

RICHARD AMBROSE REEVES: BISHOP OF JOHANNESBURG, 1949 TO 1961

by

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SUMMARY

Richard Ambrose Reeves was appointed the Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg in 1949, a year after the Nationalist Party's accession to power. Reeves's stance as a reconciler is assessed against the background of apartheid and its implementation between 1949 and 1961. Emphasis is laid on how his theological background and beliefs moulded his attitude and actions.

It is argued that Reeves laid just as much emphasis on reconciliation of people to God as between persons. The former according to him should precede the latter if there is to be social betterment.

His evangelistic work is balanced against his numerous social concerns. These include: ending of the Alexandra bus boycott, opposition to Bantu Education, solving the housing problem, helping the accused in the Treason Trial and speaking on behalf of the victims of Sharpeville.

Thus his work as a Christian reconciler relates to society as a whole.

Key Concepts

Ambrose Reeves, reconciliation, Christian, Church, apartheid, Government, Africans, Whites.

INTRODUCTION

Richard Ambrose Reeves was the Bishop of Johannesburg in the Church of the Province of South Africa from 1949 to 1961. In 1958, he wrote to his diocese:

We must act as agents of that reconciliation which our Lord perfectly exemplified in his life, death, and rising again.... We must draw men into the reconciled and reconciling, the forgiven and forgiving, the redeemed and redeeming community of faith.¹

Because his life commitment was to reconciling individuals to God and to one another, the purpose of my dissertation is to examine Reeves's work as reconciler during the period of his episcopate.

'Reconciliation' is defined by the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* as the act of 'bringing together in friendship those who have been estranged, the establishment of a relationship of peace instead of enmity'. For Reeves, this meant that establishing a peaceful understanding between each individual and God was of prime importance since it led to friendliness towards others in the place of hostility. Reeves explained the above process in an article which appeared in *The Outspan*, December, 1950:

The Church exists in the world to bring men into the presence of God and to believe confidently that a new love and new charity will thereby be found in them.²

¹. *The Watchman*, November 1958.

². Church of the Province of South Africa (C.P.S.A.) Archives, Reeves Papers, A.B. 388, Box 14.

By 'new charity' he meant experiencing a caring, friendly attitude to all other individuals. Bringing people into the presence of God meant reconciling them to God from whom they had become estranged: instead of being God's adversaries they would be at peace with Him, knowing that their sins were forgiven through Christ's death on their behalf:

This thought of reconciliation is at the heart of the Christian gospel. The problems that face us are all problems of reconciliation for the solution of which the spirit of humility and self-sacrifice is an essential condition.³

The reconciled one, preached Reeves to ordination candidates in December 1954, had God's Holy Spirit working within 'to enable [him or her] to practise goodness towards others'.⁴ He expands upon his philosophy of reconciliation in the following way:

Our life must be a sharing in life as it is disclosed at Calvary, a living response to the saving death of Christ, to live in his will of condescending love. The cross demands a change of heart, a reversal of will and new mode of action - a Divine revolution must be actualized in us.⁵

If there is no living response to the expiatory death of Christ, that is, no sacrificial kindness to others, there is no genuine belief in God and thus worshipping Him becomes meaningless. To

³. *The Watchman*, November 1958.

⁴. Ordination Candidates' Retreat, Bishop's House Chapel, Johannesburg.

⁵. *The Watchman*, November 1953.

endorse his own argument, Reeves quotes Bishop Frank Weston, Bishop of Zanzibar:

It is folly, it is madness to suppose that you can worship Jesus in the sacrament and Jesus on the throne of glory when you are sweating him in the bodies and souls of his children.⁶

A consideration of the various stages of Reeves's life shows how the attributes necessary for his work as reconciler evolved. One such characteristic was stability. Over the years he built up a sure conviction. He was not one to keep changing his basic beliefs. His personal relationships were stable too: he maintained friendships and enjoyed a happy family life, both when young and after his marriage. Another of his attributes was fortitude. Determination to succeed was manifest throughout the different phases of his life. His main aim was to foster the God-person relationship by bringing people into harmony with God and one another, and he remained resolute in this regard. Understanding was essential. This necessitated the ability to listen to, and appreciate, different points of view without compromising his own beliefs. It also included having knowledge (concerning the facts of a situation), and wisdom (a combination of common sense and prudence). Above all, humility and self-sacrifice were required. These attributes, which began to show themselves in Reeves's childhood, were well developed before his arrival in Johannesburg in June 1949.

⁶. Address to the Social and Industrial Council, April 1950, *The Watchman*, May 1950.

From a review of the books, articles, official and unofficial publications consulted for this study, and from my chapter outline, it will be observed that Reeves's reconciliatory work is evaluated within a broad social context rather than within the narrow confines of the Church itself. Political concerns, as well as economic factors and their social impact, are analysed to assess their effect on the Anglican Church in general, and on Reeves's conciliatory mission in particular.

Southey takes issue with much South African Church history writing because it lacks this broader perspective. He stresses the critical importance of 'history from below', which for him includes an awareness of the political economy, the community and the individual. He underlines the crucial importance of the years 1950-1960 in South African history and complains of the paucity of Church history covering this period, especially as regards the 'social conditions of the time, economic change and intellectual and cultural currents in society'.⁷

Bojé, in his master's dissertation on Church history, expresses similar sentiments and pleads for the church historian to give full weight to the sociological circumstances that have shaped the past. According to him there should be an integrated study of church and society. He cites a few Church histories that follow this approach, but claims that, on the whole, they are

⁷. Nicholas Southey, 'History, Church History and Historical Theology in South Africa', *Journal of Theology for South Africa* no. 68, September 1989, p.15.

silent on the subject of the Church in interaction with its environment.⁸ In an attempt to take these methodological imperatives seriously, my dissertation tries to place Reeves not merely in the context of the white South Africans, who formulated the legislation and controlled the major church denominations that originated in Europe, but in the context of South Africa as a whole. He is taken out of a purely Church framework and placed nearer the centre of a broader and more complex social history, where religious concerns play an important role. This seems to accord with Southey's verdict that: 'The history of the Church remains integral to the history of Southern Africa and is best served within the mainstream of history.'⁹

As a result, the sources I have consulted have been historical, political, legal, sociological, educational, and philosophical, as well as of a church nature. British and South African historical literature has been scanned, first to understand Reeves's formative years in the Church of England, in the United Kingdom, and for a short period in the United States of America; and then to contextualise his ministry in South Africa during the apartheid years up until 1961.

This has entailed resorting to general histories of British society. Among the many consulted were those of Lloyd¹⁰ and

⁸. T.G. Bojé, *Ecumenical South African Historiography: Towards a Transcontextual Approach* (unpubl. M.Th. dissertation, UNISA, 1991), p.100.

⁹. Southey, 'History, Church History and Historical Theology in South Africa', p.16.

¹⁰. T.O. Lloyd, *Empire to Welfare State - English History 1906-1967* (London, Oxford University Press, 1979).

Medlicott.¹¹ Both cover the period when Reeves was studying and working in Britain and Europe. They give insight into the moulding of his thought and character from a political and social point of view, a factor which later impacted upon his episcopate in Johannesburg. Regarding South Africa, Davenport's work,¹² which gives a detailed analysis of the effect of the laws promulgated in the late 1950s on all South Africans, proved more helpful than that of Muller,¹³ which concentrates on the enfranchised minority. Marks and Trapido,¹⁴ writing in the collection of essays edited and introduced by them from a neo-Marxist perspective of class struggle, adopt a different approach. In this collection the importance of religion in social relations is played down and Christian belief interpreted as an extension of a broader political ideology shaped and controlled by capitalism. This approach, nevertheless, does help explain some of the problems encountered by Reeves, which were due partly to the result of rapid industrialisation in a capitalist-cum-nationalist society. As a Christian Socialist, Reeves was attuned to the needs of workers generally. Amongst those in South Africa, religion played an important role. It is interesting that at present the importance of private religion as a motive for

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11. W.N. Medlicott, *Contemporary England 1914-1964* (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1967).
 12. T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa. A Modern History*, 3rd ed. (Johannesburg, Macmillan S.A. Ltd, 1987).
 13. C.F.J. Muller (ed.), *Five Hundred Years: A History of South Africa* (Pretoria, Academia, 1980).
 14. S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds.), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in 20th Century South Africa* (London, Longmans, 1987).

political thought and action is being stressed by an increasing number of historians,¹⁵ instead of its being 'widely presented as the flimsiest of ideological stucco on the imperial edifice'.¹⁶

Political works used in my analysis included Ashforth's study of Government Commissions of Enquiry,¹⁷ revealing their subtle bias and apartheid aims. Benson,¹⁸ Luthuli¹⁹ and Matthews²⁰ express their personal experience in relating the history of the African National Congress (A.N.C.). *Apartheid's Genesis 1935-1962*²¹ gives a revisionist view of apartheid, with much detail concerning the reaction of the Africans to the Nationalist Government and to the laws sanctioned by them - a

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15. Richard Elphick, 'Writing about Christianity in History: Some Issues of Theory and Method' (paper delivered at the 1992 Conference on Church History entitled, 'People, Power and Culture: The History of Christianity in South Africa, 1972-1992', held at the University of the Western Cape), p.1.
 16. A.N. Porter, 'Religion and Empire: British Expansion in the Long 19th Century 1780-1904' (inaugural lecture, London University, 20 November 1991).
 17. Adam Ashforth, *The Politics of Official Discourse in 20th Century South Africa* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990).
 18. Mary Benson, *South Africa: The Struggle for a Birthright*, (London, IDAF., 1985).
 19. Albert Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, 13th ed. (Glasgow, Collins, 1987).
 20. Z.K. Matthews, *Freedom for my People*, 2nd ed. (Cape Town, David Philip, 1986).
 21. Philip Bonner, Peter Delius and Deborah Posel, (eds). *Apartheid's Genesis 1935-1962* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1993).

matter which Reeves regarded with deep concern. A similar treatment is that of Lazerson,²² who focuses on White resistance to apartheid ideology. The history of the impact of Government apartheid laws on the coloured community is covered by Lewis.²³ This aspect also affected Reeves, who had coloured congregations in his diocese. Lodge²⁴ and Stadler,²⁵ political scientists, whose approach is historical, offer much useful material on the history of the African housing shortage in Johannesburg. Pirie and Hunt²⁶ write with insight concerning the Western Areas of Johannesburg before the removal. Van Tonder²⁷ deals with the history of the Western Areas Removal, in which both Reeves and Huddleston were deeply involved. Kenney's biography²⁸ of H.F. Verwoerd and the monograph by Schoeman²⁹ contain valuable material from the White liberal and Afrikaner points of view,

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22. Joshua N. Lazerson, *Against the Tide. Whites in the Struggle against Apartheid* (Bellville, Mayibuye Books, 1994).
 23. Gavin Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1987).
 24. T. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (London, Longmans, 1983).
 25. Alf Stadler, *The Political Economy of Modern South Africa* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1987).
 26. Gordon H. Pirie and Deborah M. Hunt, 'The Transformation of the Johannesburg Black Western Areas', *Journal of Urban History*, vol.11, no.4, August 1985.
 27. D.P. Van Tonder, *Sophiatown - Removals and Protest, 1940 -1955* (unpubl. M.A. dissertation, UNISA, 1990).
 28. Henry Kenney, *Architect of Apartheid: H.F. Verwoerd - An Appraisal* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 1980).
 29. B.M. Schoeman, *Van Malan tot Verwoerd* (Cape Town, Human and Rousseau, 1973).

respectively. Kenney, unlike Schoeman, delineates the harmful effects of Verwoerd's policies on Africans, Coloureds and Indians, as well as stressing the economic vagaries of the role he played.

The legal position under apartheid is aired by Brookes and Macauley.³⁰ Like Davenport, they give a more detailed analysis of the laws promulgated between 1948 and 1960. Their book has proved indispensable for its accuracy, and reveals the depth of Reeves's understanding of the oppressive laws put on the statute book while he was Bishop of Johannesburg. Sachs,³¹ a South African Marxist and a lawyer, deals with the race laws from the point of view of the Left, stressing their harmful effects on the unenfranchised workers. The annual surveys, published by the South African Institute of Race Relations and edited by Horrel,³² have been an essential source for gaining a knowledge of the apartheid laws passed each year. Articles by Karis,³³ Blom-Cooper³⁴ and Bloom³⁵ on the Treason Trial (1956-1961) helped me

³⁰. E.H. Brookes and J.B. Macauley, *Civil Liberty in South Africa* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1958).

³¹. E.S. Sachs, *The Anatomy of Apartheid* (London, Collets Publishers, 1965).

³². Muriel Horrel, *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1956-57* (Johannesburg, S.A.I.R.R., 1958); *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1957-58* (Johannesburg, S.A.I.R.R., 1959); and *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1958-59* (Johannesburg, S.A.I.R.R., 1960).

³³. T.G. Karis 'The South African Treason Trial', *Political Science Quarterly*, vol.LXXVI, no.2, 1961, p.238.

³⁴. L.J. Blom-Cooper, 'The South African Treason Trials: *R v. Adams and Others*', *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, vol.8, 1959, p.59.

in drawing conclusions from a mass of material, while Sowden's *The Land of Afternoon*³⁶ provided a personal touch.

Sociologists are represented in my reading list by, amongst others, Lever³⁷ and Posel,³⁸ whose books on South Africa concentrate on social conditions rather than on political figures. Posel is especially helpful as regards the influx control laws, which affected employment opportunities and the wage-earning of Africans. These matters were taken up by Reeves in his crusade for higher African wages. He was particularly interested in sociology, especially where it impinged upon economics. Lipton's book³⁹ filled this gap for me, since it highlighted how capitalism impacted on the African working class, during the apartheid era. Reeves, an erstwhile member of the British Labour Party with considerable experience of the working class in England, applied himself earnestly to this problem in South Africa.

The Nationalist Party, on assuming power in 1948, began immediately to focus on an area considered by its leaders to be of fundamental importance, that of education. Consequently,

³⁵. Harry Bloom, 'The Trial Takes Shape (III)', *Africa South*, vol.2. no.4, 1958, p.57.

³⁶. Lewis Sowden, *The Land of Afternoon - The Story of a White South African* (London, ELEK Books Ltd, 1968).

³⁷. Henry Lever, *South African Society* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 1978).

³⁸. Deborah Posel, *The Making of Apartheid 1948-1961. Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991).

³⁹. Merle Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid 1910-1984* (Aldershot, Gower, Maurice, Temple and Smith, 1985).

during Reeves's episcopate, cataclysmic changes took place in this area. Since Reeves was in the forefront of the battle against Verwoerd's Bantu Education policy, taking as extreme a step as to close down the Anglican Church Schools, rather than to have them controlled by nationalist policy, intensive study had to be undertaken concerning the far-reaching impact of the Bantu Education Act. Important research by Molteno⁴⁰ demonstrates that the change in African education brought about by the Bantu Education Act of 1953 was devised for political and economic ends, and as a part of the whole structure of segregation opposed by Reeves. A study by Grant, offers a detailed account, by the then principal of Adam's High School, of the destructive effect of the Act on this established technical school and teachers' college.⁴¹ Nombuso's master's dissertation is important in providing an African teacher's point of view - daughter of two teachers before her - regarding the actual effects of Bantu Education under Verwoerd.⁴²

Reeves's deeply committed theological standpoint, a unique combination of Anglican High Churchmanship and Neo-Orthodoxy necessitated some understanding of the intellectuals who had influenced his thinking most radically: the theologian/

⁴⁰. Frank Molteno, 'The Historical Foundations of the Schooling of Black South Africans' in P. Kallaway (ed.), *Apartheid and Education* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1984) p.94

⁴¹. G.C. Grant, 'The Liquidation of Adam's College', David M. Paton, (ed.). *Church and Race in S.A.* (London, S.C.M. Press, 1958), p.58.

⁴². D.S. Nombuso, *Critical Teaching under the Bantu Education System* (unpubl. M.A. dissertation, St. Mary's University, Canada, 1990).

philosopher, Kierkegaard, Moore and the neo-orthodox German theologians. Here Brown provided me with valuable information.⁴³

Church history in England in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries lent essential discernment to Reeves's background and thinking. The accounts of Hastings⁴⁴ and Norman⁴⁵ relate to all the English churches. Reeves, as an ecumenist, was influenced by non-Anglican denominations, as well as his own Church of England. Hylson-Smith⁴⁶ concentrates on eminent High-Churchmen, including Reeves, while Pickering⁴⁷ analyses Anglo-Catholic thinking and action (Reeves was regarded as a representative of this High-Church party). Moorman⁴⁸ covers the wide spectrum of theological opinion within the Church of England. Of inestimable value was Wilkinson's work on the Community of the Resurrection,⁴⁹ the High-Church order, most of whose members were regarded as Anglo-Catholic, by which Reeves was deeply influenced. He studied at

⁴³. Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* (London, Tyndale Press, 1989).

⁴⁴. Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1990*, 3rd ed. (London, S.C.M. Press 1991).

⁴⁵. E.R. Norman, *Church and Society in England 1770-1970* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1976).

⁴⁶. Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *High Churchmanship in the Church of England: From the Sixteenth to the Late Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, 1993).

⁴⁷. W.S.F. Pickering, *Anglo-Catholicism: A Study in Religious Ambiguity* (London, Routledge, 1989).

⁴⁸. John R.H. Moorman, *A History of the Church in England* (London, A. & C. Black Ltd, 1953).

⁴⁹. A. Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection. A Centenary History* (London, S.C.M., 1992).

the theological seminary of the order and later many of its members worked under him in Johannesburg. Wilkinson's detailed scholarly account makes numerous references to Reeves. The author emphasises the Community of the Resurrection's strong commitment to reconciliation between God and individuals. Social work was always a high priority for the order, as it was for Reeves himself.

South African Church history is represented by Hinchliff,⁵⁰ Villa-Vicencio⁵¹ and De Gruchy,⁵² all commended by Southey for representing a broad Church history, including politics, social commentary and the role of the individual.⁵³ 'Villa-Vicencio,' Goldberg claims in a review, 'places his faith for a liberated South Africa in transforming the White church from within'.⁵⁴ In this he resembles Reeves.

The main emphasis in these publications is the Church-versus-State issue in South Africa. This is the secondary theme of my own dissertation, since it undergirds the reconciliatory task to which Reeves was committed. Of particular value in this

⁵⁰. P. Hinchliff, *The Anglican Church in South Africa* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1963).

⁵¹. Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid. A Socio-Theological History of the English-Speaking Churches* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1988).

⁵². John W. De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1979).

⁵³. Southey, 'History, Church History and Historical Theology in South Africa', p.16.

⁵⁴ David Theo Goldberg, 'Oppression and the Church', *Southern African Review of Books*, January/February 1991, p.21.

regard were the works by Clarke⁵⁵ and Worsnip.⁵⁶ The former's doctoral study ends halfway through Reeves's episcopate and concentrates on Archbishop Clayton's attitude to the Government, which is contrasted to that of Reeves. Worsnip's *Between Two Fires* takes up the same issue but, unlike Clarke, he feels that Huddleston and Reeves's confrontational stance against Government policy was more in obedience to the scriptures than was the attitude of Clayton, who disliked 'agitators'. Southey criticises Worsnip for concentrating on five Anglicans only, in the Church-versus-State debate: African clergy and lay-people are not taken into account, and social factors are disregarded entirely.⁵⁷ Huddleston's book,⁵⁸ on the other hand, does take these matters into consideration. My chapter on African housing owes a debt to him, since he not only writes of the Western Areas Removal, but of the work of the Church amongst the oppressed as well as the confrontation between Church and State. The theological basis for his stance is explained and the unchristian nature of apartheid is expounded.

⁵⁵. R.G. Clarke, *For God or Caesar: An Historical Study of Christian Resistance to Apartheid by the Church of the Province of South Africa, 1946-1957* (unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Natal, 1983).

⁵⁶. Michael T. Worsnip, *Between Two Fires: The Anglican Church and Apartheid 1948-1957* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1991).

⁵⁷. Nicholas Southey, 'Review of "Between Two Fires"', *The South African Historical Journal*, no. 25, November 1991, p.128.

⁵⁸. Trevor Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort*, 14th ed. (Glasgow, William Collins and Sons and Co. Ltd, 1987).

Alan Paton's biography of Clayton⁵⁹ has proved extremely valuable for its information on the Archbishop's attitude to Huddleston and Reeves, and on the Church/State issue. Two reviews of this book by Donahue⁶⁰ and Fiske⁶¹ make the point that Clayton laid greater stress on love for God, than love for people. Reeves, by contrast, did not differentiate between the two. Both however, followed Clayton's favourite dictum, 'Do the next right thing' - the title Donahue chooses for his review - which meant neither did what was expedient at the time, hoping good would result in the future.

Reeves's own books, the one on Sharpeville written shortly after the event,⁶² and the other, written two years later, an account of events in South Africa during his episcopate,⁶³ were essential to my study. Much of this material recounts personal experience and could consequently be classified as primary source material. Reeves's account of Sharpeville, an exact replica of the evidence given by his lawyers before the official commission of inquiry, ensured that evidence other than that of the police was advanced.

⁵⁹. Alan Paton, *Apartheid and the Archbishop, The Life and Times of Geoffrey Clayton* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1974).

⁶⁰. John W. Donohue, 'Do the Next Right Thing', *America*, 27 July 1974, p.2.

⁶¹. Edward B. Fiske, 'Witness against Apartheid', *New York Times*, 5 October 1974, p.10.

⁶². Ambrose Reeves, *Shooting at Sharpeville: The Agony of South Africa* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1960).

⁶³. R.A. Reeves, *South Africa Yesterday and Tomorrow: A Challenge to Christians* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1962).

Peart-Binns's biography on Reeves covers his whole life and was written during Reeves's lifetime.⁶⁴ The author was thus able to interview his subject and discover much about his early life which had never come to light. While in South Africa, Reeves neither spoke nor wrote about himself, except in one short popular magazine article.⁶⁵ Bishop Colin Winter, in a review of Peart-Binns's book, writes of its heart-rending nature, for Reeves had had to endure persecution, from White church members, Government authorities, and from the State Church in England: 'His crime: as a bishop he refused to make peace with oppression.'⁶⁶

While my study touches on this aspect of Reeves's life, its main focus is the work of reconciliation he committed himself to during his eleven years as Bishop of Johannesburg. This is not a biographical study in the strict sense, but concerns Reeves as a peacemaker. In Guy's work on Colenso he points out that it is not biographical, but a study with the express purpose of presenting those aspects of his subject's life 'which people should remember': Colenso's quest for truth and justice.⁶⁷ In the present study, Reeves's background, his evangelical activity, social work, opposition to Bantu Education, interest in housing,

⁶⁴. John S. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves* (London, Victor-Gollancz, 1973).

⁶⁵. *Die Huisgenoot*, 11 April 1954.

⁶⁶. Colin Winter, 'Review of John S. Peart-Binns' *Ambrose Reeves*', *African Affairs*, vol. 73, no. 293, October, 1974, p.482.

⁶⁷. Jeff Guy, *The Heretic: A Study of the Life of John William Colenso, 1814-1833* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1983), p.xi.

and his view of the treason trial are all considered in the light of his ministry of reconciliation to people of all races in South Africa from 1949 to 1961.

Where primary sources are concerned, I have interviewed some of the people who knew him personally: his son, daughter, son-in-law, two African priests, a youth leader, a number of White clergymen, Trevor Huddleston, a Vicar-General and an Archbishop. Letters were obtained from, amongst others, seven priests and a former Director of Schools, all of whom had worked under Reeves's authority. Comment was obtained from a former Archbishop of Cape Town who had attended a full week's mission led by Reeves, and who could provide an informed assessment of his preaching. Negative as well as positive comments were obtained on his character and on aspects of his history.

A large number of newspaper reports and articles were consulted from most of the best-known Afrikaans and English newspapers of the time. Facts concerning Bantu Education and the Treason Trial were clarified and different views on Reeves were obtained.

Archival material was drawn from a number of Archives. The State Library in Pretoria houses the House of Assembly Debates, the Senate Debates and the Report on the Commission of Enquiry (sic) relating to African Education. The State Archives in Pretoria contain the Report of the Commission of Enquiry (sic) into the Sharpeville Events of March 1960, which I was given access to, since the closure period set by the Nationalist Government had recently elapsed, bringing to light facts that had been kept from the public for thirty years. In London, the

Lambeth Palace Archives houses the Ramsay Correspondence, amongst which are documents relating to Reeves. The Alan Paton Centre at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, contains a number of documents that register the Liberal Party's protest at Reeves's deportation. The South African Institute of Race Relations' Jan Hofmeyr Archives, in the William Cullen Library of the University of the Witwatersrand, has enabled me to examine the Race Relations Newsletters, reports, newspaper-cuttings and fact papers for the period from 1949 to 1961.

The richest mine of information, however, was found in the Reeves Papers themselves. These comprise fourteen box files stored in the Church of the Province of South Africa Archives in the William Cullen Library. Letters, reports, drafts of speeches, articles and minutes of meetings, all of which have allowed me to construct an account of Reeves's multifold activities were carefully preserved. The Archives also contain a complete collection of *The Watchman*, the Johannesburg monthly diocesan magazine, containing Reeves's official diocesan letters. All the copies of *CR*, the quarterly review of the Community of the Resurrection, are also housed in this collection. Addresses by Reeves at Community gatherings proved helpful, especially those concerning the application of Christian faith to Socio-Political life in South Africa. Articles by Huddleston illuminated the distress of Africans under apartheid rule and revealed the enormity of the task confronting Reeves, the friend of the Community of the Resurrection.

Lastly, I have been able to draw on my own first-hand, experience. At the University of the Witwatersrand I met and

became a close friend of Reeves's eldest son, John. From visits to Bishop's House I got to know Ambrose Reeves, the father, well. He later ordained me to the Anglican priesthood and while a curate, a hospital and jail chaplain, and later rector at Bloemhof, I worked under him as my Bishop. I met Huddleston and the other members of the Community of the Resurrection, whose work in Johannesburg I could observe at first hand. I participated in the Reeves's-inspired Three Year Mission and came to know Gonville French-Beytagh, Director of the Mission and later Dean of Johannesburg. Many of the African priests were known to me personally, for I worked in a number of African townships, such as Bloemhof, Christiana and Schweizer-Reneke. I experienced how the laws attacked by Reeves altered profoundly the social position and political rights of Africans, and how they were heartened by his stand on their behalf. Reeves assumed his oppositional stance primarily because of his personal religious belief, which taught that the strong should speak out on behalf of the weak, in this case, the Africans. His belief also urged him to heal social wounds of every kind and to work for peaceful interaction between the races.

Chapter one presents a survey of Reeves's life before his arrival in Johannesburg, to indicate the preparation he received for the reconciliatory role he was to play in South Africa. Chapter two reveals the activities Reeves became involved in, in the process of reconciling individuals to God. They would, he believed, if genuinely reunited, be drawn into social action, which must 'bring about the Divine revolution' in racial attitudes, which he wrote of and worked constantly towards.

Reeves's commitment to Christian love for others is explored in chapter three, which deals with his social concern and the part he played in the Alexandra Bus Boycott. Chapter four contains his protest against apartheid legislation, which damaged relationships between Whites and other racial groups. Chapter five examines Bantu Education, and the part played by Reeves, who had to speak out on behalf of Africans who were being seriously disadvantaged. Although sources have proved scarce, I have attempted to gain African viewpoints from letters written to Reeves by the people themselves. I have engaged in correspondence and conducted interviews with whoever I believed could throw some light on my subject. I have consulted African newspapers and biographies. On the whole Reeves's words and actions were accepted by the Africans, but there were those who disagreed with him on occasion. Chapter six analyses Reeves's social intervention in acting to relieve the African housing shortage and to put a stop to the Western Areas Removals. It shows too how the subsequent Treason Trial brought to the fore Reeves's commitment to reconciliation. Finally, chapter seven reveals Reeves's deployment of his skills of mediation in the wake of the Sharpeville Massacre, and the dire consequence this had for him in September 1961.

Since Reeves's death in 1980, Huddleston has come to symbolise the Church's fight against racial oppression. This was because he assumed Reeves's mantle as leader of the anti-apartheid movement. My study attempts to recover Reeves's powerful influence in this fight, by investigating the role he played as reconciler in the social and political environment of

the 1950s. I wish to throw light on the nature of Reeves's episcopate in the first phase of the apartheid era (1949-1961) and to record the extent of one prominent Christian's reach into the community and his influence in national relations, to bring to mind again the aspects of his life in South Africa 'which people should remember'.

To better understand the episcopate of Bishop Richard Ambrose Reeves in Johannesburg between 1949 and 1961, it is necessary to consider the processes which moulded his life prior to this period.

Reeves was born at Norwich, England, on 6 December 1899, to Richard and Clarissa Reeves, who already had a son and a daughter. Reeves's father was a pharmacist, while his mother organised the home. When the boy was only six years old, his father died. From a background of personal security and relative prosperity, the family had to move to a different part of the country and into the home of Reeves's aunt. There Reeves began to experience adversity, which was to add strength to his character. Understanding was needed because he had to live with his cousins and four aunts. Knowledge was acquired through assiduous study at home (his aunts were teachers), and at a good primary and high school, where time was spent at books rather than games. His mother earned a living by teaching music, but Reeves was tone deaf, so neither music nor sport distracted him from hard study and wide reading.¹

On leaving school at the age of sixteen, Reeves worked at a haberdashery store, while resolutely studying in the evening to become a pharmacist. World War I broke out two years later and he was required to join the British army. He was small of stature,

¹. John S. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves* (London, Victor-Gollancz Ltd, 1973), p.16.

standing 1,65m and weighing approximately 50kg, and had protruding ears and thick-rimmed spectacles. Being a butt for the soldiers, he had to develop toughness to withstand their teasing. An article in *Die Huisgenoot* described him as, 'n byna tengerig-geboude man' (a man of almost frail build).² His understanding developed as he wrote letters for the soldiers to their families and girl friends; ' . . . in this way he learnt of others' circumstances and way of life'.³ Due to bad eyesight he was not able to do active service. While in the barracks, he was gradually drawn to the ministry of the Anglican Church.⁴ One of the reasons for this was the influence of his army chaplain, the Reverend William Parker, who, while serving as the acting chaplain of the regiment to which Reeves belonged, was also the headmaster of King's School, Rochester. 'Parker's not inconsiderable mind was matched by his zeal for pastoral and evangelistic activities.'⁵ His intellectual grasp of Christianity attracted Reeves who was a thinker. The Chaplain was a distinguished graduate of Trinity College, Dublin University, where he obtained a first class in Senior Moderations with special prizes, including a gold medal in Classics for his B.A. and a Memorial medal for his Divinity Test, followed by a B.D.⁶ Reeves was fortunate in having such a chaplain - as was Parker,

². *Die Huisgenoot*, 11 April 1954.

³. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.17.

⁴. N. Reeves, *Ambrose Reeves, 1899-1980* (London, Bp. Ambrose Reeves Trust, 1980), p.4.

⁵. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p. 17.

⁶. *Crockford's Clerical Directory*, 1948 (London, O.U.P., 1948), p.1000.

in ministering to Reeves. Norman records that:

The 3,000 Anglican chaplains who served with the forces during the war were often appalled by the lack of Christian knowledge displayed by ordinary Englishmen, appearing to confirm once again the failure of the Church to penetrate the masses.⁷

Reeves's experience in the army convinced him of the need to bring Christianity to the working classes and to alleviate their lot by striving for a more equitable distribution of the wealth of industry. These concerns further influenced his decision to enter the ministry. A commission had been established by the Archbishop of Canterbury to consider the impact of Christianity on the social and economic life of Britain. As soon as the report, entitled 'Christianity and Industrial Problems', which repudiated the notion that Christianity had no voice regarding these subjects, appeared in 1919,⁸ Reeves purchased a copy which he treasured ever after. To test his vocation and because he could not afford a university training, he decided at this juncture to attend Knutsford Test School.

Reeves's time in the army had accustomed him to the attitude to life and way of living of the working class. This was to prove invaluable to him in understanding people throughout his ministry, besides being a good preparation for his stay at Knutsford, 'the wider significance [of which] lay in its approach to a less class conscious type of priesthood than had been the

7. E.R. Norman, *Church and Society in England 1770-1970* (London, OUP, 1976), p. 239.

8. Reeves, *Ambrose Reeves, 1899-1980*, p.4.

norm hitherto'.⁹ Because of this, tuition was free and open to men who would in most cases not have attended university.

There Reeves's interest in a Christian solution to economic questions was generated by the Principal, F.R. Barry, who took issue with the general Christian perception, and put forward his own view that:

Christian teachers are apt to observe that if everyone would accept Christianity our economic difficulties would solve themselves, but unless the Churches show themselves capable of constructive and realistic thinking to vindicate these enormous generalizations they are bound to appear futile and almost meaningless.¹⁰

Apart from social reform, Reeves developed an interest in psychology through the part-time lecturer in English Literature, a medical doctor, Leonard F. Browne (later a Harley Street specialist). The two men established a life-long friendship and intended jointly to write a book on psychology and sin.¹¹ Reeves learnt that psychologists need to listen attentively to gain an understanding of their patients.

No recluse at Knutsford, Reeves joined in the social activities and become adept at scene-painting. Mixing with others in various activities was the best way of getting to know them. The Principal, noting Reeves's abilities, recommended that he write a special test for entrance to Cambridge University. He

⁹. Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1990*, 3rd ed (London, S.C.M. Press, 1991), p. 73.

¹⁰. Norman, *Church and Society in England 1770-1970*, p. 314.

¹¹. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.19.

passed and was accepted at Sydney Sussex College. The first term began in October 1921.¹²

Immediately after World War I Britain experienced an economic boom. There was a demand at home and abroad for consumer goods which, during the war, had been unavailable. Many countries could now buy from the United Kingdom, especially the United States of America. However, this rise in the economy was of short duration, because a general collapse of prices and widespread unemployment occurred in the late 1920s. By 1932 there were one million people out of work.¹³

Reeves entered Cambridge during this difficult time, when many pressing questions were being asked about the economic situation, especially unemployment. Did Christianity have an answer? Was it right for the Church to interfere in politics? Did the latter dictate the country's economic state? What had happened in the past in this regard, and could it hold lessons for the future? Seeking answers to these questions, Reeves was drawn to the study of history, as well as to membership of the Industrial Christian Fellowship (I.C.F.). As a Christian, he was also intensely interested in the individual.

During his boyhood he had delighted in reading Dostoevsky's analyses of the brothers in *The Brothers Karamozov* and the hero in *Crime and Punishment*.¹⁴ Later the thinking processes of his fellow soldiers had fascinated him, especially their philosophies

¹². Reeves, *Ambrose Reeves, 1899-1980*, p.4.

¹³. W.N. Medlicott, *Contemporary England 1914-1964* (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1967), p.92.

¹⁴. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.16.

of life and why the majority had lost their interest in Christianity even before the war: 'The dogmas of revealed religion were fully accepted by only a small minority. . . . England remained Christian in morality, though not in faith.'¹⁵

At Knutsford he had studied psychology under the guidance of Dr Browne. Because of this interest he opted for moral sciences, which included psychology, and for philosophy and history, two other disciplines that fascinated him. He decided that the study of theology could be left until he entered a theological college. His interests were very wide and he believed Christianity should embrace the whole of life. Consequently, it is no surprise that one of his favourite quotations was from D.L. Murray, of King's College, Aberdeen, later a Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford: 'There are no limits to God's concern and no limits to God's activity. The whole world is God's.'¹⁶

Idealism, based on Hegel's teaching, was the popular philosophy espoused and taught by many eminent professors at Oxford and Cambridge, amongst whom were F.H. Bradley, T.H. Greene, Bernard Bosanquet and, above all, Edward Caird.¹⁷ Reeves, however, could not subscribe to this system which taught that God is an all-embracing Spirit, not God the Trinity as a person. The teaching was pantheistic, maintaining that God is pure Spirit, present in everything, human and material. It was not the

¹⁵. A.J.P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945* (Oxford, the Clarendon Press, 1965), p.163.

