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Church and State: The Impact of Christianity on South African Politics during and Post-Apartheid

Calista Struby
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Church and State:

The Impact of Christianity on South African Politics during and Post-Apartheid

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South Africa: Social and Political Transformation

Fall 2018

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II. Abstract

Within the South African context, there exists an intimate relationship between religion and politics. South Africa by definition is a secular society however data indicates that the South African population that is overwhelmingly religious. According to a General Household Survey published in 2015, 86% of the South African population identifies with some form of the Christian faith (“General Household Survey,” 2015). Historically religious civil society has played a prominent role in shaping the political climate and the political involvement of South African citizens. During Apartheid, Christianity played an influential role in the ideological formation and justification of the Apartheid political system, while simultaneously serving as a primary source of strength for those involved in the struggle. This study uses in-depth, semi-structured, narrative interviews to construct an understanding of the ways that Christian civil society organizations and South Africans belonging to the Christian faith understand and engage in politics during and post-Apartheid.

III. Introduction

“Some of the major Christian churches gave their blessing to the system of apartheid. And many of its early proponents prided themselves in being Christians. Indeed, the system of apartheid was regarded as stemming from the mission of the church...Religious communities also suffered under apartheid, their activities were disrupted, their leaders persecuted, their land taken away. Churches, mosques, synagogues and temples – often divided amongst themselves – spawned many of apartheid's strongest foes, motivated by values and norms coming from their particular faith traditions.”

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report, Volume 4 Chapter 3

This excerpt from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report illustrates the extent to which Christianity was recognized as both an ideological underpinning of and strong source of opposition to Apartheid. In particular many Christian institutions, such as the Dutch Reformed Church and the South African Council of Churches, were often at odds as to the legitimacy of Apartheid. In contemporary South Africa Christian churches and organizations appear to be far less politically active. This study uses in-depth, semi-structured, narrative interviews in an attempt to understand how the role of the Christian church and Christian organizations has changed over time. This research has important implications in the broader South African context, as churches and religious organizations remain trusted institutions, often more so than the government itself.

The primary objective of this study is to explore the relationship between religion and politics both during and post-Apartheid. As such the study examines the role of Christianity both historically and contemporarily. The specific objectives of this study with regards to historical analysis are to:

- Understand the role of Christianity in justifying the oppression of non-white individuals before and during Apartheid
- Examine the interaction between Christianity and anti-Apartheid political movements
- Identify the roots of liberation theology and its role in the struggle

The specific objectives with regards to the contemporary analysis are to:

- Examine the prominence and relevance of liberation theology and anti-Apartheid politics in the lives of Black South Africans now
- Understand how Black South African religious affiliation has changed over time
- Assess the contribution of Christian organizations to modern social justice efforts

The paper begins with a review of the literature meant to orient the reader and provide background knowledge about existing theologies with political implications. My findings are then presented thematically. The discussion is meant to bring the findings into conversation with the literature and place them in the broader South African context. I conclude by providing recommendations for further research.

IV. Literature Review

Understanding the role of Christianity in post-Apartheid South African politics requires an analysis of the different theological perspectives that emerged prior to and out of the Apartheid era. The following section is a discussion of contextual theologies that influenced South African politics during and post-Apartheid including: prophetic theology such as black theology and liberation theology, state theology or Apartheid theology, and Church theology. Contextual theologies refer to theological interpretations born out of a particular social, political, or economic context (Loubser 1987; West 1991). In regards to contextual theologies it is “the situation of the reader or the receiving community is accorded normative status... which determines the pragmatic approach to biblical material” (West 1991 62). Within this literature review special attention is paid to the role of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), as the primary face of Afrikaner Christianity, and the Kairos Document, a classic work of South African black theology.

