CONTRIBUTORS

Nicholas King
Johannes Van der Ven
Jan Jans
Stuart C Bate
ST AUGUSTINE PAPERS EDITORIAL COMMITTEE
Prof. E H Raidt
Prof. R J van Vuuren
Prof. S C Bate
Dr R Moss
Mrs M Smurthwaite

ABOUT ST AUGUSTINE COLLEGE OF SOUTH AFRICA
The idea of founding a Catholic university in South Africa was first mooted in 1993 by a group of academics, clergy and business people. It culminated in the establishment of St Augustine College of South Africa in July 1999, when it was registered by the Minister of Education as a private higher education institution and started teaching students registered for the degree of Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy.

It is situated in Victory Park, Johannesburg and operates as a university offering values-based education to students of any faith or denomination, to develop leaders in Africa for Africa.

The name ‘St Augustine’ was chosen in order to indicate the African identity of the College since St Augustine of Hippo (354–430 AD) was one of the first great Christian scholars of Africa.

As a Catholic educational institution, St Augustine College is committed to making moral values the foundation and inspiration for all its teaching and research. In this way it offers a new and unique contribution to education, much needed in our South African society.

It aims to be a community that studies and teaches disciplines that are necessary for the true human development and flourishing of individuals and society in South Africa. The College’s engagement with questions of values is in no sense sectarian or dogmatic but is both critical and creative. It will explore the African contribution to Christian thought and vice versa. Ethical values will underpin all its educational programmes in order to produce leaders who remain sensitive to current moral issues.

The college is committed to academic freedom, to uncompromisingly high standards and to ensuring that its graduates are recognised and valued anywhere in the world. Through the international network of Catholic universities and the rich tradition of Catholic tertiary education, St Augustine College has access to a wide pool of eminent academics, both locally and abroad, and wishes to share these riches for the common good of South Africa.
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St Augustine Today*

NICHOLAS KING

INTRODUCTION
It is a great honour to be invited to address St Augustine College, 1571 years to the day – give or take a calendar shift or two – after the death of this College’s patron saint. In this address I should like to do two things. First, I want to tell you why I have always liked St Augustine, with admittedly one or two wobbles. Second, I want to make some suggestions – and there is not space or time here to defend them all in depth – about why it is still important for us to be reading and learning from St Augustine in this country today.

THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF AUGUSTINE
In the first place, as soon as I was old enough, I was captivated by the beauty of his Latin, which was a good deal easier, and in many respects far more elegant, than that of his great model, M Tullius Cicero. Our teachers at school occasionally allowed us to read him for fun, and, I realised later, something of the man entered in without our observing it. He writes some lovely passages, of which the following is an example, taken almost at random, showing his marriage of content and form, and his grasp of the human psychology when it searches for God:

"nondum amabam et amare amabam et secretiore indigentia oderam me minus indigentem. Quaerebam quid amarem, amans amare, et oderam securitatem et vitam sine muscipulis, quoniam famis mihi erat intus ab interiore cibo, Te ipso, Deus meus, et ea fame non esuriебam, sed eram sine desiderio alimentorum incorruptibilium, non quia plenus eis eram, sed quo inanior fastidiosior.” ("I did not yet love, and I was in love with love, and because that need of mine was hidden from me, I hated myself because I took too little notice of my need. I was seeking for something to love, in love with love, and I hated my carefree existence, and my unflurried life, because I had an inner hunger for inner food. My hunger was for you yourself, my God. And it was not that hunger that set me starving. I had no desire for imperishable foods,
not because I was full of them, but because I had not eaten them; and therefore I scorned them all the more.”\(^1\)  

Or there is that splendid sentence, too long to quote here, in which he describes the mystical ecstasy experienced by Augustine and his mother at Ostia, shortly before her death,\(^2\) which was in yesterday’s Office of Readings. Later on, as an undergraduate, gloomy with doubts about the existence of God, I found great inspiration when someone lent me a copy of the Confessions. Those remarkable words from the opening paragraph of the work: “Tu excitas, ut laudare Te delectet, quia fecisti nos ad Te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in Te” (“You [Lord] awake us to delight in Your praise; for You made us for Yourself, and restless are our hearts, until they repose in You”\(^3\) at the time caused me to feel “Yes – that’s it!”), and have seemed to me ever since to be profoundly true. The same is true of other characteristic expressions of his, such as “Tu autem eras interior intimo meo, et superior summno meo.” (“But You [Lord] were more inward to me than my innermost part; and higher than my highest.”)\(^4\) And there was too, that charming expression of our energetic looking in all the wrong places, “et Tu eras ante me, ego autem a me discesseram nec me inveniebam: quanto minus Te!” (And You were before/(in front of) me, but I had gone away from myself; nor did I find myself, how much less You!”\(^5\) All these spoke powerfully to me at a time when I needed to hear them, and have stayed with me ever since.  

Then at a later stage – though I am not sure precisely when – and through that novel\(^6\) about the life of John Sullivan SJ which takes its title from it, that ecstatic burst of his came home to me, “sero Te amavi, pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam nova, sero Te amavi! Et ecce intus eras et ego foris et ibi Te quaerabam. Et in ista formosa, quae fecisti, deformis irrueram. Mecum eras, et Tecum non eram.” (Too late have I loved You, Beauty so ancient, yet new! Too late have I loved You! And see, You were within, and I outside, and there I searched for You; deformed, I was plunging amid/among those fair/beautiful forms which You had made. You were with me, but I was not with you.”)\(^7\) It was reassuring to find that so hugely intelligent a man could fall so passionately in love with God.  

At another stage, it came home to me that it was really Augustine who invented the literary genre of autobiography, a remarkable form of writing to which Augustine brought his own profound gift of introspection. The most recent book that I have consulted on Augustine\(^8\) makes the very sensible point that Confessions in his language has nothing to do with the literary genre represented by titles like Confessions of A Window-Cleaner. In Augustine’s understanding, it means at least the following three things: confessing sinfulness; the praise of God; and finally the profession of faith. Wills, who goes in for imaginative and sensitive renderings of Augustine’s Latin, suggests that we should call the book the ‘Testimonies’.\(^9\)  

At a later stage still, Augustine’s memorable suggestion, “ama, et quod vis, fac” (“Love and do what you want”)\(^10\) seemed to me to offer a way – possibly a deceptively simple one – through some of the less attractive thickets of moral theology.
Another aspect of Augustine that appealed to me was the discovery that he was a reluctant bishop, and one who did not, as he is often depicted, normally wear crosier and mitre; he was content with a simple monk’s habit. He was also a bishop who never ceased to think hard and vigorously on matters theological, even after his episcopal ordination. He was always, to the very end of his life, looking for new ways to express and defend his theological insights. That same restlessly enquiring intellect that is chronicled in the Confessions remained until the end of his life, determinedly investigating the mystery of God and its application to his world.

Finally, as an undergraduate student of Theology, I was enormously impressed with his remarkable defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, and his willingness to clash head-on with the problem of God’s threeness and oneness.

**WHY AUGUSTINE TODAY?**

So much, then, for the appeal that Augustine has powerfully exercised on me. Now the reason for that was not to parade before you my slightly tedious autobiography, but to indicate that the Augustine who finds himself appointed patron saint of this College is one who has not ceased to exercise a powerful attraction. For it is not just me; many people have fallen under his spell, and many people today remain under that spell.

Why should we bother with him today? I am going to suggest to you six considerations that may commend him to you, not only as patron of this College, but also as an icon of what reflective Catholicism could be doing in this time and in this place of South Africa. Augustine was in his day, and has not ceased to be since, a channel for the undying freshness of God. Therefore he provides a landmark in the bewildering world, with its tired ideologies and clashing civilisations, in which we find ourselves today.

Firstly, and this is important for us in South Africa, he was very much an African. His friend and former mentor Maximus of Madaurus, wrote to him scoffing at the barbaric African names of some of the Christians, perhaps forgetting that the name of Augustine’s mother, Monnica, was of Berber origin. Augustine was clearly unsure whether or not he should take him seriously, but does so, and writes:

> “neque enim usque adeo teipsum oblivisci potuisse ut homo Afer scribens Afris, cum simus utrique in Africa constituti, Punica nomina exagitanda existimares.” (“For surely, considering that you are an African, and that we are both settled in Africa, you could not have so forgotten yourself when writing to Africans as to think that Punic names were a fit theme for censure.”)

Augustine was not, however, a representative of the Black Consciousness Movement; his great opponents the Donatist ‘Circumcelliones’, for whom Africa was the Holy Land, carried that particular banner.¹²

Secondly, and this too is a part of his fresh appeal for us today, Augustine was very much a Catholic. He saw himself as a member of the Church universal, and had a remarkably wide international correspondence, including a rather tetchy one
with the irritable Jerome. His career in Rome and Milan had, of course, given him a great range of contacts with people of influence in both Church and State from the entire Empire. He was not, however, an entirely uncritical Catholic, and like many such he was slightly sceptical of Rome, and did not think that Christianity had actually reached there, writing in a letter to his fellow priest Casulanus that “the Church extends throughout the world, except for Rome”.  

It may at this point also be worth mentioning the saying often – and, as it stands, incorrectly – attributed to him, “Roma locuta est, causa finita est” (“Rome has spoken; the case is closed”), which is often waved in dissident faces as implying that once Rome’s verdict has been delivered there is no further room for debate. The difficulty is that Augustine did not say quite that; nor did he mean what he is often supposed to have meant.

On 23 September 417, he concluded a sermon at the shrine of St Cyprian with these words:

“Iam enim de hac causa duo concilia missa sunt ad Sedem Apostolicam: inde etiam rescripta venerunt. Causa finita est: utinam aliquando finiatur error!” (“For now the Acta of two Synods have been sent to the Apostolic See; and the rescripts have come back from there. The issue is at an end; if only the heretics’ error might also be one day at an end!”).  

So the addition of Roma locuta is subsequent embroidery; and it was not in any case the end of the story. It may be worth mentioning the circumstances: the sermon was directed against Pelagianism, which the North African bishops were inclined to view with the gravest misgivings. As Augustine indicates, they had sent the minutes of two of their episcopal synods to Rome for confirmation that Pelagius was indeed in heresy. Innocent provided what they wanted, but died shortly afterwards, and his successor Pope Zosimus, allowed Pelagius and his team to reopen the case. The case was only finally concluded when Zosimus in turn died and Sixtus reaffirmed the original judgement. Rome’s shilly-shallying – though they agreed that Rome was entitled to hear appeals of this sort – did not impress Augustine and his fellow bishops. Rome had spoken, but the case, when he uttered these words, was certainly not finished.  

Augustine always fought hard for what he saw to be the truth. However in this context, it is important to stress that Augustine was also always looking for reconciliation with his theological opponents. It is true that he did lapse into the compelle intrare mode that the Roman church subsequently seized upon, just a thought too eagerly; but I do not think that represents his most considered verdict.

Thirdly – and here we must learn to follow him, if we are to retain our contact with the undying freshness of God – Augustine, with his complex and cosmopolitan educational background, was always looking for God, and looking for new ways of expressing the truth about God. That is, once he had realised that it was God that he was looking for. Two obvious examples of this are the De Trinitate and the De Civitate Dei. This latter work, the City of God, which he described as “magnum
opus et arduum” (“huge and difficult work”).¹⁷ is an old man’s work, which occupied him from 412 to 426. Originally a political pamphlet, it ended up by turning into a meditation on the history and destination of the human race. He was trying to deal with the problem of neo-paganism: the Roman rush to return to the old gods, in the face of the collapse of the city and its empire. If you have ever heard it whispered in this country today that “of course, things worked much better in the old days”, and felt irritation at this absurd nostalgia, then you will know what Augustine felt.

The book is carefully aimed at an educated audience (“get at them through their libraries”, might have been the slogan, and not a bad one for us today) to whom he frequently compares “your Vergil” with “our Scriptures”, always, of course, in favour of the latter. Brown’s verdict is interesting: “He deliberately turned away from the threats of the Gospels to find in the Psalms a capacity to love the future.”¹⁸ Any time we find ourselves muttering “I don’t know what this country is coming to”, we need to recall Augustine’s careful contrast between Jerusalem and Babylon, the Civitas Peregrina and the Civitas Terrena. In the end, only the City of God can satisfy the human heart,¹⁹ and in this life we are still on the journey towards it.

The collapse of Rome meant for Augustine an end to the hopes of Christianising the Roman Empire, but the beginning of something different. Brown’s verdict is thought-provoking:

> What was at stake, in the City of God ... was the capacity of men to ‘long’ for something different, to examine the nature of their relationship with their immediate environment; above all to establish their identity by refusing to be engulfed in the unthinking habits of their fellows.²⁰

We need in this country today Augustine’s ability to stand apart from the ‘accepted wisdom’ of the chattering classes, and to recognise that our destiny lies elsewhere. We are pilgrims, or ‘resident strangers’, and our proper response is to be homesick, captive, sighing for release. This ability to do theology in a new and fresh way, to meet the changing circumstances of his day, is something that we need most urgently. It springs, of course, from his profound awareness that God is “always beyond us”: “De Deo loquimur, quid mirum si non comprehendis? Si enim comprehendis, non est Deus. Sit pia confessio ignorantiae magis, quam temeraria professio scientiae” (“We are talking about God; so why be surprised if you cannot grasp it? [I mean] if you can grasp it, it isn’t God. Let us rather make a devout confession to great ignorance, than a brash profession of knowledge”), he writes in one of his sermons.²¹ We need once again this pious confession of ignorance before the mystery of God, and to reclaim God’s undying freshness.

Fourth I would place, as of key importance in South Africa today, his great love of Scripture. One of the reasons behind our miracle of 1994 was, in my view, the fact that a very large number of South Africans from all cultures are Bible-reading Christians, and we need to return to the inspiration that God’s word has given us in the past. Augustine writes:
There is so much depth in the Christian Scriptures, that I could advance in the understanding of them every day, if I were to try to study them from the very beginning of my boyhood to my decrepit old age, and if I were to do this with no other distractions, with undivided attention, and with a great deal more natural ability than I actually have. This is not because it is difficult to get to the many things in them that are necessary for salvation. Rather, when a person has in Scripture got a grip on the faith without which it is impossible to live a good and holy life, there are still so many things that remain for learners to understand, and they are shrouded in so many layers of shady bowers. Besides, such a depth of wisdom is concealed, not just in the words in which they are expressed, but also in the matters that have to be understood, that it is the experience even of those who are most advanced in years, sharpest of mind, and most passionate to learn, what that same Scripture mentions somewhere: ‘When a person has finished, then they are just beginning’.”

These are the words of one who has really made God’s Word a part of himself, stumbling to express what he is trying to say of the depth and freshness of the Scriptures. It speaks volumes for his intellectual flexibility that this lyrical sentiment is in stark contrast with the repulsion he had felt earlier in his career for the crudity of the Christian Scriptures, in contrast to the elegance he found in rhetorical models such as Cicero’s Hortensius, and his early love of Virgil.

Despite what is often said about him these days, Augustine was extraordinarily open about sexuality, and about the power invested in this gift of God to us. It is commonly supposed that he was dashing puritanically around North Africa forbidding absolutely everything that people might enjoy, driven by guilt-ridden memories of his sexual behaviour as a young man. An American nun wrote an article some years ago that had the entirely regrettable title of ‘St Augustine’s Penis’. I did not bring myself to read it, but you can guess the line that it was likely to have taken. Others, with an equally cavalier regard for the evidence, or a determined projection on to it, have decided that Augustine must have been a homosexual. Wills is particularly good on this. Augustine is, however, not even remotely bashful on sexual matters. In fact, he is entirely clear on the appropriate ways of expressing our sexuality. So it may well be that we need today to take a leaf from his book, if we are to recover some of the freshness that our God wishes us to find in this great gift.

Lastly, Augustine, like us, lived at an extraordinarily difficult juncture in history. In 410 Rome fell, to the astonishment of those who assumed that such a thing could never happen, and in 430, when Augustine lay dying, the Vandals were at the very gates of his city of Hippo. It must at that point have seemed that all he had worked for was lost; that the Church, and the civilisation that it had leapfrogged, was doomed. We who are also living at a difficult moment of history may take comfort from the fact that he has been there before us. “Ut amur et nos sua
pace” (“Let us also use/enjoy his own peace”), we can say with him. But we are peregrini, nevertheless, in search of the undying freshness of God; and Augustine can aid us in that search.

CONCLUSION

It could not have seemed even remotely probable to Augustine as he lay dying that we should be talking of him, at the other end of the same continent, a millennium and a half later. Talking of him we are, however, and the name of Augustine, and the theological teaching that he presented, is better known than that of Alaric the Goth, the emperor of the day, or any of the Donatian leaders.

The Catholic Church, to which Augustine gave the first serious nudge in the direction of a systematic body of doctrine, has survived the death of that civilisation and that of many others. The same Church will also survive, we believe, whatever happens in this country, or on this continent; and it will survive, too, the consumerist cul-de-sac into which Europe and America appear to have drifted. We who are too ready to take for granted the conventional clichés of the opinion-makers may wish to make our own those words from the City of God: “there is no true justice, except in that country whose founder and Ruler is Christ ... in that country there is indeed true justice, of whom holy Scripture says, ‘Glorious things are spoken of you, City of God’.”

Augustine helped build a bridge between the earthly and the heavenly cities, and so must we; the task is urgent. But we shall get it badly wrong unless our eyes are on the eternal realities.