¹⁶. A.R. Reeves, *South Africa Yesterday and Tomorrow: A Challenge to Christians* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1962), p.157.

¹⁷. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1990*, p.228.

orthodox Christian teaching based on God's becoming man as Jesus Christ in history, being resurrected after death, and coming again, finally, to judge mankind. Even the Cambridge School of Divinity, F. Burkitt and J.F. Bethune-Baker amongst others, rejected this orthodox teaching. They were called 'modernists', and were wedded to the idealist philosophy and the evolutionary scientific outlook of the day, which they tried to synthesise with Christianity. This meant the rejection of the miracle element in Christianity: the Virgin Birth, Christ's miracles, and the Resurrection; 'the modernist had, above all, no time for miracles'.¹⁸ The most insistent propagator of this tenet in the 1920s was a Dr. H.D.A. Major, concerning whose teachings Hastings comments that they

. . . demystified Christianity, reduced it to theism of a sort, a belief in the after-life and individualistic morality - the final unrevolutionary kernel of Protestantism.¹⁹

The encounter with this approach to Christianity provided a good testing-ground for Reeves's faith. Throughout he held firm to the orthodox belief that was soon to return to Cambridge via the then young Cambridge fellow, Sir Edwyn Hoskyns, a biblical scholar who later became world-renowned for his Christ-centred approach to the understanding of the New Testament.²⁰ Although Reeves was not yet studying theology as such, these ideas permeated the

¹⁸. Ibid., p.231.

¹⁹. Ibid.

²⁰. John R.H. Moorman, *A History of the Church in England* (London, A. & C. Black Ltd, 1953), p.425.

philosophy department and the Christian student societies, such as the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (C.I.C.C.U.), the Student Christian Movement (S.C.M.) and the Industrial Christian Fellowship (I.C.F.). Reeves was a keen member of the latter, but, as a Christian student preparing for the ministry, he would also have attended the meetings and mixed with the members of the other societies. Wrestling with modernism and idealism made him turn to the orthodoxy of the Anglo-Catholics, which he found in the I.C.F. The Anglo-Catholic movement in the Church of England had originated at Oxford University in the 1830s, marked especially by John Keble's celebrated Assize Sermon in 1833. His theme was national apostasy resulting from secularism and the growth of liberal ideas. In the same year, John Henry Newman published the first of his *Tracts for the Times*, which stated that the antidote to the irreligion of the day consisted in a return to the life and teaching of the primitive Catholic Church.²¹ The Director of the I.C.F., Kenneth Kirk, was an Anglo-Catholic of Orthodox persuasion (which includes the incarnation, resurrection and return of Christ).

One of the most influential of the Cambridge philosophers of the time was G.E. Moore. He was not a Christian, but adopted his own brand of philosophy, rejecting idealism and its alliance with Christianity. He emphasised that 'the really important things in life are personal relationships and artistic experiences',²²

²¹. Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* (London, Tyndale Press, 1989), p.160.

²². T.O. Lloyd, *Empire to Welfare State - English History 1906-1967* (London, Oxford University Press, 1979), p.28.

which found an echo in Reeves's own stress on personal relationships. While Reeves could not support idealism, Christian existentialism was a different matter. Søren Aaby Kierkegaard, an acute thinker of this school, had considerable influence on Reeves. Although the Dane had died in 1855, his teachings - in opposition to those of Hegel - had an impact in Great Britain from the 1920s. He was a keen Christian believer who had become disgusted with the prosaic, hypocritical State Lutheran Church, where personal, dynamic faith in Christ had become unnecessary. Truth to him was not something objective that could be handed out on a plate. It was only discovered personally and subjectively in the course of long and sometimes painful self-analysis.²³ Unlike Hegel's idealism, which concentrated on the Spirit pervading all life and being synonymous with God, Kierkegaard stressed the gap between man and God:

God and man are two qualities between which there exists an infinite qualitative difference . . . as a sinner, man is separated from God by the most yawning chasm of quality.²⁴

Kierkegaard emphasized the need for sincere repentance in a person's search for the holy God. His social concern was acute; he called for spiritual renewal and personal responsibility as the essential preconditions for any truly creative use of social

²³. Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, p.125.

²⁴. S. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, transl. by W. Lowrie (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1954), p.253.

and political power.²⁵ Paramount was each individual's need to realise his or her utter insignificance and helplessness in the sight of God.²⁶ Such a realisation led to love for others, 'to love human beings is the only true sign that you are a Christian.'²⁷ Reeves's Christianity was modelled on that of Kierkegaard, with its spiritual intensity, hatred of religious hypocrisy and concern for personal responsibility in a democratic society, demonstrated by this love shown to other human beings.

While at Cambridge, Reeves also found inspiration in certain leading Anglicans: Kenneth Kirk, Bishop William Temple, Professor R.H. Tawney, Bishop Charles Gore and G.A. Studdert Kennedy.²⁸ Kirk, later Bishop of Oxford, believed that the Church should be deeply interested in the poor; search for the causes of unemployment and poor wages; and, through political action, put the matter to rights.²⁹ This attitude fired Reeves's own imagination.

William Temple, son of an Archbishop of Canterbury and himself Bishop of Manchester, was intensely interested in social action. Reeves admired him for the humility he showed, despite his upper-class background. A former exceptional pupil of Rugby School, Temple was extremely intelligent and open to various

²⁵. Denzil Patrick, *Pascal and Kierkegaard* (London, Lutterworth Press, 1947), p.291.

²⁶. E.W.F. Tomlin, *Great Philosophers of the West* (London, Arrow Books, 1959), p.245.

²⁷. John W. Elrod, *Kierkegaard and Christendom* (Princeton, Princeton Univ. Press, 1981) p.8.

²⁸. Reeves, *Ambrose Reeves, 1899-1980*, p.4

²⁹. Norman, *Church and Society in England 1770-1970*, p.246.

philosophical teachings, while yet holding to the miracle aspect of Christianity and the 'Lordship of Christ over all areas of life'.³⁰ Accepted as a leading theologian, he was a pilot of the Church Unity Movement. The feature of Temple's teaching which most affected Reeves was his belief that;

A social doctrine or system which aims at being in accordance with the facts will deal with every human being as of unique and irreplaceable value, because he is a child of God. And this involves two consequences. First, there must be the best possible chance for development of all gifts and faculties; or, in other words, every child is entitled to the best procurable education. Secondly, there must be the widest possible area of effective choice, for it is in actual choice that personality manifests its most distinctive features.³¹

Reeves himself often expressed similar sentiments regarding the importance of the individual.³²

Tawney, a layman, was a leading economist and Professor at the London School of Economics. He and Temple had been at Rugby School together and both had gone up to Balliol College, Oxford, in 1900. They shared an interest in a Christian solution to economic problems. Tawney was the mastermind behind the Archbishop's report, *Christianity and Industrial Problems*. It is no wonder that Reeves admired him:

³⁰. John Kent, *William Temple: Church, State and Society in Britain, 1880-1950* (Cambridge, Univ. Press, 1992) p.103.

³¹. A.E. Baker (ed.), *William Temple's Teaching* (London, James Clarke and Co. Ltd, 1950), p.156.

³². R.A. Reeves, *The Church in Relation to the State* (Johannesburg, St Benedict's Booklets, 1953), p.14.

Certainly the 1920s were Tawney's great decade. He straddled it quite amazingly yet also very quietly. In 1918 he was much responsible for the writing of the Archbishop's Fifth Report which set the tone for most Anglican post-war social thinking.³³

Gore, like Tawney, was a Christian Socialist. The most prominent Anglo-Catholic during Reeves's Cambridge period, he was the acknowledged leader of the movement. Reeves admired him because, although he had studied higher criticism of the Bible and was familiar with the modernist theology and idealist philosophy espoused by the majority of the learned at Oxford and Cambridge, he still wholeheartedly believed in the incarnation and the other basic teachings enshrined in the early Christian creeds.³⁴

Another prominent though moderate Anglo-Catholic, whom Reeves respected, was the best-known Anglican preacher of the time, G.A. Studdert Kennedy. He founded the I.C.F. after World War I, because of a compassionate desire to improve conditions among the poor. This was an interest initiated before the War, when he was vicar of a working-class parish, St. Paul's Worcester, and augmented during his period as chaplain to the troops, who referred to him as 'Woodbine Willie' and admired him greatly.³⁵ Reeves was fascinated by the dynamic preaching of this sincere priest, who really cared for those who were suffering, and who taught:

³³. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1990*, p.183.

³⁴. Moorman, *The History of the Church in England*, p.396.

³⁵. *Ibid.*, p.431

Economics and religion are not opposed, they are not even divided; they are not two things, they are two sides of one thing, the inside and the outside; you can no more separate them than you can separate body and soul.³⁶

Studdert Kennedy, Kirk, Temple, Tawney, Gore, the I.C.F. and the studies which led to his degree, all combined to make Reeves's stay at Cambridge highly satisfactory. It was now time for Reeves to undertake intense studies in theology to further this aspect of his knowledge.

Reeves's admiration for Gore originally drew him to attend Mirfield Theological College, established near Leeds in 1902. In 1892 the Community of the Resurrection (C.R.) had been founded by Gore for celibate priests of the Anglican Church who wished to take special religious vows.³⁷ One of the tasks at Mirfield was to train men for the priesthood in accordance with Anglo-Catholic doctrine - though not necessarily for joining the C.R. This doctrine emphasised daily receiving of the Holy Communion, which was called 'the Mass', and signified a sharing in Christ's sacrificial offering of himself to God. Common Anglican practice was to celebrate the Holy Communion monthly, as a memorial of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice on Calvary.

The Anglo-Catholic movement had grown in strength since its beginnings at Oxford University in the 1830s. The emphasis then had been to look to the early Church fathers rather than to the Reformation theologians for inspiration. Since the early days of

³⁶. G.A. Studdert Kennedy, *The Wicket Gate* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1923), p.165.

³⁷. A. Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection: A Centenary History* (London, S.C.M., 1992) p.1.

the movement many Roman Catholic medieval liturgical practices, such as the confessional, benediction (the veneration of the consecrated wafer), the use of incense, mass vestments, candles on the altar and the Bishop's mitre had been reintroduced.³⁸

At Mirfield emphasis was placed on social action, as the founder was also leader of the Christian Social Union, the aim of which was to work for the brotherhood of man and justice for all God's creatures.³⁹ Moreover, it is recorded, 'The Anglo-Catholics had pastoral vigour, social ideas and plenty of interesting leaders; the Evangelicals had none of these things'.⁴⁰ Reeves thus chose to study at Mirfield because it was alive to social issues without foregoing an emphasis on liturgical worship and evangelism.

Reeves made his mark at Mirfield not only because of his scholastic ability, but through his work as infirmarian (caring for the sick students) and his involvement in social activities. His leadership qualities came to the fore when he produced Beaumont and Fletcher's *Night of the Burning Pestle*. The play was a great success thanks to his mastery of the script and direction of the players.⁴¹

Before the 1923 General Election, he joined the Labour Party, even speaking from atop empty crates on behalf of the

³⁸. K. Carter, *St Paul's Church, Knightsbridge: The First 150 Years* (London, St Pauls, 1992), p.10.

³⁹. Moorman, *The History of the Church in England*, p. 393.

⁴⁰. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1990*, p.76.

⁴¹. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.25.

candidate in the Spen Valley division.⁴² The Labour Party, triumphing in their first election under Ramsay Macdonald, won the election from the Conservatives. Although they lost again a year later, they had made their mark in Great Britain as champions of the poor. Reeves must have been very impressed with their aims, especially to alleviate the working class housing shortage and to provide secondary education for all.⁴³ The Labour Party were Socialist in the sense that they believed the interests of the workers were paramount in society.

Christian Socialism attempted to apply Christian precepts to ordinary life, which, according to the I.C.F., resulted in a closer approximation to Labour Party principles than to those of any other in Britain. For this reason the C.R. favoured their standpoint and Reeves, himself, joined the Party. Reeves had much practice in public speaking over and above that done for political purposes. The Mirfield fathers were popular missionaries and took the students with them to help in their preparation, which involved preaching in the open air. On one occasion, at Wigan, Reeves was preaching in the busiest part of town when John Kensit, a radical protestant, set up in opposition. As the people drifted off to listen to Kensit, Reeves called for three cheers to be given, bringing his listeners right back to his pitch.⁴⁴

Reeves is remembered as the first graduate to have studied at Mirfield College, which tells us something about the man,

⁴². A. Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection. A Centenary History* (London, S.C.M., 1992), p.288.

⁴³. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945*, p.211.

⁴⁴. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.27.

since he could have attended any of the famous old colleges at Oxford or Cambridge. St Aiden's, Birkenhead, founded in 1846, was another institution, situated near Knutsford, where he could have studied among other graduates in a non-monastic, less rigorous atmosphere than that of Mirfield. Instead it is recorded of him,

Ambrose Reeves, one of the first externals, arrived from Cambridge in 1924. Mirfield shaped his spirituality and deepened his social convictions. He went on to study at the General Seminary, New York for a year.⁴⁵

On 18 September 1926, Reeves left Britain for New York, where he was to join Father Paul Bull of Mirfield, who had been invited to the General Theological Seminary as a visiting lecturer in homiletics. The institution had been established in New York, in 1812, for aspirant Anglican priests at a time when there were no theological colleges in England. It was one of the foremost seminaries of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America (P.E.C.U.S.A.), since its board of trustees comprised the presiding Bishop in the United States, the Bishop of New York, ten Bishops chosen by the House of Bishops, as well as priests and laymen. The degrees of B.D. and D.D. were conferred on its graduates.⁴⁶ In Reeves's time, the battle between modernists and fundamentalists was raging in all the large denominations in America, including the P.E.C.U.S.A. It was challenging for Reeves to be involved in this debate. A new

⁴⁵. Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection. A Centenary History*, p.287

⁴⁶. *The Encyclopedia Americana*, vol. 12, 1962 (New York, Rand McNally & Co., 1962), p.378.

compromise called neo-orthodoxy had appeared both in Europe and in the United States. Karl Barth's *Epistle to the Romans* (1919) had sparked off this approach in Europe. In America the Niebhuhr brothers, Reinhold and Richard, came to the fore as theologians who, like Barth, stressed personal faith in Jesus Christ as the revealer of the grace of God.

Reinhold Niebuhr (of the Union Theological Seminary, New York) stated that salvation lay in a person's humble acceptance of God's grace perfectly demonstrated in the self-sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. Yet, at the same time, the exponents of neo-orthodoxy did not reject all higher critical studies of the Bible, for God speaks to the individual by means of the Holy Scriptures.⁴⁷ Reeves heard Niebuhr lecture on the subject 'The Practical Unbelief of Modern Civilization' at the University of Chicago on 28 December 1926, during an inter-college conference. He talked to him personally then, and two months later in New York.⁴⁸ The period of study at the Seminary was to prepare Reeves for his forthcoming work in the Student Christian Movement (S.C.M.) and the World Student Christian Federation (W.S.C.F.) in Europe, where neo-orthodoxy was becoming popular.

While in New York, Reeves was actively engaged. He organised open-air preaching every Sunday afternoon in a park, near St Peter's Church, Chelsea, instructing students how to preach out in the open after lectures given by him every Friday afternoon.

⁴⁷. Malcolm A. Reid, 'The Niebuhrs,' in *Eerdmans Handbook to Christianity in America*, M.A. Noll, N.O. Hatch, G.M. Marsden (eds), (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Co., 1983), p.421.

⁴⁸. R.A. Reeves, *Diary of Time Spent in the United States Sept. 18, 1926 to April 10, 1927*, p.32.

Reeves, only twenty-seven at the time, suggested to the rector of the parish that a week's evangelistic mission be held, not only planning the enterprise - in co-operation with the church - but also acting as the evangelist. He insisted on months of thorough preparation for visitors, who went to every home in the parish, as well as for the choir. A twenty-four hour prayer vigil before the commencement of the mission was well attended, and from 20 to 27 March 1927, 180 people attended and on the last night 300, 150 of whom renewed their baptismal vows, receiving special cards signed by Reeves to mark the occasion.

Reeves also organised the first inter-seminary conference to be held in the U.S.A. It took place at the General Theological Seminary, New York from 7 to 10 February 1926 and included all the major denominations. Reeves visited the Lutheran Seminary in Gettysburg, the Baptist Seminary in New Jersey, the Congregationalist and Reformed Seminaries in New York State, as well as the theological seminaries of Princeton and Harvard. At his own instigation, he visited several teacher-training colleges in New York State, too. Cultural interests took him to the opera, musical concerts and many plays. He left for England on 10 April 1927.⁴⁹ His many commitments in the U.S.A. were testimony to his lively faith, his confidence and a talent for organisation, all of which were directed towards his chief aim of reconciling men and women to God.

Reeves was ordained in London in 1927 and accepted a post as secretary to the Student Christian Movement (S.C.M.). This organisation, which emphasised personal holiness and overseas

⁴⁹. Reeves, *Diary of Time Spent in the United States*.

missionary work, had begun with a student conference held in Keswick, in 1893. At the time it had attracted a membership comprising forty percent Church of England, thirty percent Presbyterians and thirty percent Free Church members.⁵⁰ By 1920 the S.C.M. was more active than ever before. Concentration was no longer on world mission and evangelism, but on a Christian answer to social problems, and student response to this issue. Church unity was another aim: 'the ecumenical future of Britain was decisively forged within the S.C.M.'⁵¹ Reeves's duty as secretary would be to visit theological colleges of all denominations, both in England and on the Continent. Hastings lists him among other famous secretaries like Leslie Newbigin, Alan Richardson, David Paton and Eric Fenn:

Here were men of great ability, Anglicans and Free Churchmen, who out of their S.C.M. experience would carry forward a sense of ecumenical community far stronger than had hitherto ever existed. They and their like would in many ways be decisive for the development of the Churches across the next quarter of a century as they worked to implement a vision which had been essentially delineated during the stress of the 1930s.⁵²

This was true in Reeves's case because of the experience gained in working with other exceptional young Christians. These later made their mark: Newbigin as a Bishop in South India and

⁵⁰. Mark D. Johnson, *The Dissolution of Dissent, 1850-1918* (New York, Garland Publishing Co., 1987), p.275.

⁵¹. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1990*, p.91.

⁵². Ibid. p.307.

architect of the Church of South India; Eric Fenn as secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel; and Alan Richardson as New Testament Professor. On the Continent, Reeves learnt more of the neo-orthodox approach to Christianity and mixed with students of all political persuasions and beliefs in the various theological colleges and universities. The understanding he gained was to be of inestimable value in his role as reconciler. Patrick Cowley, later vicar of Frome, Somerset, and a student on the Maidstone Mission led by Reeves, had this to say of him, 'He was a born leader, and had the complete support and loyalty of his student missionaries.'⁵³

On 28 April [1931] Reeves married Ada van Ruysen, also an S.C.M. staff member. Graduates of Mirfield took vows of celibacy only if they joined the C.R., something Reeves had not done, though he had once considered the possibility of a celibate priesthood. Of Ada it was noted:

She was a Roman Catholic before the marriage who converted to Anglicanism when she married Ambrose but was highly intelligent and ecumenical; she had considerable influence on him.⁵⁴

Nicholas Reeves, their youngest child, amplified this statement in a tribute to his father on the latter's eightieth birthday. He said that besides his father's faith, his relationship with his wife, Ada, was the essential foundation on which the strength and courage of his public life was based. For her, husband and family

⁵³. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.33.

⁵⁴. Letter from T. Huddleston to F. Phillips, 21 August 1994.

always came first.⁵⁵ Because the travelling involved in his work would mean long periods of absence from his new wife, Reeves decided to leave the S.C.M. On his departure, the *Student Movement Magazine* reported:

Ambrose Reeves . . . has accomplished an outstanding piece of work in relation to theological students, and his shaping of the Movement's ideas to meet their needs in the international, social and devotional spheres will be of great value for years to come.⁵⁶

Ambrose and Ada Reeves next spent four years at Leven, in Scotland, where he was a parish priest from 1931 to 1934. Here eldest child, John, was born. In this mining town Reeves became involved with the immediate problems of the workers. Ada supported him by producing a number of plays, an activity which created Christian fellowship and was a novel way of presenting Christian truths. Discussion groups were held for the same reason. Social evenings provided light entertainment and engendered a feeling of joy. As far as worship was concerned, Reeves not only taught the faith, but how to apply it. He laid emphasis on the importance of frequent communion and heard confessions.⁵⁷ After an active ministry of four years, however, he felt ready to return to the challenge of student work in Europe.

In September 1935, Reeves accepted a post as travelling secretary with the World Student Christian Federation (W.S.C.F.).

⁵⁵. Reeves, *Ambrose Reeves 1899-1980*, p.4.

⁵⁶. *The Student Movement*, vol. 13, June 1931.

⁵⁷. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.35.

The offer of a house in Geneva was to make life easier for his wife and child.⁵⁸ The W.S.C.F. had been formed in 1895 by the American, John R. Mott, and Karl Fries of Sweden. Mott later received the Nobel Peace Prize and became Honorary President of the World Council of Churches. An outstanding Christian leader, he organised Christian youth and student movements all over the world, including the Far East.⁵⁹ He inspired Reeves, who was pleased to carry out the ideals of Church unity by working among the branches of the Federation in both Eastern and Western Europe.

From 1935 to 1937 Reeves was able to observe the rise of Nazism at first hand, especially its control of education and the media. He wrote to friends in England warning of Hitler's belligerence, the evil of his anti-semitism and tyranny. As Reeves saw it,

the Church provided the pattern of corporate life for which men [were] already groping, a community in which neither the individual [was] allowed to express himself at the expense of the welfare of the whole nor the individual cease[d] to have any value save as he serve[d] the ends of society as a whole.⁶⁰

His travels in Eastern Europe brought him into contact with Marxist Communism too. Reeves was a socialist in that he held the view that the top priority of government should be the satisfaction of the workers' needs; a Christian socialist in that

⁵⁸. Reeves, *Ambrose Reeves, 1899-1980*, p.5.

⁵⁹. *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1963 edition, vol. 19, p.519.

⁶⁰. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.38.

he believed that each individual was precious and that he or she should not be regarded as simply a cog in the machine of state. He learnt much from exiled Russian professors (S. Bulgakoff, S. Bezobrazov and the celebrated theologian, N. Berdyaev) in Paris, especially that Stalin placed no value on the individual, as was shown by the slaughter of the Kulaks.⁶¹

Reeves's work involved trying to reconcile students from many different denominations in Eastern Europe. An idea of the success he achieved can be gained from a tribute paid to him by a distinguished Hungarian Christian, Dr. Lazlo Major, after the Tihany Conference attended by students from South-East Europe:

To bring about fellowship and understanding among these various students meant not a little task, considering the divisions existing in language (German, Slavic and Hungarian), in confession (Protestant, Orthodox, Roman Catholic), and in conflicting national interests which, in 1936, already foreshadowed the political conflagration of World War II. Reeves succeeded on two counts in particular: he brought the members of this heterogeneous assembly to a better understanding of one another in the spirit of the gospel; and he encouraged them to render mutual good services by reports on their own movements. The Conference, inspired by the exalted idea of 'Ut omnes unum sint', engaged itself in building up fellowship.⁶²

Although his work was proving successful, Reeves decided to provide a more permanent home for his wife and son and in 1937 he returned to parish work in Great Britain, which was once more to involve his playing the role of conciliator.

On 15 April 1937, Reeves commenced work as a parish priest

⁶¹. Ibid., p.34.

⁶². Ibid., p.37.

at Haydock in Lancashire. His parishoners were employees of a large mine and often he intervened personally and with success with mine management to right injustices suffered by the workers. His manner was authoritative yet kindly, demonstrating a care for those entrusted to him.

He organised a mission to the parish which lasted four years. One year was devoted to each of the four districts. This project required hard work in training visitors and in administration. Reeves had, by this time, gained much experience in missions, organising three while at Cambridge and many from Mirfield and for the S.C.M. There had been the outdoor preaching, too, at Mirfield, New York and at S.C.M. missions.

During the mission he was distressed to find a breach between the local Anglican Evangelical parish and his own Anglo-Catholic one. The previous priests had not been on speaking terms and this antagonism had been transferred to the parishioners. Reeves surprised the Bishop and the clergy by walking into a Diocesan meeting arm-in-arm with the Evangelical minister, the Reverend S. Billingham. According to the latter, the breach between the two churches was healed, a restoration of harmony that could be said to stem from the advent of Reeves in Haydock.⁶³ From here, where his ministry had been so successful, he was appointed, on 6 June 1942, to a much larger congregation in Liverpool.

Reeves's new parish consisted mainly of dockworkers, which again suited his commitment to Christian Socialism. He used the church building to attract non-members by improving their minds,

⁶³. Ibid., p.43.

bodies and spirits. Lunch-hour musical concerts were held, prominent speakers on a variety of subjects were invited to address business people.⁶⁴ The halls were also used by trade unions and other cultural committees not connected with the church, further evidence of how Reeves extended his activities beyond its walls and its immediate membership.⁶⁵

Reeves's biggest challenge while in that parish occurred in October 1945, when he mediated between the leaders of 43 000 dock strikers in Liverpool and other parts, and the Government authorities. The workers had come out on an unofficial strike for higher wages. The union asked management to accept their demands. Management insisted they return to work while negotiations were proceeding. Reeves approached the Minister of Labour, who would not interfere, but gave the priest permission to speak to both sides in order to resolve the issue. Reeves was able to make contact with the unofficial strike committee, the Transport and General Workers Union, and the administration. All these meetings were secret in order not to disadvantage the cause. The workers would only return if they were given the assurance that progress would be made.

Reeves and Father Fitzsimmons, the Roman Catholic diocesan chaplain of the Young Christian Workers (many of the men on strike were Catholics), addressed a meeting of 15 000 dockers on the Liverpool Football ground on 1 November 1945, as a result of which the workers agreed to return to work even while negotiations proceeded. Soon a new wage rate and regulations were

⁶⁴. Reeves, *Ambrose Reeves 1899-1980*, p.5.

⁶⁵. 'Tympani', *Liverpool Parish Review*, May 1949, p.5.

accepted.⁶⁶ Reeves's talents as a reconciler effected this success. The dockers knew he sympathised with them and his sincerity gave them confidence; the Union trusted his integrity which was well known in Labour circles; the administration knew him by his work in the Church's National Assembly and for the World Council of Churches. A man of standing who believed in justice, he was thus acceptable to all the parties. He possessed other qualities, too, for healing the dispute: a quiet tenacity combined with understanding of the workers' needs, of how the unions functioned, and of the administration's attitude.⁶⁷

Reeves sat on various bodies dealing with the social side of Christianity. He was made the chairman of a thirteen-member Commission on Religious Education appointed by the Bishop of Liverpool. The 103-page report, drawn up by this group and entitled *Unto a Perfect Man*, attracted wide notice. The *Church Times* praised it for stressing the need for steady unequivocal Church teaching for children. The place best suited for this was the church school, which the Commission advocated retaining. The divinity teaching in state schools was divorced from Church activities.⁶⁸ Reeves, anticipating visual education, advocated greater use of pictures and plays to stimulate the imagination.

Another of Reeves's commitments was to social welfare work. There was such concern regarding prostitution in the dock areas that he was made the chairman of a group to deal with sexual

⁶⁶. C.P.S.A. Archives, Reeves Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, A.B. 388, Box 8.

⁶⁷. Reeves, *Ambrose Reeves 1899-1980*, p.5.

⁶⁸. *The Church Times*, 30 April 1948.

immorality. Other forms of social work also claimed his attention when he was appointed chairman of the Liverpool Board for Moral Welfare Work. Under the auspices of this Board were the Stanley House Community Centre for Coloured People and a Social Work Training Centre. He became chairman of the former and chaplain of the latter. Through these tasks he ministered to the whole community, using his talents for the good of all.⁶⁹

Besides all this activity, he was involved in the wider work of the Church. In 1948 he was a delegate to the founding assembly of the World Council of Churches (W.C.C.) in Amsterdam, where he was appointed a member of the Central Committee and the Executive Council of the W.C.C..⁷⁰ This meant attendance at the World Council Assembly in Amsterdam on 23 August 1948, when 1400 delegates from 147 churches in forty-four countries were present. Karl Barth, the German theologian, and Emil Brunner from Switzerland presented papers. The best-known ecumenist from Britain was George Bell, Bishop of Chichester, and a great friend of Reeves's. Bell was a Middle Churchman, neither Anglo-Catholic nor Evangelical, but steering a mid-course between the two extreme wings in the Church of England. Reeves himself, by contrast, definitely represented the Catholic wing of Anglican thought and practice:

In a sense his contribution to the World Council of Churches' discussions were important just because [he]

⁶⁹. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.55.

⁷⁰. Reeves, *Ambrose Reeves, 1899-1980*, p.55.

was unwilling to sacrifice truth in the interests of unity.⁷¹

Reeves's work in the S.C.M. and the W.S.C.F. was so well regarded that he was assured of a place on the executive Committee of the W.C.C.

After the Assembly, a deadlock occurred in discussions between Catholics and Protestants of all denominations in considering whether or not any synthesis of the churches was possible. The Archbishop of Canterbury (G.F. Fisher) convened a meeting of eminent churchmen, such as the Archbishop of York (A.M. Ramsay), three Bishops, the Dean of Westminster (E.S. Abbott), the Anglo-Catholic theologian, Austin Farrer, T.S. Eliot and Ambrose Reeves. The latter played an important part in the compiling of a report, *Catholicity - A Study in the Conflict of Christian Traditions*. He was chosen because of his wide knowledge of different schools of theology yet strong stand regarding the Catholic tradition favoured by Anglo-Catholics. His membership of the Convocation of the Church of England and National Assembly gave him additional prestige. Another report, *The Catholicity of Protestantism*, was brought out by a committee of Free Churchmen, also appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury. No synthesis was reached between the compilers of *Catholicity* and *Catholicity of Protestantism*. However, many misunderstandings were cleared up and a non-structural unity, in which differences were accepted,

⁷¹. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.55.

prevailed between the Anglican and the Free Churches.⁷²

Reeves was now ready for appointment as a bishop. He had demonstrated all the necessary qualities for such an appointment: knowledge of Church administration on the national and local level; a keen intellect with a wide knowledge of theology, psychology, philosophy and history; and he had gained practical experience in various parishes, as well as universities, colleges and schools. An active worker in the ecumenical field, he remained a staunch Anglican. Little did he know that his field of work was to be in far distant Johannesburg.

⁷². R. Newton Flew and Rupert E. Davies (eds), *The Catholicity of Protestantism* (London, Lutterworth Press, 1950), p.7.

Reeves's first priority had always been to foster the God-person relationship, in other words to reconcile individuals to the God made known in the person of Jesus Christ. The present chapter deals with Reeves's activities in this regard. First, however, his belief needs to be further elucidated. In line with orthodox Christianity, he held that Jesus Christ and God were one and the same. Here he differed from a number of prominent Anglicans of his day, such as Bishop E.W. Barnes of Birmingham, who believed that Jesus was not God, but an exceptional man whose example should be duplicated.¹ He differed, too, from Professor John Robinson of Cambridge (later to write *Honest to God*), who though he referred to God as 'the ground of our being', did not hold that the incarnation of God as Jesus Christ was of vital importance.² By contrast, Reeves believed that society could not be changed radically for the better, with peace, justice and equal opportunities prevailing, unless men and women as individuals were changed by belief in the one God revealed in Jesus Christ. This change needed to take place first of all within the Anglican Church.³

While Reeves was preparing to help with the Greater London

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1. Paul A. Welsby, *A History of the Church of England 1945-1980* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1984), p.53.
 2. *Ibid.*, p.110.
 3. D.M. Paton (ed.), 'Bishop's Charge 1957', *Church and Race in SA* (London, S.C.M., 1958), p.48.

Mission, which was to be held in 1950, he received and accepted an invitation to become the new Bishop of Johannesburg. He was consecrated soon after his arrival in Cape Town and, on 24 June 1949, was introduced to his new diocese in Johannesburg. After a brief period of acclimatisation, Reeves understood that the Anglican Church was party to the apartheid system, and that white Anglicans needed a change of attitude towards Africans. This was a view that he shared with his predecessor, Geoffrey Clayton.⁴

One of Reeves's first tasks in the diocese was to organise an evangelistic campaign which took place over three years. The experience gained in preparing for the Greater London Mission and for the four-year mission to Haydock was to prove invaluable, besides which there was his student evangelist work at Cambridge, Leeds and in New York. His experience as a theological lecturer and organiser of university and college missions, while working for the S.C.M. and the W.S.C.M., also proved greatly to his advantage.

To understand the reasons for this enterprise, the background needs to be elucidated. In 1941 the diocese of Johannesburg, inspired by Clayton, had formed what was called the 'Bishop's Commission', to prepare a blueprint for an ideal South Africa, in other words for a new social order. In England, Archbishop William Temple had similarly inspired the *Malvern Report* in 1941, which outlined a Christian solution for a new society in England. It was decided by the synod of the Johannesburg diocese that a

⁴. Alan Paton, *Apartheid and the Archbishop, The Life and Times of Geoffrey Clayton* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1974), p.119.

report would be drawn up along the same lines. The Commission sat in Johannesburg for two years, until the *Church and Nation Report* was completed and presented to the Johannesburg Diocesan Synod in 1943.⁵ Its basic premiss was that South Africa should become a non-racial democracy: there should be 'no taxation without representation', and justice and the basic freedoms should be the right of all citizens. The Report took a stand against all excess profits, especially with regard to the mining industry. There was to be a just distribution of benefits for all people, while the great disparity between the rich and poor was to be bridged:

The main implication of the whole Report was that all discrimination based solely on race or colour should go, but this particular implication was not clearly stated.⁶

At the conclusion of the Report it was stressed that a change of heart would have to precede the necessary socio-political changes:

. . . to implement its findings demands first of all a change of heart within the nation. To this end we believe it to be of the utmost importance that the nation be called back to God, and to a whole-hearted obedience to, and love for, Him and His Church. We are convinced that the need to sound clearly this evangelistic note is as great now as it has ever been. We pray that this note will be sounded by all who accept this report.⁷

The Africans accepted these principles gladly; it was the Whites

5. Ibid., p.113.

6. Ibid., p.119.

7. 'Church and Nation Report', *The Watchman*, January 1944, vol. XIX no. 271, p.12.

who needed a change of heart.⁸ Because of the necessity to proselytise the Whites, an Anglican Evangelistic Conference had been held at Randfontein from 28 September to October 1945. An Evangelistic Council had been formed and a diocesan evangelical campaign launched. Study circles were formed, teams were sent to the parishes from a Christian fellowship group, fortnightly lectures were held, religious dramas were performed and group prayers held. Despite all this, the campaign was not a success,⁹ probably because a full-time director had not been appointed; nor could a suitably experienced person to guide such a director or mastermind the enterprise as a whole be found. Clayton lacked the experience for organising such a large undertaking.

