

POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES: AN EXPLORATION OF CHANGING IDENTITIES AMONGST
RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN THE NORTHERN AREAS OF PORT ELIZABETH.

by

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DECLARATION

I, *Andre Abrahams 209013057*, hereby declare that the *treatise/ dissertation/ thesis* for *Students qualification to be awarded* is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment or completion of any postgraduate qualification to another University or for another qualification.

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Date: 10 January 2014

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ABSTRACT

The political transition from the oppressive apartheid system to post-apartheid South Africa has brought considerable change to the political climate. As a result of this transition, political and religious identities were also affected. This study explores the changing identities amongst religious leaders particularly in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth. The research has also explored how the advent of democracy has affected the political perspectives of these religious leaders who were ministering during apartheid.

A qualitative research approach was used to frame the study, which employed an exploratory research design so as to understand the current political identities of these religious leaders. The sample of the study was purposively selected using the snowball sampling technique. As a means of collecting data in-depth interviews were conducted.

The themes emanating from the study were recognised as being:

- Church leaders reflecting on the political climate apparent in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth
- Church leaders reflect reasons for limited political action from certain segments of the community sighting fear and poverty as central tenets.
- Church leaders reveal close link between the church and politics during the apartheid period
- The activities of the church in opposing the apartheid structure
- Participants reflect on the role of Church leaders specifically during this period.
- Church leaders articulate their disappointment in the political environment since 1994.
- Church leaders reflect how race has affected the political climate since 1994
- The changing role of the church since 1994
- The growing silence on current political issues since 1994

Based on the identified themes conclusions could be drawn on the current political and religious identities of religious leaders compared to those adopted during the apartheid period. The outcome showed that religious leaders within the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth are disappointed in the current political government but despite this have remained silent on political issues unlike the visible activism and vocal upheaval waged against the apartheid system.

Key words: Apartheid, religious leaders, political activism, democracy, political perspective.

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction and Background:

Religious institutions – and particularly those in the former Coloured and Black segregated areas – were instrumental in creating an environment of political resistance, and in providing information, and eventually political leadership, to those affected communities. The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) was instrumental in the ideological success and acceptance of the system of apartheid – combining Calvinist principles with the ambitions of the White Afrikaner population (Ritner 1967: 17). During the 1970s, the major concern of the Church, and indeed the whole Afrikaner community, was the plight of the large number of unskilled Afrikaner rural migrants.

This state of affairs added fuel to the already powerful drive towards radical nationalism. The struggle for socio-economic survival against the numerically predominant Africans would be determined by the choice between two stark alternatives: either integration, leading first to cultural, and eventually to biological assimilation, or else total separation of racial groups at every point of contact, in order to ensure absolute Afrikaner supremacy and racial purity. Being strongly committed to the preservation of Afrikanerdom, and deeply disturbed by what it took to be the social effects of white poverty, the DRC was instrumental in furthering this viewpoint (Ritner 1967: 17).

The religious character gave credence to the ideology of separation, self-determination and discrimination. However, support for apartheid within the DRC structure was not unanimous – especially amongst the Coloured population – and this gave rise to anti-apartheid activists and clerics, such as Alan Boesak. Although the Dutch Reformed Church gave its blessing to the system, many churches were disrupted; and activities, such as providing space for anti-apartheid rallies and the promotion of civil disobedience, were

banned. And many church leaders, like Ela Ghandi, Nkosinathi Fihla, and the Reverend Frank Chikane, were persecuted. As a result of this, many churches, temples and synagogues became the platform of some of apartheid's greatest opposition (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission: 1998).

It is clear that Christianity is a significant part of both colonial and histories. South Africa has been a deeply religious country, religious in African customary laws, in Christianity, and the significant minority of other religious traditions, particularly Islam, Hinduism and Judaism. The apartheid regime politicized Christianity in a number of ways, through the National Party's close association with the Dutch Reformed Church, through Apartheid's political ideology of race, and through Christian national education. The opposition to apartheid also drew heavily on Christianity (Chipkin 2009:2).

Religion, and more specifically Christianity, has been an important tenet of both the colonial and the apartheid histories. Despite high levels of modernity and commerce, religion continued to influence both personal faith and political life. The apartheid system itself politicised religion – and in its particular interpretation and together– with its association with the Dutch Reformed Church, which claimed that it was God's Will, and that the Bible supported it.

In the same breath, opposition to apartheid also had a strong religious platform (Storey 1998:187). During the 1980s, the opposition to apartheid became increasingly widespread (Storey 1998:187). The political leadership of the struggle was decimated with Nelson Mandela of the ANC and Robert Sobukwe of the PAC both in prison and much thus depended on the Church acting in opposition. Churches were as a result, the site of meetings and protests; and many of these were invaded and smashed by security forces (Storey 1998:192).

Religious leaders of various denominations, like the Baptists, the Pentecostals, Charismatic and black Zionist Christian Churches rose to prominence, as part of the anti-apartheid movement. Their activism was done both secretly and publically, using their position to reflect their objection to racism and segregation. Many religious leaders shared the common belief that the apartheid system was morally indefensible and a sin (Meiring 2005). Beyers Naude was one such leader, who was deeply involved in the arrangement of the

Cottesloe consultation, where representatives of the World Council of Churches, as well as from the member churches in South Africa, had a meeting to discuss the problems of human relationships in South Africa. He then realised that the Anglican Church had been studying the race issues in the country, and that they had come to different conclusions to those of the Afrikaans community (Ryan 2005). Beyers Naude worked with the Christian Institute to promote inter-racial contact among Christians. The DRC emerged as the biggest opponent of the Christian Institute. Ryan (2005) describes how Naude was once a prominent member of the DRC; but he decided to move away from the ranks of the Church, thereby creating many enemies within the DRC and the Broederbond. The likes of Naude, Willem Saayman and Prof. Ben Marais comprised part of the opposition voices; but they were in the minority within the sea of apartheid supporters (Ryan 2005).

The Reverend Frank Chikane emerged as one of the opposing voices, as General Secretary of the SACC, and a church leader involved in the 1980s anti-apartheid struggle. He was detained under the Terrorism Act for one month, and was regularly detained and beaten. He also played a key role in drafting the Kairo Document, which was a Christian indictment of apartheid. Desmond Tutu, like the Reverend Chikane, was often the victim of vile rumours, death threats and bomb scares; yet he continued to raise money for the projects of the South African Council of Churches (SACC); and he became a central international figure in the fight against apartheid.

Desmond Tutu was the first black head of the Anglican Church in South Africa; and he campaigned actively against apartheid (De Gruchy and De Gruchy 2004). Despite the efforts of the above prominent religious leaders, and others like Peter Storey, who ministered at Robben Island to many political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela and Robert Sobukwe, and who led his congregation in one of the first protests against apartheid church leaders, many such leaders were to be found on either side of the apartheid struggle.

The Dutch Reformed Church provided the theological justification for apartheid, claiming it was God's Will and that the Bible supported it. With many of the political leaders, like Hendrik Verwoerd forming part of the DRC clergy, it was the Church that insisted on progressively sterner definitions of "separateness" (Ritner 1967: 20). Members of the DRC

dominated every aspect of life from parliament to the police and the military. The Reverend J.D. Strijdom, a prominent minister of the DRC, explained how the DRC encouraged the tradition and 'natural' tendencies of keeping Whites and Blacks apart, in order to avoid friction. He justified the system by saying: "[It was] only carrying out the policy of apartheid in the light of God's word and with God's blessing would provide deliverance from the darkness of colour mixing and bastardization" (Ritner 1967: 23). This was further emphasised in a sermon by the Reverend Du Plessis, who stated that the native population would be kept for an unlimited period in a position of subordination. The DRC, through its teachings, gave apartheid an ethical and moral content; and as such, it was used to counter the moral challenge of the more liberal critics.

The research seeks to discover whether the end of apartheid has brought about changes in the motivation and political perceptions for many religious leaders and religious activists – away from fighting apartheid to the position of an equal society, as promulgated by the democratic all-inclusive elections in 1994. However, while the segregation, discrimination and racist legislation of apartheid has been removed, many religious leaders are confronted with new complexities that are the direct result of apartheid, but also due to the deliberate failure/actions of the present government.

This has resulted in disillusionment from religious leaders, such as Alan Boesak, himself an anti-apartheid activist and executive member of the South African Council of Churches, who has now accused the African National Congress of resurrecting racial antagonism, classifications and divisions (De Gruchy and De Gruchy 2004). This has left many religious leaders unhappy with the current political, social and economic structure, and the impact it has had on their communities; since many of these are still defined along racial lines (De Gruchy and De Gruchy 2004).

The Church struggle, according to Mahokoto (2007), is still continuing today. Throughout the church's history, people have been struggling for freedom. Although apartheid, as a structural system is something of the past, the transition to democracy has not been smooth or complete. During the rule of the apartheid government, the works of religious figures, like Desmond Tutu and Beyers Naude, challenged the religious community to speak

out with a firm voice against the crimes and atrocities committed against the people of South Africa.

