ABSTRACT

1. During the past twenty years the world saw the development of the phenomenon of “Truth and Reconciliation Commissions” as an approach to resolve fractures within communities and nations, especially after periods of civil unrest, civil war, and other forms of violence and tension. Two basic questions emerge: What is reconciliation, and how does a society know that reconciliation has been accomplished?

2. Insights of theological ethics can provide a source for examination of the process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (TRC). Response to the questions may provide a view of the process to clarify the impact of the TRC on reconciliation in South Africa.

3. The TRC was a political creation, established through negotiations for an end to conflict that extended over decades. To provide insight into complex problems relating to reconciliation, Section II presents a history of the influences in South Africa relevant to apartheid and those conflicts.

4. Section III covers the formation and operation of the TRC, including participation of Christian leadership under Archbishop Desmond Tutu and others.

5. Section IV presents the “Cradock Four” case study.

6. **Ubuntu** is a decidedly African understanding of community. Christian **ubuntu** is a deeper understanding of community where individuals are seen as made in the image of God and the community as the kingdom of God. Section V presents and expands these concepts, unfamiliar to the western world. Concepts of Bernard Lonergan that guided examination of the material are included.

7. The conclusion, Section VI, presents the examination of the TRC and case study in light of the understanding of Christian **ubuntu** and the methods of Lonergan. The conclusions shift the focus of the original questions to suggest reconciliation as a process rather than a solution concluding a process. Success or decline within reconciliation is subject to continuing examination and evaluation. On earth the kingdom of God strives for unity with God and others. Glimpses of what unity might look like are in the work.
Reconciliation also has an already-but-not-yet quality that moves those in conflict closer to unity and harmony.

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Date ____________________

First Reader

Approved: ________________________________ Date

Second Reader
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ABBREVIATIONS

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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress, founded 1912, banned 1960</td>
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<tr>
<td>Azapo</td>
<td>Azanian People’s Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBOs</td>
<td>Community-based Organizations</td>
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<td>CR</td>
<td>Community of the Resurrection (Anglican)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cradora</td>
<td>Cradock Residents Association</td>
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<td>Cradoya</td>
<td>Cradock Youth Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training (government)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDASA</td>
<td>Institute for Democracy in South Africa, “sending church”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-government Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RICSA</td>
<td>Research Institute on Christianity in South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>SACC</td>
<td>South African Council of Churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SADF</td>
<td>South African Defense Force (of apartheid government)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>South African Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCM</td>
<td>Student Christian Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRC</td>
<td>Truth and Reconciliation Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDF</td>
<td>United Democratic Front, antiapartheid organization of church, civic, educational, workers, students. Sports participants (1983)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCC</td>
<td>World Council of Churches</td>
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A Theological Examination of Reconciliation
Within a Political Context:
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. 2 Cor. 5:17-20a (NRSV).

Section I – Introduction

During the past twenty years the development of “Truth and Reconciliation Commissions” provided an approach to resolve fractures within communities and nations, especially after periods of civil unrest, civil war, and other forms of violence and tension. Two frequently raised questions regarding the use of “Truth Commissions,” are:

1. What is reconciliation and how do we achieve it?
2. How does a society know that reconciliation has been achieved?

In this paper I examine the theological question of reconciliation within the political realities of the peoples of South Africa.

The South African Parliament established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (TRC) by political action in July 1995. The TRC was the 21st truth commission used for conflict resolution1. The stated purpose of the TRC was to unify and reconcile the nation after a prolonged, bloody conflict and to promote human rights. The object of the new government was to promote restorative justice rather than retribution.

Generally, modern cultures define reconciliation differently but consider it good and beneficial for individuals, communities, and nations. The abstract “good” is evident

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as experienced in particular situations. Indicators of growth, healing, and unity measure the success of restorative justice in the reconciliation process. Theologically, for Christians, imperfections of human behavior lead to individual and collective sin that separates and causes harm. Reconciliation restores and heals the relationship.

Initially I provide a historical setting and circumstances that I found related to the lengthy conflict that was grounded in the practice of apartheid. I begin with the influence of faith communities because apartheid had a base in an interpretation of scripture by colonists. Throughout the history of South Africa, additionally, Christian and other faith communities played an active, public, and integral role in governing. The political background for apartheid holds reference to faith communities as faith and politics are enmeshed. I add a history of violence to demonstrate the coercion and force ingrained in the culture. I include an actual case brought before the TRC to provide an authentic picture of life within a black community under apartheid. The method and theology of Bernard Lonergan provides a dynamic structure to examine patterns of human behavior, reveal relationships and values, and measure the “good” and “evil” in terms of concrete actions. I also use the lens of ubuntu, an African understanding of the interdependent community where all persons have value. I use these theological concepts, ethics, and scripture for insights into the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, and a case study from the TRC.

Section II - Review of South African History

A review of South African history, using three themes, provides a background of underlying influences that formed the policies of apartheid and endorsed inhuman enforcement. 1) The initial Christian presence in southern Africa planted the seed for
apartheid. The continuing involvement of faith communities played a part both in the emergence of apartheid and in the process of reconciliation begun by the TRC. 2) The political background and 3) the history of violence in South Africa completed the picture. The South African political theologian, John de Gruchy, stated that for Christians reconciliation was central to faith, to the good news of the Gospel. Reconciliation in this world had social and political as well as personal consequences and should lead to the restoration of justice. The history of South Africa reveals the interconnection of the three themes in examining reconciliation.

II.1 Influence of Christianity and Other Faith Communities on South Africa

Scholars recognize that, when speaking of Christianity or the influence of Christianity in most of Africa, the lens for Christian faith was initially European. Chaplains to the colonists and missionaries from the 17th century onward presented their understanding of the “good news,” without consideration of the values of traditional African beliefs and practices. Significantly different attitudes toward the indigenous people accompanied the evangelizers’ desire to share the gospel. As it was true for Africa generally, so it was true for South Africa. Christianity for the black indigenous peoples reflected their relationship between European white traders and settlers as well as their new relationship with Christ. The diversity of tribes and cultures found in South Africa also influenced their acceptance or rejection of the “good news.” All played a part in the evolution of the impact and influence of Christianity.3

In southern Africa in 1652 chaplains came with the Dutch East India Trade Company’s colony in what is now Cape Town. They stayed. Unlike many parts of Africa

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where life was brutal for Europeans, in South Africa the traders and farmers could settle and thrive. Dominance and possession of the land were driving factors for these early Dutch colonists. With this passion they brought their prevailing and “Christian” view that it was the destiny of the white man to rule and that of the black man to obey. Seeds of conflict and of the core policy of apartheid were found in churches with this belief. Apartheid would divide power, privilege, and resources based on perceived superior and inferior human value. Predictably, blacks resisted the taking of land and the subjugation the people. Conflict with the settlers was inevitable. In the long run, the Dutch and other Europeans in South Africa held the advantage of more destructive and deadly weapons and access to resources from their homelands. The colonists prevailed.

In 1795, during the Napoleonic wars, the British took over the Cape. They, too, settled in to conquer and profit from the land and from their association with blacks who lived there. The British also had chaplains for their churches and missionaries for the natives. Missionaries sent by the London Missionary Society were not required to be clergy or members of the Anglican Church. They often lived and worked within the tribes and provided education and training. These missionaries tended to support the rights of the blacks. Churches continued to provide the natives education and encouragement to excel. In 1848 the Church of England appointed Robert Gray as the first Bishop of the Province of South Africa. Early missionary work of this established church created mission stations. The church founded schools and hospitals and grew food as part of their missionary work. In 1903 the Community of the Resurrection (CR) arrived and soon

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5 Elphick and Davenport, *Christianity in South Africa*, 52.
knew that the Africans themselves must do the evangelizing. The monks in the Order, called the “CR fathers,” brought more schools and training. In the process they included blacks in clergy positions and in the organization of the Anglican Church in South Africa. Members of this order later influenced Desmond Tutu in his piety and way of life.⁶

Faith communities continued to play an active and prophetic role in the history of South Africa. During the 20th century many churches sponsored religious as well as secular education. Seminaries trained black leadership within the churches. In the struggles of apartheid, especially from the 1950s on, church leaders delivered the message of injustice and oppression privately to government representatives and publicly to local crowds, journalists, international leaders, and global faith communities. Their organizations appealed for repentance, reconciliation, and reparation. Many of the most recognized voices were from Christian communities, but those protesting also represented Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist traditions. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who was Chair of the TRC, served as General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) from 1978 until 1985 when he was enthroned as the primate of the Anglican Church in South Africa. This past leadership gave him a local, national, and international forum for the message of reconciliation. Tutu declared apartheid intrinsically evil, a crime against humanity.⁷ He called for repentance and reconciliation for all people, couched in terms of the African concept of ubuntu that strives for interdependence and justice for the whole community. Tutu actively protested against the evils of apartheid. He knew and worked with leaders of the faith communities and the liberation movement.

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Faith communities engaged the political process. Together, the leadership of South Africa’s churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples opposed the policies of apartheid that began in 1948 but debated and addressed the issues and effects of apartheid with some tension. The government policy of “grand apartheid” granted privileges for some in their congregations. Apartheid also imposed death and destruction upon all resisting blacks as a result of the violence prescribed by that policy. Faith communities and coalitions of organizations sponsored programs, conferences, and dialogue with members of different traditions leading the groups. The organizations with international components used their resources and influence to assist the cause. The SACC, as a Christian consortium, included representatives from all the churches except the white Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), which supported apartheid and the white government. The Research Institute on Christianity in South Africa (RICSA) provided research and commentary from the Christian community.

Faith communities helped plan for peace. SACC and RICSA prepared and presented position papers and recommendations to the apartheid government in the 1960s and 1970s and, by request in the early 1990s, for the new government. Although some members were not in full agreement with all conclusions, they remained in SACC. All continued to contact the government and to oppose the injustice of grand apartheid and the brutal enforcement of government policies. The SACC endorsed the ultimate goals of the liberation movement and advocated non-violence while acknowledging compelling reasons to take up arms. During periods of conflict and the transition to peace and a new

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government, reconciliation was central to the theological debate of the churches. The wider range of faith communities in South Africa was involved in the political process. TRC was not developed or established as Christian. However, basic Christian ideals of forgiveness and reconciliation influenced the development of the modern South Africa.