The arrival of the new Bishop resolved all these problems, for Reeves did have the necessary experience. One of his first tasks was to call together the Evangelistic Council and appoint a full-time director, the Reverend Gonville French-Beytagh. Reeves's ideas were to be implemented by the director with the help of the Council. The planning was to be meticulous and the whole campaign to take place over a three-year period. The aim was to bring each of the Whites in the area of Reeves's diocese into a God-person relationship, which would bring about the personal religious change referred to in the *Church and Nation Report*. This it was hoped would be followed by a turning from selfishness to unselfishness and an acceptance of all people as brothers and sisters for whom Christ died: 'Do unto others as you would have

⁸. Paton, *Apartheid and the Archbishop*, p. 145.

⁹. Ibid., p.146.

them do unto you'¹⁰ would inspire the actions of all involved.

The first year of the mission, 1951, was run according to the theme 'Church Weeks', the next 'Family Weeks', and the last 'Crusade Weeks'. Each of these phases will be discussed individually to show Reeves's attention to every detail.

'Church Weeks' emphasised the importance of the Church and was aimed at its White members. A change of attitude where race was concerned was sought from the outset.¹¹ Specially trained priests from the diocese itself preached for a week at parishes other than their own. Reeves supplied these preachers with suitable material for sermons and helped train them. According to Reeves's plan parishioners had to buy tickets for seats in their parish halls - this not only generated funds for the campaign, but convinced them of its importance. Book stalls were set up at all venues, with appropriate literature - more revenue was generated and church people became informed. Cross-shaped badges were sold to be worn by all Anglicans at all times, to help advertise the campaign. After each meeting refreshments were provided in the hope of drawing the people together.¹² The meetings were crowded and the first phase of the campaign was a success. Misgivings expressed before the campaign by the diocesan treasurer, H.C. Koch, concerning the costs, proved to be a chimera. Church attendance improved with resultant giving, as well as costs being contained by income from the various sales. Reeves had chosen the

¹⁰. *The Watchman*, May 1950, p.2.

¹¹. David M. Paton, (ed.) *Church and Race in S.A.* (London, S.C.M. Press, 1958), p.24.

¹². 'The Johannesburg Evangelistic Campaign', *Pan Anglican*, May 1951 (Editorial).

right director. French-Beytagh was indefatigable in visiting parishes before the 'Weeks' to explain procedure and to answer questions about organisation. He was enthusiastic and an inspiring evangelist in his own right. The success of 'Church Weeks' was recorded by him in a world-wide Anglican publication:

. . . there is already real evidence of achievement in many places - both as regards individual souls and in parish life generally. Parish priests have been very greatly encouraged by the interest shown and the work done by the laity and altogether priest and laypeople have found that 'Church Weeks' have been immensely worthwhile in spite of, or perhaps, because of, the greater amount of preliminary work involved in contacting each communicant selling tickets for the week, and so on.¹³

The following year, 1952, was the 'Family Weeks' phase, with stress on the importance of a strong family life in church and society. Reeves organised a 'Family Exhibition' in the centre of Johannesburg at Darragh Hall. Everyone was welcome and all were encouraged to attend the meetings in parishes. From 31 May to 9 June four thousand attended the Exhibition, the success of which made it a good advertisement for the meetings all over Johannesburg and the Reef.¹⁴

Missioners were trained according to material written by Reeves himself, who was well informed regarding marriage and the family. He was a convenor of the 'Marriage and the Family Committee' at the World Anglican Congress of 1954 in Minneapolis,

¹³. G.A. French-Beytagh, 'The Johannesburg Diocesan Crusade', *Pan Anglican*, May 1951, p.6.

¹⁴. *The Watchman*, August 1952, p.5.

Minnesota, United States of America,¹⁵ and was also to become the chairman of the Johannesburg Marriage Guidance Council. Bishop's Messengers took invitations from the Bishop to each of the lapsed church members. As with 'Church Weeks' seats were sold out. At the meetings much time was given to answering questions. Discussion was an important part of the proceedings. The breakdown of family life as a consequence of divorce, segregation laws and migrant labour was discussed. Whites in Johannesburg and surrounding areas were made aware of the tremendous housing shortage of 71 700 houses for Africans.¹⁶ Few Whites had been aware of the plight of African families, as the White and African communities lived so separately. It was necessary for the Whites to acknowledge their guilt for their part in the prevailing situation, otherwise there could be no change of attitude; no turning from selfishness to unselfishness. The neglect concerning African housing was due mainly to the illiberal attitude of White authorities and the indifference of White taxpayers.

The final phase of the campaign, 'Crusade Weeks', in 1953, was aimed at society as a whole. Anglicans were to encourage non-Christians to attend. Advertising came to the fore with placards and banners. The media were constantly supplied with material regarding the 'Crusade Weeks'. A special preacher, Bishop William C. Campbell of West Virginia, was flown out from the United States. He was recommended to Reeves not only for his preaching skills, but because of his versatility and his youthfulness. He

¹⁵. C.P.S.A. Archives, Reeves Papers, University of the Witwatersrand, A.B.388, Box 10.

¹⁶. Paton (ed.), *Church and Race in S.A.*, p.12.

had recently been appointed as a bishop in the Protestant Episcopal Church at the age of thirty-eight, the youngest ever to hold office in the U.S.A. He had played professional baseball, was the university boxing champion at his weight and had also played basketball and soccer for his college. He received his B.A. *cum laude* and subsequently obtained a D.D., S.T.D. and an L.L.D. He had preached at missions in three states.¹⁷ Obviously, Reeves thought people would be impressed and eager to see and hear such a remarkable person.

Other publicity included 3.24m high crosses erected on many buildings and on some of the mine dumps. Managing Directors of many large department stores had made display windows available in order to advertise the 'Crusade' phase. Reeves, accompanied by prominent people such as the Minister of Transport, Brigadier Charles Hoffe, and the Consul General for the United States, met Campbell on his arrival at Palmietfontein Airport, on the evening of Saturday, 24 August 1953. On hand were representatives of the press and newsreel cameramen. Reeves had learnt the importance of publicity when he assisted with the greater London Crusade. However, the spiritual side was not forgotten: a chain of prayer was held in all parishes from Sunday, 30 August to Wednesday, 2 September 1953.¹⁸

On arrival from the airport, Campbell was given a tumultuous welcome outside the Johannesburg City Hall, which was followed by a meeting. Other special preachers were brought in for Crusade Weeks, including Bishop Selby Taylor of Southern Rhodesia

¹⁷. *The Watchman*, August 1953, p.7.

¹⁸. *Ibid.*, p.8.

(Zimbabwe), Richard R. Rosevere (later Bishop of Accra, Ghana) and Francis Moncrieff (later Archbishop of Scotland). They spent eight nights in the city, five in the country and eight in various Reef towns.¹⁹ In each parish Bishop's Messengers were trained to reach every home - not only Anglican ones - in order to invite people to the meetings. Newcomers at the meetings were subsequently visited. During 'Crusade Weeks' all parishioners were in some way involved with the preparations, and fellowship was engendered as never before. It seemed as if every person in Johannesburg and on the Reef knew about the campaign, for it became a talking-point.

The key evangelist, Campbell, who stayed with Reeves during his visit, said of his host:

In one short day (the first) I learned two great truths about him: he is a man of controlled discipline and he is a man of God . . . To my surprise and joy, Bishop Reeves was a leader recognized by trade union members and a rallying point for those fighting for the rights of the Bantu

When I bade goodbye to Bishop Reeves, I was a different person.²⁰

Koch, who had been worried about the necessary finance for the campaign, confirmed:

As bursar I had to acknowledge that Ambrose had been quite right in predicting that the general stirring up of the church that resulted from the campaign would reflect itself in the strengthening of its finances. It roped in many fringe and lapsed Anglicans, and actually converted

¹⁹. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B.388, Box 10.

²⁰. John S. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1973), p.74.

others. I should include myself amongst the fringe Anglicans whose real churchmanship was sparked off by the evangelistic campaign.²¹

In each of the years, the 'Weeks' had ensured packed church halls and improved attendance at church services. Societies boasted increased membership and youth clubs were started. The Anglican Young Peoples' Association (A.Y.P.A.) was first introduced into South Africa in the Johannesburg diocese.²² Christianity for Anglicans became more than simply a 'Sunday religion'. It now meant having a personal relationship with God, from which followed a caring for others. Reeves, acting as an agent of reconciliation, and assisted by others, had made it possible for a large number of people to become reconciled to God.

That the 'Weeks' was more than a brief emotional episode as far as 10 000 White Anglicans were concerned was confirmed by their presence at an evangelistic rally two years later. Reeves invited the Reverend Bryan Green, a famous Anglican evangelist from Birmingham to preach at the Wembley Stadium, Johannesburg, on 28 August 1955.²³ Unlike the 'Weeks' which had aimed at bringing about a change in the attitudes of Whites to other races, this gathering catered for all race groups.

This invitation confirms that Reeves was not just interested in social action; not as his enemies claimed 'a turbulent crank and a meddler in politics when he should [have been] sticking to

²¹. Ibid., p.74.

²². Interview conducted by F.D. Phillips with Ellis Herbert, Church Warden at St Francis, Parkview, 17 November 1994.

²³. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 10.

religion'.²⁴ Reeves was just as concerned about the necessity for a personal relationship with God as he was regarding injustice perpetrated by the State. He believed that it was the duty of the Church to condemn any wrong doing, either by the Christian or by the State. At the same time, this did not absolve the Church of its duty to bring together God and the individual.

Reeves's desire to unite men and women with God is further evidenced by his participation in a mission to Natal University from 16 to 23 March 1952. Reeves and the well-known South African Methodist minister, J.B. Webb, were invited to be co-evangelists at a campaign entitled 'Quest', organised by the Students Christian Association (S.C.A.) at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.²⁵ Reeves cites this mission in his book, *South Africa Yesterday and Tomorrow*, as one of his important achievements while in South Africa.²⁶ Evangelism was a priority for him. One hundred and fifty students attended the meetings nightly to hear Reeves and Webb preach. Lunch hour forums, where discussions took place, were attended by between forty and eighty-five students. Webb wrote afterwards in his report: 'It was an intensely interesting and stimulating week.'²⁷ Reeves records: 'For me personally that was one of the most worthwhile ventures in which I have had the privilege to have a share since

²⁴. *The Sunday Times*, 5 March 1961.

²⁵. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B.388, Box 2.

²⁶. R.A. Reeves, *South Africa Yesterday and Tomorrow: A Challenge to Christians* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1962), p.105.

²⁷. 'Report by J.B. Webb', 29 March 1952, C.P.S.A. A.B.388, Box 10.

I came to South Africa three years ago.²⁸

Margaret Nash was then the S.C.A. secretary in Natal. She attended all the meetings and many of the lunch-hour gatherings. In the *Newsletter* produced during the mission, she wrote:

One thing was absent - indifference. The University is in a state of turmoil . . . 'You cannot go anywhere without getting involved in a religious discussion' complained the students - probably similar complaints were made in Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost.²⁹

Philip Russell, who was later to become the Archbishop of Cape Town, was present at the mission. He reflects concerning Reeves:

In my mind's eye I still see him standing there, a minute little piece of paper in his hands, his metal-rimmed glasses emphasising the 'minuteness' of the man - minuteness in height only. For he was brilliant - he was dealing with students, whom he believed should be thinking persons. What he said was spot-on for that situation.³⁰

These testimonies confirm the continuing effectiveness of Reeves as an evangelist and the enthusiasm he felt for this kind of work, which united individual students to their God.

The following year Reeves's zeal was manifested at an S.C.A. mission at the University of the Witwatersrand, when on behalf of the S.C.A., he welcomed Edwin Orr, a non-Anglican, but a

²⁸. R.A. Reeves, 'Report on Quest Week', 2 April 1952, C.P.S.A., A.B.388, Box 10.

²⁹. M.A. Nash, *S.C.A. Newsletter*, May 1952, vol. XXI no. 111.

³⁰. Letter from P. Russell to F.D. Phillips, 15 September 1994.

respected evangelist from the United States of America. Orr had received a doctorate from Oxford University for a thesis on evangelism.³¹ Reeves knew him and was impressed by his ability to be both evangelist and scholar, and especially by the fact that he was an Oxford graduate. The meetings were well advertised and attended. The S.C.A. were pleased to have Reeves's support, as it gave more credibility to the Association.

In 1957 the S.C.A. of the University of the Witwatersrand conducted another mission, this time in conjunction with the Student Anglican Society, which had been started by Reeves. The Reverend John Stott of All Souls, Langham Place, London led the mission.³² Stott had obtained a first class in theology at Trinity College, Cambridge, and had been a select preacher (a special appointment) to the university in 1955. He was the author of three books on Christianity and Vicar of the well-known London church, All-Souls, Langham Place, where he had served since 1945.³³ He had conducted missions at many universities around the world. Reeves supported this venture wholeheartedly, both personally and financially. It must have been gratifying for him to hear that an Anglican had been invited to head the campaign and he heartily welcomed the well known evangelical speaker into his diocese.

Stott emphasised that God is real and can be known by His revelation in Jesus Christ. The essence of Stott's theology was

³¹. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 9.

³². Ibid.

³³. *Crockford's Clerical Directory 1961-62* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1962), p.1143.

that the attributes of God are those of Jesus Christ. This same God demands a turning away from sin (disobedience to Himself) and faith in Jesus Christ who took upon himself man's punishment for his sin. Thus reconciliation is effected between the individual and God and, as a result, divine punishment (separation from God) falls away.³⁴ Reeves found this evangelical doctrine acceptable, in that it was the same as that expressed in the teaching of the Anglican Church, the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, which had to be assented to by every ordination candidate in England and South Africa. Reeves, in fact, differed more from Anglican evangelicals regarding the meaning of the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion than he did regarding the doctrine of salvation: to the evangelicals the sacraments are memorial symbols, whereas to the Anglo-Catholics God is present in the sacrament. Yet, even where this was concerned, Reeves allowed both views to be taught in his diocese. For him the most important event was an individual meeting with the Creator in person, which resulted in a complete change of outlook and led to respect and kindness in responding to others according to God's purpose. It was for this reason that Reeves placed such a high priority on evangelism and supported Stott so fully.

The mission meetings were well attended by students and staff. This was not only because of Stott's personality, but also because of his scholarly record; a necessary qualification for a missionary to a university. Reeves was pleased that the S.C.A. and the Anglican Society had combined forces for this mission.

³⁴. J.R.W. Stott, 'The Confession of an Evangelical' *The Church of England Newspaper*, 26 May 1961.

Both societies were rewarded by a boost in membership and enhanced status at the University.

There were other ways in which Reeves helped to spread this reconciliatory evangelistic message, one being through the work of the South African Church Railway Mission (S.A.C.R.M.), which had been founded at Grahamstown in 1911 with the object of ministering to Anglican railway workers living alongside the track far from the larger centres and churches. In due course, the work had spread to Southern and Northern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe and Zambia). The number of missionaries (priests and women workers) was never large: in 1950 there were thirteen priests and nine women. In the Cape Midlands one missionary made seventy visits to 291 people. In the Orange Free State one-hundred visits were made to 178 people. Because so much effort was expended visiting so few Anglicans, usually seen only once a year, the Provincial Synod questioned the viability of the mission³⁵ and in 1950 it instituted a Commission of enquiry, with Reeves as Chairman, to answer this question. Reeves accepted the position believing that his own experience of travelling while with the S.C.M. and the W.S.C.F. would help him in solving some of the S.A.C.R.M.'s problems.

The mission operated throughout the dioceses under the jurisdiction of bishops, and country priests were responsible for the railway workers. The Commission was told by the Director, the Reverend M. Lancaster, that these non-mission priests were relieved of the task of visiting their Anglican railway workers by the S.A.C.R.M. missionaries who held free passes on the

³⁵. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 2.

railways, while the priests had to use cars. None of the bishops questioned this argument, but the diocesan priests felt aggrieved at the intrusion into their parishes. Reeves agreed with the bishops on this matter, as the priests were being spared additional expense and time.³⁶ The Commission was dissatisfied that Africans failed to come under the ministry of the S.A.C.R.M. The reason given was that the workers came directly from the United Kingdom and could not speak an African language. No African priests were appointed to bring about a change in this situation. The White priests belonging to the S.A.C.R.M. did not learn an African language, nor did Reeves, though he worked with many Africans.³⁷ The missionaries could not speak Afrikaans either, though services were sometimes held in that language. When this occurred, the English prayer book, translated into Afrikaans, was read. The Commission condemned this practice, because the service was read by someone who did not understand the words. Reeves and the other Commissioners recommended that Africans be included in the S.A.C.R.M. services, though there would be little understanding of the message.³⁸

Every member of the Commission agreed with Reeves that the Director, who had served the mission for fifteen years, be asked to resign as soon as possible, although he had indicated that he

³⁶. *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the South African Church Railway Mission, 15-16 March 1950, C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B.388, Box 2.*

³⁷. Letter from Rev. J.T. Namo to F.D. Phillips, 5 September 1994.

³⁸. *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the South African Church Railway Mission, 15-16 March 1950: C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B.388, Box 2.*

would be leaving in two years' time. The decision was made, even though only one bishop expressed the opinion that the Director seemed tired and dressed untidily. According to the Commission, this indicated that 'his work must also be sloppy'. The Director had only a small number of workers to visit on a short track of 124 miles near his home in Salisbury, whereas the other worker in Southern Rhodesia, a woman, had vast distances to cover. The Director was not asked to defend himself against these accusations, which was unjust, especially as the missionaries had lodged no complaint whatsoever against him. It was valuable having someone with so much experience for so difficult a task and dress should not have been considered a reliable indication of a man's work ethic. These views were ignored and the findings of the Commission chaired by Reeves were accepted. The Director retired early, as instructed. The work was to continue, though only fifty-six of the workers on the railway-lines were English speaking. Anglicans of all races, it was decided, should be cared for by the Church, in the form of the Mission.³⁹ The aim of the S.A.C.R.M. was to initiate and maintain the God-person relationship. It was because of this that Reeves had accepted the chairmanship of the Commission of Enquiry, which took up a great deal of his time. In the end, thanks to him and his fellow commissioners, the work of the S.A.C.R.M. was enabled to continue.

Reeves's interest in evangelism extended also to the seafarers. Consequently, he was appointed chairman of the Committee of Missions to Seamen which had an office in Johannesburg for

³⁹. Ibid.

obtaining funds and generating prayer for the work of the organisation. Reeves's experience on the Liverpool docks had generated his interest in bringing the Christian faith to sailors. The Missions to Seamen, an Anglican organisation, aimed to help as many seamen as possible, despite their religious affiliation. In South Africa they went aboard ships in the Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Durban harbours, and provided for sailors's needs at special centres.⁴⁰

Reeves arranged for missionaries from the organisation to preach in churches under his jurisdiction. He was especially concerned about the necessity of giving help to sailors from Communist countries. This stemmed from his experience of the Eastern bloc, where the Christian message was not advanced. He believed, with the Mission, that the best way to present the gospel message was through friendliness and practical help: not only souls but bodies needed to be cared for. His support demonstrated his interest in world-wide evangelism, for the Mission operated in all the world's major ports. Foreign sailors converted to Christianity would carry the message of reconciliation not only to their homes but further abroad. The mission used Christian films extensively to present the gospel, a form of evangelism Reeves was particularly interested in, for he believed films were a means by which a person might come to understand the reality of God. He had used them to good effect in Liverpool.

In Johannesburg he became interested in the non-denominational Religious Films of South Africa. He sat on the board of directors

⁴⁰. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B.388, Box 2.

of this company.⁴¹ *Die Vaderland*, a Johannesburg evening newspaper, reported on a meeting where ministers of all denominations were invited to view a series of new religious films. Reeves opened the proceedings with a talk on the presentation and value of such films. He stated the importance of presenting the gospel so that it appealed to the eye as well as the ear; the emotions should be stirred as well as an impression made on the mind and the will. Films were to assist ministers, not to replace them. Instruction by the minister, he said, should precede the film; discussions should follow it. The films, he cautioned, should be of good quality and the projection as nearly professional as possible.⁴² He took an active interest in the local film company and reviewed new films received. This he did despite the importance he attached to preaching as the primary means of introducing people to God.

Not a born preacher, Reeves had studied the art carefully from his days at Cambridge.⁴³ Because his audience was often derogatory, he had learnt to be bold and spoke without a trace of self-consciousness. Reeves had developed the ability to speak clearly and precisely from an early age. His sermons were logical and easy to follow; he was able to explain obtuse theology and philosophy in simple terms; and he could preach at universities and in parks to equal effect. While at Liverpool it is noted:

Reeves's sermons were challenging and communicative . . .

⁴¹. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 4.

⁴². *Die Vaderland*, 9 March 1959.

⁴³. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.28.

stretching and stimulating. He was rarely tentative, nearly always sure. He never compromised or diluted the Christian teaching as to the inevitability of a final moral issue.⁴⁴

His preaching continued in this vein in Johannesburg. His main emphasis was always on the listener's decision to enter into a personal relationship with God. The present Roman Catholic Archbishop of Pretoria, George Daniel, remembers being greatly impressed by Reeves's preaching during a three-hour Good Friday service at St Alban's Cathedral, Pretoria, in April 1957: the sermons were well-formulated and easy to understand.⁴⁵

In the United States, Reeves was much admired because of his ability to preach. In September 1954 he became one of the few visitors to have preached in the third largest cathedral in the world, the Cathedral of St John the Divine, New York. Afterwards he was invited to preach in many churches while visiting that country to attend the Evanston World Council of Churches meeting and the Anglican Congress in Minneapolis. In one of the numerous letters received by Reeves after his visit, the Reverend Lockett Ballard of the First Church, Newport, Rhode Island wrote: 'It was a thrilling experience. I know that Bishop Higgins was delighted with the great impression you have left behind in this diocese.'⁴⁶

Because of the importance Reeves attached to preaching, he did his best to provide his priests with the necessary financial

⁴⁴. Ibid., p.51.

⁴⁵. Interview conducted by F.D. Phillips with Archbishop G. Daniel, 14 October 1994.

⁴⁶. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 10.

support to continue and expand evangelism in the diocese of Johannesburg. In this way his work as reconciler of people to God was extended.

The Wells Organisation, which was founded in the United States of America in the late 1940s, used modern business and marketing methods to improve church finances. Consequently, Reeves encouraged his churches to employ them. The main idea was that every member of a parish be approached to make an annual pledge of money to the church, to be brought to the Sunday service in the form of a weekly amount. This was to ensure the connection between worship and giving. A church board could thus be enabled to budget more successfully than under the haphazard method of collections, bazaars, cake sales and concerts. In each church the scheme would start with a church dinner for all members. On this occasion the church's needs would be specified and leaders would state how much they intended to give, in the hope of encouraging others to follow their example and give generously as well.⁴⁷

Executives of the organisation arrived in 1956 from the U.S.A. and Australia, where the scheme had established itself. On 30 September 1956, St Mary's Rosettenville, Johannesburg, held the first campaign, which was a success. This was followed by St Thomas's, Linden, in October, and St Aidans, Yeoville, in December.⁴⁸ Representatives from these parishes went to visit other churches to tell of the rapid improvement in their own finances. The scheme proved so beneficial that the salaries of

⁴⁷. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 2.

⁴⁸. Ibid.

the clergy were raised substantially and new churches and halls built.

There was opposition, however, from some priests and parishes. The Reverend Mark Risdon, Vicar of St. Andrew's Parish, Kensington, did not wish to employ the Wells Organisation in his parish. He complained about the large initial fee charged which, in most cases, would have to be raised by means of an overdraft at the bank. He did not believe that a church should incur debt. According to the scheme, members had to be transparent concerning their giving. Risdon protested that 'the right hand should not know what the left hand [is] doing'. Moreover, he felt that the Church should not be run like big business; it should be a fellowship rather than a corporation. He felt people were being given the impression that salvation was something they could pay for. The idea of L.G. Wells, the founder, that once people gave liberally they would become interested in what was happening to their money, and so become involved in church activities, was viewed with suspicion. Risdon voiced the disapproval of others beside himself when he claimed that the aim of the Church under the Wells scheme was to make money.⁴⁹ Reeves referred Risdon's letter to T.J. Hodnett, one of the directors of the Wells organisation, who had come to South Africa. Hodnett took pains to explain that all the procedures were aimed at helping the churches; that the initial fee was not excessive; and that the church was encouraged to pay off the debt as soon as possible.⁵⁰

⁴⁹. Letter from the Rev. M. Risdon to Bishop A.R. Reeves, 10 March 1957, C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 2.

⁵⁰. Letter from T.J. Hodnett to the Rev. M. Risdon, 20 March 1957, C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 2.

Another priest who voiced opposition to the scheme was Canon Leopold Alexander, a priest at Klerksdorp, who complained about the initial outlay of funds:

We usually referred to the organisation as the 'Wells Fargo'. We spent an enormous amount of money, which we were told would generate a change in giving, and money would flow. There was a change of giving - but not too much money flowed - especially after having paid the 'Wells Fargo'.⁵¹

However, Anglican churches in country towns had always found it difficult to collect funds.

Despite the opposition, Reeves was highly satisfied and records:

Income more than doubled, new churches, rectories and halls were built. Seventy new churches were dedicated. One hundred and fifty four White and fifty four Black priests were employed.⁵²

Much of this was the result of Reeves's decision to implement the Wells scheme, yet another venture on his part to bring about and maintain the God-person relationship.

⁵¹. Letter from L.D. Alexander to F.D. Phillips, 1 November 1994.

⁵². R.A. Reeves, *South Africa Yesterday and Tomorrow: A Challenge to Christians* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1962) p.63.

In chapter 2 Reeves's emphasis on the reconciliation of the individual to God was dealt with. In this chapter his commitment to the person-to-person relationship, in other words to social action, is discussed. The question of the necessity for this approach is examined first and then Reeves's own social and political involvement is explored. This includes his reaction to the Defiance Campaign and his abhorrence of law-breaking, which, however, was countered by his feeling that protest against injustice was essential. Contrary to popular belief, he gave time to individual justice, to the Jewish community, family life, mental illness and health problems, all of which are considered in this discussion. His attitude to Communism is analysed briefly. Finally, his reconciliatory work in helping to bring the Alexandra Boycott to an end is investigated, revealing his approach to intricate social problems.

Reeves's interest in Christian social action took root at Cambridge as a result of his membership of the I.C.F., and was further stimulated at Mirfield. The reason for the Anglo-Catholic reputation for involvement with the poor goes back to the latter half of the nineteenth century. Ceremonial practices connected with the Mass, such as bells and incense, the wearing of garments like the alb and chasuble, and candles were not popular in the Protestant Church of England, consequently Anglo-Catholic priests had difficulty finding posts in established churches. There were churches in the poor areas without clergy because the stipends

were low and there were insufficient Protestant-minded clergymen to fill the vacancies. Churches offering higher stipends did not want to employ clerics who would alter traditional Protestant worship. Because of these factors, Anglo-Catholic priests were appointed to churches in the poorer areas of London, Liverpool, Leeds and Durham. These men attracted a following as a result of their social work among the poor. Some of the more famous were W.F. Hook, Vicar at Leeds, Bryan King at St George's, East End, London, and Alexander Mackonochie at St. Alban's, Holburn, London. Their example was followed by other Anglo-Catholic clergymen and the movement became associated with social action, as well as colourful vestments, ritual, candles, bells and incense, which attracted people who led a drab existence.¹ It was at Mirfield, which favoured this approach, that Reeves imbibed the social-action emphasis.

Here he was encouraged to help the local Labour Party, who aimed to better the lot of the workers, in the elections.² Mirfield teaching was that Christianity involved every aspect of life and that the Church must preach and act against injustice of any kind. Trevor Huddleston, an ordained member of the C.R., epitomised this approach. In Sophiatown, Johannesburg, where Reeves was his Bishop, Huddleston preached and acted against racial injustice, believing that politics could not be separated from Christianity. He also organised a jazz band for teenagers, collected funds for a swimming-bath and began a feeding scheme

¹. K. Carter, *St. Paul's Church Knightsbridge 1843-1993: The First 150 Years* (London, St. Pauls, 1992), p.14

². A. Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection, A Centenary History* (London, S.C.M., 1992), P.287.

for children.³ It was Reeves's viewpoint regarding social action that '[w]e cannot accept the suggestion that any human interest or activity ought to be outside our concern'.⁴

Because of his sense of social obligation, Reeves was asked, in October 1952, to help in the Defiance Campaign. This presented him with a serious problem. Patrick Duncan, the son of a former South African Governor-General and an Anglican, had decided, with others opposed to the Government's racist laws, to break certain of these and thus fill the jails. Manilal Gandhi, a son of Mahatma Gandhi, was the leader of this campaign based on his father's principle of *Satyagraha* or passive resistance. Duncan hoped that Reeves would support him, since many of the acts of resistance would take place in his diocese. With regard to the proposed breaking of laws, Reeves replied, 'We know in our hearts there are laws which are unjust'.⁵ He was sympathetic towards young Duncan but, after much agonising, concluded that breaking the law was not right, as it could invite violence which he found abhorrent. It would only lead to disrespect for the law.⁶ Duncan was disappointed, but obeying his own conscience, proceeded with others, including Gandhi, illegally to enter an African location

³. Trevor Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort*, 14th ed. (Glasgow, William Collins and Sons and Co. Ltd, 1987), p.168.

⁴. R.A. Reeves, 'Selections from His Charges 1952-1957', D.M. Paton (ed.), *Church and Race in South Africa* (London, S.C.M. Press, 1958), p.10.

⁵. *The Watchman*, March 1953, p.2.

⁶. C.P.S.A. Archives, Reeves Papers, University of the Witwatersrand, A.B. 388, Box 7.

and be arrested.⁷ Violence did occur at an apartheid law-breaking incident in East London, where a nun was killed.⁸ Reeves maintained that the Campaign was 'A judgement on Europeans in South Africa and a heavy price for all concerned would have to be paid.'⁹ The Campaign was discontinued.

Reeves's decision in the Defiance Campaign revealed that he would not support opposition to the Government without careful consideration. There were critics in his own Church who thought that leaders of the political left were simply using him to promote their own cause.¹⁰ He was careful in this regard, giving support only when his Christian conscience allowed, and when legitimate means could be employed to bring about enlightened democracy.¹¹ A case in point was his support of the Civil Rights League that consisted of many non-Christians.¹² He was also the chairman of fourteen anti-apartheid organisations, not one of which was specifically Christian.¹³ Threats that he should 'stick to church matters' did not deter Reeves. When he was in England

7. 'Patrick Duncan', *Encyclopedia of S.A.*, Eric Rosenthal (ed.), 6th ed. (London, Fred Warner Ltd, 1973), p.147.

8. T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa a Modern History*, 3rd ed. (Johannesburg, Macmillan, 1987), p.370.

9. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 7.

10. Letter from the Reverend T. Bishop to F.D. Phillips, 17 September 1994.

11. John S. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1973), p.110.

12. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388. Correspondence File 1949-1956.

13. A. Hastings, *A History of African Christianity, 1950-1975* (Cambridge, C.U.P., 1979), p.144.

on long leave in 1960, White leaders in his diocese, including H.C. Koch, H.M. McLarty, the Bursar, N.C. Juta, Diocesan Secretary, and Archdeacons, F.J. Newth and R.F. Yates, formally requested him not to return, as they felt he had neglected Church affairs.¹⁴ Yet whenever he believed that something was against God's will, he spoke out or wrote against it.

At the inaugural meeting of the Civil Rights League, in the Johannesburg City Hall in March 1953, he protested against the Public Safety and Criminal Law (Amendment) Act. He felt that it was unchristian to have to face five years in jail and ten strokes of whipping for speaking out against any law;¹⁵ and that freedom of speech and action would be denied and the press and Church muzzled. He brought together the fourteen anti-apartheid organisations to discuss the raising of wages of lower income groups, the abolition of Native Representatives in Parliament, the creation of Bantustans and university apartheid, all of which he felt were opposed to Christianity.¹⁶

At times his protest focused on a single injustice and then he would write to the relevant government authority. For example, he sent a request for clemency to the Governor-General-in-Council, on 28 April 1954, on behalf of one, Joseph Machoba, who had received the death penalty. The plea was successful and the young man lived, a fact confirmed by a letter Reeves received

¹⁴. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.234.

¹⁵. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 7.

¹⁶. D. Sadie, 'A Decade of Opposition to Apartheid. The Anglican Church 1948-1960' (unpubl. B.A. Hons dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1989), p.62.

from the Department of Justice, dated 2 July 1954.¹⁷

Another injustice to an individual, this time within the Church, occurred at St John's College, the Anglican secondary school for boys in Johannesburg, in October 1956. This case was time-consuming, but he regarded it as important. As Bishop, Reeves was the chief religious adviser to the school, his official title being, 'the Visitor'. Parents of a matric student, John Pysden, who was also a house prefect, complained to Reeves that he had been expelled from school for smoking, shortly before the matric examination. The incident could, according to his parents, have ruined his future. Reeves realised this and promised to investigate the matter. He went to great trouble to have the boy re-instated, reconciling him to the Headmaster, Dean Yates, who was at first adamant that he should not return. Correspondence concerning the case was voluminous and much time was spent by Reeves at special meetings and with the diocesan secretary who was a lawyer.¹⁸ Yet a feeling persisted among a group of Whites in his diocese that he was neglecting his duties to dabble in politics.¹⁹ In this instance, however, not neglecting his duty as 'Visitor', he had restored justice and brought about reconciliation.

The time spent demonstrated that Reeves fought for justice, whether it concerned Whites or other race groups. This is praiseworthy when one considers that he had no assistant bishop,

17. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388. Box 7.

18. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388. St John's College 1945-1958 File.

19. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.253.

and had to oversee congregations from the borders of Swaziland in the East, to those of the Orange Free State in the South and Botswana in the North West. In his charge were 134 priests in eighty-nine parishes.²⁰ He knew all the clergy personally and visited their parishes at least once a year for confirmations. His main aim was to inspire reconciliation of individuals to God and to urge community work both among Christians and non-Christians.²¹

When Christians engaged in social action, the Jews, according to Reeves, were not to be excluded:

Those who harbour prejudice against Jews do it because they are insecure and need a scapegoat for their own shortcomings. We need one another.²²

Reeves held that there was great need to form a society of Jews and Christians, so that the latter could cultivate friendships with Jewish acquaintances. This was because Christians, in Reeves's view, owed a debt to, and had kinship with, Israel. He quoted Leon Bloy, who said that when we discriminate against Jews it is the same as insulting our own fathers and mothers repeatedly.²³ The admiration the Johannesburg Jews felt for Reeves was demonstrated by the fact that he spoke at the Johannesburg Jewish Association lunches on 20 October 1954 and 23

²⁰. *S.A. Church Year Book and Clerical Directory 1959-1960* (Durban, S.A. Church Publications, 1961), p.128.

²¹. *Paton Church and Race in South Africa*, p.10.

²². *The Watchman*, February 1960, p.3.

²³. *Ibid.*

September 1955.²⁴ Ellen Hellman, Chairperson of the Institute of Race Relations, was a good friend of Reeves's and greatly admired him. She attended the regular meetings of the representatives of the fourteen organisations at his home. Like Marion Friedman of the Liberal Party and Frieda Troup, a writer activist in the Congress of Democrats, she averred that Reeves was more than the religious head of the Anglican community: he was 'father of his people', providing a militant spiritual lead for all South Africans against abuse, indignity and injustice. These three women, all of whom were Jewish, regarded him as their own spiritual father.²⁵ Reeves's work among the Jews was combined with his work for the whole community, which included ensuring a stable family life for all.

