Chapter 5

Church and state in Bophuthatswana: the time of transition (1990-1994)

5.1 Introduction

The future of Bophuthatswana was at this point no longer in the hands of one person. For the residents and citizens of Bophuthatswana the moment of truth had arrived. For the first time in the history of Bophuthatswana, people stood up to make their own choice about their future in politics as well as their freedom of religious association.

This chapter will look at how Lucas Mangope attempted to use the Christian religion to his own advantage in order to win the hearts and minds of the Batswana to maintain the Bophuthatswana government. For the ruling party and for its leader, it was clear that the writing was on the wall, as the future of Bophuthatswana was uncertain. Mangope's historical interpretation of the Batswana was proven wrong with the unfolding of the dawning of the new era in South Africa.

The Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) was a stepping stone to determining the future of the Batswana, especially now that they had begun to realise their role in making their own decisions. However, Lucas Mangope maintained that Bophuthatswana was historically not a product of apartheid but of British Colonial history. The ruling party, under his leadership looked at changing its name to being called the United Christian Democratic Party. It went on to claim that it was representing the Batswana at CODESA. He wanted Bop to be recognised in the same way as Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland whose independence was given them by the British Colonial Authorities.

With the Convention for a Democratic South Africa the government of Bophuthatswana was already aware of the direction of the blowing winds of change. In a bid to save the 'independence' of Bophuthatswana, the United Christian Democratic Party, led by Lucas
Mangope, sought an alliance with the Freedom Front, Inkatha and the Afrikaner Volksfront, the Conservative Party and the Ciskei. This Alliance was known as the Freedom Alliance. Its aim was to preserve the existence of apartheid and maintain the homeland structures. This alliance was to ensure that Bophuthatswana did not become reincorporated back into South Africa and that forms of communism and non religious movements were kept out of Bop.

When it was certain that South Africa was going to elect a new government, the situation in Bophuthatswana changed with the civil service coming to a standstill. The citizens took to the streets to protest the homeland state. Seeing that the situation was not under control Mangope sought assistance from the Afrikaner Volksfront. It came at a price after the invasion of Mmabatho by the Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging (AWB) in which some civilians were randomly killed. The other price paid dearly was the deposing of Lucas Mangope from leadership of the homeland state. This marked the end of Bophuthatswana as a state which was a surrogate of the South African government. It also marked the beginning of the new era bringing in a democratic dispensation, for the whole of South Africa.

5.2 New problems arise

On 6 December 1990 the homeland government of Bophuthatswana was celebrating its thirteenth anniversary of ‘Independence’ in Mmabatho. Bophuthatswana Ministers Fraternity had organised church services to be held throughout the homeland as thanksgiving (Pioneer: 1990, Vol. 12, No.4, 1). In the capital of Bophuthatswana a prayer meeting was held at the government building, known as Garona, to mark that anniversary of ‘Independence’. The purpose of the prayer meeting was to pray for peace, harmony and unity in the region. The service was followed by an address from President Lucas Mangope who took a stance about the envisaged new South Africa. In his address Mangope emphasised that he did not expect the changing times in South Africa to affect the basic value systems of Bophuthatswana. He pointed out that his government believed in and adhered to a free enterprise system which, he said, over the years of its experience
had remained the only system with a track record which had created wealth and instilled self-respect in people (Pioneer 1990: 1). According to him, this was a system that did reward one with input and effort.

In his own words Mangope said: ‘My Government is totally opposed to the idea of any forms of nationalisation. As it is often believed, a free enterprise system does not benefit only the elite or the rich. Free market forces also broaden and create the potential for the upliftment of the total population in all different spheres’ (Pioneer 1990: 1). He added that the citizens of Bophuthatswana had a very deep and abiding respect for the principles of human dignity and of equal opportunity. These values were rooted in their Christian faith and all the generations of human experience.

In other words Lucas Mangope was using the Christian message to convince the Batswana that it was necessary to be ‘independent’ and not return to the South African system. For Mangope there:

were many conflicting forces which were at work and were multiplying as the century was drawing closer. It was necessary for the nation to look beyond the realm of flesh and blood but to the realm of Spirit, where the real battle of the ages was taking place between Good and Evil. Lucas Mangope further went on to state that there was a need for spiritual and moral strength for the nation. Yet a nation which has Almighty God at its centre and its people inspired by a genuine, courageous Faith, can achieve what no other power on earth can achieve no matter how small or how overwhelming are the odds against it. Faith can move mountains. Faith counts for more today than ever before in the chronicled history of this world. Overnight it can open prospects of deliverance. There can be no doubt Christ said so, time and again. Since the day my people elected me to be their leader, I have committed myself totally to the execution of the command stemming from the Christian message, ‘Faith can accomplish all things’.

