ABSTRACT
Recently Howard C Kee made proposals for doing ‘sociological interpretation’ by ‘interrogating the text’ by means of a catalogue of complementary questions derived from diverse ‘social science approaches’. In the main part of this experiment, an anonymous twentieth century South African text on war and violence is taken and analysed in this way, in order to ascertain whether it is indeed possible to construct the original social context. This analysis was tested and refined by the Western Cape sub-group of the Society. In a short conclusion, the opposing thesis by John H Elliott et al that one should approach the text from the mass of available sociological information is briefly discussed.

1 PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 This is an experiment. The immediate purpose of this paper is to test Howard C Kee’s recent proposals for ‘sociological interpretation’ in the form of a catalogue of ‘social science approaches’, each generating its own particular set of questions, which together render the process of ‘interrogating the text’ possible. The purpose underlying this attempt is to obtain a better understanding of the nature and the possibilities and limitations of the methodology of sociological interpretation.

1.2 For the purposes of this experiment, we understand Kee to propose a way in which ‘the social sciences can be used to extract new interpretive information from the early Christian texts through interrogation’ (1989:6). Through this ‘array of questions’, put to the texts, ‘the twin tasks of interpretation of ancient texts...and of historical reconstruction’ can be undertaken (1989:65). The value of these questions is that they help interpreters to seek ‘answers...at the level of the implicit assumptions evident within the appropriate materials’ (1989:68).
1.3 Our methodology is the following: We have selected a twentieth century South African Christian document dealing with issues of war, violence, resistance and peace. We assume, for the purposes of the experiment, that we do not know anything about this document, for example by whom it was written, to whom, why, or when. We assume, as it were, that we are living two thousand years into the future, and somehow got hold of this text from previous centuries and unknown contexts. This ‘artificial’ approach will, hopefully, make it possible to do the experiment under ‘laboratory-conditions’.

Firstly, we use Kee’s catalogue of questions in order to see whether one can indeed get useful and accurate sociological information by scrutinising the text itself, which might make it possible to reconstruct the historical setting of the document and to understand the social role the document played in its context (2.1-2.7).

We put our preliminary analysis and conclusions to the test by presenting it to the Western Cape group of the New Testament Society of South Africa, who also analysed the document, without knowing its origins, in order to ascertain that we all agree on the results, that is on what may legitimately be concluded on the basis of Kee’s questions.

After that we take into account the severe criticism which Kee’s approach has been subjected to, for example by John H Elliott, who inter alia emphasises that we do have ‘a mass of information’ available on conditions in the first century, so that it is possible to follow an almost reverse procedure in social-scientific interpretation, namely to reconstruct the historical setting by means of available knowledge, and then to read the text more adequately with the help of such reconstructions. Accordingly, using our own knowledge of twentieth century South African Christian discourse on war, resistance, peace and violence, we try to reconstruct the possible historical setting of this document, in the way people might perhaps be doing it twenty centuries into the future, with a ‘mass of information’ at their disposal (3.1-3.2). We then provide some of the actual historical information concerning the document, in order to see how this knowledge might have helped the process of interpretation (3.3). Finally, we draw some conclusions (4).

2 INTERROGATING THE TEXT ITSELF

2.1 What does the document actually say?

THE CHRISTIAN’S ATTITUDE TOWARDS WAR

At present the justification by Christians of war as a means to settle disputes between nations is being seriously debated. The reason for the degree of seri-
ousness with which the matter is discussed, is due to the increasing destruction which is the result of modern warfare. Wars have, of course, always been cruel and have continuously been misused as an excuse for inutterable deception, horrors, bloodshed, famine and acrimony. As Luther said:

‘War is one of the most horrible calamities which threatens humankind. It destroys religion; it destroys countries; it destroys families. Any other scourge is to be preferred above war. Famine and plague are nothing in comparison.’

However, it is since the arrival of modern weapons like the submarines, poison gas, bombers, missiles, and now the atom bomb — which are all directed against defenseless civic populations and not merely against armies — that the matter of warfare has become an acute problem for humankind.

Modern warfare means organized hatred against the enemy, who is denied any virtue. It means organised deception and lies.

‘There is an abundance of evidence which the majority of us refuse to read’, writes Dr Charles Raven, ‘which proves how the truth is misrepresented in a most malicious and callous manner in news media, and how everything which can heighten the thirst for blood, is overemphasized.’

War feeds the lowest and basest passion in human beings. ‘All is fair in love and war’, as the saying goes. So the greatest bitterness is sown, which will take ages to be eradicated.

War leads to the destruction of centuries old treasures of art and culture. It devours colossal sums of money. World War II (1939-1945) cost $288 500 000 000 in weapons and armoury and $57 725 000 000 in damages to property.

Modern war is the cause of unspeakable atrocities committed against the civilian population, as was demonstrated in the British concentration camps of 1901 and the later German concentration camps. Will we ever be able to fathom the depths of depravity, hatred, acrimony, and suffering which are caused by war? Leslie Weatherhead writes:

‘If you have seen the intestines of your college pal hanging on the barbed wire fence, or watched your school chum milling around, screaming, part of his face, including one eye, blasted away — then you have seen war conducted between two civilized Christian countries.’

And the people taking part in this killing are ordinary people, like us, who, in everyday life, would not hurt a fly. The same author writes:

‘Most people do not know how a man’s face looks like when a bayonet is stabbed into his stomach and turned around, and a nailed boot planted on his throat when the bayonet is pulled out.’

Above all else, modern war means an incomparable destruction. In World War I (1914-1918), a total of 11 200 000 men died; in other words on any
given day 7 000 died and 14 000 were wounded. A total of 50 000 000 widows and 90 000 000 orphans were left behind. In World War II (1939-1945) the losses were: 22 060 000 killed, 30 400 000 wounded. Of this total the British lost 1 185 675, in which were included 29 254 South African casualties (dead and wounded).

The question therefore arises: to what extent can the Christian justify war as a means to settle international disputes? On the one extreme is the answer given by militarists, who glorify war as a means to bring out the noblest virtues of man. Mussolini represents this view. He says:

'It is only through war that human energy can reach its climax and those nations, who have the courage to attempt it, can be ennobled.'

On the opposite extreme are those like Tolstoy who reject all forms of violence and resistance, and therefore also war, as being against the doctrine of Christ and therefore unacceptable to the Christian.

Between these two extremes are the various forms of the 'just war' argument, which justifies war in those cases when war is waged out of self-defense and not for the sake of conquest and usurpation. However, it is not stated what the criterion for a just war is.