The voice of the church was heard through the marches and boycotts supported by the SACC and the Christian Institute (Pieterse 1996). After the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Church was expected to play the central reconciliatory role; but this has not always been the case. The visibility and involvement of the church in political and socio-economic issues has considerably diminished since independence in 1994. The church acted as a change agent during apartheid: both for and against the oppressive system. Although democracy has been achieved, there is what seems to be a never-ending cycle of poverty, unemployment and crime – resulting in an increasingly violent society.

The church is arguably the best-placed institution to regenerate the moral values of a society ravished by violence – whether, it be through prophetic preaching, or other action that imitates the activism seen during the apartheid era (Pieterse 1996).

Pieterse (2001:106) reflects that in order to preach prophetically one needs to experience the context in which one preaches; thus the political perceptions of religious leaders are important for the prophetic message given to their respective congregations. Desmond Tutu was of the opinion that: “The church must align itself with the powerless, [the] marginalised and the voiceless. It must strive to become the voice of the voiceless, to ensure that the cries of the poor are heard. It has the enormous responsibility of telling the truth, of identifying evil wherever it may be found, and of insisting that the government, any government, must be honest” (Pieterse 2001:107).

These words are still relevant in today’s society; and thus, the study undertakes to explore whether the political perceptions that motivated religious leaders to be active during apartheid have changed since the realisation of democracy.

1.2 Problem Statement:

The struggle from apartheid to post-apartheid has been a lengthy undertaking. Many of the people who participated in the struggle have died, emigrated or withdrawn from participation in the political environment. For many, including those in the theological sphere, the post-apartheid socio-political environment has not delivered on their

expectations. For many, the argument remains that the struggle continues, since the concerns of the past have not been entirely addressed; but instead, many have deviated from the ideological expectations of these clerics.

1.3 The Research Aim:

- To assert that the roles of church leaders have changed since the era of legislated apartheid, and now the democratic post-apartheid environment.

1.4 Objectives:

- To investigate how religious leaders view the current political landscape;
- To compare their political involvement at present (post-apartheid) to that during apartheid;
- To uncover whether their expectations of a democratic South Africa have been reached;
- To determine whether religious leaders now occupy a greater role that transcends faith beyond the apartheid era.

1.5 The Research Methodology:

This study is an exploratory effort – as it sets out to investigate whether the political perceptions of the religious leaders during the apartheid era have changed since the advent of democracy, and specifically in Gelvandale, Port Elizabeth. Religious leaders all over South Africa exercised their moral authority to denounce the apartheid system; and religious leaders in Gelvandale were no different. The activism of the religious leaders in the area is largely undocumented, despite it being a vibrant anti-apartheid community. Chipkin (2009) argues that religion has remained important in South Africa. This author cites the persistence of religious practices, and the social meaning that is placed on religious observance as the reason for this.

With 17 established churches in the area, it is clear that religion plays an important role in the community; and as in the rest of South Africa, it became a useful tool to mobilise people and rally support against the apartheid regime.

The subjects of this research will be Christian leaders from various denominations, including the Catholic, Baptists, Anglicans, Old Apostolic, and Congregational churches, respectively, within the Gelvandale community, which were active during the apartheid regime. By investigating the accounts of various denominational leaders, a broader understanding of their overall political perceptions can be gained. The research will explore whether their political perceptions have changed since democracy has been achieved; and whether their expectations have been realised post-apartheid.

Many of these religious figures were active during the apartheid period; the research will investigate whether they believe their efforts were in vain. It will also seek to investigate how they perceive the current state of affairs in comparison with that before democracy. A literature review was undertaken which serves as the theoretical and empirical base for the conceptualisation of the study. Creswell (1994) reflects on the importance of the literature review – to help connect the study to the broader ongoing discussion on the subject, filling gaps and referring to other studies.

In this study, the literature review provides relevant information to assist in understanding the significant role played by religion: either in support of, or opposing the apartheid government. It also undertakes to reflect the political perceptions of religious leaders in opposition to the oppressive system, and their current political perceptions in a democratic South Africa. In the case of religious leaders in Gelvandale, Port Elizabeth, very little has been researched and documented. Thus, there is a very limited collection of research literature that exists on this subject matter specific to the area.

A study focusing primarily on the political involvement and the perceptions of religious leaders in the area has not been done, to the best of the researcher's knowledge. The exploratory nature of the study thus has the potential to advance the understanding of the current role played by religious leaders who were once politically active – as well as interpreting whether any significant change has occurred in the transition from apartheid to the current post-apartheid society.

CHAPTER 2

2.1 The Literature Review:

The history of South Africa is the story of the considerable influence of religion. Religion has played a major role in shaping the contours of all areas of South African life (Pobee 1997:75). Even in a multiracial South Africa, religion remains a pervasive and powerful social influence; and therefore, the political perceptions of religious leaders continue to be a powerful tool. Institutional arrangements, such as fair elections, representative legislation, and an independent judiciary, are necessary conditions for transforming society (Pobee 1997:75).

These political institutions are not sufficient by themselves. The success or failure of the democratic enterprise depends on the values, beliefs and habits of the people. Religion and religious values act as the social glue and inform society's understanding of public goods, as well as providing a voice in all moral discourse.

Non-violent resistance proved to be a major factor in the downfall of apartheid. The ability of the anti-apartheid opposition to take advantage of the system's economic dependence on a co-operative Black labour force played a big role in crippling the State; but the growing tradition of non-violent resistance played its role as well (Allison 2000: 186). The opponents of apartheid faced a complex set of regulations, producing a rigid stratified system, which limited the possibility of dissent. This increased the importance of non-violent resistance. The institutionalised nature of the apartheid regime expanded the role played by citizens outside government – including religious figures (Allison 2000:186).

Because religion played such an important role across all cultures, religious figures were often better equipped to reach people at the individual level, and thus could mobilise various forms of resistance. The 'Standing for Truth Campaign' led by the South African Council of Churches (SACC) was one of these formats for resistance; and it showed that the role of the church is to "create peace, but on the road to negotiations, reconciliation and peace, it will be necessary to confront, pressurise and defy" (Borer 1998:77).

These activities were often lead by SACC members, like Desmond Tutu and Alan Boesak.

In a repressed State, like South Africa during apartheid, the church could often assume important political functions, since other civil society organisations, like political parties were prevented from doing so. Jean Francis Boyart's *collaborate-complementary-conflictual* framework asserts that the more repressed the State, the more likely church actors are to confront or conflict with the State (Borer 1998).

After the apartheid regime had imposed a state of emergency in 1988, Boyart's assertion was evident, as the SACC sanctioned and planned acts of civil disobedience across the country. With many anti-apartheid organisations being banned, the SACC and other churches emerged as the only viable organisations able to generate further resistance.

Pobee (1997) reflected on how in the 1990s, Black South Africans formed the majority in all large Christian churches in South Africa, except in the Dutch Reformed Churches. In these churches, many people become involved in efforts to reverse or to ameliorate the effects of apartheid policies. Churches openly adopted anti-apartheid stands on many public issues; and churches within the Gelvandale area were very active at the time. Religious alliances provided a means of co-ordinating church opposition to apartheid, while minimizing the public exposure of church leaders (Koopman 1998).

The South African Council of Churches was the most active anti-apartheid umbrella organisation; and many religious leaders from the Eastern Cape were involved in it. Many English-speaking churches made official statements against apartheid. Some made vigorous efforts to rid themselves of racist influence. The fact that these efforts were needed indicated the degree to which apartheid, as a way of life, had crept into these structures, their worship and practice: whether they were for or against the system (Richardson 1996).

When used in the service of political agendas, religion can succumb to the deceit of human power, and become merely another political player – and be another part of the problem (Koopman 1998). The political perceptions and beliefs of religious leaders are, therefore, important for maintaining stability and consolidating transformation. Eades (1999) likened this to what happened when earlier African political leaders used racial theology to champion apartheid ideology; and for this reason, the current political perspective of religious leaders is still important.

Religion is still a powerful social tool – especially in South Africa – where religion is central to the vast majority of the population. In an area like Gelvandale, where the religious leaders occupy such an important leadership role in the community, the political ideas and opinions of the priests and pastors are still very influential.

Participation in a religious organisation is the prevailing form of association activity across the Eastern Cape and South Africa in general (Waldmeir 1997:14). The social and personal importance of religious membership has meant that the role of religious leaders in influencing the population cannot be overlooked. Religion has employed the new tools of recruitment, as well as various strategies of communication, in order to network organisations; and this can lead to the increased politicization of religion. political liberalisation and democratization processes have created a new pluralistic political environment (Waldmeir 1997:14).

The results of this could be that religious denominations will increasingly create overtly political organisations and pursue a political agenda. In the Gelvandale region, this is no different – thereby reflecting the stature of the religious leader, who is a respected and trusted member of the community.

Throughout the process of modernisation, South Africa has remained deeply religious. This indicates the importance that religious leaders still have today. Formerly used as a form of mobilisation, religious organisations presented a great political platform for change (Zukas 2007). Both apartheid and anti-apartheid activists determined an important place for religion: both in political and public life. Religion has not lost its presence; and the influence that religious leaders have over their congregations cannot be underestimated.

The apartheid regime politicized Christianity in a number of ways – through the National Party's close association with the Dutch Reformed Church (Zukas 2007). Opposition to apartheid also drew heavily on Christianity. The development of the Liberation Theology in the 1970s, gave a platform to the prominence of church and Muslims in leadership positions in 1980s, when they became politically active (Zukas 2007).