As long as we have faith we shall find solutions to our problems, and reconciliation will assuredly take place among the different people of this world.
As long as we have Faith there can be no doubting the dawn of a new day when we shall live together in peace and harmony, and prosperity. It matters not how impossible or absurd this may sound to unbelievers in our midst, and to those of little faith. It remains a fact. God’s Word is Truth and if we obey the conditions, He will do his part. Our part is to obey His commands, to love one another, to do what is right, to obey the rules and regulations of Bophuthatswana, for righteousness exalteth a nation, while sin is a reproach to any land (Bop Panorama: 1990).

For Mangope there was a need for a country to be Christian and have the church taking a lead in the state of governance, and as he puts it: ‘there is a country in Africa whose strength lies in God, whose peoples love one another, whose leaders recognise their need to pray to Almighty God for guidance and strength, and that country is Bophuthatswana’ (Panorama: 1990).

Mangope’s message was based on the text which came from 2 Chronicles 7: 14, which says: ‘If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and will heal their land’. Seeing that Bophuthatswana was on the verge of being reincorporated, Mangope was left with no idea as to how he was going to convince the Batswana to accept that ‘independence’ meant that they were now free and need not fear anything. Further than that the issue was only for Bophuthatswana to continue surviving and fostering new alliances in a changing Southern Africa, to ensure to the well-being of Bophuthatswana and all its people.

President Lucas Mangope added that he welcomed the initiatives that were taken by the South African President, Frederick Willem de Klerk, regarding the changing political climate in that country. Mangope was referring to the changes that were taking place regarding the dismantling of apartheid. He regarded the changes as creating the expectations in the minds of the people which were leading to tensions and violence as political parties and interested groups started positioning themselves in the race for a power base in the changing South Africa. He was also referring to some of the political violence spilling over the borders of Bophuthatswana. Mangope was not only concerned
with the political changes in South Africa. He also raised his concerns about the extension of the borders of Bophuthatswana, which he said was necessary.

For the government of Bophuthatswana and the ruling party, the future looked very bleak. There was a need to look for a miracle and their hope was now based on Christian principles as well as keeping their fingers crossed that there would be no reincorporation into the new South Africa. The uncertainty of the ruling party could be seen and heard in the speeches which Lucas Mangope made to the public, especially in Bophuthatswana. The mounting pressures could be seen but the party was defiant, declaring that ‘Bophuthatswana will be independent one hundred years from now’ (Jones 1999: 514). There also were diplomats from South Africa who felt that Bophuthatswana was a special case needing different treatment from other homelands. To maintain their position in Bophuthatswana, the churches were used as a podium to mobilise support, particularly from the ordinary people. It was also easier for the leaders of the United Christian Democratic Party to go to the different church denominations to talk to the congregations. In some cases notices would be announced to the congregants to attend a meeting either in the afternoon of the same Sunday or during the coming week. A large crowd would be expected to attend. This became evident a the meeting which was held on 15 March, 1991 in Mmabatho. At this meeting the South Africa-Tswana Association (SATSWA) added a wider concept of regionalism to Bophuthatswana’s ethnic rhetoric. This meeting was attended by about 320 people. Of these 120 came from Bophuthatswana state structures which included the university, parastatals, government, Mmabatho town council and some private sector representatives. The other 200 people came from South Africa including Afrikaner academics from Potchefstroom University, businessmen, representatives of mining interests and a significant number of white farmers (Jones: 1991; 516). The aim of the forum was to provide a greater bargaining power in the emerging constitutional negotiations which were to be held at the World Trade Centre in Kempton Park.

5.3 Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA)

In December 1991 Lucas Mangope like many other political leaders, addressed the
founding meeting of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa. The words that came from Mangope were that ‘Bophuthatswana is not the product of apartheid, but the legacy of British imperialism and colonialism that went wrong’ (Pioneer: February/March: 1992; 2). Mangope also emphasised that he, together with his people, (referring to the Batswana in Bophuthatswana) abhorred and has fought against the inequities of the system of apartheid with all their might. This led to Mangope presenting his version of the history of the Batswana. He said that their history goes back to the eleventh century at which time the Batswana were the inhabitants of the greatest area north of the Orange River and south west of the Zambezi River. This lasted until the time of the expansion of the missionary and colonial enterprises respectively (Pioneer:1992; 2). Mangope maintained that the expansion of the British rule among the Batswana contrasted with the way in which other British protectorates were treated. As a result of this they still had their ‘independence’. Reference was made here to countries such as Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. In return for this type of treatment, the Batswana were given an opportunity by South Africa to become a sovereign state. As he Mangope put it; ‘our sovereignty and freedom were unjustly and cruelly taken away from us by the British colonial government. We remoulded our people, who were scattered in groups and tribes over a wide area, and forged them again into a nation. We regained our dignity, our self-esteem, our sense of self-reliance and self-belief, acknowledging the wise and guiding hand of Almighty God.’ (Pioneer:1992; 2).

