

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Throughout history the relationship between church and state has been problematic and it has in either way, depending on whether they both have good or bad relations. The church has in different instances been caught in a situation where could not to play its prophetic role because it was forced to pay allegiance to the state. The liberation of the church Constantine and Theodosius led to both Christianity and the state sharing the same platform in a two road. The pope was able to run the state affairs while the empire could do the same in the church. In some instances this led to the conflict between both institutions during Pontifical monarchy. The pope was not prepared to accept the empire as the head of the state, while the empire used his powers to depose the pope from being the head of the church. This means that the church may find itself on the receiving end with the state if the relationship is that of prophecy or it may be a very close one, if other is in supporting of another. An example of this situation goes back to the Constantinian era in which the emperor was able to call the church councils to debate the doctrinal matters which the could not resolve on its own. Further than this was the acceptance of the emperor at the communion table with the pope and the bishops in the church in the early middle ages. The reformers picked up this asa problem and resolved the there should be a separation of church and state. Though a separation of church and state was finally accepted during the reformation it did not stop other countries from taking the relationship serious. The post reformation period saw the emergence of new trends coming up to address church and state relationship. These trends were, however, without any problems as it became apparent that it was not going to be easy for either side to let go of the relationship which they both got accustomed to. Some of these trends included a position of the church as independent from the state, others meant none involvement in supporting or opposing the state while others accepted the role of the church as that of prophecy. In spite of all this, some countries had not learned from history about the relationship of church and state. An evidence of this situation could be seen the context of Germany and

South Africa where the church collaborated with the state. The situation of the holocaust left many Jews being killed in the concentration camps as they were going through the oppression by the state that was ruled by Adolph Hitler. A similar situation was experienced in South Africa with apartheid and the church supported what was happening. It was difficult for the Dutch Reformed Church to be prophetic against apartheid and remind the state of its responsibilities and roles. This has turned the church into a toothless institution which said nothing about the wrongs it was doing to the people. It did not help the Dutch Reformed Church as many of its members were either state agents or Cabinet Ministers in the government.

Over the years this trend has shown in history that in some situations there may be overlaps especially when the state is involved in church matters or the church is heavily involved in state matters. Further than this it becomes more complicated when there is a theological justification for the relationship between church and state. Bophuthatswana became a new phenomenal example of the modern era of the 20th century produced by a government which was regarded as illegitimate by the majority of its inhabitants. It was in context of apartheid and further discrimination on the basis of ethnicity that this trend of church and state relationship in Bophuthatswana was inherited from South Africa to further discriminate the discriminated by using Church. As a surrogate of the apartheid state, Bophuthatswana had no choice but to follow in the footsteps of the big brother. This time the discriminator turns the discriminated into a tool and thus apply double force against himself and his own people. As a result Bophuthatswana thought the idea of 'independence' and a religious state would set Batswana free from apartheid when in fact it was deepening apartheid. The church was another means which was to be used to soften the hearts and minds of the wounded people. In the same breath as in the case of the Dutch Reformed Church supporting the South African government and its politics, it was the same with Bophuthatswana. However, the situation was fuelled to suit the bigger context of South Africa through the rejection of the South African Council of Churches by Bophuthatswana claiming the autonomy of its status as a legitimate government. This situation gave rise to a new division of the church on the grounds of territorial advantage through the use of some African Independent Churches against the mainline churches and

the ecumenical body. The creation of Bophuthatswana Ministerial Fraternity was a means to discourage the South African Council of Churches and its affiliates from operating freely and being the prophetic voice of the voiceless. This did not take away the power of the church's prophetic voice away as it continued to do so. One good example of the state and church conflict was Transkei which like Bophuthatswana was a surrogate of the South African government under apartheid, tried in vain to silence the church. The Methodist Church of Southern Africa went through the experience of being forced out that homeland, and the new denomination was created under Chief George Matanzima who was the Prime Minister in Transkei. The results of this was the fleeing of the church ministers who remained faithful to the prophetic voice from the homeland. Bophuthatswana became a unique context in which some ministers in the church joined the government and even went as far as justifying their role in the state as ordained by God. This did not only create problems for the church as it did to the state as well.