Religious communities suffered under apartheid; activists were disrupted; their leaders were persecuted; and as a result, churches and mosques became many of apartheid's

strongest foes (Riedl 2011:29). Many of these leaders are still active church members who have had great expectations of life after the apartheid era. Certain individuals within faith communities rose to prominence in the anti-apartheid movement, as a result of their religious beliefs. These activists worked both publicly and secretly in various resistance organisations – to express their disdain for racism and segregation, and their support for democratic change in South Africa. Religious leaders exercised their moral authority to condemn apartheid, as a crime against humanity, and helped to mobilise support for freedom and democracy (Riedl 2011).

Apartheid viewed the strategies of its enemies as a total onslaught, and countered these with a total strategy, which viewed society as a battlefield; and this included faith communities (Riedl 2011). Members of churches, temples and mosques were removed under the Group Areas Act; and these institutions suffered, as a result. Haynes (1996) has reflected on how these acts against the church affected how religious leaders viewed politics – and till today, may affect how they view today's government.

Media campaigns during apartheid promoted the view that churches opposing the State had abandoned their loyalty to Christ. Religious leaders who did not comply with the State's strict regulations were prohibited from participating in religious programmes (Haynes 1996). Anti-apartheid activists, in turn, defined their churches as sites of struggle. Religious institutions provided the platform for resistance to apartheid; while liberation movements were banned. During apartheid, activists found a comfortable intersection between religion and politics. Their contributions ranged from prayer to martyrdom (Haynes 1996).

After 1994, the emergence of democracy changed the focused role of religion in politics. Despite this, religion still assesses value and asks what is right and wrong; thus it still influences thought and action (Haynes 1996). However, because of the nature of our past, not all religious institutions have embraced transformation. Transitions are painful and dangerous periods for any nation – thereby making the role of religious institutions important – especially in terms of reconciliation.

The mindset of the masses has not been converted automatically – including those of religious leaders, who were active during apartheid.

Chipkin (2009) describes how the 1980s was a period, which saw various community formations escalating their opposition to the Apartheid regime. Religious figures involved in these formations experienced grass-roots solidarity. Religions offer ethical visions that can motivate believers to action. When central government is in disarray, as it was during apartheid, and to some extent as it is today, religious organisations may be the only institutions with some form of popular credibility or trust (Chipkin 2009).

Religious leaders acted as advocates working to empower the disenfranchised, and to restructure relationships and unjust social structures. As other opposition groups were banned or arrested, churches and mosques became the only places where anti-apartheid activists could meet. Churches offered theological condemnations of apartheid, and calls to action; they also hosted conferences, dialogues and retreats (Bompani 2006:1139). Today, these religious leaders are involved in the everyday life of their congregations, and therefore help develop and influence the adoption of policies that affect the lives of people. These leaders play a role in the transformation of the social and psychological conditions and attitudes that produced a racially divided, oppressive and violent society (Bompani 2006:1147).

Politicians that formulated the apartheid policy came from churches; some apartheid laws, for instance, like the Mixed Marriages Act, were motivated by churches like the Dutch Reformed Church; and some actively implemented apartheid policies. Anti-apartheid activism was not unanimous amongst the churches. Some churches contested that they suppressed, censured and condemned dissidents. Anti-apartheid activism was not unanimous amongst all churches. Some churches contested that they suppressed, censured and condemned dissidents. The Reverend Frank Chikane, as a case in point, was tortured under the supervision of a white elder of his own denomination (Meiring 2005:159).

Despite churches claiming loyalties that transcended the State they allowed themselves to be structured along racial lines, which reinforced the separate symbolic universe, in which South Africans lived. Even churches that adhered to the principle of non-racism in their structures were not without guilt in their everyday structures. The Roman Catholic Church reflected that there was effectively a black and a white church. These divisions internalised

racism even within churches; and moving into democracy hampered the reconciliatory role that the church needs to play today (Meiring 2005:161).

The leadership of the Zion Christian Church instilled pride in their congregations and continued to act against apartheid. Other churches, like the Church of England, used petitions to government as their preferred way of expressing their opposition to apartheid. The Catholic Church mobilized its own structures and opened parish halls to popular organisations to allow political meetings (Meiring 2006:166).

Out of churches came some of apartheid's strongest foes. Churches, mosques and temples gave their theological legitimisation to resistance to apartheid. Theology was an important site of struggle because of its position in legitimising apartheid. It was, therefore, necessary to turn the theological weapons of the oppressor against the oppressor (Martin 1999).

Churches, synagogues, mosques and temples also suffered under apartheid; their land was appropriated by being declared "white" under the Group Areas Act – along with this, their schools were also frequently closed (Martin 1999).

Churches claim an enormous committed constituency – with their lines cutting across many of the racial, class and ethnic barriers that a post-apartheid South Africa needed to transcend. These religious institutions represented a place where real reconciliation needed to take place, and where the values and processes of democratic citizenry needed to be entrenched. People on both sides of the apartheid struggle were often members of the same faith community: both nationally and locally (Martin 1999).

Church leaders, like Desmond Tutu, Beyers Naude and Allan Boesak have been well documented; but they comprise the few of many religious leaders that became the voice of the masses. These religious leaders became the prophetic voice to large communities, who had lost hope. The messages that they sent out were not only about the difficulties that the communities were experiencing, but what they themselves were living, as well (Mahokoto 2007).

The burdens of past habits are likely to continue for a long time to come. There are reactionary forces within religious groups that could constitute a counter-revolutionary force in a new South Africa. Because of this, the perception and political involvement of

religious leaders is still important. The memory of past sufferings and hopes for liberation within the religious traditions cannot be underestimated. Religion is intertwined with the history of subjugation and resistance in South Africa. Today, it has an equally ambiguous status (Bompani 2006: 1149).

After apartheid, nation-building became the central theme in South Africa. There was a need to restore a real sense of community. Religious leaders play an important role in terms of reconstruction, reconciliation and the integration of groups into one social system (Kurtz 2010). The political perceptions of religious leaders are, therefore, important in performing this function. The evils of apartheid have continued to exist long after the oppressive system has been dismantled. The transition of religious leaders from being anti-apartheid and revolutionary to being all-inclusive and forgiving is an important one – if racism is to be eradicated from the minds and hearts of the South African people (Kurtz 2010).

In recent times, religious leaders have voiced their opinion against the current government. There has been a growing concern among religious leaders that South Africa has lost its moral compass: touching on issues, like the need to move from a corrupt political, business and societal culture, to one that is accountable to the people (Kurtz 2010). In a society that is still highly religious, these remarks from religious leaders have far-reaching effects. In 2012, inter-faith groups of religious leaders embarked on a national campaign to fight bribery, patronage and nepotism (Struwig 2012). Corruption now is not only seen as a material challenge, but also as a spiritual and moral concern. From this perspective, it is clear that the experience of religious leaders in the new South Africa has not always been a positive one. The fact that Jacob Zuma in 2011 associated Christianity with orphans and Old-Age homes has not helped either in ensuring that religious leaders play a positive role in transforming society (Struwig 2012).

A series of interviews by The Witness in August 2002 with the religious leaders in South Africa revealed an increasing sense of disenchantment with the country's political leadership (Curry 2004). Religious and community leaders were, at the time, the first to caution the citizens not to expect change to occur quickly. These religious leaders had been legally, socially and psychologically entrenched for 46 years; and thus their perception of politics and race relations would take time to change after 1994 (Curry 2004). The political

awareness of religious leaders has, however, not faded. Religious leaders are increasingly willing to express their unhappiness with the policy decisions of the ANC government, especially on poverty and the AIDS pandemic.

In the transition period leading up to the 1994 democratic elections, religious leaders and organisations played a pivotal role in convening conferences and dialogues – all aimed at defining a progressive relationship between organised religion and the Democratic State. Now that democracy has been achieved, does this mean that religious leaders who were at the forefront in denouncing apartheid and supporting anti-apartheid movements should return to their religious duties alone? Nelson Mandela acknowledged that religious leaders could not perform their religious objectives alone; and neither could politicians. The co-operation between religious and political bodies is, therefore, important; and whether the perceptions of religious leaders have changed since the advent of democracy becomes important, as transformation continues to take place on all levels (Walshe 1997).

It has been widely recognised that the fostering of national reconciliation was a prerequisite for a peaceful transitions, ongoing stability and economic growth. The pursuit of national unity, the wellbeing of all South Africans citizens and peace, require reconciliation between the people of South Africa and the reconstruction of society. There is a need for understanding and not revenge, reparation and not retaliation (Zunes 1999:139).

Churches, according to the TRC, were set to play an important role in the process of nation-building and reconciliation. Nelson Mandela, in a keynote address in 1992, acknowledged the role played by some churches in the struggle against apartheid; and he went on to challenge the church to not only act as a midwife in the birth of democracy; but also to act as an institution that would entrench it in our society (Zunes 1999:141).

According to Kumalo (2007), the hope is that the church will support initiatives that promote justice, peace, democracy, as well as any protests against unjust policies that the democratic government put in place. The dominant models of church-state relations prior to attaining democracy were either that the church was absorbed by the State; or it regarded the State as an enemy. This Church-State relationship needs to be changed, if South Africa is to truly heal from the scars of apartheid, and consolidate as a democracy.