For the President of Bophuthatswana, there was no need to argue whether Bophuthatswana was independent or not. The reason was very simple. It could be found in its national anthem that ‘independence’ was given by God, without bloodshed, despite all odds. This was in spite of the calculations of the British rule and colonialism. Apartheid presented a very good opportunity for the ‘independence’ which Mangope had always been wishing for.

5.3.1 Is Bophuthatswana’s independence of a special nature?

Like the other ‘independent’ homelands Bophuthatswana was seen, particularly by South Africa, as being unique. This was also the case with the homeland cabinet ministers who
pledged to support Lucas Mangope irrespective of what changes were going to take place. In a meeting which was held on 26 March 1992 Mangope was instrumental in the construction of the history of the Batswana and its attempt to forge a new set of material interests between the various groups that were in the region (Lawrence and Mason 1994: 457). For Mangope, the tendency to lump Bophuthatswana together with other TBVC countries (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei) was an offence as he believed that there were ethnic differences between these states and that they differed in history, development, economy and achievements. Over and above this, Bophuthatswana had, according to Mangope, achieved ‘democracy’ unlike the other homeland states and were an ‘independent’ nation. Mangope was appealing to the Afrikaners, even suggesting to them that: ‘the Afrikaners and the Batswana share in many respects the same values, faith and norms. These commonalities were grounded in Christian principles and a respect for peaceful coexistence, underwritten by the principles of the free enterprise system and faith in our own traditions, our language and our history’ (1994 : 458). Mangope went even further using the Setswana idiom: fifing go tshwaranwa ka dikobo.\footnote{This is an old idiom: direct translation would be: in darkness we must hold each others blanket. However, what it means is that in times of darkness and difficulties people must hold each other and unite irrespective of what happens.}

In his explanation he said that this was a needed response to the political darkness and the uncertainty of the future which was not unique to South Africa at that time. He continued by resorting to the history of the Batswana when, together with the Griquas, and the Voortrekkers, they fought side by side with each other against the hostile ‘natives’ and ‘impis’ who were threatening the Church and Christian belief as well as ‘civilisation’. He emphasised the close bond which had existed between the Batswana and the Afrikaners in the past.

Mangope omitted to describe the situation in which the battles were fought and the political situation of that time. These battles were in many instances fought for the possession of land between the Batswana against the Boers and sometimes against the British colonialists. In other instances the Batswana were divided among themselves...
(especially towards the external pressures) while others sided with the Afrikaners to settle their scores with their rivals (Madise June 2002, Vol. 27, No. 1: 284). This indicates a falsification of the Batswana history as interpreted by Mangope as a way to win their trust and get them to accept the Afrikaners that they needed to guarantee the ‘independence’ of Bophuthatswana. This does not only create a false history and political background, but it also gives the impression that the Batswana were automatically Christianised at the time of the missions that were undertaken by Robert Moffat as well as David Livingstone among the Batswana (Madise 2002: Vol.27, No.1, 282).

Through the use of his own version of the history of the Batswana, Mangope appealed to the concept of alliance with the Afrikaners and support from them for his vision of regional cooperation. This was taken further with the formation of the Concerned South Africans Group (COSAG) which was composed of the Bophuthatswana United Christian Democratic Party, Inkatha, the Freedom Front and the Conservative Party as well as the military leader of the Ciskei Government, Oupa Gqozo. This coalition was formed mainly to fight the African National Congress and the National Party’s initiatives to bring about a new political atmosphere in South Africa.

In 1993 the ruling party of Bophuthatswana had firmly pledged its future to a national right-wing alliance. The focus of Bophuthatswana’s ‘independent’ politics was now shifting to that of the South African crisis. In spite of its national alliance, the ruling Bophuthatswana party continued to castigate their formal opposition (known as the National Seoposengwe Party) under the leadership of Victor Sifora (Lawrence and Mason 1994: 459). This movement of Bophuthatswana from homeland politics meant being a player in the politics of coalition with the Freedom Alliance and was a development in national political strategy. This alliance (the Freedom Alliance) was basically formed out of desperation by groups who were plagued by more fear of marginalisation than by a set of coherent principles.

