Sections of the church in South Africa involved themselves in recent decades in the theological justification of apartheid on the one hand, and a fierce struggle against apartheid on the other. Various theological declarations, conferences and actions helped shape the history of this country. In this article I use three prominent church conferences as reference points to trace the transition from a situation of church struggle to that of a struggling church.

Universally the church has acquired the habit to name its important conferences after the places at which they were held, for example "Edinburgh" (1910), "Amsterdam" (1948), or in South African terms, Cottesloe (1960), Rustenburg (1990), and Cape Town (1991). Such a name subsequently develops a meaning of its own which designates something completely different from the place name itself. This additional component in meaning coupled to a place name can eventually cause the original meaning to fade. Very few people know that Cottesloe is a suburb of Johannesburg which lies in the shadows of the reservoirs of a gas factory. Cottesloe became the home of perhaps the most important church conference in the fifties and sixties, because the University of the Witwatersrand's students residence in Cottesloe was the only available venue to stage an interracial conference of its kind during the heyday of apartheid.

The theological meaning attached to a name such as Cottesloe can also differ from context to context. For most older members and ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC or "NG Kerk") Cottesloe spells danger in the form of foreign intervention, politics in the church, criticism against apartheid, and of the World Council of Churches (WCC) taking the DRC on tow. Others such as Luckhoff (1978:1) remember that the Cottesloe Consultation was a dynamic attempt by Christians to forge a route over the barriers of language and race through the impasse of race relationships in South Africa, and that the unity of the Protestant churches was dramatically achieved.

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1 The expression “church struggle” as used by de Gruchy (1979) and others with reference to South Africa is an English translation of the German “Kirchenkampf,” which refers to the struggle for the control of the church in Germany during Hitler’s Third Reich. In this article it refers specifically to the period of intense theological and ecclesiastical struggle in South Africa for and against apartheid between 1960 and 1990.

2 By “struggling church” I refer to the present struggle of the church in South Africa to find a new theology which is relevant to the changing situation. See below.
demonstrated there. For the WCC "Cottesloe" spells a consultation of its South African member churches which took place in 1960 in reaction to the Sharpeville "pass law demonstration" and concomitant massacre. The successful consultation at Cottesloe stood firmly in the tradition of the half a dozen interdenominational conferences of the 1950s which dealt with the burning issues of South Africa. The DRC exercised strong leadership in organising these conferences. Delegates of the WCC visited the country on a regular basis (among others, W.A. Visser ’t Hooft, General Secretary of the WCC) and WCC delegates also attended the interdenominational conferences of the 1950s as observers (Gous 1993b:333,335-336; Visser ’t Hooft 1979:179).

COTTESLOE, DECEMBER 1960: RECONCILIATION AND DIVISION

In March 1960 at Sharpeville, the South African Police fired at a demonstrating crowd, killing 69 blacks and leaving 187 wounded. The Sharpeville massacre marked a turning point in the political and ecclesial history of struggle in South Africa. The massacre increased tensions between the English-speaking and the Dutch Reformed Churches. In response to the threat by the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Joost de Blank, to withdraw his church’s membership unless the WCC expelled the DRC for its continued support of apartheid after Sharpeville, the WCC called its member churches in South Africa to a consultation at Cottesloe in December 1960 (From Cottesloe to Cape Town 1991:7). The consultation was memorable in many ways. During the meeting the miracle occurred that the fiery Anglican archbishop and anti-apartheid campaigner Joost de Blank and the DRC delegates were reconciled to one another. The official DRC delegation’s behaviour at Cottesloe was so exemplary in nature that De Blank confessed his guilt and asked the DRC for forgiveness for his unfriendly attitude towards them. Dr A.J. van der Merwe, moderator of the Cape Dutch Reformed Church was the one who accepted the confession. Incidentally, thirty years later at the Rustenburg conference (1990) the roles were reversed: there Prof. Willie Jonker’s confession (from the DRC) concerning apartheid was accepted by Anglican archbishop Desmond Tutu.

At Cottesloe it was decided that only decisions on which more than 80% of the delegates were in agreement would be included in the final declaration. The official representatives of the churches thus reached an incredible level of unanimity and took far-reaching decisions.

The representatives of the WCC and the eight South African member churches, including two Dutch Reformed Churches (the DRC synods of the Cape Province and the Transvaal, which included the Black section of the DRC), basically concluded that apartheid could not be reconciled with the teachings of Scripture. After Cottesloe a political uproar arose because of three decisions: (i) The request for political rights for coloureds; (ii) the consensus that there is no biblical foundation for the prohibition of racially
mixed marriages; (iii) and that no-one may be excluded from any church on the basis of race or colour.

