

**FROM ACQUIESCENCE TO DISSENT:  
BEYERS NAUDÉ, 1915 - 1977**

**by**

**COLLEEN GAYE RYAN CLUR**

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**SUPERVISOR: PROF K W SMITH**

**JOINT SUPERVISOR: PROF A M GRUNDLINGH**

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## **From acquiescence to dissent: Beyers Naudé, 1915 - 1977**

by C G R Clur

**Degree:** Master of Arts

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**Summary:** This dissertation is a biography of Beyers Naudé, from his birth in 1915 until 1977, focusing attention on the period 1963 to 1977, when he was director of the Christian Institute. The study examines how Naudé, whose father championed Afrikaans, became a leading minister in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). It examines the challenges which confronted Naudé over the DRC's support for apartheid. The dissertation documents the factors that led Naudé to reject apartheid and clash with the DRC, the Broederbond and the National Party government, culminating in his banning in 1977. It assesses the contribution he made to debates on apartheid in church and political circles and explains how he increasingly supported black initiatives to end white rule. The dissertation shows that Naudé's background and leadership qualities enabled him to have an impact on the church and political scene as apartheid became a burning issue at home and abroad.

**Key terms:** Beyers Naudé biography; Beyers Naudé's conflict with the Broederbond; Dutch Reformed Church and apartheid; Christian Institute; African Independent Churches Association; South African Institute of Race Relations; South African Council of Churches; World Council of Churches; Black Consciousness; banning of Beyers Naudé.

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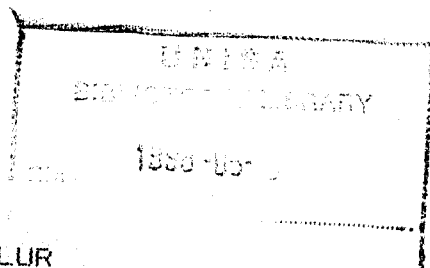
I declare that From acquiescence to dissent: Beyers Naudé, 1915 - 1977 is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



SIGNATURE  
(Mrs C G R Clur)

10 June 1997

DATE



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## Preface

Dr Christiaan Frederick Beyers Naudé, known widely as Beyers Naudé, has played an important role in political and church affairs in South Africa. Before 1960 he had silently acquiesced to apartheid, but after this period he became a thorn in the side of the National Party and the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, or Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) for publicly opposing their race and political policies. By 1977, when he was banned by the Vorster government and the Christian Institute (CI) was declared unlawful, he had become a symbol of resistance and was well known locally and internationally.

This study is primarily concerned with Naudé's work at the Christian Institute between 1963 and 1977, with particular focus on changes in his political thinking during this time. Before discussing sources on Naudé and the reasons for and aims of the dissertation, it is necessary to contextualise Naudé in the post-February 1990 era since the unbanning of the ANC. The drastic changes that have occurred in South African politics since 1990 have created a new context in which many public figures can now be assessed. For many years Naudé was regarded in established white political and church circles as extremely "radical". But since the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC), particularly since this organisation took over power in South Africa in May 1994, the controversy surrounding him has largely disappeared. There has, in fact, been a reconciliation between Naudé and the DRC, in the form of a public apology to him at the DRC's general synod in Pretoria in 1994 and an apology by an individual DRC presbytery for ostracising members who criticised apartheid.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Handelinge van die Algemene Sinode van die N G Kerk, Oktober 1994 and Presbytery of Stellenbosch, DRC, "A submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission at its Paarl

One of the features of President Nelson Mandela's early days of rule was a public commitment to reconciliation. Mandela's presidential theme during 1995 and 1996 was reconciliation and he met a wide range of white and black groups to bring home this point.<sup>2</sup> He always had a special word for "honourable" Afrikaners who opposed apartheid during National Party rule. Elements in the ANC did not always fully go along with the President in his reaching out to whites, but the organisation was more in accord with Mandela when he honoured Afrikaner opponents of apartheid such as Beyers Naudé.

