

Power sharing and secular spirituality

*Cedric Mayson*¹

Formerly from the ANC's Religious Desk

The need for power sharing

*Power sharing is crucial for our Earth and country.
Human problems demand the sharing of political,
economic, social, scientific, cultural and religious power.*

We live in the bush.² Sitting on our stoep on a dark night is an enlightening experience. The sky is extravagantly speckled with stars, the planets of our own solar system, the rest of our galaxy, then millions more galaxies light years away in space. But no people.

Our nearest neighbour is Proxima Centauri, and going flat out in a space ship it would take twenty-five thousand years to get there. But there is no life on the way. We are the only place inhabited by life for millions and millions of miles in all directions.

We Earthlings, this community of human beings, form a unique, almost incredible reality which took several billion years to form and is only becoming aware of the wonder of itself in our lifetime.³

We grew up as patches of people, living in racial and national patches, doing the things of political and economic patches, dressing in the clothes of our patch, speaking the language of our patch, practising the customs of our cultural and religious patch, believing in the god of our patch, trapped and vying for power with Earthlings on the other patches. Many of us still are: scurrying round like ants in and out of our patch, doing our competitive national, racial, religious, financial thing, with no recognition of our unique role as Earthlings inhabiting this exceptional planet.

We have plenty of patches contesting power inside South Africa. And outside: Zimbabwe, Kenya, the Congo, Somalia, Palestine-Israel, Sri Lanka, India, the Middle East, the un-united nations, riches and poverty, atomic weapons, political posturing, economic possessions, water shortages, diminished resources, climate warming, the population explosion, religious power seekers ... all seeking power over other patches.

¹ Guest Researcher, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.

² Parts of this paper reflect my unpublished memo *Agenda for Earthlings*.

³ For example, Bill Bryson. *A short history of nearly everything*. London: Black Swan. Doubleday, 2003.

This quest for power sharing is a spiritual matter. Kgalema Mothlante says:

The struggle against apartheid was not only about the transfer of political power from a minority to a majority ... but about a fundamental shift in the dominant values of society ... From a society characterised by the relentless pursuit of individual enrichment we are seeking to build a society that promotes the common good. From a society driven by greed we are trying to build a society driven by solidarity and generosity.⁴

Nelson Mandela called it the RDP of the soul.⁵ Values, understanding, heeding others, Truth and Reconciliation, honesty, patience, generosity, happiness, peace, care, compassion, the vision of a healed Earth, are essential factors of any sharing of power, and deeply spiritual concerns. An agenda for moving beyond the power of the patches commands the soul role of Earthlings.

The role of religious institutions

Religious institutions claim a spiritual role denied by their assertions of exclusivity. Christians are self-excluded from power sharing because of their post-Jesus insistence that Christ was God.

Religion has always claimed a dominant role in spiritual life but, in hard fact, religious institutions have invariably been firmly tied to the economic and political elites of their particular patch. The major conflicts of religious institutions which bedevil Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, and agnostics, glaring at one another from patch to patch, do not come from Moses, Isaiah, Amos, Zoroaster, Jesus, or Muhammad, but from the priests who came after them. The doctrines and superstitions of the priests have distorted the inspired proclamations of the prophets.

Reza Aslan writes: "Muhammad's revolutionary message of moral accountability and social egalitarianism was gradually reinterpreted by his successors into competing ideologies of rigid legalism and uncompromising orthodoxy which fracture the Muslim community

⁴ Address to the ANC CRA in June 2007.

⁵ Reconstruction and Development Programme.

and widen the gap between mainstream or *Sunni*, Islam and its two major sectarian movements, *Shi'ism* and *Sufism*.⁶

Hinduism had no founder: it emerged in India many centuries before the Common Era; it has given to the world some of its most inspiring literature and greatest prophets, but institutional confusion and conflict abound.