The problem, therefore, is a twofold one:

(a) Can war be justified by a Christian as a means to settle international disputes?

(b) What should a Christian do when his country participates in an unjust war?

The answer of Liberalism cannot be accepted. The origin of the ideals of Liberalism is not found in the Church nor the Bible, but in the liberal tradition which was the result of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. Liberalists build their hopes on humanity who conquered time and space and disease and who will now create stable international relations.

Neither can the problem be approached from the viewpoint of the Synoptic school — whose sole criterion is the teaching and example of Christ, to which the rest of the New Testament and the Old Testament is subjugated.

Our approach should rather be that of the Reformed Evangelical point of view — in which reason or humanistic criteria are subject to the revelation from Scripture, and where both Old and New Testament are given their rightful place.

(A) Can war be justified by a Christian as a means to settle international disputes?

The Scriptural evidence can be divided into two sections:

(a) The Old Testament generally acknowledges the right to wage war. The wars of Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, the Judges and the Kings are not
condemned as such. On the contrary, we read about the Lord commanding the Israelites to wage war (Judges 1:2, Joshua 10:40). We read how the Old Testament heroes of war are praised (Hebrews 11:32-33) and how the conquests of Israel are justified, because Canaan was promised to Israel and the Canaanites were a godless people. War is used by God as a scourge against his people in Jeremiah 25:8,9 and as a means of salvation for his people in Isaiah 45:1. Occasionally Israel committed atrocities in a war (2 Kings 15:16); sometimes these atrocities were a punishment of God meted out to Israel's enemies (1 Samuel 15:3 and Judges 1:5,6).

(b) In contrast with these texts we find the great commandment of the Decalogue: 'Thou shalt not kill' (Exodus 20:13); the fact that David was forbidden to build the temple because he was a man of wars (1 Chronicles 28:3); the commandments to be merciful to one's enemies (Deuteronomy 20:11, 19; 1 Kings 20:31); the condemnation of cruelty by Amos (1:13 and 21) and the fact that Israel's atrocities were never as cruel as those of the pagan nations.

Furthermore, the prophets condemned wars of aggression and regarded the wars of self-defense as worthless. God himself would punish the godless people and protect the just (Isaiah 3:1, 5:8 cf Jeremiah 28:12).

(c) In the New Testament the question of war is not directly discussed. Nevertheless, it seems clear that it allows the use of violence in certain situations. According to Paul (Romans 13:4) the authorities bear the sword as a servant of God, and therefore have the responsibility to use violence against the wrongdoer, by implication also against those who may attack their authority. John the Baptist allowed soldiers into the kingdom without demanding that they be released from their position. The only requirements was that they should not misuse their position (Luke 3:14). Although Jesus did not support the Zealots, He praised the faith of the centurion of Capernaum without any demand that he give up his occupation (Luke 7:9). With violent means Jesus drove the merchants from the temple (Mark 11:15). In the parables of the unwise servant (Luke 12:46) and the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18:34) Jesus acknowledged the right to use violence as a means of punishment. The Lord also recognized the authority of the state (Mark 12:17) and reprimanded Peter when he took to the sword, which was the prerogative of the state. In the parable of considering the costs Jesus mentioned war without disapproval (Luke 14:31) and taught clearly that wars would be there until the end of the world (Matthew 24:6,7). He came not to bring peace but a sword, Christ said (Matthew 10:34). According to the New Testament, the second coming will be preceded by a titanic battle between the faithful and the unbelievers (Revelation 20:7,9).

(d) Over against this information one finds the major truth that Christ rejects violence as a way to establish his kingdom or to defend Himself (John 18:36).
He refuses to resist the cross. He does not allow Peter to defend Him (John 18:11). He gives the law of love of the neighbour as well as the enemy (Luke 6:25) and He Himself follows this way. He refuses to entice violence by becoming king. He blesses the peace-makers (Matthew 5:9). Above all, in direct contradiction of the Old Testament lex talionis Christ proclaims the law of non-resistance. 'But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also' (Matthew 5:39).

In the same way Paul teaches not to repay evil for evil, but to overcome evil with good (Romans 12: 17, 21). He condemns enmity and praises peace (Galatians 5: 20, 22).

If we could restrict ourselves to the clear words of the Lord in Matthew 5:39, and ignore other expressions in the Old and New Testaments (in the way the Synoptic school suggests), then it becomes very obvious that war is forbidden for Christians. Accordingly, this has indeed been the viewpoint of the Mennonites, the Quakers, Tolstoy, and most of present-day Christian pacifists. Teachers of the early Christian church as well, including Justin, Irenaeus, Tatian, Origenes, Tertullian, Athanasius, Cyprian and Lactantius, rejected war as something in which Christians should have no part. Christ's command not to resist evil, however, must be read in the light of his own example and that of the apostle Paul. When the Lord, in the presence of Pilate, was hit by the servant, He did not turn the other cheek, but protested against the injustice. In other words, He resisted the evil (John 18:23). Paul acted likewise under similar circumstances (Acts 23:3). He commanded satisfaction when he and Silas had been beaten and thrown into prison uncondemned (Acts 16:37).

Christ therefore did not mean that evil should not be resisted in an absolute way. If that were the case, the evildoers would merely have been encouraged in their evil and society itself would have fallen apart. That contradicts all sense of justice. However, and this is often lost sight of, Christ protested against injustice, but both He and Paul did not struggle against it with violence. He never retaliated.

To formulate a final view on war in the light of the Biblical material is no easy task. Several truths, however, do become clear. They are:

1. That all war originates in sin (James 4:1-2).
2. That God uses war as discipline and punishment and that this aspect is victorious and for the good (Jeremiah 25:8, 9, 31).
3. That war will exist until the end (Mark 13:7-8).
4. That the sword has been given to the governing authorities to punish wrongdoers and to keep peace and order (Rom 13:7-8).
5. That the governing authorities therefore have the right also to punish wrongdoers from outside, i.e. to protect the people against aggressors.
6. Christ upholds the law of retaliatory justice that punishes injustice

(7) Christ also proclaims the law of forgiving love that bears evil and rejects violence (Luke 6:27, 29; 22:50-52).

On the question whether war is justified according to Scripture, our answer must inevitably be: yes, but only as the ultimate measure after all other ways have been tried, and when the fact that the cause is just is certain far beyond all doubt.