Lucas Mangope was adamant that Bophuthatswana was not going to be part of the new South Africa, nor was he going to allow the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party to operate or to function in Bophuthatswana. Mangope
addressed the Northern Cape Agricultural Union. In his speech he said that should the above political parties be allowed, schools would become their political playgrounds (Seipone/ Mirror Vol. 4, No.30, 11 August, 1993: 1). He further added that his people would be used as pawns in the despicable game of power politics. He went on saying that churches in his country were not going to become the hotbeds of Liberation Theology, and streets were not going to become mass action battle fields (Seipone 1993: 1). What he meant by this was that communism was not allowed in a Christian state as both the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party were believed to be against Christian principles.

The other issue which was unacceptable to Mangope was the geographic provinces which had been created. He contended that this did not take into consideration ethnic identity (particularly of Bophuthatswana) because this would prevent them being masters of their own destiny. In support of his position, Mangope said that it was counter-productive to deny the rock hard reality of ethnicity in a situation similar to that of Bophuthatswana. Instead, these realities needed to be acknowledged, and ways and means sought to accommodate them in a constructive manner (Seipone 1993: 1).

Mangope then addressed issue of land ownership which, according to him, nobody seemed concerned about, either its conservation or its benefit to future generations. He opposed the belief that owning land was an answer to the injustices, discrimination and poverty of the past. In addressing the dominant union of white farmers he said that the land was being ruthlessly manipulated and that everybody was told throughout the country that they owned it in South Africa. For him, the truth as he saw it, was that the socialist elements were only interested in nationalising the land, not for the people but for the state. In his opinion, the individual’s interests were not protected in the way they would be in a free market system.

At the same time, Mangope, who was a member of the Assemblies of God Church, was approached by the Executive Council of that church. They presented him with a letter in which the church expressed its concern regarding his political welfare. The church felt that
there was a need to seek some accommodation with the African National Congress (ANC) as a means to avoid personal disaster for Lucas Mangope and to a certain extent the possibility of bloodshed in the country (Bond: undated, 114). However, while Mangope received the church with courtesy he did not listen to their advice. He was even advised privately by individual executive members about the determination of the ANC to crush him as well as the South African government (Bond: undated, 114). The anticipated situation in Bophuthatswana turned out just as the Assemblies of God Church had predicted. John Bond, who at that time was the secretary of the Executive Council of the Assemblies of God Church, personally felt that Mangope continued to ignore their warnings because he was prepared to accept the assistance of the right wing Afrikaners.

Subsequently political developments in Bophuthatswana concerning Mangope’s ruling party’s alliance with the right wing Afrikaners took a different turn. Eugene Terre’blanche, leader of the Afrikaner Weerstands Beweging (AWB) stated in July 1993 that he would defend that homeland state’s ‘independence’ against communists and keep out the evil socialist solution (Lawrence and Mason 1994: 460). The situation in Bophuthatswana led to these right-wing Afrikaners coming into the homeland to attempt to stop the collapse of the homeland regime.

5.4 Bop and the Afrikaner Right Wing alliance

In March 1994, South Africa was about to experience its first free and fair democratic elections. However, the uncertainties in the Bophuthatswana government had made the situation so tense because of its ‘no reincorporation attitude’ that civilians took up the responsibilities of ensuring that their dream of being part of a liberated South Africa was realised.

At that stage Bophuthatswana was one of the crucial remaining links in the Freedom Alliance’s effort to resist majority rule and the creation of a unitary state. At the same time, while there was clear defiance Chief Lucas Mangope was also weighing other options besides Bophuthatswana’s stance of ‘independence’ or nothing. There were further
indications of preparations for a new South Africa. There were attempts to secure the minority and material interests, which came with the awarding of government contracts to a consultancy firm which was called Q-projects (Jones 1999: 523). The contracts were intended for voter education in 1992 and 1993 with the possibility of a referendum on reincorporation and Bophuthatswana’s participation in the April 1994 elections. Contrary to the intentions of the contracts, the government of Bophuthatswana used the money which amounted to R6 million, to popularize and promote its own ruling party (the Bophuthatswana United Christian Democratic Party). There were further funds which were added to the R6 million whose sources were unknown and amounted to R10 million. These additional funds were paid to the Bophuthatswana United Christian Democratic Party and this money was sanctioned by the National Security Council of Bophuthatswana.