Naudé was the only Afrikaner to be included in the talks which took place at Groote Schuur on 2 - 4 May 1990 shortly after the unbanning of the ANC and the release of Mandela and other high-profile political prisoners. Mandela and other ANC leaders, such as former ANC general secretary Walter Sisulu, have singled Naudé out for praise as a patriotic South African who is also an Afrikaner.<sup>3</sup> After his involvement in the talks at Groote Schuur and the subsequent signing of the ground-breaking Groote Schuur Minute, Naudé announced that while he fully supported the ANC, his calling as a minister prevented him from officially joining the organisation. From that point he dropped out of formal negotiations involving the ANC and the National Party government, but he continued to be widely consulted behind the scenes and was periodically

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session of 14 - 16 October 1996 in which an apology is given for supporting the ideology of apartheid; acknowledgement is made of "voices from among our own ranks" who were "suppressed or ignored... Others suffered defamation and found themselves being given bad names".

<sup>2</sup>Mandela has made numerous speeches emphasising reconciliation, and signalled his intention to follow such a policy in his inauguration speech on 10 May 1994 at the Union Buildings. Typical of this approach was his meeting with Afrikaner leaders, including Beyers Naudé, in Pretoria on 28 June 1995.

<sup>3</sup>Star, 20 April 1990.

consulted by the ANC in the months and years that followed.<sup>4</sup>

Carl Niehaus, a former ANC spokesman, MP and now an ambassador, has also stressed his Afrikaner roots; he is another figure the ANC can point to as an indication of its acceptance of whites and specifically Afrikaners. It is of significance that Niehaus, perhaps the most influential Afrikaner to serve on the ANC's National Executive Committee, has a close relationship with Naudé. Niehaus has regarded Naudé as a "father figure" and has consulted him frequently.<sup>5</sup> Further evidence of Naudé's stature in the ANC is that many of the organisation's regions nominated him as a candidate on their parliamentary lists before the 1994 elections, but his name was not put forward because he decided to stay out of parliamentary politics.<sup>6</sup>

Naudé's public identification of himself as an Afrikaner reinforces the argument that one of his important contributions has been that he has acted as a role model for white Afrikaners who rejected apartheid. Several "anti-apartheid" Afrikaners who were close to Naudé in the 1970s and 1980s confirmed in interviews with me that Naudé fulfilled this role for them.<sup>7</sup> Carl Niehaus has also stressed that Naudé urged him never to deny his Afrikaner roots.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps a more important contribution Naudé has made, as far as the ANC is concerned, is that the organisation had a

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<sup>4</sup>This information was supplied by ANC spokesman and MP Carl Niehaus in an interview on 7 May 1994 and was substantiated by Naudé in several discussions I conducted with him between 1990 and 1994.

<sup>5</sup>Interview with C Niehaus, May 1994 and C Niehaus, Fighting for hope, p 84.

<sup>6</sup>C Niehaus-Clur interview.

<sup>7</sup>Rev R Meyer, K Kritzing, C le Roux, G Lubbe, D van Zyl interviews with C Clur, 1988 and 1989.

<sup>8</sup>Niehaus, Fighting for hope, p 74.

high-profile Afrikaner that they could point to, to demonstrate their public commitment to non-racialism. Thus in the mid-1990s period of transition Naudé's major contribution has been that of a symbol of reconciliation.