The *Kairos Document*, published in September 1985, summed up the need for peace. The churches and their leaders and “ordinary lay” theologians in South Africa contributed to the formation of the documents through discussions and meetings held during 1985. Those documents presented a Christian, biblical, and theological message. *Kairos*, defined, was “the moment of God’s grace and opportunity, the favorable time in which God issues a challenge to decisive action.” If ignored, “the loss for the Church, for the Gospel and for all the people of South Africa will be immeasurable.”10 The document condemned the misuse of scripture to justify apartheid and mislead people in the churches. The state mouthed concepts of law and order, but the laws were unjust and created disorder in oppression. The document called for just laws and a right order to benefit all people as a replacement for the apartheid system. The crisis of a divided church in South Africa also called all Christians to examine their faith and their faith traditions in the light of the promise of God’s presence to lead to lasting peace. The document acknowledged violence within the liberation movement but distinguished between ruthless, repressive state acts and attempts to defend oneself. The message stated clearly that South Africa was a country where whites in the system benefitted greatly, amassing wealth and land and maintaining a high standard of living, while most blacks did not benefit in any way. The system was so flawed that justice called for change, not

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reform. The *Kairos Document* appealed for an end to conflict and for action in love that would include former enemies; it warned of false, empty reconciliation without removing injustice. Continued discussions, small and large, the leaders declared, provided a path to peace and encouragement for peace and reconciliation in South Africa.\(^{11}\)

Later, in December 1985, the World Council of Churches (WCC) sponsored a meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe, for prayer and reflection on the oppression of apartheid. Churches and ecumenical organizations from South Africa and the rest of the world met to stand in solidarity with those living under oppression and fear. The WCC condemned apartheid as against God’s will. The acts of the ruling white government could not be justified. Basic requirements to end the conflict formulated there became the conditions set down by liberation groups before negotiations for peace could begin: “… an end of the state emergency, the release of Nelson Mandela\(^{12}\) and all political prisoners, the lifting of the ban on all banned movements, the return of the exiles. The transfer of power to the majority of the people, based on universal suffrage, is the only lasting solution to the present crisis.”\(^{13}\) The signers of the WCC *Harare Document* urged freedom from the tyranny of apartheid. That liberation included both black and white.

When the government released Nelson Mandela from prison and lifted the ban from liberation movements in 1990, the churches took an active role in contributing to the birth of the new nation. The organizations monitored and prevented violence, provided support for mediation and voter education, and generally cared for victims suffering from the wounds of apartheid. Faith communities did not step back but

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\(^{11}\) *From South Africa*, 13-25.

\(^{12}\) Nelson Mandela was a leader in the ANC, held in prison at that time since 1964.

\(^{13}\) *From South Africa*, 35.
continued to call for economic justice, necessary for true liberation from apartheid. Guided by the language of the *Kairos Document*, they promoted the vision of the biblical Jubilee. Leviticus 25:8-22 described Jubilee as good news to the oppressed, with liberty throughout the land to all inhabitants. The new South Africa would provide the opportunity to begin anew, avoiding errors of the past. What was lost in bondage would be restored, both in material sufficiency and sense of human worth.\(^\text{14}\) Faith communities were in for the long haul.

**II.2 Political Background**

The faith community asked for peace and justice in reconciliation and gave hope to the oppressed. The prophetic stance required courage. The political process in South Africa reflected the extent of risks involved. First and foremost, apartheid was the controlling factor for existence and determined who gained and who lost. Apartheid, the separation of people by race, controlled every aspect of a person’s life in South Africa. Apartheid justified the conflicts in the government, the enforcement of policy, and the brutal means of enforcement. Apartheid means “separateness” in Afrikaans and was a social science of discrimination in South Africa with four categories – white, colored, Indian, and black. Policies of discrimination and segregation were in place in the late 19\(^{\text{th}}\) century and early 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century, with wealthy white famers and businessmen dominating the government structures in South Africa. In 1948 the National Party, made up primarily of whites of Afrikaner heritage, gained control of the government. This government established absolute rule and instituted “grand apartheid” as state policy. Race was the defining concept of society, with rigid segregation in every aspect of life. Apartheid

\(^{14}\) Maria Ericson, *Reconciliation and the Search for a Shared Moral Landscape: An Exploration Based upon a Study of Northern Ireland and South Africa* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), 329, 330.
reinforced the belief that the whites were a chosen people with a God-given destiny to rule. The policy forced black families from their homes for relocation elsewhere without any provisions. Apartheid limited education for non-whites and controlled movement and assembly. Enforcement was often ruthless and with little recourse. From a practical standpoint, apartheid allowed the government to regulate land ownership and labor mobility to the benefit of wealthy and powerful businessmen and farmers. In the mid 1930s and 1940s, many original supporters of apartheid objected to issues of social welfare and racial exploitation. In 1953 those in opposition to apartheid founded the Liberal Party (LP).

The government determined the rules. The system of apartheid worked in favor of whites, and the policy, as administered by the white government, required obedience and acceptance of all. Not to accept the rules and regulations resulted in correction and possible harm – physical, psychological, social, or economic - to the accused, friends, and family. The rules and enforcement of apartheid impoverished the black majority. Apartheid eroded any element of trust and cooperation, essential to good government, between the privileged whites and white government and the rest of South Africa.

The policy of apartheid placed the white government against the black native majority. Significant violence began in the early 1950s and escalated and increased over the decades. In March 1960 police responded to large but peaceful black demonstrations in Sharpsville with gunfire, injury, and death to the demonstrators. The government declared a state of emergency and banned the major black organizations, including the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). When violence responded to violence, the government marked black leaders, subject to arrest,
for death or imprisoned if located. In 1964 the government arrested Nelson Mandela, one of the recognized leaders of the outlawed ANC and head of its armed wing. Mandela was tried and sentenced to life imprisonment. Many in leadership positions escaped to exile or went underground to stay and fight for their people.\textsuperscript{15} As the conflict continued, the policies of the government dictated extreme security measures, cloaked in official secrecy, to control and silence opposition. Extreme measures included terror, physical and psychological torture, brutal rape, disfigurement, savage death, betrayal, and treatment of other human beings that would defy the imagination of much of the civilized world. In the working world of the government military and security forces, line officers were told these tactics were the only means for survival of “their people” against the opposition. Government chaplains were often part of the team, giving assurance that this work was blessed and carried out God’s will.

Although black resistance began as non-violent with strikes, boycotts, and rallies, the brutal responses from the government convinced some black leaders they needed to match violence with violence with armed resistance and attacks on government targets. The lack of trust emerged in black groups opposing the white government. Ideological and leadership differences existed within the black community. Old feuds and violence erupted. Some liberation groups targeted suspected black informers and traitors for stoning, burning or beating. Dealing with these issues, within some liberation groups, mirrored the tactics of the white oppressors.

South African faith organizations and concerned citizens and groups joined the liberation organizations in renewing demands to the government for an end to human

\textsuperscript{15} In giving the general background concerning the rule of grand apartheid and the responses, I relied generally on Nigel Worden. \textit{The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Apartheid, Democracy}, 4\textsuperscript{th} ed. (Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), in particular those chapters addressing apartheid, 73-133.
rights violations. Ultimately, on both sides, the need for an end to violence was conceded; the need to work toward healing was recognized. The choice was between descending further into destruction as a divided nation and negotiating a life together as the people of a new South Africa. In 1985 the Government covertly opened up lines of communication with Mandela in prison and the ANC in exile.\textsuperscript{16} A documentary, aired in October 2009 by the Public Broadcasting Company in the Masterpiece Contemporary Series, recounts the secret initiative with the ANC and the government meetings with Mandela, both sets of meetings occurring from 1985 to 1989. The international business community had placed sanctions on South Africa. The leading South African gold company provided financial backing for the peace talks with ANC to protect their business interests and promote peace, but with the understanding that any connection would be denied if the talks blew up instead of produced peace.

The plot that the documentary presents was complex, but the actual facts provided high drama. The success of the twelve sets of talks between 1985 and 1989 emerged from multiple, well-planned, but testy dialogues at a secluded estate in England. Mandela met with government officials but made no concessions, personally or ideologically. Although separated, the liberation leadership maintained a unified front. An end to human rights violations and movement toward full representation in government and equality in South Africa was not negotiable. The breakthrough occurred after a guarded sense of trust allowed the negotiators in England to recognize their common pain and loss.

\textsuperscript{16} Allen, \textit{Rabble Rouser for Peace}, 283.
as a result of the conflicts in their country and their shared humanity. The negotiators reached a tentative agreement.\textsuperscript{17}

In 1989 in South Africa black liberation forces and the white government seemed to be deadlocked with no victory in sight for either, only further destruction of the nation. In February 1990, the release from prison of Nelson Mandela signaled the beginning of negotiations toward peaceful settlement and the end of conflict. Unfortunately, during the period of negotiations the brutal conflicts not only continued but escalated. Some parties on both sides of the conflict considered this a final chance to enforce their position through violent means. The decision for holding open elections was reached in 1993. A general framework for a representative democracy was also in place.

The TRC arose from negotiation, clearly a part of the new democratic system. Significant power was held in tension by the two sides. Hearty political maneuvering with argument, persuasion, bartering, and compromise birthed the TRC. For the white negotiators, some form of amnesty was absolutely necessary. The absence of an amnesty provision shattered the prospect of a peaceful conclusion. Generals in the ANC forces sent their own message, requiring some form of amnesty for\textit{ their} men. The new government included a procedure to grant amnesty for all political acts of gross human violence after investigation through the TRC.\textsuperscript{18}

A means of establishing a measure of truth was critical to a lasting peace and the possibility of building a nation where opponents in the conflict would all thrive and promote the well-being of the nation and all of its people. Public hearings before the

\textsuperscript{17} Channel 4, Target Entertainment Group and Masterpiece. \textit{Endgame} DVD, based on the book: \textit{Fall of Apartheid} by Robert Harvey. Directed by Pete Travis (Thousand Oaks, CA: monterey media inc., 2010).

\textsuperscript{18} Allen, \textit{Rabble-Rouser for Peace}, 344.
commission provided a forum for the telling of truth about gross human rights violations. There was incentive for truth. Full and honest disclosure was the price of amnesty, even for heinous political crimes. If the Amnesty Committee adjudged “truth” told at the hearing to be less than complete, amnesty would be denied. The hope of the TRC was to promote truth and reconciliation for long term flourishing of the land and all the people. During the first session in October 1994 Parliament signaled establishment of TRC. Unlike a term for peace imposed by victors where revenge and retribution dominate the proceedings, TRC would be the means through which the new nation hoped to begin building a new relationship within and to deal with the specters from the conflict. Between 1994 and 1998, as the new government began its own work, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa accomplished its massive task.

Reconciliation, presented within the legislation and the TRC, was a multi-step process to mark the end of hostilities and promote unity of the nation. How each step contributed to individual healing and reconciliation had an impact not only on the individuals but also on the nation. Tutu and his Christian colleagues viewed reconciliation in a larger picture, one that embraced individual survivors and the nation as a whole. For them God initiated reconciliation through Christ for the entire world. Theirs was the task to work through the political body, TRC, to implement God’s reconciliation in the new South Africa. This Christian viewpoint declared confession and forgiveness were not sufficient; the offensive acts should cease and not recur. True reconciliation in South Africa required some form of restitution in the political solution. In supporting the establishment of TRC, Tutu and the leaders of the faith communities acted as the people of God and the people of South Africa.
Included in other sections of this paper, reports and commentary from South Africa describe the establishment and work of the TRC and initiatives for reconciliation after the TRC concluded. Individuals and organizations within South Africa embraced the task of promoting the long term process of reconciliation within the new political system. Work in many varied fields addressed community problems. Planning and execution of programs for healing included those people harmed by apartheid. The work and recommendations of the TRC began the process in South Africa to build a new relationship between the people of that newly constituted nation. Expanding reconciliation was the work for generations to come.