Mangope’s defiance was further fuelled by his insistence on the history of colonialism in which he claimed that the Batswana were divided through the British Protectorate when they (Britain) annexed the Southern Batswana into the Cape Colony and not into Bechuanaland. This was making Mangope more determined to maintain that Bophuthatswana was not part of South Africa. However, he failed in his mission to ultimately defy reincorporation into the new South Africa (Jones 1999: 524). Lucas Mangope made an error of judgement when he put his faith in the Afrikaner Volksfront. They too had put their faith in him, as a champion of separate ethnic development. In support, the Afrikaner Volksfront even offered to provide armed back-up in the event of conflict within the Bophuthatswana territory. This supported Mangope’s obsessive defence of Bophuthatswana. This led to a situation of frustration where Batswana ultimately entered into a strike by civil servants who demanded a 50% pay increase. At the same time increasing concerns regarding state employees’ pensions, based on rumours that the state was intending to use the funds to maintain the support of the security forces in Bophuthatswana (Jones: 1999, 524).

The 11th March, 1994 saw the protests of the civil servants accompanied by a political demonstration on the streets of Mmabatho with students and residents taking part. Lucas Mangope realizing that he had no control over the people in the homeland, resorted to
using the Freedom Alliance and called on the Afrikaner Volksfront militias. The Afrikaner Volksfront included the Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging who was under Eugene Terre’blanche. The support from these Afrikaners for Mangope was the last straw for the security forces of Bophuthatswana, who withdrew their support for Mangope and the ruling party. The Volksfront subsequently invited the Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging to Mmabatho, claiming that most of the Volksfront people were not armed (City Press 20 March, 1994). Their statement claimed that what took place in Mmabatho i.e. the killing 30 unarmed civilians who were randomly shot, was perpetrated by the Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging. One Afrikaner from the Volksfront even commented in a newspaper that:

_The AWB are nothing but rabble who know nothing about soldiering. I doubt if any had ever served in the army. If they had they must have done nothing but kitchen duty. I am proud to be an Afrikaner and want a Volkstaat but I am not a racist like the AWB. They thought that with pistols they could take on the well-equipped and disciplined Bop Army. They thought that because they were white the Bop soldiers would be intimidated and flee. How wrong they were! (City Press 20 March: 1994)._ 

Shortly after this invasion into Bophuthatswana by the right wing Afrikaners in support of Mangope and the ruling party, and the killings of civilians, the South African soldiers were sent into the area. Lucas Mangope was officially deposed from his presidency of the homeland by the Transitional Executive Council (TEC) (City Press 11 March, 1994). In spite of this outcome Mangope continued to maintain that he had been robbed of his position as the leader of an autonomous state.

The situation in Bophuthatswana did not end with Mangope’s deposition. Three of the Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging members were shot dead by a security officer of Bophuthatswana. This incident was challenged by the church as it took a stand against the killings of the three and the other victims who were killed by the Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging (The Star 23 March, 1994). This was seen as evil by the South African Council of Churches who condemned these actions and stated that such evil must be rooted out.
It even became clear when some people stood up and said that there were ordinary people who allowed themselves to be used by God to save the multitudes from a certain death. However, this was seen as a failure which the church did not take seriously until the situation was worsened with the invasion of the Afrikaners at the invitation of chief Lucas Mangope. The main concern raised was: could the church through its leaders not take action and persist until its members join in fighting against apartheid and its creation of homelands? (The Star 23, March, 1994). This meant that the church at that time in Bophuthatswana was not powerful enough to raise its voice together with the masses and make it possible for the people in Bophuthatswana to join in the struggle for re-incorporation into South Africa, as the people tended to achieve their demands through mass action.

In spite of this, the church was not left completely behind in unfolding events, and new developments were taking place at that time. At the Catholic Church in Phokeng Village (Bophuthatswana) near Rustenburg the recently ordained bishop Kevin Dowling found himself a target of ‘shoot the priest’ on March 21, 1991 (Grace and Truth Vol. 11, No.1: September, 1991). Bishop Kevin Dowling was the target and there were also other church leaders who became targets for shooting by Bophuthatswana police. Many people were injured and one was killed as they were participating in a non-violent protest march against the ‘independence’ of Bophuthatswana. For Bishop Dowling the situation posed a challenge as it meant being with the people of God in the struggle for political freedom.