With regard to sources on Naudé, a biography written by myself was published in 1990.<sup>9</sup>

It was the first detailed biographical work to be published on Naudé and my dissertation relies substantially on a portion of the book. Since then, Naudé has published his autobiography, which covers much of the same ground as my biography. He deals with the CI years in only 36 pages, but my dissertation covers this crucial period from a critical perspective and in greater detail.<sup>10</sup>

Other important recent publications are a Festschrift published to mark his 80th birthday, edited by Charles Villa-Vicencio and Carl Niehaus<sup>11</sup>, and another book by Villa-Vicencio reflecting on religion and politics in South Africa which includes a chapter on Naudé.<sup>12</sup> The latter two books contain biographical information largely based on an earlier essay written by Villa-Vicencio in the first Festschrift which he co-edited to mark Naudé's 70th birthday, published in 1985.<sup>13</sup>

Naudé is mentioned in several other books, but an earlier work stands out. Edited by Peter Randall, it consists of a short sketch of his life written by Randall and other essays by Peter Walshe, Denis Hurley and Charles Villa-Vicencio which all shed light on issues which shaped

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<sup>9</sup>C Ryan, Beyers Naudé: pilgrimage of faith.

<sup>10</sup>C F B Naudé, My land van hoop: die lewe van Beyers Naudé.

<sup>11</sup>C Villa-Vicencio and C Niehaus (eds), Many cultures, one nation: festschrift for Beyers Naudé.

<sup>12</sup>C Villa-Vicencio, A spirit of hope: conversations on politics, religion and values.

<sup>13</sup>C Villa-Vicencio and J W de Gruchy (eds), Resistance and hope: South African essays in honour of Beyers Naudé.



Naudé's thinking.<sup>14</sup> Randall's book, intended as a tribute to Naudé, was published at a time when Naudé was still banned and so the author was unable to quote his subject directly. His essay nevertheless succeeds in highlighting some of the major points in Naudé's life. Randall made his taped interviews with Naudé available to me and where I quote from these interviews this is acknowledged.

The 1985 Festschrift on Naudé, edited by Charles Villa-Vicencio and John de Gruchy, was published shortly after Naudé was unbanned. This book includes a section of biographical information, as well as essays on Afrikaans Reformed Churches and the conflicts involving the churches in South Africa. Like Randall's work, the main purpose of the book was to bestow honour on Naudé and the biographical essay, while perceptively written, covers much of the same ground as that detailed by Randall.

When I began my own biography in 1987 I relied on Randall and Villa-Vicencio's early essays as a launch pad to provide a much more detailed examination of his life. However, the more recent works published make it important that my dissertation focus more sharply on a specific aspect of his life that has not been fully covered in these works. As mentioned earlier, Naudé's own autobiography has little detail on the CI years. I have chosen to focus on Naudé's CI years for two reasons. Firstly, I deal with them in more detail and in a more critical way than has been done in any of the works mentioned above. Secondly, they were crucial years in terms of Naudé's change of political stance. When he left the Dutch Reformed Church in 1963 he had rejected apartheid and had left the Afrikaner Broederbond. He was never considered a liberal in the

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<sup>14</sup>P Randall (ed), Not without honour: tribute to Beyers Naudé.

context that it is generally used in South African politics, but in broad political terms he was close to liberal thinking prevailing in the 1960s, ie he still adopted a paternalistic view of what he thought blacks wanted. The years at the Christian Institute coincided with a more radical development in his thinking; in 1963 he regarded the ANC as a radical, illegal organisation, but by 1977 he was ready to make common cause with its aims and objectives.

One of the reasons that Naudé is important in South Africa is because he demonstrated to blacks that Afrikaners, and whites, can change. This crucial point was made by former South African Council of Churches general secretary Frank Chikane in his foreword in my original biography. In the many interviews I conducted with prominent black associates of Naudé during my research, this point was made again and again.<sup>15</sup> Naudé also played a crucial role in facilitating early discussions between whites and the ANC in the 1980s, a role made possible by the acceptance he had gained among black South Africans in the liberation struggle.<sup>16</sup> I believe it will contribute to a greater understanding of how he came to be able to play a facilitating role, and how he came to be accepted as a symbol of reconciliation, if we more closely analyse how he came to make the political shifts which occurred during his years as director of the Christian Institute.