A social duty that Reeves regarded as of paramount importance was the task of reconciling fathers, mothers and children. This involved a lively interest in marriage guidance and a concern for juvenile delinquency. He was made a member of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Johannesburg Council on the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, and later served on a Permanent Committee on Juvenile Delinquency.²⁶ He had four children of his own and had gained experience of the problems of the young while in Liverpool, which made him an acquisition for the Johannesburg Committee. He believed that one of the main reasons for juvenile delinquency was that a child had had an unhappy family life or been altogether deprived of one. For this

²⁴. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 7.

²⁵. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.201.

²⁶. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 10.

reason he spoke out against the lack of housing (50 000 houses were needed in Johannesburg), the Pass Laws, which often meant a father in jail, and especially passes for women, which could further break up family life.²⁷

He proposed, and was the main organiser of the Family Life Exhibition, at the Darragh Hall, Johannesburg, from 31 May to 9 June 1952, which drew 4 000 visitors.²⁸ Divorce was a serious problem which Reeves did much to resolve by trying to reconcile husbands and wives. He set up a marriage Guidance Service in his diocese and sat on the standing Committee from September 1949 to February 1960.²⁹ After having spoken in his first Charge in 1949 on the impoverishment of family life and its disintegration within the diocese, a special letter was composed by him to be read on the wedding-day of couples married in his churches. Just how important he considered marriage to be is demonstrated by the fact that a Conference on Holy Marriage was held at the Bishop's House on Wednesday, 9 November 1949. A Pastoral Letter concerning the importance of marriage was read in all his churches on Sunday, 4 March 1951.

Reeves also delivered the Annual Report of the Johannesburg Marriage Guidance Society in 1952. He had taken an immediate and active interest in the Society and was elected to the Committee soon after his arrival, because marriage was of such vital

27. 'Sermon at St John the Divine Cathedral, New York, September 1954', C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 7.

28. *The Watchman*, July 1952, p.6.

29. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, 'Marriage, Memoranda and Letters 1946-1961'.

importance to him. In 1953 he was instrumental in bringing Dr H. Mace, a world expert on marriage, to South Africa to deliver lectures. In 1954 Reeves was re-appointed chairman of the Society, a post he had held from September 1950. Besides this, Reeves's committee arranged weekly lectures and made provision for the employment of a full-time worker. Counsellors were also trained to interview people whose marriages were unstable. He was instrumental too in forming the South African National Marriage Guidance Council on 18 June 1954, which took over the work of the Johannesburg Marriage Guidance Society.³⁰

Over and above his dedication to problems of family life, Reeves involved himself in many social welfare organisations. He was Chaplain to the St John Ambulance Association, which provided voluntary staff for hospitals, trained youth and adults in medical aid, and assisted in emergency situations and at large gatherings.³¹ He was Vice-Chairman of the Witwatersrand Appeal Committee for the National War Memorial Health Foundation. This organisation established and maintained orphanages for children who had lost parents in World War II. It also provided scholarships for students to study social work and ran health clinics in poor areas.³² The Mental Health Society used Reeves's services for discussions and lectures.³³ The same was true of the Independent Cultural Association and the South African Pen

³⁰. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, 'Marriage Guidance Memoranda 1946-1961'.

³¹. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, 'Order of St John Correspondence File'.

³². Ibid., 'National War Memorial Health Foundation File'.

³³. Ibid., 'Mental Health Society Correspondence File'.

Centre, where he lectured on the mind and human relationships.³⁴

From his Cambridge days and those of his earlier pastoral appointments, industrial relations had always held a particular interest for Reeves. He gave the main address to the Social and Industrial Council on 'The Church's Responsibility in Social and Industrial Matters'. His main point was that 'Christian social teaching provides us with a criterion, a standard of justice to be applied to the economy and organisation of any society'.³⁵ He believed that the Communism practised in Russia and Eastern Europe as a solution to social and industrial matters was contrary to Christianity because of its atheism and its treatment of people as part of a huge state machine. He did not accept its answer to society's disorders, as it did not take human sinfulness, selfishness in particular, into account. Reeves favoured Christian Socialism instead: 'The Church must declare her doctrine and apply it to the modern social scene.'³⁶ This meant taking human egotism and laziness into account. Unlike Marxist Communism, Christianity meant having a strong belief in God, and a conviction that each human being was sacred, not a mere tool of the state. Belief in God meant a desire to please him in one's work and not just to satisfy one's manager or the Government. Moreover, in Reeves's view the Holy Spirit empowered one to counter self-interest and tardiness in one's life. This conviction could be summed up in the following words: 'The social regime must guarantee the right to a dignified existence, a full

³⁴. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 10.

³⁵. *The Watchman*, May 1950, p.7.

³⁶. *Ibid*, p.8.

realisation of the life of every human being.'³⁷ Reeves's antidote to Communism was that

Christians must strive to promote justice and support the poor . . . the Church must challenge a social system where some have every opportunity and others are condemned to a stunted form of existence.³⁸

His conviction concerning the Christian attitude to the poor came into play when the Alexandra Bus Boycott began, on 7 January 1957.

He had spoken of those 'condemned to a stunted form of existence'. The inability of the people of Alexandra, the African township North of Johannesburg, to pay 5d instead of 4d for a nine-mile trip to Johannesburg and another 5d for the return journey to their homes, revealed the extent of their poverty. Figures obtained by the Institute of Race Relations in 1954 concerning Africans were still the same in 1957:

Minimum family expenditure necessary for health	£23-10-4
Average family income	£15-18-11
Monthly deficit	£ 7-11-5. ³⁹

Joe Rogaly complained in March 1957: 'Minimum wage determination in the engineering trade was £11-12-1, in transport £12-12-5 and

37. Ibid.

38. *The Watchman*, July 1950, p.2.

39. *Race Relations News*, February 1957, vol.XVIX, no.2, p.3.

in the building trade £13-10-0.⁴⁰ The majority of African workers were unskilled, as they could neither be apprenticed to any trade nor attend a government technical college in terms of the Apprenticeship Act (1922). Consequently many earned the monthly wage outlined above. The increase in the fare between Alexandria and Johannesburg was simply unaffordable.

Previously, on 15 November 1944, a boycott of the Alexandra buses had occurred because fares were raised from 4d to 5d. Commuters had walked until 5 January 1945. Those who started work at 7h00 had had to get up at 3h00 and start walking at 4h00. If they finished work at 17h00, they arrived home only at 20h00.⁴¹ After almost two months arrangements were made to sell monthly coupons at 4d, cash daily payments being 5d a trip.⁴² The Government, the Johannesburg Municipality, the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce and the Transvaal Chamber of Industries stated that the 1957 boycott took them by surprise. According to Quintin Whyte, the Director of the Institute of Race Relations, however, the 1944 boycott was a precedent, and nothing had been done since to relieve the poverty of the Blacks.⁴³ Once the Public Utility Transport Corporation (P.U.T.C.O.) was formed in April 1945, buses to Johannesburg were made available at 4d per fare. No dividends were paid to shareholders, and profits were

⁴⁰. Joe Rogaly, 'The Bus Boycott,' *The Forum*, March 1957, p.11.

⁴¹. Alan Paton, *Apartheid and the Archbishop* (Cape Town, David Phillip, 1973), p.143.

⁴². Mary Benson, *South Africa: The Struggle for a Birthright*, (London, IDAF, 1985), p.78.

⁴³. *Race Relations News*, February 1957, p.1.

minimal.⁴⁴ By 1956, however, costs made it extremely difficult to keep the fares at the same level. Increases in fuel were £15 365 and £74 000 for spare parts.⁴⁵ P.U.T.C.O. had applied to the Rand Transport Board in 1953 to raise fares, but permission had not been granted. In December 1956 the local Road Transport Board for Johannesburg and Pretoria gave permission for fares to be raised from 4d to 5d on the Alexandra Johannesburg route, from 7 January 1957.⁴⁶ P.U.T.C.O.'s costs were such that all parties, the Alexandra People's Transport Action Committee (A.P.T.A.C.) excluded, realised that, since it was hardly possible for the bus company to refrain from raising its fares, some other solution would have to be found.

The A.P.T.A.C., which had been formed by the Alexandra Smallholdings Vigilance Committee on 2 January 1957, called a mass meeting in Alexandra on Saturday, 5 January. It was decided then to boycott the buses and walk to the city and back, rather than pay the extra 2d a day.⁴⁷ The commuters were adamant that they could not afford the increased fare and despite P.U.T.C.O.'s increased costs the fares would have to be re-set at 4d a trip.⁴⁸

On Monday 7 January 1957, nobody boarded the buses: the boycott was under way. In 1944, 10 000 had been involved; in 1957 there were more than 45 000, of whom 38% were women. This was to

⁴⁴. *Rand Daily Mail*, Johannesburg, 8 February 1957.

⁴⁵. Rogaly, 'The Bus Boycott', p.11.

⁴⁶. Muriel Horrel. *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa* (Johannesburg, S.A.I.R.R., 1957), p.129.

⁴⁷. Benson, *South Africa: The Struggle for a Birthright*, p.193

⁴⁸. *Rand Daily Mail*, 8 February 1957.

be an important factor as most of the women were employed in private homes. Agreements between industrialists to either pay extra or refund the workers could not be applied to many of these women who were domestic workers. Suggestions for arriving at a solution would have to include women and children to be effective.⁴⁹ From 12 to 14 January representatives of the the the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce, the Transvaal Chamber of Industries, the Johannesburg City Council and P.U.T.C.O. met to discuss the situation.⁵⁰ No mediator was appointed by the Government on this occasion, probably because they did not wish to negotiate, but simply to end the boycott. All but the State authorities agreed that the reasons for the boycott were economic, but it would take time to investigate wages for unskilled workers and to have the minimum wage raised by the establishment. Two particular representatives of the A.P.T.A.C. were invited to the 12 to 14 January meeting, but they failed to attend. The Committee stated that it should have been permitted to choose its own representatives.⁵¹

On 16 January 1957 the Minister of Transport, Ben Schoeman, stated that the reason for the boycott was not economic, but due to the activity of agitators. Those businessmen who thought it economic could simply raise wages.⁵² The Government, following the Minister's lead, sent police to inspect the passes of the

⁴⁹. *Rand Daily Mail*, 1 March 1957.

⁵⁰. Horrel, *A Survey of Race Relations - South Africa 1956-1957*, p.133.

⁵¹. *Rand Daily Mail*, 8 February 1957.

⁵². Benson, *South Africa: The Struggle for a Birthright*, p.193.

boycotters and check the licences of private drivers giving lifts to commuters.⁵³ The Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce subsequently revised its opinion and refused to help the boycotters. Schoeman remained adamant in his attitude:

Every kind of pressure must be turned on the natives, including the threat of dismissal, to compel them to use the buses, whether or not they can afford to do so.⁵⁴

He claimed that the boycott was a political move launched by the A.N.C. to test its ability to discipline by intimidation.⁵⁵ Albert Luthuli, President of the A.N.C., denied any involvement at all on the part of the organisation at the beginning of the boycott.⁵⁶

In response to the hardened attitude of the regime, the Moroka-Jabavu people instigated a boycott in sympathy on 20 January: the Alexandra Germiston route was boycotted on 29 January 1957. An appeal by the combined boycott committee (the Witwatersrand-Pretoria Joint Co-ordinating Transport Council) to the Johannesburg and Pretoria Road Transport Board was turned down, indicating the effect of the Government's attitude. Pass raids on commuters were continued:

⁵³. Horrel, *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa - 1956-1957*, p. 132.

⁵⁴. House of Assembly Debates, 24 January 1957, vol. 1, col. 131.

⁵⁵. Ibid., col.132.

⁵⁶. Albert Luthuli, *Let My People Go* (Glasgow, Collins, 1962), p.153.

Every possible contravention of the laws of which the boycotters might be guilty was raised as a pretext for making the boycott unpleasant and difficult for those who participated.⁵⁷

The Transvaal Chamber of Industries held to its belief that the cause was economic. On 30 January, a scheme was introduced whereby they would sell books of 5d coupons to industrial workers for 4d per coupon. This was not accepted by the Boycott Committee, as it did not include commercial or municipal workers or the women.⁵⁸ On 31 January 1957 a wide spread inspection by traffic and road transport officials on all cars helping commuters was conducted - one driver was stopped three times.⁵⁹ At this stage Reeves, in Alexandra for a confirmation service, offered his assistance. The A.P.T.A.C. agreed; the other interested parties fell in with this arrangement; and Reeves became a mediator in an unofficial capacity.⁶⁰ What made the Africans accept Reeves in this role?

He was one of the few Whites whom the boycotters trusted. His sympathy with the boycott was no secret. He understood the reasons for it, and the people knew he understood. At the same time his knowledge of such matters went back to the days before he was in South Africa.⁶¹

⁵⁷. Brookes, E.H. and Macauley, I.B., *Civil Liberty in South Africa* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1958), p.40.

⁵⁸. *The Star*, 30 January 1957.

⁵⁹. Rogaly, 'The Bus Boycott', p.11.

⁶⁰. A. Sampson, *The Treason Cage* (London, W.H. Heinemann, 1958), p.208.

⁶¹. Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, p. 158.

The situation of unrest was aggravated when, on 11 February, Randfontein township dwellers also instigated a boycott to demonstrate their support. On 18 February, P.U.T.C.O. announced that if the boycott did not end, services to places affected would be discontinued on 1 March, many buses would be sold and hundreds of employees dismissed.⁶² On 24 February, the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce, rejecting the Government's intransigent attitude, offered to pay workers an extra shilling a week, and a further shilling for those with women and children who used the buses.⁶³ Before the boycotters could decide on this, it was reported that fifty policemen were watching Alexandra day and night, which only served to incite the people further. On 28 February a mass meeting, also attended by Reeves, was held at Alexandra, where the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce's plan of a 'Bob-a-Week' was turned down.⁶⁴ This was because there was no guarantee that all employers would pay the allowance and, even if they did, the scheme excluded various classes of Africans.⁶⁵ The people cried 'Azikwelwa', 'We shall not ride', and Reeves overheard the leaders of the boycott say that the money offered by the Chamber should be put into a transport fund and the bus fare kept at 4d. He was disappointed with the decision to continue the boycott.⁶⁶ Further intimidation occurred the next

⁶². Horrel, *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa - 1956-57*, p.134.

⁶³. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose-Reeves*, p.182.

⁶⁴. *The Rand Daily Mail*, 1 March 1957.

⁶⁵. Horrel, *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa - 1956-1957*, p.136.

⁶⁶. *The Rand Daily Mail*, 1 March 1957.

day, when commuters crossing against traffic lights were given 5/- to 10/- spot fines.⁶⁷

The situation was, at this stage, tense, complicated and difficult to resolve for all concerned: Reeves, the P.U.T.C.O. officials, representatives of the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce, the Transvaal Chamber of Industries, the Johannesburg municipality and the A.P.T.A.C. Reeves held secret meetings with the A.P.T.A.C. at his home, Bishop's House in Westcliff, Johannesburg, as well as with the other organisations involved. The nature of these meetings ensured that representatives could speak freely, out of the media's hearing and without interference or intimidation from the other groups. Besides this, Reeves consulted with various A.N.C. leaders about the boycott during the Treason Trial hearings, and was able to pass on their opinions to the A.N.C. members of the A.P.T.A.C.:

It was known that he enjoyed their confidence and therefore he was in a position to exert considerable pressure on the Alexandra A.N.C. leaders, some of whom were new to the movement.⁶⁸

Reeves was named by Patrick Smith, writing in *The Listener*, as one of the few leaders courageous enough to offer himself voluntarily for such a task.⁶⁹ At the end of January, before Reeves had entered the negotiations, Dr A.B. Xuma, a former

⁶⁷. Rogaly, 'The Bus Boycott', p.11.

⁶⁸. T. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1983), p.163.

⁶⁹. Patrick Smith, 'The Alexandria Bus Boycott', *The Listener*, 25 April 1957.

President of the A.N.C., asserted:

To settle the boycott quickly, permanently and equitably will be true statesmanship. There must be no fears of victory for someone except victory for justice, fairplay and commonsense.⁷⁰

Reeves exercised this statesmanship when he attended a meeting on 1 March 1957, which *The Star* predicted would spell the end of the boycott. Also present were the usual representatives of the various organisations affected, including two representatives from the boycotters' committee. All agreed to a scheme based on a £25 000 fund, whereby the commuters would pay 5d and have the 1d returned at the end of the journey on presentation of their used coupons. This scheme was put to the people of Alexandra at a mass meeting. Again the proposal was rejected. The paper on which it had been written was burnt in public by Sam Monyane, a member of the Boycotters' Committee. An unqualified 4d fare, no temporary solution, was what the people wanted. The *Rand Daily Mail* reported this on 2 March and stated that the boycott was continuing. Reeves who had gone to Alexandra hoping to celebrate the end of the boycott was once again very disappointed.

Llewellyn Ncwana, a resident of Alexandra and member of the Liberal Party, informed Senator William Ballinger of intimidators paid by private car owners to force continuance of the boycott. However, he gives no evidence to support his allegations, which he stated were based on rumours. Ballinger was urged to intervene, but was busy in the Senate at the time. Earlier, on 20

⁷⁰. *The Star*, 30 January 1957.

February, Ncwana had alleged that some members of the Boycotters' Committee had tried to procure money for themselves from P.U.T.C.O. and the board of Commerce and Industries to end the boycott.⁷¹ Again, absence of any proof made the hearsay suspect.

Despite talk of this nature, Reeves persevered in his reconciliatory role. When he heard of the possibility of the police's forcing people to board the buses, he spent the night in Alexandra visiting the homes of the leaders to ensure that they would keep the peace in the morning. Fortunately, the Government changed its mind regarding this action.⁷²

On 15 April 1957 the boycott finally came to an end. The workers, it was agreed, would pay 4d for a 5d ticket from officials with 'Chamber of Commerce Coupon Scheme' printed on bands attached to their caps. This was a temporary measure, until the Native Transport Services Act was promulgated. The Bill passed through all stages of Parliament on 4 June 1957. A government subsidy for PUTCO enabled the company to revert to the 4d fare.⁷³ Finally, and very largely due to Reeves's efforts, agreement was reached.⁷⁴

Reeves's toughness, patience and ability to listen to and appreciate all points of view had triumphed. He writes of his interaction with the people:

⁷¹. Letter from L.D. Ncwana to Senator W. Ballinger, 8 March 1957, The Ballinger Papers, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, no. 2.1.28, File 3.

⁷². Peart-Binns, *Ambrose-Reeves*, p.185.

⁷³. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1956-1957*, p.138.

⁷⁴. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.185.

The Africans wanted to be treated as human beings. They appreciated being able to meet for frank and free consultation with myself. It was important for them to sit around a table and discuss their problems with white leaders.⁷⁵

Reeves had nothing to gain and much to lose in moving amongst hostile people, speaking on behalf of the poor and refuting the attitude of the Government. Luthuli paid tribute to him for his reconciliatory intervention:

It was the Bishop, who at one and the same time, helped to bring about a solution to the bus boycott in the Alexandra Township and played a considerable part in the campaign for a wage of £1 a day for African labourers.⁷⁶

On 26 June 1957, two months after the Bus Boycott, during the Treason Trial, Luthuli called for a 'stay-at-home'. Africans were to plead for £1-a-day wage. Reeves supported this call.⁷⁷

Reeves's desire to help the poor in Alexandra was based on his obedience to God and was the natural outworking of his faith. As with all the activities outlined in this chapter his mediation demonstrates his social concern - from his initial reluctance to break the law, to his rejection of Communism as harmful to the individual. He believed that Christianity involved the whole of life, not just the saving of souls. This was because God had set

⁷⁵. R. Ambrose Reeves, *Shooting at Sharpsville* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1960), p.13.

⁷⁶. R. Ambrose Reeves, *S.A. Yesterday and Tomorrow* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1966), p.160.

⁷⁷. Benson, *South Africa: The Struggle for A Birthright*, p.193.

the example by becoming a human being in Jesus Christ in order to reconcile men and women to himself and to one another. The doctrine of the incarnation formed the basis of Reeves's spiritual involvement.⁷⁸ In the chapters which follow, the theme of reconciliation between individuals is continued. Emphasis is placed on particular problems encountered in the realisation of this ideal, beginning with Reeves's opposition to apartheid.

⁷⁸. Letter from T. Huddleston to F.D. Phillips, 21 March 1994.

The theme of reconciliation is carried through in this chapter, which deals with Reeves's attitude to apartheid. The theory and practice of this policy will be examined in the light of Reeves's reaction to it. After statements from Reeves demonstrating his abhorrence of apartheid as such, the background to the policy is sketched. What follows is a discussion of his reactions to various aspects of apartheid, set out in chronological order. His attitude to several of the laws promulgated and to the philosophy behind them will be investigated. The most far-reaching consequences of the policy, those relating to education, housing, the Treason Trial and Sharpeville are dealt with in subsequent chapters.

'Reeves believed that apartheid was anti-Christian and essentially immoral.'¹ 'Its main purpose', he said, 'is preservation at all costs of white domination.'² In the Charge to his diocese in 1955, from which these words are taken, he elaborated on the Government's policy of apartheid:

It is a flat denial of both the witness of the Bible and the age-long practice of the Church, that people have to live separately to avoid friction. We have been put here to learn to live together. That we can never

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- ¹. Michael E. Worsnip, *Between Two Fires: The Anglican Church and Apartheid 1948-1957* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1991), p.124.
 - ². Ambrose Reeves, 'Selections from the Charges to his Diocesan Synod, 1952 to 1957,' David E. Paton (ed.), *Church and Race in South Africa* (London, S.C.M. Press, 1958), p.27.

do merely in a master-servant relationship and for the rest be content to go our own ways.³

During Reeves's episcopate, apartheid (the separation of the races) was applied, in the first place, under Dr D.F. Malan, then Advocate J.G. Strydom and, lastly, Dr. H.F. Verwoerd. Each went further than his predecessor in attempting to enforce racial separation. Segregation of the races was, in fact, a policy pre-dating 1948:

The Nationalists did not invent segregation. In many cases they built on segregatory foundations laid well before 1948. What they did do, however, was greatly to extend and refine it, in an exercise in social engineering on a massive scale, so that by the 1960's it affected almost every aspect of the private and public lives of all South Africans.⁴

Reeves's episcopate extended from 1949 to 1961, the period when the most important laws forming the framework of apartheid were enacted. Leonard Thompson, in his book on Afrikaner nationalist mythology, gives further insight into the roots of racial separation. 'Most Afrikaners', he claims, from before the Great Trek, right into the late twentieth century, 'have believed that human abilities are determined by race, that Europeans are a superior race and that the different races are incompatible.'⁵

³. Ibid., p.29.

⁴. Gavin Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1987), p.261.

⁵. Leonard Thompson, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985), p.27.

The anti-imperialist element in Afrikaner mythology gave way to the racist element, which became dominant in Reeves's time. He could see the results of the mythology in practice and how the racist theory continued to persist. He could not accept the mythology itself nor its conclusions, which he rejected not only on biological but also, and more particularly, on biblical grounds:

God the Holy Spirit makes all men one. The Holy Spirit breaks down the middle wall of partition, God intends this as a pattern for human society.⁶

As far as the beginnings of apartheid are concerned, Kenney considers the 1910 constitution a watershed:

The emergence of a unified South Africa under white rule, under a constitution which made it possible to subject the black majority to permanent inferiority with the full sanction of the law, had within itself the seeds of a racial confrontation which could only be settled by force.⁷

Yet Reeves, like Huddleston, strove to avoid confrontation that involved violence. Whatever the historical basis of apartheid, whenever the seed was planted, it bore the fruit of dangerous antagonism during Reeves's time; and his duty was to be a peacemaker, to play the role of reconciler by opposing the laws of separation in speech and action, within the framework of the

⁶. Reeves, *Selections from the Diocesan Charges 1952-1957*, p.48.

⁷. Henry Kenney, *Architect of Apartheid: H.F.Verwoerd - An Appraisal* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 1980), p.19

law.

Reeves arrived in South Africa on 10 June 1949. Malan, as leader of the Afrikaner Nationalist Party, had assumed power the year before. His chief aim was to establish Afrikaner domination and thereby to solve the colour question. To him this meant preventing the domination of Whites by Africans, under a policy of integration. This was to be achieved by forcibly separating the races. However, as his speech at the Voortrekker Monument in 1938 indicated, Afrikaners should also unite to preserve their identity and their culture.⁸ Before the 1948 general election, Malan appointed a Nationalist Party Commission under P.O. Sauer to formulate his party's policy on racial matters. The Sauer Report (1946) recommended as much separation between the races (White, Africans, Indians and Coloureds) as was possible in social, cultural and political spheres, accompanied by the development of the reserves and the granting of greater powers of self-government to Africans.⁹ Deborah Posel argues that these recommendations did not result in a grand design that was implemented step-by-step, but served only as a rough guide in bringing apartheid into effect.¹⁰ Much to Reeves's dismay, Malan set about executing many of the recommendations of the Sauer Report.

On Malan's retirement in November 1954, Strydom took over as

⁸. Thompson, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid*, p.186.

⁹. Henry Lever, *South African Society* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 1978), p.267.

¹⁰. Deborah Posel, *The Making of Apartheid 1948-1961. Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991), p.3.

Prime Minister. Not only did he believe in isolation between the races in the social sphere, but strove also for White domination of the African, a stance for which the term 'baasskap' was coined. He was a man imbued with the Afrikaner racial myth, a point illustrated by his own words:

If the European loses his colour sense he cannot remain a white man . . . and you cannot retain your sense of colour if there is no apartheid in the everyday social life.¹¹

Throughout Strydom's premiership, until 1955, Verwoerd was the Minister of Native Affairs. Ruthlessly he set about implementing Strydom's policies. The Bantu Education Act and the forced Western Areas Removals brought Reeves and Strydom into bitter conflict. On the death of Strydom in 1958, Verwoerd assumed leadership. Rather than 'baasskap', he aimed at separation with justice, the aim being the evolution of different nations for the African tribes and repatriation for the Indians:

More than anyone else, he was responsible for transforming this policy of apartheid from a merely negative policy of domination and suppression into a positive policy of separate development which aimed at fairness to each and justice to all.¹²

As Minister of Native Affairs, he had laid the foundation for this policy, which he built on as Prime Minister:

¹¹. Merle Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid* (Aldershot, Gower, Maurice, Temple and Smith, 1985), p.28.

¹². C.F.J. Muller (ed.), *Five Hundred Years. South Africa A History*, 3rd ed. (Pretoria, Academia, 1980), p.428.

Hy moes in die eerste plek praktiese beslag gegee het aan die Bantoe-belied waarvoor die grondslag in teorie reeds stewig deur hom gelê is. [He had in the first place to give practical effect to the Bantu policy, the theoretical foundation of which had already been firmly laid by him.]¹³

His views were no different from those he had held when he was appointed to the Senate at the start of Nationalist rule in 1948. In his first speech he had declared that the main African groups would have their own territories in which to develop. In towns and on White-owned farms the Africans would be mere visitors on the White man's land, with no political or social rights whatsoever.¹⁴ He denied that this was anything new, whether it was called 'segregation' or 'apartheid'. He accepted the views of Professor G. Cronje expounded in his book *Regverdige Rasse-apartheid*, published in 1947, and those of Dr. Werner Eiselen, an anthropologist who had been with him at Stellenbosch and was the Secretary for Native Affairs from 1948. Under Verwoerd this racial separation was to be brought about on the basis of 'justice', more especially justice to Whites.¹⁵ Reeves opposed such segregation, whatever its form, as being contrary to God's plan for human beings, in that it separated people from, rather than reconciling them to, one another. His aversion to the Government's racial policy did not diminish with the introduction of the notion of 'fair separate development'.

¹³. B.M. Schoeman, *Van Malan tot Verwoerd* (Cape Town, Human and Rousseau, 1973), p.154.

¹⁴. Kenney, *Architect of Apartheid*, p.77.

¹⁵. *Ibid.*, p.89.

On his arrival in South Africa, at the beginning of his episcopate, Reeves determined to examine the South African situation first. On 7 December 1949 he wrote to Professor Theo Gerdener of the Theological Seminary, Stellenbosch, commenting that he did not feel it right to express himself on the race question so soon after his arrival. It was possible, in Reeves's view, to become so pre-occupied with this issue that many equally urgent problems crying out to be resolved could be overlooked.¹⁶ In August 1950 he wrote to W.A. Visser d'Hoofdt, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, that it created a false impression to state that racial differences were the burning question in South Africa. At that stage Reeves felt that the problems brought about by rapid industrialisation were greater; especially urgent was the decision about whether to adopt the Communist or welfare state model, or another. He felt disinclined to comment on the race problem after such a short stay. He expressed the opinion that South Africa faced the same problem as many societies world-wide, where rapid industrialisation was concerned; in South Africa it was aggravated by the racial differences between so many diverse peoples.¹⁷ The same view is expressed in the work *Apartheid's Genesis 1935-1962*:

One of the striking features of the apartheid era was thus a dramatic increase in the size and powers of state apparatuses, which occasioned a massive - if

¹⁶. John S. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1983), p.83.

¹⁷. *Ibid.*, p.84.

contested exercise in social engineering. These processes bear comparison to similar exercises in other countries undergoing rapid industrialization, but the South African case is set apart by the centrality of new ideologies of racial supremacy and the availability of pre-existing structures of racial domination.¹⁸

The problems triggered off by rapid industrialisation were always in the forefront of Reeves's mind, owing to the work he had done with the I.C.F., and among miners and dockers in England. He never lost sight of the evil effects of industrialisation of the Reef, especially as regards the lack of housing, low wages, absence of family life, education and transport problems. In his first Charge in 1949, he stated that in South Africa too much time was spent in discussing politics; and that every question seemed to become a political one. He then dealt with the problems facing family life, especially with regard to the scarcity of adequate housing, but steered clear of overt politics as such.¹⁹ It was not long, however, before he realised that in South Africa, as is the case under every totalitarian government, politics pervaded everything, even domestic service.

In 1950, his second year as Bishop, Reeves wrote in the diocesan magazine:

The Christian conscience justifies only such a social regime as guarantees the right to dignified existence, a full realization of the life of every human being.²⁰

18. Philip Bonner, Peter Delius, Deborah Posel (eds), *Apartheid's Genesis 1935-1962* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1993), p.3.

19. *The Watchman*, December 1949, p.2.

20. *The Watchman*, May 1950, p.2.

He had not found this to be the case in South Africa, where Government policy discriminated against Africans, Coloureds and Indians. Nor was the Government the only culprit in this regard. In his second Charge of November 1950, he preached to his own Anglican Communion concerning their unjust treatment of domestic workers.²¹ Whites were accustomed to employ one or more domestics. In 1939 it was estimated, according to Julia Wells, that ninety-five percent of all African working women were in domestic work. After the war many African women were employed in industry so the demand for domestic workers in White households was even greater.²² Wages paid were minimal, being between £5 and £10 per month. Justification for this was the free board and lodging supplied, in addition to other perks, such as cast-off clothing. Servants quarters usually consisted of a small room and separate toilet. Showers were seldom provided and bathing was done in a small tub. Hours were long as attendance was necessary to help prepare breakfast, lunch and dinner. Servants' friends and relatives were not allowed by law to stay overnight. There were no written contracts and no trade unions to plead for the rights of domestic workers. They were cut off from their families for long periods. Lewis Sowden writes that his maid's family was in Vendaland, 300 kilometres away.²³ Women domestic workers had to send their children away to be cared for by a grandmother or

²¹. *The Watchman*, December 1950, p.10.

²². Julia C. Wells, *The History of Black Women's Struggle against the Pass Laws in South Africa 1900-1960* (Ann Arbor, Univ Microfilms International, 1982).

²³. Lewis Sowden, *The Land of Afternoon - The Story of a White South African* (London, ELEK Books Ltd, 1968), p.100.

great-grandmother in the townships or rural areas. Recreational facilities were non-existent. Anglican Church attendance was allowed in the local parish, but took place early on Sundays, at 5h30, before the normal morning service, at which Africans were not welcome. Services were also held on Thursday afternoons (the domestic workers' 'afternoon off') in the church or church hall. After the service they visited friends who were also domestic workers.²⁴

White congregations had never been taken to task concerning their servants in this way before. The church relied on the Whites' financial support and did not wish to alienate them. It took courage to address them about their injustice. They resented having their consciences disturbed, especially by a man who had been in the country scarcely two years. At Haydock, in England, Reeves had visited mine management personally concerning low wages paid to his many parishioners.²⁵ To speak to Whites in South Africa as he did was part of the reconciliation process he was committed to bringing about between masters and servants. It was not sufficient to ask servants to forgive their masters and mistresses; the latter needed to improve conditions of employment on a just basis.

From the domestic scene Reeves turned to workers in general. The next year, 1951, he preached in his Charge concerning the co-existence of great riches and grinding poverty caused by low wages. Government policy decreed no training in skilled work for

²⁴. Belinda Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900- 1983* (London, James Currey, 1991), p.100.

²⁵. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.89.

Africans.²⁶ This went back to the Botha-Smuts Government after the declaration of Union. In 1911, in regulations promulgated under the Mines and Workers Act, certain categories of work were reserved for White people. In 1922, the Government made access to skilled trades safe for the White community by insisting on a minimal age-linked education qualification for entry to apprenticeship, which youths of other race groups could not easily attain.²⁷ Collective bargaining was restored in 1924 to trade union 'European' and 'Coloured' members only. Under General J.B.M. Hertzog (1924-1933), the Wage Act of 1925 and the Colour Bar Act of 1926 were passed. These Acts protected skilled and semi-skilled 'Europeans' from African competition, and ensured unskilled 'Europeans' adequate wages.²⁸ This was still the situation in Reeves's time. Race Relations' surveys show that in 1950 the minimum family expenditure necessary for health was £17-14s-4d, yet the average family income of the African was £12-16s-6d.²⁹

On Reeves's arrival in South Africa, African priests received less than their White counterparts because it was contended that they should not live above the standards of their parishioners. Reeves set about closing this wage gap as soon as possible so that parity could be achieved. He had come to learn that in South Africa, as against other countries, a special

²⁶. *The Watchman*, December 1951, p.11.

²⁷. T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa. A Modern History* 3rd ed. (Johannesburg, Macmillan S.A. (P.E.) Ltd, 1987), p. 258.

²⁸. *Ibid.*

²⁹. *Race Relations Report*, 25/27, 1 February 1957, p.3.

situation regarding rapid industrial development existed: the racial group in the majority was prevented by law from doing skilled work which earned the higher wages, or from being trained for it. He not only attacked this situation because it affected the majority of his people, who were Africans, but because it was unjust and ensured a breach between Whites and Africans. Another factor, not realised by Reeves, was the reluctance of the Government Wage Board to prevent unskilled wage levels from falling. In response to pressure from White farmers, the Board stemmed urban wage increases, which would have lured even larger numbers of rural Africans into the towns.³⁰

Poor wages guaranteed a ready response to Communist propaganda. The Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 was opposed by Reeves since he recognised it as a means of suppressing anti-apartheid activity. The genuine way to combat Communism would, he believed, be to enable Africans to enter the skilled labour market. Reeves discoursed on 'The Church in Relation to the State' at a conference held at St Benedict's House, Rosettenville, in January 1953. In his talk, printed in booklet form the following month, he argued that the Suppression of Communism Act was an example of tyrannical and unjust legislation which the Church ought to oppose by every means in its power.³¹ Its definition of Communism included any person or organisation opposed to the Nationalist Government's apartheid policy in favour of integration. The Governor-General had the discretion to

³⁰. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid 1946-1961*, p.168.