**II.3 History of Violence in South Africa**

Violence and discrimination over a protracted time-period was a fact of life in South Africa. To address fully the possible solutions for the long term, the new leadership took this history into account. The TRC mandate was investigating and documenting gross human rights violations with political motivation, committed within or outside South Africa in the period 1960-1994. The period covered perhaps the most violent and bloody period in a larger span of human rights abuses in southern and South Africa. The legislation dictated a relatively short time frame of two and one-half years for the hearings. Consequently, the TRC heard a limited number of cases. *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report (Report)* published information about the cases that involved processing statements of 21,000 people, with hearings for about 10% of these, and consideration of 7,500 applications for amnesty. The final report stated the evidence to be conclusive for 38,000 gross violations of human rights.19 The white

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apartheid government of the National Party followed the philosophy and violent methods that were familiar to those who lived in South Africa.

The atrocities subject to the TRC hearings followed a long list of historical events that included violations and violent abuse of human rights. The Report listed the six major occurrences prior to apartheid, included below:

a. The importation of slaves to the Cape and the brutal treatment they endured between 1652 (when the first slaves were imported) and 1834 (when slavery was abolished).

b. The many wars of dispossesssion and colonial conquest dating from the first war against the Khoisan in 1659, through several so-called frontier conflicts as white settlers penetrated northwards, to the Bambatha uprising of 1906, the last attempt at armed defense by an indigenous grouping.

c. The systematic hunting and elimination of indigenous nomadic peoples such as the San and Khoi-khoi by settler groups, both Boer and British, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

d. The Difaquane or Mfecane where thousands died and tens of thousands were displaced in a Zulu-inspired process of state formation and dissolution.

e. The South African War of 1899-1902 during which British forces herded Boer women and children into concentration camps in which some 20,000 died – a gross human rights violation of shocking proportions.

f. The genocidal war in the early years of the 20th century directed by the German colonial administration of South West Africa at the Herero people, which took them to the brink of extinction.

Protection of many human rights did not extend to the native black populations. In 1909, the British government responded to an all-white South African constitutional convention and merged the British South African colonies into one nation and granted independence under a constitutional form of government. The process transferred power to a minority of white voters, omitting civil rights protections for the indigenous black majority. Acts of the subsequent governments stripped the vote from all but whites.

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20 Difaquane and Mfecane are Zulu names, both used to describe the period of widespread chaos and warfare among indigenous tribes in southern Africa during the period between 1815 and 1840.

The 1913 Land Act was a form of legislative violence, done to the land and the indigenous people of South Africa. In one stroke it limited black ownership and partnership in the land and eliminated a modest, though self-supporting, agricultural segment of the black population. The act prohibited:

...African land ownership outside of the initial seven per cent of land allocated to the so-called traditional reserves and end(ed) sharecropping and non-tenancy arrangements on white-owned farms. The Land Act set in motion a massive forced removal of African people that led, amongst other things, to the deaths of many hundreds of people who found themselves suddenly landless.22

Before the apartheid period, law enforcement agents routinely used massive force against civilian protestors and striking workers both black and white. Government forces killed hundreds of civilians, including innocent bystanders, to silence the rebellion against punitive taxes, inhuman living conditions, and enslaving terms of work. In the time frame of the events presented to TRC, the government operated in a well-established tradition of unjustified use of unlimited force against opponents of the regime.23

Apartheid, discussed more fully in Section II.2, became an official part of the political system in 1948. The white minority, about thirteen percent of the population, held economic and political power to control the black majority of about seventy-five percent and to marginalize the rest. The white, ruling party used state power and force to repress legitimate demands through the 1960s. Force increased to include house arrest, imprisonment, torture, and assassination. The government arrested an estimated 200,000 between 1960 and 1992; many were tortured in detention.24


Section III - The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa

The job of the TRC was the hopeful beginning of healing, urgently needed to end the cycles of violence. A review of significant dates reveals the incredibly short period of time in which the TRC organized and accomplished the work. February 1990, when Mandela was released from prison, marks the beginning of open negotiations for peace. In November 1993 Parliament adopted an interim constitution with a transitional council. Elections for the new democracy were April 27, 1994; President Mandela was inaugurated in May 1994. The first session of Parliament was October 1994; the “Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act,” which would establish the TRC, was introduced in November of that year. In July 1995 the bill, with an effective date of December 1, 1995, passed and was signed by Mandela. TRC Commissioners were proposed, reviewed, and chosen, then appointed on December 15, 1995. The first meeting of the commissioners was December 16, 1995. Public hearings began in February 1996. The final Report was delivered to President Mandela on October 29, 1998. The longer, more difficult follow-up to the TRC Report required recognition of the full human and economic picture if the country hoped to emerge as a healthier, united nation, finally accomplishing decolonization.

From the start the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was a political creation but intentionally constituted as the means to heal the terrible wounds inflicted on South Africa. The task given to the TRC was staggering from an ideological and a legislative standpoint. The resources and time allocated to perform the work were minimal considering the work involved. Help came from many sources. International businesses,

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governments, and schools offered funding and support. Religious organizations and non-government organizations in South Africa provided forums and conferences for academics and community organizers. Consideration of practical observations and recommendations were crucial, as well as theoretical concepts, to plan for long term goals of peace and equitable sharing of resources. Possible solutions to continuing conflict remained on the agenda. In particular however, Dr. Alex Boraine, the Executive Director of the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), provided basic support in the establishment of the TRC. Early in the peace negotiation discussion, he gathered a working group to explore the possibilities for some form of reconciliation commission. Dialogue over several years included several major workshops and conferences, and wide-ranging international and local consultation. With hope and longing for a new and united South Africa, those appointed to the task frantically tried to accomplish their assignment properly, fairly, and competently.

The vehicle for this powerful hope and rhetoric was a huge, new governmental agency that invented a new process. Legislation from the new Parliament mandated the membership mix to represent factions recently in deadly conflict. The Commissioners of TRC organized and directed the Commission as a whole. They had oversight for the three committees on human rights violations, reparations and rehabilitation, and amnesty and for the investigative unit. They were responsible for the day-to-day operations and the preparation and publishing of a final report. The legislation dictated that the Commission membership would number eleven to seventeen people without a high political profile. The legislation allowed for possible appointment of up to two non-South African Commissioners. Other truth commissions had this level of foreign participation. The

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26 Cochrane, de Gruchy, and Martin, Facing the Truth, 2.
politics of reconciliation in South Africa rejected such a visible presence of outside influence on the Commission. The TRC was a South African solution.

President Mandela opened the nomination process for commissioners and allowed public submissions for consideration. From the start he gave the people of the new nation avenues for representation. A selection committee composed of individuals from government and civil societies had the task of preparing a list of twenty five. Mandela chose fifteen with the advice of his cabinet and heads of political parties. To make a more representative body, he appointed two who were not on the list from the committee. The long process of selection included numerous hearings and meetings. Ultimately, the interest of national unity directed the appointments.

The TRC was a deliberate political exercise to unify and reconcile the nation and promote human rights. The commission named seven women and ten men who spanned the political spectrum in their affiliations. Racial representation, in terms of the old classifications under apartheid, included seven blacks, six whites, and two each of “colored” and Indian extraction. Although attempting to promote trust and inclusion for all of the factions in South Africa, the process set up an assembly that held a diversity of basic values and assumptions in accomplishing the legislative task entrusted to them. Commissioners held contradictory views about human rights violations.²⁷ Commissioners of the TRC announced on December 15, 1995, were:

Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Chairperson), Dr Alex Boraine (Vice-Chairperson), Ms Mary Burton, Adv Chris de Jager, the Revd Bongani Finca, Ms Sisi Khampepe, Mr Richard Lyster, Mr Wynand Malan, the Revd Dr Khoza Mgojo, Ms Hlengiwe Mkhize, Mr Dumisa Ntsebeza, Dr Wendy Orr, Adv Denzil

Potgieter, Dr Mapule F Ramshala, Dr Fazel Randers, Ms Yasmin Sooka and Ms Glenda Wildschut.28

The legislation assigned the TRC four major tasks to promote national unity and reconciliation:

a. analyzing and describing the “causes, nature and extent” of gross violations of human rights that occurred between 1 March 1960 and 10 May 1994, including the identification of individuals and organizations responsible for such violations;

b. making recommendations to the President on measures to prevent future violations of human rights;

c. the restoration of the human and civil dignity of victims of gross human rights violations through testimony and through recommendations to the President concerning reparations for victims;

d. granting amnesty to persons who made full disclosure of relevant facts relating to acts associated with a police objective.29

Before the actual hearings and work of the TRC began, the Commission met and set out the details of the organization. The Department of Justice assisted in the process of establishing offices and infrastructure. The complexities of operating as a “quasi-judicial” body complicated every aspect of the TRC operation. The investigations proceeded with subpoena power. The amnesty hearings made determinations as a judicial body.

The first meeting of the TRC was on December 16, 1995. The commissioners organized TRC and set Cape Town as national headquarters. The TRC members served on the four major segments of the commission; the Human Rights Violations Committee, the Amnesty Committee, the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee and the Investigation Unit. The public TRC meetings were in fact hearings before the Human Rights Violations Committee, Archbishop Tutu, presiding as Chairperson. The second full meeting, in January 1996, established four regional offices. Management of information was addressed. The need for access and storing of information was critical as

28 Report, vol. 1, 44.

was media and communication strategy. The TRC recognized also the importance of
security for both the persons of the TRC and the records. The integrity of the process in
the public forum required openness and transparency in a protected, safe environment.

The third meeting approved a full staffing plan with job descriptions and appointments to
manage finance, research, and human resources. The start-up phase was completed in
about four months.\textsuperscript{30}

During this early period of hopeful but fragile peace, the government sought to
open the processes to the people who had been so completely shut out by apartheid. The
TRC invited and included participation in their work. South Africa had a long history of
social activity through religious organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs),
community-based organizations (CBOs), and individual citizen participation.

Organizations and individuals provided communication to local communities, helped in
setting up public hearings, and assisted in taking statements. Their resources and skills
enhanced forums and workshops and contributed to debates on policy issues that emerged
as the Commission did its work. Support from the community was critical at the personal
level for those who testified before the TRC, survivors, and the families of victims.\textsuperscript{31}

Both the hearings and participation in the process gave voice to the former voiceless in
South Africa. The strategy worked toward unity and reconciliation.