Dr Hendrik Verwoerd as Prime Minister immediately realised that the WCC consensus at Cottesloe pulled the theological basis for the National Party’s policy of apartheid from under their feet. In his 1961 New Year’s message he dismissed the decisions as the opinion of individuals. He drove a wedge between the official representatives of the Afrikaans churches and the rest of the church by indicating that the synods still had to ratify the delegates’ decisions. The DRC delegates were thus reprimanded by Verwoerd for allowing themselves to be manipulated by the WCC, and told to recant. This most of the the DRC delegates did, thus paving the way for the DRC synods of Transvaal and the Cape Province to reject the Cottesloe decisions in 1961 and to resign from the WCC. They resigned because two of the more conservative synods, the Free State and Natal, threatened to abort the establishment of the long-awaited unification of the DRC into a General Synod in 1962 unless they did so. In the aftermath of Cottesloe the relationship between the English-speaking churches and the DRC deteriorated further (Viljoen 1984:203; De Gruchy 1974:124f). This placed the DRC irrevocably on its way to isolation. The initial dramatic demonstration of unity at Cottesloe was thus no more than the precursor of greater division between the churches. Thus the word Cottesloe from then on acquired a new meaning among the ranks of the WCC. It now meant: consultation as a method to bring about change (especially to racist policies) does not work (Gous 1993b:353; cf. De Villiers 1986:147 and Richardson 1977:35-44). More radical methods were needed and thus the pro-active Programme to Combat Racism was launched in 1969. Consultation as a problem-solving method or as a means to effect change thus fell out of favour - partly as a result of the DRC’s reaction to Cottesloe. Confrontation thus replaced consultation as the preferred methodology to bring about change.

The next thirty years of South African church history was a period of confrontation, isolation and struggle. Little wonder that the books describing the church’s action in this period bear titles such as “The Church Struggle in South Africa” (De Gruchy 1979) and “Christian Resistance to Apartheid” (Balia 1989). As time progresses, the history of the thirty year period of intense struggle after Cottesloe will have to be revisited and re-assessed by future researchers. The church has most certainly not yet come to terms with issues such as violence,3 the sanctions debate, church-state relations and many others that are raised by the events of that period. Only time will tell whose actions and theology can stand the test of time and remain bold in the face of scrutiny. I come back to this in the concluding section of my paper.

The period of struggle and confrontation

The period of struggle after Cottesloe saw a number of ecumenical role players filling the scene. When the need for a South African counterpart to the

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3 This refers to all the different dimensions of violence: pro-active and reactive, structural and physical, etc.
WCC arose out of Cottesloe, church leaders did not see the Christian Council of South Africa (CCSA) as its natural vehicle (Thomas 1989:35-36). The vacuum after Cottesloe was eventually filled by the Christian Institute, which was founded and financed with the help of Robert Bilheimer of the WCC and under the leadership of Beyers Naudé, one of the DRC ministers who could not be forced back into the restrictive mould of DRC thinking of that time. The Christian Council finally got its act together, and after changing its name in 1968 to the South African Council of Churches, took centre stage in the theological struggle against apartheid with its Message to the People of South Africa. Some of ecumenical highlights and lowpoints of the ensuing struggle were: 1969: The acceptance by the WCC of the proposed Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) and subsequently also the "Special Fund" which gives financial aid to the ANC and the PAC up to the present day. 1974: "Human Relations in the light of Scripture" - the first policy document of the DRC which contains in part the church's reaction to the criticism from foreign churches over its theological support for apartheid. 1979 saw the informal SACLA conference (SA Christian Leadership Assembly) under chairmanship of Prof. David Bosch - one of many meetings to be labelled a "second Cottesloe." 1982 saw the World Alliance of Reformed Churches declare apartheid a sin and its theological justification a heresy and consequently suspend the membership of the DRC. In response to this decision, the Dutch Reformed Mission Church drafted its Belhar Confession in the same year. The Kairos Document followed in 1985, the Harare Declaration in 1985 and the Lusaka Declaration in 1987, the latter which took clear decisions on the violence issue.

The violence debate and the SACC

The establishment of the Programme to Combat Racism by the WCC in 1969, without first consulting its South African member churches, placed the SACC in a dilemma, partly because it is (mistakenly) regarded by the public as the South African "branch" of the WCC. The SACC reacted by saying that it supported the struggle against racism, but that it had reservations about the proposed methods to do this. On the decision that force might be used to right wrongs, the executive committee of the SACC said: "We are disturbed by the way in which the churches and the World Council... are called upon to initiate the use of means usually associated with the civil power.... These are the weapons of the world rather than church" (in De Gruchy 1979:129). In September 1970 the SACC was caught on the wrong foot again in an even more compromising position when the executive committee of the WCC - again without consulting the South African churches or the SACC - announced that a Special Fund would be created to make donations to liberation movements. All liberation movements "fighting in Southern Africa for 'humanitarian purposes consonant with the aims and policies of the World Council of Churches'" (Viljoen 1980:42), would benefit from these donations.
Nash (1982:142-143) tried unsuccessfully “to nail that lie” that the PCR was instituted by the WCC without consulting its South African member churches. She refers to the fact that South African bishop Alphæus Zulu was at that time one of the presidents of the WCC and that both Bill Burnett of the SACC and Beyers Naude of the Christian Institute were invited to the Notting Hill consultation which approved the PCR. Fact of the matter is that none of the abovementioned could attend, and that the WCC, contrary to its claims, implemented the PCR without consulting the member churches at that time or afterwards. Only Alex Boraine, a Methodist minister of South Africa, was present (in his individual capacity) on the advisory group which recommended the Special Fund.

The introduction of the Special Fund by the WCC immediately brought the SACC under fire from Prime Minister John Vorster, who had succeeded Dr Verwoerd. He put an ultimatum to the SACC, threatening to take steps against them if member churches did not withdraw from the WCC. The SACC’s executive committee held an emergency meeting at which it was decided that the SACC still considered its task to preach reconciliation and that, despite grave difference of opinion about the issue - it was seen as preferable that their churches should remain within the WCC in order that their convictions could be heard by the world church. All member churches criticised racism and the funding of liberation movements at their various meetings. Nonetheless they decided to remain members of the WCC. Some churches however withheld their financial contributions to the WCC.