Naudé is mentioned in numerous other books on South Africa, but three other important sources can be highlighted. They are John de Gruchy's book on how the South African churches reacted

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<sup>15</sup>F Chikane, "Foreword" in Ryan, *Beyers Naudé: pilgrimage of faith*, p vii and H Adonnis, P Moatshe, H Ngada, E Thema, F Chikane interviews with C Clur, 1987 and 1988.

<sup>16</sup>F Van Zyl Slabbert interview with C Clur, 1988.

to apartheid<sup>17</sup>, A Luckhoff's analysis of the World Council of Churches' 1960 Cottesloe meeting<sup>18</sup> and Peter Walshe's book on the Christian Institute.<sup>19</sup> These three books deal with issues and events in which Naudé was closely involved and they laid important groundwork for anyone wishing to delve further into Naudé's life. However, none of these books devoted much space to Naudé's life as such and so I found that there was a great deal more research to be done. In the light of my focus on Naudé's years at the Christian Institute, Walshe's book in particular was a valuable source. It is more of a broad history on the CI than a narrow focus on Naudé and I thus feel justified in further examining his work during these years.

A problem with regard to research on Beyers Naudé was the confiscation and apparent loss of the Christian Institute's (CI) archives when it was banned. All its assets and property, including the CI's archives and some of Naudé's private correspondence, were seized. Subsequent enquiries by Professor Villa-Vicencio about the whereabouts of the documentation elicited the response from the police that the material had been destroyed. I have made new inquiries to the Ministry of Safety and Security and the police are unable to shed any light on the whereabouts of this material. In spite of this loss, I have been able to gather a great deal of information.

I consulted Ministry of Justice documents pertaining to the banning of Naudé in 1977 at the National Archives Repository in Pretoria. Although documents dated before 1976 are now open to the public, I could trace no useful information for this period. Fortunately I traced a file dating to the 1979-1980 period and was given permission to study these documents. They contain very

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<sup>17</sup>J W de Gruchy, The church struggle in South Africa.

<sup>18</sup>A H Luckhoff, Cottesloe.

<sup>19</sup>P Walshe, Church versus state: the case of the Christian Institute.

interesting information shedding light on the reasons for the banning of Naudé and they also show there was a difference of opinion in security circles on whether his ban should have remained in force.

Naudé has been the subject of many local and international newspaper reports. At the height of Naudé's conflict with the Dutch Reformed Church in the 1960s his activities were closely monitored by both English and Afrikaans newspapers. The Rand Daily Mail, The Star and Die Vaderland, to name three major newspaper sources, all reported on him extensively and these reports, although often superficial, were of use when I was constructing an initial skeleton of his life.

Naudé has also been interviewed for film documentaries and video programmes on South Africa. The most valuable of these documentaries was made by Worldwide Documentaries in 1986.<sup>20</sup> The documentary deals with Naudé's life in an uncritical manner; however, it contains a great deal of footage in which he tells his own story. But as is often the case, the filmmakers edited the interviews extensively. Full transcripts of the interviews were made available to me and were of help as an additional source. Another television documentary was screened in 1995 on SABC TV on the life of Naudé, produced by J H P Serfontein.<sup>21</sup> It contains details of Naudé's activities during his banned years, but with regard to his earlier life it covers no new ground.

Naudé has made available to me a number of his personal letters, speeches and other personal

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<sup>20</sup>A cry of reason: Beyers Naudé, an Afrikaner speaks out.

<sup>21</sup>Beyers Naudé: pilgrimage of an Afrikaner prophet.

Christian Institute documents from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The documents cannot be described as complete in the light of the state's confiscation of much other material. However, the documents do include some important material which I made use of in my dissertation.

Unpublished archival sources consulted include the Fred van Wyk Papers AD 1752 at the Department of Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand. This collection contains a large section on the Christian Institute and the documents include primary sources on the planning of the Cottesloe conference and on the conference itself. There are some important documents, some handwritten by Naudé, which show his thinking during this pivotal event. The collection includes primary sources on the establishment of the Christian Institute and correspondence between Naudé and Van Wyk. The Van Wyk collection of documents was probably my most single valuable source of documents.