Chapter 3

3.1 Research Design and Methodology:

3.1.1 Research Design

3.1.2 Qualitative Research:

A qualitative approach has been used in the study. This approach gives preference to the contextual understanding, so that behaviour and perceptions can be understood in the context employed by a particular group in society (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport 1998). De Vos et al. (1998) described qualitative research as a multi-perspective approach to social interaction, aimed at describing, making sense of, interpreting, or constructing this interaction, in terms of meanings that subjects attach thereto. This method was preferred, as it allows for the personal reconstruction of the experiences and events of the religious leaders, as well as the ability to explore personal attitudes and perceptions towards apartheid and life thereafter.

The strength of the qualitative approach is that it allows for complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue (De Vos et al. 1998). In employing a qualitative approach, intangible factors, like religious convictions and the political opinions of religious leaders, can be interpreted and better understood within a given situation – in comparison with a more positivist approach.

3.2 Research Methods:

3.2.1 In-depth Interviews:

The study used in-depth interviews to explore the perspectives of those religious leaders, who were actively involved during apartheid. Bryman (2006) describes how useful these interviews are in gaining detailed information about a subject's thoughts and behaviours. The researcher is able to build rapport with the interviewee, and to delve into personal experiences and attitudes. This open-ended and less-rigid approach of in-depth interviews allows for a holistic understanding of the religious leaders point-of-view (Bryman 2006). The

in-depth interview is discursive; and it allows latitude to explore the given topic within the framework of a guided conversation.

Babbie (1998) stated that in order to capture the insider's perspective, the most appropriate interviewing strategy is that which is less formally structured and flexible enough – in keeping with the interests of the respondents.

3.2.2 Data Collection:

Interviews are the predominant mode of data collection in qualitative research. Neuman (1994) stated that interviews are conducted because of an interest in other people's stories. Interviewing participants allows for a description of their experiences; and it encourages reflection on these experiences. Creswell (1994) defined qualitative interviews as, "attempts to understand the world from the participants' point of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences, to uncover their world prior to [any] scientific experiences."

- The study was of an exploratory nature; and it used in-depth interviews as the primary form of data collection. Neuman (1994) justified the use of this method as a data-enhancer, since in-depth knowledge is thereby acquired, correcting misrepresentations and uncovering new perspectives.
- Through in-depth interviews with various religious leaders, their experiences, accounts of apartheid and post-1994 experiences, as well as their memories of the anti-apartheid movement will be explored, in order to gauge the political perceptions of these religious leaders.
- By comparing the responses of the interviews conducted with the various religious leaders the above mentioned aims can be achieved.

3.2.3 Sampling:

Snowball sampling, which is a form of purposive sampling, may be defined as a technique for gathering research subjects through the identification of an initial subject, who is used to provide the names of other actors. These actors may themselves open a web of contact (Spren 1992:36). Religious leaders, who were active during apartheid, may not still be active in the church. Migration-snowball sampling can overcome this concealed population.

This process is based on the assumption that a 'bond' or 'link' exists between the initial sample and others in the same target population (Spren 1992:36). Trust may be developed, as referrals are made by acquaintances or peers, rather than by any other formal methods of identification.

The initial subject may be reached through directly contacting the oldest churches within Gelvandale. These include the Baptist, Congregational and Union churches, respectively, which are the ones most likely to have religious leaders who meet this criterion. The study used criterion sampling to find initial subjects that meet the specific criteria needed before snowballing can take place. The respondents all need to be religious leaders who were active during apartheid, and continued to act as religious leaders after the advent of democracy.

In order to gain adequate responses, eight potential interviews will be conducted. These will cover eight of the seventeen established churches across the various denominations present within the Gelvandale area. The population being sampled is fairly homogeneous in terms of their religious status, age and residence; and therefore, a smaller sample is preferable to a larger one.

CHAPTER 4

4.1 The Research Findings

4.1.1 Introduction:

As stated earlier, literature concentrated around the political perspectives of church leaders specifically in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth is scarce. In light of this a qualitative research study was undertaken to explore the current political perspectives of church leaders who were active during apartheid and continue to act as church leaders today. This research was conducted to gain insight into their experiences as church leaders and under the apartheid regime and how they see the current political climate now that democracy has been achieved.

The findings of the study will be discussed based on the data collected by the use of in-depth interviews. A total of eight church leaders were interviewed from within the Northern

Areas of Port Elizabeth from various religious denominations, which included Baptist, Congregational, Union, New and Old Apostolic, and the Catholic Church. The number of interviews was determined by data-saturation.

The initial participants were found through contacting the oldest churches in the Gelvandale area. Thereafter, church leaders were found through referrals made by the participants. Each was initially contacted by phone, explaining the researcher's intentions, before meeting each participant. The interview schedule included the following questions to initiate the in-depth interview:

- a) How long have you been a religious leader/priest for?
 - b) Which community were you ministering to during apartheid?
 - c) Would you describe the community you ministered to as being politically active during apartheid? And if so, in what way?
-
- a) How would you describe the political environment in which you were ministering during apartheid?
 - b) What was it like being a religious leader during that time?
 - c) What did your role as a religious leader entail at the time? Did it move beyond mere religious duties?
 - d) Was there any added pressure on you – not only as a religious leader – but as community leader, to be politically active?
 - e) In your capacity as a religious leader, were you in any way directly involved in political activism?
-
- a) How would you describe the current political environment now that apartheid is over?
 - b) Is this what you expected a democratic South Africa to be like? Could you explain?
 - c) Can you describe whether there has been a change in the economic and political reality of the community in which you minister?
 - d) Has your role as a religious leader changed since apartheid ended? If it is has, please explain how?

e) Your sermon may often be your direct line of communication to your community.

- Has your message to them changed, if you compare your ministry now with that during apartheid?
- How has it changed?

f) Do you believe that your role as a community leader has deteriorated – now that we live in a democratic South Africa?

g) Do you believe you still have a reconciliatory role to play in your own community?

4.1.2 Profile of the participants:

All the participants were active as church leaders during apartheid; and they continue to be today. All participants were ministering within the Northern areas of Port Elizabeth during the apartheid period; and they still serve their community at present. As stated previously, all the participants were recruited through purposive sampling, as they represented a concealed population.

4.1.3 Presentation of themes and sub-themes:

Theme 1:

Church leaders reflect on the political climate apparent in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth.

Sub-Theme: Church leaders reflect on the reasons for their limited political action from certain segments of the community, citing fear and poverty as being the central tenets.

Sub-Theme: Church leaders reveal a close link between the church and politics during the apartheid period.

Theme 2:

The activities of the church in opposing the apartheid structure

Sub-Theme: Participants reflect on the role of Church leaders, specifically during this period.

Theme: 3

Church leaders articulate their disappointment in the current political environment since 1994.

Sub-Theme: Church leaders reflect on how race has affected the political climate since 1994.

Theme: 4

The changing role of the church since 1994

Sub-Theme: The growing silence on current political issues since 1994

Tutty and Grinnell (1996:90) reflected that the central purpose of data analysis is to sift , sort and organise the mass of information acquired during the data collection, in such a way that themes and interpretations that emerge from the process address the original problem. Creswell (1994:155) described the eight steps for data analysis that were used for the purpose of this study; they include:

- The researcher read through all the transcripts carefully, in order to get a sense of the whole.
- One interview is selected with more information that is interesting. Whilst reading it, one asks oneself: What is it that I am reading here? And what is it all about? And one then writes one's thoughts in the margin.
- All the interviews will be read and topics with the same ideas will be grouped together and labelled. For example, if one comes across feeling the participants' experiences, a topic or category on the "feelings experienced" could be labelled.

- The researcher will assign codes to the various topics. He will then abbreviate the codes: for example, on the feelings experienced the abbreviation may be f/exp.
- The various topics are then reduced to categories; in this study they will be reduced to sub-themes. The most appropriate words to describe the topics in a certain category will be used, for example, 'experiences of refugees in relocating'.
- A final decision on the topics, codes and categories will be made.
- The data of the same category will be cut and pasted together.
- Finally, the researcher recodes the data, if this is necessary.

4.2 Identified themes:

4.2.1 **Theme 1:**

- *Church leaders reflect on the political climate apparent in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth.*
- Apartheid was turmoil-ridden. There were the constantly deteriorating conditions of the economy; violent mass protests against stringent regulative mechanisms, which were operative under constitutional emergencies, and the growing intensity of racial conflict within the society (Harshes 1991:439).
- "The northern areas were very, very vocal; a lot of people would come to meetings, especially the younger generations in the 80s, as the older generation had become afraid. The government at the time had no mercy. This led to younger guys taking the fight over through burning people, looting buildings."

- “The Coloured people and the Coloured community were in the forefront of the struggle. Often it looks like we did not do enough; but the northern areas aided the struggle in making these areas ungovernable.”
- “The Northern areas were active as a whole: schools, the church, political parties, and centrally led by the ideology of the ANC.”
- “Young [people] marched and protested against Bantu education – many were killed and buried on the eastern side of Uitenhage; there was a mass grave of children who [were] buried.”
- “In the 1990s, in the Northern areas, riots started off as service-delivery protests in Extension 28, purely protesting on bad service delivery. Shops were looted; innocent bystanders were shot. Many shop owners were in possession of firearms; and many of our people were shot by shop owners.”
- “Dower College was used for the fight for recognition. Dower belonged to the Congregational Church; and it was initially used to prepare teachers for the Coloured community. But when the State took over, it became the tool used by the labour party. Most students were very vocal; but their parents were pushed students away from politics.”