Jesus's Way is of immense importance, but Christianity is clearly a distorted version of the Good News of Jesus of Nazareth. He never claimed to be God, whatever the emperor Constantine and the councils thought at Nicea (325CE) and Chalcedon (451CE): he gives no basis for teaching that other believers will go to hell; he offers no justification for his followers to war with one another and everyone else. The quest for power by Christian institutions, linking themselves to the political and economic elites of their age, has produced the disastrous confusion of conflicting churches. The modern concern for ecumenism shows no sign of uniting denominationalism.

All religions have prophets, saints and holy scriptures, but the religious institutions demonstrate power conflict, not power sharing. There is neither scriptural nor theological justification for the conflict between Hindus and Muslims, or Muslims and Jews, or Christians with everyone else including themselves. These are the inadequate juvenile squabbles of religious patches, not the concerns of adult, evolving Earthlings.

A generation ago Professor R H Tawney recorded:

The quality in modern societies which is most sharply opposed to the teaching ascribed to the Founder of the Christian Faith ... consists in the assumption ... that the attainment of material riches is the supreme object of human endeavour and the final criterion of human success. Such a philosophy, plausible, militant, and not indisposed when hard pressed to silence criticism by persecution, may triumph or may decline. What is certain is that it is the negation of any system of thought or morals which can ... be described Christian. Compromise is as impossible between the Church of Christ and the idolatry of wealth, which is the practical religion of capitalist societies, as it was between the Church and the State ideology of the Roman Empire.⁷

⁶ Reza Aslan. *No god but God*. New York: Random House. 2005, xix.

⁷ R H Tawney. *Religion and the rise of capitalism*. London, Pelican. 1938, 280.

It is equally certain that the religions of the 21st century are grossly compromised by this ideology of wealth, and their commitment to support the power structures which keep them in the money.

Sharing power is anathema to traditional people in the religious institutions. It ensured the oppressive Christian role in colonialism and apartheid; its failure as church to join the struggle for liberation from apartheid (except perhaps saying it was naughty); its reluctance to take part in CODESA (Convention for a Democratic South Africa), the NRLF (National Religious Leaders' Forum) and MRM (Moral Regeneration Movement). Religious institutions need liberating.

The role of prophets

The sharing of vision, values, and commitment to power sharing is a spiritual matter which concerns the soul role of Earthlings, led by the prophets.

The Earthlings who have led the way in spiritual power were the prophets. It is the proclamations of the prophets which originated the spiritual power of humanity, not the doctrines and superstitions of the priests who followed them. Prophets were not people who foretold the future, or lived in a dream world, or derived their power from positions of authority. Albert Nolan spells it out very clearly.

Prophets are people who speak out when others remain silent. They criticise their own society, their own country, or their own religious institutions. Those who criticise hostile nations or foreign religions are not called prophets. The prophets are men and women who stand up and speak out about the practices of their own people and their own leaders – while others remain silent ... the tension or conflict is between authority and experience. The prophets are not part of the authority structure of their society or their religious institutions.⁸

Prophets appeared in many places. They were spiritually alert and aware women and men who were at home in the secular world, with the vision and values necessary to break down the barriers between the patches, and discern the true strengths of humanity in sharing power.

⁸ Albert Nolan. *Jesus today - a spirituality of radical freedom*. New York, Orbis Books. 2006, 63.

The curse of civilisation

The central error of civilisation was to separate spiritual from secular powers. Neither primal religions nor the prophets committed this spiritual apartheid. Secular spirituality is crucial for power sharing today.

Homo sapiens appeared on Earth first in Africa, and the truly Great Trek of Earthlings round the globe took place 90 000 to 100 000 years ago. Those who left Africa to populate Earth did their evolution thing of pigment, race, tribe, nation, talking, singing, drawing, writing, hammering, building, cutting, forging, cultivating and inventing one civilisation after another, most of which were filled with wonder and promise.

In a dry dock in Mossel Bay is a replica of the wood and canvas caravels in which Vasco da Gama sailed to South Africa and in the foyer of the Howard Library at Witwatersrand University you can see the actual stone cross, held together with iron straps, which Bartholomew Dias planted on the dunes to claim this land for Christ half a millennium ago.