³¹. R.A. Reeves, *The Church in Relation to the State* (Rosettenville, St Benedict's, 1953), p.3.

decide which organisation or person was Communist: no clear definition based on Marxist theory was set out in the Act. William Frye, reflecting on this matter, writes:

Moreover the severe penalties of the law - including part-time house arrest - applied to anyone who, '[was] deemed by the Governor-General . . . to be a Communist on the ground that he [was] advocating . . . the object of Communism by any act or omission which [was] calculated to further the achievement of such an object. . . . Among the 'objects of Communism' [was], in the government's view, an integrated South Africa. 'In this country', Archbishop de Blank once commented, 'Christ would quite likely have been arrested under the suppression of Communism Act'.³²

Emil S. Sachs, former General Secretary of the Garment Workers' Union in South Africa, was another who voiced his opposition to the Act:

Advocating world peace, uniting of the world trade union and labour movement, or the ending of colonialism might be considered by a court to be related forms of communist doctrine and punishable with 10 years imprisonment . . . Anyone who advocated the achievement of any of the objects of Communism, eg higher wages for workers, would be guilty.³³

In 1950 the Communist Party of South Africa, which had enjoyed legal status since 1921, was declared an unlawful organisation. During his W.S.C.F. work in Europe, when he worked among Communists in Eastern Europe, Reeves had gained a deeper experience

³². William R. Frye, *In Whitest Africa. The Dynamics of Apartheid* (New Jersey, Prentice Hall Inc., 1968), p.89.

³³. E.S.Sachs, *The Anatomy of Apartheid* (London, Collets Publishers, 1965), p.249.

and knowledge of Communism than was held by most people in South Africa. Many ex-Communists in Germany, France and the Western European countries who had become Christians were his friends.³⁴ He did not believe that Communists should be outlawed, as Communism would only be driven underground; Christianity would not be advanced by the jailing of its opponents. Although not espousing the cause of Marxist Communism, he was willing to work with Communists for the overthrow of apartheid. In fact, he and Huddleston were prepared to work with anyone who was opposed to the apartheid philosophy, always provided he or she took a non-violent stand.³⁵

The apartheid policy, rejected by the Communists of all races and Reeves alike, was as harmful to the Coloureds as to the Africans and Indians, but in a different way: the Coloureds regarded themselves as Afrikaners, their home language being Afrikaans. Unlike J.B.M. Hertzog, who wished these people to be classed with the Afrikaner, Malan, Strydom and Verwoerd desired their separation from the Whites. This issue was yet another taken up by Reeves. In August 1955 he wrote about the Senate Bill, and the effect it would have, if passed, on the Coloured people, who would be taken off the common voters' roll. He declared that this would be a breach of faith with the Coloureds, and an evil consequence of racial discrimination. He stressed the necessity for reconciliation because of 'the loss of mutual

³⁴. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.48.

³⁵. Michael T. Worsnip, *Between Two Fires: The Anglican Church and Apartheid 1948-1957* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal, 1991), p.122.

trust and understanding between various racial groups'.³⁶ In his Diocesan Charge at Synod in 1955, he preached of the Coloureds as a group of people who would not have come into being had it not been for the Whites, and claimed that their being classified as different would be bound to give rise to bitterness.³⁷

In March 1853 males of any race in the Cape could vote, provided they earned £50 a year or occupied a site and structure together worth £25. Only after 1900 had the Coloureds, a people of Khoisan and White extraction, adopted a separate identity, when they were discriminated against by White skilled stonemasons in the Western Cape. Before this, all those not accepted as Whites were classified as Africans by the Stonemasons Union; those accepted as Whites were allowed to vote in the Union. In 1902 the African Peoples Organisation (A.P.O.) was formed by the Coloureds to gain from the City Council of Cape Town the assurance that the segregative measures being imposed on Africans would not be extended to them. The A.P.O. was committed to the defence of Coloured rights as distinguished from those of other native races.³⁸ Coloured stonemasons were consequently granted the vote in their union. The policy established in 1853 was upheld, after the formation of Union in 1910, until 1956. The Senate Act of that year, whereby the Nationalists added members to the Senate, ensuring a two-thirds majority vote against

36. *The Watchman*, August 1955, p.2.

37. Reeves, 'Selections from Diocesan Charges', p.27.

38. Ian Goldin, 'The Reconstitution of Coloured Identity in the Western Cape', S. Marks and S. Trapido, *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in 20th Century South Africa* (London, Longman, 1987), p.163.

Coloureds on the common voters' roll, caused grave resentment. Lewis reveals, however, that bitterness had been felt long before this, soon after the 1948 Nationalist election victory, when trains on the Cape Town suburban line were segregated by Paul Sauer, the new Minister of Railways:

The Sun (a Coloured newspaper), reflected the sense of frustration, humiliation and deep anger of even conservative Coloureds at the determination of the Nationalist Government to implement train segregation proposals.³⁹

Lewis quotes pertinently from the report itself: 'The hatred which is taking hold of us will reveal itself tenfold in our children towards these Afrikaner despots.'⁴⁰ Reeves was aware of this increasing bitterness, as there were many Coloureds in his congregations, especially at St Alban's Church near the Johannesburg city centre, and at Christ the King, Sophiatown.

Further evidence of Reeves's determination to fight injustice was his 'Apartheid Statement' at the 1955 Diocesan Synod regarding the new Population Registration Amendment Act, whereby even members of the same family could be differently classified, because of dissimilarities in appearance. Reeves opposed this Act vehemently as an expression of racial prejudice at its worst, because the authors of such legislation had no scientific way of differentiating between the races, and it would affect not only Coloureds, but Africans, Indians and Whites as well.

At this time many Africans were forcibly removed on account

³⁹. Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, p.259.

⁴⁰. *The Sun*, 20 August 1948.

of their colour, for in 1955 (the year of the passing of the Population Registration Act) the Natives Prohibition of Interdicts Bill came before Parliament, whereby if an individual African or a tribe were forcibly removed by the Government from any land, which could be done in terms of the Native Laws Amendment Act, No. 54 of 1952, neither the individual nor the tribe could appeal to the courts. Reeves argued: 'This is a flagrant denial of the elementary human right of access to the courts of the land (simply on grounds of race).'⁴¹ Sachs comments:

In effect it meant that once an order was issued against an African, ejecting him or removing him from any place, or if he was arrested or detained, pending removal, he was denied the elementary right of testing the validity of such an order in court.⁴²

Removals (especially of tribes) began occurring on a large scale even during Reeves's episcopate. His words fell on deaf ears.

In 1957 it was decided by the Government that the Mamathola tribe, for example, move from the slopes of the Wolkberg Mountains to Metz by January 1958. At Metz residential, arable and grazing sites were laid out and parts of the land irrigated. A school and post office were opened there, while similar facilities in the Wolkberg were closed down and the people told that their pensions would in future be paid only at Metz. This area was in Reeves's diocese, near Tzaneen, where the priest in charge was the Reverend Charles Hooper. After resistance by the

⁴¹. *The Watchman*, June 1956, p.2.

⁴². Sachs, *The Anatomy of Apartheid*, p.268.

majority of the tribe, the chief, Malisele Letsoalo, was deposed. The removal of the Mamathola was effected between 12 and 18 March, army lorries being provided by the State. Thatching and poles for new huts were made available at Metz, where a clinic with a maternity section had meanwhile been built. Only 189 of the 400 Mamathola families were to be granted land, however, the rest were to be housed in the village. No indication was given as to how they were expected to earn a living.⁴³

Reeves asserted with regard to such removals, that human beings were being treated as pawns, moved about at the will of those in authority, with little or no respect for their rights as people. Warning that despair and hatred would be engendered in the victims of such action, and that there would be suffering and hardship in many parts of the country, he avowed: 'It is an affront to the Christian conscience, a denial of the Christian belief in the nature and destiny of man.'⁴⁴

The same denial of access to the courts suffered by victims of removal was to be effected under the proposed Native Administration Bill. In this instance chiefs could be punished by an officer of the Minister for disobedience and denied recourse to the courts. Under this Act, No. 42 of 1956, the Governor-General became Supreme Chief as governed by the code of 'Native Law', which permitted the Governor-General to punish other lesser

⁴³. Muriel Horrel (ed.), *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1957-58* (Johannesburg, S.A.I.R.R., 1958), p.140.

⁴⁴. *The Watchman*, January 1957, p.2.

chiefs without recourse to the courts.⁴⁵ If a chief did not do as he was told by the Governor-General, he was dismissed without the right of appeal.⁴⁶ The Reverend Charles Hooper discovered that a certain chief, Abraham, had been dismissed for not forcing his women to register for passes, and another put in his place. Reeves recorded:

The law is being made an instrument of injustice. We should be ashamed that such things are coming to pass amongst us, and keep before us the possibility of a better ordering of common life in which order, freedom, community, power and responsibility will all have their proper place.⁴⁷

Not only individuals, tribes and chiefs suffered under this system of segregation: even the Church became a victim, without recourse to the courts.

Section 29(1) of the Native Laws Amendment Bill of 1957 was drafted to replace section 9(7) of the Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act. Leases of church properties could be terminated if anything was said or done to harm good relations with Government authorities, and races were not permitted to hold mixed services in any area. Complaints about such services could be acted on.⁴⁸ This was the famous 'Church clause'. It was

⁴⁵. E.H. Brookes and J.B. Macauley, *Civil Liberty in South Africa* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1958), p.30.

⁴⁶. Ambrose Reeves *Shooting at Sharpeville. The Agony of South Africa*. (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1960), p.30.

⁴⁷. *The Watchman*, June 1956, p.3.

⁴⁸. Brookes and Macauley, *Civil Liberty in South Africa*, p.125.

obvious that Reeves would resist; the difference was that the Archbishop, all the bishops and the English-speaking denominations would now unite to do the same. Reeves stood with all the Anglican bishops behind Archbishop Geoffrey Clayton's call for the Church to disobey, and for church members to face imprisonment if the 'Church clause' of the Native Laws Amendment Act No. 36 of 1957 were implemented.⁴⁹ Reeves realised only too clearly that the gulf between the races would be widened by prohibiting inter-racial co-operation. Besides which, he believed that association in worship was God's will. Because of the stand taken by all the bishops and leaders of the English-speaking churches, this clause was never implemented. Worsnip agrees with Huddleston's stricture that Clayton should have made a similar stand earlier regarding the Bantu Education Act. If he and the other bishops had taken the same stand as Reeves in refusing to co-operate it might never have been implemented.⁵⁰

The 'Church clause,' which demonstrated the Government's desire to outlaw all contact between the races outside the workplace did not deter Reeves from taking positive steps to encourage inter-racial co-operation. He was one of the leading organisers, with the Inter-Denominational African Ministers' Federation, of the Multi-Racial Conference at the Witwatersrand University from 3 to 5 December 1957. The theme was 'Human Relations in a Multi-Racial Society'. Four-hundred people from all racial groups and many different walks of life attended in

⁴⁹. R.G. Clarke, *For God or Caesar* (Unpubl. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Natal, 1983), p.960.

⁵⁰. Worsnip, *Between Two Fires*, p.131.

their individual capacities. Perhaps the most important fact that emerged was that responsible African, Indian and Coloured leaders were willing to participate in frank and open discussions and were still anxious for co-operation between the races. Reeves's importance to the Conference was demonstrated by the fact that he was asked to give the closing speech. He stressed the fact that the Conference, one of the most representative of all races ever held, demonstrated that people of widely divergent views could meet and discuss their differences calmly. To him it was a miracle that such a multi-racial conference had, in the face of the authorities' attitude, met at all;⁵¹ as far as he was concerned, the Conference was a triumph.

Outspokenness, as well as action (as demonstrated by the holding of the Conference) was of crucial importance in the battle against apartheid. In April 1958, in his diocesan letter, Reeves pointed out that silence was wrong in the face of injustice. He was addressing the Church, fellow bishops, ministers and laypersons included: 'By its silence [the Church] is lending support to policies that are inflicting suffering and injustice.'⁵² Here Reeves referred particularly to police persecution, passes for women and theft of freehold rights.

Regarding the issue of passes for women, in the Western Transvaal at this time, Hooper, who had witnessed police persecution (by a special squad), of people opposed to passes for women, and had helped many of the accused in jail and in court, had been prevented by the administration from visiting his

⁵¹. Reeves, *South Africa Yesterday and Tomorrow*, p.161.

⁵². *The Watchman*, April 1958.

Anglican community in the reserves near Zeerust.⁵³ Reeves was kept informed of these developments and had supported his priest, refusing to remove him.⁵⁴ On the contrary, in fact, he urged the Church to challenge such a social system:

If laws are made which contradict Divine law, the Church must speak, man must make laws that seek to embody the Divine law in human laws.⁵⁵

This was the Reeves Christian social philosophy in a nutshell.

Archbishop Geoffrey Clayton did not always agree with Reeves as to when the Church should speak. Clayton's biographer asserts, 'Reeves was another of the Christian activists to whom Clayton was antipathetic.'⁵⁶ Clayton felt that Reeves was too outspoken and thus made a nuisance of himself, upsetting those in power who could have been better approached in private, and at the same time alienating White Anglicans who thought him too political. Yet another such activist was Huddleston. Clayton did not like the way Huddleston allied himself with non-Christian enemies of apartheid to destroy this ideology. Reeves and Huddleston were of the same mind concerning the relationship between Church and State: the Church ought to be most watchful of the State. Reeves

⁵³. Horrell (ed.), *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1959*, p.127.

⁵⁴. Ambrose Reeves, *Shooting at Sharpeville: The Agony of South Africa* (London, Victor Gollancz, Ltd, 1960), p.33.

⁵⁵. *The Watchman*, May 1958.

⁵⁶. Alan Paton, *Apartheid and the Archbishop: The Life and Times of Geoffrey Clayton* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1974), p.204.

quotes Jacques Maritain, the Roman Catholic philosopher, on the true function of the State:

The State procures the common good of the multitude, that each person may reach that measure of individuality proper to civilized life, and which is ensured alike by the economic guarantees of work and prosperity, political rights, civil virtues, and the cultivation of the mind.⁵⁷

Huddleston and Reeves both strongly believed that it was the Church's responsibility to see that the State fulfilled this duty.

In South Africa this meant opposing apartheid itself, which Huddleston and Reeves were convinced was evil because it failed to procure the common good, and not simply militating against its manifestations. Clayton felt that there was still a possibility for private dialogue with the Government. Reeves and Huddleston were convinced that such a time had passed.⁵⁸

A Conference for all Anglican bishops was arranged by the Archbishop of Canterbury every four years. In 1958 Reeves attended this gathering held at Lambeth Palace in London, where he sat on the committee dealing with human relations and discrimination. He had a hand in the official report which condemned all discrimination based on race or colour alone. It held that all must have a fair and just share in Government, in control and rewards advanced and in freedom of worship, education and recreation. This reflected Reeves's sentiments exactly,

⁵⁷. R.A. Reeves, *The Church in Relation to the State* (Johannesburg, St Benedict's, 1953), p.14.

⁵⁸. Worsnip, *Between Two Fires*, p.133.

particularly the section that read:

Our calling is to live together in the spirit of Calvary, ready both to pay the price as to inherit the blessing of peacemakers . . . the laity must go back into the world to express the ministry of reconciliation of those engaged in racial conflict.⁵⁹

Reeves must have felt greatly encouraged to find his views expressed in such an important document, sent not only to South Africa but to Anglican communities world-wide.

Clayton died in 1958 at the age of seventy, after having drafted a letter to the Prime Minister stating that the 'Church clause' would be ignored even if it meant imprisonment. Joost de Blank succeeded Clayton as Archbishop of the Province of South Africa. When he saw the effect of apartheid on the Coloureds in Cape Town, he adopted Reeves and Huddleston's stance against the Government policy.⁶⁰ Reeves now experienced the support that he had received from the majority of Anglican bishops at the Lambeth Conference from his own Archbishop.

The following year, heartened by the recent support, Reeves brought up the issue of farm labourers in South Africa, stating that there were two-and-a-half million without representation, either under Bantu authorities or any other system.⁶¹ Reeves agreed with Muriel Horrell:

⁵⁹. 'Report on Lambeth', *The Watchman*, November 1958, p.12.

⁶⁰. John S. Peart-Binns, *Archbishop Joost de Blank - Scourge of Apartheid* (London, Muller, Blond & White, 1987), p.110.

⁶¹. *The Watchman*, July 1959, p.2.

[The labourers] are kept in a state of serfdom. The system of controlling influx to towns forces them to remain in farm employment whatever the conditions of work may be.⁶²

After conducting research over thirty years, Helen Bradford points out in a chapter in *Apartheid's Genesis 1935-1962*, that in the 1940s and 1950s farmers procured much of their labour from petty offenders sent by the prisons to the farms, especially in the Eastern Transvaal. Another form of labour consisted of illegal immigrants seized by labour recruiters, while on their way to find work in industry. The immigrants were trapped on the farms, as influx control kept them out of the cities; if they tried to leave South Africa they were recaptured. With regard to this matter, Bradford quotes Michael Scott, who states in his book *Time to Speak*:

Many were still paid in second-hand garments; most wore potato sacks after their clothes had been confiscated. Almost invariably they were robbed, sodomised or assaulted by black 'bossboys' and white foremen. Most slept 'morsdood' in locked compounds which were 'the place of pigs'; at night, some urinated on the floors, if there was not the dubious benefit of a 2" pipe stuck through the wall.⁶³

In August 1959, one month after Reeves had complained about the lot of farm workers, his eldest son John, holidaying with the family in the Transkei, was drowned, after rescuing his younger brother Nicholas from the sea. This was a bitter blow to Ada and

⁶². Horrell (ed.), *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1957-1958*, p.167.

⁶³. Helen Bradford, 'Getting Away with Murder', P. Bonner, P. Delius, D. Posel (eds), *Apartheid's Genesis*, p115.

Ambrose Reeves, since their son was extremely talented, and at the time reading for his Doctorate at Cambridge. Despite this, Reeves did not allow personal tragedy to prevent him from continuing the campaign for higher wages for African labourers in the very next diocesan letter.⁶⁴ Chief Albert Luthuli, in the introduction to Reeves's book, *Shooting at Sharpeville*, writes of the considerable part played by Reeves in the campaign for £1-a-day for African labourers. Though he battled for higher wages from 1951,

[b]etween 1950 and 1956 the Wage Board made no determination limited to unskilled workers in specified industries and there were hardly any improvements in the prescribed wage rate minimum.⁶⁵

There was a shortage of skilled labour, which resulted in higher wages for such workers, yet still the Government rejected the training of Africans. To add to this, migrant workers rather than urban dwellers were employed to do unskilled work, because they could be engaged at lower wages than the locals.⁶⁶ Inflation, caused by a lack of productivity - African talents were not being used to the full - also played a part in ensuring the poverty of the African which so distressed Reeves.

On another plane the struggle went far deeper. Time and again Reeves expostulated with Whites concerning the harmful moral

⁶⁴. *The Watchman*, September 1959, p.2.

⁶⁵. Nattrass Nicoli, 'Economic Aspects of the Construction of Apartheid', Bonner, Delius, Posel (eds), *Apartheid's Genesis 1935-1962*, p.51.

⁶⁶. *Ibid.*, p.53.

effect that apartheid was having on their own beings. False pride, the feeling that they were superior morally, intellectually and physically to their African counterparts was the most damaging result. Reeves took the Christian view that pride is the worst sin and humility paramount in pleasing God. There were Whites who hated the system, and were humble, yet felt perpetually guilty at being associated with the policies of the ruling class. Reeves knew that psychologically speaking this could only warp the personality. The aim for each individual was peace of mind, that stemmed from a personality free from guilt, yet truly humble in acknowledging its kinship with all humans as sinners in God's sight, who needed to be loved, not made to suffer because of their different skin colour. In an article on the moral cost of apartheid in South Africa, Reeves set down the fact that this Christian ethic should be universal in its application. The loss of moral integrity among Whites had shown itself according to him:

. . . in the alarming rise of prison statistics, juvenile delinquency, growth in drunkenness and loose living; in an increasing breakdown of family life; in a general deterioration in the standards of conduct and an ever-increasing lack of courtesy and good manners.⁶⁷

As far as the African was concerned, he listed loss of respect for the law, anger, frustration, increasing bitterness at apartheid laws, which restricted and humiliated their children and themselves. Amongst these, loss of dignity and respect for

⁶⁷. R.A. Reeves, 'The Moral Cost,' *Africa South*, vol.2 no.4 July-September 1958, p.14.

themselves, he claimed, did the most harm to the personality.⁶⁸

Alastair Sparks, former editor of the *Rand Daily Mail*, reflects the same understanding regarding the grave moral cost of apartheid to Whites, as well as to Africans:

In South Africa, white and black are bound together in a web of mutual destructiveness. Apartheid, brutalizing the whites as it destroys the self-esteem of the blacks, robs both of their humanity.⁶⁹

As regards the ruling minority there is

[a]ggression and guilt, guilt and anxiety, anxiety about survival and anxiety about guilt . . . So the guilt and anxiety are repressed, displaced, and projected on to others in the form of yet more aggressiveness;⁷⁰

while as regards the Africans, Sparks claims, 'The psychological damage [apartheid] has caused is probably incalculable'.⁷¹ He expands on the same psychological aspects as Reeves, giving particular examples where parents and children are concerned.

Reeves's task in opposing apartheid was aimed at breaking down the barriers that were continually being raised between Whites and other groups. It constituted a positive action on the part of a man who followed Jesus Christ's example in trying to bridge the

⁶⁸. Ibid., p.15.

⁶⁹. A. Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa* (London, Heinemann, 1990), p.218.

⁷⁰. Ibid., p.219.

⁷¹. Ibid., p.223.

gap between people, though it was regarded as negative by those who believed that their calling was to erect barriers between the master race (themselves always included) and others. At the end of his episcopate Reeves wrote:

Christ died in order that all our activity, and all our relationships with one another should be lived out in the same spirit of reconciliation that was displayed by him at Calvary.⁷²

⁷². *The Watchman*, April 1960, p.3.

Reeves was implacably opposed to apartheid. There was no aspect of the ideology that he could condone. However, some of its manifestations he regarded as more harmful than others. Bantu Education was considered by him to be the worst. In this chapter the Bantu Education System is analysed. The grave step of closing the Johannesburg diocesan schools and the controversy surrounding the decision are considered and the Bantu Education Act dealt with. Further action by the Bishop and the Government's response are detailed. In the course of this discussion, an attempt is also made to answer the question of whether or not Reeves's response to this situation was paternalistic.

The most agonising decision Reeves had to make during his episcopate occurred as a consequence of the Bantu Education Act of 1953. Both he and Huddleston regarded the Act as the cruellest decree of the Nationalist Government and the one which would have the most far-reaching effect in furthering the apartheid ideal. They stood together in total opposition to it. Huddleston informed the public that in consequence 'the influence of the missionaries must be forever destroyed'.¹ At a meeting in Darragh Hall he declared his position:

A stand on principle against this act is the greatest service we can render to the Africans. It is based on apartheid, an evil thing. I will oppose it with all my

¹. Trevor Huddleston, 'An African Disaster,' *C.R.*, no. 208, December 1954, p.21.

strength because the future of the Blacks is at stake.²

In September 1954, Reeves preached in the Cathedral of St John the Divine, New York, regarding the Bantu Education Act which had recently been put into effect:

Almost 90 per cent of all schools in South Africa belonged to the churches. The government [has taken] over this education from them. The same opportunities for all no longer [apply], it [is] the policy that the native must develop along his own lines. Because of this there [will] be bloodshed and violence in another 10 years.³

The Bantu Education Act was based on the findings of the Eiselen (Native Education) Commission, which submitted its report in 1951, after sitting for two years, from 1949. Its purpose was to give effect to Christian National Education for the African.⁴ In direct contrast to the idea of equality in a mutually beneficial society, this education stood for a narrow, conservative interpretation of Calvinism.⁵ The verdict of the Commission after hearing representation from all interested parties was that the education of the Africans should be taken out of the hands of Churches, private organisations and the provinces, and placed

². *The Rand Daily Mail*, 15 October 1954.

³. C.P.S.A. Archives, Reeves Papers, University of the Witwatersrand, A.B. 388, Box 10.

⁴. E.H. Brookes and J.B. Macauley, *Civil Liberty in South Africa* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1958), p.115.

⁵. D.S. Nombuso, *Critical Teaching under the Bantu Education System* (Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, St. Mary's University, Canada, 1990), p.39.

under the Minister of Native Affairs and his Department. This was, the Commission claimed, because the education offered had been unsuited to the Africans' way of life. It had been White education, for the syllabuses were the same for both races, and instruction had been in English not in the vernacular, which was deemed unacceptable. The Commission advised that the education given to Africans be suited to their situation in life and foster a love of their own culture; it should not raise false expectations regarding a station in life which could not be attained by them.⁶ It was necessary that the Africans play a bigger part in the administration of their schools and that the local 'Bantu' authorities have more control, being answerable, not to the Provincial Department of Education or even the State Department of Education, but to the Minister of Native Affairs. It was stated that this centralisation would be beneficial from the point of view of salary enquiries, uniformity regarding syllabuses and the reduction of expenses.⁷ The type of education envisaged was to be geared to fit the African:

The present curriculum (to a certain extent), and the teaching methods, by ignoring the segregation or apartheid policy, could not offer preparation for service within the Bantu community. . . . White collar ideals have led to wide-spread frustration among so-called educated Natives.⁸

⁶. U.G. 53 of 1951, *Report of the Commissioner of Enquiry into Native Education* (Pretoria, State Library), Para. 763.

⁷. *Ibid.*, para.766.

⁸. *Senate Debates*, 15 June 1954, col. 2853.

All this was advocated for the 'common good'. Commissions of enquiry are supposedly instituted to 'give the people a say', so that an objective understanding of 'the good' might be found.⁹ However, in South Africa, they have often been set up in order to justify the intentions of the ruling power, in this case the separation-of-the-races model, and continued superiority of the Whites. The Eiselen Commission was used to

. . . help constitute the power of those who would act in the name of the state, and the subjection of those whose lives they would organize.¹⁰

Verwoerd had announced in Parliament:

Native education should be controlled in such a way that it should be in accordance with their opportunities in life, according to the sphere in which they live . . . (T)he Native would pay for his own education because I think it is in the best interests of Bantu Education and its control.¹¹

All the Nationalists voted in favour of the Bill, which was promulgated on 29 September as Act No. 47 of 1953. The terms of the Act followed the conclusion of the Eiselen Commission with, however, more power given to the Minister of Native Affairs than had been envisaged. He could withdraw any subsidy given, and close or demolish any Government Bantu School. Registration could

⁹. Adam Ashforth, *The Politics of Official Discourse in 20th Century South Africa* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 253.

¹⁰. Ibid., p.254.

¹¹. *House of Assembly Debates*, col. 6211, 3 June 1954.

be refused or cancelled if the school was not being run in the interests of the 'Bantu' people. Teachers could be dismissed at the Minister's behest.¹²

A minority report by one member of the Eiselen Commission, Professor A.H. Murray, was ignored by the Government. He advocated that African education should remain under the control of the provinces, and churches be allowed to continue using one education system for all, since education was indivisible.¹³

Reeves and Huddleston agreed with the minority report, but went even further. Huddleston recalls: 'It is true that Bishop Reeves and I immediately recognised the Bantu Education Act as the worst of Apartheid laws.'¹⁴ Reeves, with Huddleston's support, decided to oppose the Government's decision to take over the diocesan schools once the Bantu Education Act had come into effect. Bishops of the other dioceses decided not to support this stand.¹⁵

Reeves attended the Episcopal Synod held in Umtata in November 1954, when the question of whether or not to allow the Government to use church buildings for their education was discussed. Archbishop Geoffrey Clayton and all the bishops deplored the Act as being contrary to the true purpose of

¹². Act No. 47 of 1953, p.258, paras 9 and 10, State Archives, Pretoria.

¹³. U.G. 53 of 1951, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Native Education*.

¹⁴. Letter from T. Huddleston to F.D. Phillips, 21 August 1994.

¹⁵. Bob Clarke, 'Confronting the Crisis: Church-State Relations', F. England and T. Paterson, eds. *Bounty in Bondage* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1989), p.144.

education, that is, the fullest possible edification for its own sake, not that of the Government in power; and they upheld one system for all regardless of race. However, they felt that rather than close down the schools, they would lease, or sell them to the State, so that at least some education (albeit of an inferior type), could be acquired by Africans.¹⁶ Reeves disagreed and decided, after much agonising, not to lease or sell the church school buildings in his diocese. Because this education policy of the Nationalists violated the very principles on which all true education ought to be founded, he felt it had to be rejected entirely. It aimed at training the African children for a status in life assigned to them by the Nationalist Government.¹⁷ Regarding the closing of schools in the Johannesburg diocese, Wilkinson comments:

With regard to the stand by Reeves and the Community of the Resurrection (of which Huddleston was the Superior in South Africa), in refusing to lease or sell church school buildings when Clayton and the other Bishops decided to do so, taking the lesser of two evils. Ever since, Africans have supported the stand by Reeves and the Community of the Resurrection because their predictions about the dire consequences of the Act have been lamentably fulfilled.¹⁸

Huddleston likened the Act to the appropriation of Church and

16. Paton, *Apartheid and the Archbishop - The Life and Times of Geoffrey Clayton* (Cape Town, David Phillip, 1973), p.235.

17. Huddleston, 'An African Disaster,' *C.R.*, no. 208, December 1954, p.21.

18. A. Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection. A Contemporary History* (London, S.C.M. Press, 1992), p.305.

educational institutions by Hitler in 1935,¹⁹ yet he would have agreed with Villa-Vicencio, Professor of Theology at the University of Cape Town, that 'Mission education was often heavy-handed and paternalistic, and in most instances inadequately funded and administered.'²⁰ To justify this statement, Villa-Vicencio recalls that the African National Congress (A.N.C.) had called for free compulsory education to be provided by the State; and by 1949, 800 of the 2 000 mission schools had been placed under State control in response to demands by African parents. From the earliest White settlement in South Africa, he maintains, African education had been used to serve a particular end, that of service to the Whites. He states, finally: 'What the Bantu Education Act did was to entrench these traditional values in the law.'²¹ What Villa-Vicencio fails to mention, however, is that in each province there was one syllabus and one system for all races at the time of the promulgation of the new Act. He does agree with the stand taken by Reeves and Huddleston and decries the lack of support given to them by the A.N.C. and all the English-speaking churches in providing an alternative: private schools - though, however, these might not have been allowed to register - cultural clubs and a home education programme.²²

19. Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort* (London, Collins, 1956), p.160.

20. Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid. A Socio-Theological History of the English-Speaking Churches* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1988), p.95.

21. *Ibid.*, p.96.

22. Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid*, p.104.

Worsnip explains the difference in thinking between Reeves and Huddleston, on the one hand, and Clayton, on the other: the former not wanting the Church to be associated with the new Bantu Education at all, the latter compromising with it for the sake of the children, any kind of education being considered better than none. Reeves and Huddleston 'were certain that apartheid itself was evil'.²³

Of all the measures taken by the Nationalists to secure White domination, Bantu Education was the one that required fundamental change. The aspect of capitalist accumulation mentioned by Marks and Trapido, whereby the capitalist class acquires wealth at the expense of the worker, served only to reinforce the main aspect, domination by a 'superior race'.²⁴ This is in line with Reeves and Huddleston's view that the whole system, of which education was only a part, should be resisted, as racial domination was in itself evil.

The Bantu Education Act occasioned both agreement and disagreement. The Nationalists approved *en masse*, as it was in line with their overall policy of separation in every sphere. Non-nationalist Afrikaners expressed various views. Ds. J Reyneke of the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk, the 'moeder kerk' in Pretoria, was of the opinion that the general policy among the Dutch Reformed Church leaders was that they trusted the

²³. Michael E. Worsnip, *Between Two Fires. The Anglican Church and Apartheid 1948-1957* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal, 1991), p.133.

²⁴. S. Marks and S. Trapido, *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in 20th Century South Africa* (London, Longmans, 1987), Introduction, p.21.

Government not to abuse its powers as delineated in the Bill.²⁵ Ds. G. J. Coetzee of the same denomination in Amersfoort, Orange Free State, called the apartheid policy, which gave rise to the Act, a caricature of Jesus Christ's teaching and castigated the Nationalist Party for practising a non-Christian policy, harmful not only to the Africans, but to the Coloureds, who, he stated, were genuine Afrikaners. He quotes Professor B.B. Keet of the Theological Seminary as holding the same views as himself on apartheid.²⁶

The Methodist, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Congregationalist and Baptist Churches all protested against the fact that Bantu Education was being taken out of their control. None of them approved of a different education system for Africans and Whites. They deplored the basic idea enshrined in the Act, that Africans should be educated to accept their lowly status in life. Yet none of these bodies, the Roman Catholics excepted, could continue afford to continue the administration of schools in accordance with their own philosophy on the recently reduced subsidies.²⁷ African teachers' associations complained that they had never been consulted about the terms of the Bill, which they utterly rejected. These included the Cape African Teachers' Association,²⁸ the Transvaal African Teachers' Association²⁹ and the Free State Teachers' Association.³⁰

²⁵. *The Rand Daily Mail*, 20 September 1953.

²⁶. *The Cape Argus*, 9 February 1954.

²⁷. *The Eastern Province Herald*, 19 October 1953.

²⁸. *The Daily Despatch*, 19 October 1954.

²⁹. *The Star*, 5 October 1953.

Opposition members of Parliament, F.S. Waterson, Alex Hepple, Leo Lovell and Margaret Ballinger, protested against the transference of African education from the provinces and the lowering of the standard of education for the Africans.³¹

Reeves added his voice to the clamour, basing his objections on the stunted form of discriminatory education envisaged, and on the fact that African education had to be specially adapted to tribal culture and not include the whole of civilisation: 'The policy behind the Bantu Education Act is deplorable in that African education is out of the hands of the churches.'³²

An example of this was Adams College, Natal, which had a history of 102 years. It comprised a famous Teachers' Training College and an Artisan Training School, all under the American Board Mission. The Government refused to register the College as a private school, nor would it allow the Teachers' Training College to continue under the auspices of the Mission. In the end the property was sold to the State.³³

Reeves's sentiments concerning African education's being taken out of the Church's control - which applied to Adams College - were endorsed by Paton:

This *animus* against the missionaries has persisted in South Africa to this very day (from the 1830s in the Cape), and was undoubtedly one of the chief motives

³⁰. *The Friend*, 26 October 1953.

³¹. *The Rand Daily Mail*, 18 September 1953.

³². *The Watchman*, January 1955.

³³. G.C. Grant, 'The Liquidation of Adam's College,' D.M. Paton (ed.), *Church and Race in S.A.* (London, S.C. M. Press, 1958), p.51.

behind the Bantu Education Act of 1954 which brought missionary education almost to an end.³⁴

Despite all this opposition, the Act came into operation from the end of December 1954. The Anglican diocese of Johannesburg was the only one to close down its schools, forty-five of which shut their doors on 1 April 1955. Reeves refused to associate himself with the Act in any way. He believed that to do so would be to betray the Africans in his care: 'Bantu Education was designed to ensure the perpetual domination of one racial group by the intellectual starvation of the other.'³⁵ Not all the Anglican clergy agreed with his decision. The Reverend O.W. Theyise of St. Mary's Mission, Roodepoort, for example, pleaded with Reeves in a letter of 8 December 1954:

I foresee a great deal of backsliding and increase of delinquency and of low morals. The Church Centres [to replace the schools] will only be found in the larger centres. Parents have no money to send children away. What is going to happen to them?³⁶

The Rev. N.C. Makaathe made a similar plea:

To close down the schools is a negative action. Please keep them open. To follow this way often brings love and strength out of weakness.³⁷

³⁴. Alan Paton, *Hope for South Africa* (Lndon, Pall Mall Press, 1958), p.22.