Most of the churches (with the initiative coming from the South African churches!) also requested a consultation between the WCC and South African church leaders. At first Advocate Vorster said that he would not stand in the way of such a meeting. Later, however, the WCC delegation was forbidden to enter the country any further than the international hotel at Jan Smuts airport. The WCC naturally found this unacceptable and the consultation on the violence issue never took place (Gous 1991:13 & 1993a:214).

The violence debate in the SACC was undecided until 1987. Until then the SACC on various occasions rejected at first the violence of the liberation movements and later the use of violence to sustain the status quo in South Africa (Viljoen 1980:43). Douglas Bax consequently initiated a decision in support of conscientious objection against National Service because it was not a “just war” (Gous 1993a:217-218). However, in 1987 the SACC supported and signed the WCC’s Lusaka Declaration in which violence was presented as a compulsory option. The declaration affirmed “the unquestionable right of the people of Namibia and South Africa to secure justice and peace through the liberation movements” and stated that the present situation “compels [my emphasis - GG] the movements to use force along with other means to end oppression” (in Hofmeyr, Millard & Froneman 1991:389). The question remains whether the present culture of violence in South Africa (which in some areas borders on civil war) can be attributed to the theological justification of violence by both those in support of apartheid and those involved in the struggle against it.
The violence issue is only one of many unresolved issues from the period of the church struggle which needs to be re-assessed by researchers and church leaders - something which fortunately began to happen at the Rustenburg Conference in 1990. Other important happenings before Rustenburg were the 1986 policy document *Church and Society* of the DRC (amended in 1990) - which (in theory) finally closed the “apartheid bible” of the DRC (Loubser 1987:113-121). The Lusaka Declaration followed in 1987. In December 1989 State President F.W. de Klerk issued a call to all churches in South Africa to jointly define a strategy to facilitate negotiations, reconciliation and change. He appointed Dr Louw Alberts, a Christian physicist, to facilitate and convene a church conference for this purpose. The year 1990 saw the turning point with the February 2nd speech by de Klerk, in which ANC leader Nelson Mandela’s release from prison was announced, and a process was set into motion to level the political playing field for all parties. The church’s reaction to this new situation was the Rustenburg Church Conference (Consultation) the same year and the 1991 WCC visit to South Africa, which resulted in the Cape Town Conference.

RUSTENBURG, NOVEMBER 1990: “IN SPIRIT” THE SECOND COTTESLOE

Rustenburg is, as its Dutch name indicates, “a town of restfulness” northwest of Pretoria, on the main route to the famous casino-hotels, Sun City and the Lost City. Ironically Rustenburg is situated in a part of the Transvaal where the right-wing Conservative Party has quite a stronghold. This small town of Rustenburg, and more specifically the Hunter’s Rest Hotel, was the host of the now famous Rustenburg Church Conference from 5-9 November 1990. “Not since the Cottesloe Consultation in the 1960s has the Church been presented with so significant a challenge to rediscover its calling and to unite Christian witness in a changing South Africa” (Alberts & Chikane 1991:15).

Could Rustenburg be the long awaited second Cottesloe to heal the wounds of the past and bring about reconciliation in the body of Christ in South Africa?

The theme was also appropriately chosen: “Towards a united Christian witness in a changing South Africa.” Rustenburg was “the largest and most representative gathering of Christian Churches ever held in South Africa” (Hofmeyr & Pillay 1991:30). Approximately 230 church leaders from more than 80 denominations and para-church organisations attended this conference, representing more than 90% of Christians in South Africa.4

Rustenburg came the closest to a truly local ecumenical council in South Africa (Crafford & Gous 1993:437-438).

Rustenburg’s relevance is best described in the words of Catholic Archbishop George Daniel: “... on the 9th of November 1989 the Berlin Wall came down and on the 9th of November 1990 the wall came down between

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4 Underrepresented, however, were black evangelicals, women, young people and African Independent Churches.
various churches in South Africa” (in McMahan & Briggs 1990:2). Gathering representatives as diverse as Roman Catholics, Charismatics, African Indigenous Churches, Dutch Reformed Churches (black, “coloured” and white), Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and others was remarkable in itself. But the reconciliation which occurred among delegates, enabling them to produce and affirm the Rustenburg Declaration, was nothing short of miraculous (NIR Special Report 1990:1).

This new rapprochement among the churches was largely made possible by the changed political dynamics in South Africa after February 2 1990. The ecumenical stage too was drastically changed and the new political situation has made reconciliation among the churches possible: “For the first time in our history, we are talking seriously about a future in which all our people will have an equal say and in which the entrenched rights and privileges of one group are being given up” (Bosch 1990:7).

The call to the churches by F.W. de Klerk in December 1989 was the specific impetus which gave rise to the Rustenburg Conference. This was in stark contrast to the role of previous Prime Ministers. Many churches were willing to heed the call by the convenor, Dr Louw Alberts, but the SACC objected to government involvement in the organisation of the conference, “because if the State becomes involved in the resolution of theological differences, the church runs the risk of losing her independence and role as witness in society” (Chikane in Van der Linde 1990:1).

