

A NEW KAIROS: RECLAIMING PROPHETIC THEOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA  
TWO DECADES INTO DEMOCRACY

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## **Introduction**

The original inspiration for this thesis stems from an encounter with Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu in December 2014. I was spending five months in South Africa as part of the UNC Honors Cape Town program, and on one Friday morning, I attended the Eucharist service at St. George's Cathedral where Tutu was known to regularly speak. The gathering was no more than several dozen congregants, roughly split between a core group of regulars and visitors such as myself. After opening prayers and receiving the Eucharist—or alternatively, receiving a blessing from Tutu—everyone walked around greeting one another with the expression “peace be with you.” Tutu then asked all of the visitors to introduce themselves, and ended with his own reflections on the challenges facing the church in South Africa today.

His concluding remarks revolved around the South African Council of Churches (SACC), the ecumenical organization of which Tutu was the General Secretary when he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984. The SACC played a prominent role in the struggle against apartheid; however, Tutu discussed how the SACC had not regained the same stature and relevance within the modern-day political discourse in South Africa. Tutu's desire for Christian political activism today left me with a series of questions when I returned back home to the United States: Why—and how—did the SACC and other religious institutions play such a prominent role in the struggle against apartheid? Could these same religious institutions reclaim the voice of moral conscience in post-apartheid, South African society? If so, which new strategies in religious political activism could meet the needs of the oppressed and marginalized in South Africa today?

Several months later, I received a Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) from the Office of Undergraduate Research at UNC-Chapel Hill and IRB

approval to return to Cape Town for a month from mid-May to early-June 2015 and gather first-hand perspectives on these questions.<sup>1</sup> My aim was to complete a series of one-on-one oral history interviews with South African leaders from religious institutions—as well as spheres of government, law, business, and other facets of civil society—in order to transcribe and derive insights from these interviews as part of a senior honors thesis.

In terms of methodology for each interview, I first asked informants for a general background regarding their involvement in the anti-apartheid movement, the role of faith within their own life, and the nature of their vocational work in the present-day. I then asked for their perspective on the relationship between religious institutions and the government since 1994, and whether they agreed with the assumption that religious institutions had gone silent and now lacked a prophetic voice to hold the government accountable. This would segue into a larger discussion of faith-based activism in a constitutional democracy and how religious institutions could take a stronger stance on issues of social justice in a post-apartheid context. Lastly, I would share my own observation that many of the most powerful voices for social justice—as epitomized by Desmond Tutu in South Africa, or historical and contemporary figures elsewhere such as Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Gandhi, Pope Francis, the Dalai Lama, and liberation theologians in Latin America—have often had religious backgrounds, and I would ask the informant for his or her perspective on whether this intersection was a coincidence, or there was some fundamental connection between religious backgrounds and commitments to social justice. Furthermore, after interviewing John de Gruchy and

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<sup>1</sup> The IRB and Office of Human Research Ethics granted an IRB exemption for this research project on the basis that the interviews were formatted as oral histories.

reading his work *Confessions of Christian Humanist*, I articulated these final questions within his conceptual framework of religious humanism and secular humanism. I would ask how faith-based presuppositions as opposed to secular worldviews might lead to divergent approaches in social activism, or more generally whether there were ways that the faith-based contributed to the humanist discourse in South Africa that secular voices did not.

Ultimately, I was able to conduct and record one-on-one oral histories with the following fourteen interviewees during my month in Cape Town in 2015:

1. **Peter Storey**, Former President of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA); Former President of South African Council of Churches (SACC)
2. **Alan Storey**, Minister at Central Methodist Mission of the MCSA
3. **Courtney Sampson**, Western Cape Officer for the Independent Election Commission (IEC); Former Chairman of the Western Cape Council of Churches
4. **Denis Goldberg**, Anti-apartheid activist who served 22 years in prison after sentencing alongside Nelson Mandela at the Rivonia Trial
5. **Geoff Quinlan**, Retired Bishop of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa
6. **Sidney Luckett**, Former Executive Member of the United Democratic Front; Former Advisor to Minister of Transport and Public Works in Western Cape
7. **John de Gruchy**, Co-founder of the Religious Studies Department at University of Cape Town; Christian theologian and author (30+ books)
8. **Lloyd Fortuin**, Human rights attorney at Faure & Faure Partners
9. **Sa'diyya Shaikh**, Religious Studies Professor at University of Cape Town
10. **Mujahid Osman**, Co-Founder of Muslim Youth Movement at UCT
11. **Rashied Omar**, Imam at Claremont Main Road Mosque
12. **Delene Mark**, CEO of HOPE Africa (Social Development Program of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa)
13. **Rachel Mash**, Environmental Coordinator of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa; Former Coordinator of Diocese of Cape Town's HIV and AIDS Program
14. **Di Oliver**, Former Chairwoman and Current Trustee of the Black Sash Trust

The interviewees represented a diversity of backgrounds in terms of age (from a university student in his 20s to an anti-apartheid activist in his 80s), vocational background (from various leadership roles within religious institutions, to roles within the fields such as law, academia, NGO advocacy, and government) and, to lesser degree, gender (with four women and ten men). That said, with a grouping as small as fourteen, there were inherent limitations in the number and types of backgrounds that could be represented. In terms of religious diversity, for example, nearly all of the Christians interviewed came from one of the mainline churches, with the majority belonging to the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (ACSA); the three non-Christian perspectives all came from the same progressive Muslim community, the Claremont Main Road Mosque; and Denis Goldberg was the only secular perspective of the fourteen interviewees. According to the most recent census data on South African religion in 2001, these three aforementioned religious groupings collectively consisted of less than 20% of the South African population (Anglican, 3.8%; Islam, 1.5%; No Religion, 15%), and amongst those identifying as Christian, denominations such as Zion Christian churches, Catholic churches, Dutch Reformed churches, and Pentecostal churches each outnumbered the Anglican church in South Africa by 2:1.

In short, the backgrounds of the interviewees in this thesis were neither completely comprehensive nor exhaustive of all belief systems and religious institutions in South Africa. Even within Cape Town, this group of interviewees represented its own subset, as many interviewees were already interconnected with one another through the same personal and professional networks, such as belonging to the Western Cape Religious Leaders Forum or maintaining mutual friendships with Desmond Tutu. In large part, this skew arises because of my connection to Chris Ahrends—my professor on the UNC

Honors Cape Town program and former chaplain to Desmond Tutu— who, with the exception of help from UNC professor Ken Broun and Duke professors Catherine Admay and Omid Safi, singlehandedly provided all of my introductions to interviewees.

Other methodological limitations included my inability to reach every desired interviewee, record every conversation, or capture every formative encounter from South Africa into this thesis. The two most notable encounters I was not able to capture or record were 1) a half-day discussion on re-opening community hearings led by Paul Verryn, and attended by religious leaders such as Vernon Weitz (Christian Institute), Edwin Arrison (Kairos Southern Africa), Dirk Marais (Vision Quest Africa), and Dion Forster (University of Stellenbosch Faculty; former dean of Wesley College, and 2) an anti-xenophobia rally in Khayeltisha which I attended with Jerome Francis (Chief of Staff to the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town) and marched alongside Western Cape premier Helen Zille. While insights from encounters such as these implicitly permeate the entire work, I only draw explicitly from the one-on-one recorded interviews that could be transcribed verbatim and retain complete fidelity to the interviewee's original message.

Before proceeding with the first chapter, it is important for me to acknowledge that my exploration of prophetic theology in this thesis reflects my own cultural norms and understandings as a millennial American. I am both consciously and subconsciously ignorant of many explicit and implicit biases that come with writing about South Africa when I myself am not South African, and have only spent, in total, approximately half a year in the country. For that reason, I bring South African voices to the fore and draw heavily upon my interviews from Cape Town in June 2015 as original source material. With this final acknowledgement, we begin with a journey into the first chapter: an exploration of prophetic theology as expressed in the Kairos Document in South Africa.



## Introduction: Prophetic Theology in South Africa

*Once a Zambian and a South African, it is said, were talking. The Zambian boasted about their Minister of Naval Affairs. The South African asked, "But you have no navy, no access to the sea. How then can you have a Minister of Naval Affairs?" The Zambian retorted, "Well, in South Africa you have a Minister of Justice, don't you?"*

*Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Lecture (1984)<sup>2</sup>*

*It would be quite wrong to give the impression that 'Church Theology' in South Africa is not particularly concerned about the need for justice. There have been some very strong and very sincere demands for justice. But the very serious theological question is: What kind of justice? An examination of Church statements and pronouncements gives the distinct impression that the justice that is envisaged is the justice of reform, that is to say, a justice that is determined by the oppressor, by the white minority and that is offered to the people as a kind of concession. It does not appear to be the more radical justice that comes from below and is determined by the people of South Africa.*

*Challenge to the Church: The Kairos Document [First Edition] (1985)<sup>3</sup>*

On September 25, 1985, theologians in Johannesburg released an ecumenical statement known as *The Kairos Document*,<sup>4</sup> which called upon South Africans, especially those of Christian faith, to take a clear and unequivocal stance against the injustices of apartheid. At this moment of truth, resistance to apartheid—i.e. the National Party's system of racial segregation and oppression legislated since 1948—was reaching a tipping point both internally through mass action campaigns and internationally through trade sanctions that crippled the economy. The *Kairos Document's* call for "radical justice" rallied South Africans to the liberation movement on theological grounds and rejected the "justice of reform" epitomized by President P.W. Botha's proposal of a Tricameral

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<sup>2</sup> Desmond Tutu, *Nobel Lecture* (Oslo, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> The Kairos Theologians, *Challenge to the Church: The Kairos Document [First Edition]: A Theological Commentary on the Political Crisis in South Africa*; Gary S.D. Leonard, ed., *The Kairos Documents*, Kairos: The Moment of Truth (Pietermaritzburg: Ujamaa Centre, 2011). This collected edition of Kairos documents is available at: [http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Libraries/manuals/The\\_Kairos\\_Documents.sflb.ashx](http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Libraries/manuals/The_Kairos_Documents.sflb.ashx).

<sup>4</sup> "The Kairos Document [First Edition]"; Leonard, *The Kairos Documents*. What was published under the title *The Kairos Document* (with the definite article) is often referred to as the *Kairos Document* (without the definite article). I use these titles interchangeably.

Parliament that still treated non-whites as second-class citizens. Less than a decade after the release of the *Kairos Document*, South Africa would hold its first elections in 1994 where adults of all races could vote, thereby ushering in a new democratic dispensation and paving the way for a new constitution in the country.