NOTES

* Annual Augustine Lecture on 28 August 2001, held at St Augustine College of South Africa, Johannesburg.
1 Conf. III, 1, 1.
2 Conf. 9:25.
3 Conf. 1:1.
4 Conf. 3:11.
5 Conf. 5:2.
6 Ethel Mannin, Late Have I Loved Thee.
7 Conf. 10:27.
9 Wills, p xvi.
10 Comm. Ad Gal. 57, and see Wills p 111.
12 See also Wills, p 75.
13 “Quod utinam sic quae reret, aut sic affirmavit, ut toto terrum orbe diffusam, exceptis Romanis et adhuc paucis Occidentibus apertissime non blasphemaret Ecclesiam.” (“This question I would wish to see him investigate, and resolve in such a manner as would not involve him in the guilt of openly speaking against the whole Church diffused
throughout the world, with the exception of the Roman Christians, and hitherto a few of
the Western communities.”) Epp. XXXVI:4.
14 Migne PL. 38, col. 734.
15 For a useful brief account, see E. Hill OP, tr. The Works of St Augustine, Sermons III/4, p
324.
16 Wills, pp 101ff.
17 Brown, chs 26 and 27 are still well worth reading on this topic.
18 Brown, p 315.
19 Wills, p 114.
20 Brown, p 322.
21 Sermo 117, iii, 5.
22 Epp. 137:3 to Volusianus: Tanta est enim christianarum profunditas litterarum, ut in eis
quotidie proficerem, si ea sola ab ineunte pueritia usque ad decrepitam senectutem
maximo otio, summo studio, meliore ingenio conarer addiscere: non quod ad ea quae
necessaria sunt saluti tanta in eis perveniatur difficultate; sed cum quisque Ibi fiedem
tenuerit, sine qua pie recteque non vivitur, tam multa, tamquemultiplicibus mysteriorum
umbraculis opacata itelligenda proficientibus restant, tantaque non solum in verbis ista
dicta sunt, verum etiam in rebus quae intelligendae sunt, latet altitudine sapientiae, ut
annosisissimus, acutissimus, flagrantissimus cupiditate discendi hoc contingat, quod eadem
Scriptura quodam loco habet, “cum consumaverit hom, tunc incipit. (Eccli. 18:6).
23 Wills, pp xviii-xx.

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Meridian Books.
The Formation of Churches as Moral Communities

JOHANNES VAN DER VEN

ABSTRACT
In South Africa, as in many other countries, there is a cry for moral communities. This paper deals with the formation of moral communities by first examining the term ‘communities’, then the term ‘moral’, in order to clarify the term ‘moral community’. Working with the social theory of John Searle, Paul Ricoeur’s ‘small ethics’ and the theories of Kohlberg and Bandura on moral formation and learning by young people, the formation of moral communities is explicated. To put moral communities in a religious perspective three ecclesiastic codes are applied: the church as people of God, the church as a movement of Jesus, and the church as a community of the Spirit.

In various countries throughout the world there is a cry for moral communities. The question is what these moral communities should be like, why they are wanted, and under what conditions they can be established. We shall deal with these questions by analysing the three terms in the title of this paper in reverse order: in the first part we analyse the term ‘communities’ and in the second the term ‘moral’ so as to clarify the term ‘moral community’; then, in the third part, we look at the term ‘formation’ in order to explain the title as whole. Thus we focus on the formation of churches as moral communities, applying three ecclesiastic codes: people of God, movement of Jesus, and community of the Spirit.

COMMUNITIES
What are communities?
Sometimes one really wonders what a community is, especially when a president or prime minister refers to the national community, an archbishop to the church community, an academic dean to the faculty community, a medical doctor to the hospital community, a manager to the business community, a computer freak to the internet community. What, in God’s name, is a community? Evidently the term is used in an analogous way, but that does not resolve our doubts, because analogy always refers more to dissimilarities than to similarities. Clearly community, in the
sense of *Gemeinschaft*, as Tönnies (1935) would have it in premodern times, does not exist any more, at least not in the Western world which abounds in characteristics of Tönnies's complementary term 'society' (*Gesellschaft*). But society is part of the problem: Is there still room for communities in the modern era, which is no longer based on affective relationships and spontaneous solidarity but on functional differentiation and instrumental relationships? This is the problem Weber formulated at the beginning of the 20th century: To what extent is the appeal to realise brotherhood and sisterhood in a religious perspective compatible with the iron cage in which modern human beings find themselves anonymously functioning in the systems of the market and the state?

In *Ecclesiology in context* one of the authors tried to answer this question by indicating the modern form in which communities, including churches, still exist today: that is to say, networks of individuals and groups, which we still think is an idea worth reflecting on (Van der Ven 1996, 246ff). In this paper we want to probe this idea in depth by inquiring into the identity of communities, conceived of as networks of individuals and groups. In the process we will take a conceptually dangerous step, namely first analysing the identity of an individual, and then applying the findings to the identity of a community.

**Identity of an individual person**

The analysis of individual identity is based on Ricoeur (1992), who distinguishes three aspects of it: *I/me*, *ipse/idem* and self/other. To begin with the first aspect (*I/me*), Ricoeur maintains that the individual's identity is based on a dialectical tension between, on the one hand, what other people think of 'me' and – through that – what I think of 'myself' in the interior dialogue I conduct with myself; and, on the other hand, the way 'I' transcend this 'me', that is, transcend the roles I play and the functions I perform.

The second aspect (*ipse/idem*) is my awareness of the fact that I still am the person I was in the past, while spinning a narrative line of continuity in my autobiography. I am *idem*, that is to say, still the same. Nevertheless I am not identical with this sameness, which is embodied in my character, bodily posture, manual gestures? To put it paradoxically, I am my character but at the same time I transcend it, at least by being aware of it, coping with it and steering it, albeit within limits. I am determined by sameness, but at the same time I overcome it in my selfhood. It is in this transcending that I actualise my *ipse*, which reveals itself in newness, originality, creativity. In the past I showed this freshness at some turning points in life, for example, when I appeared to be ready to forgive the evil done to me. In forgiving, the chains of the past are broken and life is made new. In the future I may show this freshness at some other turning points, for example, when I keep a promise I committed myself to: ''Yes, I promise you I will stay with you, whatever happens.'' To do justice to the complexity at issue here, we must add that promising does not contain the actual *ipse*-ity but the dialectic of sameness and selfhood: I promise something to somebody, not knowing what the future may bring, which
makes the sameness of continuity fragile and the freshness of selfhood dependent on change and chance. Promising reveals the contingent, and therefore attestatory, character of the dialectic relation between ipse and idem.

As for the third aspect (self/other), the individual’s identity depends on the extent to which the person is able, not to passively tolerate, but to actively recognise and accept the radical otherness of the other with whom he or she lives, cooperates and meets. In this recognition and acceptance of the other as other, individuals become aware of their own otherness: then they accept themselves as another. In a sense the alterity of the other is mirrored in one’s own alterity, which leads to the alterity of both alter egos.

Identity of a community
Now we take a conceptually dangerous step by applying, albeit analogously, the three aspects of individual identity to the identity of the community.

From the I/me perspective, in this case a we/us perspective, communities can be said to conduct an internal dialogue on whether the kind of community other communities say they are fits their own self-image, their own self-understanding. That is to say, the ‘we’ in communities speak to the ‘us’. The vitality of communities depends on the extent to which they appear to be able to transcend this ‘us’, that being what other communities say about ‘us’ and what we sometimes believe to be true, yet not altogether true and sometimes even totally untrue. Vital communities transcend their mutual social labelling.

From the ipselidem perspective, in this case the ipsiliidem perspective, communities are concerned with commemorating the core events in their past, from which they can then trace a communal line to the present so that they can believe they are still the same. But this sameness in itself cannot be the cornerstone of the community’s future identity, because that would make it cling to the past, prevent further growth and development, which would lead to conservatism and possibly fundamentalism, even if the fundamentalism is of a narrative nature. For communities to grow into the future, making promises, expressing commitment and holding on to ideas and principles belong to the core of their identity, however open-ended, risky, fragile, contingent, attestatory this may be, because through these very promises, commitments and risks, their continuity is at stake. To put it paradoxically, continuity is at risk when risks are missing; continuity is challenged when challenges are neglected.

Lastly, from the self/other-perspective communities are dynamic, vital and vibrant, when they are aware of their own identity and at the same time recognise the unique, inalienable, irreducible otherness of other communities, including their worth, value, richness and fecundity. There is no way for communities to survive other than via intercommunity dialogues in which mutual, radical distinctiveness is expressed, exchanged, recognised and cherished. Only then the community’s own otherness – its enigma or even mystery – comes to the fore: one’s own community as just one other community. Or, to put it paradoxically, communal identity derives
from communal alterity. From all this we conclude that a community’s identity, conceived of as a network of individuals and groups, cannot but be a communicative identity or, more specifically, a narrative communicative identity which goes in three directions: inward (we/us); outward (self/other); and in time (ipseiadem). not in the sequence of past-present-future but from the present into the past and from the past and the present into the future.

Individuals and their community

But, as we have said, we took a conceptually dangerous step by proceeding from the identity of an individual to the identity of a community. However refreshing the three aspects mentioned – we/us, ipseiadem, self/other – may be, is there something like a community’s identity? That is to say, does a community have something like an ipse. a selfhood? Two extremes should be ruled out here: the one is the claim that a community is only a collection of individual selves; the other that a community as such implies selfhood, which would mean that a community thinks, feels, wills and acts.

What is the golden mean? Following Aristotle, Ricoeur argues that a community exists, is rooted and grounded in the relations between individuals, although neither the individuals nor the relations between them exist in themselves. This means two things: individuals should not be seen as monads, and the relations between them should not be reified. In other words, individuals only exist in relations, and relations only exist among individuals. Only individuals think, feel, will and act, but they do so in terms of the relations in which they exist, whereas their thinking, feeling, willing and acting in their turn change these relations.

We think the social theory of John Searle (1995, 23ff) is helpful here. Ruling out the two extremes we have mentioned, he asks why it is that people can form a community: on what basis do they develop a ‘we’ feeling, a kind of corporate identity? To this end he distinguishes between two aspects within each individual member of a community: an I-aspect and a we-aspect. The I-aspect refers to the fact that I, for the sake of my own welfare and well-being, decide to (remain) a participant in this (or that) community; I may even participate in a plurality of communities, like those in my private life (partner, household, family, intimate friends), my professional life (departmental colleagues, super-departmental colleagues, guild, union), my recreational life (sports, arts) and my civic life (ecological, political social, and cultural associations in civil society). The we-aspect refers to the fact that I decide to conform to the aims and goals which bind me to others in these various, sometimes even conflicting, communities. This means that communities are made up of individual selves who decide for themselves to participate in these communities, and they do so in one way or another, in their own mode, to a certain degree, from a certain, consciously or unconsciously carefully chosen proximity and distance, compromising when values, aims and goals conflict.

In addition we need to note that the relation between the I-aspect and the we-aspect is dialectic, because by participating in these communities in my own interest
for my own welfare and well-being. I at the same time influence the aims and goals of these communities, develop, change or correct them, together with or even in opposition to (some) other members.

In other words, the community is a community of individual selves who continually communicate with each other about aims and goals to be set, strategies and tactics to reach these aims and goals, methods to implement the strategies and tactics, and evaluation techniques to assess the realisation of aims and goals. This once again underlines the idea that a community's identity is a communicative identity.

The church: People of God
The same applies to the church: without communication its identity suffers, starves, dies; without communication the church itself suffers, starves, dies. This communicative identity can be clarified with the aid of one of the most important ecclesiastic codes: that of the people of God (Van der Ven 1996:191ff). It says that the church is a community under way, a dynamic community, because it is in conversation with itself (we/us), with other communities (self/other), and with its past and its future (ipsi/iident). It does not possess the future, because its future is not futurus, which would be an extrapolation from the present, but open-ended. Its future is an adventure, based on the adventus of the totally Other. Not an anonymous Other whom we do not altogether know, but a 'hypeymous' Other who is above all names and whose very being can only be approached inchoately and anticipatorily, beyond our normal imaginative and linguistic tools (Caputo 1998). The church does not turn its back on this future but confronts it, which means that it takes risks, faces challenges, even likes adventures, although it knows there are thorny paths to tread, dangerous crossroads to traverse and steep cliffs to skirt.

MORAL COMMUNITIES
This kind of community analysis may sound relevant and meaningful, but does it adequately take into account the daily cry for moral communities heard in a great many government speeches, sermons, academic ceremonies and business talks? This brings us back to the question we asked at the beginning of this paper: Why is it that governments, church leaders, university boards, business managers feel a need for moral communities? Why do they cry out for them? And why now? Maybe we will understand their need if we distinguish between the macro-, meso- and microlevel of society, which will enable us to analyse the complexity of this need.

The cry for moral communities
At macrolevel the leaders of state, church and business express fears of a process of eroding social bonds, weakening social cement, dissolving social cohesion. What holds our society together? Is it money, bureaucracy, social security, human rights, culture, religion? Or are we just ships passing in the night? Leaders have a deep interest in all this, because without togetherness there is no community to be governed, no community to be preached to, no community to trade with.
At mesolevel crime figures rise; inner cities gradually become places of theft, rape, robbery and murder; suburbs increasingly disappear behind high walls; and people feel protected in crowded malls. Are the neighbourhood watches and private security services, which are increasing almost exponentially, indicative of healthy community life?

At microlevel there is growing caution about morally right action in regard to the inception and end of life, while the ‘moral majority’, faced with increasing numbers of abortion and euthanasia cases, warns of the danger of sliding down a slippery slope. At the same time the number of people encountering difficulties with life itself, which they experience not as a gift but as a burden, increases as evidenced by statistics of various addictions, especially alcohol and drug abuse.

Where are the moral communities that could function as a safety net, an enveloping network, a social safeguard, a warm nest? We need them if – as the newspapers tell us – life is to go on. We need them if our present societal fabric is to survive: that is what the speeches, the sermons, the government declarations proclaim. But should life go on in this manner? Is our present societal fabric meant to continue?

Are the churches rightly called upon to fill this gap, to warm bones stiffened by the cold commodity war, alleviate the pain of harsh consumerism in a consumer society, and ease the sojourn in the iron cage Weber spoke of at the beginning of the previous century?

Let us look more closely at the wants and needs that governments, churches, universities and business leaders are expressing when they ask for moral communities. Generally speaking they want more discipline, more decent behaviour, more compliance with norms, more obedience to authorities, more emphasis on duties and obligations, more conformity to codes that people have agreed upon or been socialised into – in short: more social control.

Is this what moral communities have to react to positively, respond to affirmatively, even embrace? Have the churches a part to play in it? Let us try to answer this question from two different perspectives: first, that of morality, and second, that of religion, especially the Christian religion.

**Moral communities from a moral perspective**

From a moral perspective, the cry for moral communities in this sense is highly questionable if we take into account the three dimensions of morality which Ricoeur (1992) identifies in his ‘small ethics’.

The first dimension, which stems from Aristotelian thought, refers to ideas and ideals of the good life, that is to say, the common good life which Ricoeur defines as “living a good life with and for others in just institutions”. This is where morality starts: not with discipline and codes, but with ideas and ideals of the common good life, which consists in self-regard and other-regard, self-love and love of one’s friend, compassion with oneself and compassion with those who are near and dear to us, the fellowship of the happy and the fellowship of the weak. All this entails an
enriching life of virtues which are not imposed but freely chosen and practised, bringing real happiness and peace. But “living a good life with and for others” also implies living “in just institutions”. This requires handling social relations with other members of society, insofar as they are anonymous to each other, according to the foundational notions and principles of justice. Such justice is based on the fundamental equality of all human beings, which means that each person should be allotted his or her share, that is, his or her share of both burden and profit. Equality-based justice is not arithmetic but proportional in that it distributes both burden and profit according to each person’s need, capacity and position. Again, this is where morality starts: not with norms, duties and obligations, but with ideas and ideals of a flourishing life for all in their intrapersonal, interpersonal and institutional functioning.

If we want to speak of forming moral communities, we should surely not start with norms and codes, but with informing communities and communicating with them about the aim of the common good life: a flourishing life for all.

The second dimension which Ricoeur presents in his ‘small ethics’ stems from procedural, liberal thinkers like Kant, Rawls, Habermas and others. They advocate what Kant calls categorical imperatives. This implies that any duty, rule or norm has moral validity if, and only if, it is universally applicable to similar cases or similar classes of cases. Hence for imperatives to be morally legitimate they should be capable of being universalised. The main universal imperatives are the following: in the personal domain, autonomy; in the interpersonal domain, respect for others; and in the institutional domain, human rights.

It is not only interesting but also morally convincing, that Ricoeur does not coordinate the ideals of the good life (first dimension) and the categorical imperatives (second dimension) as if they belong to the same level of moral reasoning, but superordinates and subordinates them. He superordinates the aims of the good life, because they provide the ultimate guidelines for a flourishing life together. At the same time he subordinates them, because they have to conform to the categorical imperatives, using these as criteria for selecting the aims of the good life. This is necessary for two reasons. First, there is a plurality of ideas and ideals of the common good life. Religions present various perspectives and guidelines, and non-religious, secular worldviews present others, whereas both religions and secular worldviews disagree among themselves about the interpretation and meaning of the perspectives and guidelines. Modern people, moreover, prize their right to make their own individual choice in the realm of beliefs, values and norms, which leads to a kind of a ‘good life à la carte’.