When the wanderers scrambled back to Africa the Europeans brought with them many wonders – from ploughs to philosophy, quinine to fertilisers, and writing to cell phones – plus a supreme devastating mistake which is now proving fatal to Earthlings.

Civilisations made a disastrous separation between the sacred and the secular. They invented religions which divided persons and communities into spiritual and material aspects. It unbalanced and antagonised them as both persons and communities.

European colonialists saw no signs of religious structures, and dubbed Africans 'heathen'. They were looking for a religious apartheid, a separate category of existence, and it wasn't there. Instead of encouraging the comprehensive spirit of Earthlings, civilisation invented religions which set them in conflict with one another, promoting competition instead of cooperation, and self-centred aggrandisement instead of compassion. Religious institutions cooperated with economic and political institutions to turn evolution backwards, making people soul-less animals seeking to eat one another. It was caused by the quest for power and control on the part of individuals and elites in the political, economic and religious institutions, which only the development of democratic people power would overcome, then still centuries ahead.

The Earthlings who remained in Africa did not do that. For African Earthlings the spiritual and the secular went hand in hand, they were all of a piece. "The African has a sense of the wholeness of life.

In traditional African religion there is no separate community of religious people because everyone who participates in the life of the community also participates in its religion,” writes Luke Pato. Nokuzola Mndende says: “Religion amongst Africans is not treated as an isolated entity. It is dealt with in a broader context since it permeates all sections of life of both the individual and of the society.”

Civilisation chopped humanity up into separate concerns, putting the ‘spiritual’ and ‘secular’ in charge of different institutions. It removed the focus on moral and transcendent responsibility from everyday practical concerns. Consigning spiritual approaches to specialists in religious institutions instead of incorporating them as political and economic imperatives has been – and still is – the major curse of civilisation. The spirit liberates: religions often oppress.

This was a major concern of the South African Kairos Document which critiqued the failure of the Church in the struggle against apartheid.

Spirituality has tended to be an other-worldly affair which had very little, if anything at all, to do with the affairs of this world. Social and political matters were seen as worldly affairs that have nothing to do with the spiritual concerns of the Church. Spirituality has also been understood to be purely private and individualistic. Public affairs and social problems were thought to be beyond the sphere of spirituality.⁹

Many African languages have no word for ‘religion’: it does not exist so is not called anything. It is not a separate category but a way of handling life that everyone shares. Nor is there a word in the European languages for ‘ubuntu’. Western words like ‘human-ness’ are pressed into service, for this relationship and acceptance of one another in the sacred-secular experience of Earthlings. “It speaks of the essence of being human,” says Desmond Tutu. ‘Ubuntu’ is the human response to one another which all can experience. It does not have to be spelt out in religious terms at all.¹⁰

As with the prophets, this wholeness of human experience is the source of vision and values to rescue Earthlings from their competitive patches; it gives them the ability to stand on the two legs of secular and spiritual power, and enables them to share power.

⁹ Kairos Document.

¹⁰ It can be, of course. ‘Ubuntu’ is what the great saintly writers of all religions are portraying – despite their huge problem of relating their experience and writing to the spiritual apartheid of their inherited religious institutions.

Secular spirituality

The shared vision, values and commitment to a spiritual secularity is the common ground of power sharing, which liberates us. It can be an agnostic spirituality and a powerless secularity.

Many sensible people in our age find the divisive powerlessness of religious institutions de-inspiring – though they may be too indoctrinated to say so. Whether they become chilly agnostics, or overheated superstitious fundamentalists, they need to rediscover spirituality as a secular experience.

We are all spiritual creatures: body, mind and spirit in community: but we are not all religious and do not have to be. Religions have helped some, but the blunt and brutal truth is that these institutions are designed to promote the activities, words, services, rituals, superstitions, beliefs, oppressions, subserviciencies, structures, finances and pensions of their own patches, if necessary with violence, and are unwilling to rediscover themselves and become Earthlings. Religions need to be born again.