At its heart, the *Kairos Document* distinguished three types of theology: state theology, church theology, and prophetic theology. Rashied Omar summarized the differences as follows: “In state theology, religion wants to be on top of the state; in church theology, religion has nothing to say about social justice issues or should not be in the public arena; and in prophetic theology, religion does not want to be the state, but it sees that it has an important role in the public arena, especially on questions of social justice.”<sup>5</sup> In 1986, a second edition of the *Kairos Document* was released in order to completely rewrite the chapter on prophetic theology because “it was generally felt that this chapter was not well developed in the first edition.”<sup>6</sup> This second edition further developed that prophetic theology must necessarily include a “reading of the sign of the times” and a “call to action” that severely critiques and seeks to change the status quo; “confrontations” that clearly and unambiguously take a stand between good and evil, justice and injustice, God and the Devil; and lastly, a deep spirituality that is both practical and pastoral in denouncing sin and announcing salvation.<sup>7</sup>

Prophetic theology, as outlined in both editions of the *Kairos Document*, did not arise in a vacuum, but rather built upon various historical legacies. The language of the

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<sup>5</sup> Rashied Omar, interview by author, 2 June 2015. Muizenburg, Cape Town, tape recording.

<sup>6</sup> “The Kairos Document [Second Edition]”; Leonard, *The Kairos Documents*, 41.

<sup>7</sup> “The Kairos Document [Second Edition]”; Leonard, *The Kairos Documents*, 63-4.

“reading the sign of the times,” for example, echoed Pope Paul VI’s declaration on December 7, 1965 that “the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.”<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the larger call for a prophetic role of the church in South Africa mirrored the message of liberation theologians in Latin America in the 1970s, as epitomized by Gustavo Gutierrez statement, “There is a gradual awakening to the social overtones of the Church’s presence and a rediscovery of their prophetic role... [And] as soon as they [Bishops] point out the profound causes behind these evils, they collide with the great economic and political blocs of their countries.” Moreover, the underpinnings of prophetic theology in the *Kairos Document* was rooted within South African ideologies and theologies such as black consciousness, contextual theology, and black theology; the exemplar of religious leaders such as Trevor Huddleston, Beyers Naude, and Desmond Tutu; and progressive tradition of ecumenical organizations such as the Christian Institute, the South African Council of Churches (SACC), and South African Council of Bishops (SACB).

The appeal of the *Kairos Document*, however, was so great that even non-religious individuals embraced the message of prophetic theology. Denis Goldberg, an anti-apartheid activist who served over two decades in prison after his sentencing alongside Nelson Mandela at the Rivonia Trial, recounted, “I was released from prison in 1985 and came out to find a book called the Kairos Document. I can tell you I used this speaking all over the United States and Canada, and I would make it clear I’m not religious. You

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<sup>8</sup> Paul VI. *Gaudium et Spes*. December 7, 1965. Papal Archive. The Holy See.

<[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vatii\\_cons\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vatii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html)>.

know, *kairos* means moment of moral crisis. People would say that I knew their religion better than they did and I would deny it, saying, ‘I’m telling you what people in South Africa are saying.’ It was a very important document because it provided a justification for resistance to tyranny, including armed struggle if necessary. That was quite a daring thing to do, and the government did not act against them.”<sup>9</sup>

Although the original *Kairos Document* spoke to—and from—the crucible of the mid-1980s, its prophetic message transcended its own historical moment. The *Kairos Document’s* methodology for “reading the sign of the times” has subsequently been replicated in other contexts including Central America (1989), Kenya (1990), Europe (1998), Zimbabwe (1998), India (2000), America (2007), and, intriguingly enough, Palestine (2009), where contemporary Palestinian theologians have drawn explicit parallels between the segregationist policies of apartheid and the current policies of the Israeli government. Most relevant to this thesis, however, the replicable methodology of the *Kairos Document* facilitates self-reflection in its original national context, South Africa. In other words, what does “reading the sign of the times” look like in present-day South Africa? Is there a new *Kairos* moment for South Africa two decades into democracy?

These questions lie at the very heart of this thesis, and in the following three sections—“A Time to Break Silence,” “Post-Apartheid Liberation for the Poor,” and “Distinguishing the Religious And Secular in the Humanist Tradition”—I explore a plurality of perspectives, respectively, on a) whether religious voices have gone silent in the first two decades of democracy, and if so, how religious voices could break the silence today, b) why poverty is the central issue of post-apartheid liberation, and c) whether there a key distinctions between religious humanism and secular humanism in. In

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<sup>9</sup> Denis Goldberg, interview by author, 29 May 2015. Hout Bay, Cape Town, tape recording.

particular, I focus on key contestations and emerging dialectics amongst those thought leaders at the forefront of reclaiming prophetic theology in South Africa today.

Ultimately, the question of reclaiming prophetic theology in South Africa is not a new consideration. As early as 1997, political observer Peter Walshe questioned whether a “searching, self-critical but prophetic voice will be able to reassert itself in the difficult decades that lie ahead,”<sup>10</sup> and in 1998, historian Tristan Anne Borer similarly posited that “whether churches will again re-emerge as a dominant force fighting social injustice, or whether the intersection of the institutional and prophetic church during the 1980s was an aberration, remains to be seen.”<sup>11</sup> My own stance on these questions is not a deterministic one. I do not believe that the social, cultural, political and religious variables of the present-day context predetermine whether, in Walshe’s words, the prophetic voice will be able to reassert itself or, in Borer’s phrasing, the prophetic role of religious institutions during the 1980s was simply an “aberration.” Rather, my belief is in the agency of individuals to determine the future of prophetic theology in South Africa, and by examining, in this thesis, how the re-emergence of a prophetic role may come to pass, my hope is to contribute towards this unfolding narrative in South Africa today.

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<sup>10</sup> Peter Walshe, *Prophetic Christianity and the Liberation Movement in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1995), 158-159.

<sup>11</sup> Tristan Anne Borer, *Challenging the State: Churches as Political Actors in South Africa, 1980-1994* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 208.

## Chapter I: A Time to Break Silence

*"A time comes when silence is betrayal." The truth of these words is beyond doubt, but the mission to which they call us is a most difficult one. Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy. And some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak. Perhaps a new spirit is rising among us.*

*Martin Luther King Jr., Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence<sup>12</sup>*

### 1.1 Escalating Crisis Two Decades Into Democracy

There are signs of an escalating economic and moral crisis in South Africa two decades into democracy. The gap between rich and poor in country has only widened since the end of apartheid.<sup>13</sup> South Africa is now considered one of the most unequal societies in the world.<sup>14</sup> In terms of governance, the optimism surrounding the Nelson Mandela's years as president (1994-1999) has largely eroded since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with increasing claims of government corruption and incompetency within the ruling African National Congress (ANC).<sup>15</sup> In spite of the ANC's legacy as a political party of Nobel Peace Prize Laureates<sup>16</sup> and its pivotal role in the anti-apartheid struggle,

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<sup>12</sup> Martin Luther King Jr., *Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence* (New York City, 1967).

<sup>13</sup> Murray Leibbrandt, et. al, Trends in South African Income Distribution and Poverty Since Fall of Apartheid, *OECD Social, Employment, and Migration Working Papers*, 28 May 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Haroon Borat, "Is South Africa the most unequal society in the world," *Mail & Guardian*, 30 September 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Even Denis Goldberg, who served 22 years in prison for his involvement with the ANC, pointed out corruption. He said, "I call for renewal of the leadership of the ANC from top to bottom in national, provincial and local government. Doesn't make me popular, but I do it." Denis Goldberg, interview by author, 29 May 2015. Hout Bay, Cape Town, tape recording.

<sup>16</sup> Before Nelson Mandela received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993, ANC President Albert Luthuli received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1960.

critics believe that the ANC's actions since coming to power in 1994 only reinforce the Lord Acton's observation that 'power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.' Geoff Quinlan, a former Anglican bishop and anti-apartheid activist, further commented with regards to the ANC, "We all know that power corrupts. The liberation party of one era becomes the oppressive party of the next. It just goes round in circles."<sup>17</sup>

Peter Storey, former president of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) and of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), went so far as to compare the ANC's centralization of power to the behavior of the National Party. He asserted, "The more the present regime begins to limit and undermine State institutions, which were put in place to constrain the State, the more they're behaving like the people who they replaced. They're running a brutal police force that doesn't hesitate to beat up and torture people. They are now quietly instigating xenophobic behavior while denying it. They're trying to limit the freedom of the press. They're clamping down on the space in which non-governmental organizations can operate." Although the ANC may be "more friendly and more limited by constitutional constraints" than those previously in power, Storey argued that the ANC were still "essentially the same animal" and "the only thing that stops Caesar [i.e. the State] from overreaching himself is a just Constitution with very strong checks and balances, constraints on government power, a free press, the free function of political parties, and a vigilant church, which will not hesitate to identify government abuse of power and challenge it."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Geoff Quinlan, interview by author, 25 May 2015. Plumstead, Cape Town, tape recording.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Storey, interview by author, 25 May 2015. Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, Cape Town, tape recording.

*"There are all kinds of courage," said Dumbledore, smiling. "It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends.*

*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*<sup>19</sup>

## 1.2 Church-State Relations Post-Apartheid

Storey's conception of the ANC as fallible and power-centric only further emphasized the need for countervailing forces such as a vigilant church. Where are these vigilant religious institutions today? Peter Storey argued that the religious institutions most vocal in the anti-apartheid struggle went silent after 1994 in order to give the new government a chance, and now that many consider the ANC to be personally corrupt, incompetent, or both, these same religious institutions no longer have a prophetic voice to hold the current ANC government accountable.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, many significant religious leaders went into politics post-1994, as epitomized by the SACC leader Frank Chikane who espoused "critical solidarity" between church and state and went to work in the Office of the President.<sup>21</sup> According to Alan Storey, Minister at the Central Methodist

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<sup>19</sup> J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (New York City: Scholastic, 1998), 298.

