there were ample grounds for peoples of all races in South Africa to defy various laws on the statute book. However, he was critical of the campaign because, he claimed, it had involved relatively few people and because in its published programme the ANC had included among the unjust laws against which it was protesting, legal regulations pertaining to cattle limitation 'which do not come into the same category of discrimination as other social and economic distinctions'. (The large numbers of rural blacks who relied on cattle as a form of wealth would have disagreed.) Rather than placing his hopes on the Defiance Campaign, he saw the best 'window of hope' as being the NGK conference on racial affairs planned for the following year (1953). There, he thought, it might be possible for church leaders to agree on a programme under which all parties would agree to refrain from 'provocative utterances and actions in the field of race relations'. He hoped the Defiance Campaign would be suspended since the situation was 'tense and fraught with danger'. As a pacifist he was not prepared to contemplate violence or radical actions.⁷⁷

He stressed this point once more in 1958 in a memorandum on the ANC's campaign for a boycott of South African goods launched in that year. The memorandum was drawn up in response to a 'very difficult letter' he had received from L B Greaves of the Conference of British Missionary Societies who wanted to know what church leaders in South Africa thought of the boycott movement. Blaxall stated that the movement could not be considered in isolation because it was part of 'a desperate struggle by inarticulate people to make themselves heard at the bar of world opinion'. In considering whether the boycott would attain its aims, he stated it was unlikely to change the opinion of the whites and would probably harden them. However, as 'one of the most terrible weapons which can be used to co-erse [sic] people into following a programme which they fear' the boycott was an effective way to overthrow a government. Blaxall's fear was twofold: first,

the Prime Minister and his advisers should recognise that the only hope of producing a development programme acceptable to all would be to call an all-party conference. The congress leaders, should accept that the boycott movement had grown beyond expectations 'and is capable of producing a chaotic situation fraught with suffering, and that therefore they should officially call it off.'⁷⁸ The shrinking from radical action is, once again, apparent and on this point Blaxall was at variance, for instance, with Bishop Ambrose Reeves who wrote to him on 25 January 1960 that while he did not think any group should use the weapon of economic sanctions lightly

given the kind of situation we are now experiencing in South Africa, I believe that any such weapon is preferable to violence and bloodshed. Convinced as I am that everything must be done to avoid this, I find it difficult to see that there is any alternative to the course of action taken by the African leaders, and no alternative to the way in which in the present situation ordinary people overseas can make their attitudes known. It is for those who denounce such a step to find some practical alternative, for to fail to do this is tacitly to acquiesce in the present South African situation.⁷⁹

Despite the implied rebuke in the last sentence, there is no record of Blaxall's having tried to suggest any alternative.

Whatever Blaxall's feelings about the black nationalist movements, he never attempted during his tenure of office in the CCSA to reflect his interest in them or to arouse sympathy and support for them. The lack of any reference to the ANC in either its documents or in the *Christian Council Quarterly* (which Blaxall edited while he was secretary) has already been noted. One of the very few comments on the subject of nationalism in the *Christian Council Quarterly* was written after he had attended the IDAMF conference called to discuss the Tomlinson Commission report in 1956, when he merely observed that 'it would be foolish to pretend that there are no Africans who think in terms of what is

called African Nationalism.⁸⁰ It was hardly a ringing endorsement of a movement that encapsulated some of the greatest and highest aspirations of black people. On this score, one may question Walshe's inclusion of Blaxall's name among those who represented 'prophetic Christianity' in South Africa.

Liberal resistance to black nationalism

The figures of Shepherd and Blaxall, as has been explained, have been chosen as representatives of two poles of liberal thinking about black nationalism. There were, of course, many shades of opinion between Shepherd's outright hostility and Blaxall's cautious ambivalence, but it is true to say that liberals for too long failed to comprehend the nature of black aspirations as expressed through their nationalistic movements. Liberals, as a result of the anti-racist nature of their philosophy, deprecated nationalism of any hue because of the way it all too easily slips into chauvinism and intolerance. However, in those areas of the world which bore the brunt of colonialism, nationalism was given a different interpretation. For instance, a document of the first assembly of the AACC in 1963,⁸¹ distinguished between four types of nationalism:

1. Nationalism working towards freedom and independence, as for example, in those countries still subject to colonial rule, or the rule of a minority group.
2. Nationalism working towards the creation of national cohesion (particularly important in newly independent nations).
3. Nationalism of older nations which, even when repudiated, manifests itself through the attempt to conserve the traditional way of life.
4. Nationalism which evolves into an ideology of totalitarian character, for example national socialism.

In terms of this definition, the striving for freedom from outside rule and the establishment of cohesion among peoples of newly independent countries meant that the new, anti-colonial nationalism was aiming at 'good' goals. The critique of older nationalisms in points 3 and 4, is based on its implicit support of racism ('the traditional way of life' being a favourite phrase of those supporting the racist status quo in South Africa) and its production of sinister forces such as Nazism.

The positive view of the 'new' nationalisms was affirmed by the general secretary of the WCC, Dr Eugene Carson Blake, when he addressed the second assembly of the AACC at Abidjan in 1965. There was a tendency among Western Christian leaders to attack nationalism at a time when new nation states in Africa needed the support of their peoples and churches to create stronger nations, he said. While nationalism could become chauvinist, that was not inherent in a proper national loyalty. 'It is clear to me as an outsider that nationalism in Africa where the nations are new is much more to be expected and accepted than nationalism in my country [the United States of America] or in Europe.'⁸² In these terms, African nationalism was seen to be a positive force and thus worthy of support particularly by those churches whose contextual theologies made them proponents of human rights, freedom and justice. In other words, the new nationalisms of Africa and Christianity were seen by Blake, a spokesman for the WCC, and also by the AACC, to have strongly congruent values.

Assimilationist outcomes

This kind of thinking was slow to penetrate the Ecumenical Bloc in South Africa, where white liberals continued to see all nationalisms in terms of points 3 and 4. One reason for that, of course, was that they were locked in a political and ideological conflict with segregationist Afrikaner nationalism which, in many respects, typified these 'older nationalisms'. Another reason can be found

in a comparison between the pattern of missionary development in South Africa and that of the international missionary and ecumenical movements. The latter had recognised the positive aspects of nationalism in countries subjected to colonialisation ever since the Jerusalem conference of 1928. This could only have been due to the 'new nationalism' being strongly represented by the emergent leadership of indigenous churches. Under the dominance of the liberals this trend was almost entirely lacking in the GMC/CCSA/SACC for a full four decades after 1930. On the face of things, this was surprising, because the number of blacks in Ecumenical Bloc churches was growing at a rapid, exponential rate. While, according to census figures, the black component of the CCSA church constituency rose from 63 per cent in 1936 to 82 per cent in 1970, this was not reflected in the leadership of that organisation. Table 3 demonstrates that the percentage of blacks serving on the CCSA executive between 1941 and 1961 never rose above 20 per cent.⁸³

TABLE 3: Blacks serving on the CCSA Executive

Year	Number on Executive	Black members
1949	33	3
1952	24	4
1956	19	2
1958	26	5
1960	24	5
1962	18	4
1966	19	6
1968	16	5

It was not until 1966 that the first black president was elected in the CCSA. He was the Rev Seth Mokitimi who had been elected vice-president as far back as 1941. He thereafter served faithfully in the deliberations of the organisation, his name invariably appearing among those who delivered major papers at conferences

such as that at Fort Hare. However, he served on the executive for a full 25 years before being elevated to the presidency.

In these kinds of figures may be seen the liberals' fatal flaw: despite their 'colour-blind' trappings, liberal-dominated organisations remained so firmly under white control that it was difficult to see its termination. That, in turn, arose out of liberalism's assimilationist underpinnings, in terms of which people of 'inferior cultures' could be incorporated into the white societal ethos only when they had attained the 'civilised values' of the West. The onus was on non-Westerners to display an ability not only to understand and think in terms of white cultural norms, but also, as has already been noted, to operate Western bureaucratic structures. In the judgement of white liberals, few blacks were 'advanced' enough to enter, let alone take control of, those structures. What liberals did not comprehend, however, was that the black failure to 'become civilised' was due not to any innate inability, but rather because the great majority of blacks did not see acculturation to white, Western norms as something that was desirable in any case. Liberalism's 'colour-blindness' came at a price, and not many blacks thought it worth paying.

Thus, despite the dramatically changing statistical patterns of church memberships, the power structures of churches in the Ecumenical Bloc and of its ecumenical organisations continued to be white dominated. The anomaly was missed because, unlike in the earlier years of the twentieth century when missionaries were vitally interested in statistics relating to religious affiliation, there was little or no reference to statistical data in the CCSA after 1938, when the last *Yearbook of South African Churches* was published. The trends, however, were plain to anyone who investigated them. One such person was Maurice Webb, a Quaker who served on the CCSA executive and was president of the SAIRR in the 1950s. In an article in the *South African Outlook* of October 1953 he pointed out that the results of the 1946 census showed

that black Christians outnumbered white Christians by two to one at that stage. Although in typical liberal fashion, the first conclusion he drew from that was that 'the Christian Church in South Africa is emphatically multi-racial', he also went on to state:

It must be expected that the dominant non-European membership of the Christian Church will play an increasingly important part in the life of the Church and may be expected to make a contribution at least as vital as the contribution of the Negro in the Christian Church in the United States.⁸⁴

It was a rather patronising prediction and when blacks did take control in the SACC, they quickly showed they were not going to be satisfied simply with 'making a contribution'. However, that did not happen as a result of the workings of assimilationist liberal gradualism; it was rather to the final outcome of missionary church planting in South Africa.

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The Neo-Liberal Interlude

The term *neo-liberal* applies to those white churchmen who dominated the CCSA and the SACC in the 1960s and early 1970s. Several important points distinguished them from previous generations of liberals in the CCSA: firstly, many were South African rather than overseas-born and had had their education and theological training in South Africa. Thus old European-based divisions such as that between Anglo-Catholics and ‘low churchmen’ were not so important to them. Secondly, these were churchmen, not missionaries, and they fervently subscribed to third-phase ecumenism with its ideal of church unity. This brought them into close touch with the WCC just at the time, as was pointed out in Chapter Two, when it was turning in radical directions on racial issues. Thirdly, while they subscribed equally fervently to the ‘four fundamentals’ of liberalism as set out by Davenport and were therefore adamantly opposed to racial ideology and practice, they never overtly subscribed to the doctrines of racial assimilation of the older liberals.

Still, that there was a long-lasting ‘hangover’ from assimilationist liberalism was evident in the continuing white dominance of the

structures of Ecumenical Bloc churches as well as the CCSA and the SACC, for a decade after the last of the old liberals had left the CCSA. While the neo-liberals moved to align the CCSA much more decisively than the missionary liberals with the international ecumenical movement, there were still some wide divergences between them. This was particularly evident in the understanding of black nationalism. The neo-liberals tended to be as hostile to this phenomenon as their predecessors. This point was noted by a South African, Ms Winsome Munro, when she reported to the CCSA on a conference on Christian Education in Changing Africa sponsored by the AACC in Harare, Zimbabwe (then known respectively as Salisbury and Southern Rhodesia), in January 1963. She remarked that the emphasis on ‘curricula . . . geared to economic needs and the new sense of national identity. There is to be increased stress on science, technology and agriculture, and on “Africanisation” so as to correct the former neglect of African languages, literature, art, music, geography and history’. Both black and white South African delegates, she remarked, in contrast tended to be wary of slogans such as ‘the African personality’ since these seemed to reflect racist thinking.¹ Much more open opposition to nationalism was evident in a statement of Professor A S Geysler quoted by the *Christian Council Quarterly* in 1962, when he told a student rally at Cape Town University that any attempt to ‘nationalise’ Christianity would result in reducing Christ to a tribal god. Nationalisms were the repository of ‘sizeable amounts of hatred – hatred of other races and other nations linked with fear’.² As late as 1970 this thought was being echoed in *Kairos*, which had replaced the *Christian Council Quarterly* as the SACC’s official mouthpiece. It called into serious question ‘the tendency both in other parts of Africa and in our Republic to create an alliance between the Gospel and the political cultural philosophy of nationalism’.³ However, being exposed to the new thinking on nationalism set out in Chapter Four the thinking of the neo-liberals began to change rapidly in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The neo-liberals 'take power'

The end of the period of old liberal dominance in the CCSA can be dated to 1961, when Blaxall was at last allowed to resign from the secretaryship. He was replaced with the Rev Basil Brown, a Congregationalist and the first non-Anglican/Methodist to hold the position for two decades. Divergences in the thinking of the old and neo-liberals are clear from a confidential letter sent by Shepherd to Brown in July 1964. This was in response to a request by the CCSA for church leaders' endorsement of a statement decrying the sentences imposed on Nelson Mandela and other ANC detainees after their trial in which they were condemned to life imprisonment. He was shocked, wrote Shepherd, that so badly worded a declaration and one that made no mention of the government's duty to contain a revolutionary movement, should have been submitted to the heads of Christian churches. 'The shock was deepened when it was made known that the declaration was intended by some to be a foreword to a pamphlet the contents of which were unknown to the signatories . . . It is well known that it is an ordinary bit of communist technique.' It was unfortunate that Brown had refused to change his position when personally requested to do so by the moderator of the PCSA who made a special trip to Cape Town for that purpose. It was also unfortunate that the action was taken in respect of the possible imposition of death sentences before the result of the trial was known. 'The World Council of Churches and the Commission of Churches on International Affairs are unsafe guides, when they are not taking similar action against the arbitrary executions, prison sentences or detentions in other countries like Ghana, Russia etc.' Apologising for his 'unusual candour', Shepherd stated he had no wish other than to help the Christian Council 'with whose beginning and development I was so closely associated'.⁴ His candour also indicated that this last representative of the missionary liberals and the CCSA had finally parted company.

Brown was typical of the new generation of churchmen in the Ecumenical Bloc. Although born in England, he had been brought to South Africa at a young age and had obtained both his school and undergraduate university education there. After theological training at Oxford, he returned to South Africa to work in the Congregational Union in which he became a recognised leader, and twice served as its national chair (in 1948 and 1958). His first involvement in ecumenical bodies had been with the Cape Peninsula Christian Council, of which he also served as chairman for a number of years.⁵ He had long been associated with the CCSA having served on its Executive as far back as 1940. He became chairman of its 'Action Committee' in 1956 and in 1960 he was elected its president. It is probably significant that in contrast to the liberal missionaries of the rural Eastern Cape, his working life was spent in the urban and non-African Western Cape.

Despite his service in the CCSA, its Executive strongly resisted his appointment to the secretaryship, the reason being his insistence on continuing to live in Cape Town, while the Executive argued that the secretary should be based in Johannesburg. Although there is no direct evidence, it is possible that the executive's objections to Brown were also based on his non-membership of the old missionary group. The BCC, whose grants had made the employment of a full-time secretary possible after 1958, exerted strong pressure on the Executive in favour of Brown, as did the CPSA Archbishop Joost de Blank. He also represented a new generation of churchman, and while he was Anglo-Catholic, he was strongly committed to ecumenism. He interested himself in the affairs the CCSA immediately after he had arrived in South Africa in 1957. He proved to be a formidable critic of apartheid and quickly became a *bête noire* of the Nationalist government. In 1962 he was elected president of the CCSA; a post he held for two years. That he was deeply involved in the search for a successor to Blaxall appears from correspondence between them starting in August 1960, when Blaxall wrote to the Archbishop:

'I am surprised to read that your correspondence . . . is tied with one individual as it seems to me this may be seriously misused by some people as an attempt to stampede the appointments committee.' De Blank replied that 'as I made clear to you in my last letter' he had mentioned the name of Brown simply 'to indicate the quality of the person in mind'.⁶ After further acrimonious correspondence, the Executive had to back down and accept Brown.

Although the neo-liberals shared some of the attitudes of the old liberals, they were exposed to completely new forces, both outside and inside South Africa, which progressively changed their thinking. Thus, when they, in turn, surrendered their control of their churches and the SACC to a new black leadership, they did so willingly; when John Rees stepped down from the post of general secretary in 1977, he expressed the wish that his successor be a black. This was fulfilled. His immediate successor was the Rev John Thorne of the Congregational Church, whose short tenure was followed by that of Bishop (later Archbishop) Desmond Tutu.

The forces that impacted on the neo liberals during the 1960s can be categorised as:

1. The ecumenical movement, and particularly the WCC.
2. CI.
3. The new doctrines of 'separate development' originating in the Dutch Reformed Bloc and which were embodied in the actions of the increasingly repressive Nationalist government.
4. The forces of black consciousness and black theology. These are important enough to demand a chapter to themselves.