Those who liberate themselves from the inhibitions and divisions of the religious patches and heed the prophets of humanity, side by side, discover a great unity.

In the run-up to the 1994 elections WCRP-SA¹¹ initiated a Panel of Religious Leaders, which produced a Liturgy for Interfaith Prayers for Peace and Unity. It called people of faith to come together to pray before the elections, and included side-by-side quotations from the scriptures of all religions on the subjects of:

- the unity of our human being
- the struggle of good against evil
- the personal experience of spiritual power
- a people discovering unity together
- a tolerant people
- a people of justice
- a transforming people in South Africa

It was simple to construct an order of service drawing on all scriptures because there is little spiritual conflict amongst the prophets. They share the power of their vision and speak with one voice of goodwill on the values of people from north and south, east and west, for the last

¹¹ South African Chapter of the World Conference of Religion and Peace.

30 centuries. This assertion of spiritual power and ability is shared by all humanity. It is the Earthling thing to do.

But in every case, within a few generations, the insight of the prophets has been taken into religious institutions, co-opted and corrupted by the pressure of economic and political elites, and turned into the destructive and disputative doctrines and demands of patches of power.

It is still so today. The people of religious institutions are constantly reminded of their differences from other people, and urged to maintain them. Many still identify with the archbishop of Canterbury a century ago, who refused to attend the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago in 1893, because “of the fact that Christianity is the one religion. I do not understand how that religion can be regarded as a member of a Parliament of Religions, without assuming the equality of other intended members and the parity of their position and claims.”¹²

It is because religions refuse to follow the truth that makes them free that many seeking spiritual power in secular affairs leave religious institutions and rediscover the power of humanity through agnosticism.

The word ‘agnostic’ was invented in 1869 by the prophetic scientist Thomas Henry Huxley, during the ferment of intellectual activity released by the discoveries of science, in robust contention with the attitudes of inherited mediaeval religion. He felt swamped by all those about him who were “-ists of one sort or another: and I ... the man without a rag of a label to cover himself with”. Some friends maintained that, like the second century gnostics, they could profess sparks of divine knowledge, so Tom came up with ‘agnostic’.¹³ He professed agnosticism not as a rival creed, but as a method of enquiry.

Agnosticism does not imply un-spiritual. The human success story of love, joy and peace, the competence of compassion and cooperation, are rooted far deeper in Earthlings than instruction in a confirmation class or the prescriptions of rabbi or imam. The ethical and moral power we need to share responsibility for transforming society can be immensely strong in non-religious people too. It is the Earthling thing to do. Agnostics have no cop-out clauses to divert their attention from the certainties of Life on Earth to the maybes of Death in Heaven.

Innumerable doubters, sceptics and agnostics have made positive inputs into the spiritual life of humanity¹⁴ and the modern world is full of what professor Martin Prozesky calls ‘freelance believers’. The

¹² Marcus Braybrooke. *Pilgrimage of hope*. London, SCM. 1992, 12.

¹³ Adrian Desmond. *Huxley*. London, Penguin Books. 1998, 374.

¹⁴ A N Wilson writes of many in *God's funeral*. London: John Murray, 1999.

major need in South Africa today is for agnostics to liberate themselves from negative criticisms of medieval religion to explore the positive promise of a secular spirituality.

Celebrating the centenary of Gandhi's launch of Satyagraha in 2006, constitutional court justice Albie Sachs wrote about 'the greatest factor' in South Africa's liberation:

We had in this country an amalgam of cultural and spiritual ingredients that provided a profound philosophical setting for peaceful change. It was a case of ubuntu meeting Satyagraha meeting an international tradition of struggle for revolutionary change. The result was something that has evolved and become deeply rooted in the temper of our people. As Gandhi showed through his life, idealism is sustainable in the real world. It needs only to be backed up by real commitment by millions of ordinary people.¹⁵

It was a secular spirituality. People with faith in the potential of spiritually powerful Earthlings go hand in hand, whether they focus that belief through Jesus, Muhammad or Karl Marx. The Original Goodness of care and compassion is rooted far deeper than the Original Sin postulated by some religions (but not by the prophets). It arises from something deep within our nature. It is the Earthling thing to do.