“Reconciliation” was a word that had many shades of meanings. John de Gruchy
advised that within different cultures, the meaning may be understood with further subtle
differences of interpretation. The eleven official languages in South Africa suggested the
variety of interpretations that were operative there. The person’s conversations and

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Report}, vol. 1, 44-47.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Report}, vol. 1, 406-410.
expectations brought in other influences on interpretation of reconciliation. In South Africa de Gruchy declared the realities of apartheid dehumanizing; so reconciliation would involve recovery of identity and self respect. De Gruchy considered reconciliation as the restoration of a relationship, the journey toward healing. Reconciliation occurred in stages. The objectives were always ahead and still embedded in the process. In October 1998 President Mandela mirrored this approach in accepting the TRC final report. He named the work of the TRC an aid to healing, celebrated as a job well done under trying circumstances. The work of reconciliation had only begun.

Throughout the creation and life of the TRC, critics were many. De Gruchy acknowledged that some critics pointed out well-founded omissions and mistakes. As the TRC reflected political interpretation, some of those involved personal and political agendas. However, many critics included suggestions to facilitate reconciliation and reparation. TRC admittedly did not satisfy completely the hope for peace and reconciliation. That was for the years to come. TRC did produce signs of reconciliation including the new democracy of South Africa. The challenge continually was to evaluate the progress toward reconciliation.

Truth-finding, the object of all facets of the TRC, was one of the signs; truth could begin to build trust. Tactics of lies and falsehood used in the conflict, especially by the agencies of the government, proved major obstacles for the discovery of truth. Code language and formalized innuendo were tools of the trade, embedded in official directives and reports. Intentional misinformation, sworn secrecy concerning atrocities, and


elimination of people who participated or knew the facts were routine elements in security procedures during the years of conflict. For those in control, wiping out the evidence base that would identify the perpetrators and their directors was essential. Many disappearances and sources of terrorist activities remained a mystery. The government manipulated traditional sources of information with misinformation rather than truth. Influence on the local media and major church publications compounded the question of truth for those who relied on this source of news for local information. The investigative process for political and criminal violations introduced government versions or falsehoods in the discovery process and in the identification of facts within reports of violence. Government agents ignored or intimidated victims and families of victims. The government corruption of reports resulted in questions and confusion. Within communities, fear and assumptions bred rumor and fabrication that filled in the blanks to form stories and positions that became the “truth” for some.

The open hearings of the TRC and global media coverage changed the setting and allowed opportunity for those who were voiceless to speak, to ask questions, and expect truth in the answers. Although imperfect, the TRC process provided a degree of transparency. The requirement for full disclosure for amnesty brought to light hidden information and details of government security operations.

The amnesty process was separate from TRC hearings of the Human Rights Committee led by Tutu. The Amnesty Committee operated within judicial guidelines under the authority of the TRC legislation and held powers of implementation. Legal maneuvers surrounding the operation of the TRC determined that the provision for amnesty was the only constitutionally guaranteed component of the TRC. The process
itself was long, complicated, and extended by related legal challenges. An applicant could challenge a decision for review and judicial scrutiny. The Amnesty Committee heard cases through the year 2001. The posted amnesty figures showed 7,112 applications for amnesty were processed. Of these, the Amnesty Committee refused 5,392, granted 849, and granted in part and refused in part 54. The remaining cases were withdrawals, duplicates, or other dismissals.35 Some critics argued that amnesty supported a culture of impunity. Groups from both sides of the conflict argued for blanket amnesty. This process within the TRC process drew passionate responses. The legislation establishing the TRC determined that long term benefit to the nation required the opportunity for limited amnesty.

According to the TRC’s model of restorative justice, reparations provided a counterbalance to amnesty. The Reparations and Rehabilitation Committee proposals included interim reparation to victims, individual reparation to be paid annually for six years, symbolic reparations such as monuments and memorials, community rehabilitation meeting developmental needs, and institutional reforms to prevent human rights violations in the future.36 The argument was made that programs and projects that address the basic causes of poverty and community harm caused by apartheid provided a long lasting and structural form of reparation. For many of the victims and their families, this approach was not persuasive. The practical problem lay in the fact that the TRC could only make recommendations. Perpetrators were immediately free; victims had to wait for relief. The political process of the Parliament determined the extent of programs and


36 Report, vol. 5, 175, 176.
funding for TRC recommendations. This reality, combined with the limited funds available for the new South African government, had a debilitating effect on the restitution portion of the TRC. This weakness was and remains a major source of vocal and insistent complaints about the TRC process. Voluntary reparation from the perpetrators themselves provided little relief. The cynicism of those needing and expecting payment increased as members of the struggle against apartheid, now in parliament and part of the elite, argued for symbolic rather than material compensations for victims who remain in poverty.37

The final Report, prepared by the commission and staff, presented the insider evaluation of the work done, as well as the recommendations required by legislation. The government thanked the commissioners and officially suspended TRC on October 29, 1998, when President Nelson Mandela accepted the Report. The committees continued to finalize their work including the establishment of archives and an official web site, http://www.justice.gov.za/trc. This site made available reports and information concerning the hearings, transcripts of testimony, and findings of the hearings and amnesty proceedings. The site published reports of committees through 2003.

The TRC drew internal and external critics. The TRC Report included some of the criticism from Commissioners and staff with a wide range of backgrounds and experience. The result was internal discussion and differences throughout the process, some contentious but many involving healthy and legitimate differences. The Commission had accomplished the task given to them. Those within the TRC agreed that the goal of reconciliation remained nebulous. Recommendations listed specific areas for the government to address to promote reconciliation and unity in South Africa. The

37 Ericson, Reconciliation, 347-350.
country lacked and should have basic programs that could close the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged - education, shelter, and access to clean water, health services, and jobs. The report called for those who benefitted from apartheid to contribute from their resources to address the poverty caused by apartheid. It also recommended that Parliament establish policies that addressed and would be enforced against racism; against the abuse of human rights; for the promotion of the safety and well-being within the community, against serious crime, against corruption in both public and private sector, and for the establishment of a true rule of law with justice. The recommendations continued. Individuals who committed crimes, without grant of amnesty through the TRC process, should be prosecuted. Gross human rights violations ordered and performed by official security personnel became apparent through the investigation and hearings of TRC. The Report stated that those violations could not be given sanction because of inaction by the new South African government.38

Specific recommendations for community rehabilitation often relied on non-government organizations (NGOs), faith communities, and government agencies. The recommendations stressed that communities and geographical areas with a history of abuse during apartheid held priority for implementation of programs. Survivors of human rights and economic assaults required some form of reparation. Prison conditions mandated change to meet humanitarian norms and for monitoring. Other recommendations addressed commercial interests and asked industry and businesses to examine their practices and assist in eliminating apartheid discrimination in jobs, participate financially in programs to close the gap between poverty and great wealth, and assist in equitable access to land. Issues specifically pertaining to women and children

deserved priority. A critical recommendation stressed effective protection provided through the legal, judicial, and security systems must be reestablished and operate with safeguards to avoid future corruption. Checks and balances were necessary for all of the government. Key to most programs and projects was universal access to information and transparency in the efforts to promote reconciliation. Several recommendations covered the free flow of information, critical for a democracy. Media restrictions should be minimal. The public should continue to have access to TRC material and records, including the computerized database, all of which must be preserved and maintained to ensure record integrity.  

Throughout the process, as Chairperson of the TRC, Archbishop Tutu was candid with the people of South Africa. After completing the final report he celebrated but admitted the work had limitations. He shared the frustration and constraints felt by the commission. He accepted criticism and challenges as part of the process. The legitimate complaints would improve the chance of future efforts. Basically, however, he urged that the TRC be seen as part of the beginning of a process that must develop and continue. Continuing beneficial change for the well-being of all of the people would heal the nation. Tutu spoke often of ubuntu, the African understanding of interdependence of self and community. The spirit of ubuntu defined South Africa as a family composed of Afrikaner, English, colored, Indian, and black. In the new society all were valued. With the completion of the Report, the Commission had done its share to promote national unity and reconciliation. Now the people must “strive together for this beautiful and

blessed land as the rainbow people of God.”40 The assigned work of the TRC now completed, the task shifted to the government and individuals to act in specific, concrete ways toward actualizing reconciliation.

In June 1999 a conference, “Commissioning the Past – An Evaluation of the South African TRC,” created a multi-disciplined forum for evaluating the TRC.41 Academics, community members and members of the TRC organization participated to present a broad evaluation of the TRC. The product of political negotiation and compromise, TRC received a mission of truth finding to facilitate reconciliation. The conference declared that the work had to continue.42

In response to recommendations made in the TRC Report, multiple programs offered different means of healing for individuals and groups. Disagreement about how well the programs assisted in the process was often passionate. Yet the proponents engaged with words, ideas, and concrete examples rather than violence when they disagreed. The new government needed honest evaluation within South Africa to adjust time and funds spent working toward reconciliation. Funds for the new government in South Africa were limited. Ongoing basic needs were overwhelming. Building a new infrastructure, establishing public utilities, educational facilities, and medical treatment were critical budget items.

Many reparations, expected as part of the Truth and Reconciliation process, did not materialize. Academics and news commentators, as well as individuals within

40 Report, vol. 1, 22, 23.
41 The conference was organized by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation and the University of the Witwatersrand’s History Workshop. Financial support came from the European Unions’ CWIC Fund. See Posel and Simpson, eds. Commissioning the Past, vii.
42 Posel and Simpson, eds. Commissioning the Past, 12, 13.
participating government and private organizations, provided insight into how well the people of South Africa believed the reconciliation process was moving forward. Many survivors felt betrayed by the process that promised more than it delivered. Reports about programs and commentary beyond the organizational efforts contributed to the total picture. Personal stories provided inspiration as well as the basis of reality for healing for individuals, families, communities, and nation. As admitted observers, readers and commentators outside of South Africa tried to understand the deadly conflict and the agreed method of ending it. Only then could they attempt to assess whether the resolution had resulted in concrete measures of the reconciliation process.

The government, NGOs, CBOs, and interfaith communities continued to press for programs that provided truth and restoration. Working together they were a powerful agent of change. The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IRJ) is representative of the numerous organizations that support and monitor the real world of reconciliation in South Africa. Founders launched the IJR in May 2000 and self-consciously located in South Africa. IJR is one of many groups to address specific means to facilitate TRC recommendations. It promotes nation-building, bringing all factions together into dialogue, knowing social change cannot occur in isolation from developments on the African continent and the whole world. IRJ seeks long-term solutions and describes itself as the interface between academia and the broader structures of civil society. It brings together insights and research and promotes debate and programs of action in society as a whole. Art, community projects, education, and other programs to address healing and methods to deal with oppression and violence. Suggested strategies promote cooperation
between individuals and groups that had lived in isolation from one another. IJR provides a safe space for people to learn to live together in mutual respect and equity.