From Dowling’s perspective, his being part of the struggle for the liberation of the people of Bophuthatswana in Phokeng meant him being a servant for Jesus and fulfilling his ministry. This ministry was to affirm and encourage the people to share their gifts and personhood to build the reign of God and the church (Grace and Truth 1991). Dowling also said that the experience itself showed the cause and commitment of the people and their belief in a disciplined and peaceful pursuit of their cause. The Catholic Church in Phokeng found the action by the police to have been provocative, especially as the protesters were not violent. For the Catholic Church, this was a challenge which needed its involvement particularly in the context of fear of power amongst groups of people and individuals.
Bishop Dowling further found it a challenge that in his diocese, part of the church was in Bophuthatswana while the other part was in South Africa. This was a distinctive situation because the church was composed of two societies which were both of the rich and the poor, the oppressed and the oppressor. He felt that whatever the responses and policies they were making as the church, it should always be close to the poor and the minority groups. He made it very clear that the church must not lose its sensitivity to the overall political situation and at the same time it must remain the church which was truly going to evangelise the poor and the oppressed. As a church there was no need to impose from above and for the people to contribute to the justice and recognition of human rights to create a better future. Rather, the church needed to see itself as a humble servant and must identify with and be part of the poor and the oppressed people coming to an awareness of their human dignity; their rights as individuals and a community (Grace and Truth 1991). In conclusion Dowling saw the church in Bophuthatswana as being part of a journey and the struggle to achieving the goal of a non-racial, truly democratic, just and peaceful society as well as serving the needs of its members.

5.5 The collapse of Bophuthatswana and the Transitional Executive Council

After the collapse of Bophuthatswana, on 10 March 1994, and the removal from office of its President Lucas Mangope, the government of South Africa, through the Transitional Executive Council, decided to appoint Mr Job Mokgoro as the director of Civil Administration of Bophuthatswana until the first democratic elections. This became an indication of a paradigm shift from what Lucas Mangope thought was the ‘legitimate independence’ of Bophuthatswana when many of the Batswana people came out of the closet to express their freedom of association. Despite this paradigm shift, there were still a few people who remained loyal to Mangope and his former Bophuthatswana ruling party,
which at that point had registered to take part in the first democratic free and fair elections of South Africa.

Soon after the collapse of Bophuthatswana, Mangope was accused of corruption. The problem with Lucas Mangope was just as John Bond (undated: 114) says, that had he heeded the call from the Assemblies of God Church, things could have possibly been different and not the way they were after the collapse. In this manner the Bophuthatswana ruling party found itself in the cold and Lucas Mangope in particular no longer had the support by many of his cabinet ministers except a few who remained loyal to him. The Assemblies of God Church felt that at the time of the negotiations there were confusions and uncertainty and that in 1994 the country was also teetering on the edge of a blood-bath (Bond: undated, 115). At the same time it was the wish of the church that more calm and more wisdom could have prevailed in Bophuthatswana in the negotiations and that a better decision could have been made.

5.5.1 The aftermath of the 1994 elections

The democratic elections saw the curtain finally falling upon Bophuthatswana as it had been. It was given a new name and new borders which excluded Thaba-Nchu. The latter was now incorporated in the Free State Province. The new boundaries now formed North West Province. This included most of the areas that had comprised the former Bophuthatswana with some of the new areas including Klerksdorp; Potchefstroom; Delareyville; Lichtenburg as well as other areas which were previously part of the Western Transvaal. After the 1994 elections many of Mangope’s previous cabinet ministers and leading civil servants lost their jobs. These people expressed their anger through boycotting business with the Bophuthatswana National Development Corporation (BDNC). Civic associations and organisations were being formed in and around some of the towns in the former homeland. In the rural areas some chiefs, who had been previously appointed by Mangope, were forced out of office and the rightful ones were being re-inaugurated. Despite these changes not all expectations could be met. There were some mixed feelings towards the demise of the old style of governance and the emergence of new structures.
taking place in South Africa with traces of ‘Bophuthatswana’ (Jones: 1999, 525).

Substantially all the people who supported Bophuthatswana politically and economically had not benefited in any means. This was the case with some ministers from the historic churches, the independent churches and the charismatic churches who did not want to be seen as part of public politics. In the historic churches, the situation in some of them was simply that some resigned from their ministries and, churches while others took secondment and others absconded from the church to work in the government of Bophuthatswana. It became a problem for them to be readmitted back to the church as ministers as they were no longer considered to be in the church.

Following reincorporation, it became clear that the petty bourgeoisie were in favour of the African National Congress (ANC) or the National Party. The public servants were beginning to identify with the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Some professional people were not happy with the ousting of Lucas Mangope and the collapse of Bophuthatswana and were describing him as a ‘good man’ claiming that he had achieved more for the region and the Batswana than anyone in the past or possibly even in the future (Jones: 1999, 526). Rural people, professional people, state employees and the older generation were sympathetic to Lucas Mangope, his political party as well as his cabinet ministers and they were possible allies to the homeland leader during the elections. Many of these people from the rural areas had faith in Lucas Mangope for he had committed himself to Christianity; as a result the thought of a state without religion never passed through their minds. At the same time the church was quiet about the political changes that were taking place. The voice of the Bophuthatswana Ministers Fraternity (BOMIFRA) was also no longer audible, neither were there calls for gatherings to address the state of affairs in the church in the region.