Earthling community has a power which can no longer be confined to human patches. The prevailing attitude of religions is to sit in the political and economic patchworks, trying to protect their own interests. The major need for liberated Earthlings is to regenerate their spiritual power in secular affairs.

Secular power is not rooted in secular position. It is not necessary to go into politics or become a giant of finance or wield academic authority to be a power sharer. Gandhi didn't. Biko couldn't. Ordinary mothers and fathers, workers and voters, old and young, can embody the secular-spiritual way of life of the prophets. It is the Earthling thing to do.

People who reject religion and then proceed to reject spirituality have to be reborn with the common sense to recognise that the prophets did not throw out the spiritual baby with the religious bathwater. Nor should we. The need for an alternative approach to sustain power sharing is not far in the future, but now, now, now.

The need for an alternative

¹⁵ Proceedings of Gandhi Development Trust, 2006.

Peoples' quest for alternative ways of belief and power shows in both the so-called 'post-religious age' and in those who have succumbed to the fundamentalist superstitions espoused by some Muslims, Jews, Hindus, and Christians of the George Bush genre.

Both West and East have recently seen a massive rejection of religious institutions which dubs this the 'post-religious age'. Dr Elizabeth Harris of the British Methodist Church welcomes it as a divine initiative to liberate us from colonial religion.

There is much to value in our religious heritage both for individual and collective inspiration. Many sources and techniques of shared and healing power need to be shared, but they are often buried deeply beneath centuries of accumulated cultural dust, whether in mosques and temples and synagogues, or the practices and language of hymn books and church services.

We need an alternative vision, leadership and practice to face the power struggles of today. We are indoctrinated to accept the oppressive structures of religious apartheid which confines spirituality within medieval, colonial and fundamentalist superstitions; by the patches of politics restricted by its quest for personal power and the practice of corruption; in the acceptance of global economic systems designed by the owners of capital for their own satisfaction, whatever the moral depravity of denying the poor the enjoyment of Earth's fullness; to the oppressive domination of communication patches which compel people to think in subhuman terms; and the continuation of ecological practices which will terminate human life and eliminate Earthlings during the latter part of this century. It is a desperate need for alternative ways to bring spiritual insight and secular expertise together to change the structures of power.

Secular spirituality for power sharing

What factors drive a vanguard Earthling Movement of spiritual secularity to secure the sharing of power for human liberation? The time, the focus and the method.

It is informative to examine history for movements driven by the practice of spiritual power in secular concerns, which led to a sharing of power between the patches, and a new awareness of peace and prosperity. We can learn from examples such as the Jesus' people, Mohammed's people, the people called Methodists, and the Christian Institute (CI).

Three main factors emerge in a secular-spiritual approach to power sharing

- The time must be ripe.
- Change comes from the community.
- The prophetic method is proclamation.

The time must be ripe

Each of these examples came at a Kairos moment, when the time was ripe. Jesus came at a crucial moment in the life of the Roman Empire when both Jews and Gentiles were looking for an alternative. Albert Nolan writes:

It was by focusing their attention, and becoming fully aware, of the political, social, economic, military and religious tendencies of their time that prophets were able to see where it is all heading ... In Jesus view, it would only be a matter of time before the Roman armies felt sufficiently provoked to attack and destroy Jerusalem.¹⁶

Jesus knew the time was ripe for change.

So did Mohammed 600 years later. The Arabic world was seeking renewal but neither Jew nor Christian, lost in internal conflicts of religious institutions, offered any leadership. Reza Aslan says:

It was an era of moral depravity and religious discord: a time when the sons of Ismael had obscured belief in the one true God, and plunged the Arabian Peninsula into the darkness of idolatry ... The Shaykhs of Quraysh had become far more interested in maintaining the apparatus of trade than in caring for the dispossessed.¹⁷

The time was ripe for change.