This was more or less the attitude towards war of Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and the Reformers. Augustine was of the opinion that any war of aggression, like murder and theft, ought to be resisted and punished. Luther emphasised the authority of the government and the obedience that the subjects owe these authorities. A Christian is partly believing and spiritual and partly civil and worldly. As citizens they ought to obey the authority that declares war. Rebellion is a criminal type of unjust war. If all people were Christian there would have been no need for king, sword or law. 'Where all evil is suffered and all justice exercised, there is no conflict, struggle, trial, judge, punishment, law or sword', said Luther.

Calvin based the fact that war is just on the duty of the authorities to exercise justice and to punish injustice.

'We say that they (the magistrates) are the ordained guardians and vindicators of tranquility, so that it should be their only study to provide for the common peace and safety.'

And if the authorities can oppose all injustices within the country with violence, a fortiori can they then use violence to resist disturbers of the peace from outside.

'For if power has been given them to maintain the tranquility of their subjects, repress the seditious movements of the turbulent, assist those who are violently oppressed ... can they use it more opportunely than in repressing the fury of him who disturbs both the ease of individuals and the common tranquility of all ...? Nay, if they justly punish those robbers whose injuries have been afflicted only on a few, will they allow the whole country to be robbed and devastated with impunity ...? Natural equity and duty, therefore, demand that princes be armed not only to repress private crimes by judicial inflictions, but to defend the subjects committed to their guardianship whenever they are hostilely assailed. Such even the Holy Spirit, in many passages of Scripture, declares to be lawful.

Calvin emphasises, however, that all other ways should first be attempted before resort is taken to arms.

(B) If it is permissible for the State to declare war under certain circumstances and for the Christian to participate in it, then the second question comes to the fore:
What must be the attitude of a Christian when the State participates in unjust wars?

The question is who is to decide? Prof. Paterson's solution is that the authorities have a better insight in the state of affairs and that the citizen should acquiesce in that. That is not acceptable. Modern war is by nature totalitarian and affects every man, woman and child. Very often it is not so much the people but the wanton leader that pushes a country into war.

'We are governed by old people, but old people never fight. They land us in diplomatic difficulties and then they say that the only honourable thing to do is to fight. They expect, as a result of their policy that tens of thousands of excellent young men, who harbour ideals for a more honourable, better and more tolerant world must go and kill tens of thousands of other young men who also long for a new, more honourable, better world, but who are, like us, in the power of the older men.' And A. A. Milne cynically remarks:

"When the Prime Ministers of all the countries involved, on the morning that war breaks out, could be hung, then there would never be any war. You laugh because it sounds ridiculous. It is, however, not so ridiculous as that two or three million young men, who have no quarrel with one another, must be blown to pieces."

Most modern wars are no longer the kind of just war that Calvin had in mind. He thought in terms of a punitive expedition to punish the savage aggressor. The State acts to the outside like the police to within. Our wars, however, no longer demonstrate these characteristics.

The police attack the criminal, not his wife or child. They do not try to kill him, but to improve him. They bring him before an impartial court and most times succeed in their aims.

Modern war does not strike the guilty but the innocent. The only sin of those who suffer is that they were deceived to support their authorities. The purpose of war is to kill and maim as many as possible. 'War stops short of nothing except cannibalism,' says Churchill. War equates police, judge, jury, warden and executioner. There is no impartial justice, cf. the Nuremberg trials. In the end war seldom succeeds in its aims. The peace is mostly without mercy and unjust and sows the seeds of new wars.

In addition, modern war is not always fought for self-protection, although the authorities like to portray it as such. And even when a modern war may be called just, Christians still do not escape its barbarism.

'Even a just war', writes a certain F. A. Atkins, 'is a sure guarantee that thousands will be plunged into the abyss of hell. In spite of all possible justice with which a people may have started a war, it will not save them from a flood of sin, arson, robbery, rape, adultery, lies en murder.'
Hobbes mentions three causes for war, namely:

1. **Greed.** (One nation desires the land and wealth of another nation.)
2. **Fear.** (The nation is afraid of the power of its neighbour.)
3. **Ambition.** (The nation is offended in its pride.) One may add:
4. **Longing for power.** (Imperialism.)
5. **Revenge.** (The Second World War originated in the desire to revenge the First World War.)
6. **Religious zeal.** (Roman wars of the Middle Ages.)

The Christian, therefore, time and again faces the dilemma that he is either forced to take part in an unjust war or that he must lose his soul in a so-called just war. Under these circumstances nothing else remains than resistance against war in general. This, however, means the way of martyrdom. Modern authorities show no mercy towards those who refuse military service on the grounds of conscientious objection. There awaits for him only imprisonment or the death penalty and the accusation of cowardice. The last is, however, not deserved, since it takes more courage to refuse military service than to accept it.

If, however, Christians in all countries should refuse to fight, unjust wars should certainly become less. It is not impossible that nations who could agree not to use poisonous gas during war could also agree not to wage war again, but instead to resolve their conflicts in other ways.

The fact that the Lord said that there will always be wars is no reason for Christians not to struggle for a world without war. Sin also persists until the judgment day, yet we struggle against it until the end. For a lasting peace in the world an international law, an international court, and an international power with armed forces are needed. That would mean that each nation has to give up something of its own absolute, sovereign authority as a nation to the international authority. Within the state each citizen gives up something of his or her absolute freedom so that the authority of the state can be established. When they have conflicts with their neighbours, they may not fight privately, but they must subject themselves to the courts and the police. The same situation is necessary on an international level.

Are the nations willing to do that? Everything will depend on the Christians who belong to those nations.

‘For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it’ (Luke 9:24).

ENDNOTES
1) W. Hazlitt: Table Talk of Martin Luther, p. 332
2) C. E. Raven: War and the Christian, p. 15
3) L. Weatherhead: Thinking aloud in war time, p. 15
4) idem, p. 16
We now tum to Kee's questions in order to look for 'the implicit assumptions', the 'unspoken, but powerfully operative factors' determining the text's social and ideological role in the public discourse of its time. Kee warns that not all documents will answer to all the questions. We therefore rearrange the order of his questions in order to deal first with those to which it seems more possible to find answers in this particular document.

2.2 His fifth group deals with 'literary questions with social implications'.

What genre does the group employ for communication within the group? With those outside the group, if any? What does the choice of genre imply? Does the author's choice of a specific genre influence the message he/she wants to communicate? In what way? What are the themes in the text of the communication? What is its argumentative strategy? Who is supported? Who is combatted? Has the genre been modified to serve the specific aims of the group? In what way and for what ends? Is there a canon operative within the community? How is it defined? How does the literary organization of the communication serve to promote conceptual and social order for the community?