One of the greatest problems after the collapse of Bophuthatswana, was the threat of unemployment of civil servants during the transition period. Civil servants claimed that they were being overlooked for promotions by officials appointed by the African National Congress, who brought with them their own teams. These changes were threatening the
employment of many people with the radical down-sizing of the structures within the civil service (Jones 1999: 526). The civil servants in Bophuthatswana were also demanding parity of wages which to their disappointment brought with it the higher level of taxation from South Africa. The extravagancy in housing, cars and entertainment allowances enjoyed in Bophuthatswana was to be withdrawn. Employees in other sectors of Bophuthatswana were beginning to illustrate the problem of reincorporation with the loss of the assets which they worked for. A good example of this was the Bophuthatswana Television (Bop TV) which was the only news station independent of the state-owned South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). The station became a centre of controversy over its location in Mafikeng as well as over its status regarding the centralisation of government assets.

5.6 First ANC government in North West Province

The former Bophuthatswana coup leader of 10 February, 1988, Rocky Malebane-Metsing, was appointed the head of the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs of the North West Province. He anticipated becoming the provincial leader of the North West province as he believed that he understood the Batswana and their interests better than others. As a result of the choice of Popo Molefe over Malebane-Metsing for the provincial leadership, the latter made some false accusations against the former. A year later (1995) Malebane-Metsing was dismissed from the African National Congress due to intra-organisational conflict (Jones 1999: 528). The situation of the North West province was exacerbated by the personalised and paternalistic politics of Mangope over a period of twenty years, as the Batswana were nurtured into ethno-nationalism. It was visible in distrust towards the new administration and ‘outsiders’, bordering upon the xenophobic because ‘they did not know them’. Popo Molefe (a Motswana himself), who was a provincial leader, had gone through the same experience as he was regarded as an ‘outsider’ from the urban South Africa. The government buildings in Mmabatho were associated with Lucas Mangope and not seen as state buildings belonging to the South African government in spite of the downfall of the homeland government. This was the result of the long period of dominance by the Bophuthatswana United Christian Democratic Party
which had consistently influenced the Batswana to believe that the region belonged only to them. The success of the former ruling party of Bophuthatswana was no longer an issue after the elections, due to the report of the Skweyiya Commission which discredited Mangope after its findings about the state of affairs in the former Bantustan during its existence. The only power-base which the Bophuthatswana United Christian Democratic Party had was mainly in the rural areas and not in the towns around the province.

At the end many of all the structures which had existed in Bophuthatswana were disappearing while some of them were coming back in a different way. A good example of this was the Bophuthatswana Ministers Fraternity (BOMIFRA) which had supported the homeland government. The interesting thing about this ministers, movement was that it split, which resulted in the formation of a new movement. The new movement, that was born in 1998, was known as the South African Ministers Fraternity (SAMIFRA) under the leadership of Rev Dr Daniel Matebesi. These events saw a change in the constitution of the United Christian Democratic Party as well. Churches which had previously supported the homeland state of Bophuthatswana were no longer behind them as the state was now no more. The result for the formation of the South African Ministers Fraternity implied distancing themselves from the Bophuthatswana United Christian Democratic Party while the old Bophuthatswana Ministerial Fraternity had slowly disappeared from the picture. In spite of all this, the South African Ministers Fraternity has not moved away from supporting the United Christian Democratic Party which was under the leadership of Lucas Mangope (Matebesi: unpublished document). The United Christian Democratic Party states that it ‘acknowledges the POWER of GOD and believes in the inalienable right of Freedom of Religion’ (United Christian Democratic Party Constitution). This has led to the United Christian Democratic Party slightly shifting its focus from the former Bophuthatswana region, though they still had a strong feeling that they could win the North West Province. As a result, both Lucas Mangope and his loyal supporters still believe that they have a chance of winning the confidence of the Batswana with the concept that they had once created an infrastructure which afforded them opportunities like employment and education under their government of Bophuthatswana. For the United Christian Democratic Party, the experiences, of the past seem not to have damaged their reputation as people who once
bowed down to apartheid. The churches, especially the historic ones, have managed to pull through the transition and the independent churches have also done the same. However, the individual members who supported the homeland government have found themselves not being accepted in the main by the members of their churches, especially in positions where they could assume a leadership role. This situation was not found only in the independent churches, but in the historic churches as well. However, membership of these individuals in the church was not taken away. The historic churches always remained members of the South African Council of Churches, even though some of their stations were situated in the homelands. They did not lose their membership of the organisation as they believed that the Bantustans were a creation of the apartheid system which they opposed.