The Institute developed a *SA Reconciliation Barometer* in 2003, tracking public sentiment toward changes, to assist in evaluation of the established socio-political programs. The *2008 Barometer* (most recent available copy on-line) reported progress in South Africa ten years after the end of apartheid. Complex, the instrument attempted to use multifaceted but basic indicators of peaceful coexistence. The report took into account the uncertainty of the global economy, the shortage of resources, and skills deficits that inhibit government efforts to reduce citizen vulnerability. The improvement of conditions had not met the expectations of those in greatest need. The insecurity of poverty either instigated violence or deepened conflict along existing domestic or regional fault lines. Poverty and inequality remain in South Africa. Regardless, the government addressed these issues. Although confidence and trust in key public institutions declined, significant trust remained. The report concluded by pointing out that the developed North continued as the center of the economic crisis, but developing nations were likely to suffer most by its impact.43

*The 2008 Transformation Audit (Audit)* is another publication and evaluation tool of the Justice and Reconciliation Institute. Contributors from within South Africa provide the expertise of their fields. The *Audit* recognized that South Africa was at a turning point in the process of transformation within a democracy The *Audit* pointed out fault lines in socio-economic inequity and access to basic services. Those in poverty remained most at risk as changes in national and global economy faltered. Realignment within political

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parties that maintained solidarity during apartheid challenged political stability.

Economic and political stability in the past contributed to the movement toward dealing effectively with social and economic injustice in the political arena. Stability was still urgently needed in programs for healing. Reported conditions made stability elusive for planning purposes.⁴⁴

The *Audit* addressed the economy, the labor market, education and skills, and income poverty and inequality using data from 1995 to 2008. The extent of the deficit in all areas was staggering for the oppressed as they moved out of the time of apartheid. Although some gains were made in all areas, the initial momentum slowed. The resources for providing basic services were limited. The people of South Africa expected the new government to address needs in a way to produce long term benefits for the community but with immediate alleviation of suffering. The *Audit* provided statistical information that linked performance of national plans and programs with immediate consequences. The *Audit* presented information as a snapshot of the reconciliation process, recognizing that many factors influenced the picture. Indicators of improvement for those in greatest need encouraged long term investment for long term benefit.⁴⁵

Healing of communities was a matter of importance in the recommendations of the TRC. One of the sections of the IJR directly addressed the healing of community in conjunction with its focus on dealing with the past and allowing stories to be told. Case studies involved specific initiatives coming from a shared experience. The IRJ reports concerning the case of the Craddock Four is included in this section as an example of

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⁴⁵ See generally Hofmeyr, *2008 Transformation Audit.*
reporting in the IRJ evaluation of the TRC process and as a prelude to the section of my paper examining the Craddock Four case.

“Nyameka’s Story” was told by the widow of Matthew Goniwe, the community leader who was brutally murdered, one of the “Cradock Four.” Her story was the story of her community as well as her immediate family. Although she was thankful for obtaining, through the TRC, information that had been hidden by the government for so many years, she wondered what would be done to complete the process of reconciliation that was begun. Ms. Goniwe was particularly critical that the reparations and other recommendations of the TRC had not materialized. Her concerns included her own township of Lingelihle, once a vital community, recently treated as a relic of the past.

Community healing was an answer to that concern. Her premise was to begin to lift the psychological burden of pain that had sapped the energy from the community. She proposed that the community take on the responsibility for its own healing. Many people felt encouraged and welcomed by the opportunity to participate in telling stories in a safe atmosphere, recovering the history and values of the community, looking for solutions for the community and by the community, reconciling fragmented relations, and encouraging communal commemoration. The effort was among many in the healing of individuals, the community, and the nation. Ms. Goniwe believed that true healing required both sides of the apartheid conflict for reconciliation. She experienced little movement on the part of former oppressors to be part of the healing. This blocked her ability to forgive. She knew what would facilitate consideration of true and mutual reconciliation. Perpetrators should reveal all the truth concerning their deeds and take responsibility for their actions. In
addition Ms. Goniwe yearned for a human response, one that showed concern about how actions cause harm to others and one that is truly remorseful for past actions.46

The Cradock Community Healing Programme, initiated by Nyameka Goniwe in 2007, was a community driven process that focused on history, memory, and commemorative events, forged partnership with the churches, and encouraged dialogue and reflection. To include all of Cradock, community organizers set up consultative meetings with various community-based organizations including the youth. Some commented that they felt forgotten. Others declared that they did not know that people in the community still cared about another’s pain. Churches participated and demonstrated respect and support for the program. Response to the program was positive. One hopeful result of the program was that the three communities that make up Cradock joined in some level of dialogue. The dividing lines of apartheid racially separated the communities. They now look for a way to come together. For the IJR the program was not considered a solution but a model to address challenges involved in reconciliation.47

Section IV - The Case of the “Cradock Four”

The “Cradock Four” case is an example of the notorious cases brought before the TRC. The testimony reflected the quality of life and expectations for a black community and its leaders during the apartheid era. The facts of the case provide insight into the extent of the violence and conspiracy in covert actions of the government forces. The


official Report is the basis for a synopsis of the background and facts of the case.\textsuperscript{48} This information is supplemented from a narrative of the events, written by a South African attorney, based on knowledge and research.\textsuperscript{49} Cradock is a small farming town in the East Cape area of South Africa, north of Port Elizabeth. The current Eastern Cape Province is the second largest of the nine provinces and has the third largest population. In 1991 unemployment was above the national average and more than half the adult population had no formal income. Levels of illiteracy and life expectancy were lower and levels of poverty higher there and in the Northern Province than any others provinces.\textsuperscript{50} Cradock was considered the heartland of the ANC as well as the home of many supporters of the United Democratic Front (UDF), an umbrella body within the liberation movement rather than a political organization. The black township of Lingelihle at Cradock had a long history of resistance to apartheid.

The “Cradock Four” were Matthew Goniwe, Fort Calata, Sparrow Mkonoto, and Sicelo Mhlauli. They were abducted and murdered between Port Elizabeth and Cradock on June 27, 1985. Their bodies were found at separate sites, burned and mutilated. Official police investigations blamed the deaths on the rival black liberation organization also operating in the East Cape, Anzanian People’s Organization (Azapo). A revealing display of the callous South African justice system, the first inquest was February 1989, over three years after the deaths. This proceeding simply found that “unknown persons” killed the “Cradock Four.” The 1993 inquest reopened the case, and investigations


\textsuperscript{50} Report, vol. 3, 34.
disclosed a top military “signal,” a code word understood by all in the chain of command, calling for Goniwe’s “permanent removal,” the order to kill Goniwe. The court found security forces responsible for the murders, although, again, named no person. This summarizes the “Cradock Four” case under the apartheid government.

Matthew Goniwe was the popular principal and math teacher in the secondary school at Lingelihle, the black township of Cradock. His position was one of considerable authority since other jobs open to blacks were basically as domestics or laborers with the railroad. In June 1983, as part of a protest against rent increases, Goniwe and a friend and fellow teacher, Fort Calata, helped organize the Cradock Residents Association (Cradora) and the Cradock Youth Association (Cradoya). Unknown to Goniwe, the security police “bugged” these meetings with community leaders and subsequent meetings. Government operatives broadcast his movements and plans. By August the petition protesting rents failed to change the increase but rallied the people.

In December 1983 the Department of Education and Training (DET) notified Goniwe of his transfer to another school district. He refused the transfer as politically motivated but was willing to stay, “demoted” to classroom teacher. DET denied his offer in February 1984 and dismissed Goniwe. The community rallied to the injustice. To protest, a school boycott began that lasted fifteen months, the longest school boycott in the country. Police harassment and detentions increased. Police arrested Goniwe and his nephew along with Calata and other organizers in March as endangering the maintenance of law and order. They held the men in prison without redress. The government immediately placed a three month ban on meetings of Cradora and Cradoya. The school boycott continued. The release of Goniwe and Calata was the price to end the boycott.
Students stayed out of school in spite of the heavy opposition to the action by Azapo, the rival black group. Azapo claimed education was more important than the protest. Black students and adult leaders in Cradock were detained and tortured on numerous occasions with increased violence from both government security forces and black rivals.

On June 16th a one-day consumer boycott was successfully held. The community also held work stay-aways to protest the government action. In August, while Calata was in custody, DET removed him from his teaching position. In October 1984 the government released the Cradock men. A heroes’ welcome greeted them at home. Formation of community groups and protests continued, with Goniwe acting as a UDF rural organizer. The success of Goniwe’s work convinced the security forces that he was the key factor in all the unrest and resistance in that area. They supported and encouraged the rival black leaders to attack him personally and also to denounce the work of his organization. The white forces in the area divided to conquer. Top level security force leaders also targeted Goniwe and his comrades. Their decision resulted in even more intensive and brutal measures to repress the activity in Cradock. Harsh repressive measures dealt with the school boycott to break the organization. These measures did not have the desired effect.51

Resistance continued. The issue of reinstatement of Goniwe and Catala, the price for an end to the school boycott, still appeared to some in the government to be the impasse. However, in April 1985, the Cradock leadership examined the price asked of the students who had lost over a year of classes. Education held great value to families in Cradock; so the leadership re-evaluated this tactic. The school boycott was called off, although the DET still refused to reinstate the two men. Violence continued to escalate.

The security forces and army combined, stepped in with a show of force, and rounded up anyone they suspected of resistance and violence against the apartheid government. Some in the DET seemed to believe that restoring Goniwe to a position in the educational system would lead to restoring normalcy to Cradock. In May 1985 Jaap Strydom, head director of control in DET, and his deputy, J.N. Varmaak, met with Goniwe. Strydom asked why Goniwe refused the original transfer. After some discussion, Strydom suggested that reinstatement might be possible if Goniwe would reduce his activities in politics and violence and express some regret for the situation. He should focus on teaching within the rules of the profession. Goniwe responded that those concessions might be possible. He would need to consider them. The DET men left, giving an impression that this compromise was a good solution. They would get back in touch. Goniwe was skeptical about the conversation but later shared it with his friends in Port Elizabeth.