There is a second reason why the categorical imperatives fulfil a cardinal function throughout the process of selecting the ideas and ideals of the common good life. These ideas and ideals can be laden with egocentrism on the microlevel, ‘philaiacentrism’ on the mesolevel or socio-centrism on the macrolevel, because they run a risk of using or excluding others, for instance people of a different gender, skin colour, race, or belief, as well as foreigners and asylum seekers – the other not
merely as alter (other) but as alienus (alien). This affects the common good life in all its aspects, and devastates it. In other words, the categorical imperatives function as a filter for morally just selection of the ideas and ideals of the common good life.

Again, if we want to speak of forming moral communities, we should not start with discipline and duties but with adding to the ideas and ideals of the good life the criteria of the categorical imperatives: autonomy, respect and human rights.

Ricoeur’s third dimension has to do with what he calls wisdom-in-situation. This means that once the ideas and ideals of the good life have passed through the filter of the categorical imperatives, they have to be adapted not to but in the actual situation in which people live their lives. This adaptation in the situation requires wisdom in the process of allowing for its uniqueness and fragility; in the process of exploring the conditions that characterise it; in the process of assessing the effects and side-effects of any action taken; and lastly, in the process of deliberating, deciding and acting. Such wisdom gives the deliberation, decision and action their attestatory character. This means: I am not really sure that I am acting or have acted morally, I could also have decided and acted otherwise. But, having deliberated reasonably well, the decision taken and the action performed are mine: I stand by them, here I am, without (too much) shame, without (too much) guilt.

This cognitively and emotionally informed wisdom implies a supreme hermeneutic capacity of the individual moral self which enables it to function as its own judge in its own concrete situation, in the same way that a professional judge handles the judicial process in relation to other people. But in the moral situation the individual is victim, perpetrator, witness and judge at the same time. Nobody else can take over any of these roles: ultimately one is all by oneself, or rather: with oneself as another.

Once again, if we want to speak of forming moral communities, we should make them morally sensible in such a way that each one’s wisdom-in-situation will flourish. Must we never speak of duties, rules, norms, codes? Yes, we must, but they never have moral priority, only posteriority. By this I mean that they should be instrumental in the three dimensions mentioned above: the ideas and ideals of the common good life, the criteria of the categorical imperatives and, above all, the wisdom-in-situation.

**Moral communities from a religious perspective**

From a religious perspective we need to note the danger that a cry for moral communities, a demand for civil morality based on rules, norms and codes, reinforces the conventional status quo and supports its negative effects and side effects. From research done by Kohlberg (1981) we know how difficult it is to educate people to post-conventional judgment and behaviour – or rather, convention-critical judgments and behaviour (Van der Ven 1998a) – so that they will critically evaluate convention according to a morally higher set of ideas, ideals and aims.

Here religions may have a role to play, because from their intrinsically
transcendent perspective and rich traditions – especially the prophetic traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam – people are able to look critically at the conventions undergirding the societal fabric through God’s eyes and observe the social and structural evil that permeates them.

This religious perspective offers three dimensions in which to scrutinise, interpret and combat social and structural evil: a premoral, a radical-moral and a metamoral dimension (Ricoeur 1975). They all relate to the first fundamental appeal expressed when human beings were confronted for the first time with the evil they themselves had perpetrated in paradise, the garden of Eden: “Where are you?”; and to the second appeal they heard when they were confronted for the first time with the effects of the murder they themselves had committed outside the garden of Eden, according to the myth of Cain and Abel: “Where is your brother?” and “What have you done?”

The first dimension refers to the premoral question: Why should I be my brother’s keeper? Why be moral? Why act morally? Why is it not satisfactory, even legitimate to envy one’s brother, hate one’s enemy, take revenge, torture, and kill him? These questions cannot be answered simply by invoking moral convictions or theories. They need a higher point of view, provided by religious traditions and non-religious worldviews, which afford insight into ultimate questions: What is life all about, what is it good for, what is its meaning, and what is the sense of suffering and evil, including physical and moral evil?

The second dimension is the radical-moral one. Religious traditions enable people to have what are called contrast experiences, experiences which make them say: “This is absolutely wrong, we must protest against it” – even though it is something that was agreed upon by their democratic representatives, their highest authorities, their supreme courts. In the final analysis the social contract does not arbitrate on good and evil, right and wrong, wisdom and folly: humanity does, and the true criteria of humanity are justice and mercy. Its justice is social justice and its mercy stems from the fellowship of the weak. Jesus’ parables are particularly relevant here, because they not only criticise and protest but actually turn things upside down: the priest is replaced by the Samaritan, the older brother by the younger one, the workers of the first hour by those of the eleventh, the 99 sheep by the solitary lost one: in short, justice based on merit is replaced by justice based on need.

The third dimension is called metamoral, because it refers to the limits on moral action. Because of the inherent contingency, fragility, brokenness and woundedness of human existence, human activity is embedded in passivity and permeated by it. That is to say, freedom is embedded in tragedy, choice by ambivalence and guilt by fate. Human beings do the good which is passed on to them and the evil they are confronted with. The anthropological roots of this intertwinemnt of activity and passivity lie in the dialectical relationship between mind and body (the body I have and the body I am, which keep me captive), self and other (the other as other and oneself as another whom I cannot dispose of), and lastly appeal and response (attestatorily following one’s conscience within the limits of here and now).
Ultimately religious traditions and non-religious worldviews can only accommodate this dialectic of activity/passivity by locating it in a larger frame of reference.

Churches as moral communities
Having critically analysed the cry for moral communities from both a moral and a religious point of view, we shall now relate them to the three perspectives mentioned in the first part of this paper (self/other, we/us, ipsi/iidem) and apply them to moral communities, especially churches.

Briefly, from the we/us-perspective churches as moral communities have to maintain continuous dialogue with themselves about the moral and religious views they try to realise: What are our aims of the good life, do we critically analyse these aims in terms of human rights, what judgments do we make and what action do we take in concrete situations of individual and collective suffering? From the self/other-perspective churches as moral communities have to maintain continuous dialogue with other moral and religious communities, exchanging aims of the good life, the results of critically analysing these in terms of human rights, and judgments and actions in concrete situations of suffering. Lastly, from the ipsi/iidem perspective churches as moral communities have to continually and critically clarify and analyse their relation to their future: Do we still believe in the future not as futurus but as adventus domini, which implies taking on risks and challenges; and, in facing these challenges, are we prepared to make promises and actually keep them?

The church: Movement of Jesus
All of this can be clarified with reference to a second ecclesiastic code that plays an important role for churches: the movement of Jesus (Van der Ven 1998b, 106 ff). The church community, maybe, should become a parable community, because in the parables one finds – in the context of Ricoeur’s three perspectives – first, the aims of the good life narrated in a surprising, refreshing manner; second, the criteria of divine – and therefore universally intended – justice, which turns everything upside down; and lastly, a concrete situation which requires concrete action based on divine wisdom. In his parables Jesus narratively enacted what it means to be allowed to anticipate God’s kingdom, while ‘kingdom of God’ is simply a contextually determined metaphor for God himself as one who is wholeheartedly committed to the weak, the poor, the outcasts.

Here the categorical imperatives may fulfil a useful function, because – and this frequently causes uneasy feelings, at least for us Christians – the danger is that we may sentimentally cite Jesus’ message of the kingdom of God and the good news for the poor and the oppressed, and in so doing satisfy our own altruistic feelings out of emotional egocentrism, ‘philiacentrism’ and sociocentrism (‘I, we, the church, think and feel morally well!’), without really committing ourselves to them, without strategic and tactical planning to transform their situation, without really acting as a parable community. Hence it is essential to evaluate our ‘nice’ feelings critically with the help of one of the groups of categorical imperatives, namely
human rights. These are simple rights to a decent life: food, clothing, housing, medical care, work, social security, property and education, which are to be provided for each and every human being in any place and at all times. If churches are to become moral communities, they should become parable communities, which means minimally human rights communities.

Let us not blithely assume that churches readily allow human rights to be considered imperatives. From empirical research among grade 11 students in the Johannesburg/Pretoria region we know that religion, especially the Christian religion, contributes little, often nothing at all, to dispose these young people favourably towards human rights; in some cases it even has a negative influence on the evaluation of human rights. To put it bluntly: churches as moral communities either are human rights communities, or they are not moral communities (Van der Ven, Dreyer & Pieterse 2001a; 2001b).

**FORMING MORAL COMMUNITIES**

In practical theology the question is always how to put the ideals and principles under discussion into practice. Far from reducing practical theology to its strategic and tactical aspects, the question of how to form moral communities is pivotal. Here we distinguish between two dimensions: an educational and an organisational dimension.

**Educational**

To begin with the educational dimension, forming moral communities implies the moral formation of individuals, since we have seen that communities consist of networks of individuals and groups, and that people, as Searle pointed out, participate individually in these communities, albeit with both an I-aspect and a we-aspect. If there is one insight that should be borne in mind in the moral formation of individuals, it is its developmental structure. Kohlberg’s previously cited research shows that youngsters are only able to judge conventions critically and display convention-critical behaviour from the age of 12 or 13 onwards. This does not mean that all youths of that age, or even a great many adults for that matter, appear to develop such judgment and behaviour on the basis of higher (eg human rights-oriented) moral principles; in fact, on average only 20% of all people do. What it does mean is that it is pointless to try to stimulate youngsters below that age to think and act on such principles.

What models of moral formation may be considered adequate to prepare youths to participate in moral communities? For those below the age of 12 or 13 we present four different moral formation models: moral discipline, moral socialisation, moral transfer and moral clarification. We elaborate on each in turn, despite the danger that they may be seen as totally separate from one another, whereas in fact they should be interpreted as intertwined. In addition they should be seen as embedded in, and directed to, two other models, which we shall also discuss: emotional formation and character formation. For youngsters from the age of 12 or 13 onwards these six models, except for moral discipline, may be considered adequate.
However, special attention should be devoted to a seventh model that underlies the others: the argumentative communication model (Van der Ven 1998a).

One might ask: Does moral discipline still fit into present-day thought and action? Yes, it does, but it has to be open, not closed moral discipline. This prevents the exercise of authoritarian educational leadership and stimulates authoritative direction and guidance, which means expressing basic trust and confidence to the child, giving reasons for choosing one rule rather than another, communicating explanations, conducting open dialogue, and promoting self-discovery and exploratory behaviour.

Moral socialisation also has a part to play, implying that parents and other educationally significant others both consciously and unconsciously function as moral role models. What we have to bear in mind is that we, through our own behaviour, intentionally and unintentionally transfer not only our own moral ideals and principles, but also our own moral doubts, moral problems, moral compromises, moral failures. We are not moral saints; in a sense we are living moral conflicts – conflicts which we are not able to solve in our (at least foreseeable) lifetime. We commit ourselves to partial solutions, we make compromises with ourselves and our own high, sacred standards. Thus we convey both our ideals as moral saints and our failures as moral sinners, while suffering from our own contingencies, dramas and tragedies. Forming moral individuals means being inner-directed enough to be aware of the dirty hands (les mains sales) we incur, and to confess this frankly to those for whom we are morally responsible so that they can learn about moral disappointments, moral frustrations, moral weaknesses.

Moral transfer suffers from much the same historical labelling as moral discipline, which raises the question: Is moral transfer still adequate in terms of present-day moral thought and action? And again we answer yes, provided the moral transfer is open, not closed. In contrast to moral transfer in the ‘good old days’ – that lost paradise – when youngsters were initiated into virtually only one value system, including a pattern of educational goals which were pitched low on the cognitive scale and high on the affective scale, moral transfer today introduces (rather than initiates) youngsters to various moral traditions in a comparative way. The aim is to develop an intermoral dialogue and evaluate these traditions according to both internal and external criteria, and do so with the help of educational goals which are pitched high on the cognitive scale and low on the affective scale.

This approach may make one ask whether it is not necessary to introduce, perhaps even initiate, youths to only one moral tradition (their own) and thus first give them a solid basis derived from this moral tradition before they engage in any intermoral dialogue. They are not able, so the argument goes, to engage in such dialogue before they are thoroughly familiar with their own tradition, including all its sources, history, main ideas, values, norms and behavioural patterns. There are two empirical objections to this argument, which is widespread in all kinds of educational and ecclesiastic circles. The first objection is that it is not at all clear what the youths’ own moral tradition is or, even worse, what their moral traditions
are. Perhaps one can still speak of an individual youth’s own tradition, although the individual families children come from show nothing like a uniform value system; but in the classroom teachers are confronted with a plurality of moral traditions stemming from a plurality of families. This makes ‘the youth’s own moral tradition’ and ‘the youths’ own moral tradition’ an illusion. The second objection is that engaging youngsters from the upper primary school grades onwards in intermoral dialogue probably contributes more to their cognitive and affective development regarding the moral traditions of both Christianity and other religions than teaching them the Christian tradition on its own, as is evident from similar research into interreligious dialogue. The assumption of own-tradition-first is simply not valid (Sterkens 2001).

To prevent any danger that the moral transfer model may become indoctrinatory and manipulative, it should be firmly linked with moral clarification. The aim of this model is to stimulate youths to explore, express, exchange and validate the values and norms they are disciplined and socialised into in their families and neighbourhoods and among their friends. Here one can speak once again of a kind of intermoral dialogue, but now on a smaller scale within the narrower frame of reference of the groups the youngsters participate in, with the moral ideas and convictions coming from within rather than from the outside. But again we should not overlook the fact that such groups frequently consist of youths from different moral traditions, which challenges the group leader to accompany and guide clarificatory learning processes in such groups hermeneutically and make members of majority and minority populations in these groups understand each other, especially the strangers or ‘aliens’ among them.

Emotional formation is necessary, because a lot of the moral ideas, ideals, values and norms are embedded in and connected with emotions that human beings carry with them from early childhood. These emotions often have a moral content, dimension or colour, for example: basic trust; empathy and compassion; sense of, and passion for, justice; shame and guilt; envy and jealousy; honour and power; sex and love. It is important to clarify to youngsters how people relate to their emotions by means of various coping patterns, and how they can and even should relate to them. The most important patterns are: repression, control, neutralisation, expression, processing and ordering. From the moral point of view that we espouse we want to suggest that what youngsters have to learn, cognitively and affectively, is to try to go beyond and wisely break free from repressing, controlling and neutralising their emotions, and rather learn to express, process and then order them from the perspective of the aims of the common good life which we elaborated on earlier.

Character formation, like emotional formation, is a dimension of moral formation. The aim is not to present youths with the ‘bag of virtues’ deriving from a couple of conventional personality traits, by means of which they are supposed to be disciplined and domesticated into ‘integrated personalities’ (Kohlberg 1981, 78ff). It is rather to explore, clarify and open up to them the ‘great characters’ who play exemplary roles in classical myths and tragedies, at the same time presenting
the greatness and weakness of human existence throughout human history. These myths and tragedies are characterised by ‘polyphony’, which means that their very core is determined by inner dialogue about the constituents of human life, such as freedom and fate, nature and history, body and mind, self-love and other-love, loyalty and duty, life and death, revenge and mercy. These dialogues do not entail continuous, smooth conversation between two sweet-tempered voices, but a discontinuous medley of multitudinous, dissentient, ill-tempered voices, each claiming that its part cannot but convince and dominate the others. These voices whisper, lament, complain and cry because of human life’s ambivalence, conflicts, dilemmas, even aporias. They represent the dramatic way in which human beings of all times have struggled with these conflicts and aporias, suffered from them, coped with them, tried to reconcile them. By reading, listening, playing and re-enacting these dramas of human existence time and again, youths gradually become familiar with the greatness and weakness, peaks and valleys, light and dark of the human condition (la condition humaine) that constitute and form a truly ‘great character’. These dramatic narratives can also be found in religious traditions, like in those of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Isaac and Jacob, Jacob and Joseph, Moses and Aaron, the ten commandments and the golden calf, and especially Jesus, including his parables, the story of the last judgment and that of Golgotha. All these tell about human beings: that before they are about to fall into the gaping abyss of solitude and nothingness, they are caught and taken care of by God, because their names have been written in the palm of his hand.

Lastly, youths from 12 to 13 years onwards, and by implication all adolescents and all adults, can – and, we are convinced, should – be stimulated to higher moral learning by what we call argumentative communication in order to prepare themselves for autonomous moral thinking, feeling and acting on convention-critical principles. We stress this argumentative communication because it entails enriching – note, not replacing – the types of conversation that characterise all previous models of moral formation by exchanging good reasons for the ideas and ideals, values and norms that the youths favour and are personally committed to. The higher moral learning strategy envisaged by such argumentative communication entails at least the following three criteria (cf Bandura 1986, 335-389; Van der Ven 1998b, 173-176).

First, higher moral learning should be in situ learning, which is both experiential and experimental (Bandura 1986). ‘Experiential’ here means that one learns from one’s own thought and actions (‘enactive learning’), from those of others (‘observational learning’) and from discourse on these. ‘Experimental’ here means that one monitors not only others but especially oneself (‘self-observation’) in order to arrive at an evaluation of one’s thoughts and actions (‘self-judgement’) and define one’s reaction (‘self-reaction’).

Second, higher moral learning should be problem-related, paradox-related, dilemma- and aporia-related learning, because this sharpens one’s thinking and reasoning, intensifies one’s emotional involvement, confronts one with the seeming
lack of perspective and darkness which frequently permeates moral enigmas that are deeply rooted in the finitude and fallibility of human existence.