The coming of third-phase ecumenism

As has been demonstrated, the CCSA was weak and lacking in significant influence during the 1950s. A warning that it was being supplanted by the WCC as the chief bearer of the ecumenical

ideal in the eyes of Ecumenical Bloc churches was sounded after a visit by the WCC's general secretary, Dr W A Visser 't Hooft in 1952. Blaxall reported that 'strong feelings' had been expressed about associating WCC member churches in South Africa more closely and that it was clear the CCSA was not adequate for this purpose.⁷

Another reason for the impatience was that it appeared during the 1950s that the WCC was able to succeed where the CCSA had failed in the bringing together of Afrikaans and English-language churches. In 1954 the Cape synod of the NGK entered into WCC membership, following the lead of the Transvaal synods of that church and the NHK. This meant that not only did a significant group of Dutch Reformed churches belong to the WCC along with English-language churches, but also that the two groups were given an opportunity to work together in South Africa as, for instance, in a WCC-sponsored project on Christian Responsibility Towards Areas of Rapid Social Change. The appointment by the 1959 conference on the same theme of a Continuation Committee to explore the establishment of a wider council of churches, related in Chapter Four, underlined the point that the best chance of a *rapprochement* between the divided sectors of the church in South Africa seemingly lay in the WCC. Hopes on this score rose when in 1960 – following the Sharpeville crisis – at the suggestion of the WCC its member churches met together in the momentous Cottesloe Consultation in order to discuss the racial situation.

The outcome of the consultation, however, which caused the withdrawal of the Dutch Reformed churches from the WCC in 1961, showed that the world body was as incapable as the CCSA of bridging the chasm between the two blocs of churches. That was not apparent at the Cottesloe Consultation itself, the decisions of which were supported by delegates of all churches apart from those of the NHK. Still, Cottesloe had held out the promise of even further co-operation by appointing a 'Provisional Commit-

tee' to investigate the establishment of a body representative of WCC member churches in South Africa, whose number had risen to nine since 1948. This was something which had been under discussion long before Cottesloe, and would undoubtedly have led to the rapid extinction of the CCSA since the major South African WCC member churches were unlikely to have been willing to support two parallel bodies. Brown avoided that possibility. Even before he became secretary to the CCSA, he had been against a WCC-based Council of Churches in South Africa because he feared the 'stifling of free expression of Christian thought through the dominance of the Dutch Reformed Church', as he wrote to Blaxall in 1959.⁸

Brown's views remained unchanged, despite the withdrawal of the Dutch Reformed churches from the WCC after Cottesloe. Rather than setting up a new council, he believed the CCSA should be reformed. After taking up the office of secretary in March 1962, he immediately presented a set of proposals with this in view. His description of the situation of the CCSA was reflected in a minute which stated:

There was a strong feeling that the time had come for the Council to be constituted much more definitely as a Council of Churches. It was pointed out that most of the member Churches of the Council had either attained full autonomy or had attained a good measure of autonomy, and that the time was ripe for the Council to consider itself no longer an association of Churches and Missionary bodies but as a Council of Churches.⁹

Another important point made by Brown was that the CCSA should become an associate member of the WCC and that the 'sections' or departments of the CCSA should be brought into line with those of the WCC. He urged that the work of the CCSA be promoted through a more aggressive propaganda campaign which would be backed by his personal contact with churchmen and church organisations throughout the country. He saw the

CCSA's role as that of a 'forum for Christian thinking, planning and action'.

Brown's strategy succeeded. A delegation from the Cottesloe committee investigating the establishment of a council of WCC member churches visited the biennial meeting of the CCSA in Bloemfontein in May 1962. After that meeting the leader of the delegation, Bishop Bill Burnett, stated that Brown's reorganisation scheme would satisfy the WCC 'who were keen that there should be an effective organisation for ecumenical action in South Africa'.¹⁰ The idea of a separate council was thereafter discarded and for the time being the CCSA remained the chief institutional expression of ecumenism in South Africa.

The 1962 biennial meeting accepted Brown's reorganisation proposals and a new constitution drawn up by him was adopted at the next biennial meeting in 1964 with the significant exception of a proposed new name: the Christian Council of Churches in South Africa. On this point Brown was defeated by the arguments of one of the delegates, the Rev C W Parnell of the Baptist Union.¹¹ Parnell's opposition was based on Baptist theology which postulates the local congregation as 'the Church', and will not allow for anything but pragmatic co-operation between local congregations. What this meant was that while the Baptists could go along with second-phase ecumenism since it was based on the same utilitarian approach they themselves had to inter-church activity, they rejected third-phase ecumenism with its aim of effecting structural unity between churches. It seems strange that the biennial meeting was persuaded by Parnell's arguments. Within the CCSA constituency, not even the Congregational Union adhered to the doctrine of local congregational sovereignty as strictly as the Baptists, while the other churches, particularly the Anglican and Methodist, were very far removed from it. The final vote indicates continuing confusion among Ecumenical Bloc churches about the full implications of third-phase ecumenism which they had accepted

on every other point of Brown's reorganisation scheme and again demonstrates that South Africa was still lagging behind the thinking of the international ecumenical movement.

The local ecumenical climate was, nevertheless, altering rapidly, being powerfully influenced among other factors, by the Vatican Councils and the *aggiornamento* in the worldwide Roman Catholic church during the early 1960s. The long shadows of the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation which had lain over Christendom for 400 years were at last beginning to disappear. This was reflected on the local scene as dialogue and contact between Catholics and Protestants expanded. One of the outcomes was that the South African Catholic Church moved into observer membership with the CCSA in 1966, betokening the onset of the new era of Catholic/Protestant *rapprochement*. In addition, it meant that the most powerful missionary enterprises that had been directed to South Africa in the late nineteenth century had finally been brought together in the Ecumenical Bloc.

When Brown retired from the CCSA secretaryship in 1966, he was replaced with Bishop Bill Burnett whose denomination, the CPSA, had taken a leading role in promoting third-phase ecumenism after 1958. In that year, Anglo-Catholic sensitivities about structural unity with other churches were over-ridden by the 1958 Lambeth Conference of bishops of the worldwide Anglican communion when they officially encouraged member churches to seek union with any other churches willing to discuss the subject.¹² In 1960 the CPSA initiated talks with the PCSA and the BPC, and over the next few years the number of churches involved in the discussions increased significantly, so that by 1967 a 'Church Unity Commission' with seven member churches, including the Methodist, CPSA, the Presbyterian Church and Congregational Union had been set up.¹³ The striving towards structural unity between churches had thus become an accepted fact of life when Bishop Burnett, who had succeeded Brown as secretary,

presented another new constitution to the biennial meeting of the CCSA in 1968. This stated the primary object of the new organisation to be the fostering of unity among churches. Among the proposals attached to this constitution was, once again, one relating to the name which, it was recommended, should be changed to the *South African Council of Churches*. When the Baptist delegate Parnell renewed his objection, he could not find a seconder and could no more than record his vote against.¹⁴

This, of course, was a full 20 years after the formation of the WCC and again demonstrates how tardy South African churches were in aligning themselves with developments in the international missionary and ecumenical movements. Still, the inauguration of the SACC as an affiliate of the WCC in 1968 sealed the tie between the two organisations which, as will be related in Chapter Six, was to have momentous results for the SACC.

The impact of the Christian Institute

The period of neo-liberal dominance was marked by a significant strengthening of the structures and administration of the CCSA/SACC. Its new general secretary, the Rev Basil Brown, was an efficient and energetic worker. During his term of office important new departments, including Inter-Church Aid providing finance for both disaster relief and economic development, were initiated, while there was also a considerable expansion of regional councils of churches in various areas of South Africa. By the time he retired in 1966, two more full-time staff workers in the CCSA reflected the expansion of its organisational structures.¹⁵

His successor, Bishop Bill Burnett, continued the pattern after he became general secretary in 1967. Burnett represented a new strain of Anglican churchmen who, also South African born, had been nurtured and trained outside the Anglo-Catholic ethos. His first experience of 'ecumenism' had been as a soldier in North Africa during World War II where he encountered and worshipped with

men from many other denominations. Coming back into the CPSA after the war and experiencing its anti-ecumenical ethos was like 'trying to fit into a shoe that pinched', he said.¹⁶ His enthusiasm for ecumenism was in inverse proportion to Anglo-Catholic hostility towards it. When he became general secretary of the CCSA in 1967, he was regarded as a leading churchman both in his own denomination and in the ecumenical movement. His move to the CCSA immediately gave that body a higher public profile.¹⁷

However, perhaps one of the most important results of Burnett's appointment to the SACC secretaryship was that it brought about a close liaison with the CI. It was established under the leadership of the Rev Beyers Naude in 1963 to keep ecumenical contacts between the Dutch Reformed and other churches alive following the post-Cottesloe withdrawal of the former from the WCC. That the CI had an exceptionally high profile was largely due to the personality and political skill of Naude, who proved to be as tough and wily an operator as anyone on the apartheid side of the divide between the blocs. Indeed, as someone who had been near to the heart of the Afrikaner Nationalist establishment – he was at one time moderator of the white NGK's Southern Transvaal synod – Naude appeared to enjoy 'getting up the nose' of his former Afrikaner Nationalist colleagues in Church and State. This he did by coming out in much more forthright condemnation of apartheid than either the CCSA or any of the Ecumenical Bloc churches. The government made the mistake of subjecting him to bitter attack and harassment, which had little effect other than to raise his public profile.¹⁸ The impact of the CI was widened by the presence on its staff of two Afrikaner theologians, Drs Ben Engelbrecht and W B Bruckner de Villiers, successive editors of its journal *Pro Veritate*. While their background was that of the Dutch Reformed Bloc, it is evident from the pages of this monthly publication that the CI was far more closely in touch with the theological developments shaping the ecumenical movement and the WCC than was the CCSA. In contrast to the *Christian Council Quarterly*, for

instance, which was either silent on, or hostile to, African nationalism, *Pro Veritate* was an accurate reflector of the more positive attitudes which had been developing in the international ecumenical movement. Thus it was natural that in the later 1960s the CI should have become an important platform for black consciousness, as will be described in the next chapter.

In 1967 the CI became a member organisation of the CCSA.¹⁹ Before this time, the CI and the CCSA appear to have had little contact with each other and indeed there is evidence of tension between the two bodies, the CCSA showing sensitivity about CI activities in fields which it considered to be its own preserve. In 1966 a meeting between CI and CCSA officials was held in Kimberley to sort out their differences and while these were settled amicably, it is significant the CCSA conceded that the CI was better equipped than itself to operate in the field of ecumenical studies.²⁰ The tensions dissolved when Burnett became CCSA secretary because he was both a member and a strong supporter of the CI which, he described as 'a witness to our freedom in the gospel' when he addressed its annual general meeting in September 1967.²¹ From the following year, the two organisations had offices in the same building and Naude sat on the SACC Executive as a co-opted member. Although tensions reappeared after Burnett's resignation from the SACC in 1969, the fact that the two organisations were located in the same building (Diakonia House) from 1968, meant that the SACC was continually exposed to the 'input' and actions of the CI which, despite its weak numerical base, was undoubtedly the most important ecumenical organisation in South Africa during the 1960s.

Rapprochement *with the African Independent Churches*

The South African Christ was divided not only between the Ecumenical and Dutch Reformed Blocs, but also between them and

the AIC Bloc. However, the division between at least the Ecumenical Bloc and the AICs had slowly begun to be bridged as far back as the 1920s as the initial opposition of the missionaries to the AICs softened with the passage of time. Although Lea condemned the AICS in the *The Native Separatist Church Movements in South Africa* published in 1923,²² the *Year-book of South African Missions* of 1928, in contrast, published a sympathetic article by the Rev L N Mzimba who himself was a leader of the African Presbyterian Church,²³ a typical example of the 'Ethiopian' brand of AICs. Another of these, the African Methodist Episcopal Church which was bitterly attacked by the GMC in 1904 along with the AICs in general and for the same reasons, had, by 1925, been admitted to the membership of the GMC. The opening up of relationships continued over the following decades. When the Presbyterian Church of Africa was accepted into the membership of the CCSA in 1961,²⁴ it signalled the start of a new era in which the suspicion and hostility of the first few decades of the century disappeared.

This was reflective of trends in the international ecumenical movement and particularly in Africa. In 1962 Brown reported he was one of several South Africans who had attended a consultation on 'separatism' in Kitwe in Zambia (then known as Northern Rhodesia). As a follow-up, several regional consultations in different areas of Africa were being planned, at which 'the possibilities of building bridgeheads between the recognised churches and these groups will be considered'.²⁵ Two years later the CCSA set up a research project on the AICs under the guidance of a Methodist minister, the Rev Gabriel Setiloane. He had to leave the country after a few months' work, however, and although a white American researcher, the Rev Robert Parsons, replaced him and no report was ever issued.²⁶

Two years later, Brown reported that the CCSA was jointly sponsoring a theological education scheme for AICS, which had formed

themselves into a body called the African Independent Churches Association (AICA).²⁷ This body had come into being in the previous year as a result of an approach by AIC leaders to the CI to help them with theological training. That indicated that not only were attitudes in the Ecumenical Bloc towards the AICs changing, but that the process was also happening in reverse.

Besides the PCSA, several other AICs made application for CCSA membership during the 1960s.²⁸ Few could be accepted because they failed to comply with membership conditions laid down by the CCSA, which, in fact, faced the same situation as the GMC of 1904 when its president, James Stewart, warned of 'the whole of the Ethiopians coming down on us'. That possibility had become a reality in the 1970s; in 1975 the SACC general secretary, John Rees, reported that no fewer than 106 AICs had applied for membership, threatening to swamp the 33 bodies in that membership already and forcing the organisation to tighten up its conditions of entry.²⁹ A way out of the dilemma was provided by the formation of AICA and several other associations of AICs, which then applied for membership in the category of Christian organisations. This entitled each association to representation at national conferences and on departmental committees, giving individual member churches of the associations at least indirect representation in the SACC. AICA was granted this status in 1971 and by 1975 there were three other such associations of AICs in the SACC membership, these being the Apostolic Ministers' Association of South Africa, the Federation of Pentecostal Apostolic Mission Churches in South Africa and the Reformed Independent Churches Association. The individuals in membership with the churches represented by these association probably numbered more than one million.

The factors which had led to the new era of relationships between the AICs and Ecumenical Bloc of churches were set out in a memorandum presented to the SACC national conference in 1973 by

its Director of Theological Training, Dr Axel-Ivar Berglund.

There was a time when one spoke of Africans in terms “primitive”, “backward”, “unsophisticated”, “rude”. Hence one acted in a paternalistic manner, convinced that the correct views came from oneself. The views of the receiver were looked upon as unrealistic, or insignificant, or not to be heeded.

With time, approaches to each other have changed. Today we are becoming aware of each other’s integrity and values. The fact that we must not only accept each other’s presence, but also realize the burning need of dialogue, is increasingly becoming apparent . . . I suggest we are at the doorstep into the realm of dialogue.

In a time when there is an increasing awareness of being neither sects nor deserters, but simply fully just Churches, some so-called Independent units are seeking recognition through and in the SACC. Jealous of their particular characteristics, and increasingly weary of isolation to people of their own ranks only, they are looking across borders to others who also name themselves Christians. It is among these that they hope to find understanding respect, moral support and administrative and financial assistance. Well acquainted with humiliations and embarrassments, they wish to lift themselves to a place alongside others.³⁰

The last few sentences indicate the price the AICs paid for their severance from the orthodox Christian mainstream in South Africa. This applied especially to smaller churches which found themselves trapped in vicious circles of poverty and weakness. Their desire to raise their standing by means of a better-trained ministry led several of these churches to approach the CI for help with the provision of theological education in 1965.³¹ Their approach to the CI was an indication of their continuing suspicion of the white-dominated, multiracial denominations, while the CI’s credibility had been established in their eyes probably as a result of continuous government attacks on it.

The CI thus acted as catalyst in effecting a *rapprochement* between a significant number of these churches and the Ecumenical Bloc. It helped with the foundation of the AICA in 1967 and the establishment of a theological training college to serve the organisation a year later.

Yet while the acceptance of AICA in 1967 into CCSA membership betokened a new era of sympathy for the AICs in the Ecumenical Bloc, relationships between the two sectors were difficult. The AIC associations were constantly rent by power struggles and financial disputes, and the resentments of the contending factions tended to be projected to representatives of the orthodox Christian bodies with which they were involved. In 1972 AICA broke its links with the CI, collapsed the following year and was resurrected under a new leadership soon afterwards.³² Its theological college disappeared in the turmoil and it turned to the SACC to help it re-establish a scheme of theological training. In 1975 the Theological Education Division of the SACC was chiefly responsible for founding the South African Theological College for Independent Churches.³³ Although this was also destined to collapse after a brief and tumultuous existence, the Ecumenical Bloc had been exposed to powerful new black influences from the AICs. As Dr Berglund put it in 1973, 'entering this realm will involve many now unknown challenges. But on the other hand our entry will imply an exciting time of learning from each other, in that we share with each other terms of reference, points of departure, evaluations and expressions'.