2.2.1 What is the genre of the document? This important question is not easy to answer. Several possibilities suggest themselves.
It is not clear whether it was written by an individual or a group of people. Expressions such as ‘we’, ‘us’ and ‘our’ are often used, but they may either be examples of the royal plural, or refer to the group to which it is addressed. Whether that is a very specific group, or a more general reader-audience, is again not directly clear. It may be a church document, for example a study document for a church meeting, but several facts, for example the fact that no reference is made to a specific church or church meeting, that no direct recommendations are made, and the use of endnotes and a list or works consulted, all make this a little improbable.

The endnotes and the list of works consulted, the neat divisions into A and B and a, b, c, etcetera, as well as the many direct quotations rather seem to suggest some kind of scholarly purpose, perhaps a speech — but then intended for or later adapted to, publication — or an essay in a journal, a reader, or a magazine academic enough to use endnotes, or even class-notes for students. It could even be an essay by a student, although that would not explain the fact that it is regarded as important enough to discuss and study, unless, of course, it is the work of a well-known South African theologian, or other public figure.

It may, of course, only be part of a larger document. That would explain the absence of the name of the author, and the rather blunt way in which it starts and ends. In that case, it could be part of a scientific study or publication.

The very emotional tone, however, and the rhetorical appeal at the end seem to contradict the possibility that it is a scholarly writing.

To summarise, any conclusion with regard to the genre should be very tentative. Perhaps, however, one could say that the evidence points to a public speech with a strong emotional appeal, afterwards published with endnotes and works consulted. But one cannot really be sure.

2.2.2 Kee’s interest in the genre is, of course, given with the possible sociological implications of the choice of genre. Which people use that type of genre, and with which purposes? This leads us to a second literary question, which deals with the argumentative strategy of the document. What is the nature of its communication? Who or what is supported and who or what is combatted and how is language used to achieve this purpose?

Again, the document displays interesting tendencies. On the one hand, it seems to try to be objective, scientific, scholarly.

Several times it refers to two extreme positions (on the one hand, on the other hand) and then tries to portray its own position as the middle way, the position.
that is not extremist, but balanced and intellectual, the sober, realistic yet faithful position of a ‘yes, but’ (171).

On the one extreme one finds the militarists, on the other the pacifists (49-55). On the one extreme there are the liberalists, on the other the Synoptici (67-73). In the Old Testament one reads on the one hand of the right to wage war (83-93), on the other hand one finds many commandments and examples forbidding and condemning war (94-103). In the New Testament the use of violence in certain situations seems on the one hand to be allowed (103-123). On the other hand one finds the major truth that Christ rejects violence (124-132) and that Paul teaches similarly (133-135). On the one hand one should reckon with the clear words of the Lord and of many church authorities (136-143). On the other hand one should see this in the light of Christ’s own example (143-149).

In the same vein, it attempts to generalise and summarise, to come to ‘a final view’ in which ‘several truths become clear’ (157).

Closely related to this, is the obvious attempt to show that its position is supported by authoritative tradition, by intellectuals from a variety of backgrounds. We shall return to this in more detail when dealing explicitly with questions of authority.

On the other hand, however, the language is remarkably emotional.

War is for example described and criticised in terms of utter revulsion: Wars have always been cruel and misused as an excuse for inutterable deception, horrors, bloodshed, famine and acrimony (5-6). Luther is quoted in saying that war destroys religion, countries, families, and that any scourge is to be preferred above war, whilst famine and plague are nothing in comparison (7-10). Modern war is organised hatred, organised deception and lies (15-20). War feeds the lowest and basest human passions (21). It sows great bitterness which will take ages to be eradicated (22-23). We will never fathom the depths of depravity, hatred, acrimony, and suffering caused by war (30-32). Quotations are used to very obviously portray war as repulsively as possible (33-36, 39-41). Even just wars are barbaric (245), plunging thousands of people into the abyss of hell, into a flood of sin, arson, robbery, rape, adultery, lies and murder (246-248). The purpose of war is to kill and maim as many as possible (237). It stops short of nothing except cannibalism (238).

In a radical attack, the causes of so-called modern wars are sought in the wanton acts of leaders, Prime Ministers, who ought rather to be killed than the millions of young people (214-221). The only sin of those who suffer in war, it is said, is that ‘they were deceived to support their authorities’ (236).
It is clear that the document is, therefore, not as scholarly neutral and objective as it may pretend to be, but is in fact a strongly rhetorical argument and document, in the sense that it uses language in order to persuade, to convince, to impress and to motivate towards action.

What, precisely, is its aim? What is supported and what is combatted? In its own words: It is an emotional appeal to Christians to struggle for a world without war (271). That is, however, still too general a way of formulating it. Reading closely, one finds the final thrust of the argument in the remarkable plea for conscientious objection:

‘The Christian, therefore, time and again faces the dilemma that he is either forced to take part in an unjust war or that he must lose his soul in a so-called just war. Under these circumstances nothing else remains than resistance against war in general. This, however, means the way of martyrdom. Modern authorities show no mercy towards those who refuse military service on the grounds of conscientious objection. There awaits for him only imprisonment or the death penalty and the accusation of cowardice. The last is, however, not deserved, since it takes more courage to refuse military service than to accept it’ (257-265).

It is noteworthy that now no distinctions are allowed, for example between just and unjust wars. ‘Nothing else remains than resistance against war in general.’ The fact that this is not a popular position does nothing to distract from the urgency of the plea. Even the death penalty should not detain Christians from following this way to martyrdom.

The accusation that conscientious objection arises out of cowardice, is vehemently rejected by saying that it takes, in fact, more courage than to do military training.

Quite obviously this is the final rhetorical purpose of the document: not only to legitimate conscientious objection as a form of struggle against war (whether just or unjust is immaterial), as a possible option, in a scholarly and rational fashion, but in fact to defend it rhetorically with emotion and power, and to convince listeners and/or readers to be willing to follow this option, in spite of what it may cost.

This option is given a final, cosmic and historical perspective when the possibility is suggested that, should all Christians indeed do this, the outcome of human history could be completely different. Lasting peace in the world (272-273) is then no longer merely a dream. It is not ‘impossible’ (267). The ‘longing for a new, more honourable, better, and more tolerant world’ could then become a reality (218, 219). There would never again be any war (224).
Are the Christians in the nations of the world willing to engage on this struggle? ‘Everything will depend on them’ (281). Losing their lives for this purpose is saving it, said Christ Himself (283-284).