<sup>20</sup> Peter Storey, "Banning the Flag from our churches: Learning from the Church-State struggle in South Africa," in *Between Capital and Cathedral: Essays on Church-State Relationships*, ed. Dion Forster, Wesley Bentley (Research Institute for Theology and Religion, 2012), 1-20. With regards to this essay, Storey elaborated, "I don't think my views have changed regarding that article at all in the last couple years since I wrote it. I think things have worsened. I don't think the Church has really woken up yet." Peter Storey, interview by author, 25 May 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Storey strongly disagreed with Chikane's decision to enter politics. He commented, "Frank Chikane was a wonderful example of what happens with 'critical solidarity.' He ended up working in the President's office, taking the President's salary check, arguing as a lobbyist for the president, as an apologist for the President. So the great prophet who was so effective in standing against apartheid regime became the actual



Mission in Cape Town, religious leaders such as Frank Chikane entering government not only blurred the distinction between church and state, but also led to difficulties for those outside of government to speak prophetically. Storey emphasized, “You must understand that these church leaders were our heroes so what happens is they're now very close to power, but you think to yourself, ‘So and so is there. Surely he is not afraid. We know he's not afraid because of his leadership in the past. Surely he will stand up and say something, and if he doesn't why isn't he? Perhaps we don't have all the information.’ So we kind of doubt ourselves... Plus, it's very difficult to speak out against your previous heroes, just on a power dynamic. To speak out against your friends is so much more difficult than to speak out against your enemies.”<sup>22</sup>

In addition to this predominant narrative of the ANC co-opting religious leaders from the anti-apartheid struggle, other narratives further nuance our understanding of religious institutions’ silence post-apartheid. For example, Sidney Lockett, former executive member of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and Anglican Board of Social Responsibility, argued that religious voices wanted to occupy a different space of critique from the Democratic Alliance (DA), who, in his view, lost credibility by the type of oppositional voice they developed during the Mandela years.<sup>23</sup> Alternatively, Courtney

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spin merchant for the new government. Now, to me, it's a betrayal of his calling.” Peter Storey, interview by author.

<sup>22</sup> Alan Storey, interview by author, 14 May 2015. Cape Town City Center, Cape Town, tape recording.

<sup>23</sup> Sidney Lockett reflected, “I think anyone in their right mind—so that excludes the Democratic Alliance (DA)—would give the new government a chance. So quite apart from the close relationship between Tutu and Tambo and Mandela, there's also, ‘This is a new black government. Give them a chance to prove themselves in in very difficult circumstances.’ So that was my position as well.” On the DA, Lockett

Sampson, former chairman of the Western Council of Churches, contended that the contemporary nostalgia surrounding churches' voice against apartheid might be misleading. "I would challenge some of the preconceived notions that the Church's voice that has gone silent," he said, "as if the Church in its entirety has always been politically active. It hasn't been. I think there were a lot of people who opposed the work that we did in the ecumenical movement... What happened was that the ecumenical movement was really the voice of the banned political structures... and we pushed forward their ideologies and the political aspirations."<sup>24</sup> While some may disagree with Lockett's critique of the DA's oppositional voice or Sampson's characterization of churches as a mouthpiece for banned political structures, their perspectives nonetheless reveal a social dynamic between political parties and religious institutions that clearly influenced how religious voices articulated themselves in the public spheres post-apartheid.

### *1.3 Lost Prophetic Voice & A New Spirit Rising*

Although the extent to which religious institutions were co-opted or otherwise influenced by political parties is contestable, no one denies that religious institutions today

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elaborated, "The trouble is they [the DA] came into Parliament as a white party. They criticized the ANC. Now, you could say that's their right and that's their role as an opposition, but I don't agree that that role is a good role for South Africans. It was a big mistake not to give credit where credit is due, and the ANC have done one hell of a lot of good things in terms of provisions to rural areas, electrification, water, [etc.] which was never praised. That's partly because of their understanding of what the opposition should do. For the DA, opposition should oppose. You don't agree with anyone. You oppose at every corner which is ridiculous." Sidney Lockett, interview by author, 28 May 2015. Hout Bay, Cape Town, tape recording.

<sup>24</sup> Courtney Sampson, interview by author, 18 May 2015. Century City, Cape Town, tape recording.

have, in fact, lost the prophetic voice they once occupied during the anti-apartheid struggle. As early as 1996, leading Afrikaner prophet Beyers Naude warned, “People tend to say that now that we have a new government, now that we have a new Constitution, now that we have solved our political problems, for the time being, there is no prophetic role for the Church at the moment. I think such a perception is a very serious mistake.” In direct response to Naude’s warning, Anglican Archbishop Thabo Makgoba confessed in 2014, “Let us acknowledge that the Church has failed to act with the courage that Beyers Naude showed, and to speak out when we have seen our political leaders failing... We have committed the mistake that Beyers warned us against.”<sup>25</sup>

As Makgoba implied, there have been significant government failings in the past two decades where religious institutions could have exerted a prophetic voice. The three greatest examples of these failings, according to Peter Storey, were the 1999 Arms Deal, where the ANC procured \$4B USD of military equipment amidst allegations of corruption; HIV-AIDS denialism that plagued President Thabo Mbeki’s administration from 1999-2008 and reportedly led to over 350,000 preventable deaths from AIDS; and South Africa’s inaction towards the campaign of political oppression led by Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe.<sup>26</sup> As a result, religious institutions’ silence did not stem from a flawless government where there were no political actions or current affairs to critique; rather, the pervasive silence stemmed from an inability or unwillingness by the majority of religious institutions to speak out and hold the government accountable on these issues.

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<sup>25</sup> Thabo Makgoba, *South Africa’s New Struggle – Beyers Naude Memorial Lecture* (Cape Town, 2014).

<sup>26</sup> Peter Storey considers these three issues to be the “the three major scandals of government since liberation” and he contends, “We’re still living with the consequences of each one.” Peter Storey, interview by author.

In the past few years, however, religious leaders have begun to speak out with greater conviction and frequency against the failings of the current government. One major turning point where religious institutions finally felt compelled to break the silence was the denial of the Dalai Lama from entering South Africa three consecutive times in a five-year span. Sidney Lockett described this event as the “last straw” where “there had been some grumbling, but at that point, many church leaders came out openly in criticism of the ANC” and “since then, they’ve [church leaders] picked up on a whole lot of issues.” According to Lockett, Desmond Tutu was so upset that he proclaimed, ‘Just as I prayed for the downfall of the last government, I’m praying for the downfall of this government.’<sup>27</sup> Other turning points were the Zuma-Mbeki split within the ANC, which culminated with Mbeki’s resignation as president in September 2008,<sup>28</sup> and the more gradual, yet proactive, marginalization of progressive ecumenical groups such as the South African Council of Churches (SACC) in favor of conservative groupings such as the Religious Working Group under Mbeki or the Moral Regeneration Program under Zuma that became the “ANC-at-prayer,”<sup>29</sup> or a model of state theology.

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<sup>27</sup>Sidney Lockett described the Dalai Lama’s denial as the “last straw” where “there had been some grumbling, but at that point, many church leaders came out openly in criticism of the ANC” and “since then, they’ve [church leaders] have picked up on a whole lot of issues.” According to Lockett, Desmond Tutu was so upset that he proclaimed, ‘Just as I prayed for the downfall of the last government, I’m praying for the downfall of this government.’” Sidney Lockett, interview by author.

<sup>28</sup> Alan Storey commented, “Only when the ANC, in my opinion, began to dissent among themselves, i.e. the Zuma-Mbeki split, did the Church feel a little bit more, ‘Well, if the ANC can argue with itself, maybe we can argue with them as well.’” Alan Storey, interview by author.

<sup>29</sup>Peter Storey explained, “Everybody knew that the Dutch Reformed Church was the apartheid government at prayer. And some people would call the Methodist Church ‘the ANC government

As a result of these turning points, there is a palpable sense, to quote Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a “new spirit rising” to finally break the silence. While Desmond Tutu, the current Anglican Archbishop Thabo Makgoba and other prophetic voices have remained fearless throughout the first two decades of democracy,<sup>30</sup> there is growing consensus that the silence must be broken. The South African Kairos Document released in December 2011—which received over a thousand signatories and called out the ANC for internal factionalism, corruption, lack of respect for the constitution of the Republic, and strained Church-State relations<sup>31</sup>—embodies this emerging consensus. Furthermore, the organizational formation of the Kairos Southern Africa group, which released the 2011 Kairos Document and continues trainings, theological reflections, and conferences on prophetic theology to this day, further confirms a renewed commitment by many religious leaders and religious institutions to have a prophetic voice in the political sphere.

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at prayer,’ which to me, is an embarrassment. I’m embarrassed to be a part of any Church which is seen as a kind of front for a political party or seen as giving a divine seal of approval to a political party.” Peter Storey, interview by author.

<sup>30</sup> Peter Storey reflected, “Desmond Tutu, for instance, has remained fearless, and has spoken on a number of issues which have made him very unpopular with the present regime.” He also mentioned, “I think that the present Archbishop of Cape Town impresses me. He doesn’t speak often. He measures his words very carefully. But I don’t detect any favor or fear. I detect when he speaks on a public issue, I believe he is speaking on behalf of the gospel and on behalf of the poor - those who are suffering most in our land. He speaks in a measured way. He’s not as florid as Desmond used to be, but he impresses me.” Peter Storey, interview by author.

<sup>31</sup> Kairos Southern Africa, *A Word to the ANC In These Times: Theological and Ethical Reflections on the 2012 Centenary Celebrations of the African National Congress* (2011). Available from: <https://kairossouthernafrica.wordpress.com/2016/03/01/kairos-logo/>.

#### *1.4 Ways to Regain the Prophetic Voice*

Given these renewed commitments of speaking truth to power, how can religious leaders most effectively translate their internal convictions into a prophetic voice externally? Are there strategies to most effectively break the silence? In an effort to be tangible and specific, I cite the following principles from Peter Storey as a starting point for reclaiming a prophetic voice and speaking truth to power in South Africa:

1. Call out specific people and specific actions, as opposed to generalizing.<sup>32</sup>
2. Do not allow clergy to belong to political parties.<sup>33</sup>
3. Recognize the role of secular prophets alongside religious prophets.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Peter Storey said, “I would draw a distinction between speaking out against corruption - anybody can speak about corruption – and saying ‘Mr. Zuma, you are corrupt. You are the man.’ That’s different. I doubt whether any one of them has actually pointed the finger at Zuma and said, ‘Your house that you built for two hundred million rand of my tax dollars - money that should have gone to the poor - you are the problem.’ Prophets are never feared while they generalize. It is when they become specific that people get very upset.” Peter Storey, interview by author.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Storey concluded, “How can you be a member of a political party and be free to speak on behalf of God and speak on behalf of the gospel? How can you speak truth to the ANC powers if you’re a member of the party? I think that compromises a person immediately. I’m not against people belonging to political parties, but I am against the clergy belonging to political parties.” Peter Storey, interview by author.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Storey admitted, “I don’t think we [i.e. the religious] have any monopoly on the role of prophecy. Jon Stewart is probably the most powerful secular prophet in the United States. If you listen carefully to Jon Stewart, he puts his finger on the moral and ethical issues time and again... And we’ve had - he’s an Afrikaner, and he’s a comedian, and he uses the persona of this woman, Evita Bezuidenhout, who is an Afrikaner woman who knows all of the old apartheid cabinet ministers somewhat more intimately than she should, and he used that medium to mock them, to lift up the absurdity and immorality of the apartheid

4. Invite political leaders to act prophetically at defining moments in history.<sup>35</sup>

Storey's perspectives on the prophetic voice are meant as a starting point for further dialogue, and religious leaders developing their own prophetic voice in South Africa can adapt the principles to their own situational context. However, now that we have established why it is so important for religious institutions to break the silence today—and, with Storey's suggestions, begun to examine how religious institutions can break the silence—we must now ask, what exactly can today's prophets say? What is their message of liberation in a post-apartheid context?