Mortal combat with apartheid

The neo-liberal era in the CCSA/SACC coincided with the apogee of apartheid. After the death in 1958 of the last of the old-style segregationist Nationalist prime ministers, J G Strydom, South Africa was taken at an ever-increasing pace along the apartheid road by his successor, the formidable Dr Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd. The country had already experienced a revolution in

race relations under the Nationalists after 1948, as they implemented the segregationist ideas which had crystallised under Hertzog three decades earlier and to which the missionary liberals had objected so strongly. Under Verwoerd, segregation was taken to its logical extremes and even beyond. Verwoerd is said to have asserted that whites and blacks should not even shake hands, and while that may be apocryphal, he refused to see delegations from the SAIRR because they included black people.³⁴

This new phase of apartheid presented a far greater challenge than the old segregationist doctrines in that it was based on much more sophisticated thinking which discarded ideas about superior and inferior cultures. In the words of Kinghorn, a new concept emerged, that of 'separate development' in which 'one of the core values of modernity – the equality of people – was affirmed'. On this score, the proponents of separate development were actually ahead of the liberals. Kinghorn argues that the impulse for this new thinking came not from the Nationalist government, but from the Dutch Reformed Bloc of churches, who based their theology of race relations on the notion that

the division of nations is to be directly derived from the authority of God and represents the social embodiment of the divine structure of authority.³⁵

The decisive moment, Kinghorn states, occurred in 1950 when the switch to the new ideology and theology of separate development emerged at a 'peoples' congress' called by the Federal Mission Council of the NGK to discuss the 'native question'. Particularly active in the drive behind this congress was Dr G B A Gerdener, professor of missions in the Theological Seminary at Stellenbosch. As was pointed out in Chapter Four, Gerdener had been very closely associated with the international missionary movement and had sat on the central committee of the WCC. Kinghorn's summation of the conference findings is as follows:

South Africa was described as cosmos of *nations* (i.e. not races), each with a unique character and culture but at different stages of development. The only Christian way to safeguard every culture and to avoid friction and abuse was to separate the nations, thus providing room for the organic development of each according to its special needs.

The concept of a South African community of autonomous states was born at this congress . . . Hendrik F Verwoerd, when he became prime minister in 1958, began to implement those [resolutions of the Congress] which appeared to him to be practical politics.³⁶

Verwoerd's approaches laid down a much more rigorous separation not only between blacks and whites, but also between what were described as ethnic or tribal groups. It was noted in an earlier chapter that one of the major architects of separate development was Dr W W M Eiselen whose old-style Lutheran missionary background placed great emphasis on the virtues of ethnically based churches. In line with this teaching, the proponents of separate development asserted that there were at least eight different 'nations' in South Africa, each of them based on a different culture, ethnicity and language. The Nationalist government borrowing the idea of de-colonialisation which, was in full swing in Africa and Asia at that time, began from 1963 onwards to attempt to set up ethnically based sovereign 'nation-states'. These were the notorious 'Bantustans' comprising that 13 per cent of the land which had been set aside for exclusive black occupation by the 1913 Land Act. Here the black majority was supposed to exercise the same rights that the white minority enjoyed in the 87 per cent of the country it allotted to itself. Kinghorn notes that until the late 1980s, all the white churches in the Dutch Reformed Bloc 'carried forward the ideal of separate development, which to them was the embodiment of true biblical justice under South African conditions.'³⁷ However, whatever the visions of its progenitors, the practical implementation of the new policy resulted in a

nightmarish system of oppression, which met with universal condemnation, even from the Dutch Reformed Bloc over time. Thus the attempt to dignify the policy with the new terminology of *separate development* failed hopelessly and it continued to be known and vilified simply as *apartheid*.

While the struggle over race issues was a theological as much as a political one, the neo-liberals were initially ill-equipped to deal with it. In 1963 Brown noted in the *Christian Council Quarterly* that the spate of important legislation which had passed through parliament was affecting 'the whole pattern and structure of African life', and stated that 'we cannot but continue our strongest opposition'. Among the measures to which objection had been made by the CCSA was the Bantu Laws Amendment Act, the General Laws Amendment Act – which had introduced detention without trial (the 90-day clause), the Liquor Bill and the Sunday Sports and Entertainment Bill. The interdepartmental definition of who could be considered a member of a congregation, said Brown, 'we regard as a direct invasion by the State into the realms of the Church'. State action was also affecting churches as a result of the workings of the Group Areas Act. 'Historic churches in long-established areas are becoming redundant, schools are being forced to close down; old associations and traditions are being broken and uprooted.' The State had reared a 'Golden Calf of Apartheid', wrote Brown, 'and as a country we are in danger of bowing down to worship an idol god, setting aside our treasured Christian heritage and love of justice and freedom in pursuit of a political whim or a doctrinaire ideology'.³⁸ CCSA objections to specific items of government legislation were gathered together in a booklet entitled *The Last Bastion* in 1964, the title of which was indicative of the role the organisation saw itself playing in South Africa at that time.

Despite his observation that the 'whole structure' of African life was being affected, the CCSA continued to oppose apartheid on a

piecemeal basis. There was no notable reaction in its documents and statement to change from apartheid to the more sophisticated and far-reaching concepts of separate development. Thus the CCSA was silent on the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 which laid down the basis of the Bantustan ('homelands') policy; nor did it react to the creation of self-government in the first of these Bantustans, the Transkei, in 1963.

In fact, the alternatives to separate development postulated by the CCSA during this period were not very different from those of the era of liberal missionary dominance. In the absence of any recent statement of its own on race relations, the CCQ in 1963 quoted a statement made by the Christian Citizenship Department of the Methodist Church which laid down that a 'Christian country' would base its life on Christian principles, not merely on self-preservation, the maintenance of a 'traditional' policy or the supremacy of one section or racial group. It would be a country which would eschew racial discrimination, while a key paragraph read:

It was and will be a land where national unity will prevail. *Eenheid* 'Unity' rather than apartheid will be its goal. Sectional loyalties will be discouraged and so-called white unity will be superseded by national unity.³⁹

The words were an echo of the findings of the CCSA's 1949 Christian Citizen in a Multiracial Country Rosettenville conference, although this statement differed from those of the earlier period in that there was no mention of 'backward' and 'advanced' civilisations or of the idea of trusteeship. Lacking any ideological or theological underpinnings, the call for national unity constituted a rather weak and inadequate response to Verwoerdian separate development. Despite this, the unrelenting pressure of apartheid legislation was making a new stand and statement of their position unavoidable for Ecumenical Bloc churches.

The neo-liberals fight back: A Message to the People of South Africa

The governmental drive to enforce segregation began to be felt in an area closely linked with the CCSA when officials of the Bantu Administration Department, together with police, visited the Wilgespruit Fellowship centre near Roodepoort in 1963 and insisted that in future permits would have to be obtained for all Africans using the centre.⁴⁰ The Wilgespruit centre had originally been established by a group of laymen with the specific aim of creating a multiracial conference venue. It was situated adjacent to the Enzenzeleni School for the Deaf and Dumb of which Blaxall was the principal and where he lived. Lacking any legal *corpus* of their own, they had asked the CCSA to become the trustee of the property when they bought it in 1956.⁴¹ This meant that the CCSA was actually the owner of the Wilgespruit centre and it was to the CCSA Executive that Blaxall and the warden of the centre reported the permit demand of 1963. In view of the difficulties this posed for the holding of inter-racial conferences at the centre, the CCSA Executive agreed to send a delegation to the Minister of Bantu Administration to ask for the granting of a blanket permit to cover all functions. Not only did the minister refuse to grant the delegation's request, but the local municipality refused to grant permits in 1966 to allow Africans to stay at the centre overnight; a move which undermined its reason for existence.⁴²

So seriously did the CCSA regard the earlier threat to freedom of inter-racial gathering that in 1965 it summoned a 'summit meeting' of the leaders of its member churches to discuss the situation.⁴³ An eventual result of this meeting was the establishment of a theological commission in 1966 'to consider what obedience to God requires of the Church in her witness to her unity in Christ in South Africa'.⁴⁴ This commission, like that appointed after the 1949 conference, was all-white. Its initial task was to produce a document which would fulfil the mandate of the commission. This

it did in 1968 under the title of *A Message to the People of South Africa*, which became better known simply as *The Message*. Secondly, the commission was mandated, in Burnett's words, 'to outline some ways in which the Christian ethic could find practical expression in South Africa society'.⁴⁵

Like the findings of the CCSA's 1949 Christian Citizen in a Multiracial Society Conference, which had encapsulated the philosophy of the older missionary liberalism, 'The Message' was a crystallisation of neo-liberal thinking. In 1949 the CCSA rejected apartheid in forthright terms; in 1968 the SACC referred to separate development as 'a false faith, a novel gospel', which was being presented as 'the way for the people of South Africa to save themselves . . . in the name of Christianity'. While in 1949 there was an acknowledgment of differences between 'primitive' and 'advanced' social structures despite the 'essential unity' of humankind, the 1968 statement declared:

The Christian Gospel requires us to assert the truth proclaimed the first Christians, who discovered that God was creating a new community in which differences of race, language, nation, culture, and tradition no longer had power to separate man from man. The most important features of a man are not the details of his racial group, but the nature which he has in common with all men and also the gifts and abilities which are given to him as a unique individual by the grace of God; to insist that racial characteristics are more important than these is to reject what is most significant about our own humanity as well as the humanity of others.⁴⁶

What is clear from this statement is that the concept of superior and inferior civilisations had disappeared. On that score, the public position of the neo-liberals had 'caught up' with the thinking of the proponents of separate development. Now, however, while the assertions of the latter about the absolute validity of 'differences of race, language nation [and] culture' were rejected on theological grounds (an interesting comparison with the attempt by

Rheinallt Jones to refute segregation on 'scientific' grounds four decades earlier) 'The Message' also represented the liberal tendency to deny that these differences had any validity at all.

Still, in 'The Message' the neo-liberals had armed themselves with an effective counter-ideology to that of separate development. Unlike the 1949 statements of the Rosettenville conference, however, 'The Message' made no attempt to lay down the practical implications of its stands in the political, social and economic life of the country. There was no setting out of a franchise policy, for instance, as there had been in 1949 statement. A reason for that was the unlike in 1949, when the liberal churchmen in the CCSA still had some hope of seeing their policies being put into practice (the Nationalist majority in parliament was still only five), in 1968 the makers of 'The Message' were concerned mainly with a desperate defence of their position against an attack by the massively powerful and entrenched State.

As already mentioned, 'The Message' was the first theological statement of principle on racial affairs which had been published by the CCSA/SACC for close on two decades. It had a wide-ranging impact, receiving not only extensive coverage in the media, but as the records of the SACC show, was publicised and discussed among church members at a local level over the whole of South Africa. Letters of reaction came in from congregations in such unlikely places as Beaufort West and Sasolburg, while a Catholic priest in the remote parish of Kranskop, Natal, wrote to congratulate the SACC on 'The Message', but also recording:

Unfortunately it wasn't too well received in this little Village where I work. When I read it I was accused of all sorts of things including Communism, and since then not one European has put their foot in the Church.⁴⁷

A not dissimilar reaction came from the prime minister, B J H Vorster, who warned clerics 'who want to do the same thing

here in South Africa that Martin Luther King did in America' to 'cut it out . . . for the cloak of religion you carry will not protect you.'⁴⁸

The impact made by 'The Message', despite the essentially defensive nature of its initial mandate, can be attributed to a well-planned publicity campaign by the SACC, which by that time had acquired the full-time services of the Rev (later Dr) John de Gruchy as its Director of Ecumenical Studies and Publications. In his capacity as director, de Gruchy also handled the publicity aspect of the SACC's work, and under his aegis close on 10 000 copies of 'The Message' were distributed for study by local congregations throughout the country. The public standing of Bishop Burnett also helped to widen the impact of 'The Message'.⁴⁹

Practical alternatives: the SPROCAS reports

While the SACC played the major role in drawing up and publicising 'The Message', the CI was the main driving force behind the execution of the second stage of the original mandate; the delineation of practical alternatives to separate development. This took the form of the Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society (SPROCAS) which worked through six commissions dealing with various aspects of South African life, namely economics, education, legal affairs, politics, the churches and social relations. Launched in 1969 and completed four years later, SPROCAS was overwhelmingly white in its composition and, in fact, embodied the final developments in neo-liberalism up to 1975.

The proposals put forward by the SPROCAS commissions were far more detailed than anything advanced by the CCSA either at its 1942 Fort Hare conference or that of 1949 in Rosettenville. Two points need to be made about the SPROCAS reports; while they can hardly be said to be a product of the SACC, since they were composed of academics and professional people rather than churchmen, they, nevertheless, bore the official SACC stamp of

approval as a co-sponsor of SPROCAS together with the CI. Secondly, the reports were bound to have a deep impact on the thinking of the Ecumenical Bloc, which had lacked a 'think-tank' of this nature since the liberal missionaries had disappeared from the scene.

The SPROCAS reports indicated new trends in neo-liberalism. This is most evident in the report of the Political Commission entitled *South Africa's Political Alternatives*, which declared itself 'committed to the idea of an open, pluralistic society tolerating social and cultural diversity within the bounds of a necessary common consent . . . In an ethnically heterogenous and multi-racial society this means that any policy of forced assimilation or cultural imperialism is rejected by the Commission'.⁵⁰ This rejection of cultural assimilationism not only differed radically from the older missionary liberalism, but even differed from the emphasis on the unity of humankind set forth in 'The Message' which, with its tendency to brush aside differences of race and culture, contained echoes of the old liberal assimilationist thinking. The report of the SPROCAS Political Commission added the importance of recognising ethnic heterogeneity to liberalism's 'four fundamentals', and separated it decisively from the old liberalism. The divergence between the new strain of liberalism and the old liberalism was best summed up in the minority report of the commission submitted by one of the last surviving representatives of the old liberalism, Dr Edgar Brookes. The commission had demolished traditional British and American liberalism, he said, very largely because it made individuals the basis of society, not groups. However, asserted Brookes, whites with close African, Indian and coloured friends 'know well that there are no group differences which divide us as much as friendship and our common humanity unite us'. The turning from the individual to the group, Brookes rightly observed, gave direction to the whole report, which was aimed at producing a state in which groups would co-operate for the common good.

But these are still *groups*, and groups based mainly on race and colour . . . It assumes that this working through groups will bring us closer together, but is this assumption justified? The 'black consciousness' movement does not seem to work in that way, and Afrikaner nationalism does not either.⁵¹

Brookes claimed that the report would be ill-received by both 'world Christian consciousness' and the black community. He was wrong as far as the former entity was concerned; in fact, in the Political Commission the neo-liberals were aligning themselves with that aspect of 'world Christian consciousness' which, ever since the IMC's 1928 Jerusalem conference, had acknowledged the validity of differing group experience and existence. However, later developments proved that Brookes was right when he said that the report was not likely to be well received by blacks, but not for the reasons he put forward. Although there was little notable black reaction at the time, the representatives of black nationalist thinking by and large rejected the embodiment of the thinking contained in the report, which could be seen in the constitutional proposals put forward by the liberal Progressive Federal Party (PFP) in 1977. The congruence of the SPROCAS report and the PFP plan was not coincidental. Dr David Welsh, the secretary of the Political Commission, also played a leading role in drawing up the PFP's constitutional plan. The dispensation envisaged in that plan involved establishing a federal system whose geographical units would be partly based on the existing ethnic Bantustans. Blacks saw this as an attempt to maintain the divide-and-rule aspects of Nationalist policy. The black consciousness leader Steve Biko summed up the feelings of many radical blacks when he said that SPROCAS was 'looking for an alternative acceptable to the white people'.⁵²

White neo-liberalism of the kind evident in the SPROCAS Commission reports never gained a significant foothold in the SACC. For one thing, the era of white numerical dominance on its policy-

making bodies was coming to an end; for another, a new era of black nationalism, expressed in the form of black consciousness, was commencing. This was also highlighted by the SPROCAS commissions, particularly the Social Commission, which argued that progression towards democracy based on the extension of voting rights to blacks over a period of time was not necessarily the only form of change that would satisfy the requirements of justice based on Christian values. Since whites were not likely to make changes without considerable pressure being brought to bear on them, 'it would seem that pressure from blacks themselves offers the only real hope for incisive change in the foreseeable future'.⁵³ The commission further argued that the quest for equality would be carried out under the banner of race, and that the resolution of conflicts engendered by that fact would take the form of some bargaining or confrontation between different racial groups.⁵⁴

These thoughts were even more powerfully taken up by the director of SPROCAS, Peter Randall, in his book *A Taste of Power* published in 1973 to draw together the different strands of the six commission reports. Randall stated on its first page that the aim of change was to reallocate power to enable the black majority to exercise an effective role in the decision-making processes of society and to gain a more just share of the country's resources. This kind of change, he wrote, would be initiated by blacks. South Africa was in the early stages of a new historical process in which the initiative for change would pass into black hands. Whites could no longer ignore the 'sweeping growth' of black consciousness, which was manifesting itself among students and workers as well as in the development of related concepts such as black theology, black drama and black poetry. These were as significant as anything emanating from the white community and black workers, students and political leaders, said Randall, 'have begun to have a taste of power'.⁵⁵

The neo-liberals relinquish power

Randall's forecasts about the advent of black power said as much about the evolution of thinking among neo-liberals as they did about political developments among blacks. While, as has been said, for the greater part of the 1960s the neo-liberals were hostile to nationalism, they had by their actions and stances unwittingly transformed the SACC into a natural platform for black nationalism. By overhauling and strengthening the structures of the SACC, aligning it more definitely with the international ecumenical movement and involving a much wider segment of its constituency than simply the missionary wing of churches in its work, the neo-liberals had made it into a much more effective and credible organisation than it had been under the missionary liberals.