At its most simple, black theology seeks to interpret Christianity and the Bible from a black perspective, representing an alternative to traditional (orthodox) and western dominated theologies (Mofokeng 1987; Mosala 1987; West 1991). James Cone is credited with introducing black theology in the United States during the Civil Rights Movement. Black theology in South Africa has its roots in the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and African Independent

Churches (AICs) (Hastings 1981; Mofokeng 1988; Mosala 1987; Schoffeleers 1988; West 1991). Black theology developed as a response to the church's perceived, at best indifference and, at worst, tacit support of Apartheid (Mofokeng 1987; Mosala 1987). The literature describes the concept of black consciousness as the ideological framework of black theology and credits BCM organizations with the establishment of black theology as the spiritual dimension of the struggle (Mofokeng 1988; Mosala 1987; West 1991). In agreement with the BCM, one of the primary functions of black theology is to "work towards the cultural autonomy of black people" (Mosala 1987 viii). Black theology also developed from the grassroots engagement with the Bible that happened in the AICs following their split from missionary churches in the late nineteenth century (Gideon Khabela 1989; West 1991). While there is great variety amongst AICs and the biblical interpretations that have originated from them, the literature agrees that AICs were the result of African Christians' desire to retain their African culture in the face of white domination (Gideon Khabela 1989; West 1991). While the AICs never occupied a position at the forefront of and in certain respects remained ambivalent to the struggle for liberation in South Africa, their role in producing a uniquely black African theology should not be overlooked.

There is debate within the literature regarding the relationship between black theology and liberation theology. Liberation theology refers to theology concerned with advocacy for oppressed populations (Schoffeleers 1988; Walshe 1991; West 1991). Like black theology, liberation theology is recognized as a foreign import and is most frequently associated with the Catholic Church and Latin America (Walshe 1991). These common origins as well as black theology's "commitment which entails accountability to and solidarity with the struggle of the poor and oppressed for liberation and life in South Africa," make it easy to conflate black theology and liberation theology (West 1991 101). In addition, some scholars argue that black

theology developed as a spiritual instrument to be used in the struggle (Mosala 1987). However, it is important that black theology be understood apart from liberation theology as they have not always occupied the same theoretical space (Schoffeleers 1988; Walshe 1991; West 1991).

Literature describes black theology simply as a means of understanding Christianity and the Bible from a black context, it is only in discussing its historical development within South Africa that the literature begins to classify it as a liberation theology (Walshe 1991; West 1991). Central to this process is the evolution of blackness in the South African context. Blackness' is commonly understood as "a reality that embraces the totality of black existence" (Gideon Khabela 1989; West 1991 89). In the South African context, blackness has been the subject of frequent thought and has developed over time. At least initially, black theology had not made a full ideological and theoretical break with other dominant theologies in its discussion of black oppression (West 1991). As the concept of blackness became increasingly inseparable from oppression, the two theologies became ideologically less separate (West 1991). Still some scholars understand black liberation theology to be an amalgamation of black theology and liberation theology (West 1991).

Apartheid theology refers to the theological principles used to justify racial segregation and the broader system of 'separateness' (Loubser 1987; West 1991). A number of phenomena enabled the institution of Apartheid: utopianism, bureaucracy, reaction to foreign cultures, colonization/decolonization, the French Revolution. It was the biblical justification of racial segregation that allowed Apartheid to develop fully (Loubser 1987). The biblical justification eventually adopted by the DRC was based in hermeneutics of experience and is another example of contextual theology (Loubser 1987). The suffering endured by the Afrikaner population in the nineteenth century, including the two Boer wars (1880–1881 and 1899–1902) and mistreatment

at the hands of the British led to a sense of vulnerability that was crucial to the formation of an Afrikaner nationalism and racial prejudice (Loubser 1987). Drawing from the Hebrew scriptures, Afrikaners began to believe in a special “calling” that they had been “chosen by God” to fulfill (Loubser 1987). The DRC became identified almost exclusively with the Afrikaner population as Afrikaners began to identify themselves with the Israelites (Loubser 1987). This identification intensified during the early twentieth century as the Afrikaner population became more secluded inland (Loubser 1987). Caught-up in their own vulnerability and perceived oppression, Afrikaners took little notice of growing non-white dissatisfaction. In fact, the formation of the African Native National Congress (later re-named the African National Congress) in 1912 garnered little attention from the Afrikaner population despite being an early warning sign of the racial conflict to come.