Eighteenth century Britain was in a similar plight. The Anglican, Catholic, and Protestant churches were locked in seemingly irreconcilable conflict; the early commercial capitalist systems, prompted by the Industrial Revolution, were indulging in what R H Tawney calls 'an orgy of financial immorality'; the Evangelical Revival, wedged between the American and the French Revolutions, was beginning to challenge

¹⁶ Nolan, A., *Jesus today*, 65.

¹⁷ Aslan, R., *No god*, 5, 31.

the prevailing notion that 'trade is one thing, and religion is another'. The time was ripe for new approaches.

The 1960 apartheid shootings at Sharpeville triggered consternation, but none of the patches knew what to do about it. Repression was rife, enforced by police and army; politics was stifled amongst whites and banned amongst blacks; fear ruled business; the churches were divided and without hope or vision; and the time was ripe for Beyers Naude and the Christian Institute to bring a new dimension to the situation.

Change comes from the community

The second factor prompting secular spirituality in power changing is the recognition that change comes from below, from the people who are requiring a wide and deep spiritual involvement in secular and social affairs, a democratic, people-based, grassroots transformation which affects religious, political, economic, social and ecological life. It does not come from the elite.

Jesus was born of a young girl who believed that "God stretched out his mighty arm and scattered the proud with all their plans, brought down mighty kings from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly." Jesus believed he was called "to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, and announce the year when the Lord will save his people".¹⁸ He was as critical of the wealthy priestly families who profited from the temple finances, as of the self-centred merchants. His parables turned the concepts of economics and responsibility upside down.

Muhammed's revelation in the cave at Mount Hira began with the awareness of God as good and close and merciful, but was deeply concerned with changed relationships. Reza Aslan records:

[His message] dealt almost exclusively with the demise of the tribal ethic in Mecca. In the strongest terms Muhammad decried the mistreatment and exploitation of the weak and unprotected. He called for an end to false contracts and the practice of usury that had made slaves of the poor. He spoke of the rights of the underprivileged and the oppressed, and made the astonishing claim that it was the duty of the rich and powerful to take care of them. It was not friendly advice: it was a warning. God

¹⁸ Luke 4:18.

had seen the greedy wickedness of the Quraysh and would tolerate it no longer.¹⁹

One of John Wesley's most famous remarks, "The world is my parish", has more than geographic significance. His preaching and emphasis on what he called scriptural holiness required major involvement in the relief of poverty, in healing, with the sick, in education, in the anti-slavery battle, and the later emergence of community-based politics. His practices were in many ways forerunners of modern democracy. The time was ripe.

Time was also ready for the Christian Institute which moved from Bible studies about race and justice, to support for AICA, SASO, BCM²⁰ to critiques of the church, and to support for those engaged with the ANC and PAC in the liberation struggle. Beyers Naude pointed out that the true power of change and renewal always emanates from the grassroots, the faceless mass who are never acclaimed but without whose support and action no meaningful change ever takes place.

Brian Swimme, the cosmologist, recognising that life on earth has suffered the cataclysmic threat of extinction five times before, believes that hope lies in understanding that at the root of things is not individualism but community in a global sense, and that is what religion should be teaching.

The whole world today is stirring for change to bring spiritual insights into secular activities of the human community. Secular spirituality means a fundamental change in the purpose and structure of religious, economic, political, social and ecological systems. It is the Earthling thing to do.

But what makes it happen? What kicks a secular spiritual revolution to promote the sharing of power? It is not organisation, or money, or authority, or tradition ... It is proclamation.

The prophetic method is proclamation

Jesus went into Galilee "proclaiming the Good News from God".²¹ Mohammed was told to "Proclaim to them what you have been commanded."²² Wesley rode on horseback round Britain for forty years proclaiming a secular spirituality which contributed to the power sharing of emerging democracy which later transformed the UK and

¹⁹ Aslan, R., *No god*, 40.