2.2.3 With this analysis of the argumentative strategy in mind, one is now able to answer Kee’s third important question regarding literary issues with social implications, namely the question concerning the canon operative within the community and how it is defined.

At the first glance this is very easy to answer, since the document deals with it explicitly. Not only does it affirm the Bible as God’s revelation, as authoritative canon, but it even offers some polemical comments on other viewpoints, from which a kind of doctrine of Scripture becomes visible:

It rejects namely both liberalism, of which ‘he origin is not found in the Church or the Bible’ (68), and the ‘Synoptic school’ whose ‘sole criterion is the teaching and example of Christ’ (74). These so-called Synoptics were obviously important to the document, perhaps as offering a plausible and tempting alternative, since they are directly rejected at various stages of the argument (74, 138). They seem to have taught that Christians could only obey the clear words of the Lord Himself (136-138).

In other words, both the canon of liberal human values and convictions — typical of ‘modern’ theology since the Renaissance and the Enlightenment (69) and the canon within the canon of people following only Christ’s example or even the Gospels, are rejected.

Instead, the document deliberately and on more than one occasion refers to the whole Bible, including the Old and New Testaments, as authoritative canon (75, 137). It calls this ‘the Reformed Evangelical point of view’ which should also be their own approach (76). It looks for ‘Scriptural evidence’ (82), for the results of ‘the Biblical material’ (156), for a viewpoint ‘according to Scripture’ (170).

In the course of the argument the document indeed quotes freely from Old and New Testament books. With that, however, a deeper level of this issue comes to the fore. We have said that the question concerning the canon is seemingly easy to answer, but now it becomes clear that the issue is more difficult. There is, namely, a crucial difference between the canon that is confessed and described, and what Kee calls the ‘operative’ canon, that is the set of authoritative ideas, beliefs, people and documents in reality determining the argument and the important conclusions.

In spite of the fact, therefore, that the text explicitly calls the whole Bible its final authority, interesting observations become possible when one examines the
function of authority in the document more closely with the assistance of Kee’s questions.

2.3 The second group in Kee’s catalogue addresses ‘authority questions’.

What are the roles of power within the group and the means of attaining them?
What are the structures of power within the group, including rank?
How do the titles of leadership function in terms of authority and status?
How is the leader chosen? Who is in charge?
Can authority be transmitted to successive generations? If so, by what means?

2.3.1 We have already said that the Bible is the stated canon for the text. A closer look, however, shows that in a crucial part of the argument the Bible is, in fact, not the final authority. We refer to the concluding summary providing the ‘final view’, the ultimate answer to the first question whether wars can ever be justified ‘according to Scripture’ (154-173):

It provides seven ‘truths’, on the basis of which a conclusion is then drawn. The first truth says that all war originates in sin, which obviously does not legitimate it. The second says that God can use war as discipline and punishment, but it also does not justify war. The third truth says that war, like sin, will exist until the end of time, but it is later explicitly said that this is therefore not a justification of war. The sixth truth — in itself doubtful since it is based on two references from parables, but be that as it may — simply says that Christ upholds, that is acknowledges, the principle of retaliatory judgment in that injustice will be punished on the judgment day, which is again not a justification of war. The seventh truth in fact says that Christ proclaims the law of forgiving love that bears evil and rejects violence, which, if anything, seems to reject the possibility of a just war. Only truths number four and five are therefore left. Number four simply says, with appeal to Romans 13, that the governing authorities have been given the sword to punish wrongdoers and to keep peace and order.

Truth number five is therefore obviously the decisive one. It argues that the governing authorities have the right also to punish wrongdoers from outside, that is to protect people against aggressors. Quite clearly this is the only ‘truth’ that justifies war. It is, however, also the only truth without any direct Biblical reference!

When one considers the actual words of the authoritative conclusion, it becomes even more remarkable: ‘On the question whether war is justified according to Scripture, our answer must inevitably be: yes, but only as the ultimate measure after all other ways have been tried, and when the fact that the
cause is just is certain far beyond all doubt.'

Not only did the Biblical truths not provide the authority to say that war can be justified, but all the other expressions and qualifications obviously do not come from the Biblical analysis either. The text not once provided any evidence that the Bible speaks of an ‘ultimate measure’, ‘after all other ways have been tried’, or if ‘the cause should be just far beyond any doubt’.

These remarks, instead, stem directly from the philosophical and also Christian tradition of the ‘just war’ theory. Therefore, although the text seemingly wants to listen to the total message of Scripture, the conclusion is provided by the Christian tradition and not by Scripture. Although Scripture in its totality is the professed canon, the really operative canon is something else. Let us consider this in more detail.

2.3.2 In addition to the Scriptures, the document explicitly also mentions and employs other authorities as well in order to legitimate and justify arguments and conclusions. A first source of authority and legitimation is the Christian tradition.

Immediately after the above-mentioned conclusion is reached, it explicitly adds: ‘This was more or less the attitude towards war of Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and the Reformers’ (174ff). In a long section lengthy quotations from these figures from church history are then provided in order to substantiate the claim made. The picture is therefore that the document first examines the authoritative Scriptures, comes to a conclusion on this basis, and then shows that church history agrees. In reality, of course, the argument is exactly the opposite.

The use of these names implies that the document finds itself in broad agreement with the Protestant tradition, and on one occasion it explicitly says: ‘Our approach should rather be that of the Reformed Evangelical point of view — in which reason or humanistic criteria are subject to the revelation from Scripture, and where both Old and New Testaments are given their rightful place’ (76-79). It is not very clear what this means. It might imply that the document originated within ‘Reformed Evangelical’ circles — but what exactly would that refer to? Within the context of the argument, where the two wide-ranging traditions or Enlightenment-liberalism-humanism on the one hand, and taking the Jesus-of-the-Gospels-as-moral-example on the other are opposed, it might refer to another stream of tradition where the Bible is taken as authority and canon, for example in Reformed and Evangelical circles, and that the document prefers to associate itself with this approach.

A second source of authority, seemingly very important to the document, is the
opinion of theologians.