Once the South African government was controlled by General J. B. M. Hertzog and the Afrikaners, total segregation was seen as a pragmatic political plan for the future (Loubser 1987). It is crucial to note that the DRC did not create Apartheid. In fact, there were prominent South Africans who belonged to the DRC and also fought for the liberation of non-white South Africans (Loubser 1987, West 1991). However, literature is highly reflective of the idea that ideologically Apartheid developed within the DRC (Loubser 1987). The DRC was hugely influential in establishing segregation as an approach to avoiding racial conflict and giving doctrinal substance to racial prejudices (Loubser 1987). In 1935, the DRC adopted a new directive for missionary activity: that missionary work should lead to “self-supporting, self-governing, and self-expanding Bantu churches” (Loubser 1987 29). This was more an elaboration of the DRC’s ‘no equality’ stance than a shift for missionaries (Loubser 1987). The ‘Missionary Policy’ acknowledged the unity of humanity but argued that because of the racial,

cultural, and ethnic diversity within the DRC, it would be best to separate white and non-white churches and allow them to develop parallel to one another (Loubser 1987). Within the DRC, where identity was understood as God-given, it was believed that Christian Afrikaners had been tasked with leading the non-white population to “full maturity” (Gideon Khabela 1989; Loubser 1987 32). Ultimately, the “Missionary Policy” provided precedent and institutional support for racial separation that helped to legitimize the national policy of segregation implemented under Apartheid but stopped short of claiming scriptural support for Apartheid. In 1947, professor Evert Groenewald produced the first document claiming the existence of scriptural support for Apartheid (Loubser 1987). Although the report was never adopted by the DRC in an official capacity, it did release a statement asserting that “Apartheid was not only born of circumstances but has its basis in Holy Scripture” (Loubser 1987 61). Groenewald’s report did inspire critique; some theologians began critique the idea of segregation as a biblical imperative (Loubser 1987). Despite an ideological split within the DRC regarding Groenewald’s report, it became the basis for the DRC’s 1974 “Human Relations and the South African Scene in the Light of Scripture” report, and was imperative to the DRC’s acceptance of political Apartheid (Loubser 1987).

The Kairos Document, crafted in 1985 by a group of theologians from the townships of Soweto, represented a seminal work of liberation theology in South Africa (Kairos Document 1985; Loubser 1987). The Kairos Document is first and foremost a rejection of the theological justification for Apartheid crafted within the DRC. In its own words, it is “a critique of the current theological models that determine the type of activities the Church engages in to try to resolve the problems of the country” (Kairos Document 1985 preface). It should be noted that the Kairos Document refers to “the Church” without reference to a particular denomination. There are parts of the Document that address specifically the “White Dutch Reformed Church,”

however the Document was written to convince South Africans without a strong stance in favor or opposed to Apartheid (Kairos Document 1985). What is perhaps most unique about the Kairos Document is that it understands two particular theologies as problems and a particular theology as a solution (Mofokeng 1988; West 1991). The Document points to the existence of three main theologies within South Africa: a “state theology,” a “church theology,” and a “prophetic theology.” “State theology” is “the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism and totalitarianism” (Kairos Document 1985 chapter 2). The authors of the Kairos Document assert that “state theology” misuses biblical texts and the name of God for political purposes (Kairos Document 1985; Loubser 1987). The third chapter is a critique of “church theology” or the theological assumptions underpinning statements about Apartheid made by sympathetic church leaders (Kairos Document 1985). In the opening of the third chapter, the authors are careful to clarify that their critique does not assume that the majority of Christians in South Africa agree with the statements that justify Apartheid made by sympathetic church leaders, but does recognize them as unofficial opinions of the church. “Church theology” is described as cautiously critical of Apartheid in a way that is “superficial and counter-productive because it relies upon a few stock ideas derived from the Christian tradition” such as reconciliation, justice, and non-violence (Kairos Document 1985 chapter 3). The Kairos Document argues that these concepts have been taken out of context and used to promote a false image of alignment to Christian values. In its fourth chapter, the authors of the Kairos Document introduce a “prophetic theology,” as a way forward. In reality this chapter uses many of the same theological and biblical elements used by the DRC to justify segregation, as the basis for a rejection of Apartheid (Kairos Document 1985; Loubser 1987). The final chapter of the Kairos Document is a call for the church to engage with the struggle and actively reject Apartheid.