All three men who had successively occupied the crucial post of secretary during the 1960s, Brown, Burnett and, most especially, John Rees – who moved into the post in 1970 – contributed to this in growing measure. Rees in particular was a remarkable figure in the life of the Ecumenical Bloc in general and the SACC in particular during the 1970s. Unlike his predecessors, he was a layman, and although he had no theological training, was infused with a religious fervour typical of the Methodist Church in which he had been born and brought up. His working background lay in the field of public administration, having gone straight from school into the service of the Johannesburg Municipality in its Non-European Affairs Department. This had given him close contact with black people and brought him face to face, in a way not experienced by many whites, with the devastating effects on individual lives of Verwoerdian apartheid. Rees was passionately opposed to apartheid and as general secretary of the SACC, became almost as much a thorn in the flesh of the apartheid government and its security apparatus as Beyers Naude.

In many ways Rees, in his energy, vision and ambition, resembled John Mott, who was also a layman. Rees proved to be an able

networker and negotiator in both the international ecumenical sphere and in the secular world and, moreover, displayed a good understanding of, and a capacity for, managing the mass media. During his term of office in the SACC, its bureaucracy and sections dealing with different areas expanded enormously,⁵⁶ so that it became a major organisation with a public profile and impact that the old liberal missionaries and even his immediate predecessors could only have dreamt about. Most of the new activities were financed by monies that Rees had raised in copious quantities from overseas churches and donor agencies anxious to help in the struggle against apartheid.

This, however, was to prove his Achilles heel; while the SACC's budgets expanded exponentially, the organisation's infrastructure was not well equipped to cope with the inflow and administration of these large sums.⁵⁷ Rees was not as careful an administrator as he might have been, and although he retired amid accolades from the SACC in 1978, a few years later when he was director of the old liberal institution, of the SAIRR, he was arrested and charged with defrauding the SACC. The action against him did not originate from either the SACC or any funding agency, but from the State, which had obtained access to the records of the SACC through the activities of the Eloff Commission set up by the government to investigate the SACC in the 1980s. The case of the State proved to be well founded because when he was haled into court, Rees could not account for an amount of R30 000 of SACC monies (his supporters claimed that this was because he was protecting the recipients of the money who were involved in clandestine anti-government activities). Although the judge found that he had not personally gained from this, in legal terms he was guilty of fraud, having diverted monies to uses other than that for which they were intended. He escaped a jail sentence and, instead, was heavily fined which, of course, constituted a criminal offence. Despite that, Rees continued to command widespread respect, and later became the administrator of the Avril Elizabeth Home

for physically disabled people. That cancer brought his life to an end at the comparatively young age of 56 meant that he never saw the emergence of the ‘new South Africa’ for which he had worked so hard.

In expanding the work of the SACC and raising its profile to unprecedented heights, he transformed it into a major body in the life of both Church and State in South Africa. While arguments over finances created long-lasting acrimony between him and Bishop Desmond Tutu, who succeeded him as SACC general secretary, perhaps among the most important contributions he made was the way in which he facilitated the transition of power in the SACC to its black majority and so helped to euthanase liberal dominance in at least this sector of the Ecumenical Bloc.

Notes

1. CCQ, no. 66, First Quarter, 1963, 5–6.
2. CCQ, no. 69, Third Quarter, 1962, 5.
3. *Kairos*, vol 2, no. 9, November 1970, 3.
4. SACC archive, 623/7. In his reply, Brown described Shepherd’s statements as ‘wild and unfounded’, and asked him to retract them. There is no record of Shepherd having done so.
5. CCQ, no. 62, Third Quarter 1961, 1.
6. SACC archive, AC 623/2/1.
7. CCQ, no. 52, July 1952, 2.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Minutes of a Special Meeting of the General Purposes Committee held in the Christian Council Office . . . Cape Town on Thursday, 15 March 1962, 1.
10. CCSA Executive Minutes, 8/5/1962, 5.
11. CCSA Executive Minutes, 20/5/1964, 2.

12. Strassberger, *Ecumenism in South Africa 1936–1960*, 30.
13. Minutes of the Church Unity Commission, 27 to 30 March 1968, 2.
14. CCSA. Minutes of the Meeting of the General Purposes Committee, 22/2/1968, 3.
15. Minutes of the Biennial Meeting of the Christian Council of South Africa, 15 to 16 June 1966. Executive Minutes, 384–5.
16. Interview with the author.
17. Indicating that despite Brown's efforts the CCSA still did not have a strong public standing, is a letter written by the Bishop of Johannesburg to the Archbishop Joost de Blank in response to the proposal to make Burnett general-secretary of the CCSA. While that would be a 'wonderful' move, wrote the Bishop, 'I am myself so convinced about the value of the Council as to be able to urge the appointment. From what I have seen of the Council, they never seem to get down to anything definite.' SACC archive 623/1/1.
18. P Randall, ed. *Not without Honour. Tribute to Beyers Naude* (Johannesburg, 1982), 29–34.
19. CCSA Executive Minute no. 2918, 2/2/1967, 419.
20. D Thomas, *Councils in the Ecumenical Movement, 1904–1975* (Johannesburg, 1974), 31.
21. SACC archive AC 623/6.
22. A Lea, *The Native Separatist Church Movements in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1926).
23. L N Mzimba, 'The African Church.' In J D Taylor, *Christianity and the Natives of South Africa. A Year-book of South African Missions*. Published under the auspices of the General Missionary Conference of South Africa (Lovedale, 1928).
24. CCQ, First Quarter, 1961, 5.
25. CCQ, no. 65, Third Quarter, 1962, 4.
26. CCSA Executive Minute no. 284, 14 to 15 June, 1966, 375.
27. CCQ, no. 79, Second Quarter, 1962, 4.

28. These were the African Orthodox Church (1967), the African Zionist Mission South Africa (1964), the Bishop of St John Mission (1964), Christ the Rock Mission (1968) and the Order of Ethiopia (1969). SACC archive AC 623(9).
29. *Ecunews* Bulletin 35/73, 9/11/73, 11.
30. A-I Berglund, Memorandum on Relationships Between the So-called Independent Churches of South Africa and the SACC. 5 June 1973, 1–2.
31. D van Zyl, ‘Bantu Prophets or Christ’s Evangels?’ *Pro Veritate*, vol 5, no. 5, 15 September 1966, 6–9.
32. *Ecunews* Bulletin 2/74. 11/2/74, 3.
33. *Kairos*, vol 7, no. 4, March to April 1975, 10.
34. J Dugard, ‘Racial Legislation and Civil Right.’ In *Conflict and Progress* ed. E Hellman and J Lever (Johannesburg, 1979), 79–86.
35. J Kinghorn, ‘Modernization and Apartheid: the Afrikaner Churches.’ In *Christianity in South Africa*, ed. R Elphick and R Davenport, 135–154.
36. *Ibid.*, 145.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *CCQ*, no. 69, Third Quarter, 1963, 2.
39. *CCQ*, no. 66, First Quarter, 1963, 5–6.
40. CCSA Executive Minute no. 169, 7/2/63, 270.
41. Thomas, *Councils in the Ecumenical Movement*, 8.
42. CCSA Executive Minutes, 9/2/1966, 371–2.
43. Thomas, *Councils in the Ecumenical Movement*, 7.
44. CCSA Executive Minutes, 15/6/1966.
45. General Secretary’s Report to the Biennial Meeting of the Christian Council of South Africa, 29 to 30 May 1968.
46. J W de Gruchy, and W B de Villiers, eds. *The Message in Perspective*.

- (Johannesburg, 1968), 35.
47. SACC archive AC 623/6.
 48. De Gruchy and de Villiers, *The Massage in Perspective*, 35.
 49. Minutes of the Seventeenth Biennial Meeting of the Christian Council of South Africa, 28 to 29 May 1968. Executive Minutes, vol 1, 549–553.
 50. P Randall, *Towards Social Change. Report of the Social Commission of the Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society* (Johannesburg, 1971), 48.
 51. *Ibid.*, 243–4.
 52. Cited by B Pityana, ‘Voices of the South African Churches.’ In *A Long Struggle. The Involvement of the World Council of Churches in South Africa* ed. P Webb, (Geneva, 1993), 87.
 53. P Randall, ed. *Towards Social Change. Report of the Social Commission of the Study on Christianity in Apartheid Society* (Johannesburg, 1971), 48.
 54. *Ibid.*, 49.
 55. P Randall, *A Taste of Power* (Johannesburg, 1973), 34.
 56. See Thomas, *Councils in the Ecumenical Movement*, *passim*.
 57. That Rees had learnt this lesson was clear to the author when working with him a few years later in the SAIRR. On his return from an overseas fund-raising trip, Rees stated he could easily have raised millions of rand for the work of the institute. However, he said, he turned most of the proffered money down because he realised that the institute was not equipped to handle it.

Black Power and Liberation

It has been said that if you swim in the sea, you cannot avoid getting wet. Thus even strong anti-apartheid bodies in South Africa were not able to escape the consequences of apartheid policies and laws. In terms of legislation that laid down that institutions as well as individuals had to be racially classified, the SACC became a black organisation at its national conference of August 1972.¹ As Rees later explained to the SACC Executive, this was because, for the first time in its history, the national conference – the organisation’s supreme legislative body – had a majority of blacks (36 blacks to 31 whites).²

The advent of black majorities in the ruling bodies of both individual churches and the SACC, and the movement of blacks into the seats of power in church and ecumenical bureaucracies, is referred to in this study as ‘structural indigenisation’. As far as mission-based churches were concerned, it was, of course, part and parcel of their attainment of autonomy which involved the ‘euthanasia’ of their founding missions. Structural indigenisation and autonomy represented a major development among South African churches. It began in the nineteenth century, but reached its full flood in the mid-years of the twentieth century. One of the

best indicators of this development is to be found in changes in the membership of the CCSA and SACC during the twentieth century.

The changing church scene

The white-dominated, multiracial churches which initially had been colonial wings of their mother churches in Britain, were the first to achieve autonomy. The leader in this process was the Congregational Church, the beginnings of autonomy being dated to 1859.³ The CPSA followed in 1872, the Methodist Church of South Africa in 1883 and the PCSA in 1897.⁴ Over the next half-century, the number of similarly autonomous churches in the CCSA grew very slowly. By 1950 there were only seven such churches in membership, compared with twelve overseas-based churches and mission societies. In contrast, by 1975 ten of these mission societies had been superseded by twelve autonomous black churches. The remaining two overseas-based missions, the Church of Scotland Mission and the Paris Evangelical Mission, survived as administrative entities rather than actual missions. Table 4 details the metamorphosis of CCSA/SACC membership.⁵

The churches listed in the table attained their autonomy much later than the four churches mentioned earlier, but there was a more important distinction between the two groups. While the older churches were all multiracial which, in practice, as has been pointed out, meant that their controlling bodies were white-dominated, the membership of the newer group was almost entirely black, although they retained some whites in administrative capacities.

The importance of the last-mentioned fact becomes evident from an analysis of the composition of the first black-majority national conference of the SACC in 1972. The representation of multiracial churches, which included the largest proportion of Christians

TABLE 4: *Metamorphosis of CCSA/SACC membership*

Ex-mission churches in SACC membership in 1975	Date of entry into CCSA/SACC	Date of autonomy	Founding mission society
Bantu Presbyterian Church	1936	1923	Church of Scotland
Moravian Church of Western Cape	1955	1954	Moravian Mission
Evangelical Lutheran Church South-eastern Region	1962	1954	Berlin Mission Church of Norway Mission Church of Sweden Mission American Lutheran Mission Hermannsburg Mission
Evangelical Lutheran Church Transvaal Region	1964	1962	Berlin Mission
Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika	1966	1963	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk
Evangelical Lutheran Church Cape/Orange Region	1967	1963	Berlin Mission
United Congregational Church of Southern Africa	1968	1967	American Board Mission London Missionary Society Congregational Union
Moravian Church Cape Eastern	1968	1968	Moravian Mission
Tsonga Presbyterian Church	1968	1962	Swiss Reformed Mission
Evangelical Lutheran Church	1972	1959	Hermannsburg Mission
Indian Reformed Church	1972	1959	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk
United Evangelical Church of South West Africa	1972	1972	Rhenish Mission Finnish Mission
Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk	1974	1981	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk

in their ranks, reflected the skewed representation of the races in their controlling bodies, in that they sent 18 whites and only 9 blacks to that conference. In contrast, the new black churches sent 16 blacks but only 6 whites.⁶ Thus it was the black churches, originally founded by the mission societies, which ensured the advent of the black majority and helped, finally, to bury white dominance of the SACC.

Lutherans move in

Among the most important of the black churches entering CCSA/SACC membership in the late 1960s were those that replaced the German, Scandinavian and American Lutheran missions. These were the Evangelical Lutheran Churches of the South-eastern Region (1962), the Transvaal Region (1964) and the Cape-Orange Region (1968). Although numerically powerful, representing more than 500 000 members, these churches made little initial impact on the CCSA; one reason being that white missionaries retained a controlling position in them even after they had been granted autonomy.⁷ However, they were in the final phases of attaining full autonomy and once they had moved into the seats of power in these churches, black Lutherans such as Dr Manas Buthelezi, were not disposed to assume the low profile with which the conservative white missionaries had been content. In 1966 the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in South Africa (FELCSA) was formed, which brought the newly emergent black Lutheran and Moravian Churches into closer contact with each other.⁸ These included the two dominant churches in Namibia (then called South West Africa), the Ovambokavango and Rhenish Mission Churches. Their leaders, such as Dr Lukas de Vries, author of *Mission and Colonialism in Namibia*, and Pastor Zepheniah Kameeta, head of the Otjimbingwe Lutheran theological seminary, were particularly radical and outspoken.⁹ An indication of their impact is evident in a report in *Ecunews* on the two-yearly meeting of FELCSA held in Johannesburg in February 1973, which noted:

The South West Africans came . . . in a truculent mood. And when the conference began discussing some toughly worded proposals . . . to make Lutheran unity more tangible and real, they were strongly supported by Black leaders from South Africa like Bishop Rapoo of the Tswana Lutheran Church and Bishop Mhlungu of the South Eastern Region Church. When the Whites present tried to stall the unity issue, the blacks responded in an emotional way. In a highly charged speech, Dr J L de Vries . . . said: "Our struggle in

South Africa is a life and death one . . . We came here because we need and expect help, but it appears you are not prepared to give it.”¹⁰

After this conference, *Ecunews* described FELCSA as emerging ‘as a new, united force, not only in the church world, but in the whole of Southern Africa’. FELCSA had very close ties with the SACC; from 1972 onwards they shared the same building, while the Rev A Habelgaarn, who was elected president of the SACC in 1971, was also president of FELCSA. The general secretary of FELCSA at that time, Pastor K H Schmale, was a member of the SACC Executive. In contrast to pre-World War II Lutheran missionaries, Schmale strongly attacked the ethnic basis of the various Lutheran churches in South Africa and played an important role in effecting the unity of these churches in Namibia,¹¹ where the United Evangelical Lutheran Church was formed in 1972. As recounted earlier, the South African black Lutheran and Moravian churches also moved towards structural unity, which was accomplished in 1975 when the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa was established, extinguishing the theology of ethnic churches among black Lutherans, although white Lutherans stayed out of the new church.