³⁵. Clarke, 'Confronting the Crisis: Church-State Relations', p.143.

³⁶. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 8.

³⁷. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 8.

Seventeen African priests of the diocese, on the other hand, signed a letter welcoming the decision of Synod on 23 October 1954 to close the schools.³⁸ The A.N.C. decided to organise a boycott of the schools, but a former secretary, Dr. A.B. Xuma called the boycott a negative plan:

If there is a boycott then you refuse to use the only effective weapon (school boards etc.) against the scheme. Teachers must remain at their posts as allies of the people. There must be the best possible representatives on boards to see that proper facilities are provided, otherwise boards will be packed with self-seeking advisors.³⁹

In its press review, the *South African Outlook* quotes the opinion of two African newspapers: '*The Bantu World* could ill afford to support any political action involving children - leave children at peace', Xuma cautioned, or they would make mischief and roam the streets. *Ilanga Lhase Natal*, on the other hand, asked that the new plan be given a fair trial.⁴⁰ The viewpoint of Africans was thus divided. Was Reeves correct in his belief that what he did was in the best interests of the African? John H. Hlakani of Cradock, Cape Province, thought so:

Many Africans throughout the length and breadth of the country are not unmindful of the service you render us. African people do not doubt your recent decision - however painful it was. We saw Christianity at work.⁴¹

³⁸. Ibid.

³⁹. *South African Outlook*, 2 May 1955, vol.85, p.69.

⁴⁰. Ibid.

⁴¹. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 8, Letter 27 November 1954.

Reeves was especially pleased to receive a letter from the Reverend James Calata, who had been an A.N.C. secretary for over twenty-five years. He had lost all confidence in White church leaders and was on the brink of leaving the Anglican Church, when Reeves decided against co-operating with the Government in carrying out its Bantu Education plan.⁴² Regarding White reaction, Reeves received a vituperative letter from the head of the Lovedale Institute, Dr. R.H.W. Shepherd, who had been editor of the liberal magazine, *South Africa Outlook* for many years. His attack ran:

May I say that, with 35 years of missionary service in this land behind me, I believe also that a factor in the destruction of missionary work, if it comes, will be your own uninformed, inexperienced and one-sided pronouncements.⁴³

Reeves replied that he had relied on the experience of Africans in making his decision. The letter from Shepherd was followed by several from other Whites, most of whom were less privileged, opposing his stand.⁴⁴ Tom Bishop, Reeves's Superintendent of Diocesan Schools at the time, also disapproved of 'Reeves's decision to close the schools', rather than to allow the Government to take them over: '[I]t was wrong because it did more damage than good and caused hardship to many.'⁴⁵ . A letter in

⁴². C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 8, Letter 23 November 1954.

⁴³. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 8, Letter 1 May 1954.

⁴⁴. *Die Huisgenoot*, 11 April 1954.

⁴⁵. Letter from the Rev. T. Bishop to F.D. Phillips, 19 September 1954.

direct opposition to this view came from one of the foremost liberals, Quintin Whyte, Director of the Race Relations Institute, congratulating him on his schools' decision.⁴⁶ Another liberal, H.R. Raikes, Vice Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand, also supported him, suggesting ways to raise money in order to open one large private school.⁴⁷

Reeves was heartened by the support he received, sad about the opposition, but sure that the implementation of the Act would cause resentment against Whites and the Church, if the latter were to submit to the establishment. At least the Africans would know that some White Christian leaders, namely, Huddleston and himself, were acting on their behalf. Huddleston was right behind Reeves and later reproved Clayton, his Archbishop, for not having taken a stand like Reeves:

I think that the White clergy and bishops were at that time all prepared to compromise over the Act and it caused for me a breakdown in relations with Archbishop Clayton.⁴⁸

Clayton resolved later, in the matter of the 'Church Clause', to risk imprisonment rather than obey the Government, yet he failed to take the same stand with regard to the more grievous piece of legislation, the Bantu Education Act of 1953, which was to affect

⁴⁶. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 8, Letter 24 November 1954.

⁴⁷. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Letter from H.R. Raikes to Bishop R.A. Reeves, 15 November 1954.

⁴⁸. Letter from T. Huddleston to F.D. Phillips, 21 August 1954.

the lives of the entire African population of South Africa.⁴⁹

Even after his efforts to oppose the Nationalists' system of Bantu Education, Reeves felt that he had not done enough to try to reconcile Africans to Whites, or keep the breach between the two from widening.⁵⁰ Schools should not be left closed, but used to help African children. He decided to start Family Church Centres, where the children could receive instruction in handcrafts and Church teaching, and play games. Formal instruction was illegal under the Act. These Centres were limited and did not prove a success owing primarily to a lack of money needed to pay properly trained staff - £10 000 per year was needed for each centre, and the diocese had budgeted for only £700.⁵¹ Huddleston describes a visit to some of these centres on the East Rand. At Benoni there was one African woman trying to interest at least fifty children in a game, at Brakpan they were making dolls, knitting, sewing and mending shoes: 'Here as at Benoni, there was hardly any equipment for club work: nothing that could suggest a school.'⁵² As Theyise had complained to Reeves, even these centres were situated only in the heavily populated areas. They were no substitute for schools, but at least an attempt had been made to help the children. After one year, however, it was obvious that the experiment had failed. A

⁴⁹. Worsnip, *Between Two Fires: The Anglican Church and Apartheid*, p.145.

⁵⁰. Reeves, *South Africa Yesterday and Tomorrow. A Challenge to Christians* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1962), p.105.

⁵¹. *The Watchman*, January 1955.

⁵². Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort*, p.176.

contributory factor was that Verwoerd had ordered town councils not to change the terms of the lease of church buildings, and many were closed down when no longer in use as schools.⁵³

Two well-known African high schools in the diocese of Johannesburg had to shut down: St. Peters in Rosettenville, which had been operating for forty years; and St Cyprians in Sophiatown. Huddleston's resistance to the forced closure of St Peters, a school with a fine academic record, is recorded in *The Star* editorial: '[H]e and his Bishop could not and would not cooperate with the Government.'⁵⁴ As regards the other secondary school in Sophiatown, which also had an excellent record, parents decided to pay for their childrens' schooling and to open the school under a new name, 'Christ the King'. But this school too was ordered to close by the Minister of Native Affairs, Dr. H.F. Verwoerd.⁵⁵ Reeves spoke at the closing of the newly established school on 8 February 1956:

The closure appears to be a direct and wanton attack on the Anglican Church. Although the Church you love is being prevented from giving to your children the education that you desire for them, be certain that the Church will never forsake you.⁵⁶

He pleaded with his listeners not to join agitators in any violence as a form of retaliation. Defusing an ugly situation and

⁵³. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.125.

⁵⁴. *The Star*, 19 August 1954.

⁵⁵. Reeves, S.A. *Yesterday and Tomorrow: A Challenge to Christians* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1962), p.126.

⁵⁶. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 4.

calming the angry parents,⁵⁷ his presence and words maintained the tenuous bridge between Africans and Whites, and between parents and their church.

Reeves's efforts against Bantu Education were thus not entirely in vain. The Africans did not perceive him as aligned with the Government, whom they regarded as the oppressor. Consequently, he kept open the possibility for dialogue. Despite the combined opposition of Reeves, Huddleston, the Anglican education bodies, the English-speaking churches, the Native Representatives in Parliament, such as Margaret Ballinger, and non-Nationalist politicians, such as Alex Hepple, Sir de Villiers Graaf and F.S. Waterson, the Government persisted in its policy. Frank Molteno points out that this was because they wished to break the power of African nationalism, which had taken hold, especially amongst the youth. From a political point of view, the Nationalists wanted to control the youth, more particularly those in the cities, by sending them into 'Bantu' schools in the homelands, where they would be taught the 'traditional' way of life and adapt to it. From an economic point of view, the Nationalists aimed to provide an education which would not produce any skilled artisans to compete with the White elite. The Government was under great pressure from White Afrikaner unions in this regard.⁵⁸ The educational system was therefore devised to further both political and economic ends, and as part of the

57. Ibid.

58. Frank Molteno, 'The Historical Foundations of the Schooling of Black South Africans,' P. Kallaway (ed.), *Apartheid and Education* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1984), p.94.

whole segregationist structure to which Reeves was opposed. Verwoerd announced in the Senate:

The State is taking over from the churches to prosecute the same work more efficiently . . . A Bantu pupil must obtain knowledge, skills and attitudes in the school which will be useful and advantageous to him and at the same time beneficial to his community.⁵⁹

These objectives of the Act were realised to the detriment of African education.

The harmful effects of the the Bantu Education Act are spelled out by Dlamini Nombuso. She demonstrates from her parents' and her own experience as teachers, and from interviews conducted with fifteen other teachers working under the Native Affairs Department, that the system was less efficient than when it came under church control. Besides which, she maintains:

Bantu Education was devised to support and legitimize the concept of separate development. People who believed in equality were not desirable teachers. Teachers who taught equality were expelled, detained or indirectly banned under the guise of misconduct.⁶⁰

Reeves had heard similar complaints and voiced them on behalf of the Africans in a memorandum to a Commission investigating riots at Dube, Johannesburg, between 14 and 15 September 1957.

One of the reasons given for the uprisings was the parents' dissatisfaction with the educational system. They were angry that

⁵⁹. *Senate Debates*, 7 June 1954, col.2598.

⁶⁰. D.S. Nombuso, *Critical Teaching under the Bantu Education System*, p.85.

African members of school boards and committees had to be approved by the education authorities. Other causes for complaint listed were: 1) teachers who opposed apartheid were given a month's notice; 2) three hours daily was all the time given for schooling; 3) no recreational facilities were provided; 4) English was not taught in the lower grades; 5) there was a public examination after the first three years of schooling, which would bar children who failed from continuing; 6) teacher training was given to those who had only completed standard six.⁶¹ Reeves, like Huddleston, had been prepared by his study of the relevant literature - the Act, Verwoerd's speeches and the Eiselen Commission Report - for this outcome.

In his Memorandum, Reeves was yet again speaking for the African. Did the latter resent this intervention as paternalistic? According to the available evidence, neither the A.N.C. nor Reeves himself thought so. In 1948 Anton Lembede, the first President of the A.N.C. Youth League, had resented White Communists or Liberals speaking as leaders of African liberation.⁶² During the early 1950s, the Youth League grew stronger, placing its emphasis on African Nationalism: Africans were to rule, though Whites could assist in liberation activities.⁶³ The A.N.C. itself took the line of non-racialism. Dr James Moroka declared that he was 'prepared to work with any

⁶¹. R.A. Reeves, *Memorandum Presented to the Dube Riots Commission of 1957*, C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 8, p.5.

⁶². Joshua N. Lazerson, *Against the Tide. Whites in the Struggle against Apartheid* (Belville, Mayibuze Books, 1994) p.46.

⁶³. *Ibid.*, p.70.

White man who accepted the principle of equality'.⁶⁴ Reeves's pronouncements and actions were acceptable to Lembede, because Reeves was neither a Communist nor a Liberal in the accepted sense. He never joined the South African Communist Party (S.A.C.P.), the Congress of Democrats (C.O.D.), the Liberal Party (L.P.) or any other South African party. As a young man in England, he had belonged to the Labour Party. His background was Christian Socialism, not Liberalism, with its emphasis on free enterprise. In South Africa he spoke on behalf of Christianity, for justice against oppression. In the mid-1950s, even Potlako Leballo and the Africanists, who were against White radicals and White liberals, excepted Reeves: they specifically mentioned the radicals of the Congress of Democrats and the liberals of the Liberal Party as subverting Africans.⁶⁵ None the less, with regard to Reeves's Bantu Education stand, there were, as has been shown, Africans who opposed him and who might have regarded his activities as paternalistic.

After studying the background to the Bantu Education Act, Reeves was convinced that its implementation would lead to more harm than any other apartheid law. His conscience would not allow him to let the Government use the diocesan schools. This was despite opposition from his fellow bishops, a liberal educationalist such as Shepherd, his own Superintendent, some African clergymen and a former A.N.C. chairman. The needs of the children, it appears, were uppermost in his mind. It was

⁶⁴. *The Clarion*, 5 June 1952.

⁶⁵. Lazerson, *Against the Tide. Whites in the Struggle against Apartheid*, p.184.

unfortunate that the Church Centres were unsuccessful. If, however, all the bishops had agreed that the churches should close their school doors to the Government, Verwoerd might have been forced to shelve his plans. Huddleston and Reeves had hoped this would eventuate, because the consequence of the Act would only be to increase the gulf between African aspirations and the Nationalist Government's intentions. Reeves believed that he had acted in the best interests of the Africans in trying to prevent them from becoming estranged from all Whites.

CHAPTER 6 SOCIAL ACTION: HOUSING AND THE TREASON TRIAL

In Chapter 5 'Bantu Education' was identified as the most harmful aspect of apartheid. For Reeves the second most detrimental to the African was the lack of housing, especially the Western Areas Removal Scheme, while the third was the Treason Trial. The two last mentioned are dealt with in this chapter. First, the harmful effects of the housing shortage, its background, the Western Areas Removal Scheme, the Housing Exhibition, the Utility Company and the actual Removals are analysed. Next the Treason Trial, its background, Reeves's involvement, the Defence and Aid Fund and the outcome of the Trial are outlined and discussed.

Lack of suitable housing was one of the first issues which bothered Reeves after his arrival in South Africa. In 1949, in his first charge to the Johannesburg diocese, he discoursed on the disintegration of family life. One of the main reasons for this phenomenon was the housing situation among Africans in Johannesburg, where the sharing of latrines (one pail to sixty people in Orlando), taps (far from the houses) and accommodation (often one family to a room), as well as tenants in the yards, negated privacy.¹ In July of 1950 he wrote of tens of thousands of legitimate employees lacking homes in Johannesburg. There was a rising tide of anger and bitterness among younger people. The overcrowding in inadequate dwellings was a grave evil, which destroyed health and happiness, while at the same time being injurious to character. The African housing problem presented a

¹. *The Watchman*, December 1949, p.5.

fierce challenge to all believers in justice and the love of God.²

Although Reeves had only been in Johannesburg one year, he had already prevailed upon the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce to sponsor a Johannesburg Citizens Native Housing Committee (J.C.N.H.C.). He became a member of the executive and a plan was formed to relieve the shortage as soon as possible. Reeves was not one to wait for others to take action. To date very little had been done to improve health conditions in the African areas. He began by studying the history behind the shortage with the help of A.J. Cutten, Director of the Johannesburg Native Affairs Department.

Commissions had sat in Johannesburg in 1903 and 1913 to investigate African living conditions. They recommended that the Africans be provided with a clean, healthy, decent environment. Freehold was not mentioned because this was taken for granted: Sophiatown and Newclare were freehold areas when they were proclaimed in 1905 and 1912, respectively. There was a preponderance of Whites in Sophiatown and Coloureds in Newclare.³ In Sophiatown 1,700 plots, 15m square were laid out, the whole area consisting of ninety-six hectares. In 1905 Whites who could afford to do so moved out of Sophiatown, as a municipal sewage works and refuse dump were established nearby. A vigilance committee was set up in 1907 by those Whites who were left to

². *The Watchman*, July 1950, p.4.

³. D.Goodhew, 'Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Crime, Policing and the Western Areas of Johannesburg, c.1930 - 1962, 'History Workshop Paper, Univ. of Witwatersrand, February, 1990, p.1.

keep Africans out of the area. This attempt failed and by the 1920s few Whites remained.⁴ African people had moved to temporary structures in Pimville in 1904, which were still in use in 1950. In 1922 the Stallard Commission recommended proper control of areas in cities and towns where Africans lived.⁵ The result was the setting up of a Native Affairs Department in Johannesburg and the appointment of location superintendents.⁶ The Urban Areas Act was passed in 1923 according to which sale of land to Africans was prohibited in urban areas. In the 1930s Orlando was built for African occupation by the Johannesburg Council with funds from the Central Housing Board which had been set up by the central Government. Africans forced out of White areas by the 1923 Act, especially Doornfontein, had to go to Orlando and the Western Native Township. The latter place catered for 13,000 people in 3,000 small two-bedroomed houses with no freehold. The former was established because the African areas of Sophiatown, Newclare and Martindale were overcrowded. These three areas were excluded under the 1923 Act, as they were freehold properties. The buildings in Orlando consisted of rows of rooms, each ten feet square, without doors, windows or floors. Latrines

4. Gordon H. Pirie and Deborah M. Hunt, 'The Transformation of the Johannesburg Black Western Areas', *Journal of Urban History*, vol.11, no.4, August 1985, p.388.

5. T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History*, 3rd ed. (Johannesburg, Macmillan, 1987), p.346.

6. A.J.Cutten, 'Address on Native Housing,' The Independent Cultural Association Meeting 29 January 1953: C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B.388, Housing File, Box 1.

were in blocks, one latrine to every sixty people.⁷

The position grew gradually worse. By 1944 there were two families per house in Orlando, so a squatter camp arose near the area, to which 4,000 families moved under the inspiration of a man called James Mpanza, a community leader without party affiliations. In 1946 squatters took over two open squares of Alexandra Township (where there were freehold dwellings). In 1947 a squatter camp was set up at Moroka which was controlled by the Johannesburg municipality.⁸ During Reeves's episcopate, there were 50 000 Africans living in Moroka, 11 000 families in shacks (with roofs held down by rocks) that had been erected in 1947 on plots of 20 ft square.⁹ Reeves visited these non-freehold areas when conducting confirmations and got to know the inhabitants.

One of the schemes devised by the Nationalist Government was the Western Areas Removal Scheme, by which it determined to move 'non-Whites' from freehold areas west of Johannesburg. Reeves viewed this Scheme as,

. . . one of the most flagrant examples of injustice to be found in South Africa at the present time. I have no hesitation in saying it is morally indefensible and demands to be condemned.¹⁰

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7. Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in S.A. since 1945*, 4th ed. (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1990), p.94.
 8. Cutten, Address on Native Housing, 29 January 1953, C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 1.
 9. R.A. Reeves, Radio Broadcast, 24 March 1953, C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Box 1.
 10. R.A. Reeves, *Justice in South Africa* (London, The Africa Bureau, 1955), p.8.

The Reverend J.B. Webb, a leading Methodist in South Africa at the time, agreed with Reeves and wrote to him saying that there could be no co-operation in carrying out the removal: 'It is wrong - morally and ethically - the Johannesburg White public know it, the Africans know it, the Government know it, all know it.'¹¹

Although Sophiatown, Newclare and Martindale, four miles west of the Johannesburg centre, were grossly overcrowded, with tenants living in backyards, they were an improvement on the municipal locations, since homes had been bought before the 1923 Act under freehold. In these Western Areas there were 54,000 Africans, 3,000 Coloureds, 1,500 Indians and 688 Chinese.¹² Expansion of the manufacturing industry and a concomitant need for black workers had brought them into the city.¹³

The Johannesburg municipality had considered moving the Africans from the Western freehold areas for many years. The Stallard Commission of 1922 had investigated urban segregation, and in arguing in favour of this removal had placed emphasis on overcrowding in the poorer quarters of Johannesburg and a need for slum clearance. According to Stadler this justification masked a fear of public disorder and of a withdrawal of political support by enfranchised White workers.¹⁴ The Johannesburg City

¹¹. J.B. Webb, Letter to Reeves, 2nd April 1954, C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B.388, Housing file, Box 1.

¹². Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, p.95.

¹³. Pirie and Hunt, 'The Transformation of the Johannesburg Western Areas', p.391.

¹⁴. Alf Stadler, *The Political Economy of Modern South Africa* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1987), p.61.

Council passed resolutions in 1937 and 1939 on the removal of Africans from the Western Areas, but the Minister of Native Affairs would take no action.¹⁵ Besides the other areas, Reeves studied the history of the Western Areas Removal Scheme with Cutten's help. He learnt of the 1944 Council resolution to institute a ten-year programme for the removal of Sophiatown and its satellites, Newclare and Martindale. Owing to a lack of funds and Government inability to help because of World War II, the plan was shelved. Another reason was that thousands of families were homeless elsewhere in Johannesburg.¹⁶ Reeves took up this point once the Government and Johannesburg City Council decided, on 17 February 1950, to effect the Western Areas removal. 'There are 50,000 houses needed (not only for legitimate employees), why is this not attended to?' was his reaction to the authorities.¹⁷ Further meetings were held between the Johannesburg City Council and the Government with regard to the Western Areas Removal Scheme. The Minister of Native Affairs was determined not to give freehold rights to the people in a new area.¹⁸ The Johannesburg City Council therefore decided, in April 1952, not to co-operate with the Government: they were unwilling to refuse freehold rights to those who had enjoyed them before. However, in 1953

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- ¹⁵. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, p.98.
- ¹⁶. D.P.van Tonder, *Sophiatown - Removals and Protest, 1940 -1955* (Unpub. M.A. dissertation. Unisa, Nov. 1990), p.141.
- ¹⁷. R.A.Reeves, *South Africa Yesterday and Tomorrow. A Challenge to Christians* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd. 1962), p.146.
- ¹⁸. Ibid., p.88.

they sold ground at Meadowlands to the Government on which houses could be built for those who were to be removed from the Western Areas. Late in that year the Johannesburg City Council again refused to co-operate with the Government, because of opposition to the scheme from the African National Congress (A.N.C.), the Transvaal Indian Congress (T.I.C.), Huddleston's Western Areas Protest Committee (W.A.P.C.) consisting of many Whites and A.B. Xuma's African Anti-Expropriation Ratepayers Association (A.A.E.R.A.).¹⁹

Conditions in Sophiatown, Newclare and Martindale were unsatisfactory in Reeves's view, with on average forty people to two latrines, and tenants in backyard shacks causing overcrowding.²⁰ Gangsterism was rife. In Newclare a number of Basotho known as the 'Russians', who had started as a vigilance society, had by the late 1940s, become a criminal gang, preying unhindered on township residents mainly by demanding 'protection' money. By 1950 a Civic Guard had been formed to oppose them. The widespread clashes which ensued led to 300 families leaving Newclare and crossing the railway line East of Western Native Township to form a squatter camp in March 1952.²¹ Russians operated on the East Rand as well as in Johannesburg, they were Basotho caught between migratory and immigrant status, who were faced with the problem, according to Bonner, of protecting their

¹⁹. D.P. van Tonder, *Sophiatown - Removals and Protest 1940-1955*, p.141.

²⁰. R.A. Reeves, S.A.B.C. Johannesburg, Radio Broadcast, 24 March 1953.

²¹. D.P. van Tonder, 'Gangs, Councillors and the Apartheid State', *The South African Historical Journal* vol.22, 1990, p.82.

women and finding space for themselves.²² Goodhew gives a number of reasons for the success of the Russians and the numerous smaller gangs that formed. Policing was inadequate as most of the policemen's time was spent investigating liquor and pass offences. One police station at Newlands was all that was available for the entire area comprising Sophiatown, Martindale, Western Native Township and Newclare. Crime increased during the war years when police numbers were reduced to a minimum. Moreover, crimes were seldom reported to the police who were distrusted because of their boorish behaviour. The poor education standard of the force did not help matters. Other factors influencing the crime rate were unemployment among the youth, lack of housing and escalating prices.²³ Reeves would not agree with the Government, which used the high crime rate to bolster its argument to justify the removal:

Yet, while we deplore the existence of such conditions, we have opposed and shall continue to oppose in every legitimate way the uprooting of the whole population in the Western Areas, together with the deprivation of the freehold rights which some have enjoyed for many years, all of which is undertaken merely to implant a particular racialistic ideology.²⁴

He supported Huddleston completely in trying to stop the removal

²². Philip Bonner, 'The Russians on the Reef 1947 - 1957,' P. Bonner, P. Delius, D. Posel (eds) *Apartheid's Genesis 1935-62* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1993), p.175.

²³. Goodhew, 'Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Crime, Policing and the Western Areas of Johannesburg, c 1930 - 1962', p.12.

²⁴. David M. Paton (ed.), *Church and Race in South Africa* (London, S.C.M. Press, 1958), p.22.

of the people and the destruction of Sophiatown. Like Huddleston, he regarded the repeal of freehold as theft, and unworthy of a civilised society.²⁵ Huddleston, who had lived in Sophiatown since 1943, fought, moreover, for the preservation of a unique society:

The truth is that Sophiatown is a community: a living organism which has grown up through the years, and which has struck its roots deep in this particular place and in this special soil.²⁶

While Huddleston was involved with the A.N.C. and property holders' opposition groups, Reeves worked with the Johannesburg City Council and the J.C.N.H.C. He did much to place facts and figures before the citizens in order to alleviate the African housing backlog, as well as to emphasise the importance of freehold rights for Africans. He was the main speaker at an open meeting in the parish hall of St George's Church, Parktown, called by the Western Areas Removal Protest Committee.²⁷ The Reverend A.G. Sidebotham, C.R., wrote to Reeves on behalf of the Western Areas Protest Committee stating that they knew they could 'count on [his] fullest support'.²⁸

To extend this support, Reeves organised a housing exhibition

²⁵. Trevor Huddleston, 'Naboth's Vineyard', C.R. no. 206, July 1954, p.18.

²⁶. Trevor Huddleston, *Naught for your Comfort*, 14th ed. (Glasgow, William Collins Sons and Co., Ltd., 1987), p.101.

²⁷. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Housing File, Box 1.

²⁸. Letter from the Revd A.G. Sidebotham, C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Housing File, Box 1.

in March 1953, with the help of the J.C.N.H.C. The aim of this exhibition was to give the public an idea of the housing crisis for Africans, Coloureds and Indians in Johannesburg, and stress that while there was a shortage of 50,000 houses, people with residences in the Western freehold areas were going to be evacuated. The exhibition was held in Greatermans Department Store in Johannesburg, and consisted of photographs, maps and posters. Reeves opened the exhibition and outlined its aim. Ten thousand attended, each of whom received a thirty-page booklet entitled, *A Place to Live*, with a foreword by Reeves. He knew the facts and was indefatigable in putting them before the citizens of Johannesburg.²⁹

Something practical had to be done to provide houses, so Reeves and his fellow executive of the J.C.N.H.C. acquired the Springs Housing Utility Company. It was a self-help scheme to enable Africans to build their own houses at a very low cost without having to get bonds, which they could not do because legally they could not own freehold property. During 1953, 1,000 dwellings, called 'Bishop's houses', were erected in Dube.³⁰ They were the second group built for Africans since 1948, the Johannesburg Municipality had constructed 1,000 in 1952.³¹

Hendrik Verwoerd, the Minister of Native Affairs, was, at the same time, actively engaged in implementing the Western Areas Removal Scheme. On July 1953 he set up a Western Areas

²⁹. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Housing Exhibition File, Box 2.

³⁰. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, Housing Utility Company File, Box 2.

³¹. Reeves, *South Africa Yesterday and Tomorrow*, p.147.

Resettlement Board to put the Scheme into operation independently of the Johannesburg City Council. The State loaned the Board £850 000 for that year and a further £1 000 000 for 1954.³² Opposition to this move had to be powerful and swift. Reeves chaired a Conference organised by the Southern Transvaal Regional Committee of the South African Institute of Race Relations on 22 August 1953. Representatives of fifty-one organisations attended. The Conference findings were presented and published in a thirty-five-page report, which stated that African opposition to the removals was widespread and that their implementation would undermine confidence in the faith and goodwill of Whites, as well as creating a united and determined spirit of opposition to the Government.³³ The fact that Reeves wrote the foreword indicated the importance of his influence in this matter.

Despite the combined efforts of Reeves, Huddleston, the A.N.C., the Sophiatown Property Owners, the Institute of Race Relations and many others, the removals were instigated from 9 February 1955. In his 1956 charge, Reeves made the following powerful statement:

'Thou shalt not steal' - this applies to the taking away of freehold rights. This is one of the clearest breaches of this commandment which has ever taken place among us.³⁴

He further pointed out that Coloureds, Chinese and 700 Indian

³². Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, p.103.

³³. Ibid, p. 104.

³⁴. Paton, *Church and Race in South Africa*, p.37.

traders would also be compulsorily displaced. There would be hardship and suffering because they were not White. The Church, he said, was pledged to uphold justice and freedom in human relationships and this issued a direct challenge to the Christian conscience.³⁵ The Group Areas Act of 1950 allowed for the removal of vast numbers of Africans, Indians and Coloureds, besides those removed under the Western Areas Removal Scheme (60,000 in all). Reeves pointed out in his monthly letter that no fewer than 200 000 people would be moved over the next few years. This would be done despite transport difficulties (Johannesburg Indians were to be placed fourteen miles from Johannesburg) and the scarcity of labour and materials. The people concerned would be living under threat and in complete frustration. He urged White Anglicans to study the Group Areas proposals and oppose them as strongly as possible.³⁶ Three years later he wrote more vehemently about the implementation of the Group Areas Act:

Human beings are treated as pawns to be moved about at the will of those in authority with little or no respect for their rights as persons, little account of despair and hatred that is bound to be engendered in those who are victims of such actions. It is a denial of the Christian belief in the nature and destiny of man.³⁷

The Group Areas Act was followed by the proposed Native Resettlement Act of 1954. The Bill was bitterly opposed by Reeves who saw injustice in a Resettlement Board's overriding a City

³⁵. Ibid.

³⁶. *The Watchman*, January 1954, p.2.

³⁷. *The Watchman*, June 1957. p.2.

Council in its own area. This would be done ' . . . without the consent of the elected representatives of the citizens of Johannesburg, despite ignoring Africans' opinions'.³⁸

It was the Resettlement Board under this Act which engineered the Western Areas Removals. Following on remarks made by Reeves and Huddleston in opposition to the Resettlement Bill, an attack was made on the Anglican Church by Verwoerd during the second reading of the Native Resettlement Bill in the House of Assembly. The Church was condemned for interfering in political matters:

The background to this agitation is that there are certain people, liberalistic cliques . . . who for a considerable time have tried to offer resistance. Unfortunately the leaders of these liberalistic cliques are certain people of the church like the Rev. Huddleston and even the Bishop of Johannesburg Ambrose Reeves. . . . I sought co-operation [from the Johannesburg City Council] and their co-operation was obtained until these outside influences spoiled it.³⁹

Reeves used this as an opportunity to explain to church members why protest was necessary whenever basic human rights were threatened. It was not, he said, interfering in politics, but fulfilling an incontrovertible obligation to uphold moral standards in the dealings Christians have with others as fellow human beings. This led to his verbal attack on church members for trying to evade their responsibility by not concerning themselves with the issues of local government. He blamed them for the lack of African housing, in particular, and for allowing the Government to take over municipal responsibilities:

³⁸. *The Watchman*, April 1954, p.2.

³⁹. *House of Assembly Debates*, 22 March 1954, col. 2517.

We have cared so much for our comfort and haven't been sensitive enough to the needs of the 1,000's of under-privileged living around us. May God forgive us for our selfishness and our failures.⁴⁰

Reconciliation needs an admission of failure and guilt. As with his efforts regarding education, Reeves had maintained a link between the Africans and Whites by being one of the few who not only spoke out against the scandalous housing situation, but acted to alleviate it. Action was also to characterise his part in the Treason Trail.

While the housing scandal was one of the worst consequences of Verwoerd's policy of racial separation, because it affected so many people, the Treason Trial, which caused suffering to fewer, was no less grave an injustice. An international lawyer expressed the international perception of it as the worst of the Nationalist Government's acts:

It caused a greater shock overseas than anything else that had happened since 1948: not since the burning of the *Reichstag* in Berlin in 1933 - with the notable exception of the special trials at Nuremberg, has a trial attracted such international attention.⁴¹

During the 1950s, growing concern was being expressed by five organisations in South Africa about the situation of Africans, Indians and Coloureds, particularly in respect of their disenfranchisement and denial of opportunities for advancement

⁴⁰. *The Watchman*, May 1954, p.2.

⁴¹. L.J. Blom-Cooper, 'The South African Treason Trials: *R v. Adams and Others*' *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, vol.8, 1959, p.59.

equal to those of Whites. These were the A.N.C., the South African Indian Council S.A.I.C., the South African Congress of Trade Unions (S.A.C.T.U.), the South African Coloured People's Organization (S.A.C.P.O.) and the Congress of Democrats (C.O.D.). Under the inspiration of Professor Z.K. Matthews, a Professor of African Studies at Fort Hare University and Cape President of the A.N.C., it was decided to hold a Congress of the People at Kliptown in 1955. In August 1953 Matthews, recently returned from a visiting lectureship in America, attended the Cape annual A.N.C. conference in Cradock. At this meeting he had enquired whether

. . . the time ha(d) not come for the African National Congress to consider the question of convening a national convention, a congress of the people, representing all the people of this country irrespective of race or colour, to draw up a Freedom Charter for the democratic South Africa of the future.⁴²

Matthews's words were taken up by the A.N.C. country-wide and preparations were begun for the congress to be held in June 1955 at which a Freedom Charter would be affirmed point by point. The proposed charter would set out guidelines for a common society with equal rights for all. Representatives from all five organisations would assemble at Kliptown, Johannesburg.⁴³ The C.O.D. had a large White membership so there would be representatives from all races to establish a non-apartheid South

⁴². Z.K. Matthews, *Freedom for my People*, 2nd ed. (Cape Town, David Philip, 1986), p.173.

⁴³. Mary Benson, *South Africa: The Struggle for a Birthright*, (London, IDAF., 1985), p.174.

Africa. All were opposed to the Nationalist Government. Three thousand representatives arrived for the meetings held on 25 and 26 June 1955. On the first day photographs were taken of all the leaders present. Reeves was not there, but Huddleston had a place on the stage as a special guest and

. . . was totally identified with the daily struggle of millions of oppressed Africans. It [was] in recognition of this unique role that, together with Chief Albert Luthuli and Dr. Yusuf Dadoo, Trevor Huddleston was among the first to be awarded the A.N.C.'s highest honour, Isitwalandwe.⁴⁴

It was on the second day, as the clauses of the Freedom Charter were being read out, followed by a speech and affirmation, that the police raided the gathering. Many carried stenguns, others had rifles or pistols. Pamphlets, written speeches, documents, books and papers were confiscated.⁴⁵ In due course, during September 1955, there was a Government follow-up in the form of raids on the offices of the five organisations, plus forty-five others, and the homes of 500 individuals who had been present at Kliptown. Further confiscations took place.⁴⁶ The Minister of Justice, C.R. Swart, announced in Parliament in July that 200 would be arrested and charged with high treason.⁴⁷

A 'police swoop' took place in the early hours of the morning

⁴⁴. A.S. Minty, 'The Anti-apartheid Struggle', D.D. Honore (ed.), *Trevor Huddlestone: Essays on His Life and Work*, (Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 1988), p.190.

⁴⁵. Benson, *South Africa: The Struggle for a Birthright*, p.178.

⁴⁶. Worsnip, *Between Two Fires*, p.113.