It refers to and/or quotes a variety of theologians, authors and viewpoints, whether in agreement or polemical: Luther, Raven, Weatherhead, Bertrand Russell (quoting Mussolini), Tolstoy, Liberalism, the Synoptics, the Mennonites, the Quakers, the Pacifists, and ‘teachers of the early Christian church, including Justin, Irenaeus, Tatian, Origenes, Tertullian, Athanasius, Cyprian and Lanctantius’ (141-142), Prof. Paterson, A A Milne, Churchill, ‘a certain F A Atkins’ (245), Hobbes (250-252), and, in the endnotes, Geesink.

Again it is extremely difficult to draw final conclusions as to the underlying assumptions and convictions. These scholars and authors represent a very wide range of opinions and backgrounds. Indeed, most of them are English; Geesink being the only, but still remarkable exception. On the other hand, Bertrand Russell may be a rather unexpected source to quote from.

Perhaps it is safe to reach only the general conclusion that scholarship itself serves as legitimating authority. The wide-range of quotes and references, precisely not representing a particular tradition or school, but simply scholarship as such, the direct, often lengthy quotations with comments, the serious and repeated polemics with some sources, the use of endnotes and a list of works consulted, all point to the academic nature of the document, but also to underlying convictions that the scholarly debate is a serious one and that opinions can be justified in dialogue and debate with intellectual contributions.

Especially interesting may be the fact that Biblical scholars are not referred to and that, in fact, the insights of Biblical scholarship are almost completely absent in the way the Bible is used. Lists of verses are simply made, without exegesis and often without respect for the original context, genre or meaning. The document obviously addresses people to whom the Bible is authoritative when used in this way, or to whom the specific references from the Bible already make good sense and serve as authoritative grid or tradition.

So, in spite of the fact that the Bible is confessed as the final authority, it seems as if the tradition and scholarship in general serve as authoritative sources of convictions and legitimation as well. Still, they are not the truly operative canon. Let us look at something even more influential.

2.3.3 Scrutinizing the argumentative strategy of the document, it becomes clear that neither Scripture nor tradition and scholarship are the operative canon and final authority, but that this role belongs to the common experience, the shared emotions, assumptions, values and convictions underlying the communication:
The document seems to answer a twofold question: Can war be justified by Christians, and what should a Christian do when his (or her) country participates in an unjust war (63-66)?

In the first part the document answers the first question in the affirmative, seemingly appealing to Scripture, but in reality following the authoritative just war tradition.

Then comes the crucial second part, dealing with the second question (208ff). Without directly saying it, the document now retracts its own conclusions in the first part. It actually begins to argue that just wars are no longer possible.

The characteristics of a just war no longer apply. 'Modern war is by nature totalitarian ...' (212). 'Most modern wars are no longer the kind of just war that Calvin had in mind' (228). 'Our wars, however, no longer demonstrate these characteristics' (230-231). A series of reasons are given why modern wars differ fundamentally from what could previously have been just wars. 'And even when a modern war may be called just, Christians still do not escape its barbarism' (244). 'Even a just war is a sure guarantee that thousands will be plunged into the abyss of hell. In spite of all possible justice with which a people may have started a war, it will not save them from a flood of sin, arson, robbery, rape, adultery, lies and murder' (245-248).

In terms of these arguments, the problem should be reformulated: 'The Christian, therefore, time and again faces the dilemma that he is either forced to take part in an unjust war or that he must lose his soul in a so-called just war' (257-258). And obviously this is no real dilemma, no real choice! No Christian will be willing to lose his or her soul!

The use of the word 'so-called' is extremely important, it provides the key to the thrust of the whole document. What started as a theoretical scholarly discussion about the possibility of a just war, has changed into a powerful rhetorical argument that the difference between just and unjust wars is absolutely irrelevant and immaterial.

The second question has undergone a passionate shift: from the theoretical question about what a Christian should do in case of an unjust war, to the emotional claim that Christians can only lose their souls in 'so-called' just wars.

Is it possible to deduce that the document addresses an actual socio-political, ideological public discourse in which groups differ on the question whether a specific war is just or unjust, since it is a choice which would determine the conduct of Christians, and that this document wants to make the passionate plea that the distinction is irrelevant, since all wars 'plunge people into the abyss of hell'?

In radical terms the only possible conclusion is stated: 'Under these cir-
cumstances nothing else remains than resistance to war in general’ (259-260).
‘War in general’ rejects any distinction between just and unjust — and may probably refer to a very specific war.

The important point is this: By saying all of this, the document has itself rejected its own first part and has shown this to be theoretical and irrelevant. The discussion, in which the authority of Scripture and tradition featured so prominently, was only a superficial one. The crucial question is: What is the authoritative canon underlying this second part of the document? How can the text come to these conclusions? How does it justify or legitimate this — remarkable and new — position?

The answer is again easy to see. The document appeals to the common convictions, common experiences, shared values and assumptions of its hearers/readers. These form the real ‘operative canon’.

A clue is given in the multitude of occasions on which the word ‘modern’ is used, and again in the words that ‘under these circumstances’ nothing else remains. The convincing power of these words lie in the fact that the listeners/readers agree. They also know what is at stake. They have had similar experiences. Within their context, the plea of the document makes existential sense.

Now it also becomes clear why so many terms of emotion and revulsion regarding war are used right from the beginning. They serve to strengthen the common rejection of war and its atrocities that the text and its listeners/readers share.

It is important to see that the document, in arguing like this, effectively criticises both Scripture and tradition from the perspective of its own context. Even if Scripture says that wars can be justified, and even if the Christian tradition has always defended the just war theory, ‘under these circumstances’ these viewpoints no longer apply.

It is an obvious case of situation ethics, or contextual criticism of Scripture and tradition. The document tries not to say that Scripture and the mainline Christian traditions are wrong, but instead argue that the new situation makes similar positions no longer possible. ‘Most modern wars are no longer the kind of just war that Calvin had in mind’ (228).

In addition, the rhetoric of the Christian tradition is regarded very critically. ‘If you have seen the intestines...then you have seen war conducted between two civilized Christian countries’ (33-36). And, contrary to the high moral arguments of the just war theory, when the document summarises the causes of
war, it names only greed, fear, ambition, longing for power, revenge, and religious zeal (250-256)!

In order to look more closely at these underlying common assumptions, we turn to the next group of Kee’s questions.

2.4 In his seventh group, Kee suggests ‘questions concerning the symbolic universe and the social construction of reality.’