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ideology. He was a secular prophet. He continues to speak out very much on the issue of AIDS. And there are others of course who are not necessarily comedians." Peter Storey, interview by author.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Storey noted, "God does use political leaders from time to time who have a particularly clear vision of, if you like, the big picture, who can place what they're doing in the context of the big picture. I think Kennedy had that gift.... I think Mandela clearly was able to see beyond his immediate party political goals and could paint a picture of something much bigger than an ANC South Africa - a South Africa at peace with itself. I think that political leaders are invited to be sensitive to the signs of the times, and to be used in order for God to bring about some new thing. And perhaps it's more accurate to say, instead of political leaders being secular prophets, it may be that there are moments in history when a political leader is invited to do the prophetic thing and sometimes does it. FW De Klerk did the prophetic thing once in his whole political career, but it was a very important thing he did. We can never underestimate it. He was pretty pathetic before that and pretty pathetic after that. But in that moment, he rose to great stature." Peter Storey, interview by author.

## Chapter II: Post-Apartheid Liberation for the Poor

*Even though many of us responded to this new situation with what we called “critical solidarity”, we have now come to realize that our key solidarity has to be with the poorest of the poor and the marginalized in society. In the same way, as “speaking truth to power” became a catch-phrase in our midst, we now realize that “speaking truth to people” and becoming involved in organizations of the people is probably a much more appropriate response, since those in power rarely respond positively to a truth that is being spoken to them.*

*“A Word About Our Walk Together Since 1994” in Kairos Document 2011<sup>36</sup>*

### 2.1 Poverty as the Central Issue

Any message of liberation in post-apartheid South Africa today must speak out on poverty as the central issue of the era. In fact, as Di Oliver, Trustee of the Black Sash, argued, perhaps that should have been their undivided focus all along. She comments, “The hardest job today is dealing with the fact that the sort of energy that we put into fighting apartheid we should have put into fighting poverty. If we had, we wouldn't be in the predicament we are today.”<sup>37</sup> This predicament that Di Oliver references is the persistent issue of poverty and alarming gap between the rich and poor. Many progressive religious leaders have begun responding to this economic crisis - for example, poverty is a key focus for both the Social Development Arm of the Anglian Church of Southern Africa<sup>38</sup> and the Claremont Main Road Mosque, where they have initiated a “Jihad

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<sup>36</sup> Kairos Southern Africa, “A Word to the ANC In These Times.”

<sup>37</sup> Di Oliver, interview by author, 29 May 2015. Cape Town City Center, Cape Town, tape by recording.

<sup>38</sup> Delene Mark, CEO of HOPE Africa, asserted, “There's a huge divide - so the economic divide in the country is huge and that's also a big problem. So the gap between the super rich and the poor people is a huge gap, and we've by-passed Brazil on that scale at the moment. So we're even more unequal than Brazil. As a result, we do see some of the symptoms of this problem are high levels of crime and violence in society, which is common in countries that are so unequal.” Delene Mark, interview by author, 18 May 2015.

Kenilworth, Cape Town, tape recording.



Against Poverty” – however, the escalating crisis has also garnered more radical, and potentially dangerous, responses. Most prominently, a new political party, the Economic Freedom Front (EFF), has risen by speaking to the economic disenfranchisement and disillusionment in the country. Some observers compare their leader, Julius Malema, to Hitler and fear that just as Nazi Germany used the Jews as a scapegoat, an EFF South Africa might take a similar stance towards whites.<sup>39</sup>

What has led to this present-day economic crisis? Why has economic inequality actually *increased* since African National Congress came to power in 1994? Any reasonable answer must acknowledge the structural legacies outside the control of the ANC, such as the extent of societal damage caused by apartheid (which lasted nearly half a century, 1948-1994, while the ANC has only governed for the past two decades). Furthermore, although the South African reconciliation process has often been lauded as ‘miracle’ for its lack of violence, one must also acknowledge that the process contained a fundamental economic compromise. Mujahid Osman, the founder of the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM) at the University of Cape Town, reflected, “One of the critiques I have of the

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<sup>39</sup>Geoff Quinlan relayed, “Many people have drawn parallels between Julius Malema and Hitler. Hitler was an interesting politician. He came in on the backs of real disaffection. The first World War denuded Germany. It was appalling the way they dealt with them. They made them pay their debts. They drove that country into the ground economically. There was huge hurt and anger and so on and Hitler came along and cashed in on it. I think Malema is doing the same thing. What Hitler did is he also found a scapegoat. So he used the Jews as a scapegoat. The really dangerous thing is if Malema comes in and tries to use the whites as a scapegoat. Then you'll have real rabid racism. Hopefully that will not happen, but it can happen. And then I think the country will go to the dogs, so we hope it won't get to that.” Geoff Quinlan, interview by author, 25 May 2015.

South African reconciliation process is that yeah, it was great in that it prevented large parts of violence, and.... there was the issue of hope and healing and reconciliation and forgiveness, but for poor people, they don't really care about that... There's definitely an issue [that] land redistribution was not looked at.”<sup>40</sup> In the eyes of some activists, Nelson Mandela’s economic compromise in the negotiated settlement undermined the entire anti-apartheid struggle. Whether one agrees or disagrees with Mandela’s political calculus, the effects of that decision last to this day and contribute towards the structural economic inequalities inherited by today’s ANC.

That said, there is a strong argument that the current ANC is still culpable for economic inequality insofar as they have focused on their own self-enrichment and the enrichment of a select black middle class, as opposed to the interests of the poorest of the poor, over the past two decades. Sidney Lockett explained, “If the ANC were honest, and I think they're aware of it, inequality has increased since the ANC came to power, and it's definitely widened very dramatically within the African group. Of course, if you're a middle class person and you want to compete for a job, it's really to your advantage to be recognized as black and not as poor.”<sup>41</sup> Lockett, who has previously worked with ANC leaders from Premier Ibrahim Rasul to Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa, elaborated, “I think race is a social construct, particularly in South Africa. It's a colonial heritage so why on earth the ANC still holds onto this colonial heritage is something that I'm frustrated with. So we get rid of the Population Registration Act [i.e. apartheid race-based categorization], but it comes in another way. It comes through affirmative action

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<sup>40</sup> Mujahid Osman, interview by author, 26 May 2015. Rondebosch, Cape Town, tape recording.

<sup>41</sup> Sidney Lockett, interview by author.

legislation, employment equity legislation, and Black Economic Empowerment legislation where you start re-categorizing. I think you can't fight against that race-based classification by using race-based classifications. Einstein once said, 'You can't change anything using the categories of what you want to change.'<sup>42</sup>

Although Lockett's call for class-based affirmative action over race-based affirmative action are controversial within ANC circles, and – by his own admission – ANC policies surrounding race-based affirmative action are preferable to alternative policies of the Democratic Alliance (DA),<sup>43</sup> his analysis nonetheless highlight the failure of the current ANC to meaningfully address structural inequality in ways within their control. In addition to breaking the silence in Church-State relations to express solidarity with the poor as opposed to with the government, religious institutions must also – to quote the *Kairos 2011 Document* – learn to “speak truth to people.”

## *2.2 Poverty and Human Rights as Intertwined*

“Economic disparities,” Sadiyya Shaikh, Religious Studies Professor at the University of Cape Town, asserted, “remain the fundamental challenge to any kind of

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<sup>42</sup> Sidney Lockett, interview by author.

<sup>43</sup> Lockett argued, “The DA comes at it from another aspect. They also want to say, “What's past is past. We're now in a new dispensation. We don't have to take account of color or race.” And I disagree with that as well. There are historical consequences. We can't just wipe the slate clean. So we do have to give priority for the poor and that's what they don't do. They have an open market - that's what they argue for, an open market system. That's only going to disadvantage the poor even more because they don't even have the opportunity to get into this open market. They're on the margin. I think that's worse than the ANC policy. I'd rather go with the ANC policy.” Sidney Lockett, interview by author.

meaningful human rights because it becomes impossible to talk about that when there's such huge gaps of resources between people.”<sup>44</sup> The issue with economic inequality, therefore, is not just the inherent sense of ‘unfairness’ around an unequal distribution of resources, but rather the way that the unequal distribution of resources directly affects one’s ability (or lack thereof) to access basic human rights. While the South African Constitution is one of the most progressive in the world for its positivist rights (‘Everyone has the right *to...*’, vs. ‘Everyone has a right *not to be*’) and the Bill of Rights explicitly guarantees assets such as housing, healthcare, food, and water as basic human rights,<sup>45</sup> the reality in the townships is that many of South Africa’s poorest citizens lack access to these resources, and thus are being denied basic human rights. Any message of post-apartheid liberation must account for this way in which South African poverty entails not just *less* resources, but rather a *lack* of human rights.

In response to this lack of basic resources for the poorest of the poor, many citizens in the townships have organized what are known as ‘service delivery protests,’ which at times have erupted into violence or other acts of criminality. Beyond condemning the violence associated with service delivery protests, another contentious aspect of these protests is whether their goals aim towards true justice. On the one hand, Minister Alan Storey argued in the affirmative, claiming what South Africans “euphemistically call ‘service and delivery protest’.... is just really for justice: people wanting water and sanitation and schooling and basic things for life.”<sup>46</sup> On the other

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<sup>44</sup> Sa’diyya Shaikh, interview by author, 1 June 2015. Rondebosch, Cape Town, tape recording.

<sup>45</sup> See “Housing” and “Health Care, Food Water, and Social Security” sections in South African Bill of Rights from *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (1996).