⁴⁷. A. Sampson, *The Treason Cage. The Opposition on Trial* (London, W.H. Heinemann, 1958), p.109.

of 5 December 1956. One-hundred-and-fifty-six people who had attended the People's Congress were arrested in their homes in various parts of the country and flown to Johannesburg. The charge was high treason and they were incarcerated in the Fort gaol.⁴⁸ At 6h30 on the same day Reeves was visited by Joe Slovo, a young lawyer from the C.O.D., who came with the news, only to be arrested soon afterwards. Reeves was informed that one of those arrested was Oliver Tambo (Secretary-General of the A.N.C.), an Anglican who had been an ordination candidate.⁴⁹ Other prominent people arrested were Albert J. Luthuli (President of the A.N.C.), Professor Z.K. Matthews, the Reverend D.C. Thompson (a Methodist minister who had visited Russia and organised help for its people during the war), Mr L.B. Lee-Warden, M.P. (Natives Representative for the Eastern Cape), Dr. G.M. Naicker (President of the S.A.I.C.) and Mrs Lillian Ngoyi (President of the Federation of S.A. Women).⁵⁰ The arrests were extensive:

In the cells we met not just a few friends, but men from every corner of the land - professionals and labourers, priests and laymen, Muslims, Christians, Hindus, infidels, Africans, Indians, Coloureds.⁵¹

⁴⁸. Muriel Horrel (ed.), *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1956-57* (Johannesburg, S.A.I.R.R., 1958), p.42.

⁴⁹. John S. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1973), p. 188.

⁵⁰. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1956-57*, p.42.

⁵¹. Albert Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, 13th ed. (Glasgow, Collins, 1987), p. 147.

Those arrested were only to be visited by the defence counsel on the first three days, and they were not granted bail pending commencement of the preparatory examination. This opened before a magistrate, Mr. F.C.A. Wessel (Chief Magistrate of Bloemfontein), on 19 December 1956, in the Drill Hall, Johannesburg.⁵²

Reeves meanwhile, assisted by Alec Hepple, Labour M.P. for Benoni, had been extremely busy arranging the formation of a Board of Trustees to administer a fund to pay bail for the accused and give any other financial help necessary for themselves or their families. He gained the support of Clayton, the Archbishop of Cape Town, and Judge Feetham. The Board of Trustees, of which Reeves was Chairman, consisted of Judge F.A.W. Lucas, Alan Paton and Dr. Ellen Hellman. Alex Hepple, became Chairman of the management committee of the Treason Trail Defence Fund, which became known as 'The Bishop's Fund'. The Reverend Arthur Blaxall, a worker among blind Africans and Secretary of the Christian Council of South Africa, who was at the initial meeting to discuss the establishment of such a fund, had this to say:

Looking back to December 1956, with all the knowledge I have gained through the years, I still maintain it was AR's [Ambrose Reeves's] prompt and urgent reaction that spiked a master-plan of the National Party government . . . within hours the security police found themselves face to face with a group (led by Reeves), of determined people who did not challenge their right of arrest but said they would see that everything was conducted in a way which would ensure to the accused the maximum of

⁵². Horrel, *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1956-57*, p.43.

opportunity to prove their innocence.⁵³

The most important source of funds came from Christian Action in England. The Reverend John Collins, a Canon of St Paul's Cathedral, London, had started the group called 'Christian Action' in 1948 in order to help the German people in their distress after the war. In 1952 he had turned his attention to those in need in South Africa during the Defiance Campaign, sending funds to help those involved, and their families. Reeves now applied to him via Christian Action to help the accused and their families in the Treason Trial. As chairman, Collins sent money immediately from this group and instituted a branch of the Treason Trial Fund. With the money collected, the Fund could pay the bail required for all the accused at the beginning of the preparatory examination: £250 for the Europeans, one hundred for the Indians and fifty for Coloureds and Africans. Help came from the organisation throughout the four years of the trial: besides bail, £1 a week was given to each of the accused, with food and clothing and help for their families. Applications for assistance came through Reeves, who visited the prisoners in court regularly.⁵⁴

On the first day of the preparatory examination, Reeves was present when proceedings had to be adjourned because loud-speakers had not been installed. There were insufficient seats

⁵³. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.189.

⁵⁴. Trevor Huddleston, 'The Birth of a Struggle', Ian Henderson (ed.) *Man of Christian Action - Canon Collins - the Man and His Work* (London, Lutterworth Press, 1976), p.53.

for the African spectators and there were no interpreters. The loudspeakers were necessary as 4,000 had gathered outside the Drill Hall chanting and shouting. Events on the second day were tense. The accused and their counsel arrived to find that a large cage had been erected for the accused. Maurice Franks, Q.C., immediately complained to the magistrate about the 'caged beasts'. He warned that the whole defence team would abandon its work on the case unless the cage were removed. The court adjourned until a compromise had been reached and much of the cage removed.⁵⁵ The Crown prosecutor began his speech outlining the Government's case of high treason, but the noise from outside the court suddenly became much louder and a shot rang out. Spectators left the hall to investigate, especially as once more shots were fired. Reeves was one of the first to leave the building. He saw young policemen firing, while their colonel shouted at them to stop. Lewis Sowden, an assistant editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* present on the occasion, explains:

The shooting was followed by running in all directions. Before I followed into the street I made sure that the firing had stopped. In front of the building I came up against Dr. Ambrose Reeves, the wiry little Bishop of Johannesburg. 'They've lost control!' he exclaimed. 'They've lost control!' Then he ran past me holding a hand up and appealing to the crowd to keep calm.⁵⁶

Reeves placed himself between the Africans on the street outside the court and the police, urging the former to calm down and

⁵⁵. Sampson, *The Treason Cage*, p.12.

⁵⁶. Lewis Sowden, *The Land of Afternoon - The Story of a White South African* (London, Elek Books Ltd, 1968), p.159.

disperse, which they did.⁵⁷ The next day the *Rand Daily Mail* reported:

The trouble started when a press photographer was roughly handled and his camera confiscated. Bishop Reeves appealed to the policeman in charge, Colonel J. Grobler, to address the crowd. They were only too willing to go peaceably. The behaviour of the police was provocative in the extreme, they had no knowledge as to how to control crowds.⁵⁸

A headline in the *Cape Times* ran: 'Bishop Pacifies Crowd After Police Shooting.'⁵⁹ Reeves had learnt how to handle crowds. During the Liverpool Dock Strike, on 1 November 1945, he had faced many thousands of angry men at Anfield Soccer Stadium and calmed them.⁶⁰ In Liverpool the workers had had faith in his being on their side. In Johannesburg the African crowd trusted him as a man who was sympathetic to their cause and that of the accused. He had demonstrated this by arranging bail and promising to help the families of the accused. For his sake the crowd dispersed peaceably, preventing an imminent catastrophe, with the possibility of many dying. Again Reeves was the peacemaker: he allied himself with the crowd and showed great courage in addressing the people. Press reports on the next day, 21 December, reflected a return to normality: 'There was an air of quiet orderliness in the courtroom today';⁶¹ and 'Daar was weer

57. Sampson, *The Treason Cage*, p.14.

58. *The Rand Daily Mail*, 21 December 1956.

59. *The Cape Times*, 21 December 1956.

60. C.P.S.A. Archives, A.B. 388, no. 8.

61. *The Star*, 21 December 1956.

rus en orde by die Drill Saal.⁶² Minor trouble occurred on one or two subsequent days, but no further shots were fired. Reeves should have been thanked by the Government for calming the crowd, but his intervention went unacknowledged.

As Chairman of the Treason Trial Fund, much of his time was spent in court, arranging monetary help for the accused and their families. It was some relief when all but ninety-one were released after a year, including Albert Luthuli and Oliver Tambo: they were found 'not guilty' of being members of a national liberation movement that had sought to propagate a Marxist-Leninist account of society. At the beginning of the examination, the Prosecutor had stated that the Freedom Charter envisaged steps in the direction of a Communist state and was, if necessary, to be the prelude to revolution. The Defence denied that the Charter was treasonable or a step towards a Communist state.⁶³ It was incomprehensible that the two most important leaders, Luthuli and Tambo, were released, but not the ninety-one others. No recompense was made to the sixty-one set free by the State either. The Bishop's Fund had supported their families and been a source of courage and hope.

Once the trial itself began at the Old Synagogue in Pretoria on 1 August 1958, the demands on the Bishop's Fund grew. Defence counsel, though it had arranged to reduce its fees, was the best in the land and had to be paid. Transport costs were a new factor as the trial was being held in Pretoria and counsel lived in

⁶². *Die Vaderland*, 22 December 1956.

⁶³. Benson, *South Africa the Struggle for a Birthright*, p.192.

Johannesburg, so they had to travel ten times as far as before, a tiring journey. The State provided transport for the accused, but theirs was a far longer day. The defence tried in vain to persuade the State to relocate the trial to Johannesburg. It refused in order to avoid the larger, angry crowd in Johannesburg, besides which the prosecuting team lived in Pretoria. The trial was not being held at the convenience of the accused but as a show of Government strength over its 'enemies'.⁶⁴ Trevor Huddleston, in a letter concerning the trial to *The Times* in London claimed :

It is designed first to discredit, then to intimidate, (by using smear tactics) all those who dare publicly to identify themselves with resistance to racial policies.⁶⁵

The explanation for the Trial given by Mr. V.C. Berrange, Q.C., endorsed Huddleston's statement:

It arose out of a political plot similar to the inquisition or the *Reichstag* Fire Trial. The people before the court do not propose merely to defend themselves against the allegation. They will assert and in due course ask the court to hold that they are the victims of political kite-flying on the part of those responsible for these prosecutions.⁶⁶

The Crown Prosecutor was Oswald Pirow, Q.C., who before World War II had visited Hitler's Germany and come back impressed by

⁶⁴. Sowden, *The Land of Afternoon*, p.155.

⁶⁵. *The Times*, 27 May 1957.

⁶⁶. Horrell (ed.), *A Survey of Race Relations - South Africa 1958-1959*, p.45.

Nazism. Subsequently he established the New Order, a party favouring National Socialism.⁶⁷ He outlined the State's case against the accused: they were using Marxist ideas to overthrow the State and institute a totalitarian Communist regime.⁶⁸ During the preparatory examination, the State had called Professor A.H. Murray of Cape Town University as an expert witness on Marxism. Although he testified for many days, his argument about Communism was refuted by the defence counsel who showed that, if he were right, many past Democrats, such as Lincoln, Heine and Shelley were Communists;

[i]f the Crown's definition of High Treason were correct, then the most astonishing collection of world leaders and thinkers would find themselves on trial if they lived in South Africa. The framers of the United Nations Declaration, for instance, Earl Russel, Eduoard Herriot, Thomas Mann, for striving for peace; Jefferson, Milton, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, for writings which were solemnly pronounced 'Communist' by Professor Murray.⁶⁹

Counsel read passages from the above writings without giving the authors' names, and one by one Murray pronounced them 'Communist' - the last quote was from one of Murray's own books! Pirow, when Murray's definition of Communism had been discredited, next submitted that remarks made by the accused meant the opposite of what they were actually saying - a technique used, he claimed, by

⁶⁷. Eric Rosenthal ed., *Encyclopedia of Southern Africa*, 6th ed. (London, F. Warne & Co., 1973), p.432.

⁶⁸. T.G. Karis, 'The South African Treason Trial,' *Political Science Quarterly*, vol.LXXVI, no.2 (1961), p.238.

⁶⁹. Harry Bloom, 'The Trial Takes Shape (III)', *Africa South*, vol.2. no.4, p.57.

the Communists.⁷⁰ Thirty of the ninety-one accused were asked to face the charges, followed by the remainder in April 1959. The Crown's case involved the reading of thousands of pages of notes taken over a number of years by security police at meetings held all over the country. Witness after witness admitted under cross examination that the accused had, on various occasions, specifically advocated peaceful means of change and not violence, as had each of the five organisations to which the accused belonged.⁷¹ The State's case was so poor that they used one Solomon Mgubasi, who had been jailed for fraud, to testify against the A.N.C. He stated that he had been part of a conspiracy to overthrow the State as a member of a leading committee of the A.N.C. The defence counsel showed that he had committed fraud on many occasions and was an unreliable witness.⁷² The Crown also brought forward one Ralakeki, a gang leader from Evaton, as a witness. Berrange proved that he was a gangster and killer, employed by the Evaton bus company to break the boycott.⁷³

Reeves's efforts, by means of the Defence and Aid Fund (the Bishop's Fund), to have the best defence counsel possible proved effective. He had urged before the City Council, when it had tried to have the preparatory examination removed from Johannesburg:

⁷⁰. Ibid., p.57.

⁷¹. Ibid., p.56.

⁷². Sampson, *The Treason Cage*, p.33.

⁷³. Bloom, 'The Trial Takes Shape' (III), p.55.

I am sure that you will also agree that those accused should have the best legal advice possible. At the moment this is being provided by some of the most eminent members of the Johannesburg bar and it would be much more difficult for counsel if proceedings were transferred elsewhere.⁷⁴

Although proceedings were later transferred to Pretoria, the defence counsel triumphed in the end, vindicating Reeves and his friends for establishing and maintaining the Bishop's Fund, which had paid the defence lawyers.

At the end of four years the Presiding Judge, Mr Justice F. Rumpff, acquitted first the thirty, and then, without further evidence, the other fifty-nine (one had died, the other absconded). The trial came to an end on 29 March 1961. Justice Rumpff announced that the three judges were unanimous in finding the accused not guilty: the court found it impossible to conclude that the A.N.C. had adopted a policy to overthrow the State by violence.⁷⁵ '(I)f the Crown fails to prove conspiracy then all the accused go free,' Rumpff pronounced.⁷⁶ The Crown had failed and all were acquitted.

It was the longest trial in South Africa's history and cost taxpayers £157 525. The Treason Trial Fund spent £150 000 on legal defence and caring for the accused and their families. Most of this money came from Christian Action and the American

⁷⁴. *The Cape Times*, 28 December 1956.

⁷⁵. T.G. Karis, 'The South African Treason Trial', p.239.

⁷⁶. Reeves, *South Africa Yesterday and Tomorrow*, p.113.

Committee on Africa (established on 7 May 1957, sponsored by Eleanor Roosevelt and John Gunther),⁷⁷ added to which £50 000 had been collected in South Africa.⁷⁸ Reeves's part in the collection and distribution of this money was significant since he was Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Fund, and was, with Hepple and Blaxall, one of the instigators of the Fund from the time of the initial arrests. It was fortunate that the Government had left Reeves out of its reckoning when it chose to imprison the accused in Johannesburg, and hold the preparatory examination at the heart of his diocese. This made it possible for Reeves to administer the Bishop's Fund and keep regular contact with the accused. When the trial moved to Pretoria, he was still able to visit the accused personally concerning the distribution of the available monies.

Reeves had comforted the accused both at the preparatory examination and at the Treason Trial itself. This was effected by his personal presence and help given by means of the Bishop's Fund. At the beginning of the trial he risked his own life. Luthuli wrote, in tribute to Reeves:

. . . he was selflessly committed to the sufferings of the people of South Africa and did not spare himself in an untiring effort to bring them relief.⁷⁹

⁷⁷. *Cape Times*, 7 May 1957.

⁷⁸. Reeves, *South Africa Yesterday and Tomorrow*, p.108.

⁷⁹. R.A. Reeves, *Shooting at Sharpeville: The Agony of South Africa*, (London, Victor Gollancz, Ltd, 1960), p.1.

There could be no reconciliation without justice, which meant breaking down the wall of separation raised by injustice between the White government and the Africans. Reeves helped in this regard by organising the best defence lawyers possible on behalf of the accused, whose vindication was to increase the sympathy of many Whites towards the Africans, Indians and Coloureds and further demonstrate the injustice of the National government. In writing of the Trial, Reeves quotes Luthuli:

At the end of the Trial, the granite walls still remain, but they certainly reveal a few significant cracks . . . the forces of progress have been vindicated.⁸⁰

Reeves's action, in both the housing scandal and the Treason Trial, proved the sincerity of his preaching and writing. He had helped to weaken the apartheid structure and to keep alive, albeit to a limited extent, the possibility of a healthy relationship between the races.

⁸⁰. Reeves, *South Africa Yesterday and Tomorrow*, p.116.

CHAPTER 7 REEVES AND SHARPEVILLE

The last chapter of this study deals with the climax of Reeves's career as the Bishop of Johannesburg. This coincides with the twelfth year of Nationalist rule, which culminated in the 'Sharpeville Massacre'. Reeves's involvement in this event will be analysed in the light of his reconciling purpose. The latter will be explored within the Anglican context, in accordance with his views on Christian love and the Church versus State controversy. Reeves's attitude with regard to these matters led to his intervention on behalf of the Sharpeville sufferers. The happenings of 21 March 1960 and Reeves's implication in them, together with the repercussions of Sharpeville, including Reeves's escape to Swaziland and later deportation, are examined.

Reeves was no different from other South African Anglican bishops in his basic motive for helping human beings - love for God as expressed by love for others of whatever race. Like Reeves, Clayton and the other bishops sometimes preached against certain aspects of Government policy which caused their unenfranchised congregants to suffer. This was usually done in the annual charge to their dioceses. Unlike Reeves, however, Clayton preferred to visit or write to the Minister concerned privately, regarding a Government measure which was causing harm.¹ Whereas Clayton and his fellow bishops believed that many aspects of apartheid were wrong, Reeves was convinced that the

¹. Alan Paton, *Apartheid and the Archbishop: The Life and Times of Geoffrey Clayton* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1974), p.263.

whole system was thoroughly evil.² Norman avows, regarding the bishops of the church of the Province, Reeves excepted:

. . . the corporate Church confined itself to the declaration of the general principle, and was careful not to condemn the Government as such, or to incite anyone to disobey the law.³

Joost de Blank, who followed Clayton as Archbishop of Cape Town, took the same stance as Reeves. Neither he nor Reeves, however, ever incited anyone to break the law.⁴ De Blank supported Reeves in his care of the victims of apartheid and his stand on their behalf. The major difference between Reeves and other bishops was that he worked with members of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (S. A. C.T.U.), the Congress of Democrats (C.O.D.), the Transvaal Indian Congress (T.I.C.) and all organisations who opposed apartheid on a non-violent basis. Included were many non-Christians, some of whom were atheists. A committee of people representing fourteen such organisations met regularly at Reeves's house or were called together if a crisis arose.⁵ Reeves's fellow bishops were careful not to antagonise White

². Michael T. Worsnip, *Between the Two Fires: the Anglican Church and Apartheid 1948 - 1957* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1991), p.124.

³. E.R. Norman, *Church and Society in England 1770-1970* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 408.

⁴. John. S. Peart-Binns, *Archbishop Joost de Blank: Scourge of Apartheid* (London, Muller, Blount and White Ltd, 1987), p.133.

⁵. Joshua. S. Lazerson, *Against the Tide: Whites in the Struggle against Apartheid* (Bellville, Mayibuye Books, 1994), p.201.

members of the Church by criticising the Government, because the contributions of such members helped subsidise African work in their dioceses. White priests, except a handful such as Huddleston, Blaxall, Gonville french-Beytagh, Michael Scott and Philip Russell, followed their bishops by not becoming too involved in politics.⁶ The majority of overseas bishops supported Reeves's stand, as is proved by the anti-apartheid resolution of the 1958 Lambeth Conference mentioned in chapter 6. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, took the same view as Clayton, who regarded Reeves as an extremist in his constant attack on the Government, which he believed merely stiffened the Government's resolve. Both Archbishops, Hastings remarks, 'most certainly did not believe in any old priest (or Bishop), shaking the boat'; and he confirms that Clayton 'saw eye to eye in this with the Archbishop of Canterbury'.⁷ Welsby, in a description of Fisher, writes: 'While not being illiberal, he was impatient of rebellion and was unable to understand rebels.'⁸

However, many priests in England, such as Canon John Collins, founder of Christian Action, were great supporters of Reeves. Others belonging to this organisation were Edward Carpenter, later Dean of Westminster Abbey, Ian Henderson, Executive Officer

⁶. John. W. de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1979), p.93.

⁷. Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1990*, 3rd ed. (London, S.C.M.Press, 1991), p.432.

⁸. Paul A. Welsby, *A History of the Church of England 1945-1980* (Oxford, Oxford Univ.Press, 1984), p.10.

of Christian Action and Joseph Robinson, Canon of Canterbury Cathedral.⁹ They believed, with Reeves, that love for others meant being involved in politics, as well as every aspect of living. Such an attitude involved them in the Church versus State controversy.

During Reeves's episcopate, the crux of the Church versus State issue in South Africa was whether or not the Church should involve itself in politics. This is discussed here with particular reference to Reeves, in order to better understand his involvement in Sharpeville, which was viewed by his opponents as interfering with the State in the execution of its duties. In the Anglican Church it was accepted that a Christian layperson such as W.E. Gladstone, British Prime Minister in the Victorian era, could be called by God to be a politician, and that individual Anglicans should belong to political parties, or at the least vote.¹⁰ Bishops and clergy, on the other hand, were not expected openly to favour any political party. In Great Britain, Government laws or policies could be criticised, since the State Church (the Church of England) was the conscience of the nation.¹¹ In South Africa, where the Church of the Province of South Africa was separate from the State, any criticism of the latter by the former was frowned upon, not only by the Government

⁹. Ian Henderson (ed.) *Man of Christian Action, Canon John Collins* (London, Lutterworth Press, 1976), p.133.

¹⁰. David W. Bebbington, *William Ewart Gladstone: Faith and Politics in Victorian Britain* (Grand Rapids, W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1993), p.224.

¹¹. Norman, *Church and Society in England 1770-1970*, p.457

but by many White Anglican lay people as well. The general attitude was that bishops and clergy should leave politics to the politicians and concentrate on saving souls and helping church members. The Government, in turn, should not interfere with the Church's work in proclaiming salvation from sin. This outlook was a convenient one to adopt as far as Government and White churchgoers were concerned. For the Government it meant no interference or soul searching on its part; for the White churchgoers it meant no twinges of conscience or efforts to cross the colour line. Peter Hinchliff, Anglican priest and former Professor of Church History at Rhodes University, remarks:

It is probably true to say that when members of the Government accuse the bishops and clergy (the few concerned) of the Province of interfering in politics, many of the laity silently agree with the accusation and wish that their own consciences and the secular authorities might both be allowed to rest in peace.¹²

Reeves rejected the position that the Church must save souls, while the Government cares for bodies. From his student days, he had held that the Church had a duty to the whole person - body, mind and soul; and must be involved in every aspect of life.¹³ The State had to provide the framework in which humans could develop their full potential by enjoying equal opportunities, freedom of movement, religion and expression. If the State neglected this duty, it needed criticism and help. Reeves

¹². P. Hinchliff, *The Anglican Church in South Africa* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1963), p.240.

¹³. R.A. Reeves, 'Selections of Charges to Synod 1952-57', David. M. Paton (ed.) *The Church and Race in South Africa* (London, S.C.M. Press, 1958), p.43.

commented:

The Christian conscience justifies only such a regime as guarantees the right to a dignified existence, or full realisation of the life of every human being.¹⁴

The most crucial problem in the Church versus State debate in South Africa was whether or not armed force should be supported by the Church to overthrow a tyrannical Government. Clayton set down certain conditions that had to be fulfilled before anyone could organise an attempt to overthrow a duly constituted Government by force: 1) A Government had to be guilty of grave and prolonged violation of the rights of its subjects; 2) all peaceable or constitutional methods of obtaining redress and reform had to have been honestly tried and have failed; 3) a reasonable prospect of success had to exist. Clayton did not believe that conditions two and three had been fulfilled and thus never advocated that a violent overthrow of the State be attempted.¹⁵ Reeves entirely rejected the use of force. He refused to support the Defiance Campaign despite its use of non-violent means to break certain laws, because he believed that lawlessness could lead to violence.¹⁶

Reeves's interference with the State's conduct immediately following the Sharpeville shooting was in line with his views on

¹⁴. *The Watchman*, May 1950.

¹⁵. R. Clarke, 'Confronting the Crises; Church-State Relations', F. England and T. Paterson (eds), *Bounty in Bondage* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1989), p.135.

¹⁶. John. S. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1973), p.213.

the Church versus the State: if the State does not act justly the Church must intervene, but always in a non-violent, lawful manner to restore relations between the Government and the people. Reeves applied this belief in his involvement in the aftermath of the Sharpeville uprising.

On the afternoon of 21 March 1960, the Reverend Keith Davie, an Anglican hospital chaplain at Baragwanath Hospital, Soweto, had been informed by the Superintendent, Dr. Isidore Frack, that a large number of Africans, suffering the effects of bullet wounds, had arrived from Sharpeville township, near Vereeniging. Davie left a message for Reeves and hurried to the hospital.¹⁷ On receiving the message, Reeves immediately telephoned his priest at Sharpeville, the Reverend Z.M. Voyi, but the wires had been cut. Cancelling all other appointments, Reeves went to the hospital after requesting his lawyers to send some of their staff there to take statements from the injured. At Baragwanath, he comforted the victims and took down details of what had happened at Sharpeville that day. Two lawyers, John Lang and Ernest Wentzel, arrived from the Diocesan law firm and took statements from those who had been injured, in order to verify Reeves's account.¹⁸

Fortunately Reeves had acted quickly, for when the police arrived later on the afternoon of the shooting, they took over the Superintendent's office. On his arrival from the wards, they

17. A. Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection. A Centenary History* (London, S.C.M. Press, 1992), p.312.

18. Ambrose Reeves, *Shooting at Sharpeville: The Agony of South Africa* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1960), p.71.

told him the injured from Sharpeville were under arrest and a policeman must stand at each victim's bed. Frack, the Superintendent, protested vehemently. A compromise was reached and policemen were posted outside each ward. The Lieutenant-Colonel of the police protested to the Superintendent about Reeves's presence at the bedside of the patients and ordered that he be asked to leave. Frack refused, as Reeves was administering spiritual help to many who were dying. The next day, Frack was relieved of his post by orders from the Head of Hospital Services in Pretoria.¹⁹ Reeves returned on Tuesday 22 March to visit the injured and dying.

During the time of the Superintendent's dismissal - which lasted one week - Reeves was prevented by the police from entering the hospital wards. The new doctor in charge told him that higher authority had ordered this. Reeves, not to be deterred by this stricture on his role as chief pastor of the Anglican community, went to see the Colonel at the Newlands Police Station in the company of his lawyer, and explained his position as chief shepherd of the diocese of Johannesburg. He was given permission to continue his visits. Meanwhile, Lang and Wentzel took more statements from the 180 who had been injured.²⁰

Reeves had to act quickly regarding the examination results of the bullet wounds on the dead and injured: he had observed that most of these appeared to be in the victims backs. Dr. P.

¹⁹. Lewis Sowden, *The Land of the Afternoon - The Story of a White South Africa* (London, Elek Books Ltd, 1968), p.207.

²⁰. Reeves, *Shooting at Sharpeville: The Agony of South Africa*, p.71.

Keen, a doctor at the hospital who had examined the patients on admission, found that seventy per cent of the bullet wounds at entry were in their backs. Relatives of those who had been killed approached Reeves because no independent examination of the bodies, apart from that of the Senior District Surgeon at the Government mortuary in Johannesburg, was to take place. Reeves arranged to see the Judge President of the Transvaal to request an interdict to prevent the bodies from being examined by the Senior District Surgeon, Dr. John Friedman, without his being accompanied by the doctor appointed to represent the relatives. Signatures of relatives were required and these were obtained by diocesan workers.²¹ The police were thus thwarted in their attempt to have the bodies examined by the District Surgeon alone. If Reeves had not acted with haste, the important fact that seventy per cent of those shot were fleeing the police might not have been revealed. Suppression of the truth would further have hardened the African's attitude towards the White Government and worsened relationships.

Once Reeves had ascertained what had happened according to those interviewed, he called a meeting of the consultative committee of fourteen anti-apartheid organisations. Reeves told them of the facts he had gathered and they discussed what should be done. On their advice, he called a press conference of overseas journalists to give his viewpoint concerning the day's events, before censorship could be imposed on them by the Government. Local pressmen were not invited, since they were already bound by strict censorship laws. Any contravention of

²¹. Ibid., p.67.

these measures would certainly have led to prosecution.²² For the sake of the African people, Reeves wanted the facts to be made known overseas. World opinion against the pass laws could hasten their end and thus improve relationships between the Government and Africans.

It was only six months later, at the Commission of Enquiry held on 23 September 1960, that accounts other than Reeves's were made public. The newspapers would have infringed existing press censorship if they had published stories and pictures concerning the events of 21 March 1960 at Sharpeville. Statements acquired by Reeves and his lawyers at the hospital told the story of what happened on that day. Reeves had also been able to interview his own priest at Sharpeville, Z.M. Voyi, and a Presbyterian Minister, M. Maja. The latter had spoken to people in the crowd at the police station while trying to find the Anglican priest, had seen a number of people being killed or injured, and had helped the injured once the shooting had stopped.²³ Voyi had spoken to many of his parishioners who were present at the shooting and this information was given to Reeves.

It was public knowledge that there would be an anti-pass protest on 21 March 1960. The African Nationalist Congress (A.N.C.) had organised 31 March 1960 as an 'Anti-Pass Day' but then the P.A.C., hoping to steal the A.N.C.'s thunder, planned a

²². Norman Phillips, *The Tragedy of Apartheid* (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1961), p.71.

²³. Attendance by F.D. Phillips at sermon preached by M. Maja, St. Columba's Presbyterian Church, Parkview, Johannesburg, 23 February 1961.

similar demonstration on 21 March.²⁴ The P.A.C.'s campaign was to extend throughout South Africa, its aim being the achievement of freedom from bondage by 1963. Country-wide demonstrations were to be held outside township police stations. P.A.C. presidents would refuse to carry passes and would ask to be arrested. The slogan for those arrested was to be 'no bail, no defence, no fine'. P.A.C. members had been instructed to conduct the campaign in a spirit of non-violence. Robert Sobukwe, the P.A.C. leader, had written to the Commissioner of Police informing him of the projected campaign, 'if the police are interested in maintaining law and order they will have no difficulty at all'.²⁵

Early on the morning of 21 March 1960 a crowd estimated at between 5 000 to 7 000 (many others including A.N.C. members had joined in the demonstration), marched to the municipal offices at the entrance to the Sharpeville township. After the crowd had been told to disperse, there was a baton charge. The crowd reassembled outside the police station. Nyskane Tsolo, one of the leaders of the demonstration, then jumped over a wire fence surrounding the police station and told the police lieutenant that the people had come without their reference books and wished to be arrested. The answer was that so many people could not be imprisoned.²⁶ The demonstrators did not disperse, as Tsolo had been informed by the lieutenant that an important Government

²⁴. Mary Benson, *South Africa: The Struggle for a Birthright* (London, IDAF, 1985), p.221.

²⁵. E.S. Sachs, *The Anatomy of Apartheid* (London, Collets Publishers, 1965), p.307.

²⁶. Muriel Horrel (ed.), *Days of Crises - South Africa (Events up to 15 May 1960) A Fact Paper* (Johannesburg S.A.I.R.R., 1960), p.10.

official would be coming later to address the people. The rumour spread that he would announce the abolition of the pass laws.²⁷ Reinforcements were summoned by the police when the people had not dispersed by 13h30.²⁸ This despite the fact that, according to Reeves's information,²⁹ the crowd had been cheerful and showed no antagonism. Photographs taken by *Drum* photographer, Ian Berry, proved this. No guns were found on any of the victims and even the police testified to having seen only a few sticks, although they spoke of stones being thrown immediately before the shooting, which had slightly injured three of them.³⁰ Lewis Sowden, of the *Rand Daily Mail*, sent a reporter and photographer to Sharpeville on 21 March. He writes that they maintained that the crowd was truculent. Yet he notes, 'Our reporters were not present during the shooting . . . they heard the shooting as they entered'.³¹ William Frye, an American journalist visiting South Africa, is adamant:

Pictures taken at the time show no visible weapons in the possession of the Africans and much indication of a holiday mood. The crowd was singing songs and shouting.

²⁷. Sachs, *The Anatomy of Apartheid*, p.309.

²⁸. Horrel (ed.), *Days of Crises*, p.10.

²⁹. Reeves, *Shooting at Sharpeville: The Agony of South Africa*, p.58.

³⁰. State Archives, Pretoria, *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Events at Sharpeville on 21 March 1960*, K.110, no.7, para. 301.

³¹. Lewis Sowden, *The Land of Afternoon*, p.198.

Women were carrying umbrellas and children were playing.
A few men held sticks.³²

One of the lawyers appointed by Reeves, M. Partington, answered the account given by the Police Counsel, P.S. Claasen, at the Commission of Enquiry by stating that if the crowd had been antagonistic and wanted to attack the police, the wire fence surrounding the police station would have been trampled down. Police testified that they had heard shots from the crowds, as did a few African witnesses, but later admitted under cross-examination that they had been more like the detonations of small explosives (perhaps fire-crackers). Moreover, none of the policemen had any gunshot wounds.³³ The crowd's mood was the crux of the matter concerning whether or not the police had grounds for shooting at the gathering. Reeves's opinion was that they were not justified in doing so.

Horrel reports that before the firing 'It was said that two of the officers tried to speak to the crowd over loudspeakers but could not make themselves heard'.³⁴ Policemen at the station and those on the Saracens started firing at the crowd. According to police evidence, however, no one gave an order to fire and no policeman admitted to firing first.³⁵

Norman Phillips, a British journalist in South Africa spoke to Reeves shortly after the shooting:

³². William. R. Frye, *In Whitest Africa - The Dynamics of Apartheid* (New Jersey, Prentice Hall Inc., 1968), p.45.

³³. State Archives, K.110, no.9, para. 135.

³⁴. Horrel, *Days of Crises in South Africa*, p.10.

³⁵. State Archives, K.110, no.7, para. 281.

We talked about the Sharpeville massacre and he said, 'I would go into a court of law and say, if it were the last thing I ever did, that it was not necessary for the police to open fire. One woman was in a shop buying groceries. Another was hanging out washing in a backyard. Even if there was provocation, it is difficult to believe that it could have been justified seriously enough to warrant what can only be described as a massacre of unarmed people.³⁶

The sole Commissioner at the Commission of Enquiry, Judge P.J. Wessels, did not give unqualified acceptance to Reeves's view that the crowd was not about to storm the police station, but he admitted that the people wished to see what was happening at the gate and that this caused the surge forward. Reeves's view was that the police had no reason to shoot because they had received no order to do so.³⁷ The Commissioner reserved judgment on the grounds that it was outside the scope of the Commission to lay blame on any individual or group.³⁸ Reeves, by means of his counsel, saw that Pienaar, the police officer in command, was rebuked and that the police were blamed for the massacre. This helped to assuage hurt and gave Africans some hope that the truth would be revealed. Reeves knew that without justice genuine reconciliation could not take place.

At the Commission of Enquiry, press photographs were exhibited of people fleeing under police fire. Reeves charged that not only should the police have held fire, but having once fired, they should have stopped the moment people began running away, if they

³⁶. Phillips, *The Tragedy of Apartheid*, p.115.

³⁷. Reeves, *Shooting at Sharpeville: The Agony of South Africa*, p.97.