Other archival sources I consulted included the full minutes of various synods of the Dutch Reformed Church, Transvaal Dutch Reformed Church and Southern Transvaal Dutch Reformed Church. I also consulted the Southern Transvaal Synodical Commission documents pertaining to the mid-1960s and studied a variety of church publications at various libraries.

Pro Veritate, a journal co-founded by Naudé, was published from May 1962 to September 1977. He was the first editor of this journal which was intended to stimulate debate on theological, racial and political issues. Although not the official mouthpiece of the Christian Institute, it largely served this purpose. In later years Naudé relinquished editorship, but Pro Veritate continued to publish Naudé's articles and they chart the changes that occurred in his thinking over the years. I found it essential to study Naudé's writings because they reflected his actual position at the time.

Whenever I used information from interviews conducted with him later, I compared it with what he had said or written at the time.

I also consulted issues of Die Kerkbode, the official mouthpiece of the Dutch Reformed Church. For many years the journal was edited by Dr Andries Treurnicht, who represented the views of the extreme right wing in the DRC in the 1960s. A strident and consistent critic of Naudé and the CI, Die Kerkbode launched many attacks on Naudé. Naudé often replied to these attacks in Pro Veritate. A comparative study of the two journals was an interesting way of following the argument over the issue of biblical justification of apartheid, which was at the core of the dispute between the CI and the DRC.

In the 1970s Naudé was influenced by the Black Consciousness (BC) philosophy. I consulted numerous sources on the BC movement, both primary and secondary publications. I also interviewed Barney Pityana, a close associate of Steve Biko in the 1970s and a man involved in the Black Community Programmes, an organisation partly sponsored by the Christian Institute. The conflicts and tensions in the relationships between the CI and the BC groupings are an important theme of this dissertation. It was necessary to explore this issue far more closely than I had done in my original biography on Naudé.

Before concluding, this preface asks how useful biography is to historians. There has long been debate on “the hero in history”, as Sidney Hook refers to it. Hook examines this issue and contends that even social determinists acknowledge the role of important individuals in shaping events. There is no denying this, but there is still the question of whether people like Naudé are truly heroes or, especially in the modern context, merely creations of the media. As Hook points

out, society seeks out “heroes”, giving them names such as saviours or prophets, particularly at a time of “sharp crisis in social and political affairs”.<sup>22</sup> Naudé and the CI received a great deal of attention from the media, the government, and local and overseas churches because he spoke out at a time when there was no meaningful Afrikaner dissent towards apartheid. It is true that his fame was partly due to a great deal of media interest, but his voice was significant because he actually did dare to step outside the fold. Naudé was a white Afrikaner who saw the error of apartheid long before most of his peers were ready to question this ideology; he played an unusual role in South African politics and this made him a person of note and a worthwhile figure of study.

A related issue is the question, also raised by determinists, of the justification of “glorifying” or focusing on individuals to the detriment of “the people”. This philosophical question is perhaps even more relevant in South Africa at present than has previously been the case, since we are at a juncture when “mass suffering” is being probed in forums such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings. But the reality is that history is not just about the masses, about societal, economic and political systems; it is also about “great” men and women. Leaders, and Naudé certainly was a leader, have a role in the telling of history because their lives have an effect on society. Charles Villa-Vicencio has said that Naudé is one of the “great people” of South African history because he personified the spirit of his times but also anticipated future trends; he was regarded as a prophet because he was ahead of his people, but not so far ahead that he was lost to them.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>S Hook, The hero in history: a study in limitation and possibility, pp 12 - 13.

<sup>23</sup>C Villa Vicencio, “A life of resistance and hope” in Villa-Vicencio and De Gruchy (eds), Resistance and hope, p 12 and C Villa-Vicencio-C Clur interview, 1988.

