

SOME THOUGHTS EXPRESSED BY MANGOSUTHU BUTHELEZI
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FOR DISCUSSION WITH THE REV. DR R HINES FROM THE UNITED STATES
ACCOMPANIED BY MR RICHARD SCALLAN AND MR. R. CHIN

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I welcome you, Dr. Hines, and you Mr. Scallan, and you Mr. Chin to Ulundi and express a sense of joy that I will be able to share again in Christian fellowship. It has always been so important for me and it is now more important than ever. Oddly enough now that the State President has delivered his February 2nd speech and has followed it up with bold and formative action he has taken since, there are some people who think that the battle is won and that the struggle is over.

There is probably more at stake today in South Africa than there has ever been before. There is more that is valuable which has been rendered vulnerable than has ever been the case before. Finally, everything is up for grabs and there is a lot of devil-take-the-hindmost politics under way.

In the past I expressed concern about the lack of leadership that the churches were providing in the struggle for liberation and in politics generally. The Church itself was at odds with itself on crucial issues which were tearing South Africa apart. I was not a Christian out of step. Church leaders who agreed with me that the Church was not providing laymen with the leadership that they needed included people like Archbishop Hurley and many other Bishops and leading clergy. There was agreement that the Church itself was in dispute about the issues involved.

I find it somewhat difficult to look ahead at what is going to evolve as the Church and State adjust to relate to each other. In politics there finally will be negotiations and in negotiations there will I hope be the avoidance of settling old scores and instead the concentration of what is best for South Africa. In the Church, however, I wonder who there is that is going to lead the way into the future.

In the past there have been the established churches, there have been established congregations forming a Christian body which was rejected by an advance guard group of theologians innovative in adjusting Christian belief into supporting revolutionary activity. The Kairos document is a document in point.

In the Kairos document theological assumptions are made which run quite counter to the best that we can hope for in the present climate of negotiation and reconciliation. In the Kairos document there was an austere demand for support for radical political action based on the assumption that there will be no forgiveness without confession and there would need to be political retribution, and there would be no retribution this side of political victories over White South Africa of the kind the ANC was promising. The term 'White South Africa' was not of course used, but in actual practise this is what it amounted to.

Now that February 2nd has happened and now that the South African National Party leopard has changed its spots - and it has changed its spots - and now that the South African Government is doing that which ANC revolutionaries and all other revolutionaries swore to the world that it could not do - move to annihilate apartheid complete and establish an open, fair and race-free democracy - do we tear up the Kairos document and throw it away? Or will there be some kind of growth industry at work making jobs for new era South African theologians who continue to breathe Christian conspiracies against whatever status quo emerges to be the new reality?

The old advance guard theologians who went out in front and left their congregations behind them are now going to be left as theological revolutionaries with no revolution to fight. How are they going to return to the hard work of pastoral care and the meaningful shepherding of ordinary people in ordinary life? Is the taste for the exotic in theology not perhaps incurable?

Some of these questions are a little naughty and some of them are provocative, but all of them are indicative of the need for wide-ranging exploration about the Church's role in the new circumstances. I have heard about possible reconciliation between the various members of the Dutch Reform family, and I have heard about possible reconciliation between the South African Council of Churches and the Reformed churches, but I have not heard any theologian or church leader be bold enough and big enough as a Christian to say: Stop, advance guard Christians must take stock of what is happening and re-examine their basic premises.

When apartheid was seen as a hideous and monstrous threat, there was World Conference after World Conference with apartheid as a main item on the agendas. There has not been one World Conference with the dynamics of the politics of negotiation on its agenda. There seems to me to be a need to point to these things and to ask questions.

What Christian perspectives are there, for example, about the pronouncements of the ANC now that it is free and now that its leaders are unshackled? Where does the Church stand on the ANC's continued development of Umkhonto we Sizwe as a military force committed to using killing for political purposes? What has the Church now to say about Dr. Mandela as a leader of the ANC inside

South Africa who stands back and threatens the resumption of armed struggle, and who says that he cannot call for peace in the townships when the people need to arm themselves against some hidden force working behind the scenes?

When apartheid was seen as a hideous threat, there were all sorts of distortions and the bending of truth to portray a situation in which ANC revolutionaries were taking last-ditch action which could not be condemned because there was nothing left to do but to fight. The facts of South African politics are that reform is now irreversible. There is no political prospect whatsoever of apartheid being reintroduced. Why does the Church now not tear up its excuse for violence on behalf of revolutionaries and why does the World Council of Churches not hold a conference calling the ANC to book as there were conferences calling apartheid to book?

If in the past the churches did condone ANC violence because they did accept the bona fides of the evidence and arguments that everything else has failed and there was now nothing left to do and that a justified war was being fought, why are they now silent on the ANC's army and its constant threat to reinvoke the armed struggle if the process of change taking place in South Africa is irreversible?

On a more personal level, if I may share in fellowship, I have often been pushed out into the cold by my Christian brothers with other brothers and sisters with political persuasions different to mine. They made participation a principle and made absolutist statements about why I should not have been involved in the KwaZulu Government. Those statements can now be seen to be nonsense, even to those who could not see that they have always been nonsense. Dr. Mandela himself is dealing with leaders of self-governing regions. He is visiting them and he is co-opting them into his political entourage.

There have been adjustments but still there is the Christian vendetta against me as a black leader. Why? Is it because the vendetta is hypocritical? Is it because the vendetta is actually politically motivated? Or is it because there is really something wrong in me which I have not been able to discover in prayer and fellowship?

Who is there in South Africa who will now stand up and call for a new era Christo-politico Conference where political Christians and Christian politicians can meet amongst church leaders to look at the kind of questions I am asking?

I am more than ordinarily aware of the need that there is to make reconciliation an ingredient of the politics of negotiation right now. The rule of law and justice itself will thrive most in a stable and democratic South Africa. We will not have a stable and democratic South Africa unless we reconcile Black and White now.

Are we going to sit back and watch the politics of negotiation raise thorny issues which will set man apart from man in South Africa without the churches keeping pace with negotiation developments, and without the churches doing the reconciliatory work that they should now be doing?

Dr. Hines, Mr. Chin and Mr. Scallan, I share these thoughts with you. They burn in me. I yearn for the Christian fellowship which will show me right from wrong in these matters. I yearn for the sharing amongst Christians in which the rightness in these matters can be spread. And yet I am perhaps a lonelier Christian now than I have ever been before. I would like to share the victory of the oppressed with my Christian brothers and sisters. I would like to share the relief of the poorest of the poor with them. I would like to hold celebratory masses with the Archbishops, the Bishops and the priests of South Africa. I would like to attend great big mass thanksgiving services for deliverances from apartheid and from the evil of the violence which apartheid has brought about in the breasts of man.

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