The consultation asked for and sponsored by the State President therefore went ahead on July 20th 1990, but without the SACC member churches. Subsequent negotiations between Alberts and the SACC led to the agreement that Alberts and Chikane would act as co-organisers of a national (nationwide) church consultation, on condition that the State President withdraws from such a consultation - a step which Mr de Klerk was willing to take. Where Verwoerd had bulldozed the combined witness of the church at the Cottesloe consultation, de Klerk requested a common witness and even tried to facilitate it. He, as it were, got what he asked for ... a declaration by all the churches which rejected apartheid as sin.

“A conference of confessions”

The watershed event of the Rustenburg Conference was undoubtedly Prof. Willie Jonker’s confession on the first morning:

I confess before you and before the Lord, not only my own sin and guilt, and my personal responsibility for the political, social, economical and structural wrongs that have been done to many of you and the results of which you and our whole country are still suffering from but vicariously I dare also to do that in the name of the NG Kerk (DRC) of which I am a member, and for the Afrikaans people as a whole. I have the liberty to do just that, because the NG Kerk (DRC) at its latest synod has declared apartheid a sin and confessed its own guilt of negligence in not warning against it and distancing itself from it long ago (in Alberts & Chikane 1991:92).
Following Jonker's address Desmond Tutu spontaneously rose to receive the confession and offer forgiveness:

I believe that I certainly stand under pressure of God's Holy Spirit to say that ... when confession is made, then those of us who have been wronged must say "We forgive you." And that together we may move to the reconstruction of our land. It [the confession] is not cheaply made and the response is not cheaply made (in McMahan & Briggs 1990:2).

The entire conference delegation rose to its feet in applause, expressing recognition of the moment when the grace of God had broken through into the affairs of the church and nation (McMahan & Briggs 1990:2). The confession induced most other churches to make confession also. In this spirit of humility and confession few delegates looked each other in the eye to search for the proverbial splinter there. In most cases the mirror was held up in order to look for the beam in the owner's eye. Villa-Vicencio remarked: "...perhaps the only act we can realistically engage in with any integrity at this time is an ecumenically unifying confession of guilt" (in McMahan & Briggs 1990:4). The conference will thus go down in history as the "Conference of Confessions" (Alberts & Chikane 1991:16).

The next morning the Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church, Dr Pieter Potgieter, speaking for the delegates from his church, offered an unambiguous identification with Prof. Jonker's statement as it "precisely reiterated" the decision of their most recent General Synod. "We would like to see this decision of Synod as the basis of reconciliation with all people and all churches." Further he referred to a Declaration of Christian Principles including a Bill of Human Rights which had been adopted at the same Synod (McMahan & Briggs 1990:2).

Desmond Tutu then acknowledged that he was in no position to accept a confession on behalf of anyone but himself. But he continued to say:

I cannot, when someone says "Forgive me," say "I do not." For [then] I cannot pray the prayer that we prayed "Forgive as we forgive..." There are no guarantees in grace. When Jesus Christ looked at Zaccheus, he had no guarantee that Zaccheus would respond to the grace of His forgiveness and love. We are people of grace who have to have the vulnerability of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on the Cross. Jesus Christ in accepting Zaccheus, released Zaccheus so that Zaccheus could then say "I will make restitution" (McMahan & Briggs 1990:3).

But there were others, especially from the ranks of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa and the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, who remained wary of the confession. They insisted that this confession, like others they had heard before, was too general and all-inclusive. They urged the conference to ask for clarification of what the Dutch Reformed Church meant by apartheid: socially, politically, economically, and religiously.

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5 These two churches are the black and "coloured" Dutch Reformed Churches respectively, which are in a process of unity negotiations to form the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa.
The mood at Rustenburg, however, was that this historic conference dare not stress division when unity seemed within reach. The conference steering committee implicitly accepted the confession and moved on, encouraging the DRC family of churches to “find a way of resolving those problems amongst themselves” (McMahan & Briggs 1990:3). According to Bosch (Bosch 1991:3), it was felt that, in a sense, the domestic squabbles of a particular denomination had inappropriately been transferred on to the conference agenda and had, at times, really threatened to dominate it. The DRC family of churches did meet in February 1991 to discuss various unity proposals - albeit without immediate success - an indication that real reconciliation is a difficult and slow process.

During the final debate on a joint declaration there was considerable give and take. Although a broad diversity of ideological perspectives continued to be vocally advocated, most delegates seemed willing to sacrifice absolute consensus in order to achieve broad agreement. This spirit is represented in the Preamble to the Declaration: “Some of us are not in full accord with everything said in this conference, but on this we are all agreed, namely the unequivocal rejection of apartheid as a sin” (in Alberts & Chikane 1991:275).

The conference’s closing was bittersweet. Just before the end of the conference, Prof. Potgieter gave a press conference to publicly qualify the DRC’s support for portions of the Declaration, because of the DRC delegation’s inability to go beyond the decisions of their Bloemfontein synod; while still affirming their confession of apartheid as sin.

Reactions to Potgieter’s press conference varied from understanding, shock, and “we have warned you beforehand” or “we told you so.” Potgieter’s move proved that the DRC’s decision making structures were not yet equipped to handle the dynamics of ecumenical gatherings. The DRC has no system of “reception” to carry decisions of ecumenical gatherings back to their synods. The DRC was therefore in this respect a frustrating partner in this ecumenical gathering because it couldn’t go further than the decisions of its previous synod.