Third, higher moral learning should be meta-learning, which means that at the end of the moral learning process we explicitly ask what we have learnt, how we have learnt, why we have learnt, so that the strategies of moral learning are clarified. To avoid misunderstanding we stress that higher moral learning can also consist – maybe *a fortiori* consists – of deep insight into the fragility of moral judgment and action, the to some extent radical insolubility of moral problems and conflicts, the tragedy of moral passivity, and especially why this is so. This is because, in the final analysis, moral character implies being open to moral attestation, which, as we have indicated, does not equal moral certainty but moral testimony. And moral testimony is not expressed in phrases like ‘I morally believe’ or ‘I am morally convinced’, but in variations of the dictum by the Italian philosopher Vattimo: ‘I morally believe that I morally believe.’

**Organisational**

In addition to an educational dimension we mentioned an organisational dimension of forming moral communities, indicating that the two dimensions go hand in hand and can reinforce each other. The question, however strange it may sound, is: How to start a moral community, or – easier and more to the point – how to develop a moral project within an existing community?

By using the word ‘project’ we avoid striving to mobilise a whole collectivity at once and restrict ourselves to a network of individuals who are ready, or have been made ready by education, to morally reach out to the needy, the poor, the oppressed, and help to transform these people’s painful, distressing situations. By using the word ‘project’ we also imply designing a developmental plan, including specific objectives and targets, methods and techniques, assessment and evaluation tools, financial resources and, last but not least, a timetable (Dunn 1981; Van der Ven 1996, 389ff). It also includes the domain in which the activities will be performed, possibly the domain that missionaries have always felt themselves driven to by the Spirit: medical care and education. Why not reach out to squatter camps and help emancipate people there from illiteracy by means of adult education in the manner of Paolo Freire, and why not reach out to the sick, especially AIDS sufferers, and help them as comrades? For such activities to be undertaken and heard, and to promote the flow of inspiration in the local parish they may lead to, it is advisable to locate the project group at the centre of the community as a whole and to select its members from existing groups in which they play a leading role, because this is what network analysis teaches us in terms of organisational efficiency and effectiveness. In order not to restrict project activities to the scale of the local congregation or parish, why not try to develop a regional, sub-synodal or even synodal plan, in which the illiteracy and AIDS projects of local parishes are coordinated as well as made observable to society as a whole? Then the churches can function as societally observable moral communities.
The church: “Community of the Spirit”

Finally we use another of the main ecclesiastic codes to legitimise our project among the sick and the illiterate: the code of the community of the Spirit (Van der Ven 1996, 425 ff). We hope, perhaps even expect, that this project will arouse some sympathy and enthusiasm beyond the project group in the wider local church community, so as to trigger an overflow of the inspiration that the church is meant for and lives from. The church is the community of the Spirit, in the sense that the inspiration which its members generate is seen as emanating from the Spirit. We not only concur with the theologian Kuiper that all that comes from above comes from beneath, but would like to add, even more importantly, that all that comes from beneath comes from above. This Spirit-driven enthusiasm in the local community, which is inspired by facing challenges and taking risks, is motivated by Matthew 25 – not so much by the hope of joining the sheep when they are separated from the goats, but by the eschatological words attributed to Jesus that when people gave food, water, shelter and fellowship to “the least of my brethren”, they were giving these things to him. This Spirit-driven enthusiasm is also motivated by the eschatological words that nobody knows to which category they belong, the sheep or the goats, and that God’s ultimate revelation will take place at the time of the last judgment, the last ordeal. Only then will we know what human existence is all about, who and what we are, what is good and evil, right and wrong, wise and foolish. Now is not the time to strive to know about our own salvation and redemption, but simply to liberate the needy, support the poor, care for the sick. The Spirit of the church is the Spirit of God and of Jesus – which was and still is the implication of the filioque debate – and it is this Jesus whose Spirit makes the church future-oriented through eschatological hope: hope of the kingdom of God for “the least of my brethren”.

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PRELUDE

Every time I look at you
I don’t understand
Why you let the things you did
Get so out of hand
You’d have managed better
If you’d had it planned
Now why’d you choose such a backward time
And such a strange land
If you’d come today
You could have reached the whole nation
Israel in 4 BC had no mass communication

Reading these lines, were you hearing a melody in your head, did you see some images, are you able to name the title of the song and the play? The answer is probably a matter of age and musical taste. The fact remains, however, that the rock opera *Jesus Christ Superstar*, staged in 1970 and turned into a movie in 1973, is an excellent example of an attempt to bring the Jesus-event to a broad audience by the use of the contemporary medium of rock music. What got lost, according to some despising criticism – ‘yuck, what a Coça-Cola Christ’ – was not only the central place of Judas Iscariot, but also the tension between his expectations regarding the effect of Jesus’ activities and the factual course of events: apprehension, torture, death on the cross. To be sure, this tension was very present among some of Jesus’ followers, as we are informed by the Gospel according to Luke: “But we had hoped that He was the one to redeem Israel” (Lk. 24,21; cf. Acts 1,6b). However, the very point of Judas is not focused on this tension, but his specific reproach to Jesus has to do with planning and strategy: Jesus simply appeared at the wrong time and
place, and the proof is the perspective of today. If only He had come today, He could have effectively reached everybody thanks to modern mass media such as ... rock opera.

SOUND AND VISION

Again today, across the threshold of the 21st century and the third millennium, the criticism of Judas sounds a bit outdated. For, we now have at our disposal the most extended mass medium of all time – the world wide web – allowing us to overcome the limits of time and place. Therefore, just as the many successors of Peter in their role as Vicar of Christ presented themselves and their church by using all kinds of media, so will the proper use of information and communication technology today and tomorrow guarantee an adapted and, therefore successful, worldwide presence. ²

Isn’t this kind of optimism analogous to the hype we had about two decades ago with the introduction of the microwave? We were told that this was thé cooking device for the future, allowing a faster, healthier, tastier and cheaper, in brief, the perfect preparation of all food, at the same time demoting all traditional cooking utensils as old-fashioned and ready to be discarded. However, things went a little differently and microwave ovens – in the meantime sporting all kinds of fancy extras – turned out to be a convenient kitchen tool next to others without affecting the predicted substitution. At the same time, the microwave did exert some influence on our eating habits, and its specific capacities even gave rise to a new kind of ready-made meal which cannot be prepared with other kitchen tools. Or: if you do not have a microwave, you do not have access to such meals. ³

A more fundamental remark is the following. A theologian can hardly fail to notice the similarity between the expectation of salvation that was formerly associated with the letters I.C. – remember in nomine Iesu Christi (Acts 3-4) – and the good news of liberation that comes to us today in the form of seemingly limitless I & C: Information and Communication. This is very well illustrated by the designation that Guy Kawasaki proudly used for himself as the ‘evangelist’ of the Apple Macintosh personal computer. Furthermore, this – beyond doubt, very charming – PC was launched on the American market by an illustrious advertisement broadcast during the Super Bowl of 22 January 1984, in which ‘the Mac’ was depicted as a sexy technological breakthrough that would liberate humankind from the chains of (blue) slavery. ⁴ Today, some even want to go beyond that and claim that: the world wide web and the internet themselves are a new religion. For, is no: the root of religare the notion of ‘connection’ and, therefore, will an electronic network accessible to everybody not at the same time realise total and mutual connection, or ‘religion’? ⁵ With tongue in cheek, just a brief ‘theological note’: some science fiction story of the 1970s, describes a total connection of all computers in order to establish one supercomputer which is asked the only really important question: “Does God exist?” The answer comes literally as quick as lightning because fire falls from the sky and welds together the connections made, and a voice thunders: “From Now On!”.
In this contribution, I present three reflections on this phenomenon and these kinds of ideas. Fundamentally, my thesis is that, on the one hand, we should resist the temptation of a ‘byway’ while, on the other hand, we have to investigate real chances and possibilities. With the notion of ‘byway’, I have in mind the enthusiasm together with the hope and expectation that with information and communication technology (ICT) we now have a new medium – a means, really – that, if used properly, will be effective to such a degree that the contents of the message will be transmitted as a matter of course. Furthermore, such a ‘byway’ is supported by the idea that the ‘product’ offered by the faithful and their churches is evidently of excellent quality and that the often-noted lack of transmission, therefore, must be mainly a problem of management or public relations. Underneath, there is the silent hope that the interpenetration and maybe even the reversal of medium and message – critically described by Marshall McLuhan in the 1960s⁶ – can indeed be realised. With e-vangelisation today, it would be possible again – just as with the beautiful stained glass windows in medieval cathedrals – to relate form and content in such a way that the masses can be reached, appealed to and converted.

CACOPHONY?

My first reflection deals with the peculiar way in which information and the internet relate to one another. The other mass media we are familiar with are largely hierarchical in the relation they impose between a limited number of senders of information and a preferably large group of receivers (hence the broadcasting terminology). However, the internet is the first medium that not only allows one-to-one communication – as is the case with letters and the telephone – but that also marks the transition towards a horizontal and interchangeable relationship between multiple senders and countless receivers of information. In the first phase of the proliferation of the internet, this caused church leaders quite some worry.⁷ They already had great difficulty with the loss of church influence on content, format and distribution of information in printed media, radio and television caused by the ‘secularisation’ of these media,⁸ and now the internet seemed to be a medium that looked totally out of control. I think this intuition is correct and gladly refer to the insights of bishop Jacques Gaillot:

The central notion in the modern world is network, communication in networks. There, one finds a suppleness that opens up familiar forms. These networks are also international, which is necessary in our age. The Church can also be defined as a network. The diocese of Partenia is itself present on the internet, and it shows me that connections are horizontal, that there is no centre. In this way, a church is growing through and across the borders of parishes and dioceses. This will only continue.⁹

Such timorousness is by now undoubtedly overcome. In all imaginable ways, churches, communities of faith, faithful, etc. are present and active on the internet, as can be seen on websites such as <www.godonthenet.com>. My point is not the
factual content of these websites but the simple fact that the actual radical pluriformity one encounters there is closely connected with the above mentioned peculiarity that each and every receiver can become a sender him/herself. This possibility is meanwhile being practised by innumerable users. At the same time, the presence of ‘true doctrine’ is just one among many: in our contemporary areopagus in the shape of the information highway, everything – for better or for worse – is exhibited, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church or Christians for the Cloning of Jesus are only one mouse click away from each other.10 My conclusion is both that the presentation of content remains important – ‘being there’ – but that this must go hand in hand with the somewhat sobering insight that medium and message do not exactly converge with one another. I would suggest, therefore, that the critical prediction of McLuhan is less than ever a problem because the democratisation of the very medium and the concomitant multitude of messages counters the reduction he described.

INTERLUDIUM

My second reflection is a brief interlude. Just as the internet is not a kind of magic bullet for the successful evangelisation of the 21st century, one can refrain in its factual use from its proper peculiarities. Therefore, the presence mentioned above on the electronic areopagus requires its own kind of inculturation. ‘When in Rome, do as the Romans do’ is also, on the internet, good practical advice. Firstly, this means that in employing the internet, churches and faithful should pay attention to the construction of websites to ensure that they can be visited by users who only have limited technical means at their disposal such as a slow computer, an ordinary modem, and an older browser, and who would otherwise be excluded. Secondly, it means that one must pay attention to both the actuality – an electronic medium just begs for up-to-date information – as to the ordering and accessibility of archive material. Thirdly, the dynamics of the medium invite the use of interactive capabilities: one-way traffic from server to surfer is just a repetition of the hierarchy of the classic media. Finally, the litmus test of inculturation is to provide the user with hyperlinks which will take him or her beyond the length of the surfer’s own nose but also beyond the nose of the server: a combined demonstration of competence and humility.

I restrict myself now to just one example, which one could imagine to be the most ‘Roman’ of all websites: the Vatican.11 Accessibility and general presentation are quite remarkable, with simple graphics and a clear outline of the various subsites. As a result, it is fairly easy to log in. Next, the site is updated at least once a day and its archives are continuously enlarged. However, one must have a fairly good knowledge of the internal structure of the Roman Catholic Church in order to navigate through this wealth of information, the more so since the provided search function is often out of use. The interactive part of the site is weak: only on a couple of subsites will the visitor find an email address (of L’Osservatore Romana, but not of the Press Service) or an invitation. Encouragement of interaction is lacking.
Finally, from top to bottom and from left to right on this website, external hyperlinks are nowhere to be found: at the heart of the Roman Catholic Church, one can only surf in circles – even links to official websites of bishop’s conferences, dioceses, church organisations, sister or brother churches, not to mention the world at large, are absent.¹²

To be sure, this brief description and, therefore, my assessment are to a large degree ephemeral, and this too belongs to the inculturation of the internet. It is something like a snapshot, maybe offering some points of reference when visiting other websites and perhaps providing a little inspiration to those who want to embark and sail the virtual ocean on a religious website of any kind.

**IN NOMINE IESU CHRISTI**

After this short intermezzo, my third and final reflection deals with the relation between form and content, between information and spirituality, between the internet and the gospel. My thesis that there is not a ‘byway’ in the Christian use of whatever medium is fundamentally linked to the insight that the content about which information can be provided and distributed and about which we can engage in communication, is not just any message that is more or less of importance to us – such as the weather forecast. For, people of faith and their churches proclaim *euangelion*: the good news of God’s concrete love of humanity inviting a response of faith, hope and charity. To carry things to the limit, I would even dare to postulate that if such a ‘byway’ did indeed exist or could be brought into existence by the use of a (new) medium it is precisely the very content of the message that would command not using it. The reason is that the dialectics of a covenant between salvation offered by God, on the one hand, and the free response in faith of human persons, on the other, opposes any kind of reduction; on the contrary, it wants to bring its very existential weight fully into the spotlight.

The literal credibility of religious information therefore comes from, and is connected with, the faith of believers. A comparison with merchandising can be instructive: while an advertisement is judged to be successful if the potential customer is indeed seduced to purchase, many would rightly frown if buying this or that led to a radical change in life. However, this is exactly – and for this reason alone, faith is not a ‘product’ – what the proclamation of Christian faith in God aims to do: *metanoia* as conversion and change by which human beings turn into new and better relations with others and themselves on the basis of their relation to God. The impressive hi-tech of the electronic media does not modify any of this. Even if a flashy site is better at first sight, this is really only worthwhile if the visiting *cybernauts*¹³ are touched by its real content made accessible to them by the congruence between technology and this content. Concretely: the proclamation of a faith in which the covenant – ancient and always new – is central, could use ICT to shape a sense of belonging among humans. This is also what I would call the ‘spirituality of the internet’: the medium is opening up a (cyber)space of I&C which, however, only becomes a spiritual space by the commitment of the people
present in it. Again, a comparison might be helpful: imagine, on the one hand, an impeccably sung psalm in the context of a concert and, on the other hand, the same hymn in the context of liturgy. The former is a performance that ends with deserved applause, the latter invites a participation that also looks forward to its implications after the celebration. I would suggest that the internet can and must be a place like that, for example, by providing information about such a unity of liturgy and diaconia where this inside of the faith is put on the stage, not as a show but as witness of the unity between spirituality and action.

As an extension of the well known pastoral tele-services, the internet could also be a means to be near to people almost regardless of time and place. An obvious example is Internetseelsorge. More controversial, and usually regarded with a lot of suspicion, is the phenomenon of ‘online confession’. I would not be too quick to dismiss this right away because to the degree that it really represents an honest awareness of failure and the request of forgiveness searching its way through a new medium, we have to assess this first of all on its proper value and not just out of a comparison with the existing and more familiar forms. At the same time, such a comparison is desirable because it could reveal where the new medium might be a most welcome supplement. For the time being, it is not yet clear where all this will lead us, but I would like to voice a plea for the faithful to move around freely in cyberspace and to share their experiences with one another, for example, by way of a regional or national listserv or by setting up a website for surfing pastors. I think that much support and inspiration can be found in the pioneering work done since 1996 by members of the European Christian Internet Conference.

To return to my example of the microwave oven, I can very well imagine that ‘special plates’ will emerge, and, as long as this is not at the expense of the full range of media used, even this might be welcomed because variety is the spice of life. In other words, the internet should not become a substitute for other media, but where and how it will be supplementary and, above all, unique is a process that is still developing. Anyway, referring to the task that every epoch has to write its own fifth gospel, I do hope that the remarkable increase of equal access and use of the internet by men and women will offer us a unique opportunity to do away with all kinds of traditional discriminations in the area of I&C and to replace them by relations which suit a community of equals.

**JESUS E-VANGELIST?**

In conclusion, I would like to address the question: Would Jesus today and tomorrow be an e-vangelist? I propose to answer this question in three ways, according to their respective theological weight. A heavy theological answer could point to the community that we designate as the ‘Body of Christ’ and subsequently state that the use of the internet in and by this community is indeed a kind of e-vangelisation. This answer is certainly correct, but perhaps it remains too formal and runs the risk of insufficiently thematising the connection between users and their faith as point of reference for any true evangelisation. An answer that is less
heavy might draw the attention to all places and situations where the internet allows a global presence of both the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5,3-12, cf. Lk. 6,20-23) as well as ethical engagement in line with the Last Judgment (Mt. 25,34-40). A specific gravity of such e-vangelisation could be an ecumenism in which the use of I&C is not just pushing back the limits of time and distance, but which aids people to overcome our self-inflicted and damaging divisions of faith as a 'sign of the times'. Finally, a rather light variety could be the e-version of a repenting Judas Iscariot who now engages in the proclamation of 'Jesus Christ Cyberstar'. I can imagine that this might be quite successful; as long as it goes hand in hand with the insight that such a Jesus of Silicon Valley is at the service of Jesus of Nazareth, I would suggest that the proper balance is maintained between medium and message.