³⁸. State Archives, K.110, Introduction, para 3.

thought that lives were in danger.³⁹ This argument remains valid, even if the police estimated the crowd at 20,000 instead of 7,000 and perceived that the crowd's mood was hostile, aggressive and volatile. Shooting at people running away shows more than panic on the part of the police, according to Karis and Carter, who claim that animosity is hinted at in the words that refer to the police's being, 'outnumbered by people whom they regarded as the 'enemy'.⁴⁰

Advocate G. Colman, Q.C., testifying for the accused, rebuked the police for firing. In his report, he accepted Reeves's view that the crowd had neither been unruly nor intended to attack the police station. He pronounced, like Reeves, that racial prejudice and unfounded fears had caused the shooting. He quoted the words spoken by Lieutenant-Colonel Gideon Pienaar under cross examination, 'Whenever Africans gather they do so for violence'. Colman held that Pienaar's panic-stricken attitude had been passed on to his men, and continued: 'The men who fired (or some of them), did so either in hatred or in contempt of the people they were shooting.'⁴¹ Kenney makes the valid point that the police could have been thinking of a similar incident at Cato Manor, when four White and five Black policemen had been killed by a mob of Africans. One of the policemen at Sharpeville might

³⁹. Ibid., para.49.

⁴⁰. Thomas Karis and Gail M. Gerhart, *Challenge and Violence 1953-1964*, (ed.) *From Protest to Challenge*, vol.III (Stanford, Hoover Press, 1977), p.334.

⁴¹. State Archives, K.110, no.9, para.27.

have lost his nerve, causing him to shoot, setting off the others.⁴²

The Commissioner, like Colman, was very grateful to Reeves for the information gathered over and above the police statements.⁴³ He ended his report after stating that the ambulance took the wounded and dead away and there was no more trouble that day. He simply recorded what had happened on 21 March 1960, heeding his instruction to reach no conclusions as to where the blame lay. Reeves and Colman were bitterly disappointed, having wanted a swift denunciation of police action and apologies from the Government to the dependants of those killed and to the injured. This was not forthcoming, nor was the report ever published by the State. Circulation would have caused an uproar from anti-government groups, overseas opinion and especially Africans in South Africa. Non-publication, however, did not further the Government's cause: it was assumed that the Nationalist regime had something to hide. Moreover, Reeves, on arriving in England later in 1960, published a book giving his own account and condemning police action. The book, *Shooting at Sharpeville*, was banned in South Africa.

Reeves's role in the aftermath of Sharpeville was a vital one. When he was summoned to Baragwanath on 21 March 1960, care for those shot was uppermost in his mind. As far as Reeves was concerned this was more valuable than words and prayers. Bitterness against Whites on the part not only of the victims and

⁴². Henry Kenney, *Architect of Apartheid: H.F. Verwoerd - An Appraisal* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 1980), p.182.

⁴³. State Archives, K.110, no.7, para. 267.

their families but of all Blacks, had to be countered by a White person's exposure of the truth about what had happened. This meant obtaining evidence from the victims, having their bodies properly examined and contacting the overseas media. Reeves, by his actions, was to have a positive effect on race relations. Prejudice against all Whites could have no validity as long as he and his White friends put themselves at risk and unselfishly did their utmost to help the victims. Seventy-three out of 170 White police had fired, sixty-nine Africans had been killed, but a White person and his allies had done everything possible to see that justice was done at great sacrifice of their own time and energy.⁴⁴ Subsequent Government action in deporting Reeves revealed how great the sacrifice had been.⁴⁵ His actions on behalf of the African people tempered their hatred and thus helped the cause of reconciliation which had been dealt a severe blow. Justice and reconciliation are inseparable: the more justice is seen to be done, the more reconciliation among opposing parties is effected. Attempts were made to stifle Reeves's investigations at Baragwanath regarding the injured and the dead. Owing to his position and his resolution he was able to overcome these difficulties. His actions following the Sharpeville uprising were in line with his attitude concerning love for one's neighbour and the Church's role vis-à-vis the State. Both involved exposing injustice to bring about reconciliation.

Reeves's involvement in the Sharpeville debacle meant an

⁴⁴. Phillips, *The Tragedy of Apartheid*, p.114.

⁴⁵. Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection*, p.331.

inevitable clash with the Government. A sign of this was the presence of Security Branch detectives outside his house, taking the numbers of all the cars that entered or parked outside the premises.⁴⁶ Another pointer was the fact that Lang and Wentzel were arrested on 30 March 1960.⁴⁷ The next day a State of Emergency was declared. Seventeen days after this Reeves was due to leave for England on long leave. He was anxious to go in order to publish the facts concerning Sharpeville, because they had not, by Government regulation, been made known in South Africa. He had arranged many speaking appointments in various parts of the United Kingdom. These included the South African Church Institute Annual Festival, a Christian Action Conference at Newnham College, Cambridge, from 8-10 July 1960, and the World Council of Churches Central Committee meeting at St Andrews, Scotland, 16-24 July.⁴⁸

On 1 April 1960, Reeves was warned by three close friends (whose names he does not disclose) that according to information they had received from a source in the Special Branch, he was due to be arrested at any moment.⁴⁹ He called together the future Vicar-General, the Reverend A.G. Sidebotham, Archdeacon E. Walls and Dean P. Barron. They decided that the best course of action would be for Reeves to leave that night by car for Swaziland.

⁴⁶. R.A. Reeves, *South Africa Yesterday and Tomorrow: A Challenge to Christians* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1962), p.37.

⁴⁷. Phillips, *The Tragedy of Apartheid*, p.114.

⁴⁸. Reeves's Diary 1960, C.P.S.A. Archives, Reeves Papers, A.B. 388, Box 10.

⁴⁹. Reeves, *South Africa, Yesterday and Tomorrow*, p.35.

From there he could fly to Southern Rhodesia and then to England to meet his commitments.⁵⁰ One of his aims was to acquire financial support for the Africans who had been injured at Sharpeville and for the dependants of those killed. This could be done by disclosing the facts, especially relating to the cause of the uprising: the oppressive laws symbolised by the pass system. Reasons for the killings he would show to be prejudice, hatred and fear on the part of the police; fear for their own lives and that the country would be dominated by Africans. Reeves would claim that the police had not been at risk on the day of the Sharpeville shooting.⁵¹

Reeves took the advice of his counsellors and late at night left for Swaziland in a car driven by Walls. They entered the country without incident and stayed there for a few days before Reeves travelled to England via Salisbury (Harare).⁵² Controversy broke out once his whereabouts became known. Archbishop Joost de Blank was thunderstruck, as were the other South African bishops. In his own diocese there was turmoil. Everyone had an opinion about whether or not he should have left. Philip Russell, later an Archbishop of Cape Town, felt that either choice would have been right:

Had he stayed and gone to gaol, I would have respected him but I suspect that he had reason to believe that in captivity, subtle methods might have been used to get information out of him which almost certainly would have

⁵⁰. Ibid., p.35.

⁵¹. Reeves, *Shooting at Sharpeville*, p.77.

⁵². Reeves, *South Africa Yesterday and Tomorrow*, p.44.

been harmful to many others.⁵³

Tom Bishop, former Superintendent of Diocesan Schools, believed that Reeves had abandoned his flock. On Reeves's arrival in Swaziland, Archdeacon Walls said that it was not too late for him to return to Johannesburg; Reeves replied that his wife feared his imprisonment and wanted him to flee.⁵⁴ Some thought that still struggling as she was to come to terms with the loss of her eldest son, only six months earlier, Ada Reeves might well have begged her husband to avoid imminent arrest and, according to Bishop Michael Nuttall, possible assassination.⁵⁵ Historian, Professor Andrew Harington, believes that

. . . it was with his family's well-being in mind, and especially his wife's mental stability that he decided to get out and at least try to minimise further distress and strain. Reeves's judgement could also have been affected by his son's death.⁵⁶

Fraser Alexander, a former priest in the Johannesburg diocese, thought that 'It was a great mistake and the act of panic-stricken folly for Reeves to have left his flock - this way'.⁵⁷

⁵³. Letter from Rt. Rev. P. Russell to F.D. Phillips, 15 September 1994.

⁵⁴. Letter from R. Bishop to F.D. Phillips, 19 August 1994.

⁵⁵. Letter from Bishop M. Nuttall to F.D. Phillips, 1 May 1995.

⁵⁶. Letter from Professor A.L. Harington to F.D. Phillips, 15 November 1994.

⁵⁷. Letter to F.D. Phillips from P. Alexander, 30 August 1994.

concerning the flight:

. . . it smacked of the melodramatic, and, to say the least, was ill-advised. The obvious construction of the manoeuvre could do Reeves [sic] reputation no good; and it gave substance to the criticism that foreign reformers, when the going got too tough, had only to skip the country.⁵⁸

Eric Richardson is another priest critical of Reeves's departure.⁵⁹ Canon Leopold Alexander, who was then Rector of Klerksdorp, believes that he should have stayed: 'Running away as he did solved nothing.'⁶⁰ Jacob Namo, a young African priest at the time, was aggrieved by Reeves's involvement at Sharpeville and the consequences, because his own pastoral problems were not being addressed by his Bishop. Other diocesan issues concerning African priests were not put right either.⁶¹

There were many therefore who believed that Reeves's act was a cowardly one and unchristian, as he had deserted those in his care. They forgot that he was due to leave for England in seventeen days, in any case, and had appointed a Vicar-General to take over control.⁶² His own point of view, supported by his advisers, was that he could better serve the country and his

⁵⁸. Letter from Rt. Rev. H. Stevenson, 22 September 1994.

⁵⁹. Letter from Canon E. Richardson to F.D. Phillips, 6 September 1994.

⁶⁰. Letter from Canon L. Alexander to F.D. PHillips, 21 October 1994.

⁶¹. Letter from Rev. J. Namo to F.D. Phillips, 5 September 1994.

⁶². D. Sadie 'A Decade of Opposition to Apartheid. The Anglican Church 1948-1960' (unpubl. B.A. Hons. dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1989).

diocese if he kept his commitments overseas to secure financial and other support for the suffering people of South Africa.⁶³ At the end of his long leave he would return and face arrest if this were the Government's intention. If it were true, it would have been to prevent him exposing the Sharpeville story and giving the Government other negative publicity overseas. The South African Government was trying hard to justify its policy overseas at that time.⁶⁴

Many felt that possible arrest and detention would have helped the anti-apartheid cause more than preaching in England. David Stephens, a British M.P., spoke to the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, on 28 September 1961 regarding a possible post as bishop for Reeves in England, but 'the Archbishop thought that Bishop Reeves's flight into Swaziland was a grave error of judgement'.⁶⁵ Thus it was only on 15 June 1962 that he was appointed as Assistant to the Bishop of London. This was despite the fact that there had been vacant bishoprics in the interim. Alan Paton was also warned that he would be arrested at the time and told to flee to Swaziland, which he refused to do, as he believed that it would be cowardly and look like an admission of guilt. When he heard that Reeves was in Swaziland, he flew to see him to urge his return to South Africa. Reeves refused as a matter of conscience. Paton, on his return journey,

⁶³. Reeves, *South Africa Yesterday and Tomorrow*, p.38.

⁶⁴. Sadie, *A Decade of Opposition to Apartheid*, p.64.

⁶⁵. Lambeth Palace Library, London, Ramsey Correspondence, vol.II, no.250.

nearly lost his life in a crash landing.⁶⁶

Many felt that Reeves, like Paton, should have eschewed escape. If he had been arrested, he could, as a martyr, have helped the anti-apartheid cause.⁶⁷ In line with Church teaching, however, Reeves held the conviction that to court martyrdom was a sin. He believed God should be obeyed, not man, and that he was pursuing God's will expressed through the Church (his advisers) and his own conscience. He defended his action by arguing that revered and famous bishops, such as Athanasius, had left their dioceses during persecution to return when circumstances allowed. By taking the action he did, the facts that he had gathered regarding Sharpeville were publicised to a world audience.⁶⁸ It was understandable that the Government would want to punish Reeves, as he had severely criticised the police through his lawyers at the Commission of Enquiry in May. Once he had arrived in the United Kingdom, he had freely spread his hostile - according to the South African Government - information concerning the pass laws and police action, and had even prepared a book for publication.

Punishment came when Reeves returned to South Africa after his three-month's long leave. He flew back ahead of his family on 9 September 1960 and was given a hearty welcome at Jan Smuts Airport, Johannesburg, by many African members of the Anglican church and a few White priests. He held a service in St. Mary's

⁶⁶. Letter from P. Alexander to F.D. Phillips, 30 August 1994.

⁶⁷. Sadie, *A Decade of Opposition to Apartheid*, p.65.

⁶⁸. Interview conducted by F. D. Phillips with the Vicar-General, A.G. Sidebotham, 5 August 1960.

Cathedral and spent that Sunday on administrative matters. He was staying at St. Benedict's House, Rosettenville, Johannesburg, where he was to be accommodated until the return of his family by sea.⁶⁹ The next morning he was visited by A.T. Spengler, the Lieutenant-Colonel who had been present at Sharpeville police station on the day of the massacre. A leading member of the Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D.), he handed Reeves a deportation order. Stunned, Reeves asked to see his lawyer and was permitted to telephone to make an appointment. Spengler and Reeves had tea together and, after Reeves had been given the assurance that he would be taken to the Greys in Johannesburg (the C.I.D. headquarters) where his lawyer would be waiting for him, he packed and went with Spengler in his car. But the car drove to Jan Smuts Airport and directly onto the runway beside an aeroplane bound for England. Spengler disappeared, ostensibly to see customs, and Reeves was put on the aircraft, which departed immediately. Reeves's surprised shock at the time is evident from his claim that 'it was the most blatant example of lying that I have ever known'.⁷⁰ The only reason given by the Government for Reeves's deportation was the alleged claim he had made that the police had used dum-dum bullets at Sharpeville. It was Lang, in fact, who had held that 'dum-dum' bullets had been used by the police.⁷¹ Reeves had merely asked why many of the wounds were small where the bullets had entered and large where

69. Reeves, *South Africa Yesterday and Tomorrow*, p.49.

70. Ibid, p.54.

71. Interview conducted by F.D. Phillips with Dr. Colin Lang, 3 November 1994.

they exited; and further, what type of ammunition had been used.⁷² This charge concerning the bullets was a red herring on the part of the Government to enable it to avoid giving the real reason for Reeves's deportation: their anger at his revelations about police action at Sharpeville and 'a decade engaged in undermining apartheid'.⁷³ It was possible that there was still greater cause for anger. Instead of the Verwoerd Government blaming itself for the strongly negative reaction which resulted in a decrease in overseas investment in South Africa and the concomitant loss of South African capital after the Sharpeville uprising, they blamed Reeves as one of the agitators, whose activities had led to the massacre. But for him, only the police version of the happenings would have been presented before the Commission of Enquiry.⁷⁴ According to Verwoerd, Sharpeville would not have had dire economic consequences apart from Reeves. This links up with Verwoerd's view - one shared by the police - that 'mischief makers', not the African majority, had caused the trouble by stirring up the anger of the crowd. In Verwoerd's thinking it was this viewpoint that would have mollified world opinion. Instead Reeves (the unnamed culprit) had blamed the police and Government policies, inflaming the anger of Africans, so that a State of Emergency had to be declared which frightened off overseas investors and South African financiers. Verwoerd

⁷². Sadie, *A Decade of Opposition to Apartheid*, p.69.

⁷³. Reeves, *South Africa Yesterday and Tomorrow*, p.57.

⁷⁴. Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection. A Centenary History*, p.331.

spoke of 'mischief makers', no individual was named.⁷⁵

Philip Kgosana of Cape Town was another such 'agitator'. The P.A.C. anti-pass campaign was conducted not only at Sharpeville. In the Cape it began on 21 March 1960, led by Kgosana, Sobukwe's leader in that area. On the eve of the campaign, Kgosana claimed that he had addressed 5 000 at two large gatherings at Langa and Nyanga. The next day 6 000 had gathered to march to Langa police station to surrender themselves for violating the pass law. That night two were shot dead by the police. This was followed by rioting when a coloured man was killed. After ten days there was a march of 30 000 on Caledon Square, Cape Town. Kgosana was told by Colonel I.D. Terblanche that he could see the Minister of Justice at 17h00, if he dispersed the crowd. He did this, but was arrested that night without seeing the Minister, C.R. Swart. This caused grave dissatisfaction, but a State of Emergency was declared and the campaign ceased.⁷⁶ Because so many were killed at Sharpeville it has become a name that symbolises all the events connected with the anti-pass campaign. Merle Lipton elaborates:

Sharpeville provoked widespread unrest in South Africa, flight of foreign capital and storms of protest internationally, with U.N. resolutions of condemnation, culminating in the 1963 voluntary arms embargo, supported by the U.K. and U.S.A.⁷⁷

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- ⁷⁵. Horrel, *A Survey of Race Relations in S.A. 1959-60*, p.104.
- ⁷⁶. T. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (London, Longman, 1983), p.221.
- ⁷⁷. Merle Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid in S.A. 1910-1984* (Aldershot, Gower, Morris, Temple and Smith, 1985), p.29.

There were a few members of the Nationalist Government who would not have blamed Reeves, but the oppressive aspects of apartheid. The ministers, Dr.T.E. Dönges, Paul Sauer and Barend Schoeman called for the abolition of the reference book system.⁷⁸ But Verwoerd made them toe the Government line when he blamed a small number of agitators in a speech made before 70 000 - 80 000 at Meyerton, five days after Sharpeville, where he said that the black masses favoured Government policy.⁷⁹ In Parliament he stated that there would be no departure from separate development.⁸⁰ Kenney, his biographer, encapsulates Verwoerd's view of himself and his policies in a single comment: 'There was only one true way and that was through him and him alone.'⁸¹

Verwoerd regarded Reeves as one of the chief agitators. Since he was not a South African citizen he could be deported as punishment. Verwoerd could not do this with the South African born troublemakers, Sobukwe and Luthuli or their followers, whom he arrested. Eighteen thousand were jailed after the disturbances during 21 March and in the days following.⁸² Deportation was the most drastic form of punishment the Government could administer to a foreign-born bishop of the Anglican Church, who had interfered with the police in the course of their duties and thus aggravated the upheavals. Sharpeville was such a cataclysm

⁷⁸. Kenney, *Architect of Apartheid*, p.186.

⁷⁹. Ibid., p.187.

⁸⁰. *House of Assembly Debates*, 20 May 1960, col.8337.

⁸¹. Kenney, *Architect of Apartheid*, p.189.

⁸². Gail. M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa. The Evolution of an Ideology* (Berkeley Univ. of California Press, 1978) p.245.

that looking back, Robert Lambert sums up:

This was a watershed event in South African political history, for it marked the beginning of a state of emergency, banning of African political organisations and the demise of African Trade Unions for more than a decade.⁸³

Yet opponents of apartheid had thought that Sharpeville would have the opposite effect - an amelioration of the African's suffering:

Instead, it galvanized the Government into even stronger measures against their opponents, particularly against those who advocated an integrated society and the extension of non-white rights. In this way, Sharpeville far from being a turning point served to accelerate a process already well advanced.⁸⁴

The period was marked by a diminution of rights so that White minority rule could be preserved. On 28 March 1960 the Government introduced the Unlawful Organizations Bill designed to ban the A.N.C. and P.A.C. It also increased tenfold the penalties for intimidation. On 30 March a State of Emergency was declared, but before this was made public, 1,000 people of all races were detained in pre-dawn arrests.⁸⁵

John Lazar quotes a senior minister in Verwoerd's cabinet,

⁸³. Robert. V. Lambert, 'Trade-Unionism, Race, Class and Nationalism in the 1950s Resistance Movement', Philip Bonner, Peter Delius and Deborah Posel (eds), *Apartheid's Genesis* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1993), p.288.

⁸⁴. Janet Robertson, *Liberalism in South Africa 1948-1962* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971), p.204.

⁸⁵. *Contact*, 16 July 1960.

M.C. Botha, who wrote to his Prime Minister regarding the reaction of the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs (SABRA), which asked for changes in the system following Sharpeville:

Apartheid is not being enforced strongly enough, Africans should only be allowed into 'white' South Africa as long as the 'favour' of work (has been) extended to them.⁸⁶

Verwoerd had gained the support he wanted without any change in the pass laws or the other apartheid legislation. After Reeves had been evicted from the country, stringent economic measures were enforced to normalise the economy by way of strict exchange control, expansionist policies by the state sector and increased protection via both import controls and domestic procurement.⁸⁷ Overseas capital was brought back by more strictly enforced 'law and order',⁸⁸ including the silencing of agitators and Reeves's deportation.

On the morning after Reeves's deportation, the *Rand Daily Mail* editorial expressed the following reaction:

He thought the Police acted wrongly at Sharpeville and said so and soon his views were well known overseas. So he had to be eliminated. Anyone who actively identifies himself with the aspirations of the African people and works to rectify their grievances is seen as a threat to outwit the baasskap State. Such is the pass we have

⁸⁶. John Lazar, 'Verwoerd versus the Visionaries, S.A.B.R.A. and Apartheid (1948-1961)' in Bonner, Delius and Posel (eds), *Apartheid's Genesis 1935-1962* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1993), p.391.

⁸⁷. Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid in S.A. 1910-1984*, p.144.

⁸⁸. Kenney, *Architect of Apartheid*, p.211.

reached.⁸⁹

Hardly a voice of protest was raised by the Whites in his Diocese at his deportation.⁹⁰ The Archbishop, Joost de Blank, however, was incensed that the Government should have done such a thing:

The forcible removal of a Bishop cannot be characterized otherwise than as an act of religions persecution - an act abhorrent to all faithful Churchmen.⁹¹

Luthuli observed that the Government had removed one of the few people who was making a distinctive contribution to the future of the country; one who was unselfishly committed to the sufferings of the people of South Africa and did not spare himself in his untiring efforts to bring them relief.⁹²

The Liberal Party, on behalf of all Reeves's supporters in his crusade against apartheid, voiced the strongest opposition to his fate. They wrote to the Minister of the Interior voicing the party's most emphatic protest against his 'so-called deportation', disapproving entirely of the Government's action. They wrote of Reeves's asserting the Christian doctrine of the fundamental and inherent dignity of all people. They contended that the Government's, 'action in deporting him constitute[d] an arbitrary abuse of the powers of Government and [was] an

⁸⁹. *The Rand Daily Mail*, 12 September 1960.

⁹⁰. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.259.

⁹¹. *Ibid*, p.259.

⁹². *Reeves, Shooting at Sharpeville: The Agony of South Africa*, p.14.

expression of [its] contempt for [its] political opponents'. They recorded their protest at the disgraceful conduct of Colonel Spengler in preventing the Bishop from communicating with his lawyers, although he had given him his word. Because of this they wished to record that 'the Bishop's unlawful removal was an act of shanghai-ing'.⁹³ The Liberal Party also presented a petition of one-hundred signatures to the Mayor of Johannesburg, asking for a public meeting of protest against Reeves's deportation, but this was refused.⁹⁴

The actions of the Liberal Party were noteworthy in the face of so much apathy on the part of Whites of the country. The *South African Outlook*, a non-party, liberal journal expressed shock that:

Reeves, an Anglican Bishop who was very frank, fearless and an exasperating critic of Government race policies and practice should nevertheless be treated in such a discourteous and amateur fashion.

It continued with a warning to South Africa and its people that:

Criticism would continue with added edge and there was a danger of South Africa not being admitted to the Commonwealth on becoming a Republic. To the world such treatment was regarded as a compliment to the recipient (Reeves).⁹⁵

⁹³. The Alan Paton Centre, Univ. of Natal, Letter of the Liberal Party of S.A. to the Secretary of the Interior, 21 September 1960, File PC2/4/12/2.

⁹⁴. Ibid.

⁹⁵. *South African Outlook*, October 1960.

On the other hand, the editorial of *Die Burger* expressed the general Nationalist point of view:

The fuss about the deportation of Bishop Reeves doesn't impress us at all. Even if it caused U.N., the World Council of Churches, British public opinion and many other things to descend upon our heads it would still not impress us. We are sick and tired of this man and his kind who are dumped off on us from England to shout at us and shunt us about in the name of God as though we were dirt. Unknown and unpraised in their own country, they are here invested with pompous titles and the accompanying sham authority. . . . No vexation on the part of his colleagues can make the so-called Bishop of Johannesburg - as though Johannesburg as a city has a bishop - anything else but a mischief-maker and slanderer.⁹⁶

The editor displays his ignorance, for Reeves was well known and praised in England for his World Council of Churches' standing and as a member of Convocation and the Church Assembly. Reeves had displayed his true authority in speaking on behalf of the oppressed and caring for the poor in South Africa, and in being persecuted for obedience to God. Jesus Christ said: 'They persecuted me, they will persecute you also'. A true follower is persecuted, as was Reeves, for speaking the truth and acting in love. Jesus was persecuted by religious people, so was Reeves. It was the editor of *Die Burger*, however, who gave the reason for Reeves's deportation:

What we know is that Reeves has tried the patience and self-control of the oldest settled population group in South Africa to breaking point. To us his deportation is an expression of an indignation that people of flesh and blood could contain no longer.⁹⁷

⁹⁶. *Die Burger*, 16 September 1960.

⁹⁷. *Ibid.*

He was speaking on behalf of the majority of Whites, who believed in apartheid.

To resolve the racial antagonism which had been aggravated by Sharpeville, the W.C.C. arranged a meeting with the representatives of member churches in South Africa.⁹⁸ Reeves, who had not yet resigned as Bishop of Johannesburg, was a delegate from the Church of the Province of South Africa, but owing to his deportation could no longer attend. Delegates from the three Dutch Reformed Churches attended the consultation held at Cottesloe, Johannesburg from 7-14 December 1960. They agreed with the English-speaking church delegates that all South Africa's people had the right to own land and share in the government of the country. After the consultation, however, the three D.R.C. synods repudiated the stance of their delegates and resigned from the W.C.C.⁹⁹ Reeves had felt inspired to help the victims of Sharpeville because in doing so he could help to bring about reconciliation between ruler and ruled. This had meant alienation from some in his own church, who asked him to resign shortly before his return from England (the majority, however, would not agree to this).¹⁰⁰ Moreover, he incurred the displeasure of the Government who deported him. Yet he remained faithful to his convictions, believing that his actions were in accordance with his conscience. Others, many of them bishops and priests,

⁹⁸. Marjorie Hope and James Young, *The South African Churches in a Revolutionary Situation* (New York, Orlis Books, 1981), p.76.

⁹⁹. Zolile Mbali, *The Churches and Racism: A Black South African's Perspective* (London, S.C.M. Press, 1987), p.43.

¹⁰⁰. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.234.

perceived the situation differently. They thought he was either cowardly or misdirected in fleeing. Once his decision to travel to England had been taken, however, he did not waver, since this was not in his nature.¹⁰¹ On 28 February 1961, when there was no hope of a return to South Africa, he resigned.¹⁰² His episcopate had ended in ignominy as far as his enemies were concerned and in triumph in his friends' view. They regarded deportation as a tribute to his stand for justice and reconciliation. Sharpeville meant self-sacrifice by Reeves on behalf of the unenfranchised. He provided a voice for them and thus helped to alleviate alienation between Blacks and Whites.

¹⁰¹. Ibid, p.226.

¹⁰². Reeves, *South Africa, Yesterday and Tomorrow*, p.86.

CONCLUSION

Ambrose Reeves arrived in South Africa in June 1949, twelve months after the Nationalist Party had assumed power. Its overriding aim was to achieve separation of the races in the social, political and economic spheres, in other words, to control every aspect of life, individual and corporate. In order to counter this policy Reeves became involved, almost immediately, in every sphere of life, personal and social in an attempt to bring people together in a spirit of reconciliation. His work extended beyond the confines of the diocese of Johannesburg and the Anglican denomination. This is where his significance in South African history lies - a fact which is demonstrated by his social welfare activities over a wide front, his assistance in ending the Alexandra Bus Boycott, his opposition to Bantu Education, his encouragement in solving the African housing shortage, his support for those involved in the Treason Trial, and his championship of the victims of the Sharpeville Massacre.

His activities extended even beyond South Africa, through his attendance at World Council of Churches's meetings, leading discussions at the Lambeth Conferences of the Anglican Church in London and at the Anglican Congress in the United States of America. He also preached at many cathedrals in the United Kingdom and America. Few other church leaders have matched the experience he had gained before arriving in South Africa or his

level of involvement in every aspect of South African society. In Europe he had observed Nazism and Communism at first hand over a number of years. He had been connected with mine and dock workers in the United Kingdom, had sat on the Church of England Convocation and the Executive of the World Council of Churches, known famous Church leaders and theologians personally and experienced student life in the United States of America. It was inevitable that he should set himself in direct opposition to the Nationalist Party's extreme form of nationalism, with its fascist tendencies that arose out of a racist belief in White supremacy. Reeves's connections with the world-wide Church and Anglican communion ensured a wide audience for his views, and support, in most instances, in his stand against the authorities.

My dissertation places the important role played by Reeves within the mainstream of those South African Church histories, which are not separated from 'the broader history of their times'¹, the social, economic, political and other *milieux* in which they take place. Such contextualisation, Elphick states, is lacking in so much of South African religious history writing.² Had Reeves fulfilled only his Church responsibilities, his character and work would have required assessment in the context of society as a whole, to acquire validity according to Elphick's dictum. Where Reeves is concerned, however, the private and

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1. Richard Elphick, 'South African Christianity and the Historical Vision', *South African Historical Journal*, no. 26, May 1992, p.182.
 2. Richard Elphick, 'Religion in South African History: A Study in Denial' (paper presented to the African Studies Association, Seattle, Washington, 22 November 1992), p.1

public aspects of his life are so intertwined, that placing him within the broader context of South African life was inescapable. Elphick's plea for the private, inner consciousness approach and the public angle³ is partially satisfied in this study, although the emphasis does fall on the socio-political-economic aspects of Reeves's history. Reeves's fusion of all aspects of life was the direct result, as has already been stated in my dissertation, of his Christian conviction that life could not be compartmentalised. It was his ability to put his belief into practice that so dramatically sets him apart from others, and that necessitates his occupying a prominent place in South African history.

The final consequence in South Africa of Reeves's reconciliatory love was a fate suffered by no other Church leader in South Africa. In England, persecution continued at the hands of both religious and secular authorities. On his arrival there, Reeves was not given a bishopric.

During his time in South Africa there were those with whom he was less than popular. Often, it is said, he failed in the matter of compassion. Certain members of the clergy and administrators regarded him as autocratic.⁴ While, as a bishop of the Anglican Church, Reeves did hold considerable power within the Anglican Church hierarchy, he could have shown greater sympathy towards his clergy. A former archdeacon complains that, when he was still a rector under Reeves, the bishop did not allow

3. Elphick, 'Religion in South African History: A Study in Denial', p.6.

4. Alan Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection: A Centenary History* (London, S.C.M. Press, 1992), p.304.

him to move to a new parish after a term of seven years. On resignation, he was required to give six months' notice.⁵ A bishop who was a curate in Reeves's diocese writes:

He was a great champion of the under-dog, yet could be quite autocratic in his dealings with people and needlessly antagonized some who might have been his allies.⁶

An African priest was one of the latter. He was promised a post as rector and was told by his archdeacon at the last minute that the Bishop had decided that he was to remain an assistant. The reason the priest advances is that at a clerical meeting he had given a lecture on traditional customs, many of which, he felt, should be retained. It appears that Reeves disapproved and reneged on the priest's appointment. However, Reeves never spoke to him personally or explained his decision.⁷

Unlike Huddleston, who was demonstrative in his affections, Reeves was reserved. Although he could engage affably with strangers, there is no evidence that he had any close friends outside his immediate family circle.⁸ This was so both in England and South Africa. He was friendly to all, but intimate with none - which was the reason he valued his family so much.

Despite Reeves's deficiencies, Hylson-Smith, in his book on

⁵. Letter from the Revd Leo Alexander to F.D. Phillips, 1 November 1994.

⁶. Letter from Bishop Hugh Stevenson to F.D. Phillips, 22 September 1994.

⁷. Letter from the Revd Jacob Namu to F.D. Phillips, 5 September 1994.

⁸. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p.282.

prominent High Churchmen, after giving a resumé of Reeves's life, classes him among the few prophets of the Anglican Church, a prophet being one 'who fearlessly proclaimed God's purpose'.⁹ And God's purpose, according to Reeves, was to reconcile his people to himself and to one another; to unite all races in one harmonious society.

It might seem as if Reeves was unsuccessful in his mission, since apartheid laws proliferated in the next two decades, but like Huddleston and Scott, he persisted in preaching and writing against the evil consequences of forced separation. Moreover, the hatred generated towards Whites because of apartheid legislation was lessened by the presence of Reeves, a White religious leader who spoke out for African civil rights against unjust laws. In the eyes of the majority of Africans this invested Reeves with considerable prestige. His courage gave other Whites the strength to oppose the ideology of racist separation, which prevented the Nationalists from forming one consolidated White bloc against the other racial groups in South Africa.

The part played by Reeves in the eventual dismantling of apartheid can be likened to that of figures such as Paton and Suzman. Rich, in his review of Alexander's biography of Paton, reflects:

In many cases, liberal ideals became embodied in the lives of particular individuals, and scholars have much work to do in assessing the impact of such figures as Helen Suzman, Donald Woods and Desmond Tutu. In this

⁹. Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *High Churchmanship in the Church of England: From the Sixteenth to the Late Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1993), p.306.

context, the role of biography may well come into its own, organising as it does notions of moral example that stretch back to the Victorians. Peter Alexander's biography of Alan Paton is a good example of this approach, as it upholds Paton's life and career as exemplary in the fight against apartheid and racial discrimination.¹⁰

The present study has attempted to uphold Reeves's life and career in the same way. His impact, I believe, equals that of others such as Woods and Tutu, while his role in opposing the apartheid State from within the Church has been somewhat eclipsed by that of Huddleston. To a certain extent this began in 1980, after Reeves's death, when Huddleston took over the leadership of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. But, in the United Kingdom, even in 1961, the role Reeves had played in South Africa was overlooked. His escape to Swaziland to evade arrest was regarded as cowardly by the Archbishop of the Church of England, G.A. Fisher, and his successor, Archbishop A.M. Ramsey. (Huddleston, it is interesting to note was given the bishopric of Stepney and later became Bishop of Tanzania, and finally Archbishop of Madagascar and Oceania, where he gained great esteem in the eyes of the people.)

Reeves should be established in South African history as a man whose exceptional qualities of stability, boldness, tenacity, keen intellect and empathy for people in general, based on his strong faith in God, enabled him to assume the role of reconciler during the first crucial decade of the apartheid era. In an address delivered at King's College Chapel, the well known British social historian, Stedman Jones, advanced the view that:

¹⁰. Paul Rich, 'Whites against Apartheid,' *South African Historical Journal*, no. 32, May 1995, p.2.

Morality is not borne forward by nations, classes or the World Spirit, it is a project embarked upon by individuals in communities inspired in their actions by maxims of practical reason. Such a morality cannot be imposed by states, parties, churches or schools, but these institutions can certainly create positive frameworks and environments in which individuals can join in the unending project of building a moral community.¹¹

Reeves was one of those 'inspired individuals' who desired to bring about a morality of kindness between racially different people, with the support of the Church and the community. The Anglican Church and the society who failed to support him were his stumbling blocks. There were, however, many Africans who did. Since they were in the majority, his work has not been in vain.

Reeves's ministry in South Africa was thus, in both the short and the long term, a successful one. This is borne out by the moving tribute that appeared in a *Sunday Times* editorial after his eventual resignation as Bishop of Johannesburg:

The Bishop was one of the most courageous men this country has ever known. He saw quite plainly that his main duty was to fight for social justice: and to him the racial discrimination practised in South Africa was unjust. Therefore he fought racial discrimination. His Christian conscience did not allow him to stand aside and do nothing. It was a career carried on in the finest tradition of the Christian Church.¹²

¹¹. Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Faith in History', *History Workshop*, Issue 30, Autumn 1990, pp.66.

¹². *The Sunday Times*, 4 March 1961.

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