When asked his opinion of the DRC’s public qualification of the Declaration co-chairman Frank Chikane said that he understood their hesitation. The conference for him represented a simple, but significant beginning, not just for the DRC, but for all (in McMahan & Briggs 1990:6). If we take Nürnberg’s four ground rules for true reconciliation as a measuring rod, we will see that Rustenburg only scratched the surface. According to Nürnberg (1988:8), true reconciliationpresumes that:

a) The causes of the conflict have been identified (and agreed on) by both parties.
b) The guilty party expresses regret and is willing to remove both the causes and the consequences of the conflict as far as that can be done. This is where the cross comes in for the guilty party.
c) The wronged party is willing to forgive and to bear both the causes and the consequences of the conflict as far as they cannot be removed. This is where the cross comes in for the wronged party.
d) The two parties agree to restore full fellowship on the basis of justice and equal dignity.
At best, the Rustenburg Conference in its Declaration began to define the issues involved in reconciliation. The mood of confession and restitution at the conference also determined the structure and content of the Final Declaration. In its decisions the conference denounced apartheid as an evil policy and a sin against the unity of the church (see Alberts & Chikane 1991:275-286). The participants also acknowledged that they had permitted a culture of violence to develop, where people regarded force as the only way to deal with disputes. The perpetrators of all forms of violence were also condemned - in stark contrast with the Lusaka-statement of 1987 which stated that the situation compelled people in the struggle to use violence.

According to Bosch (1991:7), Rustenburg’s significance lies in its potential rather than in its achievements. It is the beginning of an important process, not the end, a promise rather than a fulfilment. We need to help one another as we move forward, haltingly and hesitantly. We will differ on the way, and in fact, frequently be tempted once again to go our different ways. But if we do that, we will fail ourselves, our country, and our Lord.

One of the most important aspects was that the ghost of Cottesloe - the ghost of division - was laid to rest at Rustenburg. But, formally, Rustenburg was not the second Cottesloe, since the WCC did not convene it. The real second Cottesloe, convened by the WCC, still had to come; as it did in Cape Town in 1991. Furthermore, Rustenburg was much more representative than Cottesloe, which comprised only the eight WCC member churches of the time.

However, four aspects do qualify Rustenburg as the long-awaited second Cottesloe, due to similarities in content and structure: a) Rustenburg was an official meeting during which the church leaders could speak officially for their churches. b) The reconciliation during the Rustenburg consultation caused the spirit of Cottesloe to live on. c) The DRC, as one of the main players at Cottesloe, was, after thirty years of isolation (from within and

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6 The Declaration is structured under six headings: 1. Context; 2. Confession; 3. Declaration; 4. Affirmation (4.1 Justice; 4.2 Church and State; 4.3 Peace and violence; 4.4 Spirituality, mission and evangelism); 5. Restitution and commitment to action. 6. Conclusion.

7 Some of the more important decisions (in Alberts & Chikane 1991:275-286) read as follows:

2.2 “We denounce apartheid, in its intention, its implementation and its consequences, as an evil policy. The practice and defence of apartheid as though it were biblically and theologically legitimated in an act of disobedience to God, a denial of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and a sin against our unity in the Holy Spirit.”

2.6 “We have permitted a culture of violence in which our people believe that force is the only way to deal with any dispute.”

2.7 “Some of us have become willing instruments of the repressive state machinery. Others have reacted to oppression with a desire for revenge.... Some of us have failed to be instruments of peace in a situation of growing intolerance of ideological difference.”

4.1.1 “More equitable wealth distribution must go hand in hand with economic growth.”

Section 4.2 of the Declaration requests the negotiators for a new constitution to consider a number of principles which the majority of Christians prefer, such as: an independent judiciary, a bill of rights, a democratic election process based on one person one vote, and a common voter’s roll in a multiparty democracy and a unitary state. In 4.3 the causes of violence are listed, and it is in this section that the words “condemning the perpetrators of all forms of violence” are used.

8 Two representatives of the WCC were present, however. One of them was Barney Pityana, then Director of the Programme to Combat Racism, presently attached to the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town.
From the church struggle to a struggling church

without), again officially represented (See also Bosch 1990:7). d) The role of the head of state: At Rustenburg, the State President, as it were, undid the damage of a former Prime Minister.

Unlike with Cottesloe, the process initiated by Rustenburg did not die a sudden death. Or did it? And if so, who is to blame? After the conference the plan was to restructure the Rustenburg steering committee, apparently to reflect more adequately the diversity of perspectives represented within the conference and among others to include Black evangelicals on the committee. But six months later, in June 1991, the SACC held its annual conference (with the theme “From Egypt to the wilderness”), at which the Rustenburg Conference was passionately debated:

The result, as we now know, was that the follow-up committee and its activities were viewed as constituting an alternative ecumenical forum to the SACC, in competition with the Council; hence it was resolved that the leadership of the SACC would not participate in any follow-up activities without the explicit support of the SACC member churches (Dosch 1991:1).

The SACC Annual Conference in actual fact torpedoed the ongoing existence of the Rustenburg Conference - a conference which the SACC demanded to co-organise. Has the resolution by the SACC effectively put paid to the whole thrust of Rustenburg? David Bosch believed not. According to him, Rustenburg stands in too strong an ecumenical tradition, going back to the informal ecumenical gatherings of the 1970s and 1980s and all the way back to Cottesloe (Bosch 1991:1,7).