Black Nederduitse Gereformeerde churches move in

A decade before this, however, the beginnings of an equally notable development became manifest when the NGKA, the African ‘daughter church’ of the NGK, joined the CCSA as an observer member. The NGKA, was a very recent creation. It was based on missionary work among the African population undertaken by the various synods of the NGK. At first, African converts were simply added to the NGSK created for coloured people in 1881. In time, separate churches and synods for the African converts were established – the first being that of the Orange Free State in 1910. A similar synod was created in the Transvaal in 1932 (it was a member of the CCSA between 1936 and 1940), the Cape

Province in 1951 and Natal in 1952. The separation between these synods came to an end in 1963, when the NGKA was formed.¹²

Although the NGKA immediately moved to associate itself with the CCSA, for several years it was quiescent as far as secular affairs were concerned. It was easy to conclude that because of its close alignment with the white NGK, this church would have been inclined to support apartheid. Indeed, its very existence as a separate ethnic entity was predicated on the same premises as government policy. There were also strong pragmatic factors which might have made it sympathetic to apartheid. Although legally autonomous, it was still extremely dependent on the NGK for financial subsidies,¹³ while the white missionaries of the 'mother church' working in the NGKA not only exercised a powerful influence within it, but remained members of, and responsible to, the white church rather than to the NGKA itself.

Thus the entry of the NGKA into observer membership in 1963 was somewhat surprising to the CCSA, but of course, not unwelcome. The minutes of the CCSA Executive meeting of 7 February 1963 record that when Brown reported that the NGKA had inquired whether it could send observers to the next biennial meeting, the request was granted 'with real joy'.¹⁴ When the NGKA was eventually accepted into observer membership at the biennial meeting of 1966, Brown expressed 'a very special word of welcome to these brethren'. Ironically, the CCSA was benefiting from the separate racial structures of the NGK, since the separation of the black 'daughter' churches from the white 'mother church' enabled those black churches to develop an outlook and ethos which differed from the NGK in many respects. If the proponents of apartheid had used the three-self formula to their own advantage, the establishment of autonomous, indigenous churches was beginning to produce some wholly unintended consequences for them and it became clear from the early 1970s that the NGKA was going its own way. Voices began to be raised within the church

urging it to speak out on human rights and racial discrimination.¹⁵ A straw in the wind was an address given, significantly, at a meeting of the CI in September 1973, by the Rev T Mofokeng of the Northern Transvaal synod. Among other things, he asserted that 'the Church in South Africa should be involved in a relevant theology of liberation for the whole man'.¹⁶ The most arresting demonstration of thinking in the NGKA came in November 1973 when a meeting of a hundred NGKA ministers issued a statement denouncing apartheid as 'unChristian'. Explaining the background to the statement, the Rev S P E Buti, the secretary of the NGKA synod, said: 'It came out boldly from the meeting that we could no longer hold our peace against the ideology of separation on the basis of colour.' In their statement, the hundred ministers called on their colleagues to 'conscientise the people in the Theology of Liberation of the whole man'.¹⁷

As in the ethnically divided Lutheran churches, there were strong calls for an end to structural divisions based on race within the church. On this score, black NGKA leaders and those of Lutheran churches found enough in common to begin a series of consultations together which, in time, led to the formation of a new black organisation, the Association of Black Reformed Evangelical Churches in South Africa.¹⁸

Not only the NGKA was causing a stir by its anti-apartheid stands. That the much older NGSK was following the same line became evident at its general synod of 1974 – which took resolutions on unity among NG churches and on issues such as mixed marriages which, commented the CI journal *Pro Veritate*, amounted to a rejection of the core of separate development.¹⁹ In the same year, it also joined the SACC as an observer member church. As a further indication of the trends of thinking in this church, it simply needs to be mentioned that Dr Alan Boesak, a leading exponent of black theology and increasingly recognised as a leader of black nationalist resistance in South Africa, was a product of the NGSK.

The black NG churches' moves towards the Ecumenical Bloc were extremely important for a number of reasons. For one thing, this was the first time since the NG Transvaal synods had withdrawn from the CCSA in 1940 that there was any sign of a possible *rap-prochement* between the Ecumenical and at least the black segment of the Dutch Reformed Bloc. The most momentous move of all, however, happened in 1975 when the NGKA decided to take the simple step of transforming its observer membership of the SACC into full membership of the organisation. The full significance of that move is best appreciated in the light of other developments which need to be set out first.

The end of CPSA/Methodist dichotomies

If black nationalism was engulfing apartheid and the theology of ethnic churchplanting on which it was founded, it was also engulfing liberalism and neo-liberalism. The effects of this in maintaining white dominance of churches as well as ecumenical bodies are evident in changes in their leadership and particularly their clergy. The number of blacks in the clergy advanced very slowly during the first half of the twentieth century. According to Gerdener, the percentage of blacks in the ministry of South African churches rose from 35 per cent in 1910 to only 43 per cent in 1953;²⁰ a rate that certainly did not reflect the expansion of Christian profession in South Africa during the same period. More detailed breakdowns relating to individual churches are difficult to obtain. Table 6 indicates the rate of black advance among the clergy of the two largest multiracial churches – the CPSA and Methodist – between 1940 and 1970.²¹

If clergy are seen as the leaders of churches, the figures demonstrate the increasing extent to which the leadership of these two denominations was increasingly skewed in favour of whites since, as was demonstrated in Chapter One, their black membership was growing at an explosive rate during the period covered. While the percentage of black clergy in the Methodist Church was

TABLE 5: *Black clergy in the multiracial Methodist and CPSA churches, 1940 to 1970*

Methodist Church	Total number of clergy	White	%	Black	%
1940	483	258	53	225	47
1950	527	242	46	285	54
1960	661	300	45	361	55
1970	708	327	46	381	54
Church of the Province of South Africa	Total number of clergy	White	%	Black	%
1940	762	558	73	204	27
1950	890	603	68	287	32
1960	861	545	63	316	37
1970	997	583	58	414	42

practically static for three decades after 1940, black advance in the leadership of the CPSA was even slower. The first black suffragan bishop in this church was not elected until 1960. He was Bishop Alpheus Zulu, then working in the diocese of St John's. He became the first full black bishop of the CPSA in 1971 when he was elected head of the diocese of Zululand. In 1975, out of a total of 14 on the CPSA bench of bishops, only Zulu and 2 other suffragan bishops were black. In the Methodist Church at that time, a similar situation prevailed in that only 2 of the 14 chairmen of the regional synods were black.²²

It seems strange in the light of these figures that the onset of self-sufficiency in theological training took place at a much earlier date for blacks than for whites. The explanation for that lies in the discrimination churches practised against black clergy by refusing to send the great majority overseas for theological training in the same way as were whites before World War II. A department of divinity for the training of black clergy had been established at Fort Hare University College as early as 1921²³ and ac-

cording to Gerdener, full self-sufficiency in the theological training of black clergy was established by the 1930s.²⁴

However slow the black advance in the white-dominated Ecumenical Bloc churches, from the 1960s onwards there was a growing realisation of the necessity for a greater Africanisation of their leadership. That resulted in the Rev Seth Mokitimi being elected president of the Methodist Church in 1964 (two years before he became president of the CCSA), for instance. In addition, during the 1960s the old mission/church dichotomy evident in the racial division of the structures of these churches was deliberately abolished. The CPSA began that process in 1960 when it replaced its old Provincial Board of Missions with a Board of Missionary Strategy. In a report made to this body in 1963, a committee appointed 'to consider the Church's Ministry in the changed conditions in South Africa' stated:

Only when the Church can show itself as genuinely African and no longer an import in its modes of theological thought and appreciation, in its life, worship and activity, can it hope to make an effective impact on neo-African society.²⁵

These thoughts – and even the wording – are reminiscent of those used by Jacottet and Lennox in the GMC in 1904 and 1909 respectively when they advocated the establishment of 'native churches'. A powerful injection of the theology which had led to the merger of the WCC and IMC in 1961 was given to the worldwide Anglican communion by the Anglican Congress in Toronto in 1963 which produced what has been described as an 'epoch-making document' entitled *Mutual Responsibility and Inter-dependence in the Body of Christ*.²⁶ Its ideas on the unity of the church and mission were repeated in a book published by the CPSA in 1963, *Methods of Mission in South Africa*, which was authored by the locally born bishop, John Carter.²⁷ The final resolution of the mission/church dichotomy in the CPSA can be dated

to its Provincial Synod of 1965 which abolished the Board of Missionary Strategy together with the diocesan missionary conferences, while the concept of 'missionary dioceses' was also discarded.²⁸ Although a missionary department of the church continued to exist, mission was from this time seen to be the responsibility of the whole church and applicable to whites as well as blacks.

In the Methodist Church the name of the Methodist Missionary Society was changed to the *Missionary Department* as early as 1944.²⁹ Moves in the direction of resolving the mission/church dichotomy were not as overt as in the CPSA until 1961, when the Methodist Conference adopted a standing resolution which stated the fundamental aim of Methodist missionary policy to be: 'Going to every place where men are without Christ . . . to spread Scriptural Holiness throughout the land by the proclamation of the evangelical faith'.³⁰ The lack of any mention of 'converting the heathen' and stress on the universality of mission was also an echo of world theological trends in this regard. The same was true of the alteration by the PCSA of the name of its Africans Missions Committee in 1960 to the *Church Extension Committee (African)*.

The changes in the CCSA constituency during the 1960s were the most extensive it had experienced to that date. They were not immediately transferred either to its operations or to the composition of its controlling bodies, although there was a foretaste of changes to come in the election of Mokitimi as president in 1966. The victory of Bishop G Pakendorf of the newly formed Evangelical Lutheran Church, Transvaal Region, over the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town in a contest for the CCSA presidency in 1964 indicated a new willingness to break with the long-established tradition of Anglican/Methodist dominance of the CCSA.³¹

The establishment of the black majority

As when the Moravian Church Western Cape entered into full membership of the CCSA in 1957, the historic nature of the first black-majority SACC national conference in 1972 was, if not ignored, then not well appreciated. This, however, was understandable. The numbers of blacks in SACC bodies had been growing slowly over a number of years and, in fact, the advent of a new dispensation had already been signalled by three notable developments at the national conference a year earlier. These were, firstly, a statement by Rees that from henceforward the organisation would deliberately seek to reflect the black-majority situation of its constituency in both its staffing and Executive bodies. Secondly, it was at this conference that the first black-majority Executive was elected; and, thirdly, there was the election of a black president, the Rev August Habelgaarn of the Moravian Church.³² He was not the first black to be elected to that post. However, the election of the Rev Seth Mokitimi to the presidency in 1966 was a gesture of tokenism rather than a recognition of the realities of growing black strength in every sector of South Africa as a whole and in the Ecumenical Bloc in particular. Mokitimi's election certainly did not reflect any predominance of blacks in the controlling bodies of the CCSA; at the biennial meeting which elected him, only 26 out of 76 delegates were black.³³

Although not much was made of it at the time, the advent of the black majority was a notable event. It reflected the outcome of a historical process which had begun almost two centuries earlier when the first missionaries left the shores of Europe and North America to 'convert the heathen'. It also coincided with the emergence of a powerful new force.

The coming of black consciousness . . .

The situation of Ecumenical Bloc churches *vis-à-vis* black nationalism changed radically between 1970 and 1975. One of the

reasons for this was that the earlier anti-black nationalist bias of white liberals was submerged as blacks moved into their seats of power. This also resulted in a new vision which saw Christianity as a vehicle of nationalism in terms of the new ideologies of black consciousness and black theology.

Black consciousness, as noted earlier, represented a new wave of African nationalism which, for a period, eclipsed that embodied in the ANC and the PAC. The seeds of black consciousness – expressing, in the words of its leading proponent, Steve Biko, ‘group pride and determination of the black to rise and attain the envisaged self’³⁴ – were found in the writings of Franz Fanon (particularly *The Wretched of the Earth*) and American black power leaders such as Malcom X and Stokely Carmichael.³⁵ Black consciousness represented the ultimate reaction to the old idea of superior and inferior races and cultures. While that had been discarded both in the secular and religious spheres, this was in the nature of a white concession as it were, that other races were indeed equal. Black consciousness was an aggressive assertion by blacks themselves of their equality and human worth, summed up in the statement: ‘Black is Beautiful’. However, according to the proponents of black consciousness, this could not stop at mere verbal assertions; it had to be seen and experienced in practice as an existential reality. In many respects, this could not happen overnight because a mind-set of white superiority and black inferiority had existed for hundreds of years among blacks as well as whites. For that reason it was necessary for blacks to separate themselves from whites because in racially mixed situations, whites invariably ‘took control’. Thus blacks needed to be on their own, free of any white influences or ideas, and indeed any white presence, in order to establish their own confidence and selfhood. Once that had been accomplished, they could then return and encounter whites on a basis of a true equality. (The same line of thought was also evident among radical feminists, who argued for the same reasons that women needed to separate themselves from men.)

For many, and particularly liberals, this demand for separation between whites and blacks sounded uncomfortably similar to apartheid thinking, and indeed black consciousness was described by some liberals as 'apartheid in reverse'. It certainly seemed to deny the 'unity of humankind' theme which was so strongly stressed in 'The Message' by the neo-liberals. Not that the proponents of black consciousness ever saw any redeeming features in apartheid. Whatever the theory behind even separate development, its practical results represented the ultimate statement of white privilege and superiority over blacks. However, it is interesting to speculate on whether the progenitors of the three-self formula, Venn and Anderson, would have seen black consciousness as much of a threat as did many liberals.

. . . and black theology

Although black consciousness was a reaction against the assumption that white, Western values were inherently superior to those of black, non-Western people, it did not embody a reaction against Christianity as such. A reason for this, as Biko wrote, was that

African religion in its essence was not radically different from Christianity. We also believed in one God, we had our own community of saints through whom we related to God, and we did not find it compatible with our way of life to worship God in isolation from the various aspects of our lives.³⁶

Another reason was that black theology, which emerged very nearly concurrently with black consciousness, was seen to be an aspect of the nationalist liberation struggle, since it was a strongly 'contextualised' theology. In Biko's words, black theology 'wants to describe Christ as a fighting god, not a passive god who allows a lie to rest unchallenged. It grapples with existential problems'.³⁷ The emphasis on liberation in a political sense as much as in any other, is stressed again and again in writings on black theology. As a statement issued by a regional seminar on black theology in 1971 put it:

Black theology is a theology concerned with the future of the black man in the light of Christ as liberator . . . We understand Christ's liberation to be a liberation not only from circumstances of internal bondage but also liberation from circumstances of external enslavement.³⁸

The most powerful statement of all was made by Dr Alan Boesak five years later:

Black theology is a theology of liberation. Black theology believes that liberation is not mere "part of" the gospel, or "consistent with" the gospel, but is the content and framework of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Black theology takes seriously the black situation, black experience, and grapples with the suffering of black people under oppression.³⁹

With this emphasis on liberation, black theology came at a critical moment for churches. According to the Rev M Mogoba, who was later to become president of the Methodist Church and subsequently leader of the PAC: 'When young students in universities, colleges and schools were seriously rejecting the Christian religion as a White man's religion, [black theology] saved Christianity for our sub-continent.'⁴⁰ This statement can be compared with Gerhart's observation that while the black consciousness movement faced formidable obstacles in reaching a mass audience through workers' organisations, it fared better among black churchmen, and seminary students were among the earliest and most ardent proponents of black consciousness.⁴¹ The part played by black church people in several other black consciousness organisations and events confirms this. The University Christian Movement (UCM), created as a students' organisation by Ecumenical Bloc churches in 1967 after they had withdrawn their support from the conservative Students' Christian Association (SCA), was rapidly taken over by student proponents of black consciousness and became the launching pad for the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) in 1968.⁴² Black Christians

also played a major role in the Black Peoples' Convention, an umbrella organisation which included journalists, students, artists and a federation of women in its ranks. It was formed in 1972.⁴³ Church people were again prominent in the organisation of the Black Renaissance Convention at Hammanskraal in 1975, which brought a wide range of black consciousness organisations together.⁴⁴

While some proponents of black consciousness displayed outright hostility towards Christianity and the churches, in some cases the opposite applied. Frank Chikane, in his autobiography, relates how in the early 1970s Christian students at the University of the North who supported black consciousness practised their faith 'underground' rather than comply with demands of leaders that they reject their religion because it was an instrument of white oppression.⁴⁵ One of the leading thinkers on black theology at the time, the Rev Ernest Baartman of the Methodist Church, wrote in 1973 that 'the black man is grateful to God for His Church' and that 'thanks to the Church, the black man has been awakened'.⁴⁶ Other spokesmen for black consciousness tended to be more critical of the churches, often referring to their situation of white domination; but while, as SASO stated in 1971 that Christianity as propagated by these churches had helped in the oppression of blacks by supporting the status quo, it nevertheless also expressed support 'for those Christians in this country who are making a new departure to take the Christian message to the people of God, and consequently welcomes the emergence of black theology'.⁴⁷ It is significant moreover, that suggestions put forward from time to time that blacks form their own separate churches, which would have been very much in line with the ideology of black consciousness described above, found little support. Although blacks mostly chose to stay within white-dominated churches, the 1970s were marked by an ever-increasing black outspokenness in the synods and assemblies of those churches as well as in the SACC.⁴⁸