<sup>46</sup> Alan Storey, interview by author, 14 May 2015. Cape Town City Center, Cape Town, tape recording.

hand, Reverend Courtney Sampson argued that service delivery protests is “paternalistic” and “a “weakened form of expressing the lack of justice.” He reasoned, “Inherent in the term service delivery means that we have and we will give to you as you will require and as we determine.... We’re not worried so much as to whether you remain poor or not, whether you got a job or not.”<sup>47</sup> While seemingly opposed, neither view is mutually exclusive of the other. In fact, reconciling both views gives us a dual-pronged view of justice that must simultaneously address denial of human rights in the present and socioeconomic mobility for the future. Categorizing education, which facilitates socioeconomic mobility, as a human right even further intertwines these two views of justice.<sup>48</sup> Prophetic theology must frame service delivery protests as necessary and essential, but not alone sufficient, to address this dual-pronged understanding of justice.

### *2.3 Reciprocal Relationship Between the Poor and Religious Institutions*

The ideal relationship between the poor and religious institutions in South Africa is often one of mutuality. “You can understand why God has this sort of ‘preferential option to the poor’ because you kind of feel that the poor have got a preferential option towards God as well,” Reverend Rachel reflected. “In a community like Khayelitsha [a large informal settlement where the majority are poor], church is really important, so it becomes their whole life in the community. It’s really enriching working with a community like that because you go to a middle class place and the church is down on

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<sup>47</sup> Courtney Sampson, interview by author.

<sup>48</sup> Education is considered a basic human right in the South African Constitution. See “education” section in South African Bill of Rights from *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (1996).

the list.”<sup>49</sup> Mash’s reference to a ‘preferential option for the poor,’ which was popularized by Gustavo Gutierrez within the Liberation Theology movement of Latin America, reflects an understanding of the divine in solidarity with the poor, and her anecdotal experiences as a Anglican priest in Khayelitsha reveal an understanding of the poor seeking solidarity with the divine. In this theological sense, the poor need religious institutions insofar as God expresses solidarity with the poor and vice versa.

At the same time, religious institutions need the poor to the extent that the poor push religious institutions to challenge the status quo. “The rich don’t hunger for change,” argued Alan Storey. “That’s why the Church needs the poor – not the poor that need the Church. The Church needs the poor to remind us in actual fact that what *is* is not what *should be*.”<sup>50</sup> Moreover, echoing the *Kairos 2011 Document*, religious institutions also need the poor in that ‘speaking truth people’ gives one the authority to ‘speak truth to power.’ Peter Storey provided one of the best illustrations of this principle from the apartheid era. He recounted, “I remember sitting in front of P.W. Boothe in his office in the Union Buildings and saying, ‘The reason, Mr. President, why you need to listen to us is because no one else knows what's going on on-the-grounds in this country better than we do....’ And I stand by that. Now if the Church is not ministering down amongst the poor, then it must shut up. It has no right to speak.”<sup>51</sup> In this way, religious institutions’ political credibility, moral authority, and theological legitimacy stem in large part from their relationship with the poor, and any post-apartheid message of liberation must speak *to* the poor, not just *about* the poor.

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<sup>49</sup> Rachel Mash, interview by author, 18 May 2015. Kenilworth, Cape Town, tape recording.

<sup>50</sup> Alan Storey, interview by author.

<sup>51</sup> Peter Story, interview by author.

#### 2.4 Singular Political Goals Around Poverty

“While apartheid was on, we knew what we were against,” recounted former Bishop Geoff Quinlan. “When it fell, we weren't so sure what we were for.”<sup>52</sup> Quinlan’s sentiment captures the crux of reclaiming the prophetic voice in South Africa today, and one of the key dilemmas in framing a post-apartheid message of liberation: once in solidarity with the poor, which political aims are you *for*? Rachel Mash further outlined this dilemma. “We need prophets. It's just a bit more difficult for what the prophet to say,” she acknowledges. “Obviously, the current government was voted in and we want the current government to be accountable to the people, but what are you actually saying you want? What exactly do you want to bring in? Are you advocating for an economic system? It was very clear-cut before and that's why everybody was able to get behind the one thing such as ‘bring it down’ or sanctions.”<sup>53</sup>

While there is no easy conclusion as to what this one thing should be for the present era – either in terms of the one overarching political aim (comparable to ushering in a nonracial democracy in 1994) or the one political means (comparable to economic sanctions during the 1980s) – there are viable possibilities to rally around, such as initiating a 2<sup>nd</sup> CODESA that considers the redistribution of land and other economic resources, ending race-based categorizations within public policy, or creating alternative political parties such as the Agang South Africa from 2014. None of these proposals are without controversy, however just as Desmond Tutu’s supported sanctions in the face of

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<sup>52</sup> Geoff Quinlan, interview by author.

<sup>53</sup> Rachel Mash, interview by author.

great opposition during the anti-apartheid struggle,<sup>54</sup> progressive religious institutions today should be fearless in their convictions if there are any singular political goals that they believe can rally civil society to meaningfully transform the lives of the poor.

In summary, the post-apartheid struggle - just as the best of the anti-apartheid struggle preceding it - must be framed around an underlying concern for the poorest of the poor in South Africa. By viewing poverty and human rights as inextricably intertwined, recognizing the mutuality between the poor and religious institutions, and determining singular political goals to rally behind to transform the lives of the poor, progressive religious institutions can strengthen their message of liberation in South Africa today and reaffirm their foremost solidarity with the poor over those in power.

### *2.5 Faith-Based Activism in a Constitutional Democracy*

Within the new framework of a constitutional democracy in South Africa, progressive religious institutions face the challenge of adapting organizational models of the anti-apartheid era to the post-apartheid context. The South African Council of Churches (SACC), for example, provides a case study into some of these challenges. The SACC was arguably the most effective ecumenical group organizing against apartheid throughout the crucible of the 1980s, however the SACC today is - in the words of Peter Storey, its former President - a “skeleton body.” This organization which once staffed upwards of sixty people in its heyday now only staffs two individuals, and as a result, faces massive limitations in what their ecumenical group can do. The question of whether the

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<sup>54</sup> Geoff Quinlan noted, “People hated him [Desmond Tutu] because of the stand he took on sanctions. He became a pariah in this country.” Geoff Quinlan, interview by author.



SACC could be revived to its former prominence and relevance within the modern-day political discourse is not a new consideration, nor one that has eluded the attention of Church leaders in South Africa. In fact, the original inspiration for this thesis stemmed from hearing Desmond Tutu discuss this very issue of the SACC's revival during a Friday morning Eucharist services at St. George's Cathedral in December 2014.

Unfortunately, in speaking with Peter Storey, the revival of the SACC in the present-day context seems unlikely. "At the end of the day we didn't root the SACC in the South African Church," he explained. "We were able to do critical things because we had enormous amounts of money that were given from abroad. When liberation came, the people who used to support us found other priorities, and we had not succeeded in persuading the big denominations."<sup>55</sup> If anything has the potential to revive the SACC, Professor Storey argued that the catalyst would be a growing sense of crisis that pulls churches from out of their denominational bunkers, however the additional roadblock today may actually be the ANC. "There's a concerted effort by the ANC to make sure it's not revived," asserted Storey. "Most ANC cabinet members owe something to the SACC - they were either helped to get out of the country, or they will helped to get an education- but now they want to see the SACC kept very quiet."<sup>56</sup>

The SACC's plight today is emblematic of other organizations whose primary structures and model did not outlast the anti-apartheid struggle. The Black Sash, for example, was an all-female, predominantly Christian anti-apartheid organization that

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<sup>55</sup> Peter Storey, interview by author.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Storey, interview by author.

transitioned into the new era of a democratic South Africa by intentionally closing its membership. Di Oliver, former Chairwoman and current Trustee of the Black Sash Trust, believes that the Black Sash drew its strength during the anti-apartheid struggle from its membership composition and their perceived respectability, however they could not revive that model today. She explained, “So a lot of people have said, ‘Now that the new government is performing so badly, why doesn't the Black Sash start up its protest work again?’ Well, we couldn't. Because our members were largely white - not only, but that was who was attracted to the organization. There's no way that we would start out as a protest movement of white people again.”<sup>57</sup> Given the structural changes undergone by organizations such as the SACC and the Black Sash in the transition to a constitutional democracy, is there still a unique space for the faith-based to engage in social activism?

In terms of successors to the SACC, other ecumenical and interfaith platforms have emerged as forces for social justice in 21<sup>st</sup> century South Africa. These new groupings are largely organized either based on geographic proximity, such as the Western Cape Religious Leaders Forum or Diakonia Council of Churches in Durban, or issue-area, such as the South African Faith Communities Environmental Institute. However, a focus on reviving the SACC or finding the closest proxy to the SACC within the modern religious landscape might be secondary concerns. Instead, one should consider the social activism landscape overall, and assess which movements, whether religious or secular, are making the most headway to advance human rights and express solidarity with the poor. In this regard, Reverend Rachel Mash was the first to admit, "It's the non-church

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<sup>57</sup> Di Oliver, interview by author.

organizations that are doing better in terms of advocacy.”<sup>58</sup> Reverend Alan Storey echoed, “The only time government has really moved has been when they've been threatened by legal action. That's through [secular] organizations like Equal Education, Section 27, Treatment Action Campaign, the Social Justice Coalition, and a whole lot of other organizations.” Because of the success surrounding these organizations’ advocacy work, Storey boldly claimed that the rule of law enshrined in the South African Constitution and activist NGOs were “the two things that are going to save this country.”<sup>59</sup>

This new Constitutional framework, however, still leaves space for religious institutions to capitalize on their unique ability to mobilize on the community level. In response to whether being a faith-based organization, as opposed to a secular social development organization, added a unique angle to the work of HOPE Africa, Delene Mark replied, “Definitely, [because] we don't have to go looking for communities. We have them. We're located within a Church and you have local churches in almost every community in the country.”<sup>60</sup> Similarly, theologian Dr. John de Gruchy reiterated that the Church “has a unique role in the sense that it’s everywhere, in every community and every part of the country.”<sup>61</sup> Moreover, faith-based organizations and non-faith based organizations can also complement each other’s strengths by pushing activist organizations to specialize in the research, and religious institutions to specialize in translating research to the grassroots community level. According to Reverend Rachel

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<sup>58</sup> Rachel Mash, interview by author.

<sup>59</sup> Alan Storey, interview by author.

<sup>60</sup> Delene Mark, interview by author.