After its dramatic confession at Rustenburg it was taken for granted that the estranged DRC would be welcomed back as observers into the SACC, a body of which they were founder members in 1934. The DRC was therefore invited to the SACC Annual Conference in 1991, but the conference meeting resolved, by a large margin, not to grant the DRC the observer status for which they applied, until they had (a) withdrawn all previous accusations against the SACC, (b) provided reasons for applying for observer membership now, (c) started normalising relations with their sister churches, and (d) declared their willingness to criticise the government in terms of the gospel (quoted in Bosch 1991:7). Nico Smith, who suggested these conditions, thus played the role of the older brother who didn't want to welcome the prodigal brother (sister?) back (Gous 1993b:309). The fact (rather than the content) of the conditions, however, reflected for Bosch (1991:8) a “hardline” approach by the Council, a refusal to compromise. He regarded compromises as necessary if positive consequences could flow from them. A compromise in this case would have meant that the DRC would be exposed to people and views from which it had deliberately or by default been isolated for decades. And who knows to what positive consequences that might have led? Now however, the DRC is allowed to continue in its isolation, for not only is it barred from SACC observer membership; also the exposure it had within the context of the Rustenburg Conference has effectively been brought to an end. We are, therefore, back in our respective camps, prisoners of our inher-
ited or acquired prejudices (Bosch 1991:8). This is exactly what Bosch warned against shortly after Rustenburg. The danger in the long run is that dialogue will be terminated, that we will once again, as in the past, not be involved in dialogue but in a double monologue.

But Rustenburg will stand as a monument in history - we cannot undo the event - but also, according to Bosch, as an accusing finger to all of us (1991:9):

It raises its finger at the DRC, whose delegation, in the dying moments of the conference, issued a press statement which, although it did not take back what was said publicly, at least qualified something of what had been said, to make it more palatable for its conservative members. The conference's finger also points to the DRC because of its hesitation to take a bold and uncompromising stand on the issues of the day as well as its tendency to emphasise correct "principles" rather than concrete deeds of justice and restitution.

This does not mean that the Rustenburg Conference allows the SACC member churches to get away scot free. They in effect turned a cold shoulder to an admittedly only mildly and very haltingly penitent Dutch Reformed Church. They tended to do precisely what Tutu had said a Christian may never do - to say: "I will forgive you, if..." and in so doing they turned the gospel into law.

Let us hope, however - as David Bosch expressed it at a Diocesan Conference of the Anglican Church in Pietermaritzburg in August 1991 - that in the end it will not be the failure of the DRC and the "hardline" approach of the SACC that will prevail, but the infinite grace of God.

**CAPE TOWN, OCTOBER 1991 - FROM COTTESLOE TO CASTRO**

The seventh Assembly of the WCC, held in Canberra in February 1991, took cognisance of the Rustenburg Conference and in the Statement on South Africa (Kinnamon 1991:221) joined in the spirit of confession that characterised Rustenburg. In fact, the WCC officially invited two representatives of the DRC to attend the Canberra Assembly as observers. In its recommendations on South Africa, the Assembly instructed the Central Committee to initiate a consultation with South African member churches, the SACC and the liberation movements, in order to come to an agreement on issues such as the lifting of sanctions and to coordinate ecumenical actions for reconstruction and reconciliation (Kinnamon 1991:222). This created expectations that the real "second Cottesloe" would soon be convened by the WCC.

These decisions of Canberra resulted in a WCC visit to South Africa in October 1991, which culminated in the relatively unknown Cape Town Conference. This visit to South Africa by Emilio Castro, General Secretary of the WCC, was memorable in more ways than one. Twenty years earlier, a previous General Secretary had still been refused entrance to South Africa. Prime Minister John Vorster would allow a previous WCC delegation no further than Jan Smuts airport. Emilio Castro's visit and meeting with State President de Klerk and the latter's request for joint prayer was thus a remarkable turnabout from the past.
Castro visited four major cities, gave some 34 lectures and met with a variety of political and church leaders, including a DRC delegation. This historic event officially marked the return of the WCC to South Africa (From Cottesloe to Cape Town 1991:8-9). Castro’s visit ended in Cape Town where he participated in a WCC/SACC Consultation on the theme “Towards an ecumenical agenda for a changing South Africa” in October 1991.

For some reason this meeting (the first official WCC meeting with South African churches since Cottesloe) did not meet expectations. According to Villa-Vicencio (1992a:17):

... it was anticipated, at least by the more optimistic members of the ecumenical brigade, that the visit of Castro would usher in a new phase of ecclesial history. Some were even tempted to call it “the second Cottesloe.” It was hoped that a broad front of churches would gather to affirm unequivocally (for once and for all) the total rejection of apartheid as contrary to scripture, that past divisions between the Dutch Reformed Churches and other churches would be put aside, and that a theological and pastoral programme of nation-building be established in its place.

These expectations were unfortunately not realised. This despite the fact that the Cape Town Statement addressed all the right issues - violence, reconciliation, women’s causes, youth, amnesty for political prisoners, sanctions, the political economy, the need for cultural pluralism and the importance of spiritual renewal. It even went further than previous ecumenical gatherings and included a proposals for action related to each of these categories.