On Thursday, June 27, 1985, Goniwe and Calata joined with Sparrow Mkonto and Sicelo Mhlauli to attend a briefing with UDF in Port Elizabeth that evening and visit community leaders along the way. Mkonto was part of the UDF in the East Cape. Mhlauli was simply a friend on holiday in Cradock. Born there, he had taught in the Eastern Cape since 1981. Much of the discussion during the day between the men centered on meetings of civic associations and on threats and violence. They shared concerns about the hardships of students and parents in the schools, and Goniwe briefed them on his conversation with DET officials. The evening UDF briefing covered recent clashes between UDF and Azapo supporters in the townships. The four men left Port
Elizabeth that night about 9:30 p.m. with warnings to take care on their trip home. This was the last time they were seen alive by friends.\(^{52}\)

The lives and work of the men were significant in the liberation movement and openly admired. Their deaths brought a global response of both sorrow and outrage. The funeral service in Lingelihle for the “Cradock Four” on Saturday, July 20, 1985, drew a crowd of 60,000. Those in attendance held signs of solidarity with the ANC and posters proclaiming government responsibility for the deaths. Diplomats, church leaders, and journalists attended from all over the world. The Rev. Allan Boesak, a black Dutch Reformed Church minister, addressed the crowd and did not mince words; he placed the blame clearly. The murders were the work of the government and the police. He told all who were listening, “The people know and I know who murdered them. I say to you it was the death squads of the South African Police.”\(^{53}\) The families continued to investigate to find the actual perpetrators. Information made available at TRC hearings and other investigation revealed more of the truth. The families filed a claim for damages against the South African Defense Force (SADF) and South African Police (SAP) under the apartheid government. Ultimately they settled the case out of court.\(^{54}\)

At the 1993 reopened inquest of the “Cradock Four” case, the findings established that members of the security forces carried out the murders. Colonel Harold Snyman was a security policeman who from 1984 to 1986 was divisional commanding officer in the Eastern Cape, stationed in Port Elizabeth.\(^{55}\) Colonel Eric Winter was head of the security

\(^{52}\) Nicholson, *Permanent Removal*, 40-49.


police at Cradock from April 1985, assigned with specific instructions to address the unrest there. Commander Laurens Du Plessis served as Senior Staff Officer of Information at Eastern Province Command and in Communications Operations (Comops). He was secretary of the Eastern Province Joint Management Committee (JMC) during 1985, a secret government organization to obstruct work for the blacks. The JMC also gave warning of internal threats and acted to “defuse unrest.” The minutes of meetings were secret, every man swearing an oath never to divulge their activities. Du Plessis’ job also included psychological and propaganda exercises. Documents presented to the court established that the signal that Matthew Goniwe and his comrades should be “permanently removed from society” was directed to General Johannes (“Hekel”) van Rensburg. From 1982 van Rensburg was second to the State Security Council secretariat and in 1985 was appointed head of the strategy section. His duties included advice and coordination on security, economics, social and even constitutional matters, including execution of security matters. In 1993 the court under the apartheid government found that evidence only established the suspicion that Snyman, Winter, Du Plessis and van Rensburg were involved.

Investigation by attorneys for the “Cradock Four” families continued. The family participated in the TRC hearings. Information, revealed through the TRC process, clearly identified members of the apartheid government who played major roles in the planning and execution of the murders. The intricate and detailed plot included an abundance of

56 Nicholson, Permanent Removal, 118.
57 Nicholson, Permanent Removal, 95, 96.
58 Nicholson, Permanent Removal, 126.
59 Nicholson, Permanent Removal, 169.
cover-up and intrigue. Because of this, the extensive media coverage and public access to information through the TRC hearings was an important part of the process for family and friends. Seeing the proceedings and the people involved and/or hearing the testimony brought it all to life for others and allowed a new level of understanding for those who were not present at the hearings. Observation of demeanor and expression illuminated the meaning of words. Documentation remained available for verification.

A video, *Long Night’s Journey into Day*, captured this added dimension and covered four different cases before the TRC, one being the “Cradock Four.” The video presented actual testimony from the hearings and interviews with Nyameka Goniwe, Nomonde Calata, Eric Taylor, and the other security officials that sought amnesty. Ms. Goniwe was willing to listen but questioned how fully the story was told. She could not forgive Taylor. Tearfully, Ms. Goniwe said she was still hurt. Taylor was stoic in stating he knew he was wrong and hoped for forgiveness. He spoke of having to face his four year old daughter and family since everyone knew what he did during apartheid.60

Subsequent written reports of how Ms. Goniwe worked in the reconciliation programs for her community gained added significance for me. Seeing and hearing the actual people in the case through the video provided a more personal connection with them and a different, meaningful dimension to the story. Through the media, the formerly “invisible” oppressed were present and active in the TRC process. This gave them an authenticity and value for countless radio listeners and TV viewers all around the world. The images became as real as the people who were participating.

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During the amnesty process and the TRC proceedings, the following security officers involved in the case applied for amnesty: Eugene Alexander de Cock, Jacob Jan Hendrick (Jaap) van Jaarsveld, Eric Alexander Taylor, Gerhardus Johanus Lotz, Nicolaas Jacobus Janse (Nick) van Rensburg, Harold Snyman, Johan Martin (Sakki) van Zyl, and Hermanus (Sakkie) Du Plessis. Only de Kock and van Jaarsveld received amnesty. The Amnesty Committee refused the others’ petitions as failing to make full and truthful disclosure.61

Section V – Theological Approach to TRC

All of the sections above and more educated me about the life and times of the oppressed people of South Africa during the apartheid period of government and the emerging, new South Africa after apartheid. With this knowledge, through theological reflection, I gained a better understanding of reconciliation in South Africa begun by the TRC.

V.1 The Method of Bernard J. F. Lonergan

The approach of Bernard Lonergan to moral understanding and action guided my examination of the TRC and reconciliation in South Africa. To live a moral life is to consider and make decisions for the good in terms of consequences that result in progress or decline for self and others. Redemption occurs when new understanding leads to changes that reverse decline and promote progress. Moral questioning is part of the natural search for meaning that leads to decision. For Lonergan in particular, concrete circumstances of life provide the ethical grounding for change rather than abstract application of theories. Moral living requires focus on the operations of experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding on a continuing, day-to-day basis. An immediate

experience presents a possible relation of things and actions for the person concerning whatever happens. The experience has meaning based on the individual’s background and the lives of others who are trusted, both in the present and past. The person defines experience through assumptions as well as the information that is presented. Questions arise in review of both. The responsible person searches for answers that clarify and verify both and then determines meaning of and understanding about a particular experience. In this way, a person can address ignorance, blind spots, errors, and bias, promote progress, and offset decline.62

In some cases patterns of experience automatically assign meaning or dictate action for good habits as established by communities or cultures. What society accepts as necessary or beneficial for good order could have priority over individual claims because the common action can accomplish what one individual cannot. All these steps bring about the legacy of human knowing. Awareness of fundamental norms and obligations towards others moves a person beyond individual interest. When judgment includes consideration of the “common good” beyond the interests of community and for the benefit of humanity, moral decision-making moves to a higher level. Questions may arise as to whether good will actually result from an action. A person then clarifies information and challenges assumptions for responsible decision-making. Specific choices based on the discovery of correct information and known biases give meaning to individual or corporate action and form moral living.63 Because of a sense of moral responsibility, persons question and consider facts and the usual responses to circumstances. What is


actually experienced? How may that increase or decrease life? Answers to these questions divide good and evil. In following such questions, people make choices that reveal human flourishing and life or lead to the diminishment of life and death.

Cultures sometimes claim that community norms hold precedence over the individual’s by asserting that the norms of the group are for the common good. In free societies, individuals can question the claim and promote change if the norm actually is not for the common good. Participation and cooperation in established community norms may achieve more than individual actions, but the result can be for good or for evil. Especially when a person benefits from accepted norms, carelessness, convictions, and bias may cloak the false as true. Discovery of false information leads to moral choice. Upon examination a person may change behavior and actions in light of truth and move toward a new commitment. With this discovery the person has the opportunity to offset decline by changing from error to truth.

When social structures promote the interest of some at the expense of others, social habits deny moral responsibility and deform the notions of good. Although domination and oppression can be intentionally inflicted, structural evils may slowly build up when society gradually excludes one group from the benefits of society. Unless someone questions biases and norms, great harm comes to those who have been marginalized. When those with power intentionally exclude or allow harm to continue, people challenge and question the actions and provide responsible opposition. Those who

64 Melchin, *Living with Other People*, 20-22.
65 Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 44
benefit from unequal systems may block questioning of actions, especially when the group or individual did not participate in the oppression itself.  

Societies and individuals participate in making decisions toward social progress or social decline. Moral choices determine the continuing process of life. Changes are necessary as the technological, economic, and political circumstances change. Decisions may be made for hostile as well as beneficial reasons. Lonergan stated that in society these changes are difficult to correct as long as negative or long-term consequences are concealed or unknown. Conviction of group superiority of a dominant group divides society and justifies the decline of others outside the group as unworthy of progress. “Imperceptibly the corruption spreads from the harsh sphere of material advantage and power to the mass media, the stylish journals, the literary movements, the educational process, the reigning philosophies.” The hope of redemption for structural sin lies in a belief that promotes justice and life through moral choices and self-sacrificing love. Those actions can reverse the damages of decline. Responsible questions to societal information and assumptions also involve examination of related convictions and commitment. Honest discovery may lead to significant change for progress. Society becomes more authentic and moves toward cooperation in meeting the needs of the whole.

For Lonergan, Christian faith provides moral meaning for choices and behavior and shapes human knowing and human response to sin. For the Christian, God is active in time and through the lives of the faithful. God works through communities and persons

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in community by grace through love, the saving work of Christ available to all humanity. Grace makes forgiveness possible when evil overwhelms at a personal or social level. Faith empowers moral choices and provides for change that includes forgiveness. A true measure of the common good reflects the example of God’s love seen in the life of Jesus. Respect for others especially the poor, the well-being of all of creation, and God’s justice become the deciding factors in the standard for goodness. Moral living under this model requires attention to day-to-day choices made by the individual or community.\(^{69}\)

Concrete choices reflect the measure of that moral living. The Christian strives for the norms of the community found in scripture. God’s love for creation provided the framework of the great commandment given to the faithful by Christ, to love God and love neighbor as self. Jesus’ teaching found in Mark 12:29-31, Matthew 22:37-40, and Luke 10:25-28 was firmly based on Old Testament teachings. God told the people through Moses and the Ten Commandments how to live life in harmony with others – not to harm others and to love neighbors and aliens, which includes everyone, as yourself. The mandate clearly includes the neglected, marginal, invisible people.\(^{70}\) In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus set the measure of love in faith. Unless action demonstrates love for the least of God’s people, a person has not joined the true kingdom of God. God’s directives provide clear guidance for moral choices and the impetus to ask questions when choices or recommendations seem to contradict the teaching of the Gospel. Loving, Christian action contributes to the good of humanity rather than the benefit of the few through social sin. A society, living as followers of Christ, relies on divine power and the grace of God acting in history.

\(^{69}\) Melchin, *Living with Other People*, 93-102.

\(^{70}\) See Leviticus 19 generally, verses 18 and 34 particularly.
V.2 Ubuntu

The final clause of the 1993 Interim Constitution stated a need for understanding not revenge, reparation not retaliation, ubuntu not victimization. In Africa ubuntu is a long held understanding of self and community, embraced without religious label. Ubuntu is an abstract concept, an underlying belief formed and particularly expressed in the African context of community and interdependence, peculiar to the African worldview. Archbishop Desmond Tutu saw ubuntu as foundational to a process to promote a new South Africa and a system benefitting all of the people. He was convinced that the people of South Africa would use this shared value in the process of healing. Tutu effectively taught and spread the concept of ubuntu to the rest of the world through education and preaching and by example. In No Future Without Forgiveness he said:

Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, “Yu, u nobuntu”; “Hey, so-and-so has ubuntu.” Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say “My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.” We belong in a bundle of life. We say, “A person is a person through other persons.”