<sup>61</sup> John de Gruchy, interview by author, 19 May 2015. Skype, tape recording.

Mash, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) recently identified trade unions and faith-based organizations as the two of the most effective ways to get information to people on the ground, and as a result, partnered with the Anglican Church of Southern Africa by providing multiple WWF interns in the diocese.<sup>62</sup> These partnerships between activist NGOs and religious institutions today mirror the way that an umbrella entity such as the SACC or a denominational group such as the Anglican Board of Social Responsibility during apartheid would have utilized their staff to conduct research, and allow the grassroots religious institutions to fully focus on and maximize their mobilizing impact.

These community-level mobilizations by religious institutions are an important part of a larger shift in South African society towards redefining democracy in South Africa. Sidney Lockett, for example, asserted that “the big challenge in South Africa now is ‘what does democracy really mean’<sup>63</sup> and Alan Storey provided the further context that while “a democracy is a framework that allows you to address social problems in a particular way, democracy [alone] doesn’t solve your problems.”<sup>64</sup> Religious institutions’ mobilization of the masses responds to the democracy question by reviving a more participatory understanding of democracy in the present-day. Reverend Rachel Mash reflected, “You bring in a democratic government [in 1994], but it's not participatory democracy. It's like, ‘I vote once every four years and then I expect the government to get on with it.’ And what was lost then was participatory democracy, because prior to that in the struggle years, you had street committees and community development stuff. There was much happening, but it was on a community level. There was leadership in the

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<sup>62</sup> Rachel Mash, interview by author.

<sup>63</sup> Sidney Lockett, interview by author.

<sup>64</sup> Alan Storey, interview by author.

community. That whole kind of peoples' movement was kind of lost in some ways.” In this light, faith-based mobilizations in the community have the potential to build a greater sense of political agency amongst South African citizens, especially the poorest, to engage within the democratic system. By carving out this space for faith-based activism within the constitutional democracy and encouraging a more participatory understanding of democracy, progressive religious institutions have the potential to catalyze meaningful movements for justice in South Africa today.

### Chapter III: Distinguishing the Religious and Secular in Humanism

*Christian humanists believe that we should join with secular humanists and people of other faiths in the struggle for human rights, freedom, dignity, justice and peace, and sustainable policies for the environment. Christian humanists nonetheless affirm a humanism that is distinct because it is shaped by faith in Christ.*

*Being a Christian humanist implies that one is committed to human dignity, rights and freedom, and has some real hope for humanity; and being a Christian humanist suggests that these commitments and this hope are inseparable from one's faith in Jesus Christ.*

*John de Gruchy, Confessions of a Christian Humanist<sup>65</sup>*

The focus of this third chapter is reclaiming prophetic theology on the individual level, as expressed through personal ideologies, belief systems, and motivations that spur on and inform how progressive religious individuals exert their social and political agency in society. If the earlier chapters examined how religious institutions can engage in political structures and achieve societal transformation, this section examines from what personal worldview religious individuals seek this societal transformation. In particular, I root prophetic theology within the modern-day discourse around humanism in South Africa, and explore how religious perspectives may diverge, or at least distinguish themselves, from secular perspectives in the humanist tradition. Furthermore, I draw heavily upon John de Gruchy's framework of the religious and secular, and of the humanist and fundamentalist, and utilize the corresponding classifications of religious humanist, religious fundamentalist, and secular humanist.<sup>66</sup>

Ultimately, I argue for an understanding of religious humanism a) opposed to religious fundamentalism, drawing particularly about Muslim humanist perspectives to enhance the existing Christian humanist literature in South Africa, b) distinct from

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<sup>65</sup> John de Gruchy, *Confessions of a Christian Humanist* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).

<sup>66</sup> Secular fundamentalists exist, too – least necessary to distinguish.

secular humanism in its faith-based presuppositions and corresponding outlook in social activism, and c) defensible against exclusionary secular humanists in our world.

### *3.1 Religious Humanism: To Be Truly Human, Not More Religious*

*The purpose of Christian faith is not to make us religious, but to make us more truly human.*

John de Gruchy, *Confessions of a Christian Humanist*

*I agree with John de Gruchy that for me also this is the purpose of religion, this is the purpose of creeds, prayers, liturgies and so on: it is all there for us to enable us to become more fully human [as] compassionate, caring, loving human beings.*

*If it's secular humanism that makes you to be more compassionate and loving and caring, whether it's atheism or Marxism, it's fine with me. I'd rather have that than have people embrace Islam and reduce it to something which is so awful that they embrace religion and become worse human beings: judging others, kill others, ex-communicating people, all of those sad things. The religion is not humanizing the person. It is, in fact, making the person more sectarian - wanting to save the soul of another person by any means possible [and] just spreading their religion through conquest and power. I'm not sure that's really what the purpose of religion is.*

*Rashied Omar, interview by author (2015)<sup>67</sup>*

John de Gruchy and Rashied Omar offer an understanding of faith whose primary purpose is to humanize. While Professor John de Gruchy constructs an explicit framework solely for Christian humanism in *Confessions of a Christian Humanist*, Omar's perspectives on Muslim humanism, especially as expressed through the progressive Claremont Main Road Mosque community, push us to consider a more expansive and inclusive category of 'religious humanism' that encompasses the humanist imperative within Christianity, Islam, and other faith traditions. The aim in constructing religious humanism is not, as de Gruchy warns, to "lump world religions together in some undifferentiated mass" and do "an injustice to all,"<sup>68</sup> but rather to distinguish two basic understandings of religion – one where the ultimate ends is to become more human, and one where the ultimate ends is to become more religious for its own sake.

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<sup>67</sup> Rashied Omar, interview by author.

<sup>68</sup> John de Gruchy, *Confessions of a Christian Humanist* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).

While religious fundamentalism contains many facets, including the ideological “attempt to impose a single way on a plural world,”<sup>69</sup> in its most basic sense religious fundamentalism prioritizes religiosity over humanism and values the need to become ‘more religious’ as detached from or greater than the need to become ‘more human.’ In response, a true religious humanist opposes any dehumanizing aspects of a religious fundamentalists’ ideology or value-system, especially if the faith tradition is the same as their own. Mujahid Osman, who started the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM) at the University of Cape Town as an alternative to the more conservative Muslim Youth Association (MYA), epitomized this Muslim humanist response. “In a way, all Muslim activists have an ambivalence,” he pointed out. “On the one hand you're uniting with many conservative Muslims fighting against Islamophobia, but then on the other hand you're also battling them on another battlefield looking at issues of gender, looking at issues of sexuality, looking at issues of marginalization of race [or] class.”<sup>70</sup> Mujahid’s challenge to dehumanizing aspects of Islam define him as a true religious humanist similar to the way that de Gruchy’s critical stance towards combating dehumanizing aspects of the Christian tradition reveal his own religious humanist imperative.

Furthermore, religious humanists consider themselves equal partners with secular humanists and – unlike religious fundamentalists – do not pressure their secular

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<sup>69</sup> De Gruchy here is quoting Jonathan Sacks in *The Dignity of Difference* who wrote, “Fundamentalism, like imperialism, is the attempt to impose a single way of life on a plural world. It is the Tower of Babel of our time.” John de Gruchy, *Confessions of a Christian Humanist* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).

<sup>70</sup> Mujahid Osman, interview with author.



counterparts to convert to their religious faith. In fact, true religious humanists will acknowledge ways in which their secular counterparts may possess humanism to a greater degree than themselves. Rashied Omar, for example, confessed, “I have met human beings who are not religious who have been far more human in human values than I’ve ever seen myself or other people who purportedly are religious display.”<sup>71</sup> Similarly, Peter Storey admitted, “Many of the giants in the struggle for justice have been - or have been influenced by - people of faith [and] a faith framework, [but] then I have to make two caveats.... One caveat is that there are a whole lot of very destructive people in the public square who are religious. And the second caveat is that there are some remarkable voices for justice who are not religious, and we need to acknowledge them and give them credit.”<sup>72</sup> Storey’s observation implicitly rejects any automatic association between a humanist tendency (e.g. caring for justice) and religious backgrounds, and as a result, one can understand why true religious humanists are devoid of proselytizing tendencies: after all, if their primary goal is to become more fully human, and there is *no* automatic association between becoming more religious and becoming more fully human (and in fact, the opposite can occur, where some religious iterations dehumanize), then pushing for religiosity as a requisite completely lacks credibility.

Moreover, if faced with a choice between religious fundamentalism and secular humanism, religious humanists often express solidarity with the latter over the former. For example, Professor Sa’diyya Shaikh considered Islam inextricable from her own

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<sup>71</sup> Rashied Omar, interview with author.

<sup>72</sup> Peter Storey, interview with author.

identity and entire worldview,<sup>73</sup> yet she also asserted, “If a debate on religion doesn't progress to how one thinks about reforming and rethinking those legal forms that are very problematic in terms of their implications, then I would much rather go with a secular state where we all agreed at a secular level [that] we have human rights [and] we have equal rights for everybody.” She added, “I would rather keep Muslim personal law debates out of that public conversation because whatever people’s particular vision of religion is becomes the dominating and invariably authoritarian narrative.” Shaikh’s preference of a secular discourse over a religious discourse in the public realm, in spite of her own deep-seated religious convictions, again emphasized how religious humanists prioritize concerns for justice and universal human rights above religiosity for its own sake, and stand in solidarity with secular humanists over religious fundamentalists.

Lastly, the perspective of religious humanism in Cape Town responds to an empirical observation - and question - at the very heart of this thesis: is it merely a coincidence that many of the most well-known voices for social justice have had religious backgrounds - from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X in the United States, to

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<sup>73</sup>Shaikh explained, “Nothing that I can consider from my very worldview is outside the ambit of religion, because religion to me attends to what does it mean to be a human being. And so it's impossible for me to think about any question because ultimately all of the kinds of ways in which we think about politics and social relationships are premised on a certain kind of understanding of human nature and human relationships and for me those are deeply informed by religion. So, even if I choose to speak in a space where I don't say a word about Islam, foundational to my thinking has been an entire edifice of Muslim thinking and feminist thinking and being South African. All of those different heritages that have formed who I am, so it's impossible for me to think about those things as separate. They just inform who I am.” Sa'diyya Shaikh, interview by author.