This structure is what was evident in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth; and it led to the riots in 1990. Mawande (1990) describes how masses of Coloured people in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage started the uprising against the notorious rent increases. “The property, and looting businesses; while [the] trigger-happy apartheid security forces shot and killed 59 people.”

4.2.2 **Sub-theme:**

Church leaders reflect on the reasons for limited political action from certain segments of the community, citing fear and poverty as central tenets.

- “The poverty levels were high in the northern areas; and that further prevented action.”

- “Fear of losing the little they already have.”
- “Young couples got married, but stayed with their parents, because they could not afford a house.”
- “Poor education was fed to the coloured people by the white government, which further prevented action.”
- “People were afraid to speak out against the government. There was a holistic stance against apartheid; but it was kept under wraps through fear. There was another part of the community who just said they didn’t care; but they made up a smaller part of the community.”

4.2.3 **Sub-theme:**

Church leaders reveal close links between the church and politics during the apartheid period; the church could not be separate from politics.”

- “The church was politics; you could not separate the two.”
- “The church did not recognise the Coloured church – which pushed the church even further for change.”
- “There was no line between church and politics.”
- “The church leader was the father of the community. The two were intermingled.”

4.2.4 **Theme 2:**

The activities of the church in opposing the apartheid structure

- “The church meetings were used to send a message to the government.”
- “The weekly meetings, and the prayer meetings, were used to conscientise the community.”
- “The main aim of the church was to fight the injustice of the present government, knowing full well that the political leaders were banned.”

- “The church used robust activism and the platform of local churches to mobilise people and make them more aware.”
- “Sunday sermons were used as a means to advertise events that were organised.”
- “There used to be a ministers’ fraternal that consisted of all the churches in the Northern Area. They would meet once a month to decide on rallies.”
- “There was a need for churches to act as shelters and to provide protection.”
- “Many times, when the heat was on, we had to open the churches, and open the halls, so that political groups could have meetings their meetings. The police would wait till these meetings ended; and then you would hear that something had happened along the way.”

4.2.5 **Sub-theme:**

Participants reflect on the role of Church leaders, specifically, during this period.

- “The leaders also made an individual choice that the oppression had gone on too long. Many said, ‘to hell with happens to me.’”
- “Church leaders spoke about apartheid; and the next day they were in prison.”
- “Church leaders were very honest in addressing the issues of the community.”
- “Many who started preaching politics stopped – after finding themselves in trouble.”
- “The church leaders tried not be aligned with a particular party as such, because the community you are ministering to were not all the same and had their own political opinions – therefore, the church had to avoid being politically aligned or affiliated. The church still had to communicate their concerns, as they had the platform to do so.”
- “The political leaders had lost their voice; and the church leaders took up the mantle.”

- “The community put pressure, because as a church leader, you needed to take care of the people: ‘the flock you have been given.’”
- “Because of the killings and burning, the church leader did not want to be part of that struggle; but they concentrated more on the building up of the people.”

4.2.6 Theme: 3

Church leaders articulate their disappointment in the current political environment since 1994.

- “This is not the South Africa we hoped for. The hope was that with democracy, would come a better life.”
- “There is no change in South Africa. The current legislators are doing the same as during the apartheid system.”
- “This new South Africa has delivered us a new apartheid – Parliament you just see black. If you look at the lower class to the councils you will again just see black again.”
- “Not where we ought to be when asked about current politics, my reply is always first annoyance of not seeing the benefits of our people for the fight; thus, I get very agitated at the state of things.”
- “The ANC is doing exactly what the white man did.”
- “Living standards have gone down.”
- “Once you get power, you forget what the fight was for. Now that people have been put into ascending positions, they become just like the oppressor.”
- “I can say that there has been very little change.”

- “Today, in the Northern Areas, [it is] not what people hoped for; nothing has really changed: still shacks; schools are worse off now; at least during apartheid, we would know we would have transport, food schemes, etc.”

4.2.7 **Sub-theme:**

Church leaders reflect how race has affected the political climate since 1994.

- “Look at the Northern Areas; democracy has side-lined Coloureds, except one or two [who] have become councillors.”
- “People who [have] become parliamentarians got there by making as if the Black man owed you something; you have to be subservient to the way they see things.”
- “You cannot fight dishonesty; because you are a small minority in a big circle of Blacks.”
- “Many coloured people [are still] struggling to find jobs; gangsterism is growing. If you look at recreation, there is no government support.”
- “Coloured people don’t know where they fit in; they do not have a unified standpoint; and that makes us weak.”
- “I feel unforgiving, in the sense that you rarely trust Whites completely; and you are disappointed in the blacks, who do not seem to know how to run a country.”
- “Government shows they don’t care, because we are not black enough.”
- “The resources of the metro are not distributed equally. The black areas are being aided by government. There is a big inconsistency.”

4.2.8 **Theme 4:**

The changing role of the Church, since 1994

- “Money plays a big part in the Coloured clergy leaders; and that’s why the political perspective has altered. None of the priests do anything for nothing.”
- “The Church was meant to be the custodian, once that change came.”
- “The church has reached a stage where they believe it’s, back to business, meaning I only need to take care of my own flock. They become jealous of my colleagues: “Don’t steal my flock”. “Churches have become enemies of one another.”
- “Many never knew why they were fighting. Many fought because the ANC was fighting; now that the struggle is over and the ANC is in control, the church does not know its role any longer.”
- “There is no longer any camaraderie among the churches. Denominations have become estranged. It’s difficult to change the church – the church has become stagnant.”
- “There is a need for the church to stand up; unfortunately the church does not have the financial resources to bring about the change needed, as the church is dependent on poor members to keep it sustainable.”
- “Our members in the pews have become indoctrinated; the moment a sermon sounds political, they say they don’t speak about politics in the church.”

4.2.9 **Sub-theme:**

The growing silence on current political issues since 1994

- “Where is the church of the 60s 70s and 80s after 1994? Each one went to their own corner – busy with their own household.”

- “There was a big change in mindset by church leaders; we thought that when we reached democracy, we thought we could take a step back; and that played right into the hands of the politicians.”
- “People and church assumed that those who were marginalised would stop after the end of apartheid.”
- “The church has become quiet since apartheid. They have fallen asleep. There has been a crumbling of the clergy – especially in the Coloured community.”
- “The church in the Coloured area ought still to be revolting, and doing more beyond food parcels and token giving.”
- “The Church became silent; it’s no longer a prophetic voice who spoke out. If you look at juvenile crimes, the church is silent, at gangsterism, the church is afraid to speak out.”
- “People will soon ask: Where is the church, which was willing to fight back then, but is quiet now?”
- “We believe the struggle is over; but when you look at abortion, the church doesn’t speak out. You look at money laundering; in the past the church would say the Whites are stealing; but today, the church is quiet.”

CHAPTER 5

5.1 Discussions and Analysis:

Political perspectives are many times shaped by the social, economic and political environment in which people find themselves. Apartheid was turmoil-ridden. There were constantly deteriorating conditions of the economy; violent mass protests against stringent regulative mechanisms, which were operative under constitutional emergencies, and the growing intensity of racial antagonism within society (Harshes 1991:439). For church leaders in the Northern Areas, it was clear from these responses, that there was a high level of

political activism within the community. Participant (1) reflected: “The Northern areas were active as a whole, school, church, political parties; and these bodies were centrally led by the ideology of the ANC.”

This was further reiterated by Participant (2), stating that: “The Coloured people and the Coloured community were in the forefront of the struggle. Often it looks like we did not do enough; but the northern areas aided the struggle in making these areas ungovernable”. Although the level of activism within the Northern Areas to a large extent remains undocumented, the interviews did reflect the extent to which the area was involved in the fight against apartheid. The activism present may be seen as a reflection of the political perspective of the community at the time: From the responses, the Northern Areas were described as a community that was very active in their opposition to the apartheid government. “The Northern areas were very, very vocal; a lot of people would come to meetings, especially the younger generations in the 80s, as the older generation became afraid. The government at the time had no mercy. This led to younger guys taking the fight over – through burning people and looting buildings” .

The level of activism reflected by the participants was largely brought on by the conditions that existed within the Northern Areas. Simon (1989) explained how the simplified urban structure of apartheid brought about racially exclusive and unequal residential segments, educational, health and recreational facilities that were designed to minimize interracial contact. Apartheid brought about an urban structure, in which White control was paramount; and where the conditions of other races mirrored their socio-political positions and relative class status (Simon 1989:198).

As both church and community leaders, the issues faced by the community directly influenced the church, and the role adopted by the church leader. The conditions faced by the community members would directly impact on how church leaders viewed politics at the time. As reflected by the participants, there was often no separation between the church and politics. Although as church leaders, they reflected that not all of the community had the same political assertions, as stated by Participant (5): “The church leaders tried not be aligned with a particular party as such, because the community you are ministering to

were not all the same; and they each had their own political opinions; therefore, the church had to avoid being politically aligned or affiliated.”