Under ubuntu a person has the self assurance of belonging to a greater whole, of participating and sharing. Within this context, social harmony within community, including all of the community, is the greatest good. Tutu speaks of ubuntu at work when forgiveness, as a means of healing community, overcomes the desire for revenge and retribution. In the early 1990s during the peace negotiations, Tutu supported the process that became known as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a way to “rehabilitate and affirm the dignity and personhood of those who had been silenced, had been turned

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71 Cochrane, de Gruchy, and Martin, Facing the Truth, 1.
72 Tutu, No Future Without Forgiveness, 31.
into anonymous, marginalized ones" in all aspects of the conflicts. He imagined that the ability to ask questions and tell stories in this process would recognize victims’ value as persons. Both victims and oppressors could find some measure of truth, bring the memory back, deal with it, and remember in a different, less hurtful way. The community could unite and work toward a different and mutually beneficial relationship.

For African ubuntu, the relationship of a person to community is understood from a sense of belonging to a living organism. A person’s welfare depends upon the strength and well-being of the community. Each person contributes to the flourishing and growth of the whole or to its abuse and decay. In the African idiom, “A person is a person through other persons.” When one diminishes or dehumanizes another, that one also is diminished or dehumanized. Dominance for good or evil is a threat to the community and its members. Cooperation in the shared life allows freedom to encourage health and joy and counter harm to the whole. The interdependence of ubuntu gives proper relationships to the community without diminishing the individual. When Archbishop Tutu spoke of ubuntu, he added the Christian understanding of community, koinonia, the kingdom of God. As Chairperson of TRC, he reminded the people of ubuntu. He performed his secular duties and occupied his chair wearing his cassock, often in prayer with the people gathered. In solidarity with the people, he was a holy man of God, the God who promises forgiveness.

The worldview of ubuntu was the subject of continuing study for the Rev. Michael Battle, who was ordained by Archbishop Tutu and for two years worked as a priest in South Africa. Battle is a theologian who provides insight into Christian ubuntu.

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73 Tutu, No Future Without Forgiveness, 30.

74 Tutu, No Future Without Forgiveness, 30-32.
The ideal Western individual most often is understood as independent and self-sufficient. Aligned with other individuals to form and perform within the assembly, the person maintains and promotes what that individual deems good. This is an association rather than community. The individual cooperates within the assembly but is not integrated and blended into the whole. Competition and achievement establish self-esteem. Recognition of status and consideration of the welfare of all the members streams through the lens of self rather than community. Freedom in this context allows self-determination and self-direction to guide action according to individual judgment.75

In contrast, Ubuntu affirms the basic humanity of every person within the relationship of others. To be human is to be part of community. A self-sufficient individual is outside this understanding of humanity. Ubuntu identity is reflected and nurtured by others, found as well as developed in the interdependence of community. Potential is fulfilled for both individual and community and benefits each and all in obtaining a fuller life. True knowledge of self is in community. The person is within the system, a part of it, rather than outside looking in. Fully human relationships are reciprocal - concern for the other, an interdependence of equals, an affirmation of mutual value, a recognition of the need for each other. Each retains an identity and, within differences, supports the other. Battle explains ubuntu as “the touchstone by which the quality of a society has to be continually tested, no matter what ideology is reigning.” Family and community are the important settings to observe behavior and actions and to determine and evaluate the resulting benefits. Ideally, cooperation, with recognition of each other as a valuable part of the whole, allows for adjustment and change to the advantage of all. When competition replaces interdependence, community is broken,

divided into winners and losers. Domination strives for positions of advantage, and the common good can be forfeited. In an interdependent community a person is known to be strong within relationship with others. In a competitive society a person is strong because another is weak. The extremes of both positions are problematic.

Tutu and the Christian leadership in South Africa called for the healing power of ubuntu, understood in a Christian theological context. The SACC sent petitions and letters in the spirit of ubuntu to the government throughout the apartheid era and formalized concerns for the country in September 1985 in the Kairos Document. They joined other WCC members in signing the Harare Document later that year. The continuing horrors of the conflict obscured and denied any opportunity for life for the majority of the people of South Africa. Appeals increased to end the evil of apartheid that was the opposite of ubuntu and destroying the nation. The apartheid policy of separation not only allowed but also approved of the treatment of others as less than human and without value, a policy running absolutely counter to ubuntu.

The truth of Christian ubuntu is based on the understanding of creation and the knowledge that all people - the full range described in apartheid including white, colored, Indian and black - are made in the image of God, all valued and beloved by God. Humanity and creator enjoy an intimate relationship. People live together and flourish within a creation deemed good. Demonstrating ubuntu, power-relations in community, both village and nation, recognize that all are valued children of God. The reality of apartheid allowed for power totally contrary to the concept of Christian ubuntu. The faith community continually appealed to the white leadership that called themselves Christian.

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76 Battle, Ubuntu, 3-7.

77 Battle, Ubuntu, 28-32.
Creation and the saving grace of Christ exhibit a higher understanding of God’s love for all of humanity. Christ came that all might have life and live it more abundantly. Humanity true to the image of God shares values. People want a good life for themselves and those close to them. For the long term this can only be reached through interdependence and concern for one another and those beyond.

For the injured, both the oppressed person and the community, forgiveness is part of the healing, a key element in addressing the disorder and injury inflicted. The Christian understanding of restitution involves confession, repentance, and changes promoting healing. Forgiveness helps mend rather than restores relationship. People do not forget or pretend that nothing happened. Often part of the process is to learn the truth about what happened. Even when the truth is horror, not-knowing is worse. To remember in a different way, to know what happened, allows the open wound to begin to heal. What is, is what it is; it should not happen again. Remembering in this way can keep the memory from poisoning existence. Repentance and some offer of amends hasten the move toward reconciliation. Forgiveness and reconciliation require long, demanding, personal exchange and are not “nice gestures” to get on with life. Those concerned must be willing to go beyond reactions leading to revenge and accept the hard work and risk required in repairing the relationship. Forgiveness is the domain of the one wronged. The offense may carry with it the right to punish, but forgiveness releases the wrongdoer from that personal right to punish. Reconciliation includes restoration and reparation, but they are not necessarily the deciding factor. The power of true forgiveness lies in the fact that release also frees the injured person from the grip of fear or anger that was part of the
injury. The act of real forgiveness is difficult but restores relationship and faith that things will change.\footnote{Tutu, \textit{No Future Without Forgiveness}, 270-273.} In a less than perfect world, forgiveness is a risky business.

The TRC process held hopes for \textit{ubuntu}, healing, and a reconciliation of equality in the eyes of God. The word \textit{ubuntu} is found within and throughout official documents concerning the building of a new South Africa. \textit{Ubuntu}, as practiced in traditional African society, called for justice, consideration, and mercy. In the 1993 Interim Constitution, crafted after tough negotiation, the need to foster national reconciliation was evident. A functional society committed to mutual cooperation, South Africa needed to establish peaceful existence and economic growth. The final clause reads:

\begin{quote}
This constitution provides a historic bridge between the past of a deeply divided society characterized by strife, conflict, untold suffering and injustice, and a future founded on the recognition of human rights, democracy and peaceful coexistence and development opportunities for all South Africans irrespective of colour, race, class, belief, or sex.

The pursuit of national unity, the well-being of all South African citizens and peace require reconciliation between the people of South Africa and the reconstruction of society.

The adoption of this Constitution lays the secure foundation for the people of South Africa to transcend the divisions and strife of the past, which generated gross violations of human rights, the transgression of humanitarian principles in violent conflicts, and a legacy of hatred, fear, guilt and revenge.

These can now be addressed on the basis that there is a need for understanding but not revenge, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for \textit{ubuntu} but not for victimization.\footnote{Cochrane, de Gruchy, and Martin, \textit{Facing the Truth}, 1.}
\end{quote}

During the years of violence, apartheid was the antithesis of \textit{ubuntu}. In establishing the framework for the new government, discussion and analysis centered on how the process would work for national unity and peace. As another example, the \textit{Report} includes a designated section on \textit{ubuntu} as bedrock for restorative justice. The
government wanted to restore the dignity of persons and the value of community. Repentance, reparation, and reconciliation would be key elements. These same elements are basic to Christian ubuntu, the expansion of the traditional African concept. The goal declared by the new government was a unified nation, functioning effectively for the well-being of all the people. What was right or wrong about relationships and community and about equitable sharing of resources in South Africa would be measured by how ubuntu was manifested or absent. President Nelson Mandela and the new Parliament joined the religious leadership in the hope and intention to make changes according to these goals. They called the warring people of the apartheid era to remember, live into, and promote that revered quality that creates healthy interdependent life for all of the community. The constitution, legislation, and courts of the emerging South African government in the mid-1990s called for respect for human life and dignity and for healing and restoration. In the process all of the people who call South Africa their homeland would begin to feel the safety and embrace of home. Christian ubuntu, when taken to its farthest limit, extends to all of humanity and creation. Recognition and respect for the value of all people, no matter what, extends even to those with whom conflict exists. Love your enemy. The TRC emerged from this call.

V.3 Examples from South African Interdisciplinary Observers

Opinion and commentary with theological overtones were and are part of South African life. When control of information was a high priority for the apartheid government, regulating information meant restrictions on the media and banning assembly in designated areas of the country to silence unwanted voices. However, I

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80 Report, vol. 1, 125-128.

81 Report, vol. 1, 131-134.
found that in South Africa, even then, well-established academic, religious, and political organizations operated with their own network of communication and provided a critical voice. That tradition remains and the diversity of views produces commentary on reconciliation. I include observations of two present South African theologians, operating in an interdisciplinary framework, who contribute to the ongoing discussion concerning the progress of reconciliation in their country. In 2005 Alistair Kee explored reconciliation issues in South Africa. Kee taught theology at the University of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in the 1960s, during the years of struggle for civil rights, social equality, and national liberation. He linked racism and apartheid and believed that the negative embedded images of both were problematic in the process of reconciliation unless addressed. Kee corrected a “Western assumption” about Africa generally and South Africa specifically. Too often a non-African person holds a selective image of the “African” as a black, idyllic, unsophisticated, but noble person. He noted that the reality is that black leadership comes from all across the spectrum of society and includes a decidedly urban element. The quality and wealth of scholarship and serious journalistic commentary in South Africa is well documented. The level of sophistication, political consciousness, and active participation in this leadership is more the norm there than in the West.82 The level and quality of activity during the period of apartheid and in the new South African society reflect the truth of Kee’s assertion. The people and organizations of South Africa have a massive job but rich leadership resources.