Mother Theresa, Ghandi, the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, Pope Francis, and others around the world? On the one hand, religious humanists in Cape Town would remind us that the secular can be a strong voice for justice just as easily as the religious can be counter to justice, indicating that religion is neither necessary (i.e. as secular humanists prove by counterexample) nor sufficient alone (i.e. as religious fundamentalists exemplify) to be a voice for justice. At the same time, the perspectives of religious humanists in Cape Town indicate that there are profound ways in which a religious background can deepen and enhance one's commitment to justice. Although religion is not a requisite precondition for a commitment to social justice, we must next consider whether there are unique contributions that the faith-based can make towards the humanist tradition that secular perspectives cannot.

### *3.2 Religious Humanism vs. Secular Humanism: Value of Faith*

*I think Christian humanists generally operate with a greater sense of hope than secular humanists. I think it's the nature of Christianity that it lives in anticipation of the coming of justice and peace. I think it has a longer vision if you like.*

*Interviewer: With the idea of moving from a secular humanist to a religious humanist, is there a pressing need that one needs to make that transition from your perspective?*

*One doesn't need to make the transition. But one may at some point want to make the transition. One might find that secular humanism at the end of the day does not have a deep enough of a foundation. You want something that is more deeply rooted.*

*John de Gruchy, interview by author (2015)*

While religious humanists and secular humanists are equal partners with a common humanist agenda, there are meaningful ways in which faith-based presuppositions, as opposed to secular ones, might create divergent approaches in the pursuit of justice. De Gruchy, for example, hinted at a deeper foundation and

transcendent dimension to religious humanism that secular humanism might lack. In this section, I highlight five first-hand accounts from religious humanists in Cape Town, and underscore their perspectives on how faith-based belief systems, as opposed to secular presuppositions, have allowed each one to:

*1. Recognize the fallibility of human beings and put faith in the divine as opposed to putting faith solely in our humanity as human beings.*

Peter Storey: “I would argue, rightly or wrongly, that the secular humanist runs out of road at some point. He's more likely to suffer disillusionment because the secular humanist doesn't have a theological framework to explain the failure of human beings to be human. Secular humanism tends to put its faith in our humanity as human beings, and I would want to say that I think that's a pretty dangerous thing to put your faith in because human beings fail to be human far too frequently.”<sup>74</sup>

*2. Seek a sense of divinity in the present that gives one a purpose larger than oneself, as opposed to seeking the acquisition of material possessions as one's purpose.*

Sidney Lockett: “We're all humans. Where the Church takes prayer life seriously - and by that I don't mean petitionary prayer, I think that's too much of a common thing in the Church, but prayer life in the sense of meditation, in sitting still. In Christian language you would say, “Waiting for the word of God” and in Buddhists it's just being open to the present. That's where I see the connection. People with that kind of sense where they're actually prepared to be - where this life is not the be-all-end-all, and therefore you're not

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<sup>74</sup> Peter Storey, interview by author.

acquisitive of material possessions. There's something more to life - maybe that's the best way to phrase it. There's more to life than simply material possessions and I think that's what a religion - a good grounding in faith - will give you.”<sup>75</sup>

*3. Conceive of restorative justice, as opposed to retributive, vengeful or violent justice.*

Rashied Omar: “Where religious leaders or religious people bring added value - because there are others also who know about peace and justice - what we bring is to do all of that within the framework of compassion, of mercy. So you don't have retributive justice, vengeful justice, but restorative justice - justice which has a soft ethos of compassion and mercy and tenderness.”<sup>76</sup>

*4. Call societal injustices a heresy against God, as opposed to just a moral wrong.*

Alan Storey: “The South African Council of Churches and the Methodist Church under apartheid never said apartheid was wrong. The world said apartheid was wrong. The Church didn't say apartheid was wrong. What they said was far more profound. They said apartheid is a heresy, and a heresy by definition is something that is much more profoundly wrong. It gets to the heart of God, that apartheid is an offense God. It is against God. It is not just merely humanly wrong on a humane level, which of course it is. It is a crime against humanity. But it's also a crime against God. We must get our theology right.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Sidney Lockett, interview by author.

<sup>76</sup> Rashied Omar, interview by author.

<sup>77</sup> Alan Storey, interview by author.

5. *Approach social activism with a sense of true self and devoid of both ego and personal ambition, as opposed to with a sense of false self and an ambitious, reactionary ego.*

Geoff Quinlan: “When I look back at my activist days, I can see how at times you were active but it was not about God. The principles were alright, but there's a difference between doing something when God is pushing you to do it. That's what I knew when I did the march for the first time. I knew God pushed me. And I don't think we can do anything effective unless we actually surrender to God and listen to God. That's what I discovered about myself: how did I react. I was trying to do the right thing. I was saying what I believed needed to be said, but when I met resistance, instead of sometimes recognizing that just for what it is, sometimes I would react. Now when I'm reacting, that's me. That's not God. You've got to be who you are without being reactive.”<sup>78</sup>

Overall, these five first-hand accounts reveal that faith-based presuppositions, as opposed to secular ones, can create divergent approaches to justice. One could argue that some of these divergences are not inherent to faith or a lack of faith. For example, faith-based perspectives do not have a monopoly over restorative justice; a mature secular perspective might just as easily embrace restorative justice. However, that is exactly the

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<sup>78</sup> Geoff Quinlan further explained, “Desmond [Tutu] and I used to quarrel - well, not quarrel. We used to disagree on it. He would say that ambition's appropriate, even in a clergyman. I disagreed with him. I've learnt that our calling is to serve.... You can't be unselfish unless you have something bigger than yourself to live for, and that's why the understanding that we're called to serve God, that God has made us for himself - that sense of something bigger than myself that I seek to love and to serve, and you can't love unless you know you are loved.” Geoff Quinlan, interview by author.

point: while faith was not the *only* possible means to embrace restorative justice, the fact that Rashied Omar credited a religious framework for his embrace of restorative justice accentuates that faith was the *best* - or at least, most effective - possible means for him personally to embrace restorative justice, and in turn, become more fully human.

As a result, secular humanists must acknowledge that just as a secular background facilitates their own journey to become more fully human, religion – while not the only possible means – is the best or at least most effective possible means for religious humanists to become more fully human. For a secular humanist to deny a religious humanist her right to a religious worldview is just as “fundamentalist” as a religious fundamentalist denying a secular humanist her right to a secular worldview. Just as we would reject the latter as forced proselytization, we must also condemn the former outright and defend the right of religious humanists to their own belief systems. This defense serves as the basis for my following response to exclusionary secular humanists.

### *3.3 A Response to Exclusionary Secular Humanists*

*Why, then, is it wise openly to question the myths and gods of organized religions? Because they encourage ignorance, distract people from recognizing problems of the real world, and often lead them in wrong directions into disastrous actions...A good first step toward the liberation from the oppressive forms of tribalism would be to repudiate, respectfully, the claims of those in power who say they speak for God, are a special representative of God, or have exclusive knowledge of God's divine will. Included among these purveyors of theological narcissism are would-be prophets, the founders of religious cults, impassioned evangelical ministers, ayatollahs, imams of the grand mosques, chief rabbis, Rosh yeshivas, the Dalai Lama, and the pope.*

*So, now, I will confess my own blind faith. Earth, by the twenty-second century, can be turned, if we so wish, into a permanent paradise for human beings, or at least the strong beginnings of one. We will do a lot more damage to ourselves and the rest of life along the way, but out of an ethic of simple decency to one another, the unrelenting application of reason, and acceptance of what we truly are, our dreams will finally come home to stay.*

Edward Wilson, *Social Conquest of Earth*<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Edward Wilson, *Social Conquest of Earth* (New York: Liveright, 2012), 293, 297.

Edward Wilson embodies an exclusionary secular humanist. To his credit, he is humanist in that he values the mutuality of our relationships with one another and expresses a 'blind faith' in our humanity as human beings. He is also clearly secular, as shown by his blanket denial of God, special representatives of God, and exclusive knowledge of God. However, the aspect most noteworthy in this analysis is that he is exclusionary. Wilson's failure to see value in religion – especially its potential to humanize and create the same "ethic of simple decency" that he seeks - is problematic, but that alone does not make him exclusionary. Many secular humanists may not truly see the value in religion, yet still tolerate religion given our pervading norms around religious tolerance and respect for diversity. Wilson, therefore, is exclusionary in that he rejects those norms and makes a universal repudiation of everyone who is religious. Moreover, by calling out progressive figures such as the Dalai Lama and the Pope, his critique is not the archetypal straw man argument against religion manifested as religious fundamentalism, but an argument against religious humanism as well. His critique, therefore, is inclusive, targeting all people of faith on the basis of their faith alone.

In a world of increasing secularization, Wilson's stance as an exclusionary secular humanist may become the new norm. As outlined in the previous section, denying the right to a religious worldview is "fundamentalist" in that it, de facto, forces a secular worldview upon someone for whom religion could be the best means to become more fully human. What would be lost in this scenario, of course, are the perspectives of religious humanism and the partnership between secular humanists and religious humanists in pursuit of justice. Given these consequences, is there a meaningful alternative to Wilson's exclusionary stance?



Denis Goldberg embodies this alternative, which we will call an inclusive secular humanist. Similar to Wilson, no one doubts Goldberg's humanism. Goldberg was willing to die alongside Nelson Mandela at the Rivonia Trial, and he ultimately served 22 years in prison for the ideals of freedom.<sup>80</sup> Also similar to Wilson, Goldberg is unapologetic in his secular beliefs, which he considers "rational,"<sup>81</sup> and he roundly criticizes most iterations of religion, especially those used as a justification for tyranny, oppression or other forms of dehumanization.<sup>82</sup> Where Goldberg differs from Wilson, and earns the

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<sup>80</sup> Goldberg said, "When Nelson Mandela said, "These are the ideals for which he was prepared to die," he spoke for all of us on trial in the Rivonia Trial. We expected the death sentence and we were ready for it." Denis Goldberg, interview by author.

<sup>81</sup> Goldberg stated, "Myself, I would call myself a rationalist. I'm not religious because I don't know what happened before the big bang theory of our modern universe, but I know there had to be something before the big bang, otherwise there would be nothing to bang. And since science tells us that matter are interchangeable but not destructible, and that theory seems to hold, there must have been something before the big bang. And I don't see what it has to be a Supreme Being. We might never know what it was." He continues, "Morality is a system of rules about how society coheres. And I've arrived at the values, which others also uphold on different grounds for upholding them, because they're human. And necessary for human beings to live together - not because these are rules handed down by some almighty power who will punish me if I don't uphold them, but because I believe they're the right values to hold. I've noticed that people who claim to be religious all over the world, and regardless of whatever religion, break their moral code and go to their religious services on Saturday or Sunday but the fear of divine punishment doesn't stop their criminality and immorality. So I prefer to stay a free thinker with rationally defined and derived rules of behavior." Denis Goldberg, interview by author.