But, the church still had to communicate their concerns, as they had the platform to do so. Because of this dynamic, the church had to be careful regarding their own political perspectives, and their role as a church leader, as participants reflected on how there was no divide between politics and the church.

Stamoolis (1985) suggested that there was no separation between the church and politics. The all-embracing scope of apartheid meant that even the churches could not escape the effects of the legislation; although the responses of the churches to the situation were different. No absolute uniformity within any denominations existed; but governments attempted to control church life through means like the clause 29 (c) of the Native laws Amendment Bill of 1957, which prohibited the attendance of an African at a church service in a ‘white’ area, without permission from the Minister of Native Affairs. This meant that politics and the church would always be connected. Church leaders reflected this same sentiment.

Participant (2) said: “The church could not be separate from politics”, Participant (1) said: “The church was politics; you could not separate the two”; Participant (3) said: “The church did not recognise the coloured church – which pushed the church even further for change”. Participant (5) said: “There was no line between church and politics.” Participant (7) maintained: “The church leader was the father of the community. The two were intermingled”. As stated by two participants: “ Many put pressure on the church to be politically aligned to a particular political party; and they found that most were prepared to do this, because of the division that could have been brought along with it”. “Unknowingly, people put pressure on the church – wanting to know what they are going to do.” Because this pressure was evident and there was an undeniable link between the church and politics, the political perspectives of church leaders were that much more important.

What would have further influenced the political perspectives of church leaders would be the level of poverty and the lack of opportunities that the apartheid period brought with it, especially to the Northern Areas. The standards of living, and the lack of opportunity evident in the Northern areas, would be directly reflected by the respective congregations

described by one participant as: “The flock that I have been given” that would further effect the political stance of these church leaders and the role they adopted, which would be expanded on. Poverty in South Africa is profiled by shacks, homelessness, unemployment, casual labour, poor infrastructure and the lack of access to basic services.

During the apartheid era, exclusion was based on race and class (Triegaardt 2006). According to Terreblanche (2002), the nature of South African poverty among Africans and Coloureds at the time was so clear-cut and pervasive, that any reliable data would reflect the same results. Between 1993 and 1995, at least 50 to 60 per cent of Africans and 22-32 per cent of Coloureds were living in poverty (Terreblanche 2002). Within the Northern Areas, these poverty levels were evident as well; and the participants cited poverty and fear as the main reasons that limited or prevented activism. “The poverty levels were high in the northern areas; and that further prevented action.

“The fear of losing the little they already have”; “young couples got married, but stayed with their parents, because they could not afford a house”; “poor education was fed to the Coloured people by the white government, which further prevented action.” Seeing this high level of poverty should have further influenced how church leaders viewed the government; and along with the pressure brought by community members, mentioned earlier, should have influenced the role they played within the community.

Mgojo (1989) states that under the pressure of events in South Africa during apartheid, churches were forced to act; and they discovered their relevance through action. The activities of banned organisations were seen as being central to the gospel and mission of the church in South Africa; and for this reason, church leaders were bound to take over these activities (Mgojo 1989:24). The easiest reflection on the political perspectives of church leaders is arguably the roles they adopted during the apartheid period. Although the degree of activism differed between church leaders and denominations, there was a clear trend of activism against the apartheid regime within the Northern areas.

One participant reflected that: “The main aim of the church was to fight the injustice of the present government; and knowing full well that the political leaders were banned, they used robust activism and the platform of local churches to mobilise people and make them more aware.” “Sunday sermons were used as a means to advertise events that were organised.”

“There used to be a ministers’ fraternal that consisted of all the churches in the Northern Areas. They would meet once a month to decide on rallies. “Many times when the heat was on, we had to open the churches and open the halls, so that political groups could have their meetings there.

The police would wait till these meetings ended; and then you would hear that something happened along the way. By providing space for meetings and using sermons as a tool to communicate political messages to their congregations, churches in the Northern areas provided another form of opposition to the oppressive regime. The National Catholic Reporter stated that: “It was the church folk, who through more than 15 years of direct activism and annual shareholder resolution, kept the issue of apartheid before the public. It was the persistence of church activists, ridiculed as naïve and silly for taking on some of the largest corporations in the US, that formed public opinion against racial inequality in South Africa”(National Conference Reporter 1994)

From the above, it was clear that the political perspectives of church leaders in the Northern areas were influenced by the political climate at the time, the pressure placed on them by the community, the link between the church and politics, and the level of poverty faced by the community. All these factors resulted in a holistic opposition to the government – not only by the church, but also by individual church leaders. As participants reflected: “Leaders also made an individual choice that the oppression had gone on too long. Many said: ‘to hell with happens to me’”; “church leaders spoke about apartheid and the next day they were in prison.” “Church leaders were very honest in addressing the issues of the community; political leaders had lost their voice and the church leaders took up the mantle”. “The church leaders tried not to be aligned with a particular party as such, because the community you are ministering to were not all the same and had their own political opinions; therefore, the church had to avoid being politically aligned or affiliated. The church still had to communicate their concerns, as they had the platform to do so.”

These actions by individual church leaders were a reflection of their rejection of the apartheid system and their contribution towards the struggle.

Seekings (2006) reflects on how democratisation was accompanied by high hopes that poverty and inequality would be reduced. The hope was that the poor would also be

enfranchised. The ANC promised 'a better life for all' in its 1994 election campaign. Its election manifesto – The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) – promised that 'attacking poverty and deprivation' would be the first priority of this democratic government (Seekings 2006).

When asked about how they see the current South Africa; and whether this is the South Africa they had hoped for, church leaders reflected a great deal of disappointment. "This is not the South Africa we hoped for. The hope was that with democracy would come a better life". "Not where we ought to be when asked about current politics, my reply is always first annoyance of not seeing the benefits of our people for the fight. Thus, I get very agitated at the state of things ." "Living standards have gone down." "Once you get power, you forget what the fight was for. Now that people have been put into ascending positions they become like the oppressor". "I can say that there has been very little change."

From the above responses, it is clear that, according to the participants, this is not the South Africa they had hoped for – especially in the reflection of poverty levels and living conditions in the Northern Areas. During the apartheid period, the political perspectives of church leaders and the level of opposition waged against apartheid were largely brought on by the poverty levels within the Northern areas. The lack of change reflected by church leaders is further emphasised by the comparison made with that of the apartheid regime. "There is no change in South Africa. The current legislators are doing the same as during the apartheid system. This new South Africa has delivered us a new apartheid – Parliament you just see Blacks. If you look at the lower class to the councils, you will just see Blacks again".

Conway (2013) reflects how racial terms are still commonly used in part due to the ANC government's Affirmative Action programmes, which promote the representation of previously oppressed non-white groups in management positions previously dominated by white males. The accusation of racism towards coloured people kicked off when Jimmy Manyi stated that there was an "oversupply of Coloured people in the Western Cape". Trevor Manuel responded to this, stating: "I want to put it to you that these statements would make your racists in the mould of H.F. Verwoerd. I want to put it to you that you have the same mind that operated under apartheid.'

Although there have been considerable improvements when it comes to race relations, the above example regarding Jimmy Manyi and the responses given by church leaders reflect the relevance that race still has in politics in South Africa.

The data presented by Borat (2005) are particularly revealing – especially when it comes to race. Between 1995 and 2000, the census data analysis suggests that both absolute and relative poverty levels increased for Africans, Coloured and Asian households. McKaiser (2012) asserts that many coloured people feel that they benefit less from policies designed to redress past discrimination than do black Africans, who are currently seen as the worthier victims. The lack of adequate economic opportunity for Coloureds since the demise of apartheid combined with the sense of victimisation explains why the Coloured community is the most class-homogeneous racial grouping in South Africa, as an essentially poor lower class community (McKaiser 2012). Participant (6) further supports this, stating: “Today, in the Northern Areas, it is not what people hoped for; nothing has really changed: still shacks; schools are worse off now; at least during apartheid, we would know we would have transport , food schemes etc.”

The disappointment revealed by participants is further emphasised by reports suggesting how difficult the Northern areas have been to police. In June 2013, the Northern areas were described as being a hot-spot for violence, so that even the police were hesitant to set foot in volatile suburbs (*The Herald, 7 June 2013*).

As stated earlier, the political perspectives of church leaders during apartheid were influenced by the poverty levels and the standard of living brought on by the oppressive system. From the above responses, church leaders reflect a similar disappointment in the current socio-economic environment, which again may affect their current political perspectives. Statements made by participants (1)&(7) like, “The ANC is doing exactly what the white man did”; and “I can say that there has been very little change” reflect their disappointment and may shape the way they see politics today, since the advent of democracy. The direct comparison made between the ANC and the oppressive white minority government during apartheid also reflects the current political perspectives of these church leaders seeing both in a negative light.

There were widespread expectations and hopes that the elaboration of democratic institutions would also inaugurate policies that would progressively alleviate poverty and inequality. The euphoria of 1999 has come up against deepening inequalities, rising unemployment, the HIV pandemic, and burdening violence. The radicalised and class divided spaces created by the apartheid State did not automatically disappear after democratisation; but they have, in fact, become further entrenched (Padayachee 2011, Rozenburg Quarterly, The Magazine).