Two important questions must be satisfactorily addressed before a biography can be said to have any value in the field of history: Has the work presented the facts accurately; and has it succeeded, through interpretation and selection, in adequately illuminating and explaining the subject's life?

The above aims are central to the biographer and he or she must be aware of potential problems which can hinder in trying to achieve these objectives. At the outset it is important for the biographer to acknowledge his subjectivity. All historians grapple with this problem, yet it is of particular relevance to life writers. No two biographies on the same person will reflect the subject in exactly the same way and so, however the biographer may struggle to maintain his neutrality, he will unavoidably leave his own imprint on the central character.<sup>24</sup>

Allied to this is the question of selection, since the biographer may choose to highlight particular events or achievements while ignoring or minimising others. The biographer must cover the most important events or "facts" as the life of the subject unfolds, but where the difficulty comes in is in the relationship between the events themselves and the meanings attached to them. Interpretation, like selection, is a critical issue, and once again it must be acknowledged that interpretation in biography depends on the qualities of both the subject and the biographer.<sup>25</sup>

It has been argued that most biographers, at the outset of their studies, already have a

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<sup>24</sup>H Kuper, "Biography as interpretation: eleventh annual Hans Wolff memorial lecture", Part II, p 43.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid, pp 29-30.



well-developed idea about their subjects and seek evidence to support this view.<sup>26</sup> This may sometimes be the case but the biographer must keep an open mind and let the information he uncovers guide him, rather than his own preconceived ideas. I tried to be conscious of all these problems as I researched Naudé's life.

The problems of subjectivity must be tackled, yet the biographer can still succeed in creating a balanced portrait if he or she does a thorough study of all available sources, weighing up their value and reliability. Written sources are vital, but if one is tackling the life of a contemporary figure, then personal interviews are often just as important.<sup>27</sup> The great advantage of conducting interviews is that the biographer can ask specific questions; interviewees, when asked to concentrate their minds on a subject or issue, often volunteer extremely interesting and useful information which would otherwise remain undiscovered. I conducted interviews extensively for this dissertation, both in South Africa as well as in England, Sweden and the Netherlands. All interviews were taped and fully transcribed.

Interviews with the subject of the biography, if this is possible, are also very helpful. But the biographer must strive to maintain some distance to avoid writing a "hagiography". Whether the character is living or dead, the biographer must be wary of being "taken over" by the subject.<sup>28</sup> I conducted extensive interviews with Naudé between 1987 and 1989 and have remained in contact with him since then. I naturally was guided by him in what he regarded as the important

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<sup>26</sup> I B Nadel, Biography: fiction, fact and form, p 10.

<sup>27</sup> U O'Connor, Biographers and the art of biography, p 15.

<sup>28</sup> L Edel, "Biography and the science of man", in A M Friedson (ed), New directions in biography, p 9.

milestones in his life but I continually strived to maintain some distance. I found the fact that I was simultaneously conducting interviews with many other people with differing views was a useful way of trying to keep a critical attitude towards my subject. With regard to the milestones he identified, I largely agreed, at the end of the study, that most of these were important. However, my research of other sources and interviews with other people enabled me to uncover additional events and issues that were also significant in his life. Interestingly, the one subject on which he was silent was the symbolic role he has come to serve. It was largely in interviews with other sources that I identified this aspect of Naudé's contribution.

There could be criticism that this study relies too much on oral evidence, from Naudé and others whose memories may at best be faulty and at worst be selective; I believe this is unfounded in the light of the fact that wherever possible I cross-checked information I received from other sources. The main thrust of this study, which is from 1963 to 1977, relies far more on a wide range of primary and secondary written sources than merely on interviews with Naudé. However, interviews with Naudé and many of his colleagues from those days enabled me to sharpen and contextualise his life and work.