In the changing reactions of the SACC and its constituent churches to the concepts of black consciousness and black theology is to be found the clearest pointer to the end of the long period of white liberal dominance. Initial reactions were ambivalent, tending towards hostility. In October 1971, the SACC mouthpiece, *Kairos*, stated that while the current stress on black identity within churches was very significant and that black–white polarisation was recognised as a necessary strategy for change, nevertheless, ‘however much polarisation may be a necessary political expedient, it is not a mark of the Church’.⁴⁹ More overt hostility to black consciousness/black theology was evident in the attitudes of churches towards the UCM, their own creation, when it emerged as prominent platform for the new ideology after 1968. As a result of its increasingly radical stands, churches began to express reservations about its activities. In 1970, for instance, the CPSA Synod of Bishops asked Bishop John Carter to represent their church at consultations between the Johannesburg leadership of UCM and local denominations. In a confidential report submitted to the synod in September 1971, Bishop Carter stated that as far as relationships between the UCM and the churches were concerned

a love-hate relationship exists, in which mutual criticism predominates at present. The Churches find it very hard to go on justifying their endorsement of UCM, which appears to be encouraging disaffection. UCM wants the Churches’ support, but as its critique of society becomes more radical it increasingly sees the “White-dominated Churches” as part of the oppressive system that must be destroyed.⁵⁰

Carter recommended that the CPSA keep in touch with the UCM while making clear its theological differences and its objections to UCM attacks on the institutional church. The Methodist Church went further; in 1971, after hearing a report on UCM given by Professor W M Kgwane of the University of the North, the annual conference of the Church decided to sever Methodist links with

UCM altogether. Interestingly, Professor Kgware described UCM as merely an arm of SASO.⁵¹

The ambivalence and hostility of the white-dominated SACC constituency was not shared by the CI, whose journal, *Pro Veritate*, gave its full support to the new black movements. However, when the SACC moved into the same position, this was not due so much to the CI as simply to the onset of the effects of structural indigenisation which enabled blacks to put their point of view much more forcefully from an official position of power. Thus, the first 'non-token' black president of the SACC, the Rev August Habelgaarn, stated in his presidential address to the national conference in 1972 that black theology offered an opportunity to produce a confession of faith which expressed an interpretation of the gospel by the people of Africa. Black theology, he said, would produce not only new theological thought patterns, but 'also free the man of Africa from inferiority and help him towards a discovery of his worth and identity'.⁵² Another indication of the impact of the new black majority situation in SACC deliberations is afforded by a report from a task force on violence and non-violence set up by the Justice and Reconciliation Division of the SACC. The task force was composed of nine blacks and four whites, and its report is worth quoting at length.

What happened to this group was more significant than any recommendations it made . . . [Its] composition made for a high degree of personal and emotional involvement in the issues discussed, and identification of a strong feeling on the part of the Black majority that the few Whites were (must be) alienated and ignorant of this experience . . . Therefore the presence of Whites in this group (and by implication in other such groups) focused cathartically their resentment, and in some cases hostility, to all Whites, for all their responsibility for the situation in the country, their resistance to basic change or even to taking any practical steps to share in the sufferings of the majority.

The white members of the group, said the report,

all felt uncomfortable, helpless and baffled at being accorded no role but to bear this aggression . . . What happened was that three of the four Whites came willingly to accept the need of Blacks at least for an initial separation.⁵³

When this last sentence is compared with the *Kairos* editorial quoted earlier, it is evident that the presence of a black majority was bound to have a major impact on thinking in the SACC. Thus there was a fairly rapid turnabout in its attitudes towards black consciousness. This is most evident in a report made by the director of the Justice and Reconciliation Division, Professor Brian Johanson, to the SACC Executive in December 1973 in which he wrote that black consciousness

needs to be encouraged and supported by churches, helping blacks to overcome and throw off oppression by consent, to realise their dignity, exercise their initiative and support each other in acting on their convictions. The Black man must first liberate himself and develop his attitudes so that he can operate without the lead of the White man.⁵⁴

From this time onwards, the SACC gave its wholehearted support to, and endorsement of, black consciousness and black theology. In 1975 the Rev John Thorne, who succeeded Habelgaarn as president the year before, stated in his presidential address to the national conference of that year that 'black consciousness has become one of the great events of our time'.⁵⁵ In response, the conference, in a 'Statement on Race Relations', accepted a motion which read

We accept the reality and importance of Black Consciousness as defined by the President of the SACC and encourage the churches to promote and support Black awareness in this country.⁵⁶

Yet while Rees stated in his address to the 1975 conference, ‘the future of South Africa is now firmly in the hands of the black man’,⁵⁷ the SACC itself never travelled far along the road mapped out by the theoreticians of black consciousness. A reason for this was that their movement suffered major setbacks as a result of savage State action against its institutional expressions such as SASO and the murder of its leader, Steve Biko, while he was in detention in 1977. Thereafter, black consciousness suffered something of a decline. That its purist thinking never made great inroads into the general population seems evident from the fact that even after they had been allowed, once more, to operate freely from 1990 onwards, black consciousness organisations such as the PAC and the Azanian Peoples’ Organisation (Azapo) did not score much electoral success. The ANC continued to be the main vehicle of black liberation and political achievement. In contrast to black consciousness organisations, it never wavered from its commitment to multiracialism and had whites among its leading figures all through its period in exile and thereafter in government.

The SACC followed the same pattern. While welcoming the contribution of black consciousness to black assertiveness and power, and hence to black liberation, neither its constituent churches nor the SACC itself ever made any significant moves to create separation between blacks and whites as demanded by black consciousness proponents. Not only did that indicate that the ‘unity of humankind’ theology remained the most powerful in the Ecumenical Bloc, but also that developments in the SACC – and particularly the change from white to black leadership – ensured that it had become too valuable an instrument in the anti-apartheid struggle to be discarded for any reason.

The impact of black majorities

While the move to black majority rule in the SACC happened uneventfully, this was not the case as far as the outcomes were

concerned. It is interesting to compare the experience of the SACC with that of the international missionary and ecumenical movements resulting from the entry of 'younger churches' into their counsels from the time of the Jerusalem conference onwards. Just as the influence of those churches had deeply affected the theology and direction of the IMC and WCC, so within two years of the establishment of a black majority of the SACC it had been pushed in a more radical direction too, aligning itself unequivocally with the aims of black nationalism in general and of the ANC in particular.

The gap between the white leadership of the CCSA/SACC and the aspirations of the black nationalist movements probably opened to their widest during the 1960s when, as Mandela stated in the Rivonia treason trial in 1964 – which led to his life imprisonment – attempts to effect change by peaceful means were abandoned.⁵⁸ The churches of the Ecumenical Bloc, however, remained committed to non-violent solutions, not only out of conviction but because to do otherwise would have invited savagely punitive reactions from the apartheid State. However, it was precisely at this stage that radical new forces in the international ecumenical sphere were being strengthened in the WCC by the merger with the IMC and its constituency of autonomous indigenous churches from newly independent countries. Not only did this result in an increasingly favourable response to anti-colonial nationalisms, but thinking was also being strongly influenced by the *missio dei* theology and the theologies of revolution propounded by M M Thomas.

The increasingly strong stands of the WCC were embodied in resolutions taken by its Church and Society Conference in Geneva in 1966 and also at its fourth general assembly in Uppsala, Sweden, in 1968 which noted that 'ominous events' demanded new efforts to eliminate racism and called for the establishment of a special programme on the issue.⁵⁹ A WCC-sponsored conference

on racism at Notting Hill, London, in 1969, attracted sensational publicity – not only because of several controversial racial incidents, but because it also led to a realisation that, in the words of a South African participant, the Rev Ian Thompson, the ‘theology of the powerless’ propounded at the meeting ‘will perhaps involve the recognition that what are dirty words in today’s theology: terms like “Revolution”, “violence”, . . . are perhaps the only terms capable of expressing the reality of Christian mission’.⁶⁰ One of the recommendations of this conference was that ‘all else failing, the Church and churches support resistance movements, including revolutions, which are aimed at the elimination of political or economic tyranny which makes racism possible’.⁶¹

The white leadership of the CCSA/SACC reacted with shock to these developments. The SACC general-secretary Bishop Burnett, commenting on the Notting Hill Consultation in his report to the 1969 national conference of the SACC, declared that he thought the statement was poorly constructed and badly expressed, which made it difficult to commend it to people in South Africa. The reaction of many was to ask that the Church should condemn it out of hand.⁶² The gap between this type of thinking and that of the WCC was fully demonstrated in 1969 when the Central Committee of the WCC resolved to accept the recommendations of the Uppsala assembly and the Notting Hill Consultation, and gave its approval to the establishment of a PCR. The struggle against racism, stated the Central Committee, was ‘not against flesh and blood. It is against the principalities, against the powers of evil, against the deeply entrenched demonic forces of racial prejudice . . . Ours is a task of exorcism’.⁶³ Among the activities of this new programme was the setting up of a ‘special fund to aid oppressed racial groups and organisations supporting the victims of racial injustice’. The first grants from the \$US200 000 were announced in September 1970, and pre-eminent among the recipients were the liberation movements involved in violent struggles against the Portuguese empire in Africa and the white regime in Rhodesia.

There was a storm of angry and hostile reaction from most of the whites and the media in Southern Africa. The SACC summoned an emergency meeting of South African church leaders five days after the grants had been announced. The action of the PCR, stated that meeting, could be regarded as identification by the WCC with organisations 'whose purpose is to change the social order in Southern Africa by the use of force'. For that reason the church leaders dissociated themselves from the action.⁶⁴

However, this stance changed in a time. In place of its outright dissociation from the grants, the journal of the SACC, *Kairos*, reported in 1976 that the SACC had moved to a position in which it unreservedly supported the aims of the PCR, although it disagreed with some of the methods adopted to effect those aims.⁶⁵ Two major factors had led to this change; the first was that the PCR grants had driven the SACC to dialogue much more closely with the WCC on the issues which had brought the PCR into existence. This led to a better understanding of the rationale of the PCR's grants. Closer contact with the WCC was made more urgent by the pressure brought to bear on South African member churches both by the apartheid government and by many whites in their own ranks, to withdraw from the WCC. Led by SACC officials and by Rees in particular, they refused to do so. They too, saw themselves as being involved in a struggle to combat racism, although by different means, and thought it vital to maintain contact with the international church community as represented by the WCC. As an alternative and also to indicate to the WCC that peaceful change was possible in South Africa, the SACC resolved in 1971 to establish its own counterpart to the PCR in the form of a new Division of Justice and Reconciliation which would devote intensive study to the racial, political and economic situation in South Africa.⁶⁶

The second major factor which changed SACC attitudes to the PCR grants was the advent of black autonomous churches, as de-

tailed earlier – into its membership which, in turn, produced black majorities on SACC controlling bodies after 1971. This was crucially important because both in the SACC and in its constituent churches, blacks had responded favourably to WCC actions and particularly to the activities of the PCR.⁶⁷ Indeed, that blacks were a major factor in preventing the WCC member churches from withdrawing from the organisation was a pointer to the way that black majorities and black control were going to turn the anti-apartheid struggle of the Ecumenical Bloc into much more radical directions.⁶⁸

The new direction: the ‘Conscientious Objection Resolution’

The full extent of changes of attitude in the SACC towards not only the PCR grants but also to the liberation struggles being waged by exiled nationalist movements became apparent in the form of what was known as the *Conscientious Objection Resolution* passed by the SACC national conference in 1974. It took its name from a clause which called on churches ‘to challenge all their members to consider . . . whether . . . identifying with the oppressed does not, in our situation, involve becoming conscientious objectors’. Although addressed to all the members of churches, in fact, the application of the resolution was limited to whites, since only they were subject to military conscription. This in itself was significant, since there was no similar appeal to blacks to refrain from resorting to violence to rid themselves of oppression.

The resolution used typical ‘liberation theology’ terminology. It began by acknowledging ‘as the one and only God Him who mightily delivered the people of Israel from their bondage in Egypt and who in Jesus Christ still proclaims that he will “set at liberty those who are oppressed”’. While advocating conscientious objection, the resolution did not advocate pacifism, being rather based on the ‘just war’ theory. It asserted that the defence of a system such

as South Africa's, characterised by oppression and violence, could not be classified as a 'just war'. An important clause read:

The injustice and oppression under which the Black peoples of South Africa labour is far worse than that against which Afrikaners waged their First and Second Wars of Independence and that if we have justified the Afrikaner's resort to violence . . . or claimed that God was on their side, it is hypocritical to deny that the same applies to the Black people in their struggle today.

Although not as explicit a blessing on the cause of the nationalist liberation movements as that pronounced by the WCC and PCR, the implications of the 'Conscientious Objection Resolution' were nevertheless similar.

The way in which the SACC conference came to its conclusions is important.⁶⁹ The resolution was not thought out beforehand, but was conceived and drafted during the conference itself in response to a report given by Rees on the fourth assembly of the AACC held in Lusaka, Zambia, earlier in 1974. That assembly was characterised by great excitement caused by the victories of nationalist movements in the Portuguese colonies in Africa a short while before. It was, moreover, attended by a good number of members of various African liberation movements, who were hailed with the singing of 'Onward Christian Soldiers'. During the conference, Rees and other South African delegates made contact with members of South African nationalist movements in exile, including the ANC and the South West Africa Peoples' Organisation. Rees stated that on the basis of information given to him by the representatives, 'terrorist' attacks could be expected in South Africa within 18 months.

In the discussion following Rees's report, a delegate of the Presbyterian Church, the Rev Douglas Bax, himself a theologian of some note, raised the idea of conscientious objection as means of protest against the situation in South Africa, which was seen to be

the cause of the threat of violence and war, described Rees. Bax's thinking on the issue, he afterwards stated, 'stemmed from my study and understanding of thinking of the prophets and Jesus on violence, on war and on God's use of Assyria and Babylon to punish Israel for its injustice, oppression and worship of idols'. All this was a clear echo of 'liberation theology' and of the concepts of *missio dei*. When he later drafted the conscientious objection resolution, Bax did so in conjunction with Beyers Naude, who also seconded it when it came before the conference; a significant fact in the light of the role that the CI played in acting as conduit for the ideas of the international ecumenical movement and black consciousness up to that time. Several white delegates, realising the importance of the resolution and its likely repercussions in South Africa – whose white population was extremely nervous of the 'terrorist threat' following the fall of Angola and Mozambique – resisted the resolution strongly. Chief among these was Bishop Philip Russell of the CPSA and the Rev Peter Storey of the Methodist Church. However, the newly established black majority in the national conference proved decisive. Of the 56 voting delegates present, 39 were black and it soon became clear that Bax had the majority behind him. After a five-hour debate, the resolution was accepted. In its implied approval of the actions of the liberation movements dominated by the ANC, the SACC had completed its alignment with black nationalist forces.

One of the most perceptive comments about the new situation came, rather surprisingly, from a Rev Dawid Botha, a white official of the NGSK, which was accepted as an observer member of the SACC at that same national conference of the SACC which he attended as an official delegate. He afterwards reported to his church:

As a result of the Blackening of the SACC and the rise of black consciousness, the influence of the white liberals is decreasing sharply. These fighters for justice were always a major divisive factor in

church life in South Africa in the past. In my opinion, the present composition of the Council offers a much better starting point for the restoration of relationships with the NG Kerk.⁷⁰

In the short term, he was wrong on this point. However, events were to show that the eclipse of the liberals and the new composition of the SACC would indeed, in the final analysis, lead the restoration of relationships if not with the NGK, then with the Dutch Reformed Bloc as a whole.