While the Kairos Document is widely appreciated and would become inspiration for many other statements made by oppressed populations all over the world, scholars do recognize its flaws. In some instances the Kairos Document uses theology in the same way that Apartheid theology does (Kairos Document 1985; Loubser 1987; West 1991). Some scholars critique the Kairos Document as “still ideologically and theoretically enslaved to the dominant discourses in biblical hermeneutics” (West 1991 59). For instance the Kairos Document employs a romanticized conception “the people” which allows for othering, a key part of both Apartheid and liberation theology (Loubser 1987; West 1991). Similarities such as these exist because both the Kairos Document and the Apartheid theology it critiques are examples of contextual theology (Kairos Document 1985; Loubser 1987). The Kairos Document draws its inspiration and influence from its context, primarily in the black townships of Soweto, and thus is based on the lived experience of non-white South Africans who had suffered decades of oppression and second class citizenship (Kairos Document 1985; Loubser 1987). The authors of the Kairos Document acknowledge this: “the starting point for prophetic theology will be our experience of the present KAIROS, our experience of oppression and tyranny, our experience of conflict, crisis and struggle, our experience of trying to be Christians in this situation” (Kairos Document 1985 chapter 4). As such, the Kairos Document cannot be understood as unbiased. The primary fault recognized by scholars is that it conflates the DRC with the state government in regards to responsibility for the establishment of Apartheid (Kairos Document 1985; Loubser 1987). This, as has been discussed already, is a mistake.

V. Methodology

Data for this study was collected through a series of three in-depth, semi-structured, narrative style interviews regarding politics, Christianity, and religious leadership during and

post-Apartheid. Interviews, at the convenience of the participant, were conducted at various locations around Durban and lasted anywhere from forty-five minutes to an hour and a half. Each interview was started using a set of questions drafted in the early stages of the study (see appendix A) although ultimately each interview was guided by the interviewee. As is to be expected from semi-structured interviewing, the ways questions were asked, number and type of follow-up questions varied from interview to interview. This allowed me to tailor each interview to the interests and professional capacity of each respondent. This was helpful in allowing me to get the most out of a given interview. Using narrative style interviews presents a number of advantages as opposed to other interview styles. For instance, narrative interviews focus on a particular experience or sequence of events. Given my focus on Apartheid I found this style of interviewing helpful in framing questions for interviewees. In addition, narrative interviews allow the respondent significant space to dictate how information is shared. It is my hope that this has resulted in a more authentic representation of the issues and perspectives discussed.

This paper is based on thematic analysis of three interviews with Christian affiliated South Africans active both during and post-Apartheid. A snowball method was used to recruit participants after initial contact was made with the KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council. Recruitment was by far the hardest part of data collection. A lack of willing or available respondents often resulted in a scramble to schedule an interview or find a respondent. This was the result of a tight timeline for data collection and poor communication on my part. All three participants were male South Africans, two were black and one was white. The lack of female respondents is regrettable but also potentially indicative of male dominance within religious organizations, a trend discussed by several respondents. In congruence with the scope of the study, only Christian affiliated participants were recruited. Two participants hold leadership

positions within the church: Richard is a bishop, Martin is a reverend. The third respondent works with the KawZulu-Natal Christian Council.

A number of steps were taken throughout the study to ensure the privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of respondents and the data they provided. At the start of each interview the respondent was provided with a description of the project, including the potential risks and benefits, and the opportunity to ask any questions or refuse to participate. While there were not many identifiable risks associated with participation, the major themes of the study and thus the interviews did encompass potentially sensitive topics such as religious beliefs, political affiliation, Apartheid, and activism. Potential benefits included contributing to the literature regarding religion and political activism in South Africa. Each participant was pre-advised of their right to refuse to answer any question and end the interview at any time. They were then asked to sign a consent form agreeing to be interviewed and recorded. All recordings were filed and password protected on my computer. Names have been changed in order to ensure the anonymity of the respondents; only I know the identities of participants. Notes taken during interviews were left unidentified and unlinked to participants to maintain confidentiality. All recordings, notes, and transcripts will be destroyed approximately three months after submission of the paper.

VI. Limitations of the Study

My study could have benefited greatly from more variation in methodology. It is my regret that I was not able to incorporate participant observation or archival analysis as was my intention at the outset of the project. This was due primarily to my inability to recruit participants with the resources or willingness to assist me in implementing this methodology, as well as time constraints. I also would have preferred to have a larger sample size but given the

aforementioned difficulty recruiting respondents, this was not achieved. Despite this, I feel that my sample does represent a diversity of perspectives and organizational affiliations that is unusual given its size. I was also able to speak with people who had a wealth of experience with religious advocacy and South African politics, I consider this a key strength of the study.