NOTES
1 Superstar (voice of Judas), from the rock opera Jesus Christ Superstar (1970); see for example <www.elte.hu/~pici/webber/jesusch.htm>
2 Pope John Paul II in his address with the telling title Preach from the Housetops: The Gospel in the Age of Global Communication at the occasion of the XXXV Day of World Communication (27 May 2001): "Consider ... the positive capacities of the internet to carry religious information and teaching beyond all barriers and frontiers. Such a wide audience would have been beyond the wildest imaginings of those who preached the Gospel before us." See <www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/communications/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20010124_world-communications-day_en.html>
3 I owe part of this example to Caroline Vander Stichte.
4 See <www.apple-history.com/movies/1984.mov>
7 Interesting is the way this problem was discussed – with strong voices pro and contra – at the first Catholic NewTech Conference in 1998 under the heading 'The new technologies and the human person. Communicating the faith in the new millennium'. See <www.newtech.org/home_en.htm>
8 A theme that deserves to be studied more in-depth is the reason why these forms of paternalism came to an end and especially how the conflict between the content of a message that announces all kinds of liberation and the way this liberation was imposed, contributed to and even nourished from the inside the very movement towards secularisation.
11 Cf. <www.vatican.va>
12 A multitude of such links can be found on the website of the World Council of Churches, <www.wcc-coe.org>

14 Cf. <www.internetseelsorge.de>

15 Cf. <www.ecic.org>
What Does it Mean that the Church is the Instrument of the Kingdom of God in the South African Context: A Catholic Perspective

STUART C BATE

INTRODUCTION

Ecclesial praxis is a participation in God’s work of salvation. Catholic missiology sees the mission of the Church as a continuation of Christ’s mission rooted in the love of the Father (AG 2). The principal agent of the Church’s mission is the Holy Spirit (RM 21) indicating further the participation of human and divine in salvation history. The goal of this history is the fullness of the Kingdom of God which nevertheless is already present dwelling amongst us (Lk 17:21) to the extent that Christ lives in our lives and we live by the Spirit (Gal 5).

It is the ambiguity of the participation of human and divine which raises the question of the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the praxis of the Church. The given topic is: “What does it mean that the Church is the instrument of the Kingdom of God in the South African context: a Catholic perspective”. The value of the metaphor of “instrument” is that it places the agency of salvation in God: Christ is saviour and it is the Holy Spirit who is “the principal agent of mission: (RM 21). It also concurs well with the phrase “the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church” (EN 75). Similarly, the Church is referred to as “in the nature of sacrament – a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men” (LG 1). These references all point to how the metaphor is compatible with Catholic missiology.

However, the metaphor also carries a problem with it, one that is exacerbated in the South African context. This is the understanding of instrument as a passive tool of the true agent. Much of South African ecclesial practice and cultural understanding is informed by the idea of a world of spirits which controls human
experience (Thagale 1995b:173-178; Bate 1995:158-160). Human beings are seen to be helpless victims of the spirit world. It is this mindset which is often promoted by coping-healing churches and in African cultures. So Hansie Cronje, a former South African cricket captain and committed Christian, involved in a betting scandal, proclaimed that “the Devil made me do it” (Mail & Guardian 2 June 2000). Many South Africans often believe that the bad things of human experience are sent by evil spirits or permitted by angry ancestors. It is ‘bad luck’, witchcraft and demons which cause sickness, unemployment and a poor lifestyle. People are helpless victims of these forces.

Catholic theology is currently trying to respond to some of these challenges of culture. This response maintains that Christians are active agents in the process of salvation themselves. It is this co-participation of human and divine agency which allows both the discernment of the Spirit or the ‘good news’ in a time and the manifestation of the Kingdom of God amongst us.

Catholic theology in South Africa has tended to adopt the approach of contextual theology in its reflection. This approach begins from human experience and attempts to find the presence of God within that experience. Authors such as Albert Nolan (1975, 1988) have been at the forefront of this effort. This is also the approach I have taken in my own work and which I will use here. So the answer to our question will be found only through an analysis of ecclesial praxis. Our starting point will be a study of the praxis of the Church in a particular human context since the context, its peoples, its cultures and its history, provide the flesh into which God’s Spirit is incarnate. That context is the South Africa of 1950–2000.

A paper like this can only sketch an outline of the story. We will attempt to survey something of the preoccupations of the Catholic Church in South Africa during the period of apartheid, together with some indications of changes in the short post-apartheid period to date. After a brief survey of how the term ‘Kingdom of God’ has been understood in some South African Catholic writings, a working understanding of the term for the purposes of this paper will be introduced. The rest of the paper will demonstrate with illustrations how the preoccupations of the Catholic Church in South Africa during this period reflect the understanding that this church has of its role as instrument of the Kingdom of God.

**KINGDOM OF GOD IN SOUTH AFRICAN CATHOLIC WRITING**

The term ‘Kingdom of God’ is not used much by South African Catholic writers. When looking at the relationship between the saving activity of God and the reality of the South African situation it is the terms ‘human dignity’ and ‘God’s plan’ which mainly provided the guiding thread for theological discourse. Earlier writings tend to crystallise around the theme of human dignity and human rights, whereas increasingly from the early 1960s onwards, the theme of ‘God’s plan’ becomes the prevalent theological key for ecclesial praxis. Before exploring these more common usages, however, we intend to present a few examples of what South African Catholic writers have said about the term ‘Kingdom of God’.
In general, there have been three perspectives to the relationship between the Kingdom and the Church in these writings. In the first, there is an identification of the Church and the Kingdom. In the second, we find more distance between the two with the Kingdom articulated as goal and vision and the Church as God’s instrument in achieving his goal. In the third, the focus is on South African society itself and making society conform to the vision of God’s Kingdom, in particular with regard to issues of justice.

The South African Catholic hierarchy was established in 1951. In a book published to celebrate this event, the metaphor of the mustard seed is used to present the new South African hierarchy as a branch of the tree which is the Kingdom.

The Kingdom of God, the Church, the mustard seed of Jesus Christ has grown into a massive tree and has filled the earth. The establishment of the Catholic hierarchy by the Supreme Pontiff in the year 1951 is an indication, if indication be needed, that the Church in the Union of South Africa has reached maturity (Agathangelus 1951:ix).

In this quote we find an example of strong identification between Church and Kingdom. But in the same book we find an example of a more nuanced relationship between the two. For Geoghegan (1951:8) the Church and Kingdom are not identified “Christ’s Kingdom, which is not of this world, is nevertheless in this world, in part ... the Kingdom, by his death, became the inheritance of all”. Here then is a Kingdom for all people, an example of the third perspective identified above: the Kingdom as a model of how the world should be. Finally, Geoghegan provides an example of the second perspective when he shows that the Church is responsible to manifest the presence of the Kingdom. The Church is Catholic when it recognises its mission to bring the Kingdom to all: “So now, Christ’s gospel of the Redemption and of man’s vocation to the divine life is enshrined in God’s new instrument, the Catholic Church” (8-9). And so early on we meet our topic. Here the Church as God’s instrument is explicated as the “Catholic” Church.

A particularly useful source of Catholic self-understanding is found in the pastoral letters of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference (SACBC). Again there are few references to the Kingdom of God but those present also reflect all three perspectives presented above. The earliest mention of the term is the 1960 pastoral letter which focuses on justice. It provides probably the best pre-Vatican II presentation on this theme. The letter articulates its theme of justice in terms of the Kingdom of God in the following way:

Christ teaches us that we have to seek first the Kingdom of God and His Justice, and tells that (sic) then all things shall be added to us. We pray ‘Thy Kingdom come’ ... In other words we have to carry out the Commandments and leave the rest to God ... The justice of the Kingdom of God must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, those intensively exclusive sects of the times (PL 1:25.)

The bishops go on to indicate that God’s sovereignty extends to “the destiny of nations as well as of men” (PL 1:25) and they present a vision of society based on
the Gospel which must always recognise economic, political and social dimensions of Christian justice and love (PL 1:26-29).

The next reference by the bishops is found in the 1962 pastoral letter written to mark the calling of the second Vatican Council. In this pastoral, the Kingdom and the Church are strongly identified with one another: “We firmly believe that the Church is the kingdom of the Son of God, which He established on earth for the salvation and the perfect happiness of mankind” (PL 1:31). The Bellarminian ecclesiology continues in the statement: “We believe that this Church, wondrously instituted by Christ our Saviour for the sake of mankind, is a society in the full sense of the word” (:34). The conclusion of this ecclesiology is that “...a solution for all human problems can best and most harmoniously be sought for under the protection and guidance of the Catholic Church which is ‘the standard bearer and the herald of a way of life which is always up to date’” (:35). 4 Catholics are reminded of their duty to participate in all affairs of the world: “to cooperate in giving a Christian note to modern civilisation” (:35) But in doing so they are exhorted to “seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His justice” (:35 quoting Mt 6:33).

Subsequent pastoral letters make very few explicit references to the Kingdom of God until it appears as a major theological key in a 1989 pastoral letter on the municipal elections (October 1989) probably indicating a preference of the author but also indicating the influence of the growing popularity of this theological term, in particular its American form as the Reign of God, in the South African Catholic theological community.

This document makes clear how central the reign of God is for the praxis of the Church: “The great concern of Jesus and therefore of his church is that all aspects of our life should come under the reign of God” (PL 5:54). This vision is spelt out as follows: “This means that his truth, his purity, his justice, his love should grow in us – in a word, that we should become holier. This applies not only to our personal life but also to our domestic and social life” (:54). In a re-echo of the 1960 document, the political and economic aspects of social life are highlighted: “In social life there are special problems because of its political and economic aspects. In social life it is not easy to foster the love and justice that should be the mark of followers of Jesus” (:54). The rest of the letter is given over to an analysis of the political strategy of the apartheid government which leads to a call for voters to boycott the election. In a conclusion it returns to the theological key of the Kingdom repeating that it is “... the Christian values of justice and love, sharing and unity, which are of such immense importance for the Kingdom of God” (:58). Here we find an example of the way the term is used as a vision for human society.

The term is dealt with in some depth in the report of the Theological Advisory Commission (TAC) of the SACBC in a document examining the role of violence in bringing about justice. Since this forms part of the section on the Church’s role in the struggle against apartheid it is dealt with there.

The South African theologian Albert Nolan has also dealt with the topic in his book God in South Africa (1986). He is pessimistic about the use of the term since
he considers it to be so encumbered with apocalyptic and historical overtones to be rendered almost meaningless. Nolan's views are also considered in more detail in the section on the role of Catholic organisations and groups in the struggle.

These examples give an indication of the way in which the theological notion of the Kingdom of God has been used by South African authors and in particular the hierarchy. The term cannot be said to have played a major role in South African Catholic theological discourse. This does not mean, however, that there is no more to say. Indeed, what is perhaps more important is to seek an interpretation of the way in which the praxis of the Church is related to the Kingdom of God. In order to do this we will need to formulate an interpretive model of this relationship.

A WORKING UNDERSTANDING OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND ECCLESIAL PRACTICE

The Reign of God is both a goal which Christians journey towards as well as a reality of daily life when we experience faith, hope and love. Whilst there is a necessary rupture between the coming of the Kingdom in its fullness and the world in which we live, there is also a necessary connection between the two.

Figure 1 presents a modified version of Alberich's (1987:19) well known model of the relationship between the Kingdom of God and ecclesial practice (see Bate 1995:237). This model provides a useful way of indicating the way in which the Kingdom of God may be manifest in the Church and its praxis. In this way it responds to a praxis based approach to the treatment of how the Church is an instrument of the Kingdom of God. For this reason it is chosen as a means of interpreting our data. The model indicates the primacy of the Kingdom of God as the goal towards which the Holy Spirit moves us (Cf LG 5; GS 45; Fuellenbach 1987:1-6).

As well as the fundamental commitment of Christian life, this is an affirmation that the people of God have the mission to participate in making the Kingdom of God a reality in the world in which they live through their lifestyle, commitment and involvement. In this way they become the Church in action. The means of ecclesial practice expressed as martyria, koinonia, diakonia, kerygma and leitourgia are themes describing the activity of the Church and so are useful both for categorising and also for indicating lacunae in ecclesial practice. At the same time they are too general and so do not respond to the particularity of context. Such particularity has to be done by an observation of phenomena emerging from the Church's praxis. A phenomenological description of this activity will thus be the focus of our next section.

EMERGING PHENOMENA IN THE ECCLESIAL PRAXIS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

In identifying the major themes of South African ecclesial praxis we will be somewhat diachronic since the history of the context is intimately tied up with the emergence of response in ecclesial practices. But we also want to be thematic,
pointing to the principal areas of ecclesial practice in the period 1950–2000. The focus will be largely in the period 1970–90, which is the most significant period as we shall see.

**Alternative Society model: The Kingdom is found in the Church**

In the pre-Vatican II period, the Church considered itself to be closely identified with the Kingdom of God, as we have seen, and much of its praxis was geared towards the establishment of an alternative Catholic society within which Catholics could live their lives. For this reason, schools, hospitals and other services were provided especially within the white settler community to allow Catholics the opportunity of finding the social services they required within a Catholic world (Bate 1999a:6; 12-13). This praxis was reinforced by the sense of threat and alienation experienced by Catholics in South African society where the *Roomse gevaar* (roman danger) was a stated problem for the Calvinist ethos of the governing Nationalist Party. In the 1957 meeting of the SACBC, the minutes record that the
“government was already determined that the Church should not rise above five percent of the population” (SACBC 1957:26; See also de Gruchy 1982:71-72).

A similar goal and purpose obtained in the Catholic Mission church but lack of resources meant that not all areas of life could be recreated and education was the main focus and indeed the main instrument of its missionary activity. By 1953 the Catholic Church controlled 15% of all black schools, by far the most visible Catholic presence in society. The decision by government to withdraw funding from Mission schools since “they created false expectations amongst blacks” (Chamberlain et al 1999:187) was a major crisis. In 1955 a “high powered financial drive to establish a school fund” was launched and whilst some success was achieved, these schools were progressively closed.

The schools and hospitals were at the forefront of the Catholic effort to create a Catholic ethos but as the notion of the nature and role of the Catholic Church changed, especially after Vatican II, the need to maintain these structures was increasingly undermined. Post Vatican II ecclesiologies had two effects. The first was to emphasise a greater distance between the Church and the Kingdom – effectively destroying their identification – and the second was to indicate a certain distance between the notion of Church and Catholic Church so that identifying the two became uncommon: something which was to prove helpful in building Christian solidarity in the struggle against apartheid. By 1980 a new phase of Catholic relationship to society was emerging in South Africa. This was articulated in terms of God’s plan for society and the Church’s plan to do God’s will. Pastoral planning was upon us. The pastoral plan Community Serving Humanity recognised the value of the Church’s previous pastoral practices in the educational and health ministries as part of a “wide variety of activities handed down to us” (CSH 1989:14) which were to be integrated into a “new vision” (14). We will return to the “new vision” later, but first we focus on an important aspect of Catholic ecclesial practice which was to feature right from the early period and to continue through to today: the voice of protest against unjust governance by the state.

Statements of protest to government. The Kingdom is found in respecting human dignity
Catholic Theology has a rich tradition of social teaching which indicates social moral norms for nations, states and the international community. This teaching can also be seen as a way of helping make the Kingdom present in human society. The South African hierarchy’s initial attempts at protesting against apartheid were to relay this teaching through their pastoral letters. It is significant that six of the seven pastoral letters issued to 1974 were on the topic of race relations. Synnott (nd:9) remarks that this is “a phenomenon in Church history and marks the racial question in South Africa as the special test of charity, or love in Christ which we [in South Africa] have...” (italics in original).

The principal hermeneutic key of these letters is human dignity and how this is not respected in the South African context. But Synnott (nd:18ff) shows that the
notion of human dignity referred to is that provided by the gospel. This notion runs contrary to ‘normal social values’ though it is expressed in a limited way in the United Nations charter. It is a notion which values all people equally and proclaims the love of others as a universal value. In the 1952 letter, this key is seen in the expression “Fundamental Christian truths”. These are outlined as follows:

that man is created by God in His Own image, with a spiritual soul, the power of reason and a free will; that his last end is to achieve everlasting happiness in the vision of God in heaven; that he is fallen in Adam but redeemed by the sacrifice of calvary and restored in Christ to supernatural grace and the heritage of Heaven; that Christ died for all men and all have the same right to eternal salvation (PL 1:1-2).

For Synnott (nd:11) the theological vision operating in these writings may be “summed up as ... the universality of love and justice and the ‘code’ of human rights which protect man’s dignity, freedom and well-being”.

The 1957 pastoral letter also focuses on the dignity of the human person (PL 1:14) but it sounds an important new note when it affirms a “condemnation of the principle of apartheid as something intrinsically evil” (:15). This is the first such condemnation of the evil of apartheid by an ecclesial body in South Africa (Villa Vicencio 1988:36). In another strong statement it goes on to ask: “Are we not making a mockery of Christianity by proclaiming ourselves a Christian nation and pursuing a policy so contrary to these words of Christ?” (PL 1:16). The pronoun “we” betrays the standpoint of this, and indeed all of the bishops’ statements until 1960. It is a criticism from within. The paradigm remains the white settlers attempting to deal with the ‘race problem’. The bishops speak from within Christian Western civilisation to which they assume the white Nationalist government belongs together with them.

This approach continues in the fourth letter published in 1960 which retreads the ground of human life under the light of the gospel: “All man’s activities must be directed in the light of the Gospel which is given that he might live as God requires and thus reach his great destiny” (PL 1:19). Consequently “[n]ationalistic aspirations cannot be the final criterion by which men determine their ends and actions. It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ which must be their guide and director” (:19). This letter also introduces the theological category “plan of God for man ... which has been made known to us in the revelation of Jesus Christ” (:20). This category will eventually become the principal theological category for the Catholic Church’s praxis reaching its culmination in the adoption of the Pastoral Plan for the church in South Africa in 1989.