What are the shared values, aspirations, anxieties, and ethical norms of the group?
What is disclosed about the symbolic universe of the group by its shared understandings of supernatural beings (good and evil), of miracles and portents, of magic and healing techniques?
How does the group understand history and its own place in history?
What is its view of time?
How does it perceive God in his essential being, and in the divine actions, both within the cosmic structure and among human beings?
Are there dualistic elements in the group’s perception of reality? Do these good/evil factors assume political, moral, social, or cultural forms?
What are the dominant symbols for the group and its place in the universe? In what distinctive ways does this group employ symbols that it shares with other groups?
What are the distinctive symbolic features of the group under scrutiny?
What are the marginal factors in the community’s life which are important for the maintenance of identity?

2.4.1 Let us start with the first question, inquiring after ‘the shared anxieties of the group’. What is the issue really at stake? What does the document ultimately fear?

It is unnecessary to document the answer in any detail, since it is abundantly clear. It fears the ultimate horror and destruction of war, modern war, as it has been or is being experienced.

It is difficult, if not impossible to gather from the document the actual circumstances under which this fear is being experienced. In a kind of general, almost timeless way ‘modern war’ is addressed. This is, however, nothing strange. In fact, many kinds of literature, including sermons, speeches, church reports, research documents, essays and scientific articles often address concrete ideological issues only in such a roundabout, discrete way, and for a variety of reasons. Even the New Testament offers examples of this kind.
The fact, therefore, that one finds only very indirect references to the 'real' world, and has to rely solely on the coded language of the 'constructed symbolic world' of scholarly reflection, does not necessarily suggest that the document does not address particular socio-cultural, political and military issues.

Perhaps the plea for 'conscientious objection' provides the best indication of the real-life struggle taking place. What is to be feared in the symbolic world of the text is the terror of war, much more than martyrdom, the death penalty, and accusations of cowardice. What is ultimately at stake in the symbolic world is the possibility of losing one's soul.

2.4.2 Is it possible to distinguish some common values and aspirations?
On the one hand one finds clearly negative emotions regarding war, lies, hatred, bloodshed, deception, thirst for blood, bitterness, destruction of art and culture, depravity, suffering, greed, fear, ambition, longing for power, revenge, religious zeal, totalitarianism, arson, adultery, rape, murder, robbery.

On the other hand, one senses a preference for values and visions such as mercy, impartiality, justice, forgiveness, tolerance, courage.

2.4.3 Of special importance may be the way in which the authority of the State or the governing authorities is finally regarded within this symbolic universe. Although obedience to the authorities is necessary, this can never be an absolute obedience on the part of Christians. People may in fact be 'deceived' into supporting their authorities (236).

Quite explicitly, the view that the authorities know best what is in the public interest is rejected (210-212).

In fact, quotations saying that the wanton leaders should be killed instead of the population are used in a very powerful way and without any criticism or qualification (213-227).

The appeal for conscientious objection itself is, of course, an appeal for disobedience and resistance. Christians, in all countries, should 'refuse' to fight (266).

In dealing with Christ, the document makes interesting remarks about resistance. He did not mean that evil should not be resisted in an absolute way. In fact, He Himself 'protested' against injustice. The point is that He did not struggle against it 'with violence' and 'He never retaliated' (154-155).

In this regard, the final paragraphs are interesting, although difficult to understand. The document seems to plead for some kind of international law, international court and international power with armed forces to solve particular conflicts in the world. Does this refer, in a technical way, to the establish-
ment of, for example, the United Nations (which would date the document before 1948, but then one should also account for the references to the Nuremberg trials (240), as well as the argument about conscientious objection)? Or is it simply an implicit appeal to respect the United Nations and the World Court and their decisions and actions, which could situate the document in a variety of contexts? Or is it, in an even more general way, an appeal to respect international involvement in the ‘own affairs’ of a particular country, whenever a conflict over national borders is at stake?

2.4.4 There are clearly dualistic elements in the document’s construction of reality. The forces of hell are responsible for war and it is the duty of individual Christians to struggle against these unto the very end, and in spite of all costs.

This gives a cosmic, almost apocalyptic, element to the struggle. Several references are made to the end of time. What is at stake is the faithful participation of Christians from all nations of the world in the building of a better world. This also lends extreme urgency to the time they live in, and their place and actions within human and cosmic history.

2.4.5 As far as dominant symbols are concerned, at least the image of ‘the way of martyrdom’ should be mentioned as a description of the Christian’s life at a crucial moment in the argument (260). ‘Everything will depend on the Christians’ (282).

2.5 In the sixth group Kee raises questions dealing with ‘group functions’.

What are the dynamics of the community? What are its goals?
What helps or hinders the achievement of the group’s aims?
What are the tensions within the group? What are the tensions with the surrounding culture? Who are the chief enemies?
Does the group use body language? If so, in what way? What does it imply?
Is there a problem of cognitive dissonance within the texts produced by the group, or between its texts and its experience? How are these problems handled?
What are the ritual means of establishing and reinforcing the group identity?

2.5.1 It is not necessary to answer several of these questions in detail, since they have been implicitly addressed already, for example concerning the dynamics of the community (represented by the text) and its goals. The same goes for the important question concerning the tensions within the group and the tensions with the surrounding culture.
2.5.2 The question concerning possible 'cognitive dissonance' is relevant. There is clearly a cognitive dissonance between the authoritative Christian tradition concerning war (namely that war is justified under certain circumstances) and the experience of the author(s) of the document (namely that in modern times no war can be justified). In an attempt to restore consonance between its own radical pacifist option and its original set of beliefs, the document quotes the authoritative tradition extensively, but then overrules the tradition, explaining that it was formulated in a time before modern warfare made any just war impossible.

2.6 In his first group, Kee points to 'boundary questions'.

By what authority are the boundaries drawn which define the group?
What are the threats to the maintenance of these boundaries?
Who are the insiders? The outsiders? Can an insider become an outsider?
Does the threat to the boundaries arise within the group or from without?
What bounds of time and space does the group occupy?
Which is the more important factor: group identity, or the criteria for belonging?

One comment can be made. It is clear that the text is trying to draw a boundary between what is Christian and what not. What is at stake, is not merely one issue amongst others, or a theoretical question in Christian ethics or political theory. No, what is at stake, is the very essence of Christianity, the way of martyrdom itself, the possibility of losing one's soul, the future of the world and of history, the destiny of the nations, lasting peace in the world or terrible violence and war.

In other words, the particular issue at stake in the 'real' world of the group is projected onto the stage of world-history itself. In this process, the repeated references to 'the Christian' and 'a Christian' and 'Christian' are meaningful.