I recognize that a significant gap exists in respect to the local Christian organizations represented in this analysis. While I was able to incorporate perspectives from those involved with the KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council and the South African Council of Churches, I was unable to speak with anyone from the Denis Hurley Centre due to the tragic loss of a key board member that limited the ability of those affiliated with the organization to meet with me. This is not to say that the Denis Hurley Centre was the only local organization excluded from my analysis but simply to recognize that the project would have benefitted greatly from their input.

Lastly it is important that I acknowledge my own bias and the biases of the study as a whole. As someone who is not religious myself and was not born or raised in South Africa I cannot pretend to understand the importance that South Africans place on religion and religious life. This lack of understanding did create expectations and lead to assumptions about what I would find in my research. For instance, at the outset of this project I had a very negative perception of Christianity's role in Apartheid. As I have done this research my assumptions have been repeatedly challenged. I have come to understand that Christianity serves everyone differently and that it was not only the religion of the oppressor but also the religion of the oppressed. While I do feel as though this research has educated me, I must also acknowledge that I still do not fully understand the complicated relationship between politics and religion that exists in this context.

VII. Findings

A. “The Church had many voices.” – Daniel

All of my participants echoed the literature regarding the use of Christian rhetoric as a tool for both proponents and opponents of Apartheid. When participants spoke about Christianity’s role in upholding Apartheid they spoke of the Dutch Reformed Church and the Afrikaner Calvinist mentality that portrayed Afrikaners as a chosen people.

“Apartheid was born in womb of the DRC. They [the Afrikaners] saw themselves as sent by God. That was at the heart of the whole enterprise [Apartheid]. It was the theological, ideological underpinning.” - Richard

The Dutch Reformed Church was described by all three participants as architects of Apartheid at worst, and unsympathetic to the injustices committed as a result, at best. This is reflective of the literature surrounding Apartheid theology and the misinterpretations that inspired Apartheid ideologically. Participants did not hesitate to attribute this to blatant racism that existed both within the Church and amongst the general public.

“It [Apartheid] was always about keeping blacks in their place.” - Martin

All three participants also spoke of the essentialness of Christianity and local Christian organizations to the liberation struggle. Richard was the only participant that spoke explicitly of liberation theology however the other two participants also acknowledged the Christian faith as a source of strength and inspiration for many including some of the struggle’s greatest leaders.

“People who led the struggle were driven not only by their political commitment but also by their religious faith. They found themselves within the scripture.” - Richard

Participants also identified local Christian organizations as essential to the struggle. Participants specifically mentioned the South African Council of Churches, the Diakonia Council

of Churches, and the Denis Hurley Centre. These organizations served a range of purposes from recruiting and mobilizing anti-Apartheid activists to providing financial assistance to the families of those in exile. Most importantly, because of the high public trust in religious civil society, these Christian organizations gave moral legitimacy to the liberation struggle.

B. “We lost our sense of confidence.” – Richard

All participants were asked to describe what changed for Christian organizations post-Apartheid; each one spoke of a transitional period in which the role of the church in the new democracy was unclear. Daniel did talk about the facilitating role that Christian organizations played in helping local communities with unity and reconciliation post-Apartheid, but generally participants agreed that the church seemed to lose much of its Apartheid era fire.

“Post-1994 the church, like most activists was fatigued. We became complacent.” -

Martin

Complacency was a central issue identified by both Martin and Richard. Both respondents talked about a false sense of victory that lulled Christian organizations and leaders within the church into a sense of complacency. Martin described this as “the Mandela bubble.” While the end of Apartheid represented a political victory, Martin emphasized that this was not achieved without significant compromise including the continued economic subjugation and covert oppression of non-white South Africans.

“Politicians tried to derail the work [of Christian organizations]. We were relegated to focus on morality issues, petty kinds of things, not the morality of good governance.” -

Daniel

When the church did try to reengage politically they were met with resistance from a government that wanted a subservient and non-threatening church. The church, based on its high levels of public trust and experience dealing with the Apartheid government, could have served as a valuable partner in the creation of the young democracy. Churches continued to push to be included in matters of good governance, but Daniel said that the church lacked the information about government that it needed to engage in politics the way it previously had.