²⁰ African Independent Churches, SA Students Organisation, Black Consciousness Movement.

²¹ Mark 1:14.

²² Qur'an, 15:94.

the USA. The CI began with a man who left his black gown hanging over the pulpit in his church, and went out to the media and the printing press, the universities and the political parties, the sermons and conferences, and the conversations in his back garden after he was banned, to proclaim the vision and values of a new way of life of power sharing, the secular spirituality of a post-apartheid community.

The time seems ripe today for the prophets of secular spirituality to proclaim that we can liberate ourselves from poppycock religions, poppycock economics, poppycock politics, a poppycock media, and a poppycock ecology. They are the Five Horsemen of the Apocalypse, bringing about the collapse of humanity as we know it. That change is inevitable. The power sharing of secular spirituality is vital to empowering the evolution of Earthlings in these five areas.

Earthlings no longer have room for the irrelevance, obscurity, and superstitions of mediaeval, colonial, or fundamentalist religious institutions. We stand no hope of further evolution until the community has rid itself of the iniquity of the control of the economy by the rich. Our problem is not the bribed, but the bribers; not with the corrupted but the corruptors.

Al Gore, commenting on the power play of the wealthy amongst the media and the politicians writes:

Now that the conglomerates can dominate the expression of opinion that floods the minds of the citizenry and selectively choose the ideas that are amplified so loudly as to drown out others that, whatever their validity, do not have wealthy patrons, the result is a de facto coup d'etat overthrowing the rule of reason. Greed and wealth now allocate power in our society, and that power is used in turn to further increase and concentrate wealth and power in the hands of the few.²³

We face the certain demise of humanity unless unprecedented efforts are made to share our power to liberate Earthlings from ecological destruction now.

These five empires, like all empires, are collapsing, with disastrous threats to the human community. Either we transform them, or we collapse with them. The global economy is currently on the way down, with massive attempts to patch it up and retain it, rather than liberate and replace it. Religious institutions show little sign of sharing spiritual power to save the community. Obama has been elected to

²³ Al Gore. *The assault on reason*. London, Bloomsbury. 2007, 99.

produce political change, and is already locked in a massive struggle with the US status quo.

If the time is ripe for the prophetic South African community to engage in a secular spiritual renewal, triggering the patches to share power to liberate our nation and continent, the way ahead is to proclaim it.

Earth itself insists that we take ecology seriously: the hurt will force us. E-mails and cell phones put communication in the hands of the community (even if some media can be liberated). A new approach to politics is struggling to emerge, especially in Africa, realising that power sharing does not mean perpetuating the artificial barriers imposed on us by colonial corruption and oppression, with its dictators controlled by the bidding of global manipulators, but in releasing the ubuntu power of united compassion and cooperation deep in our communities from Cape to Cairo. The attempt to bail out the current economic system by using the next generation's money to maintain the capitalist patches will end in a far greater economic collapse which the rich as well as the poor will feel, when the only answer will be a truly developmental economy rooted in the power changes which ubuntu demands. Many will suffer.

This paper cannot detail the changes which have yet to emerge. Its task is to proclaim that Earthlings will liberate themselves through sharing power, rooted in a process of spiritual secularity. It will not come from institutions committed to preserve the past, but from prophets emerging from amongst all people of faith, religious or not, who are being liberated. Small communities of liberated people are coming together already, communities whose inspiration is not the SACC (South African Council of Churches), WCC (World Council of Churches), AACC (All Africa Council of Churches), WCRP (World Conference on Religion and Peace), the United Nations, or the World Bank, but such groups as WSF and SAFCEI, and perhaps UNISA?²⁴

Like the earlier prophets, their calling is far more than a message of doom. It is a surging faith, an exuberant hope, that a spiritual secularism can bring the changes to liberate and share the power in our structures, transform the human experience, and save the Planet. It is the Earthling thing to do - and Africa will lead the way.

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²⁴ World Social Forum and the SA Faith Communities Ecological Initiative.

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