Whether sustained energy and commitment to the programs for reconciliation are present remains to be seen. Kee suggested that the challenge is to focus on long range

solutions while straining to address immediate survival needs. The “evils” of apartheid
and racism were not the base problem but symptomatic of the less well identified and
acknowledged evils maintained by social structures. Both racism and apartheid were not
just against race. They were systems to perpetuate inequalities of power. An end to
apartheid could bring political emancipation, but that was not the same as human
emancipation from the inequities of racism and economic justice. The unequal benefits
and privileges of power under apartheid required the control of many for the advantage of
a few. Kee declared that for real and lasting social change, the underlying evils must be
changed to benefit all the people of South Africa.

In his criticism Kee considered the role of the Church in reconciliation. The
churches too often support the underlying principle of control in organizational life and
the language of worship. Churches frequently use the authoritarian model, as do
governments that require obedience to unjust laws and practices. The feudal titles remain
in worship – Lord, King, Master- that encourage submission as a virtue. Kee noted better
ways to understand relationship with God. Jesus brought a new image of God as an
intimate and loving Abba as part of his message of salvation. In form and practice the
Church, as the body of Christ, is meant to reflect the love of God to all. Part of doing this
requires church participation toward the social shifts required for emancipation and new
life in South Africa just as they did to abolish the more blatant abuses of apartheid.83 As
with reconciliation, emancipation is an ongoing process that requires attention and review
to maintain the health of society. Christians are called to reflect the grace given by God
and proclaim salvation for the world through the cross of Christ. Faithful people create

83 Kee, “Criticism,” 50.
and maintain the new community of God when they support and nurture all of humanity. Creation and the cross call for nothing less.

Acts of care are ongoing under Christ’s command to love others as ourselves, a continuing process for long-term and lasting relationship of concern, not a quick fix. Complaints that significant change in South Africa is slow and reconciliation flawed and incomplete disappointed Kee. In his commentary he asserted that blacks and others who consider themselves liberals were in the forefront, lamenting the slow change. The history of South Africa put the process in perspective. In removing colonial powers, the new black (“liberal”) authority retained successful business and professional interests for the sake of the economy. Too often the new elites join with the old, and the poor are left behind, still poor. Kee warned the leadership in South Africa to be aware of this danger and look to the economic justice of the nation. The end of apartheid and the completion of the work of the TRC had only provided opportunity to continue the journey toward reconciliation and a new relationship of mutual sharing. Deeper causes must be noticed and addressed to continue in reconciliation.84

My second theological observer is Peter J. Paris who worked for the Student Christian Movement (SCM) of Nigeria in the mid 1960s. The global dimensions of ecumenical movements connected him with SCM groups in Africa and the world. Paris joined the dialogue on moral and religious issues relating to the emerging nation and the scandal of constitutional apartheid. After the colonial period, churches looked for their own identity. In rebuilding churches, the religious leadership could correct the abuses and subordination of native blacks under colonialism. Opportunity allowed churches to build on an African model. Participation, community, mutual respect, ancestor devotion, social

84 Kee, “Criticism,” 51.
justice, and fidelity were marks for the African churches. Paris identified the churches by
the fabric of the African community and the kingdom of God, known through the saving
power of Christ. Within community, interdependent persons found freedom from control
and domination. Africa gained from an internal tolerance that appreciated and respected
the strength provided by diverse gifts within the larger whole.  

Paris saw theological concerns as concrete and direct; they include daily needs
and freedom. God made the world to provide for all. Paris wrote of social justice as the
interdependent accommodation for all of God’s people, a characteristic of Christian
ubunto. Suffering in the battle for social justice is in the interest of establishing and
maintaining the community of God. Through the theology of the cross, Christ becomes
the focus and meaning of all values and directs the journey toward liberation and
reconciliation. Christian ubuntu offers the power of the cross to see others as equals,
beloved and valued.

Section VI - Conclusions

My initial focus was to consider reconciliation in South Africa from a theological
viewpoint. My questions were:

1. What is reconciliation and how do we achieve it?

2. How does a society know that reconciliation has been achieved?

These questions were not amenable to simple answers. I concluded that reconciliation is
not about a problem seeking a solution. Reconciliation is not a solution but a complex
and continuing process toward unity, harmony, and human flourishing. Reconciliation

85 Peter J. Paris, “African Contributions and Challenges to the Ecumenical Movement,” in The Quest for
Liberation and Reconciliation: Essays in Honor of J. Deotis Roberts, ed. Michael Battle (Louisville KY:

requires attention in proportion to the cause and duration of division and harm. The question of how a society may know that reconciliation is achieved is meaningless when a continuing process is involved. The better question is whether signs of mutual progress and well-being indicate movement toward reconciliation.

I fully concur with the TRC statement to Mandela and Parliament that the hearings were a beginning in a reconciliation process that would require time and work from the government and all the people of South Africa. I am convinced that reconciliation cannot be reduced to steps toward a solution. John de Gruchy suggested that the stages of the journey toward reconciliation require recovery of identity and self respect. The process requires a basic level of equality. I found specific circumstances where reconciliation is happening in South Africa.

I discovered that in South Africa reconciliation involves participation and interaction with a spiritual component that confirms and values each human being. The Faith communities participated in the formation of the TRC process. I determined also that the language in the political context and in commentaries concerning the TRC incorporated religious and spiritual dimensions when addressing secular, practical issues. This interdependence was consistent during my examination of the TRC. The TRC planned for individual healing and reconciliation by intention and, through extension, for healing and reconciliation for the nation. The combined follow-up processes offer the same. Political and spiritual objectives are not divided. I am convinced that for the oppressed people of South Africa and much of the world, Bishop Tutu was and is a symbol of God’s presence, calling for justice in the process as well as repentance and forgiveness. Tutu makes it clear that God’s love includes all of humanity, made in the
image of God, with special concern for the poor and oppressed. Through *ubuntu*, community follows the highest good as the kingdom of God, embracing all, including enemies. God’s real people include the imperfect. In that spirit, I understood reconciliation in South Africa in terms of unity, participation, and membership in a greater whole, with respect for one another, open communication, and actions for the good of all. In Cradock, follow-up programs included and involved all of the community in planning and execution. Relationships between the still segregated sections of Cradock have opened, a hopeful sign of mutual acceptance and healing.

I learned that when the reconciliation process is happening in South Africa, changes involve the freedom and ability to move, act, and speak without fear of physical harm from government forces. This freedom was a function of the initial terms of the cease-fire and is a major objective of the post-apartheid government. Ms. Goniwe is an example of new freedom as she continues to be a vocal critic of government actions. She now initiates community programs, works with CBOs, and is part of the leadership providing means for healing the community.

In the examination of the TRC process I realized how critical freedom of movement and the absence of censure are to the process of reconciliation. These freedoms allow access to information as well as freedom of speech and opinion. Although not an element of the TRC process per se, the open global coverage of TRC proceeding played a part, the media making the stories known. Testimony was available; verification of facts and rumors was possible. In this way, the families and communities enlarged their ability to hear and participate in the process and to question formerly closed systems. The public aspect of TRC hearings meant information, hidden by the
former government, is now available. The people of South Africa, demeaned and excluded, obtained the dignity of access to information.

I determined that reconciliation is happening when truth-telling offers an element of trust. One of the objectives of the TRC process was to determine the truth about what really happened during the years of apartheid, especially in terms of many who suffered torture and death. In my estimation, the public TRC process set the stage using the possibility of amnesty to gain the full truth from perpetrators. The TRC amassed volumes of testimony and information that still can be used by the survivors and families. Concrete media reporting provides lasting data for verification or challenge. The TRC process also produced proof of long concealed government practices that created injustice. With this evidence, truth-telling continues and can continue to promote trust and reconciliation in South Africa.

I found that feeling safe, a universal condition for good life, needs to be listed as a sign that reconciliation is happening. The TRC process was considered a safe place to tell stories of life. This was true for those who gave testimony, both survivors and perpetrators. Follow-up programs intentionally continue to provide safety for participants. The element of safety is important in the opportunity to be heard generally, but particularly when heard by government officials. An expectation of safety, rather than violence, is part of the process toward reconciliation.

When reconciliation is happening in South Africa, it involves some form of reparation. On this point, I concur with and admire survivors who say knowledge of what happened to loved ones and the freedoms they now enjoy provide a form of reparation. Some survivors say programs designed for individual and community healing and public
memorials are signs of reparation. However, I also concur with those who call for a
greater effort on the part of the government to make amends, including some payment to
those who remain in the poverty caused by apartheid. The TRC began the process for
reconciliation. Recommendations by the TRC for reparation and rehabilitation instructed
the government in next steps needed after the hearings to reverse the underlying, harmful
policies of apartheid.

I found that there is much work still to be done. The difficult problem of how to
determine and fund the reparations was initially and remains the key to the reconciliation
process. When personal sin requires reconciliation, both parties to the offense participate
for healing and movement toward life. It is clear to me that the systemic sin of apartheid
also needs mutuality for reconciliation in South Africa. IJR is careful to point out, quite
correctly, that some of the fiscal problems, both global and national, are not easily
controlled and influence the level of measurable improvement in South Africa. A
prevalent, negative opinion is that the present government is reluctant to establish more
aggressive programs to address promised reparations to individuals and to deal with the
reality of a widening gap between economic poverty and great wealth.

Mutuality for the people of South Africa cannot be confined to the political body.
I heard a complaint that individuals and businesses that benefitted from apartheid do not
participate in the reconciliation process. Within the confines of this paper, I did not
examine how the former privileged class may be addressing reconciliation in South
Africa. Ms. Goniwe appears to believe there is limited participation. Although some
movement toward life in South Africa is reported, life has not improved for many of
those who suffer from the scars of apartheid.
I concluded that reconciliation is a continuing process. I further concluded that reconciliation is happening in South Africa, indicated by the following. An active, interdisciplinary community with a spiritual component participates in the process of reconciliation. The people of South Africa enjoy the freedom and ability to move, act and speak. Freedom of speech, including the media, fosters access to information. Truth-telling is a positive element in society and includes the means of testing the truth. Especially in contacts with the government, safety is an expectation of the people of South Africa. The new government delivered limited reparation for those injured by the policy of apartheid and continues to provide funding for the reconciliation process.

My personal conclusion is that, as a result of my examination of reconciliation in South Africa, the people of South Africa are more real for me, valued as mutual dwellers in a world grown small. Choices made by the government for their country will determine how the hopes and aspirations of the TRC materialize and advance reconciliation. If Christian *ubuntu* is the guide, life and flourishing for all of South Africa will match the message of 1 Cor. 12:26. “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice with it.”

God bless South Africa.


Video Recordings


Web Sites


The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (South Africa), “Reconciliation and Social Transformation: Healing Cradock after Apartheid” in Case Studies. The Institute for