This dissertation, then, is a good example of modern history that relies in part on oral evidence. In the light of the gaps that exist because of the loss of some written sources on Naudé and the CI, I felt it was essential to conduct many interviews with relevant people. A major criticism of studies based on interviews could be that the historian recounts a story as the subjects see it in hindsight. This raises the issue of memory. In interviews, was Beyers recounting the past accurately? Was he retelling a story that had a life of its own, that had, almost, the makings of a legend? John Tosh raises the issue of memory in the context of using oral sources, pointing out

the danger of oral accounts having been “constantly reworked to articulate their meaning more clearly, and sometimes to change it”. The longer the gap between the original event and its retelling, the greater the potential for distortion. As Tosh notes:

“From the historian’s point of view, the great merit of traditions pertaining, say, to the lifetime of the grandparents of today’s elders is that the process of abstraction has not yet gone very far: details which meant a great deal to the original participants may have been dropped, and the stories may have been affected by the perspective of hindsight, but the exploits of named individuals and their social world remain clearly visible.”<sup>29</sup>

These are relevant questions, but I believe I have overcome them by concentrating not solely on oral evidence. In general, I did not make use of my interview material to verify facts and dates, but rather to gain an understanding of the motives of Naudé and his colleagues for a particular course of action. A final point in this regard is that at the outset of my research, Peter Randall, made available taped interviews he had conducted with Naudé in 1982, some six years before I began my research. I thus had relatively “fresh” memories obtained by Randall on which to base my questions. In general I found Naudé to have had a very good memory, especially when prompted with questions I obtained from researching other sources. I tried to be constantly aware that certain issues would have more prominence in his mind than others.

A final point to be made in defence of oral history is that there is a tradition of some excellent historical writing using this mode of research in South Africa. Gail Gerhart, in several works, and especially in her book examining the development of black nationalism in South Africa since 1943, acknowledges in her preface that much of the information and interpretation was drawn from interviews with South Africans carried out between 1968 and 1973. In addition, she made

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<sup>29</sup>J Tosh, The pursuit of history: aims, methods and new directions in the study of modern history, pp 223 - 225.

use of transcribed interviews conducted by Gwendolen Carter, Thomas Karis and Sheridan John conducted between 1963 and 1964.<sup>30</sup> Her study, however, also was based on numerous traditional written sources, and it is her ability to weigh up all the evidence, both written and oral, that enabled her to produce a worthwhile study. I have tried to maintain this principle, of having a critical attitude towards all sources, in my dissertation.

It is not enough to chronicle the events of a person's life or to spell out his achievements without depicting his personality<sup>31</sup>, since it is the person's unique characteristics which make him a worthwhile subject of study. Again, I found interviews to be extremely useful in this respect; by repeating the same questions to many interviewees one is often able to extract a broad picture of the subject's personality. In my interaction with Naudé I also naturally developed my own impressions of his personality.

Allied to the issue of personality is the more controversial practice of delving into the psyche of the subject. While some biographers regard it as imperative to give a detailed psychological perspective<sup>32</sup>, psychological interpretations may prove difficult to substantiate. This does not, however, preclude the biographer from searching for early influences which may have shaped the subject's life and from attempting to broadly identify important psychological and moral forces. I found that interviews with Naudé on the issue of early influences, and particularly discussions with some of his other family members, helpful in this regard.

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<sup>30</sup>G M Gerhart, Black power in South Africa: the evolution of an ideology, pp vii - viii.

<sup>31</sup>O' Connor, Biographers and the art of biography, p 13.

<sup>32</sup>Nadel, Biography: fiction, fact and form, p 6.