The ‘Call to conscience’ (1972) is less theologically dense and more simple and specific in style. Its very title shows that whilst addressed to all Catholics, the principal interlocutors are clearly the whites who have shown “little significant response” (PL 2:10) to previous documents. With it the hierarchy largely abandons its standpoint from within Christian civilisation as represented by white society and begins to move to a more neutral position within the whole of South African
society: "our witness to social justice must begin at home if it is to be credible" (11). This and subsequent documents are more issue driven and so more practical. Issues such as just wages, education, trades unions and so forth move to the fore as does a more praxis-oriented response rather than a statement-based response: "When justice demands it a Christian must have the courage to act" (15). Here we see the first steps of a journey the hierarchy will make during the following years to a greater identification with the standpoint of poor people, especially those suffering as a result of the apartheid policy. This journey will also be reflected in the move to a more collaborative style of ministry. In the 1980s the Church will be siding ever more with the victims of oppression and attempting to articulate from within their perspective.

Commitment and involvement in the socio-political struggle: The Kingdom is found in solidarity with the poor

In the special consultation of Catholic leaders in the apostolate of social justice held in February 1976, one of the speakers illustrated the relationship between Church praxis and commitment to the poor on the one hand, and the Kingdom of God on the other, in the following way:

One of the pre-eminent signs that God’s kingdom is being established is that the poor have the Gospel preached to them. This preaching of the Gospel cannot be the mere enunciation of the truths of religion ... The preaching of the Gospel to the poor that is required is living in solidarity with the poor ... [which] ought to bring us to a distribution of resources and apostolic personnel that effectively gives priority to the poorest and most needy sectors (CCSJ 1977:29).

A major step towards solidarity is seen in the 1977 SACBC document entitled 'Declaration of Commitment on Social Justice and Race Relations within the Church'. Recognising the weakness of their response so far, the bishops moved here to commit themselves to a plan of action which has been articulated in terms of five tasks (Verryn 1982:63):

• to change derogatory social attitudes and customs;
• to advance blacks in the Church;
• to reassess the distribution of personnel in the Church so that ministry would be concentrated where needs were greatest;
• to move visibly to communalise Church funds;
• to work towards a Pastoral Consultation with majority black participation for future policy on Church life and apostolate.

From now on the leadership of the Catholic Church in South Africa moves to become more actively involved in the struggle to rid society of apartheid. Taking a stand is a coming of age which mirrors much of what was happening in the turbulent period born of 16 June 1976.9 Now the awakening within people of a social conscience about injustice is seen as "central to evangelisation" (PL 2:44) and the bishops commit themselves to promote it. But they also commit themselves to the
task of “transforming the concrete structures that oppress people; and in the light of this, to strive that the Church be seen in solidarity with the legitimate aspirations of oppressed people; on the side, therefore, of Black Consciousness, in regard both to those who promote it and those who suffer for it” (:44-45). In their ‘Statement on the current situation and citizen rights of blacks’ issued at the same time, this point is put more forcefully: “We affirm that in this we are on the side of the oppressed and, as we have committed ourselves to working within our Church for a clearer expression of solidarity with the poor and deprived, so we commit ourselves equally to working for peace through justice in fraternal collaboration with all other churches, agencies and persons dedicated to this cause” (:41). The question of taking sides will become an important issue in the South African political and theological debate. It will surface in the influential Kairos document where a “Church Theology” which remains “neutral” in a conflict between oppressor and oppressed is condemned.

Another important aspect of the quotation above is its ecumenical dimension. There is no doubt that the struggle against apartheid brought churches and religions together in South Africa in a way that is perhaps unparalleled elsewhere to date. The growing consensus of purpose amongst religious organisations, but especially amongst Christian denominations, saw people and organisations working together in many projects. The Diakonia ecumenical agency in Durban is probably one of the best examples of this. Diakonia’s social programmes and training events involved Christians from many denominations together in an attempt to respond to the socio-political crisis of the 1970s and 1980s. The agency continues to operate today. The various church consultations such as Cottesloe (1960), and Rustenburg (1990) allowed Christian leaders to exchange ideas and grow closer in vision and praxis. This increasing unity of conviction was often cemented in marches, especially those involving confrontation with the police as well as in more structured events such as the Standing for the Truth campaign launched by the South African Council of Churches (SACC) in 1988. During this period the SACC and other Catholic bodies issued a number of documents together with the SACC or their non-Catholic counterparts. The Catholic Church is now a full member of this ecumenical body. The importance of ecumenical collaboration is expressed in the following SACC statement: “There was excellent cooperation between the SACBC and the SACC on practical socioeconomic and political problems since both groups were convinced that the Gospel of Jesus Christ had to be introduced and lived in these areas and so transform South African society” (SACBC plenary minutes January 1987 cited in Hinwood 1999:374).

During the 1980s, as the socio-political situation deteriorated in the face of an intransient government and an increasingly inflamed low intensity war on the ground, issues of violence and war moved to the foreground. In what one commentator has described as “the intellectual highpoint” (Egan 1999:341) of the Theological Advisory Commission of the SACBC, the document The things that make for peace (TAC 1985) examined the morality of violence and war in the South
African context. Here we find what is to date the most developed South African theological reflection on the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the praxis of the Church.

In *The things that make for peace*, the relationship of the Kingdom of God to society is specifically linked with the mission of the Church in society. We recognise these two as the third and second of our original three perspectives. In the introductory section, there is a motivation of just why the Church has to be concerned about issues of war, violence and politics:

It is therefore the church’s task to bring God’s concern and guidance into the political realm, and not to give the impression that he is found only in religious worship or personal relationships. Jesus showed this kind of concern when he preached not just personal salvation but the coming of God’s kingdom (TAC 1985:7).

In the scriptural section (Chapter 3) there is a whole section entitled ‘The Inauguration of the Kingdom’ (:56-58). The Kingdom brought by Jesus in his preaching is “not one ‘somewhere else’, but is shown in power being exercised within the framework of serving others, rather than forcing others to serve their ruler” (:57). At the same time the Kingdom renders all human states and nations provisional since they are “due to pass away” (:57) and the ultimate reality is to be revealed in the judgement.

The role of the Christian community today is to “witness through its life” to this ultimate reality as “a new source of value” (TAC 1985:57). Conflict, war and suffering is predicted by Jesus. When this happens we are not to “clutch at false promises of political security or religious deliverance ... [but] show that God’s reign still holds through exercising so far as possible his justice and compassion amidst the surrounding turmoil” (:60).

The whole of chapter 10 is given over to the theme of ‘The Sovereignty of God’. God’s sovereignty “is shown above all in his releasing people from any and every kind of oppression, and inspiring them to strive together ... [to] live in freedom and peace. While realising that we have not yet come to the full peace and freedom of the Kingdom, nevertheless our responsibility is to prepare the way for it” (TAC 1985:175). So the agent of God’s Kingdom is God himself and the activity of the Christian today is a work of preparing the ground. The life and teaching of Jesus show how God extends his sovereignty over us. Each is called “through grasping their particular societal role to let His sovereignty be realised on earth ... [accepting] a certain real but limited responsibility which they ultimately exercise on God’s behalf” (:176). This implies action on the part of Christians to work for change: “In an oppressive society ... an obligation arises for each person to assert themselves and so gain the responsibility that is rightly theirs ... their actions have vicarious authority and thus legitimacy” (:176). The section concludes by legitimising the actions of those who “may involve themselves at times in a limited recourse to violence to guard against injustice”. The document is very cautious in recognising only that each individual is called to make a personal decision with regard to their
actions. This makes it weak at analysing and informing collective actions which, of course, are the norm, especially in the Church’s praxis. It also makes the distance between the kingdom and the Church too great by presenting the kingdom as an activity of God alone. For the Church it is a remote vision, an ideal. And ecclesial practice is ‘preparing the way’ rather than participating in its establishment.

Later documents from the hierarchy: The Church must be involved in socio-political issues
Apart from this reflection of the TAC the notion of the Kingdom of God does not appear much in subsequent pastoral writings of the SACBC. It prefers to speak of the role of the Church in the modern world or of the plan of God. From this point, pastoral letters with general themes of justice and peace are less common and what emerge are issue based reflections with more practical recommendations. Here too is a sign of the Church leadership recognising its role as an active agent in society. Some of the issues include:

- 1983: On the proposed new Constitution for South Africa: “... not a satisfactory step on the road to peace in South Africa. ... We cannot support the proposed constitution” (PL 3:55-56).

- 1986: On Christian hope in the current crisis: “The Gospel forces us to condemn injustice” (PL 4:8). “We are not neutral in the current conflict ... we support fully the demands of the majority of people for justice” (9) “The government’s policy has ... done its satanic work well” (11). Jesus offers us the gift of hope today of a better future “What we hope for is, in effect, the transforming power of God’s love in our lives” (13).

- 1986: On economic pressure for justice: “We ourselves believe that economic pressure has been justifiably imposed to end apartheid ... [Such] pressure should continue and, if necessary be intensified should the developments ... show little hope of fundamental change ... [Intensified] pressure can only be justified if applied in such a way as not to destroy the country’s economy ...” (PL 4:18-19).

Other issues included militarisation, conscientious objection to military service, HIV/AIDS, on the bomb blast at SACBC headquarters, and on the Namibian peace accord.

Catholic groups involved in the struggle against apartheid and injustice: The Kingdom of God as a liberation praxis
Clearly the Catholic Church’s praxis cannot be reduced to the activities of the hierarchy. There were many Catholic individuals and groups involved in the struggle against apartheid – numbers which rose considerably in the 1970s. After Vatican II, Justice and Peace committees began to spring up in parishes and dioceses throughout the country. A national Commission for Justice and Reconciliation was also established within the SACBC. These groups were often rallying points for those Catholics who wanted to get involved.

Local commissions were set up around the country and these attacked
local evils and challenged injustices. Representatives of these commissions acted as animators and consultants for the bishops and were instrumental in having the bishops visit scenes of injustice, for example, Namibia and in drawing up draft statements of their attention ... Meetings, workshops and campaigns were organised to raise the consciousness of Catholics about events in the country e.g. the 1983 constitution, the various elections, the negotiations process etc. Members of these commissions worked closely with other churches and organisations to ensure the success of various campaigns e.g. the Standing for the Truth Campaign (Kelly 1991:25-26).

One of the first Catholic movements to become involved in justice issues was the Young Christian Workers (YCW). This movement was introduced into South Africa in the early 1950s and quickly got involved in worker issues. Its training methods of structured group meetings and ‘study weekends’ where more in depth training was offered, was very effective in producing leaders many of whom eventually became officials in the trades union movements. In 1969 its chaplain was one of the first Catholic priests to incur a sanction by the state when his passport was withdrawn. The movement was increasingly harassed and even infiltrated by Security branch members and

in 1978 thirty members of the group were detained by the South African authorities. In only four of the cases were charges brought after detentions ranging from one to over fifty days. The other prisoners were released – with no apologies – probably in response to the solidarity demonstrations staged all over the world. The four brought to trial were convicted on various charges of violence, charges considered so far fetched by the YCW and the youths’ parents that they embarked on a long expensive appeal process (Hope and Young 1983:166).

The YCW sees its purpose as “living the faith and not just knowing it” (Let’s Go nd:31). It is a movement committed to social action: “Through this little action, he is building a new world, made of greater love (in Action), Leaders become an essential part of this PLAN OF GOD ...” (:31). The YCW leader in his activity was “living and experiencing the mystery of incarnation, the mystery of redemption, the paschal mystery, the mystery of the Church ... The Church is the Kingdom of God, the body of Christ. [The leader] is building this Kingdom through his active concern” (:31). Reference to the Kingdom is found in the YCW prayer: “Thy kingdom come in our factories, workshops, offices and in all our homes”. It helps people to see that all young workers “are created by God to be his sons and daughters ... this is why [they] may not be treated as slaves or valued less than the machines they operate ... why all have a right to a living wage, healthy working conditions, a family where there is love, adequate housing; the chance for education and the freedom to express opinion – BECAUSE GOD CREATED EACH ONE TO BE LIKE HIM.” (How to start...nd:5-6). A former YCW national president comments:
In the YCW I have learned that what is most important in life is the respect and dignity due to each and every human being, especially the worker; not only to respect this dignity, but to defend it and fight for it to be restored ... I have learned that the worker struggle is a long and painful process with no short cut ... I have learned that the problems I experienced were not just mine or confined to my family. They affect the whole community of working class in South Africa ... I have learned that we are the Church, that we have to bring the Church to the workers. I have learnt that we have to start with real life and move towards the Kingdom of God, from here on earth (Seripe, 1982:23-24).

The Black Theologian, Buti Tlhagale, in developing a black theology of labour, suggests that such a theology is found within the active struggle of the black worker to strive for the realisation of the image of God in their lives:

Black theology locates the ‘solution’ not in gratuitous options of rich Christians but in the revolutionary awareness of the workers themselves. The image of God in which the workers are made is not a given, an already existent reality. It is something to be striven for, to be realised in meaningful human activity. The more workers labour in accordance with their free will, in response to their material needs, the more that image of God becomes a reality (Tlhagale 1985:130).

Black Theology is a liberation theology and so is praxis driven: “for black theology praxis authenticates Christian claims. Self assertive acts, in the form of strikes and work stoppages – despite expulsions, ‘repatriation’ and detention of union leaders – all affirm the dignity of workers” (Tlhagale 1985:134). Here is the Kingdom of God as a liberation praxis.

The YCW earned the praise of then President Mandela who in an address to them said:

It is common knowledge that the YCW has made a significant contribution to building the organs of civil society in South Africa ... The YCW’s approach has always been to acknowledge and challenge injustice, and then to build the capacity of the oppressed to act in a constructive way that will bring an end to injustice and create a better world for all of us (Mandela 1995:2).

The YCW is not the only Catholic worker organisation in South Africa. Catholic worker militants have played a role in a number of worker organisations. Lowry (1999) has chronicled some of this story.

Another youth movement which played a significant role especially in student politics and militancy is the Young Christian Students (YCS). Albert Nolan had a considerable influence on this group and his book (1976) Jesus before Christianity, provided a vision of Christianity which student leaders could identify with:

Nolan presented a Jesus who was a rebel – even a revolutionary – who consciously broke all the class and religious taboos of his day, challenging the first century Palestinian establishment, including
Roman occupiers, Jewish collaborators and particularly what he perceived to be the morally and spiritually bankrupt social order. This Jesus challenged the rich to identify in solidarity with the poor, a spirituality of solidarity that resonated with white Catholics seeking a new, progressive direction (Egan 1999:340).

Large numbers of student leaders, especially whites, came under the influence of the YCS during Nolan’s time. He was also the founder of the Institute of Contextual Theology (ICT), an ecumenical body which was to have an immense role in providing theological underpinning for much of the struggle for liberation.

Nolan’s vision of the Kingdom of God is outlined in his book *God in South Africa* (1986:125-133). He presents Jesus’ vision of the Kingdom as down to earth and practical to do with the life of the people of his time. “He spoke about a concrete practice at a particular time and in a particular place as the coming reign of God” (132). For Nolan the term Kingdom of God has now become an unhelpful term since it means so many different things to different people but in particular because it has become spiritualised and conceptualised as an ideal and as a final point in history for all times. So it is rendered meaningless for the daily lives of the people of a particular time. It “has been so overlaid with apocalyptic associations that it is very difficult in practice to rework it and give it the meaning that Jesus had in mind” (133). Nolan prefers the concept of Salvation and the idea of Good News as something which happens in the daily events of the life of people and not just as a text in a book, the Bible. He sees Good News and Salvation in what is happening in South Africa today: “Are we not experiencing a classic example of Good coming out of evil ... how racism has given rise to non-racialism, separation to a desire for unity, authoritarianism to democracy ... They are just as much wonderful works of God as anything we read about in the Bible” (155).

The increasingly strong stance of the Catholic Church against apartheid promoted the emergence of Catholic groups opposed to this shift. The two most important of these were The Catholic Defence League and TFP (tradition, family and property). Both groups became quite vocal during the 1980s and published a number of books and articles which claimed that the Church was being influenced and controlled by Marxist philosophies and communist agencies. These groupings were particularly concerned about liberation theology and its perceived influence on the hierarchy and some Catholic organisations (Tuffin 1991). The *New Nation* newspaper started by the SACBC in the 1986 as an alternative press came in for particularly vitriolic treatment (Tuffin 1987). These movements, however distasteful they may have been to the SACBC, which issued a statement in 1979 “repudiating” their activities (PL 2:56-57), reflected a theological and political position which remains powerful in certain sections of the Church. This is a position which sees the Kingdom as an otherworldly reality and the practice of the Church as a purely religious one concerned with worship.

But for most Catholics and certainly for the leadership, this was a period in which the role of the Church in bringing about the Kingdom was increasingly one
of socio-political engagement. From the standpoint of the poor and oppressed the Church had to get involved in the process of social liberation. Many Catholics paid a severe price. Some less well known people died, were incarcerated and were sometimes tortured in the process. This happened to some of the youth of my own parish in 1987. There were also more prominent cases like the incarceration and torture of Fr Mkatshwa, then secretary general of the SACBC (PL4:44) and the arrest of well known Catholic activists like Tome Waspe, Sr Bernard Ncube and Fr Motsiri Mosai OMI. A number of staff and students of my own institution, St Joseph’s Theological Institute (then Scholasticate), were also arrested in 1986 and a member of staff was deported the same year. The SACBC offices were bombed in 1988. This was an unpopular message for many whites and richer people, some of whom left the Church, but it was one which clarified Christian practice as active participation in making the vision of the Kingdom a reality in the South African society.