<sup>82</sup> Goldberg mused, "Isn't it interesting that tyrannical governments use religion to justify their tyranny throughout history. So people use their religion and mythology to create a justification for their brutality. That's my background to religion." Denis Goldberg, interview by author.

title of inclusive as opposed to exclusionary, is his acknowledgement of what religion, at its best, *can be*. When I asked whether he had ever considered becoming religious during the anti-apartheid struggle, Goldberg replied, “Never. But I did change my attitude.” He explained, “In South Africa, all the major churches supported racism and apartheid, and reaction against black people as human beings. Therefore my attitude was a ‘plague on all your houses.’ But now, given the experience of our struggle against apartheid and the later turning against apartheid by people on religious grounds, I have to say I cannot simply condemn every religious person, simply because I think they're not rational. They have good instincts, which they justify in their religious terms, I would justify on rational humanist terms. So the change is that I don't automatically condemn people for their religion.”

Goldberg's shift from exclusionary secular humanist to inclusive secular humanist offers a path forward for individuals such as Edward Wilson. Wilson would not have to retract any of his views on the dehumanizing aspects of religion, nor compromise his perception of the irrationality of faith. He would have to acknowledge that for self-identified religious humanists, religion might be the best means for them to become more fully human, and that their religious worldviews are worth defending just as he would defend himself against the forced proselytization of religious fundamentalists. This response to exclusionary secular humanists, while grounded in an understanding of religious humanism from Cape Town, can apply as a general defense of religious humanism anywhere and everywhere in our world today.

## Conclusion

*When I walked out of prison that was my mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor both. Some say that has now been achieved. But I know that is not the case. The truth is we are not yet free; we have merely achieved the freedom to be free, the right not to be oppressed. We have not taken the final step of our journey, but the first step on a longer and more difficult road. For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others. The true test of our devotion to freedom is just beginning.*

*Nelson Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom (1995)<sup>83</sup>*

*We always praise Nelson Mandela for his sacrifice, and sadly, distort his contribution by implying that the saint, Madiba as he's called, personally brought freedom on his own. The greatness of Nelson Mandela is working together with other great leaders from the 1940s onwards and finding ways to mobilize masses of people. That's his brilliance.*

*Great leader that he was, I want that legacy of Nelson Mandela upheld. And the sacrifice of the thousand people murdered in prison and outside. And the hundred or so who were hanged. And the tens of thousands of years of imprisonment. And the thousands of men who sat in Angola [or] Mozambique in military camps for sometimes 30 years, and came back and still today die destitute. That brought our freedom. And they did that willingly, knowing what they were doing.*

*So, where are we today? I think we lack moral values. We praise the sacrifice of Nelson Mandela, but we are not just workers who need to be well-paid, we're citizens and citizens are responsible for the transformation of our country. And who's going to do the transformation unless we do.*

*Denis Goldberg, interview by author (2015)*

The dream encapsulated by the Mandela years was, as Peter Storey emphasized, “not just because of Mandela.” While “he [Mandela] articulated that moment well and stood for that moment,” Storey reminisced, “We were all ready to work harder than ever before to make our country work. And everybody was happy. There was a joy around. And young people were so proud and excited to be South African. Even though people were poor [and] even though people still lived in squalor, nevertheless there was a spirit that could do almost anything. It's not an accident that we won football cups and rugby cups and cricket cups and things. It's not an accident. We were all doing more than we

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<sup>83</sup> Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (MacDonald Purnell, 1995).

needed to do.” Storey ended with the conviction, “We need to recover that dream. And it's all there. Nothing in it was invalid. It was all valid. It just needs to be recovered.”<sup>84</sup>

Every interviewee with whom I spoke echoed these sentiments from Peter Storey and agreed that the Mandela years captured a dream of the future has since been lost and needs to be recovered two decades into democracy. In this concluding chapter, I argue that one way the religious can contribute towards recovering the dream of the Mandela years is to reclaim prophetic theology in both the public and private sphere, and that ultimately, the challenge to reclaim prophetic theology in South Africa serves as an invitation for each of us to re-examine the struggles for justice in our own context.

#### *Role of the Religious: Reclaiming Prophetic Theology*

*So, where, why and how does the “New Struggle” begin? It begins with the rational and emotional acceptance that after 20 years of democracy, we need to regain our moral compass. We need, as I said when I led a march on Parliament earlier this year, to turn ourselves inside out and expose our sense of moral consciousness to the sun. The sun, the light, is God's disinfectant and will help us cleanse ourselves. It will help us become morally disinfected so that we can recapture the dream we had when Nelson Mandela was inaugurated 20 years ago.*

*Thabo Makgoba, South Africa's New Struggle – Beyers Naude Memorial Lecture (2014)*<sup>85</sup>

Reclaiming prophetic theology in South Africa two decades into democracy, as explored throughout this thesis, has innumerable facets: from issues in the public sphere surrounding Church-State relations, the message of post-apartheid liberation, and faith-based activism in a constitutional democracy, to questions in the private sphere around our understandings of the purpose of religion, distinctions between the religious and secular in the pursuit of justice, and humanist responses both to religious fundamentalists and exclusionary secularists. Yet, at the heart of all these discourses, I have perpetually

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<sup>84</sup> Peter Storey, interview by author.

<sup>85</sup> Thabo Makgoba, *South Africa's New Struggle – Beyers Naude Memorial Lecture* (Cape Town, 2014).

affirmed the singular belief that the religious *can be* a force for justice in South African society. In the public sphere, religious institutions *can* become a re-emergent force for social justice in South Africa and prove that the prophetic voice of 1980s was not simply an aberration. In the private sphere, South African faith perspectives add to the humanist discourse in necessary and meaningful ways, and faith itself *can* be one of the most powerful sources for believers to become more fully human. In a world inundated by secular value systems and dominated by the likes of capitalism and consumerism, non-believers too have much to gain from the moral insights, alternative value systems, and humanist frameworks provided by religious humanists in Cape Town and elsewhere around the world.

Just as we might say that recovering the dream of the Mandela years is ultimately about recapturing a spirit of hope and possibility more than proposing any tangible public policy, reclaiming prophetic theology is the same. More than any individual political strategy, reclaiming prophetic theology two decades into democracy is about reclaiming today the sense of agency that religious leaders, institutions, and communities exerted throughout the struggle against apartheid. In that sense, recovering the dream of the Mandela years and reclaiming prophetic theology parallel one another, as both seek internal transformation of individuals. However, I would go one step farther and submit that these two processes are, in an essential sense, one and the same in *the type of* internal transformation they seek: both are about regaining a fundamental sense of agency to change South African society for the better, whether amongst progressive religious institutions and individuals specifically (reclaiming prophetic theology) or amongst South African citizens generally (recovering the dream of the Mandela years). Reclaiming prophetic theology, therefore, may be one of the greatest ways for the religious to help

catalyze the collective sense of agency and excitement that surrounded the original dream of the Mandela years.

*Retrospective Moral Clarity: Lessons Beyond South Africa*

*When black children did rise up in 1976 and onwards, they said to their parents, "But how could you tolerate it? Why didn't you speak up?" And one of the standard answers was, "But we did it for you my children. We managed to get from the countryside to the city, say Soweto, and if we made a noise about the politics, we couldn't have sent you to high school where you would get a proper education. We'd be sent back to the reserves, the Bantustans. So we did it for you, so that you would have a better chance in life." And some of the young people said, 'But you shouldn't have done that. You should have stood up.' Difficult, huh?*

*So I've created a counterhypothesis of a progressive white Afrikaans-speaking family in Pretoria, the heart of Afrikaner nationalism. An architect has two grown-up children who go to one of the posh schools, an art university, and they say to him, "Dad, why didn't you stand up against apartheid?" "Well, I'm an architect, and we live in Pretoria. To get work from government, I had to keep quiet so that you could go to this best school and then go on to university and study to your hearts content." "Yes, but daddy, apartheid was so bad." "Yes, but we looked after our maid and the garden boy and we knew their children and we saw them through school, but we did it for you my children." So what's the difference in the white family who were hypocritical, knowing apartheid was wrong, and black people?*

*And so you ask me about the future, I'll tell you my philosophy. I know utopia is a dream, and utopia is a Greek word which means nowhere. But how do you get to utopia? Utopia is nowhere, means nowhere. But I'll tell you how you get there. Today you try to get somewhere, and tomorrow you get somewhere further towards nowhere. And nowhere recedes in the distance but you're going somewhere to make lives better.*

*Denis Goldberg, interview by author (2015)*

Goldberg's thought experiment of a black family and white family in South Africa underscores the concept of 'retrospective moral clarity,' or the way in which it seems so clear in retrospect not only what the right thing to do was (e.g. fight against apartheid), but also that there was a clear moral imperative to do that right thing. Moreover, Goldberg's admonition emphasizes that one's circle of concern must go beyond just one's own family and involve a concern for everyone in society, particularly the most marginalized and oppressed. Future generations will have this retrospective moral clarity to judge the present era and challenge their predecessors on whether they were a part of working towards utopia and receding the nowhere of utopia into the distance. With

regards to the topics addressed within this thesis, one can already imagine the kinds of questions that future generations in South Africa may ask about this historical moment two decades into democracy: Why did religious leaders not speak against the failings of the ANC? Why did religious institutions not come to the forefront of social activist movements and mobilize? Why did religious voices not express greater solidarity with the poor? Why religious humanists not further combat religious fundamentalists? Why did secular humanists not better defend religious humanists? Thus, the challenge posed by retrospective moral clarity speaks to reclaiming prophetic theology in the present.

As one final note: many of the societal issues, ethical queries, and political dilemmas raised throughout the discourse of this thesis apply beyond a South African context. For example, questions surrounding how to redress legacies of institutional racism while moving forward in a nonracial democracy, who occupies the role of prophetic voice in society, or whether there are ethical ways to create wealth in a 'free-market' economy while maintaining solidarity with (and not exploitation of) the poor are just as relevant to the present-day United States as they are to present-day South Africa. In particular, the increasing secularization in America, especially within the millennial generation, makes the defense of religious humanists that much more relevant. Ultimately, though, wherever in the world one may be an engaged citizen, the challenges, questions, and dilemmas posed within this thesis serve as invitation for each of us to critically self-reflect on our own societal context and re-imagine our own engagement, whether religious or secular, towards justice.

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