The problems around the idea of a Christian state are that it becomes difficult for the church to be prophetic as it will side with the powers that be. For South Africa today, it is important to be a secular state than to embrace any religion. Bophuthatswana set a very good example of ministers from the church supporting the state and being unable to be prophetic. The same ministers in the church were also ministers in the government. It made the situation difficult for them as they served the two masters. Theologically and scripturally the ministry refers to servitude while in social and political terms this means power. As a result the prophetic voice was kept silent Bophuthatswana and thus the masses were left without any prophetic voice from the church reminding the state of its obligation. Theologically and scripturally, a minister is called to take up a duty to proclaim the good news to the poor, liberation to the oppressed and freedom to the captives. It is the duty of the church and its ministers conscientise the state to fulfil its mandate of offering the services to its citizens like housing, employment, better life for all and empowerment. The secular understanding of ministry simply means being put into office by the powers of the world and exercise the same power to rule the people. Ministry in the church should therefore be that of prophecy while that of the secular world should be left to the powers of this world. The church must always remember to be at arms length with the state and not

embrace each other. Bophuthatswana as an example, showed that the two ministries will never in anyway be the same, as one is a call to serve the people of God while the other is about power over the people. It is important for the ministers of the church to remember that theirs is a calling while cabinet ministers exercise their powers to rule the people. This also lead to the context of the church talking about the use and ownership of the land.

In many parts of the world, land has become a serious issue which has left many civilians in conflict situations. The church should not get involved in matters affecting the land. The South African Church had in the past owned the land to the detriment of the civilians who were not provided for with resources to live on it. It is the duty of the church to ensure that people have access to the land and its resources. The task of the church and its prophetic voice is to remind the powers of this that the land belongs to God and all that is on it. However, the resources that is in it are to be shared equally by all the people. People are and will always be stewards of the land and they have the responsibility to make use of the land to the advantage of all. For South Africa today, the imbalances of the land use in the past must be addressed to empower all its people. The duty of the church is to remind the state of the fact that land cannot be owned by people but that it can only be occupied. In this context the church is supposed to advice on matters of land occupation that the traditional method of the kings and chiefs was a better one as it meant that the land can only be used to share the resources equally. The kings and the chiefs had the headmen assisting them with land allocation to people who needed to use it either for grazing and tilling the soil. However, this has changed to mean that some individuals can own the land and the resources that is found in that land. In some cases this can be seen particularly in the mining sector where it is the owners who get to enjoy the resources without sharing with the rest of the people occupying that piece of land. The issue of land means that people in authority should be the custodians of the land and have to look at allocating it equally to the people to occupy and not ownership. Ownership will mean control and exploitation of the resources found in the land by those who will be owning that piece of land. Therefore it is important for the leaders to ensure that resources can be shared by all the people equally. A good example of the occupation of the land by people can be seen with the Bafokeng clan near Rustenburg where they have managed to equally share the resources

of the land they are occupying. Due to the mineral resources which are in that land it became easier for those people to know that the resources belongs to all who occupied that land which is what stewardship of the land mean about sharing, hence the saying that the land belongs to God and people are occupiers.

The good relations may be influenced by through some ministers or the church being involved in matters of the state. The other problems can be seen in the church promoting the division of races and influence the state to continue with it. The creation of the homeland system in South Africa was even deeper than racial discrimination. People were not only going through separation on the basis of race but it further involved the ethnical division of the black people based on language and culture. Looking at the 'independence' which was given to Bophuthatswana and others like Transkei, Ciskei and Venda could only mean one thing which was divide and rule. The Dutch Reformed Church in collaboration with the state did not see anything wrong with this and blessed the system as being good for black people to govern themselves. However, many churches did not loose focus of their prophetic voices as they continued to preach the gospel of unity and not division. Some of these churches (mainline churches) particularly in Bophuthatswana, were viewed as embracing Communism.

The idea of a Christian state created problems in the past because it had been difficult for the church to actively play its prophetic role. Bophuthatswana set an example where it made it difficult for the church (especially those which were on the side of the state) to take its place as a prophetic voice for the voiceless, because it found itself serving the secular master and the Divine Master. The church leaders and ministers in democratic South Africa need not do the same but take a lesson from Bophuthatswana that ministry is about serving and committing ton the one master. The church can only remind the state of its role and obligations as well as the promises it made to the civilians during the election time. This further means that the church must not be instructed by the state on some of the issues which need to be addressed. One example of that is the state mandating from the state about the Moral Regenerations. This is the matter which need to have been picked up by the church from the beginning and not the state, and the church is supposed to have acted

immediately. South Africa today is a secular country and therefore does need to recognise one religion above the others. The church need to reclaim its position in the religious arena as a moral institution, the conscience of the state as well as the voice of the voiceless people. The church does not need to endorse what the state is doing but remind it of the political role it owes to its people. It should not be a situation where the two are collaborating in matters which affect the people and the church is found not taking its position of reminding the state of its responsibilities towards the civilians. As a government its responsibilities are to serve the people while the church is there to keep it on the toes. The church is supposed to be on guard and not to be rubber stamping everything the state is doing. The church unlike the state is closer to the people and has more knowledge of the situation on the ground. The church encounters what people are going through daily and can therefore be able to know and understand their problems and the church as a caring institution has this obligation to remind the state. The church today must re-look at allowing some of its ministers from being appoint to the position of the government and the sate need to also look at appointing the ministers of the church to the government positions. The voice of the voiceless is to be heard through the church of God.