5.7 Conclusion

After the release of many political leaders and the return of many exiles to South Africa, the government of Bophuthatswana found itself wanting, knowing very well that some of the former prisoners and exiles were previously from within that homeland. These challenges were difficult for the Bophuthatswana government and attempts were made to resort to Christianity as an ideology and to a capitalist style of political structure. For the homeland government this was a way in which they felt they could deal with what at that time, they, together with the then South African government, referred to as communistic and unchristian from position of African National Congress and the South African Communist Party. At the same time, for Bophuthatswana, these influences could not be allowed to infiltrate the churches that were in their territory in the form of the South African Council of Churches because of its support for the liberation movements. To do this, the Bophuthatswana Ministers Fraternity was used to organised some church services to pray for the homeland’s leadership and its continuity. This indicated some uncertainty to the homeland’s authorities and to South Africa about the future of the Bantustans.

In the traditional way of doing things in Bophuthatswana, the beginning of the talks through the Convention for a Democratic South Africa and its participation, led to the
Bophuthatswana Ministers Fraternity calling for a prayer day for the leaders of the homeland when they were going to participate in the talks. The leaders of Bophuthatswana clarified that they were not going to discuss the future of Bophuthatswana but to help South Africa solve its own political problems and instability. Bophuthatswana’s leaders believed that their ‘independence’ was not negotiable and that their participation was a matter of courtesy to South Africa as they (SA) were the ones who were going through a difficult time of political instability. Even at the World Trade Centre in Kempton Park, Mangope was adamant that the ‘independence’ of Bophuthatswana was not due to apartheid but to colonialism which came through the British Protectorate. In spite of the situation in Bophuthatswana the South African Council of Churches continued to give support to its member churches that were in the homeland and to encourage them to continue their involvement in the struggle for the total liberation of the country from all forms of evil. Many of the member churches in the South African Council of Churches never recognised the ‘independence’ of Bophuthatswana. The affiliation of churches in terms of their historic origin was also playing a role in the politics of South Africa and some political figures were using this situation for their own political gain, as in Bophuthatswana. Examples of this could be seen in some individual ministers from the historic or mainline churches who decided to be part of the homeland government as well as the ministers of some independent churches using their churches to support the state.

Another contradiction was the alliance with the Afrikaner Volksfront that made many people question the autonomy of Bophuthatswana and Mangope’s interpretation of the history of the Batswana. For many people who were opposed to Mangope, the last straw was him seeking assistance from the Afrikaners as this meant being sold out for the second time to the same oppressors. This was not far from the truth with the call for ‘assistance’ from the Afrikaner Volksfront when Mangope realised that the writing was on the wall. It was this action which led to Mangope losing favour among many of the Batswana: some of whom were his loyal supporters while others were those who directly opposed him.

However, the end of the Bophuthatswana homeland state did not bring to an end the political future of the United Christian Democratic Party. The party continued to campaign
for the municipal elections and took a part in the larger South African politics. The leader of the party, Chief Lucas Mangope was ousted from the role of president of Bophuthatswana, by the Transitional Executive Council of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa. Mangope decided to continue to take an active role in politics even though he was not going to be actively involved at the level of national politics. However, he remained actively involved in the province. Despite with the changes that were taking place in South Africa, the United Christian Democratic Party did not give up its Christian principles not its attachment to politics. its members opted for amendments to their constitution to bring it into line with the new political dispensation in South Africa.

One could only come to the conclusion that neither he nor his party have yet accepted that their role in politics ended on the day there was ‘civil disobedience’ in Bophuthatswana. For the United Christian Democratic Party to try and resurrect itself will be a difficult task as the politics of today are different from those of the past where the church and religion were used by politicians to win the hearts and minds of the people for their own ends. Many people began to see through party politics particularly those which attach Christian sentiments to their constitution, misusing Christianity for their own benefit. They are also discriminating against other religions which are active in South Africa. This means that for a party like the United Christian Democratic Party the future looks very uncertain. Churches have also moved on from identifying with the state and have decided to conscientise the state on issues which affect South African society. Historic Churches and the Independent Churches have also come to terms with the fact that they can no longer look at each other as having different origins but as mutually belonging to the Church of God. The churches have had to come to grips with the fact that they all belong to one body of Christ, hence today they all belong to the ecumenical body of the South African Council of Churches.