The Kingdom of God in community ministries: From clerical to peoples’ ministry

Vatican II renewed a vision of the Church in which all were called to ministry. The emphasis of the priesthood of all believers and the importance of lay ministries in several of the Vatican documents had a big impact on the Catholic Church in Southern Africa. One of the principal difficulties facing the rural Mission church was the shortage of clergy (PA 1:1). This problem was exacerbated by the rapid growth in the Catholic population especially after 1950. The traditional approach to this difficulty was the training of catechists and a number of catechist training schools were operating throughout the country including the Lumko centre in the Eastern Cape. At this time a number of priests and bishops were experimenting with the possibility of having local leaders trained for ministry within the outstations of the rural parishes. Gradually the Lumko Institute was involved in helping train these leaders and they developed a series of programmes for the training of community ministers in the Church. From 1974 onwards they published a large number of training booklets which have had an impact throughout the world.

In 1974 an ad hoc commission comprising bishops, priests, religious and lay was set up to examine how to introduce a wider variety of ministries into the Church. The purpose of introducing such ministries was seen as broadening the field of ministry in order to deepen the Church’s mission and not merely to respond to clergy shortage (PA 1:2). Another goal was to de-paternalise the role of the priest in the Church so that the Catholic Church might become less priest centred and more People of God centred (PA 1:4). In this way lay people would be empowered to service.

However, the commission went much further than laying out long term goals for the kind of church it saw in the future. These goals was far reaching and daring, as already at this stage, the commission felt that their work was just a first step in preparing for “future forms of Christian community” (PA 1:16). It proposed a future church built of communities in which local leaders were also ordained priests but
not employed by the Church as is the case at present. The vision proposed was of “self supporting teams of priests for each congregation” (:16). Such priests were to be “taken from local men who remain in their secular work and with their families” (:16), an example taken from the situation in the early Church (:16). Such an arrangement would imply priests with different levels of education. This was not seen as a problem. Such an arrangement “will require the bishop and existing priests to exercise the role of unifying, inspiring, training and updating the many local teams of priests” (:17).

The work of Lumko has been astonishingly successful in the rural areas of South Africa with most parishes now having teams of ministers to the sick, funeral ministers and ministers of the Eucharist. Services led by lay people are now the rule rather than the exception in all areas except the urban centres. Most ministers have been through some kind of training based on the Lumko programmes, whether at its centre in Germiston or in their own area. Courses are organised by qualified people, usually priests and religious, but sometimes lay people train for this work. Clearly this has changed the nature of the Church and its praxis in this part of the world with so much of it now led by lay ministers trained in this approach.

An example here is the funeral ministry. Funerals are a major aspect of African traditional life, linked as they are to the question of ancestors. In a major study of the ministry of funeral leaders in rural areas of the Eastern Cape, Wuestenberg (2001:479) has confirmed that:

their ministry is an important contribution to the community based approach in the South African Catholic Church. It contributes to justice in many respects ... It is a demonstration of a culturally initiated ministry ... Initiated by ‘the hierarchy’, the community ministry of funeral leaders takes over the entire ministry at the ritual of funerals. By doing so it shares in the concern of ministry about unity, holiness, apostolicity, and catholicity. It serves these central aspects of faith in close cooperation with the priests and pastoral workers. So it by no means diminishes the hierarchical form of ministry. On the contrary it enhances it.

Clearly, the issue of the ordination of community ministers has not been resolved. The Eucharist is a central aspect of Catholic Christianity and yet the vast majority of people are only able to participate in a eucharistic celebration on an irregular basis. Whilst the blessed sacrament is often available for distribution by ministers of the Eucharist in Sunday worship services, the Mass is celebrated much less frequently. This is the major area of concern for Wuestenberg in a study which is otherwise a confirmation of the values of community-based ministries in the life of the Catholic Church in South Africa. When the Eucharist is not available at the funeral service this becomes a “major deficiency in the ministry. The restriction of the celebration of the Eucharist to the ordained ministry limits the efficacy of the offered community ministry ... This deficiency has to be dealt with to some extent and needs further research” (Wuestenberg 2001:480).
Here we are dealing with an area in which the vision of the Kingdom remains obscured in the practice of ministry in the Church. The Church has come a long way in implementing the vision of ministry outlined in Vatican II but questions of the Eucharist and ordination continue to be problematic. The deprivation of the Eucharist in a church where it is so central remains a problem. Clearly ecumenical influences have helped the Church in revisiting its way of doing ministry in the South African context. Lobinger has explicitly cited the Methodist approach as being inspirational to his own vision of community ministries which Lumko has adopted. Similarly the vision of community ministry adopted by the ad hoc committee referred to above was inspired by Lutheran practice in Indonesia (PA 1:15).

**Pastoral planning and the Pastoral Plan: Empowering all Christians**

We noted earlier that the theological category “Plan of God” has been a popular one within South African theological and ecclesial discourse. The term describes something of the relationship between the Kingdom and the way in which it is to be actualised in Christian praxis. It thus links very closely with our theme of the Church’s instrumentality in realising God’s Kingdom. The term is first found in the 1960 bishops’ pastoral letter in this form: “[I]t is the plan of God for man, God’s mind for us, that we must follow in our conduct whether as individuals, whether as members of a family, whether as citizens, whether as persons wielding authority. This plan has been made known to us in the revelation of Jesus Christ” (PL 1:20). It is the chief term that is now used in the official discourse of the South African hierarchy. This is because of the decision to adopt a pastoral plan for the Church in South Africa in 1989, a decision that was some ten years in the making.

The reason for the decision to move towards a specific pastoral plan for the Church in Southern Africa was two-fold. In the first place, the second Vatican Council had evoked a re-appraisal of mission and ministry throughout the world and this was developed by the Synod of Bishops in 1974 which focused on the theme of Evangelisation. This led the Southern Africa bishops to commission a survey of Evangelisation today in Southern Africa (see Connor 1991:38-40; Bate 1991:71-73) which revealed the principal problem of the Catholic Church to be that it is “structured along lines that are foreign and white in a country which is overwhelmingly black” (Hulsen in Bate 1991:72).

However, the second and probably more crucial factor was the increasingly grave social and political situation especially after the events of 16 June 1976 in Soweto. A pastoral consultation was carried out in which groups and organisations in the Church were asked to identify needs and concerns. These were collected into a document which formed the basis of a three-day meeting held in 1980 in which people from all over Southern Africa came together to process the results and prepare some conclusions for the future. Many issues emerged and a number of structures were set up to cull these into a workable plan. By 1987 it was clear that there was a need for a pastoral plan in the Church in South Africa, which would meet the following four concerns (CSH 1987:4) that:
• the pastoral plan must be unmistakably inspired by the understanding of the Church that emerged from the Second Vatican Council;
• this understanding of the Church must be related to the realities of life in Southern Africa;
• there should be a key theme for the pastoral plan and that this can be formulated as Community Serving Humanity;
• the basic element in the pastoral plan must be Formation; that is, the education and evangelisation of all people in the Church – bishops, priests, religious, laity; adults, youth and children – in terms of the vision of the Church expressed in this theme.

The plan was launched in 1989 and remains in force representing the way in which the South African Catholic Church sees its mission at this time. The literature produced for the pastoral plan rarely uses the notion of the Kingdom of God, but has been interpreted as a “vision of society in terms of the kingdom of God” (Bate 1991:100). But allusions to the relationship between God’s Kingdom and the mission of the Church are found throughout the Vision Statement in phrases such as “the call to build community is not a mere human urge. It comes to us from the divine community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in whose image we are made” (CSH 1989:17) and in a reference to the early Church: “the very kingdom whose coming they looked forward to was also a community” (CSH 1987:15). Similarly with regard to service: “Our God is a serving God. God’s Son came to serve, not to be served ... We his body, wish to become a serving community” (CSH 1987:29).

The plan was introduced to parishes by means of a “pastoral plan kit” presented by people sent for training on a diocesan level. This allowed grassroots formation by means of discussion based on pictures and key words. This method had been successfully developed by Lumko in its bid to find effective forms of formation for people with low levels of formal education.

The pastoral plan calls for the Church to “become a serving community” (CSH 1989:29). In the past the Catholic Church was particularly known for its large service institutions: schools, hospitals and clinics at which ordinary people were passive recipients. The aim here is to get ordinary people at the local level to set up their own organisations and structures which respond to local needs and which are sustainable by the local community itself. In other words to encourage and empower all Christian communities to service at their own level and within their own resources. These efforts were quite successful and many small Christian communities were able to set up their own services. A book published to review these efforts seven years after the establishment of the pastoral plan presented a number of grassroots small scale efforts as the basis for reflection on the progress of the plan. Amongst these are the Jabulani self-help project (Gneiss 1996), community kitchens (Huna 1996), small business development projects (Khamali 1996) and prayer groups for the sick (Mthethewa 1996).

We see here a similar process of empowering all people in the Church to service, as was the case with ministry in the previous section. These two sections show us
that a major priority of the Catholic Church in this period has been to recreate itself as a body in which all people have a role to play. This is a move away from an overly hierarchical and clerical body. It is also a response to the growth of consumer religion in which people shop for the best services for themselves. If the Kingdom is a vision and a power in human society it is even more so in the Christian community. All Christians are called to live in, contribute to and serve communities in which the Kingdom of God dwells amongst them. According to the Pastoral Plan it is in this way that we become the Body of Christ.

Racism in the Church: The Kingdom is not found in the Church
The Catholic Church in South Africa has often failed in living up to the vision of the Kingdom which it is called to serve. In no other area is this perhaps more true than in regard to racism within the Church. Right from the beginning black people have experienced a feeling of inferiority and second class treatment. Mukuka (2000) has shown how the first black clergy suffered in this regard. When eventually, under pressure from Rome, the first black bishop of a diocese was appointed, there was an immediate outcry from the white Catholics of the diocese who objected to “having a non-European as Bishop of Europeans (Abraham 1989:87). These were attitudes which were very common amongst whites including “good Catholics”. They were based on values and beliefs handed down over generations within settler culture, the so called “South African way of life”. Whilst there has been much change, such attitudes are still quite common.

The growth of black consciousness in the late 1960s and early 1970s and the participation within it of a number of Catholics led to increased black awareness of the seriousness of these issues. One response was a much publicised protest by a group of black Catholics (and some white Catholic sympathisers) at a Bishops’ Conference meeting, in August 1971, where they accused the hierarchy of maintaining the status quo and confining blacks to secondary positions in the Church. In a subsequent document (PL 2:125-127), “four black priests and laymen” raised a number of “questions we are asking” (:125). Twelve statements of the reality of discrimination in the Church were presented including poor wages paid to church workers, bad working conditions, different pay for the same work to different race groups, the poverty of parishes taken over by blacks from whites and so forth.

A short history of these problems is presented in a publication of the African Catholic Priests Solidarity Movement (ACPSM 2000). It is presented as the story of “different groupings of African Priests and laity at different moments in the history of the Catholic Church in South Africa, as they waged a continuous struggle against homelessness and alienation within the Church” (:16). The group maintains that even today black people have a “painful experience of ‘feeling alienated – feeling like foreigners – in our very own Church’ (memorandum to the SACBC)” (:6).

The principal metaphor for their reflection is from psalm 84:10 “even the sparrow has found a home” (ACPSM 2000:5). All Christians are called to live in
God’s house (:5) and the “idea of home is closely linked with the reality of what Jesus called the kingdom of God” (:36). The theme is clearly linked to that of “God’s family”; a principal symbol for the Church proposed at the African Synod (:50; cf. EA 63). Indeed they point out that it is Jesus’ mission to create a home for all peoples (:37-39). A sociological and cultural analysis of the Church is presented in the book. In it the authors demonstrate how the Church, both by its social structure which is European and its culture which is Western, alienates its African members and causes them to experience homelessness. Their solution is a “pastoral plan” of action to work towards the goal of making the Church a more African home for its African members. A number of practical suggestions are made for redressing the balance in the Church. These include changing “the imbalance in cultural influence within the Church ... by pushing up African culture” (:55); the study of African history within the Catholic Church (:56); developing “anti-racism awareness” amongst all Catholics (:57-58); empowering African leadership at all levels (:60-61); working for commitment, responsibility and accountability at all levels of the Church (:61-62); the empowerment of women (:63) and a more just redistribution of goods and wealth in the Church structures (:67-68).

Post apartheid emerging issues: Building the Kingdom in the new South Africa
Finally, we would like to indicate some other areas that are becoming more important during the post-apartheid phase. These do not imply that the issues raised before are decreasing in importance. Community ministry, the pastoral plan and issues of racism and culture continue to be important as does indeed the socio-political role in civil society that the Church is called to exercise. Nevertheless, a new context has led to the emergence of new concerns. The demon of apartheid has been defeated and this is a great victory for the forces of God’s Kingdom of which the Catholic Church is one. But its effects still linger in the physical, structural and cultural reality of our context.

The African Church and inculturation: The Kingdom is found in African cultures
Linked with the issues raised in the previous section is the growth of interest in questions of Africanisation and inculturation in the South African Catholic Church. Whilst these have been important areas for ecclesial practice in other areas of Africa for many years, the socio-political crisis in South Africa during the apartheid era meant that these issues were not a priority.

Today, however, black Catholics are increasingly interested and motivated to rediscover their cultural roots and the place they have within Catholic faith. A major conference on inculturation was held at Lumko in 1995 and attracted 140 people from all over Southern Africa. In his opening remarks, Bishop Mvemve of Klerksdorp noted: “The Church in Southern Africa has entered a new age. There is a growing awareness that people can embrace their culture and still remain Catholics, that the Catholic Church can become more diverse in its expression of faith and yet remain Catholic ... The challenge is simply this, if you claim to be an
African Christian then become an African in the expression of your values and your Christian faith” (Mvemve in Makobane et al 1995:10). The conference dealt with a wide range of issues: liturgy, healing, veneration of ancestors, African values and Christian morality, the role of music and dance, etc. The relationship between some of the issues raised in the previous section and inculturation are summed up by Tlhagale (1995b:170) as follows: “Inculturation argues that faith can find a home in an African culture and indeed open up its new home to new challenges.”

The process of inculturation describes how a local Church assimilates those aspects of its own cultures which are compatible with the gospel into its own praxis. But it goes further by challenging its own cultures and transforming them by the power of the gospel to bring these cultures “closer to the vision of the kingdom of God, affirming and developing what is of value whilst continuing the struggle against evil” (Bate 1991:98). This implies that the vision of the Kingdom of God has to be expressed in African cultural concepts and many African theologians have begun to examine these areas. Progress has been slow in the Southern African Catholic Church but recent studies include those on ancestors (Tlhagale 1995a), on African and Christian notions of Sacrifice and the Eucharist (Sipuka 2001) and on marriage (Hlatshwayo 1996).

South Africa of course is a land of many cultures having their origins in Africa, Asia and Europe. The local Church recognises the special priority of Africanisation as a result of the condemnation of African traditions and customs in the missionary period. But South Africans have been quick to point out that the process of inculturation will be more complex than that. Cultural roots as well as the large influence of modernity in this country have to be considered if we are not to turn Christian practice into unreal religious romanticism (Nxumalo 1996:147-155; Keteyi 1996:51ff). At the launch of inculturation in a special Mass in 1999 in the KwaZulu-Natal province, the task was explained as follows:

The Bishops of the KwaZulu-Natal region are inviting all Catholics to walk together as we together grapple with issues of our faith, and our culture or traditions. We are aware that the Province of KwaZulu-Natal embraces people of different cultures or traditions. In this booklet the term ‘African’ refers to all people living or born in Africa; regardless of their ‘roots’ which may be of Asian, European or Mixed origin ... The great tasks of Christian Churches in Africa today is to encourage the members to express their African and Christian values in a fully African way (We come... 2000:8-9; italic in original).

Reconciliation and reconstruction: The Kingdom comes in healing racism, discrimination and oppression

In the post-apartheid phase of the country socio-political concerns have moved from the struggle against apartheid to the building of the “new” South Africa. This is a process involving healing the wounds of the past, social reconciliation between communities and individuals who were at war and now find themselves as citizens
of one land, and the reconstruction of the society by providing housing, infrastructure, work and a better life for all people in the country. These are clearly goals with which the Church can identify. Indeed they are values found within the scriptures.  

Healing the wounds of decades of apartheid and centuries of colonialism and racism is obviously a very big task. In the first place, it implies political action. Injurious apartheid legislation must be dismantled and new legislation enacted which can direct the country towards a better life for all. The Catholic Church sees itself having an important role in civil society to lobby for legislation that is in accord with its vision of the Kingdom. In that regard a Parliamentary Liaison Office has been set up in Cape Town with the task of researching and coordinating a Catholic lobby to the committees in charge of preparing legislation as well as disseminating information on policy and legislation issues to Catholic groups and institutions.

Reconstruction also implies the provision of land, housing and infrastructure to people. In this regard an important initiative has been the review of Church held land to determine the history of the Church’s acquisition of land in South Africa and questions of restoration to tenants and other role players. Land is a major issue in the South African context. Colonial land acts deprived Africans of land restricting them to 13% of the total. Retribution and redistribution are thus major social issues. This is a long process and involves a number of churches. Churches are cooperating with the Land Affairs Department of the government in order to determine the best ways forward for land redistribution in the country.