C. “The church is failing God and its people.” – Richard

All three respondents agreed on most things. In regards to the current state of the church in South Africa however, Richard and Martin felt that the church is currently experiencing serious short comings, Daniel did not indicate that he felt similarly.

“Some of us are disappointed because the church has stopped engaging government and injustice the way it used to. We’ve become complacent and self-absorbed.” – Richard

Richard’s feelings about church in its current state were the most overtly negative. Richard expressed a profound sense of disappointment in current church leadership. He described the church as “much more honest about its flaws but caught up in the wealth the government has to offer.” He referred to the church as more inward looking and self-absorbed multiple times over the course of our interview and emphasized that this constitutes a serious failure on the part of the church.

“Corruption is not a new thing to South Africa.” - Martin

Martin’s current feelings about the church somewhat echoed Richard’s concerns but to a far lesser degree. Unlike Richard, Martin spoke explicitly of corruption within the church. He also echoed Richard’s perspective about the self-centeredness of the church. Martin accused the

church of avoiding “difficult conversations” particularly in regards to gender, sexism, and environmental issues such as climate change. Martin spoke extensively about issues around gender that he feels are significantly downplayed in the current political climate. He referred to gender issues as the biggest indicators of transformation.

“We are focused on responding to challenges on the ground” – Daniel

Daniel did not raise specific complaints about the church the way Martin and Richard did. Rather he focused on discussing the issues of importance to his specific Christian organization such as land issues, abuses of human rights, HIV/AIDS, and xenophobia. Daniel described his particular organization as active and impactful even currently. Daniel’s more positive assessment of the current state of church affairs may be the result of a scope that is limited to local activity rather than thinking about the church as an institution which seemed to be the perspective of Richard and Martin. Richard and Martin both spoke of a comparatively inactive and less impactful church. For Richard this admission seemed especially challenging. Richard was my oldest respondent and very active in the struggle himself. He described witnessing the church change since Apartheid as “deeply painful.”

D. “Should I stay or should I go?” – Martin

Martin was the only white respondent in this study and also the only respondent to explicitly discuss the current racial climate within the church. Martin spoke specifically about a “white fear” which is particularly prevalent amongst the Afrikaner and rural white populations. For many it is a fear that drives them to contemplate leaving South Africa. This is a phenomena is well documented in the literature. Martin argues that it speaks to the survival of racism post-Aprtheid.

“Like it or not, I walk into a space and people’s attitudes change” - Martin

Martin discussed a certain level of racism that he felt was engrained in not only the church but in South African society more generally. Martin described a white South African public that is still for the most part unaware of its racial bias. According to Martin, there are five components of “white culture”: cleanliness, control, security, timeliness, and standards. Within each component the assumption is that white people are the standard. For instance, Martin spoke about the last component, standards, in regard to education. When white people speak of needing to maintain high educational standards it is usually in response to the potential inclusion of non-white teachers or students. The assumption is that non-white individuals have inherently lower standards. Martin labelled this “language of excellence” as “the new language of racism.”

“Non-racialism in whiteness, not non-racialism within blackness. If a black person comes into a white context than we speak of non-racialism but you'll never find a white person in a predominantly black context.” – Martin

Martin was also the only respondent to critique the non-racial project. He described it as something he firmly believes in but claims that there is not an accurate collective understanding of what non-racialism means. Martin believes that this is what has kept South Africa from successfully implementing non-racialism.

E. “We are salt. We are light.” – Richard

At the end of each interview the respondent was asked to describe their ideal future for the church.

“As a Christian I would like to see the church engaging society the way it did – fundamentally about human rights, human dignity, restoring humanity. That’s what we fought for – our humanity and the humanity of Afrikaners” - Richard

Generally, participants reiterated that they felt as though the church had lost something since the end of Apartheid and advocated a return to the values at the core of Christianity. Richard spoke of the need to return to the values of African Christianity in particular. He specifically mentioned the Southern African philosophy of ubuntu, which refers to the bond that connects all humanity. Richard situated ubuntu at “the heart of who we are as Africans” and advocated for a rediscovery of this concept. This is not necessarily a new perspective. Post-Apartheid Archbishop Desmond Tutu popularized ubuntu with English speakers through ubuntu theology which posits that every human has the capacity to forgive and respect humanity. Daniel also felt that forgiveness was key to the success of the church in the future. He spoke of the church’s ability to give people a sense of hope and resilience and the role it has to play as a peacemaker.