2.7 This particular document does not reveal that much concerning status, role and ritual questions (Kee: groups 3 and 4). It is noteworthy that inclusive language is not used, and that 'a Christian's' problems are solely that of 'men', but this could also be explained to some extent by the underlying issue of soldiers and conscientious objection, since military training might not have been compulsory for women at the time, while it might have been for 'young men'.

3 CORRELATING THE TEXT WITH HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTIONS OF THE SETTING

3.1 One of the strongest criticisms of Kee's approach — at least regarding the
way we also interpret him here — has been that sociological method should not proceed from the text, but should follow the exact opposite approach, namely to read texts within the socio-historical reconstructions of their settings, of the public discourses in which they functioned.

In other words, we should not interrogate the text with a view to reconstructing the socio-historical setting, but we should start from sociologically responsible, scientific and theory-informed reconstructions of the socio-historical setting in order to understand the social function of the text better.

This forms e.g. the heart of John H Elliott's well-known criticism of Kee. According to him, 'social science criticism' or 'social-scientific critical method' must be seen as a part of the larger paradigm of the historical-critical methodology. According to him, we have a 'mass of information' available concerning the cultural, social, political, economic, legal, etcetera world of the first century, and sociological interpretation in Biblical scholarship should employ these vast resources far more effectively.

Such an approach, of course, underscores the importance of knowing who wrote the documents, when, to whom, under which conditions (political, military, legal, social, economic, natural, national and international), with which purposes (rhetorical, ideological). Let us consider this alternative approach for a moment, again with reference to the text.

3.2 So: What is or was the socio-historical setting of the document we are reading? The problem is clear: In order to reconstruct the historical setting, we need to know something about the authorship and the date of origin. In other words, we need to know which elements in the 'mass of information' available to us are applicable and which not.

We indeed know a lot about the twentieth century South African religious discourse on war, peace and violence. It has been documented in great detail in a variety of studies. We need to know, however, where to situate this particular document in the many public discourses of this kind.

In spite of the monotonous refrain of time expressions such as 'at present', 'now' and 'modern', the text does not make it easy to reconstruct its particular setting. This is, of course, not strange, especially not in the case of discourses on war and violence.

In order to get closer to a responsible decision on authorship and date, and therefore to a reconstruction of the historical setting, one might follow several clues.

From the text itself it is clear that it cannot dated further back than after the Second World War (references to Neurenberg trials, atom bomb, the sources used). The references to an international court and peace-keeping force may
even point to a date immediately after the war, but not necessarily.

The emotional plea for conscientious objection may point to a much later date, perhaps after the 1974 decision by the SACC that member churches should ask their members not to participate in the wars in Zimbabwe and Namibia, as a response to the PCR fund of the WCC. In other words, if they could not support the liberation struggle, they should also refuse the SADF’s war, although seen by many members of the mainline churches as a ‘just war’. In fact, this proposal was made by Douglas Bax and Beyers Naude, a Presbyterian and a Reformed theologian, which also makes good sense in terms of the document. This might also explain the emotional experiences of the readers/listeners of the horror of war, as well as the suggestion that international involvement is not only legitimate but indeed necessary.

The reference to ‘now the atom bomb’ may perhaps be important. This might refer to the worldwide peace movement of the eighties, addressing the possibility of world-wide destruction through nuclear armament. This would explain the cosmic and apocalyptic tones. The WCC for example published a book called ‘Before it is too late’, and many churches, with the Reformed tradition being especially involved, published books and study documents, for example in the Netherlands and West-Germany. The reference to Bertrand Russell and other well-known pacifists would then also be understandable.

The reference to ‘Durban’ might provide an important key, but once again it is in itself extremely ambiguous. Was the document written there, or was it addressed to an audience there, or was it published there? Was the speech, if it was a speech, delivered there? But then the speaker/author could come from any place. Was the author necessarily a South African?

Natal was the seat of several important religious discourses on war, peace and violence during the second half of the twentieth century. At the time of writing it is the scene of widespread violence and many public speeches and church and theological appeals. It is also the home of the SACLAC initiative, not long after the SACC resolution, and of the National Initiative for Reconciliation, which published several readers.

In short, we have an enormous amount of information available which we can use to describe fairly accurately how public religious discourse in South Africa developed during these decades, but unless we have more exact knowledge concerning the document itself, it would be almost impossible to reconstruct a specific historical setting.

3.3 But: Suppose we knew more about the document, would that necessarily help us to make more responsible conclusions?
Suppose we knew that it was a church report and that it was tabled in Durban on 30 May 1947, that is the day before Union Day, a year before the advent of apartheid. Would that help us at all, or perhaps mislead us?

Suppose we also knew that it was a report of the ‘Federale Raad’ of the Dutch Reformed Church. Would that help us to make generalisations concerning the position of the DRC on — say — conscientious objection?

Suppose we also knew that the first part of the document was mainly a repetition of earlier statements by the DRC and that the only new and rhetorically important part of the document was the last part, would that have helped us to understand the DRC’s position on war and conscientious objection during the second half of the twentieth century even better?

Suppose, however, we also knew that the ‘Federale Raad’ did not accept the second part of the document at all, but merely noted it, while they simply accepted the conclusion of the first part, namely that just war is allowed according to the Bible, then it would have helped us to understand the position of the DRC better, but not necessarily the document itself, for then the intriguing questions still remain: Who were the authors of this document? How widespread was their viewpoint in the DRC of the time? What happened to them and to this viewpoint? Did they voice it again, or did they retract?

In other words, sociological interpretation should certainly be seen as part of the historical-critical paradigm. The reconstruction of socio-historical settings is essential for understanding documents. We should, however, be extremely careful with regard to our conclusions and generalisations, since the precise knowledge necessary to draw legitimate conclusions is hard to obtain, in spite of whatever mass of information we may have.

4 CONCLUSIONS
Kee’s approach proved to be useful, but mainly as a method of rhetorical analysis. For example, it pointed out the incongruities of argumentation within the document itself. In that way it helped us to understand the text and its persuasive function better. However, Kee’s proposals failed to supply a satisfactory explanation of the historical setting of the document — for example as to who wrote the document, when and why, etcetera.

On the other hand, enthusiasm for the reverse theory by Elliott and others, that it is possible to understand the document and its place in the discourse of its time via a reconstruction of the historical setting, should also be guarded. Even with the knowledge of some facts regarding the historical setting of the document (e.g. its date, place and context of origin — 1947, Durban, the ‘Federale Raad’ of the DRC) it was quite possible to misinterpret the document, its possible influence, etcetera.
WORKS CONSULTED

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