When asked about life since democracy, church leaders assert how race continues to play a big role in the current political environment. The continuous reference made to race when asked about life since 1994 shows just how conscious these church leaders are regarding race within the new South Africa, and in particular the plight of the Coloured community. Adhikari (2006) reflects how South Africa's Coloured community has remained a marginalised community – marginalised by history and historians. Constituting no more than 9% of the population throughout South Africa and lacking significant political or economic power Adhikari (2006) reflects how Coloured people have always formed a marginalised group in society. Church leaders within the Northern Areas reflected on how this has continued since the advent of democracy. “Look at the Northern Areas; democracy has side-lined Coloureds, except for one or two, who have become councillors”. “People, who become parliamentarians, got there by making as if the black man was owed something by you; you have to be subservient to the way they see things”; “you cannot fight dishonesty because you are a small minority in a big circle of blacks”.

A common response among church leaders was a negative reference to black people and how they have shaped the current political environment. Participant (3) stated: “I feel unforgiving, in the sense that you rarely trust Whites completely; and you are disappointed in the Blacks, who do not seem to know how to run the country”. Participant (2) reflected that “government shows they don't care, because we are not black enough.” And participant (4) maintained that “the resources of the metro are not distributed equally. The black areas are being aided by government. There is a big inconsistency.”

From the above, it is clear that a lot of the disappointment felt by the respective church leaders is still circled around race relations within South Africa. Adhikari (2005) wrote that it

has become a commonplace for Coloured people disaffected with the new South Africa to express their disgruntlement by lamenting that: “First, we were not white enough; and now we are not black enough.” This claim, according to him, has become highly hackneyed, because it reflects popular sentiment within the greater part of the Coloured community. The phrase also captures the predicament of marginality in South Africa. Few would deny that their lives have been profoundly affected by changes since the transition to democracy.

Du Toit (1999) stated that building a new South Africa cannot be done without religious support. Churches and religious groups must be mobilized to promote the values needed to strengthen the common good. In its final report, the TRC emphasized the role of the church in post-apartheid South Africa, highlighting its widely respected and far-reaching moral influence. As such, they were expected to continue playing a key role in present South Africa (TRC, 1998: 316). As church leaders reflected, their disappointment in the new South Africa and the continued emphasis placed on race relations – albeit now circled around black people – there was also an evident change in the role that the church has played since apartheid ended. Participant (4) stated that “money plays a big part in the Coloured clergy leaders; and that’s why the political perspective has altered. None of the priests do anything for nothing.” “The church has reached a stage where they believe that it’s back to business – meaning: I only need to take care of my own flock. They become jealous of my colleagues, “Don’t steal my flock. Churches have become enemies of each other”.

These responses differ from the way church leaders spoke about the church during the apartheid era, when the role of the church was clear; and the goals of the church were definite. For example, participant (6) stated: “The main aim of the church was to fight the injustice of the present government, knowing full well that the political leaders were banned” – reflecting thereby the known direction of the church during the apartheid period. However, the participants reflected a sense of disillusionment within the church, when speaking about the church since democracy has been achieved. “Many never knew why they were fighting. Many fought because the ANC was fighting; now that the struggle is over and the ANC is in control, the church does not know its role any longer”. “There is no longer any camaraderie among the churches. Denominations have become estranged. “It is difficult to change the church; the church has become stagnant.”

From the above, it is clear that there are a number of factors that have brought about a change in the political role, which the church once played. These included how finance has become important for the clergy; the belief that since democracy has been achieved, the church can take a step back, and the fact that the church is uncertain with the role it needs to play in the new South Africa. From the responses of the respective participants, these are seen as the main reasons for the change in the churches' role and why there is a growing gap between church and politics.

Church leaders have also noted a change in their congregations: "Our members in the pews have become indoctrinated; the moment a sermon sounds political, they say: "Don't speak politics in the church". These elements combined are what church leaders cited as the reasons behind the growing silence of the church – when asked about the role the church plays today.

A very important role of the church in the new South Africa is that of reminding and encouraging government in the fulfilment of its God-given task, for which it is appointed (Coetzee 2004:346). Charry (1994) stated that the church is perhaps the only institution with the beliefs, liturgy, practices and authority necessary to rescue people from the violence and other deforming features of modern-day life. In order to do this, the church must meet people at their point of need. Church leaders asserted how the church has since the end of apartheid been silent on political issues. "Where is the church of the 60s 70s and 80s? After 1994, each one went to their own corner busy with household things". "There was a big change in mindset by church leaders. "We thought that when we reached democracy, we could take a step back – and that played right into the hands of the politicians".

"People and church assumed that those who were marginalised would stop after the end of apartheid." All these responses suggest that the church since 1994 had adopted a new stance when it came to politics – one where they would not directly engage in political issues, as in the past; and this led to the silence that participants reflected on. "The church has become quiet since apartheid. They have fallen asleep. There has been a crumbling of the clergy, especially in the Coloured community." "The church in the Coloured area ought still to be revolting, and doing more – beyond, food parcels and token-giving".

“The church has become silent; it’s no longer a prophetic voice which spoke out. If you look at juvenile crimes, the church is silent; at gangsterism, the church is afraid to speak out.”

“People will soon ask: Where is the church which was willing to fight back then, but is quiet now?” This reflects a change in the level of activism from the church in comparison with the high level of involvement asserted earlier, when looking at the apartheid period. A common thread among responses has been their belief that the fight is over, that now that we have reached a state of democracy; the church can take a step back, when it comes to political issues.

As participant (7) asserted: “We believe the struggle is over; but when you look at abortion, the church doesn’t speak out. You look at money laundering; in the past, the church would say the Whites are stealing; but today the church is quiet”. This growing silence of the church mentioned, is in contrast to how vocal the church was during the apartheid period. Naidoo (2005) reflects how the State finds itself confronting mass protests reminiscent of popular struggles in the apartheid era, as poor people demand houses, jobs and speedier delivery of basic services. The church leaders – although aware of these conditions, has not responded in a way comparable to that during the apartheid period. As mentioned previously, church leaders after apartheid felt disillusioned in terms of the role they were to play in the new South Africa.

When looking at the current conditions described by church leaders found in the Northern Areas in terms of housing, education and healthcare, it’s clear that, as community leaders, the church still needs to apply relevant moral norms to the current political concerns faced by their community.

CHAPTER 6

6.1 Conclusion:

In order to gauge whether religious leaders’ perceptions of the South African social, economic and political realities have changed during apartheid’s transition to post-apartheid, it was important for the study to initially explore the apartheid experience of the respective church leaders. It was clear that that life within the Northern areas of Port Elizabeth possessed all the trademarks of a non-white community during apartheid. Poverty,

service-delivery issues, education, segregation and the lack of opportunities were all common tenets of the community; and these issues are what pushed the church and church leaders into action. The Northern Areas were described as being very vocal and active during the apartheid period – brought on by the conditions faced by the community.

Although a large portion of the community was not active during this period – out of fear and the high levels of poverty being faced, the youth and the church were visibly active. In a community that was active through protests and riots, it was often the church leaders who had to take up the mantle from political leaders who were being targeted at the time. Church leaders were seen as community leaders as well; and because of this, there was an added pressure on the church to be politically active. As church leaders described it, there was no separation between the church and politics during apartheid.

The political perceptions of the church leaders during apartheid were strongly influenced by the struggles faced by the community. The congregation was seen as “the flock given by God”; and thus church leaders felt responsible for their communities. It was clear that the role of the church leaders brought on by the harsh political climate of the time went beyond a purely prophetic one. The opening of church halls, the advertising of political rallies from the pulpit, the emergence of Church fraternities; and the use of church meetings to send messages to the government reflected the political role adopted by many churches within the Northern Areas.

Church leaders at the time often made an individual choice to become politically active away from the church, as an institution which reflected their degree of dissatisfaction with the social, economic and political environment at the time. Although the level of activism amongst these church leaders differed, there was a common thread of rejection and unhappiness with the state of affairs. These church leaders, although in many ways they were driven by the ideology of the African National Congress, were very careful not to be seen as being politically affiliated, and to prevent creating division within their own congregations.

Many church leaders were vocal, when it came to raising issues within the community; politics was spoken about from the pulpit, even though imprisonment was always a danger. It was evident that church leaders were aware of the platform that they had as community

leaders; and they used this as a means to engage with political issues and oppose the apartheid structure.

Church leaders, when asked about their adopted roles since the advent of democracy, hardly resembled the level of activism and involvement that was evident during the apartheid period. Participants were quick to sight a number of reasons for the changing level of involvement from the church, when it came to political issues. Central to this was the idea that since democracy has now been achieved, the church could take a step back from political issues. Added to this, church leaders stated reasons like money becoming important to the church, and that there is no longer camaraderie amongst churches in comparison to the unified stance taken during the apartheid years.

These issues all contributed to the growing silence that church leaders were aware of when it came to issues of corruption, abortion, money laundering and gangsterism, as identified by church leaders. This ongoing and growing silence, and the changing role of church leaders, could be seen as a reflection of the churches' current political perspective. The participants were clear that this was not the South Africa they had hoped for after the apartheid period; and their responses reflected the extent to which they were disappointed in South Africa, since the advent of democracy. Many asserted that very little change has occurred since the transition to democracy – especially in the Northern Areas.