“We are salt. We are light. We need to make sacrifices and take risks. That’s what creates change.” – Richard

Richard balanced his advocacy for a return to traditional values with a call to church leaders to challenge the establishment, both within the church and society as a whole. Martin echoed this and spoke of young people as essential to this process. He was however, careful to emphasize that young people be allowed the space to hypothesize their own solutions. He urged against surrendering to the tendency to encourage the participation of young people only to mold them to fit the existing paradigm. Instead Martin advocates for self-sacrifice and a relinquishing of control on the part of church leadership. Despite having significant concerns about the current state of affairs within the church, each of the respondents spoke optimistically of the future.

“As Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, ‘I am a prisoner of hope.’” - Martin

VIII. Discussion and Conclusions

The history of Christianity in South Africa cannot not be separated from the history of Apartheid. Within the literature and the minds of those who know the history well, the two are fundamentally linked. The Christian church and its affiliated organizations were essential to both the establishment and destruction of Apartheid. The ideological foundation of Apartheid was established through the development of Apartheid theology and the bureaucratic paradigm provided by the Dutch Reformed Church. Simultaneously, those involved in the struggle found strength in the Christian scripture as is reflected in classic works of liberation theology such as the Kairos Document. Post-Apartheid the church was not only without a liberation struggle to fight, but overshadowed by a new government that was supposedly not in need of the moral guidance the church has previously offered. Despite this, trust in the church amongst the South African public did not decline.

In the contemporary period the church remains a highly trusted institution even though participants identified serious issues within the church. While it is possible that the church is no less active than it used to be, the general sense from participants was that the impact of the church on matters of social justice has declined significantly following the end of the Apartheid. Participants spoke of a contemporary church plagued by corruption and self-interest. Despite this participants were optimistic about the future of the church, something not surprising coming from people with such long histories of church involvement.

South Africa has developed a number of distinct Christian theologies written about extensively in the field of religion and politics. The findings of this study portray a contentious and unclear future for the church. As the novelty of South Africa's democracy wears off, and issues of corruption, land reform, severe inequality, and low educational performance become more and more dire, it will not only be South African politics that changes. The church and its

affiliated organizations will likely be forced to take a more active role in advocacy and social justice or continue to lose legitimacy, if not with the South African public than with those within the church. It is the hope of those within the church that there will be a reemergence of the church's strong activist role. However first the church must deal with its internal failings referenced by the participants. Much of the corruption and self-interest described by the participants can be linked to a prevalent culture of corruption that exists in contemporary South African. In order for the church to truly return to its Apartheid levels of activism it must find its place in a society where corruption and inactivity are increasingly the norm.

This field is ripe with opportunities for further research. In a larger study with more resources it would have been interesting to extend the study beyond the Christian tradition or even to focus on one denomination in particular. I also think that literature regarding religion and politics in South Africa could benefit greatly from further research regarding the high levels of public trust placed in religious institutions and organizations. Lastly the state of the church and its involvement in South African politics is of course subject to change and will continue to be of academic interest.

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X. Appendix

Interview Guide

Interviewer: To start I'd like to thank you for agreeing to participate in my research. The goal of this study is to understand the role of Christianity in social justice activism and advocacy, both during and post-Apartheid. Today, I am going to be asking you a series of questions about your spiritual journey as well as about the Christian religion more generally. Does this sound okay?

This interview should take approximately an hour. It is important that I remind you that your participation is completely voluntary, if at any point you no longer want to participate please do not hesitate to let me know. We will end the interview immediately and none of your responses will be used in my final product.

You will also be provided with a copy of the consent form which you signed before this in case you forget your rights or the protections in place surrounding your involvement. My contact information is also included on the consent form should you have any questions after today. Do you have any questions before we begin?

I'd like to start by having you describe what it is that you do.

What was the role of the church during Apartheid?

- Do you feel as though this has changed since 1994?

In what ways would you say the church is politically active now?

Do you feel that the church is sufficiently politically active currently?

What do you see as the biggest problem with South Africa today?

- Do you see religion as having a role in the solution? If so, what is that role?

What are some of the challenges the church currently faces?

What is your hope for the church in the future?