What went wrong? Why was there no fire in this meeting? There was even a lack of interest in this meeting. Some heads of churches and other leading church functionaries made only brief appearances, and others did not attend at all. Villa-Vicencio (1992a:17) quotes an international journalist as saying “What has happened to the church struggle? There’s no fire in the belly. I’ve waited for years for this visit and it has turned out to be a damp squib.” The Cape Town Conference will therefore not be remembered for long and people still speculate about the reasons for its being a non-event. Some of the reasons could be that mostly member churches of the SACC were represented there. After Rustenburg an old style conference with only the “partners in struggle” (the traditional brothers in arms), without the evangelicals, charismatic churches and especially the DRC, was doomed from the start. Secondly, Castro started his visit with a very open and conciliatory approach but he was forced to harden his stance because of the hardline approach of SACC. On sanctions, especially, there were diverging views. Thirdly, the timing of the visit was unfortunate because it took place at a time of intense tension between F.W. de Klerk and Nelson Mandela. But perhaps the real reason for the status of the Cape Town Conference as a non-event is this: At Cape Town there was less evidence of a “church struggle” than of a “struggling church!”
FROM THE "CHURCH STRUGGLE" TO THE STRUGGLE FOR A NEW THEOLOGY

The view of Villa-Vicencio (1992a:16-17) is instructive in this regard:

A kind of a church within a church - the church in resistance - in more recent years [was] able to set the agenda of the ecumenical witness in South Africa. From this ... emerged a theology which enabled the institutional church ... to say “No” to apartheid, “No” to exploitation and oppression and “No” to most forms of phoney reform.

The situation in South Africa changed so dramatically that the context now required something more than just a resistance theology. The church is now struggling to adapt to the new situation and to redefine its role in society. What is the task of the church in a period of transition? According to Villa-Vicencio (1992a:17), it has something to do with developing a new kind of theology:

Hitherto the church was simply required to say “No.” This took courage and some paid a heavy price in taking this task seriously. It did not, on the other hand, take a great deal of creativity by way of providing practical solutions to the array of specific socio-political and economic problems facing the nation.

Villa-Vicencio's view is that, in addition to saying “No” when it is required (a task a prophetic theology can never afford to neglect), there is a need to utter a creative “Yes” to programmes which reach beyond the present social order to a new order. His suggestion is a theology of reconstruction which implies that the church must get involved with the process of “nationbuilding” (Villa-Vicencio 1992b:19-49). He is the first to admit that this is not unproblematic (1992a:17): The problem, as participants in the Cape Town Conference repeatedly stated, is that history is cluttered with examples of failed theological programmes of this kind: the missionary arm of Western imperialism came close to destroying the cultural and religious identity of millions of black South Africans; theological support for Hitler's Third Reich contributed to the annihilation of six million Jews, and theological support for Afrikaner nationalism resulted in decades of suffering. Villa-Vicencio (1992a:18) concludes:

This compels even those who are theologically driven in their resistance against oppression to acknowledge that theology has a bad track-record in the history of nationbuilding.... Paul Tillich once observed that while “a mighty weapon in warfare” theologies of resistance are often “an inconvenient tool for use in the building trade.”

A THEOLOGY OF RESPONSIBILITY

The debate is now what kind of pro-active theology aimed at the future must replace the reactive resistance theology. My suggestion would be a theology
of responsibility which excels in assuming responsibility for the future instead of in placing all the blame on the past. The main thrust of such a theology would be to take personal responsibility for the future. It would say: "Perhaps it is not my fault that everything is as it is, but it is my fault if it remains as it is." It is a movement away from blaming everything on something else (be it apartheid or the government) and taking responsibility for one's own future, individually and collectively. It is an approach where one may have an excuse for one's present predicament, but one tries not to use it. A theology of responsibility will emphasise not only one's rights but also one's responsibilities; it will not sit passively in the sun of newfound freedom, but rather request people to assume responsibility for constructing the long awaited "new" South Africa with vigour. Without a theology of personal responsibility, a theology of reconstruction will have an unmotivated workforce which will expect somebody else to take responsibility for the construction.

In a theology of responsibility, human rights may never be divorced from human responsibilities. The Exodus-tradition, where God liberates his people from the oppressors in Egypt, must be immediately followed by the Sinai-tradition where God demands responsibility and obedience to his law before his people may enter the promised land. The theme of the 1991 Annual Conference of the SACC was aptly chosen to read: "From Egypt to the Wilderness" and subtitled "Challenge to the churches in a time of transition" (Sowetan 25\6\1991). To my mind the challenge facing the churches in South Africa today is to encounter their responsibilities in the wilderness before even trying to enter the new South Africa. A theology of liberation will therefore have to be balanced by a theology of responsibility. In a different context, Victor Frankl10 suggested that the American nation supplement their statue of Liberty on the East coast, with a statue of Responsibility on the West coast! In a lecture at the University of Pretoria (8 September 1990) he went further and suggested that the best place for a statue of responsibility would be on the other side of the Atlantic ocean, at the Cape of Good Hope,11 at the entrance of Cape Town harbour,12 to remind South Africans and the world that freedom may never be divorced from responsibility (cf. also Frankl 1980:94). A positive recent development was the Declaration on Religious Rights and Responsibilities of the South African Chapter of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP-SA 1992), where rights and responsibilities were inextricably linked. A theology which calls us to freedom and responsibility, is a prerequisite for a theology of reconstruction. Before we start to build the new South Africa we must assume responsibility to contribute what we can. This will free the assertive demand for human

10 The Austrian psychiatrist who survived a Nazi concentration camp, author of Man's search for meaning and founder of logotherapy.
11 The fact that France donated the Statue of Liberty to the American nation (with a small replica remaining in Paris), may even inspire the USA to build on this tradition and donate a Statue of Responsibility as a bridal gift to the new liberated South Africa (with a small replica somewhere on the east coast of the USA)!
12 Robben Island may also be a symbolic venue: that is to say if the politicians and ecologists would allow such an initiative.
rights from selfishness, because it is in giving that we receive - especially for a Christian. This fact is underlined in Blauw's theology of mission: Election primarily conveyed neither privilege nor favouritism, but rather responsibility (Blauw 1962:23).