Issues of reconciliation were confronted nationally by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Despite its many limitations, the commission has helped to open the wounds of the past and expose some of the evil that was carried out. In that way, it has played an important role in “healing the social psyche of the nation, through its public hearings, taking of statements and its use of the media, particularly radio and television” (Hay 1998:59). A number of churches and other organisations have tried to participate in this healing process by organising retreats and workshops where people can ‘tell their story’, be heard and participate in liturgies of reconciliation. The Justice and Peace commission and other groups in the Archdiocese of Durban held a number of such retreats in the mid 1990s. An example of the process in such a retreat is given by Edwina Ward (1995) who continues to organise them.

Racism in this context refers to the “internalised belief in the superiority of the white race over the black race – with the result that the culture, norms, theories and practices of the dominant white racial group come to be seen and treated as normative for all” (Mpako 1999:236). Mpako, who is secretary of the African Catholic Priests Solidarity movement, says that reconciliation demands an awareness and promotion of a spirit of antiracism. This implies dealing with “all that has been the cause of division in the past ... a sincere and concerted effort to move away from racism and its hidden psychological effects ... and from colonialist
racist power relations" (:238-239). The reality of reconciliation has already
happened in the Christ event and so we are called to “Become what God has already
made you” (:238). The instrumentality of Christian praxis in making this reality of
the Kingdom manifest amongst us is a clear imperative for the Church today.

HIV/AIDS: Healing a new scourge for South Africa
South Africa currently has the highest number of AIDS deaths worldwide. This has
become a new plague and crisis for the country – a wicked blow after the struggle
to rid society of the scourge of apartheid. Estimates suggest that as much as 10% of
the population may be infected whilst statistics for pregnant mothers, the only ones
available, indicate infection rates of over 30% in KwaZulu-Natal, the worst hit
province. This has led to death, the breakdown of family life and a growing
phenomenon of ‘AIDS orphans’. The response of the Catholic Church has been
quite considerable: “the largest AIDS programme in South Africa, apart from the
government” (Southern Cross July 11 2001). Hospices for AIDS patients have been
set up around the country, the most famous being the one of Mother Theresa’s
sisters in Khayalitsa, Cape Town. A number of programmes of family based care
are running like the one organised by the Archdiocese of Durban. The Catholic
Health Care Association has developed a training manual for parish HIV/AIDS
support groups which aims to “equip participants with the knowledge and expertise
to develop appropriate parish-based actions to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic”
(McGregor, nd:23). In August 2001 the SACBC began to discuss the question of
approving the use of condoms for Catholics with HIV/AIDS to prevent infection of
HIV- people and reinfection of HIV+ partners.

Women: They are also full citizens of God’s Kingdom
The worldwide emergence of a struggle for women’s rights within the Catholic
Church has also begun to touch the local Church here. The issues around this
struggle include: “women’s entrance into liturgical ministries, election to parish
pastoral councils and diocesan commissions” (Rakoczky 2000:34). The use of non-
sexist language is increasingly promoted in theological writings and in educational
institutions. Women’s Ordination South Africa (WOSA) was founded in 1997 and
publishes a regular newsletter. The group together with some other Catholic women
activists held a protest against discrimination against women in the Catholic Church
at the 2001 Diakonia Good Friday ecumenical service which had as its theme ‘end
violence against women’. The comments reported in a local newspaper of some
other Church leaders against the Catholic position aroused some public controversy
in the city leading to an apology by both the Methodist and Anglican bishops for the
article which they repudiated (Catholic News Archdiocese of Durban No. 376
March 2001). The journalist stands by his story.

The Grail movement started the Women’s Leadership Training Project in 1985
to respond to the need for “the development of women to their full potential in order
to empower them to participate in society at all levels and in various spheres”
(Mabaso 1996:173). This project runs training workshops, skills programmes and has sponsored some self-help projects amongst women. It has also established a women’s resource centre. Theological training for women is another area where things are beginning to change. The Catholic Studies Programme at St Joseph’s theological institute in Cedara now offers a three-year programme, which allows people to study theology, philosophy and the humanities without going through the normal six-year seminary programme. Many women are taking advantage of this option.

African culture is often cited as an obstacle to the possibility for women to have leadership roles in the Church (Rakoczy 2000; Wuestenberg 2001:174-175). It is encouraging to note the concern of the African Catholic Priests Solidarity Movement in this regard as they push for the empowerment of women in ministry (ACPSM 2000:63). However, it is sobering to note that these issues were also raised by the ad hoc commission for the study of ministry in 1975 (PA1:18) and not much has been done since then.

THEORETICAL REFLECTION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN ...?

The simple answer to the question posed is that it means that the Church has to be involved in the life of the community. The first line of Gaudium et Spes sums this up well: “The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men (sic) of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted in any way are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well” (GS1).

In our presentation we have shown how the preoccupations of the community have been those of the Church as well. But what does the Church, the people of God, bring to this human condition? The section of our paper entitled ‘A working understanding of the relationship between the Kingdom of God and ecclesial practice’ provided a pastoral theological model to answer this question. The Church is called to be a special site in which the Kingdom of God is manifest: a sacrament of salvation (LG5). This manifestation of the Kingdom is described in the model presented above. To the extent that the Church has manifested martyrria, koinonia, diakonia, kerygma, and leitourgia, it participates in living (Lk 17:21). The Kingdom of God is amongst (within) the people.

The long section of our paper entitled ‘Emerging phenomena in the ecclesial praxis of the Catholic Church in South Africa’ has been a phenomenological description of that reality. It is not necessary to make all the links: a few examples will suffice. We have seen martyrria in the suffering of Christians against apartheid. We speak of those like Mkatsiwa, Waspe, Ncube, Kneifel, members of the YCW national executive, staff and students of St Joseph’s Scholasticate, and many others who were imprisoned during the apartheid era. Some of these were also tortured. But martyrria is also seen in the efforts of many millions who had to suffer the harmful effects of discrimination, prejudice, homelessness and injustice in the land of their birth and yet stood up to try to make a difference to the world around them.

We have seen koinonia in the emergence of the Pastoral Plan with its emphasis
on building Christian community. We see it in the emergence of many small Christian communities and in community based ministries concerned to make the Church active and real in the lives of people. We see it in the attempts at reconciliation and in the struggle to destroy racism both within society and in the life of the Church itself.

We have seen *diakonia* in the service given by the many social institutions of the Church and in the struggle for justice of organisations like the YCW, YCS, Diakonia, as well as Justice and Peace commissions nationwide. We see it in the efforts of small groups of people inspired by the Pastoral Plan to set up small scale housing projects, farming projects, care for the sick, women's training projects, diocesan development committees and the like.

We have seen *kerygma* in the statements of the bishops against apartheid throughout the years. "A country in crisis, a continent in crisis, demand our attention. The Church of South Africa in the year 2000 and later, will either praise our leadership or shamefacedly bow their heads and rather forget the Shepherds of the Seventies" 15 (CCSJ 1977:20). It is seen in the statements of many groups of Catholics on matters of social justice. It is seen in the statement of the “four black priests and laymen” questioning racism in the Church. It is also seen in the quest for the provision of the Eucharist through the ordination of community ministers especially funeral leaders.

We have seen *leitourgia* in the Masses for peace and reconciliation held during the apartheid era and in the quest for inculturation in worship. It is also seen in the attempts to develop community ministries throughout the country. It occurs in the commitment of ministers to bring the sacraments and the possibility of religious worship throughout the country.

There are some areas of life in which Church praxis seems to have militated against the Kingdom. Racism within the Church, the marginalisation of women and the disparaging of African cultures are some areas in which the witness given has been compromised. There are probably others but these in particular are challenges the whole community faces. Another area of current weakness is in leadership training especially in the socio-political arena. The Catholic Church has learned over the years that it has to play a role at all levels of civil society. What it is now not doing which it did before, is to train leaders for that future. The educational institutions are gone and so an influence over youth is considerably reduced. This is exacerbated by the current weakness of the youth movements such as YCW and YCS. Leadership training remains an important mission of the Church. Youth organisations which train leaders rather than choirs are an urgent need. New educational initiatives like the new Catholic University are of prime importance in this regard.

We also described the presence of the Kingdom in the praxis of the Catholic Church in South Africa in terms of the various themes presented. We collect the relevant headings below since they provide a summary of what we have discovered to be the relationship between the praxis of the Catholic Church in South Africa and the Kingdom of God.
• Alternative society model: The Kingdom is found in the Church.
• Statements of protest to government. The Kingdom is found in respecting human
dignity.
• Commitment and involvement in the socio-political struggle: The Kingdom is
found in solidarity with the poor.
• Catholic groups involved in the struggle against apartheid and injustice: The
Kingdom of God as a liberation praxis.
• The Kingdom of God in community ministries: From clerical to people’s
ministry.
• Racism in the Church: The Kingdom is not found in the Church.
• The African Church and inculturation: The Kingdom is found in African
cultures.
• Reconciliation and reconstruction: The Kingdom comes in healing racism,
discrimination and oppression.
• HIV/AIDS: Healing a new scourge for South Africa.
• Women: They are also full citizens of God’s Kingdom.

I do not agree with Nolan’s (1986:133) assertion that the “Kingdom of God is
so overlaid with many historical interpretations that it is very difficult to rework it
and give it the meaning that Jesus had in mind”. It is precisely the symbolic nature
of this term that provides its richness and also its ability not to be captured by any
one interpretation including the one we might believe to be the “correct” one. The
richness of symbol is its ability to transcend concept and history and so to connect
being and time from generation to generation. This is precisely the richness of
human culture and why no one community or age can capture all of the mystery of
God’s plan and destiny for us. This is also the true meaning of catholicity: a unity
which is rooted in, but which also transcends, all ages and all cultures. The rooting
of the Church in context and culture means that it is for each generation and each
group to “discern in the events, the needs, and the longings which it shares with
other men (sic) of our time, what may be the genuine signs of the presence and
purpose of God” (GS 11).

It means that the Church has to listen for the Spirit. Discernment is a necessary
aspect of being an instrument of the Kingdom. It also means being committed to the
context. The Church is the group of people that believes that within the events of
the day it is possible to hear God’s communication to us. This is the group that has
to reveal this communication to all people and then to act on it. This is the true
meaning of evangelisation and it also points to the active role of people in the saving
work of God as he sends the Spirit. This same Spirit is also a power to action
multiplying those human actions which are in accordance with God’s will (1 Cor
12). In this way the Church through the Spirit becomes a leaven in this particular
society, raising it up.

It also means openness to the universal. Africa is racked by factionalism,
division and splintering. There are over 5000 separate churches in South Africa
alone. The Catholic Church brings a particular Christian vision of lived unity within
cultural difference which is evangelical for much of Christianity here. The witness of trying to be one in mutual respect is important. However, it is clear that the Church must listen to the African voices within it who have been patient for so long. The Catholic Church continues to be controlled by white interests. The majority of the bishops are still white and a large number still expatriate. This is a tremendously challenge for us right now. The critique of Hulsen of a church that is overwhelmingly black being led by a leadership that is overwhelmingly white continues to ring true.

In *The things that make for peace* (TAC 1985:175) the role of the Christian was expressed as preparing the way for the Kingdom which is a work of God. I would argue that this too reflects a too passive instrumentality. I indicated earlier some of the reasons why in the South African cultural context such a notion militates against human responsibility for the state of things in the world. The incarnation is a more intimate participation of God in humanity than just agency. Christians, filled with the power of God in baptism, and committed in faith, live as Christ in the world. It is not I who live but Christ. It is this intimate mingling of humanity and divinity which is the Church and which marks the people of God out as agents of their own destiny. We are able to create our own future by our own decisions and then the Lord magnifies this creation to the extent that we live in his light and the Kingdom is amongst us. In the English understanding of the word (for it too is cultural) instrumentality as a model ultimately fails. It makes the people of God too passive. People in South Africa who participated in the struggle know the power of human solidarity and human commitment to change the world. This is truly a marvel of God but one which requires our own agency. Without this we are merely pawns in the heavenly battle and the reality of the incarnation as God’s means for salvation is devalued.

NOTES

1 This research was completed while the author was Visiting Research Fellow at the Department of Missiology of the University of South Africa. It was presented at a meeting of the International Commission for Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue.

2 It is necessary at this stage to indicate the somewhat complicated system employed when referring to the ‘Church’ in this work. When referring to the One Church founded by Christ the term is capitalised and always singular: the Church. Similarly, capitalisation is employed when referring to the fullness of the Church as present in a place in a local Church, particular Church or new Church. Here, capitalisation is employed since these terms all refer to the One Church of Christ (see ch. 10). When referring to official names of churches, capitalisation is also employed but for a different reason viz. that proper nouns are capitalised: thus the Methodist Church, Roman Catholic Church, Presbyterian Church, and so on. In all other cases the lower case, church, is employed. Thus lower case is employed in phrases such as ‘mainline churches’. ‘Coping-healing churches’ and ‘African Independent churches’ as well as in sentences such as “The Roman Catholic Church is a church which stresses the role of sacraments”. In quotations we have followed the usage of the authors.
3 There is an encouraging growth in Catholic theological and missiological writings over the past 10 years. In the area of Christianity and culture see for example Makobane et al 1995: AAVV 2000; Bate 1995; Keteyi 1996 and also the journal, Grace and Truth, published by St Joseph’s Theological Institute, Cedara.

4 The quote is from the encyclical Mater et Magistra of Pope John XXIII.

5 Note that two distinct churches could be identified in this period: a “Settler church” for the whites and a “Mission church” for the blacks. Whilst an overall Catholic unity was maintained the reality was very much of two separate bodies with separate fields of endeavour, cultures and praxes (See Bate 1999a).

6 See for example Gremillion 1976.

7 Most of these documents are written without the gender sensitivity found in most current theological discourse. The original terms are retained where, in the opinion of the author, they present a better phenomenological description of what was being said. The weakness of gender insensitive expression is explicitly affirmed.

8 The reference is to John 23:34-35 found in the text as follows: “I have a new commandment to give you, that you are to love one another, that your love for one another is to be like the love I have borne you. The mark by which all men will know you are my disciples will be the love you bear for one another” (PL 1:16).

9 This was the day in which a protest by students against the introduction of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in all black schools was met with fierce resistance by the police. A number of people were killed and many were jailed. A period of intense confrontation between youth and police was initiated on that day which is for many the beginning of the final period of the struggle against apartheid. June 16 is now an annual holiday in South Africa dubbed ‘Youth day’.

10 The Kairos document was a 35-page document developed by a number of concerned Christians and theologians in 1985 to respond to the deteriorating social situation at the time. The document points to the role of Christianity in this crisis outlining a “State Theology”: a “false god” which has legitimised apartheid; a common Christian attitude dubbed “Church theology” which adopts a neutral position in the conflict; and finally a “Prophetic theology” which calls for the evil of apartheid to be denounced as the source of the conflict and justifies the mobilisation of democratic forces to overthrow it. The document justifies prophetic theology as the only legitimate theology in this time (van der Water 2001).

11 This ecclesial history is well known. See for example Villa Vicencio 1988.


13 For a number of articles on Nolan’s influence on Contextual Theology in South Africa and on the ICT see Speckman and Kaufmann 2001.

14 See Martin 1999 for a reflection on the changed role of the relationship between Religious groups and the state in the new dispensation as well as an agenda for the future including nine specific areas identified in the 1999 ‘Multi-Event’ conference which examined the role of religion in public life in South Africa.

15 Bishop Fulgence Le Roy, from the introductory address to the special consultation on matters of social justice and race relations at the plenary session of the Southern African Bishops’ Conference of 3-5 February 1977.
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NICHOLAS KING is a tutor in Biblical Studies at Campion Hall, Oxford University. He is the author of a number of books including *Setting the Gospel Free*, and *Whispers of Liberation: Feminist Perspectives on the New Testament*. He contributes a regular column on the Sunday readings in the *Southern Cross*, a South African Catholic weekly newspaper.

STUART C BATE is Professor of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry at St Augustine College of South Africa. He is the author of a number of books and articles in the areas of mission history, religious healing, inculturation and practical theology. He has lectured and given conferences in Africa, Europe and North America. He was consultant to the World Council of Churches on Healing in 2000 and 2002 and to the International Roman Catholic – Reformed Churches dialogue in 2001. He is currently a member of the international video conference for the theological updating of the clergy, held monthly by the Congregation for the Clergy. He can be contacted at +27 (82) 712 1047 or by email at scbate@aol.com

DR JAN JANS has been a member of the St Augustine College teaching staff since 2001. His other appointments include Assistant Professor of Moral Theology at the Tilburg Faculty of Theology – Catholic University of Brabant in the Netherlands and Invited Professor at the Theology for Ministry Summer Institute organised by the American College at Louvain, Belgium. He is a member of, among others, the European Association for Catholic Theology, the Internationale Vereinigung Deutschsprachiger Moraltheologen und Sozialethiker and the European Ethics Network. His main areas of interest within fundamental moral theology are images of God, personalism and ethical methodology, including feminism. Within applied ethics most attention is devoted to the interface between ethics and technology in medicine and in electronic media. A focus of ongoing research aims at exploring the concept of ‘neighbour’ as a hermeneutical key with regard to a characteristic Christian moral identity.
JOHANNES VAN DER VEN is the Dean of the Faculty of Theology, Nijmegen. He was President of the International Academy of Practical Theology from 1994–97 and President of the European Association of Catholic Theology from 1995–98. He is the author of a number of books including Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach, Education for Reflective Ministry and God Reinvented?. He is also the editor of the Journal of Empirical Theology, Series Empirical Studies in Theology and Serie Empirische Theologie.
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