The events surrounding the passing of the 'Conscientious Objection' resolution took place in a dazzling blaze of publicity which gave the SACC an even higher profile than it had established at the time of 'The Message' in 1968. Reactions to the resolution were revealing. While it evoked the heaviest governmental attack on the SACC which it had sustained to that time – and also created doubts among its own white constituency there was equally strong support from its black constituency.⁷¹ In September 1974, less than two months after the passing of the resolution, the largely black United Congregational Church of South Africa as well as the black Evangelical Lutheran Church, Transvaal Region, gave official support to the resolution. They were followed by the BPC, the United Evangelical Church of South West Africa and the Tsonga Presbyterian Church in October. Later, the Provincial Standing Committee of the CPSA voiced its support, while the Methodist and PCSA expressed support, although less directly.⁷²

The most significant of all endorsements of the 'Conscientious Objection Resolution' came not from within the long-established constituency of the SACC, however, but from within the Dutch Reformed Bloc. As already described, it was after the resolution had been passed that the NGKA decided to move into full membership with the SACC. This was a largely symbolic act – by then the NGKA had been an observer member of the CCSA/SACC for 12 years and in that capacity enjoyed all the rights of membership

other than being able to vote. The acquisition of that right was critical, neither for itself nor the SACC in which a black voting majority had been established three years earlier. However, that in practical terms the NGKA move meant so little, underlined the importance of its full identification with the SACC and with that organisation's new status as a platform of, and voice for, black liberation. Accomplishing that did not come easily for those in the NGKA who supported the move. When it came before the church's 1975 synod, it was strongly opposed by white missionaries as well as a good number of black members. However, when, after a fierce debate, a majority voted in favour of full SACC membership, the decision was greeted with singing, chanting and cheering.⁷³ There was singing and cheering once again when, a little over a month later, the national conference of the SACC received the first delegates of the NGKA into full membership status.⁷⁴

Although most involved in those events probably did not know the details of the history, their vocal acclamation demonstrated that they were certainly aware that this was a historic occasion. There was among them probably an unconscious, but instinctive, realisation that they were standing at the confluence of two great streams of missionary effort in South Africa which had begun to divide and conflict not long after Shaw wrote to his London Committee in 1820. Despite that, both the integrationist/assimilationist and the segregationist/apartheid stream, with its strong roots in the three-self idea, had played equally important roles in bringing about their ultimate convergence. Those who supported the former idea and who came to be known as liberals, had created the instrument, the SACC, which provided the platform for the visible accomplishment of the convergence. However, it was those churches which had arisen out of the ideas originally encapsulated in the three-self formula, which led the way towards the full realisation of the implications of the autonomy hoped for, but whose consequences were probably never wildly dreamt about, by the early missionaries. The totally unintended outcome of their work,

as is demonstrated in Chapter Seven, was that both liberalism and apartheid were simply left behind by the black churchmen who were taking control of the SACC.

The rejoicings at the 1975 synod of the NGKA and the national conference of the SACC, also betokened a realisation that finally the brand of Christianity produced by mission work, was being transformed into one of the most effective battering rams used in the final assault on the bastions of white control in South Africa, as embodied in apartheid.

Notes

1. SACC Executive Minutes, 7 to 8 March 1973, 2.
2. Figures taken from the attendance register of the Minutes of the National Conference of the South African Council of Churches held on 2 to 3 August 1972.
3. J Wing and D R Briggs, *The Harvest and the Hope. The Story of Congregationism in South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1970), 112.
4. Strassberger, *Ecumenism in South Africa 1936–1960*, 23, 36.
5. Data assembled from SACC records and various denominational sources.
6. National Conference Attendance Register for 1972. (The remaining 20 delegates present were from organisations such as the Christian Institute and the groupings of AICs, which were in membership with the SACC.)
7. For example, although granted autonomy in 1963, the Evangelical Lutheran Church South-eastern Region, did not appoint its first black bishop until 1971. He was Bishop P B Mhlongu, elected to his post on 10 July 1971. *Ecunews* Bulletin, 5/71, 3.
8. Strassberger, *Ecumenism in South Africa 1936–1960*, 75.
9. See, for instance, Kameeta's article on 'A Black Theology of Liberation.' In *Lutheran World*, vol 22, no. 4, 1975, 177–8. Later, the Namibian churches were to withdraw from the SACC when the Namibian Council of Churches was established.

10. *Ecunews* Bulletin 2/73, 9/2/73, 1.
11. *Ecunews* Bulletin 3/73, 16/2/73, 11.
12. J M Cronje, *Born to Witness. A Concise History of the Churches Born out of the Mission Work of the Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk) of South Africa* (Pretoria, 1982).
13. J H Serfontein, *Apartheid, Change and the NG Kerk* (Johannesburg 1982), 220.
14. CCSA Executive Minute no. 168, 7/2/1963, 269.
15. *Ecunews* Bulletin, 19/11/1971, 2.
16. *Ecunews* Bulletin, 29/73, 28/9/1973, 4.
17. *Ecunews* Bulletin, 34/73, 2/11/1973, 1.
18. *Ecunews* Bulletin, 13/75, 14/5/1975; also 14/75, 4 and 15/75, 5.
19. 'The Sendingkerk will Never Be the Same Again.' (Editorial) *Pro Veritate*, vol 13, no. 7, November 1974.
20. G B A Gerdener, *Recent Developments in the South African Mission Field* (Pretoria, 1958), 259.
21. Figures extracted from Methodist Church Annual Conference Minutes and the *CPSA Year Book and Clerical Directory* for Relevant Decades.
22. *Ibid.*
23. A Kerr, *Fort Hare 1915 – 1948, The Evolution of an African College* (Pietermaritzburg, 1968), 57.
24. Gerdener, *Recent Developments in the South African Mission Field*, 255.
25. 'The Church in the New South Africa. Being a report by the committee appointed by the Provincial Board of Missionary Strategy to consider the Church's Ministry in the changed conditions of South Africa. The meeting took place in Kimberley from 15 to 18 January 1963,' 3. CPSA archive, AB 789, Provincial Board of Missionary Strategy. Minutes and Memoranda, 1960–1965.
26. Letter from Bishop F A Amooore, Provincial Executive Office of the CPSA, to the author, 8 August 1983.

27. J Carter, *Methods of Mission in South Africa* (London, 1963), *passim*.
28. Amooore, letter, see no. 26.
29. There was apparently no resolution to this effect: the new name appearing without explanation in the 1944 Minutes of the Methodist Conference.
30. Minutes of the Seventy-ninth Conference of the Methodist Church . . . 1961, 69.
31. Minutes of the Biennial Meeting of the Christian Council of South Africa, 1964. Minutes no. 136; Executive Minutes, vol 1, 311.
32. *Kairos*, vol 3, no. 7, August 1971, 1 and 3. Of the 16 members of the Executive (including two co-opted members), 10 were black. This exactly reversed the black/white ratio on the last white-majority Executive elected in August 1970. *Kairos*, vol 2, no. 7, September 1970, 4–5.
33. Minutes of the Biennial Meeting of the Christian Council of South Africa, 15–16 June 1966. Executive Minute Book, 38–45.
34. S Biko, 'Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity.' In *Black Theology*, ed. B Moore (London, 1973), 36–47.
35. G Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology*. (Berkeley, 1978), 275.
36. Biko, 'Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity.' *Black Theology*, 36–47.
37. *Ibid*.
38. 'Black Theology Resolution.' *Pro Veritate*, vol 12, no. 3, 15 July 1973, 25.
39. A Boesak, *Civil Theology for Southern Africa*, no. 19, June 1977, 35–43.
40. Interview with the author, 1983.
41. G M Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa. The Evolution of an Ideology*. (Berkeley, 1978), 294–5.
42. SASO: 'Historical Background.' In *African Perspectives on South Africa* ed. H E van der Merwe, *et al.*, (Cape Town, 1978), 7.

43. B Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash. The Soweto Revolt – Roots of Revolution?* (New York, 1979), 7.
44. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 295.
45. F Chikane, *No Life of My Own. An Autobiography of Frank Chikane* (Johannesburg, 1988), 38–9.
46. E Baartman, 'The Black Man and the Church.' *Pro Veritate*, vol 11, no. 12, 3–5.
47. SASO: 'Resolution on Black Theology.' In *Black Power in South Africa*, ed. van der Merwe *et al.*, 309–10.
48. This is evident from numerous *Ecunews* Bulletins (published weekly) during this period.
49. *Kairos*, vol 3, no. 9, October 1971, 8.
50. J Carter, 'University Christian Movement.' SACC archive, AC 623/9/4 (e) iii.
51. *Ecunews* Bulletin 18/71, 27/10/1971, 2.
52. *Kairos*, vol 4, no. 8, August 1972, 1.
53. Report of the General Secretary to the Executive Committee, December 1973. Division of Justice and Reconciliation, 1–2.
54. D G Thomas, *Councils in the Ecumenical Movement*, South Africa, 1904–1975, 68.
55. J Thorne, 'Beyond the Sunset.' In *The Church in South Africa – Today and Tomorrow* ed. B Johanson, (Johannesburg, 1975), 12–19.
56. *Ibid.*, 79.
57. *Ibid.*, 6.
58. N Mandela, *No Easy Walk to Freedom. Articles, Speeches and Trial Addresses of Nelson Mandela* (London, 1965), 173.
59. A J van der Bent, ed. *World Council of Churches' Statements and Actions on Racism, 1948–1979* (Geneva, 1980), 23.
60. I Thompson, 'Impressions of the WCC. Consultation on Racism (London, May 1969).' *Pro Veritate*, vol 8, no. 2, 15 June 1969, 14–15.

61. A J van der Bent, ed. *World Council of Churches' Statements and Actions on Racism*, 23
62. General Secretary's Report for the National Conference, 1969, 3.
63. A J van der Bent, ed. *World Council of Churches Statements and Actions on Racism*.
64. *Kairos*, vol 2, no. 8, October 1970, 3.
65. *Kairos*, vol 8, no. 7, December 1976, 2.
66. SACC Executive Minutes, 18–19 March 1971, 5.
67. D J Bosch, 'Racism and Revolution. Response of the Churches in South Africa.' *Occasional Bulletin of Overseas Ministries*, January 1979, 13–20.
68. Only one church, the white-majority Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, came near to withdrawing from the WCC when its Executive Commission voted in favour of that step in 1971. Legal opinion showed that because only the General Assembly of the church was empowered to take such a decision, it was *ultra vires*. See Thomas, *Councils in the Ecumenical Movement*, 77.
69. The details in this section are based on Thomas, *Councils in the Ecumenical Movement*, 87–94, and on *Ecunews* Bulletin 25/74, 5 August 1974, 3–5.
70. 'Notule van die Sinode van die NG Sendingkerk te Woester 1974, F – Laat ingekome stukke. Verslag van die waarnemer by die Konferensie van die Suid-Afrikaanse Raad van Kerke gehou te Hammanskraal,' 31 July to 2 August 1974, 311.
71. Thomas, *Councils in the Ecumenical Movement*, 87–94
72. Ibid.
73. P Walshe, *Church Versus State in South Africa: The Case of the Christian Institute* (London and New York), 1983.
74. Thomas *Councils in the Ecumenical Movement*, 97.

A Reflection

While the period after 1975 falls outside the purview of this study, developments within the next quarter of a century call for some reflection. By 1975, the stage had been set for the climactic years of the SACC's history. It moved into the forefront of the struggle against apartheid after the CI had been suppressed in 1977 and Beyers Naude had been silenced by a seven-year banning order. Of course, the place of the CI as an extra-institutional 'think-tank' was taken by the ICT – founded in 1981 – a fact emphasised by its founders who consciously chose its title, states Cochrane, because its abbreviation, ICT, was that of the CI reversed.¹ Under the leadership of Fr Albert Nolan who 'saw the concern of the Institute for Contextual Theology moving beyond the academic circle of theology by offering an alternative, "a peoples' theology" ',² the members of the ICT redoubled the grass-roots mobilising and gadfly roles of the CI. Like the CI, the organisation established very close links with the SACC. The famed Kairos Document – drawn up under the auspices of the ICT – was, in fact, launched by the then SACC general-secretary, Beyers Naude, while he was in Europe. Spong says in his official history of the SACC, *Come Celebrate*, many thought the Kairos Document had been produced by the SACC. Just how close the ICT

and SACC were was illustrated by the way Frank Chikane, the first full-time director of the ICT, moved into the general secretariat of the SACC in 1987.

However, the SACC cannot be thought of simply in terms of its leadership. While Chikane and his predecessor general-secretaries, Desmond Tutu and Beyers Naude (appointed to the post after his banning order had expired), were towering figures, the positions the organisation took were based on decisions of its national conferences composed of delegates from its constituent churches and organisations. As has been shown in Chapter Five, the ‘coming of age’ of the former mission churches meant that those national conferences were increasingly black-dominated. Here, besides black consciousness and black theology, a new factor began to make itself felt from the mid-1970s. In Cuthbertson’s words:

The social experience of Blacks led to the adoption of a more radical approach . . . and in the Christian context, to a radicalisation of Christian theology. Liberation theology took a harder line, showing itself to be increasingly susceptible to Latin American theology which was influenced by the Marxian critique of religion.³

This was reflected, among other things, in the endorsement by SACC national conferences of radical statements such as the Harare Declaration, the Kairos Document of 1985 and the Lusaka Declaration of 1987. Either overtly, or by implication, each of these gave support to the use of violence to overthrow the apartheid regime. It was stated in the Kairos Document that ‘there is a long and consistent tradition about the use of physical force to defend oneself against aggressors and tyrants. In other words, there are circumstances when physical force may be used.’⁴ The authors of the document strongly rejected the concept of reconciliation (strongly supported by neo-liberals), declaring: ‘Nowhere in the Bible or in Christian tradition has it ever been sug-

gested that we ought to try to reconcile good and evil. God and the devil. We are supposed to do away with evil, injustice, oppression and sin – not to come to terms with it.’⁵ This position, they implied, was that adopted particularly by the ‘English-speaking’ churches, whose ‘church theology’ they attacked along with the ‘state theology’ of the apartheid government. This attack was taken up by Denis van der Water, general-secretary of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa in writing about the ‘Prophetic Theology and the Challenge of the Kairos’ in 2001.⁶ Van der Water betrays a historical superficiality in his failure to mention that while the ‘English-speaking churches’ evinced strong reservations about the Kairos Document, it was endorsed by the SACC national conference. None the less, that he implicitly differentiated between these churches and the wider Ecumenical Bloc illustrates the way in which its black majority had moved the SACC in much more radical directions than the ‘English-speaking’ churches were willing to countenance at that point. The effect of the black majority on the SACC is also evident in Spong’s report of the debate in the 1987 SACC National Conference on the Lusaka Declaration. The debate, he wrote, was ‘an emotional matter, where most blacks, but not all, and most whites, but not all, stood on different sides of the issue.’⁷ Balia asserts that the debate was a direct confrontation between black and white ‘factions’ and if that is something of an exaggeration,⁸ according to Tingle, there was a ‘large majority’ in favour of the statement,⁹ something which could only have been reflective of the overall black majority.

That majority helped push the traditional anti-apartheid position of the Ecumenical Bloc into a significantly different new direction, best described in terms of Cochrane’s typology as moving from a ‘challenge to the legality’ of apartheid to a much more far-reaching ‘delegitimising’ of the apartheid government.¹⁰ This development was clear in the Kairos Document¹¹ and was even more strongly evident in the findings of the Harare conference at which,

writes Borer, 'three types of legitimacy were listed: legitimacy under international law, moral legitimacy and theological legitimacy. The conference concluded that the government was illegitimate on all three accounts.'¹² The virtual sanctioning of violence to overthrow apartheid was a natural corollary to this conclusion and on this score, the SACC had gone a long way beyond the positions it had adopted under either the old liberals or the neo-liberals. No doubt the members of the pre-World War I GMC would have been appalled by this unintended consequence of their efforts to 'convert the heathen'.

However, the violence dimension should not be allowed to overshadow the significance of the delegitimation notion. In this, the SACC was moving 'beyond democracy' in the same way as the Allies in World War II who, irrespective of what the majority of Germans thought or wanted, had destroyed the Nazi government, not only in Berlin under Hitler, but also its successor under Dönitz in Flensburg because they regarded its existence as morally intolerable. While up to 1985 both the white- and the black-dominated SACC had often pronounced anathema on apartheid, this was not extended to the Nationalist governments, since they had been 'legitimately' elected, albeit by only the white population. Now, regardless of their overwhelming electoral support among whites, the moral anathema had been extended to the governments themselves, which constituted a sanctioning of attempts to destroy them by physical force if necessary.

On the surface, this seemed unlikely to have much effect on those governments which almost automatically rejected and condemned anything the SACC said or did. However, in contrast to the situation in 1948, when the most devastating tactic of the Nationalist government was simply to ignore the old Christian Council, this was no longer possible. The profile of the SACC was too high both in South Africa and in the international sphere. Thus the organisation came under increasingly fierce verbal, intellectual and,

finally, physical assault. This took the form of the government-sponsored Eloff Commission of Inquiry into the SACC in the 1980s, and culminated in the destruction of the SACC headquarters in 1989 by a bomb planted on the orders of the State President, P W Botha. In the same year there was the attempted assassination of Chikane. The resort to violence by the apartheid government and the sanctioning of violence by its opponents in the SACC, seemed to belie the prediction made by the Rev Dawid Botha that the black majority in the SACC would bring about a *rapprochement* between the SACC and the NGK; the gap between them seemed to have widened, if anything, in the years following the conscientious objection resolution of 1974.