Because of the limited change in terms of the living conditions and the general standard of living within the Northern Areas, church leaders were clear about their disappointment in the current government. This lack of positive change and the continued economic struggles faced by the community were further emphasised as church leaders likened the current government to that of the apartheid system, saying that it feels as if this is apartheid in reverse, if not worse. By making this comparison, it was clear that church leaders were not happy with the current political environment – brought on by the lack of development seen in their own communities.

By their negative responses to how they see the current South Africa, it was clear that for church leaders in the Northern Areas, this was not the South Africa they had hoped for.

Despite this negative outlook on the state of society, both economically and politically, this has not meant that church leaders have become more vocal or active, as was the case during the apartheid period. The respective church leaders were aware of this; and they cited an array of reasons for the silence of the church. The reasons given were not that the church was no longer aware of political issues, but that the church was not as certain as they were in the past of the role they now have to play within the community.

When we moved into democracy, church leaders – along with the rest of the formerly oppressed – had the expectation that the fight against oppression was over, and that the end of the apartheid system would bring visible change. Although the change brought by democracy is unquestionable, poverty and inequality still remain growing and ongoing problems. The expectation that the political change brought by ending the oppressive apartheid structure would bring change visible change to the Northern Areas meant that the church took a step back when it came to politics. The community had the same expectation after the political transition, which further widened the gap between politics and the church. The pressure from the community for the church to be politically involved, as a result also weakened. Church leaders described how speaking about politics from the pulpit was frowned upon by the community, who had started seeing the church only for its prophetic purpose. In this way, the changing role of church leaders was shaped by their own communities. The political involvement of the church during the apartheid period to that since democracy is a vastly different one; and this is reflected by the silence that the church leaders themselves are showing.

Although the political involvement of the church has waned, race still continues to be an important issue in society, as reflected by church leaders.

Church leaders also continue to place a strong emphasis on race when referring to the current political environment. When describing how they see South Africa since 1994, a lot of the blame was placed on the current administration, specifically referring to how Black people have prospered from the ANC consolidating its power and the ongoing plight of Coloured people. Although no questioning was done along racial lines, this was the definite pattern from the responses given. The lack of change evident in the Northern areas since democracy, by the church leaders and the continued struggle faced by the respective

communities are the issues that further pushed this perspective. From the responses of the church leaders, the lack of political involvement and the growing silence that church leaders show, it was clear that since democracy the role adopted by church leaders in the Northern Areas has not to any great extent transcended faith issues, as was the case during the apartheid years.

When gauging whether the political perspectives of church leaders have changed, there were various factors that had to be taken into consideration. What shaped their political perspectives during the apartheid period were the struggles faced by their own congregation, which motivated them and also put pressure on them to be politically active. As community leaders, these religious leaders took a stance against apartheid and their actions reflected this. Since 1994, the church has not been as politically involved as was the case during the apartheid years. Although their level of activism has faded, and the church is not as vocal as it was prior to democracy, this was not an indication that the political perspectives of church leaders had drastically changed. When asked about their political views since democracy, there was a consistent response of disappointment and unhappiness in the current government – to such an extent that many participants themselves likened the current political environment to that during apartheid. Their views on how they see government nearly 20 years since democracy have, therefore, not changed drastically – despite the demise of the oppressive apartheid system.

Central to this, has been the limited change apparent in the Northern Areas and the continued disappointment in government. Another tenet that has not changed when looking at the political perspectives of church leaders has been the issue of race. During the apartheid period, a strong focus was placed on race relations, and how the structure favoured white South Africans. A constant among responses was how the current democratic structure favours black people, and how coloured people have continued to struggle, specifically in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth.

Despite their views on politics not going through a drastic change, the roles now adopted by church leaders are different. Their disappointment in the current political government and the continuous economic struggle of their own congregations has not evoked a response of activism or opposition to government, as was the case during apartheid. Church leaders

reflected a sense of disillusionment after the euphoria of 1994, in terms of the role they would have to play in the new democratic South Africa. The fight against apartheid was indeed over; but the process of change has been a slow one – especially when looking at the Northern Areas.

The expectation was that having achieved democracy, positive change would be realised within the community; and consequently, the church took a step back when it came to political issues. Participants described an undeniable link between the church and politics during apartheid, which has not continued into the democratic South Africa. The focus of the church has shifted away from the realm of politics, as church leaders began to focus on their own individual communities. The common thread among churches in the Northern Areas has been the united stance adopted against apartheid; and when the struggle against the oppressive system ended, so the unity among churches faded. Added to this, the respective congregations no longer put pressure on the church to be politically involved; and as a result we see that after apartheid, the level of activism and involvement of the church diminished – even though their actual political perspectives, in terms of being unhappy with the government and disappointed in the level of change, have not changed since democracy has been achieved.

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Appendix A

NELSON MANDELA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

<u>RESEARCHER'S DETAILS</u>	
Title of the research project	
Reference number	
Principal investigator	Andre Abrahams
Address	242 van der stel street , Rowallan Park
Postal Code	6025
Contact telephone number	041- 371 1114

A. <u>DECLARATION BY OR ON BEHALF OF PARTICIPANT</u>		<u>Initial</u>
I, the participant and the undersigned	(full names)	
ID number		
Address (of participant)		

A.1 <u>HEREBY CONFIRM AS FOLLOWS:</u>		<u>Initial</u>
I, the participant, was invited to participate in the above-mentioned research project		
that is being undertaken by	(name of researcher)	
from	(affiliation e.g. department/school/faculty)	
of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.		

THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS HAVE BEEN EXPLAINED TO ME, THE PARTICIPANT:				Initial	
2.1	Aim:	<p>The investigator seeks to gain an understanding of my political perspective from apartheid to the current democratic post-apartheid environment</p> <p>The information will be used for research purposes and not any political motive.</p>			
2.2	Procedures:	I understand that the interview will be recorded for research purposes.			
2.3	Confidentiality:	My identity will not be revealed in any discussion, description or scientific publications by the investigators.			
2.4	Access to findings:	Any new information or benefit that develops during the course of the study will be made known to me by the researcher.			
2.4	Voluntary participation / refusal / discontinuation:	My participation is voluntary	YES	NO	
		My decision whether or not to participate will in no way affect my present or future care / employment / lifestyle	TRUE	FALSE	

3. THE INFORMATION ABOVE WAS EXPLAINED TO ME/THE PARTICIPANT BY:								Initial
(name of relevant person)								
in	Afrikaans		English		Xhosa		Other	
and I am in command of this language, or it was satisfactorily translated to me by								
(name of translator)								
I was given the opportunity to ask questions and all these questions were answered satisfactorily.								

4.	No pressure was exerted on me to consent to participation and I understand that I may withdraw at any stage without penalisation.	
-----------	---	--

5.	Participation in this study will not result in any additional cost to myself.	
-----------	---	--

B. STATEMENT BY OR ON BEHALF OF INVESTIGATOR(S)							
I,	Andre Abrahams	declare that:					
1.	I have explained the information given in this document to	(name of patient/participant)					
	and / or his / her representative	(name of representative)					
2.	He / she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions;						
3.	This conversation was conducted in	Afrikaans		English		Xhosa	Other
	And no translator was used <u>OR</u> this conversation was translated into						
	(language)		by	(name of translator)			
4.	I have detached Section D and handed it to the participant	YES			NO		
Signed/confirmed at		on				20	
Signature of interviewer		Signature of witness:					
		Full name of witness:					

C. DECLARATION BY TRANSLATOR (WHEN APPLICABLE)		
I,	(full names)	
ID number		
Qualifications and/or		
Current employment		
confirm that I:		
1.	Translated the contents of this document from English into	(language)
2.	Also translated questions posed by	(name of participant) as well as the answers given by the investigator/representative;
3.	Conveyed a factually correct version of what was related to me.	
Signed/confirmed at		on 20
I hereby declare that all information acquired by me for the purposes of this study will be kept confidential.		
Signature of translator		Signature of witness:
		Full name of witness:

D. IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO PATIENT/REPRESENTATIVE OF PARTICIPANT

Dear participant/representative of the participant

Thank you for your/the participant's participation in this study. Should, at any time during the study:

- an emergency arise as a result of the research, or
- you require any further information with regard to the study

Kindly contact	Andre Abrahams
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at telephone number	084 049 1243
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Appendix B

• PO Box 77000 • Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

• Port Elizabeth • 6031 • South Africa • www.nmmu.ac.za

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW

Dear Sir

My name is Andre Abrahams, I am currently a Political Science student at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. The Research I would like to conduct for my Master's treatise involves researching whether the political perceptions of religious leaders have changed since the advent of our new democracy, specifically in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth. This Project will be conducted under the supervision of Professor Wendy Isaacs-Martin.

I am hereby seeking your consent to conduct an interview with you regarding the above research topic.

The interview being conducted is purely for research purposes and is being done under no political motives. If you so wish, your name will remain anonymous and will not be reflected in the academic paper. With the purpose of highlighting the important role played by religious leaders in achieving our democracy and how they view the current political environment your participation will be greatly appreciated.

I have included a background to the study, the consent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter which I received from the NMMU Research Ethics Committee (Human). If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me on 084 049 1243, email : abrahamsandre9@gmail.com. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours Sincerely

Andre Abrahams

(Department of Political and Governmental Studies, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University)