The flag of a theology of responsibility was previously carried by the WCC with their emphasis on a "responsible society" (WCC Division of Studies 1956). This emphasis faded away somewhat but resurfaced again in JPIC, the process of Justice Peace and the Integrity of Creation. The neglected theme in the whole debate to my mind was personal responsibility. Suffice it to say, for the purpose of this article, that the contours of a theology of responsibility will have to include topics such as: personal responsibility, social responsibility and ecological responsibility in response to God's call which, in the first instance, makes us responsible (see Honecker 1989).

RETHINKING THE PAST

In rethinking resistance theology there is both a need to shift the emphasis to the future and to scrutinise resistance theology's legacy of the past. A critique of two aspects of this theology is necessary namely that of the "noble" violence of the struggle as legitimated in the Lusaka statement and that of the sanctions issue.

Noble violence?

Referring to documents such as the Harare Declaration and the Lusaka Statement Villa-Vicencio states (1992a:16): "Together they constitute a theology of struggle probably as noble as what has emerged anywhere in the modern world." Perhaps it was noble but also, like all nobility, all too human and full of error. During Dr Castro's visit in 1991, in answer to a question of mine as to whether the theological justification of violence by the WCC did not add to the spiral of violence, he responded as follows (in Gous 1991:13):

We are all guilty. Together with the WCC's theological justification of violence we must also remember that the Dutch Reformed Church legitimated the government's use of violence.... Now however we have passed the era of revolutionary violence and we must co-operate to bring an end to criminal violence in South Africa.

John Kane-Berman (1991:13), director of the South-Africa Institute of Race-Relations (SAIRR) made himself unpopular by underlining the fact that the churches in South Africa helped to justify the use of violence. The SAIRR, in the person of Fred van Wyk, then its organising secretary, had been closely involved in organising the Cottesloe Consultation in 1960. In 1991 Kane-Berman stated (1991:13):

Violence has reached the stage where some churches are worried to such an extent that they have begun at least in part to blame the liberation organisations. The churches must however realise that they have helped to justify violence as an instrument for liberation by accepting the Lusaka Declaration of 1987 in which it is stated that "the present situation compels the liberation/movements to use violence as well as other methods to bring oppression to an end."
Kane-Berman said that they chose that route in spite of the fact that his Institute published reports that other non-violent options were available at that time. He admired the courage of the two delegates in Lusaka who proposed a motion (which was rejected) that the word “compels” be dropped from the declaration since it held the implication that the taking up of arms was a matter in which one had no choice. According to Kane-Berman this new strategy has been sanctified to such an extent that it

is a pitiful situation when it requires more courage to question certain tactics of the liberation movements, than was the case to criticise the government during the time in which apartheid was applied without compromise.... The SAIRR for decades spoke out fearlessly against the injustices perpetrated in the name of apartheid. The new challenge facing the Institute is to exercise the same vigilance over the atrocities perpetrated in the name of liberation.

This vigilant role will not guarantee the popularity of any political institute (or church).13

Constructive sanctions?

The constructive or destructive contribution of the sanctions debate will also have to be re-examined and re-evaluated in the future. The WCC prides itself on the fact that it pioneered the international action for the isolation of South Africa, including the sanctions campaign (Castro 1991:72). Castro stated at the Cape Town Conference that during his delegation’s visit to South Africa, they detected many ambiguities on the question of sanctions in discussions with various leaders, and would like to have it clarified as soon as possible. In the mean time, he said, he would take his lead from Frank Chikane, who was very clearly still in favour of sanctions. Early in 1993, when even a politician like Nelson Mandela started to call for the lifting of sanctions, Frank Chikane stuck to his guns in a statement immediately following Nelson Mandela’s call for the lifting of sanctions.

But more important than the analysis of the past (a process which must continue), is the need for a theology for the future. This tale of a suburb, and two towns, dealt with the theological significance of Cottesloe, Cape Town and the rustic town of Rustenburg. Should there be another? Should we ask where next instead of what next?

Perhaps the real need is first of all for the spirit of Rustenburg to reach to the local church. True reconciliation and reconstruction must take place where local churches exist and minister. To work for a “conciliar fellowship of local churches which are themselves truly united” (WCC Faith and Order 1974:121) and to further the ideals of the conciliar process (justice, peace and integrity of creation) on local level must be the first priority.

13 A further contribution to this debate comes from Tingle (1992).
Where next?

But given the dissension among Christians, the lack of consensus concerning the task of the church, and the fact that there is no unifying ecumenical goal to mobilise the churches, there is perhaps need for another national conference for all the churches in South Africa; for another town to be elevated into history due to the theological significance of the conference held in it. Rustenburg, the "conference of confessions" dealt with the past. Now is the time for an all-encompassing conference to deal with the future, to give direction to the endeavours of the local church, and to provide a new theology for a new South Africa.

Until that time we will have to live in South Africa with a church struggling in its search for a new theology or theologies. Added to this is the search for an ecumenical body representative of all the churches in South Africa. May the spirit of Rustenburg live on; may the Holy Spirit inspire us to new ecumenical formation!

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