However, while this might have been true of the white NGK, it was not so of the black Dutch Reformed Churches. In a development reminiscent of that in both the international missionary/ecumenical movement and in the Ecumenical Bloc in South Africa, it was these indigenous churches that mounted perhaps the most damaging assault on apartheid. That it emanated from within the Dutch Reformed Bloc meant that the white NGK was unable to withstand the shock, and its close ties with the government meant that that would have been speedily telegraphed through to those in the seats of political power. As related in Chapter Six, the black Dutch Reformed assault on apartheid had become visible from the early 1970s, particularly in the increasingly bold stands of the African NGKA, which culminated with its decision to move into full membership with the SACC in 1975. The so-called coloured NGSK entered the membership of the SACC in the previous year and from there on it took the lead in the anti-apartheid campaign within the Dutch Reformed Bloc. In 1978, the synod of this church declared apartheid to be a sin, also asserting that its 'moral and theological justification was a mockery of the gospel and its consistent disobedience to the Word of God was a theological heresy.'¹³ This was repeated at the 1982 synod of the NGSK, where the Belhar Confession elevated condemnation of apartheid into a *status confessionis* or an article of faith.

The black churches were also attacking the NGK through bodies outside South Africa, particularly the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). Their lobbying had earlier, in 1982, led to the white NGK being suspended from membership of this body, one of its last international ecumenical links.¹⁴ 'The General Synod in October 1982, was shaken by the WARC decision,' report the authors of a publication put out by the NGK itself entitled *The Story of the Dutch Reformed Church's Journey with Apartheid*.¹⁵ The initial reaction of most was that the Church should turn its back on the WARC just as it had on the WCC after Cottesloe. But, 'although the majority of synod delegates requested that the Church withdraw completely from the WARC, the two-thirds majority required for such a decision could not be obtained,' report the authors of *The Story*.¹⁶ Still, pragmatists within the church, such as its moderator, Johan Heyns, could see that because of its support of apartheid, their church was now in great danger of total isolation. Its withdrawal from the WARC would infuriate the black churches and possibly prompt the expulsion of the NGK from even its own 'family'. It must have been clear that the only way to avoid being rejected by that family was for the NGK to do the unthinkable and itself reject apartheid.

Thus at its next General Synod held in 1986, a policy document entitled *Church and Society* was adopted in which, among other things, it was stated:

The Dutch Reformed Church is convinced that the application of apartheid as a political and social system by which human dignity is adversely affected, and whereby one particular group is detrimentally suppressed by another, cannot be accepted on Christian ethical grounds because it contravenes the very essence of neighbourly love and righteousness and inevitably the human dignity of all involved.

Following the reflection that has taken place through the years in church periodicals, conferences, committees and synods concerning the policy which has become known as apartheid, the convic-

tion has gradually grown that a forced separation and division of peoples cannot be considered a Biblical imperative. The attempt to justify such an injunction as derived from the Bible must be recognised as an error and be rejected.¹⁷

The same document also officially withdrew the church's support for the Immorality Act, which not only prohibited racially mixed marriages, but also made inter-racial sexual intercourse a criminal offence, punishable by imprisonment. What aroused most fury among the conservative white sector of the church were synodical resolutions which declared 'the membership of the Dutch Reformed Church open [to all races]' and that 'services of worship and other meetings are open to all visitors who desire to listen to the word of God'. This led to the formation of a breakaway denomination, the Afrikaans Protestant Church, which demanded that 'membership of the Dutch Reformed Church be reserved for white Afrikaners'.¹⁸

That the black Dutch Reformed churches had played such a major role in forcing the NGK to abandon apartheid, constituted a grand-scale unintended consequence of its missionary work and missionary theology. It was so amazing that opponents of apartheid found it difficult to believe. More radical elements dismissed the *Church and Society* statements as mere window dressing designed to improve the image of the NGK in ecumenical bodies, particularly the WARC.¹⁹ While it might have seemed to be too good to be true in the crisis situation of South Africa at the time, in hindsight it is clearer that this was a crossing of an ideological Rubicon with major implications for the apartheid regime as much as for the church. If, as Kinghorn argues, it was the NGK which provided the Nationalist government with the theological and therefore the moral underpinnings for apartheid or 'separate development' in the first place, these had now been swept away by the same church.

Also in hindsight, it is clear that apartheid was both economically and militarily untenable, and therefore its fall was no great surprise. What was surprising was how quickly the end came. In later years, the noted commentator Herman Gilliomee remarked that while there were few areas of the world which had been more written about and analysed than South Africa, practically no one had predicted that things would turn out the way they did and that the transition would be largely peaceful.²⁰ A number of factors contributed to that outcome, although none of them were very obvious at the time because attention was focused on the seeming inevitability of a violent denouement. While on the surface the Nationalist government appeared to be as committed as ever to apartheid and was prepared to defend it with maximum force, in fact, it was retreating from hardline positions. One visible pointer to that was the steady dismantling of racial segregation while in an amazing 'backstage' development, it secretly began to negotiate with Mandela while he was still in prison.²¹ I would, however, argue that one of the most telling blows to apartheid and the Nationalist government was delivered in 1985 and 1986 when both the Ecumenical and Dutch Reformed Blocs stripped it of its last vestiges of moral credibility. That even the NGK had joined the swelling ranks of those calling for an end to apartheid must have made many in government realise that the game was up, and that, in turn, was also surely an important factor in helping persuade most whites to surrender their grip on power in a comparatively peaceful fashion.

That the two church blocs were now agreed on a rejection of apartheid did not mean that the divisions between them were automatically healed. As already noted there were still deep suspicions about the motivation of the NGK and the road to reconciliation was to prove a long one; its end still not having been reached as late as the turn of the twentieth century. However, important initial steps on that road were taken at the Rustenburg Conference of Churches of November 1990, which, at the suggestion of

the then president, F W de Klerk, brought together representatives of 80 different denominations. It was arranged by a committee of church leaders headed by Frank Chikane, general-secretary of the SACC, and Dr Louw Alberts of the NGK. 'In some respects it was comparable to the Cottesloe conference,' according to the NGK publication cited earlier and among the notable happenings was a speech by Dr W D Jonker of the church's theological seminary at Stellenbosch, in which he said:

I confess before you and before God not just my own sin and guilt, and my personal responsibility for the political, social, economic and structural injustices under which our entire country are still suffering, but I also venture to do so vicariously on behalf of the Dutch Reformed Church, of which I am a member, and for the Afrikaners. I am at liberty to do so because at its last General Synod the Dutch Reformed Church declared apartheid a sin and acknowledged guilt for its own omission, in that it did not long ago warn against and distance the church from it.²²

In response, Desmond Tutu, who by then had become primate of the CPSA as Archbishop of Cape Town, said that he accepted Jonker's confession of guilt and had no doubts about its sincerity. The next day the leader of the NGK delegation, Prof P C Potgieter, told the conference that his delegation fully associated itself with Jonker's statement. Again Tutu responded by saying that although he had been subjected to a great deal of criticism for accepting Jonker's words since the guilt of the NGK could not be forgiven so easily 'he had no doubts: if guilt was confessed, the Lord would forgive – and Christians should forgive each other similarly. Up to seventy times seven, said the Lord Jesus.'²³ Perhaps the most spectacular demonstration of the new situation of the NGK came at its quadrennial NGK synod in November 1994, which was addressed by the new president of the 'new South Africa', Nelson Mandela, who was emotionally received by delegates. Beyers Naude also received a 'heartly welcome' when he visited the gathering, which became known as the *Synod of Reconciliation*. So,

at last, it seemed that the Christ divided between the Ecumenical and Dutch Reformed Blocs was being conveyed to the sepulchre. However, that Christ proved almost as difficult to bury as Jesus himself.

Post-apartheid débâcles

The end of apartheid was not the beginning of a brave new world for either the Dutch Reformed or the Ecumenical Bloc. The NGK continued to be excluded from ecumenical bodies such as the WARC on grounds, argued by the black Dutch Reformed churches among others, that its rejection of apartheid was cosmetic rather than real. Its attempts to join the SACC were rebuffed for the same reasons and by the end of the century it found itself weakened and still isolated from the world church community. While the sins of the fathers in formulating and supporting apartheid are still being heavily visited on the present-day 'children' of the NG, the story of the black churches has also been an unhappy one. Their attempt to form the Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa in 1994 was only partially successful. A sizeable rump of the African NGKA stayed out of the union and the closing years of the century were characterised by long drawn-out court battles between this group and the new Uniting Church over ownership of property.

The lot of the SACC has not been much better. It rapidly receded from public and church consciousness once the battle against apartheid had been won and the new ANC government installed. While it had played a significant role in resisting and undermining apartheid, it was given no special place in the negotiations that brought apartheid to an end. All attention became focused on the political parties moving into the seats of power. After that had been accomplished in 1994, the SACC in common with peak church bodies in other countries, became just one more 'do-gooding' organisation among many non-governmental agencies. Apart from the purely political sphere, it also lost ground in the

ecclesiastical. The urgency about ecumenism of the mid-years of the twentieth century and which, according to the SACC constitution was its prime reason for existence, began to evaporate. This was due to some extent to pragmatic experience which indicated that structural church unity was an unrealisable ideal. Overseas church unions in Britain and Australia, for instance, failed to produce the galvanising effects on church life hoped for, and did little to halt the decline in church membership. In South Africa, attempts to unite the two churches which seemed to be the obvious candidates for such a move, the Presbyterian Church and the Congregational Union of Southern Africa, collapsed in 1986. Moreover, little had come of the long drawn-out negotiations of the Church Unity Commission established with such high hopes in the 1960s, nor was there much encouragement to be gained from the experience of the Uniting Reformed Church. This may have been due to a growing perception that the quest for church unity was a 'modernist' project which, in seeking the creation if not of a meta-system of Christian truth, then at least of a meta-Christian church, was out of joint with the times. In the anti-authoritarian and individualistic social climate of the late twentieth century, people were inclined to view the blooming of a thousand doctrinal and religious flowers with post-modern equanimity. That made both church division and church unity seem, if not irrelevant, then no longer a major priority.

The decline of the ecumenical ideal was only a partial explanation for the decline of the SACC; just as important was the fact that the defeat of the apartheid had seemingly deprived it of one of its major *raison d'être*. This is certainly one interpretation of the fact the overseas agencies which had thought it urgent to support the SACC financially while the anti-apartheid struggle was being fought and won, afterwards diverted their support to other areas of the world where needs seemed to be more pressing. That, of course, meant the SACC suffered great financial contraction and, as local churches have never had the wherewithal to make much

of a financial contribution, its activities also shrank. Thus during the later 1990s, the position of the SACC was in many ways reminiscent of that of the Christian Council during the 1950s.

An unfinished ecumenical quest

That their exclusion from the national political process seemed to condemn both these organisations to weakness and obscurity might give weight to the argument, that they were always more concerned with politics than with religion. However, there can be no doubt that both the CCSA and the SACC were correct in seeing the political issues surrounding race as being fundamentally 'religious' in that they represented the struggle to answer the question asked of Jesus: 'Who is my neighbour?' Another way of posing the 'neighbour' question is that stated earlier in this study: 'What is the best, the most Christian way, of dealing with racial and cultural difference?' While at the end of the twentieth century, it was generally and emphatically agreed that the forcible separation of races as envisaged by apartheid was not the answer, it was also clear that the integrationist answer given by Ecumenical Bloc churches, or the CCSA and SACC, was not adequate either. As has been demonstrated in this study, under the banner of non-racialism, the integrationist position produced a situation of white domination which was not very different to that which segregationists consciously maintained and defended. As has been argued, what brought an end to the white monopoly on power in the Ecumenical Bloc, were those churches originally set up in terms of the three-self formula, which was the antithesis of integrationism.

The integrationist philosophy also produced the idea of assimilationism. This was, in fact, widespread among people of white, European descent throughout the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While sheer racial arithmetic made its large-scale application unfeasible in South Africa, this was not true of other newly colonised parts of the world, particularly the United States of America, Canada and Australia. Here whites

quickly became a numerical majority and practised policies of forcible assimilation of indigenous peoples well into the twentieth century. In all three countries, one aspect of this policy consisted in removing indigenous children or those of mixed indigenous/white antecedents from their parents and placing them either in institutions or in the homes of white foster parents. Here, it was thought, they would grow up with little knowledge or memory of their peoples' culture, and so be assimilated easily into white society. That churches colluded closely with governments in the execution of this policy, providing many of the institutions in which uprooted children were placed, indicates the extent to which they too, subscribed to assimilationism. The policy not only failed but had disastrous consequences for both individuals and communities. What has been termed in Australia as *The Stolen Generation* constitutes a blot on the history of both the country and its churches, this form of assimilationism being widely interpreted as an attempt at cultural genocide.

While the accession of the ANC to power in 1994 finally abolished apartheid and installed doctrines of non-racialism in South Africa, racism and racial tensions still haunt the country.²³ Not that the mere existence of racism is proof of moral failure or corruption; racism is a world-wide phenomenon and in the last quarter of the twentieth century produced much worse outcomes in places such as the former Yugoslavia, Sri Lanka, Rwanda, Israel and Fiji than ever it has in South Africa. Racism also continues to be rife in countries with vaunted democratic institutions, such as the United States of America and Britain and, speaking from first-hand experience, it is also alive and well in the country in which I have lived for many years, Australia. Much more important than racism itself is what should be done both to contain and, if possible, to eradicate it. Official policies of non-racialism are necessary but not enough; mind-sets and discourse need to be changed from the ground up, and in this regard there are still great worlds both for churches of South Africa and bodies such as the SACC

to conquer. That the need for this is recognised in the wider community, is indicated by the fact that the first time the SACC was able to attract significant public attention for a number of years, was when it held a conference on Churches and Racism in November, 2000.

However, in the quest to find a methodology for dealing with racism, heed should be given to history. What the history presented in this study shows is that for over a century Christ was divided in South Africa between apartheid Christians who absolutised human diversity and the liberal Christians who absolutised ‘the unity of humankind’. There are many lessons to be learnt from the failure of both prescriptions. Against that background, it may be argued that working out how the tension between diversity and unity can be peacefully and fruitfully managed in multi-ethnic communities, could form one of the great ecumenical projects of South Africa’s churches in the twenty-first century.

Notes

1. James R Cochrane, ‘Questioning Contextual Theology.’ In *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology. Essays in Honour of Albert Nolan*, ed. M T Speckman and L T Kaufmann (Pietermaritzburg, 2001), 67.
2. Kaufmann, *ibid.*, 25.
3. G Cuthbertson, ‘Christians and Structural Violence in South Africa in the 1970s.’ In *Views on Violence. Proceedings of the Ninth Symposium of the Institute for Theological Research (University of South Africa), (Unisa), held at Unisa in Pretoria on 4 and 5 September 1985* (Pretoria, 1985), 43–65.
4. World Council of Churches. *Challenge to the Church. A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa. The Kairos Document and Commentaries* (Geneva, 1985), 20.
5. *Ibid.*, 18.
6. In M T Speckman and L T Kaufmann, *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology*, 33–64.

7. B Spong, *'Come Celebrate! Twenty-five Years of Work and Witness of the South African Council of Churches* (Johannesburg, 1993), 89.
8. D M Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid: Ecumenism in South Africa, 1960–1987* (Johannesburg, 1989), 138.
9. R Tingle, *Revolution or Reconciliation? The Struggle in the Church in South Africa* (London, 1992).
10. C Cochrane, 'Christian Resistance to Apartheid: Periodisation Prognosis.' In *Christianity in South Africa*, ed. M Prozesky (Cape Town, 1990), 81–100.
11. That document declared 'a tyrannical regime has no *moral legitimacy* [original emphases] . . . if it is a tyrannical regime it is, from a moral and theological point of view *illegitimate*', 25.
12. T Borer, *Challenging the State: Churches as Political Actors in South Africa, 1980–1990*. A dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1995), 11.
13. *Ibid.*, 16–17.
14. Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, 129.
15. General Synodal Commission of the Dutch Reformed Church. *The Story of the Dutch Reformed Church's Journey with Apartheid 1960–1994. A testimony and a Confession*. (English extract from the Afrikaans document) (Pretoria, 1997).
16. *Ibid.*, 18.
17. *Ibid.*, 19.
18. *Ibid.*, 20.
19. Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, 133.
20. H Giliomee, *The Bold Experiment: South Africa's New Democracy* (Johannesburg, 1994).
21. See A Sparks, *Tomorrow is Another Country. The Inside Story of South Africa's Negotiated Revolution* (Sandton, 1994).

22. General Synodal Commission, *The Story of the Dutch Reformed Church's Journey with Apartheid*, 24.
23. As attested, for example, in the thoughtful article by Max du Preez, 'Racial Genie pops out of bottle.' *The Star*, 10 October 2000, 12.

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