This dissertation, in chapter one, deals briefly with the first half of Beyers Naudé's life, from his birth in 1915 until the launch of the Christian Institute in 1963. Early influences and the factors that led to his initial rejection of apartheid are dealt with in the chapter. The remaining chapters focus more closely on his work from 1963 until closure of the Christian Institute and the serving of a banning order on him in 1977. The focus in these chapters centres closely on answering the question: how did he continue to adjust his political thinking in this period? What were the factors that led him to broadly support the Black Consciousness groupings in the 1970s? By answering this question it becomes far easier to grasp why he came to fully support and promote the ANC after he was banned in 1977. The seeming contradiction, that he first supported Black Consciousness and later the Freedom Charter-supporting ANC, is explained by the fact that the BC organisations in the 1970s were the dominant black political force, while from the 1980s the ANC, and later the UDF, were at the forefront of the black liberation struggle. From the mid-1970s he pragmatically supported the black organisations mostly likely to succeed in the battle for liberation.

One of the most important themes throughout this dissertation is that while his political thinking evolved quickly, he always regarded himself as an Afrikaner. There are a large number of conservative white Afrikaners who may still argue that Naudé relinquished his claim to being an Afrikaner after his break with his church in the 1960s; he nevertheless always regarded himself as one. As he grew to believe that apartheid was indefensible, he never abandoned his commitment to Afrikaans, and in the early years of the Christian Institute I will show how he and his colleagues concentrated on trying to win over members of the DRC.

The next part of the dissertation chronicles and examines Naudé's almost lone battle against the

united forces of the National Party, the Afrikaner Broederbond and the DRC; his failure to influence his church significantly caused him and the Christian Institute to work more closely with English-speaking Christians who were members of the CI. However, in the late 1960s, while there were individuals in the English-speaking churches who opposed apartheid, the rank and file church membership did not actively support the activities of the CI and the SA Council of Churches. This lead me to conclude that Naudé was regarded by most whites, not just Afrikaners, as a highly controversial figure.

The last chapters deal with Naudé's encounter with black groupings such as the African Independent Churches and later the Black Consciousness (BC) movement. The relationship between the CI and the student leaders was often strained and uncomfortable. BC organisations relied on Naudé and the CI for funding, but there is evidence that many in the BC organisations did not fully trust the CI, and dismissed Naudé and other CI figures as "liberals". In spite of these tensions Naudé's political convictions became more radical in the 1970s as he led the CI to a closer identification with the black struggle. It was therefore not surprising that when the Vorster government clamped down on the BC movements in 1977, it also banned Naudé and closed down the Christian Institute.

In conclusion, why a dissertation on Beyers Naudé? I have shown that while there have been other books written on Naudé's life, these have not provided sufficient detail and have usually chronicled his activities in an uncritical manner. In this dissertation I have tried to critically explain his political transformation from 1963 until 1977 and interpret his actions, also to assess the impact he has had in South African church and political life since 1960. His influence on various organisations is still being felt. He has often been described as a prophet or a person ahead of his

time. His recognition, for example, of the inevitability of black rule and the pivotal role that the ANC would play in SA politics has certainly been proven correct. I hope that this biographical study will make a valuable contribution to South African history.

### Acknowledgements

I am very grateful for the help and support I received while undertaking this study. My subject, Beyers Naudé, and his wife Ilse were generous in the extreme, agreeing to numerous interviews and encouraging me to freely and critically pursue this exploration. My thanks go to the many other people whom I interviewed. I would also like to make special mention of Peter Randall and Bob Bilheimer, both of whom gave me access to their original interview tapes and transcripts with Beyers Naudé. I would like to acknowledge and thank the Swedish Ecumenical Council which provided me with a grant, enabling me to conduct research outside South Africa. Some of the material in this dissertation originally appeared in my book, Beyers Naudé: pilgrimage of faith. Although I made many changes for this dissertation, I am still indebted to Russell Martin, my editor at David Philip Publishers, for helping me lay a firm foundation. Many people helped me gather information and gave me excellent advice, and I would particularly like to mention Brian Brown, Horst Kleinschmidt, Veronica Boer, Wolfram Kistner, Margaret Nash, Zenaide Jones, Charles Villa-Vicencio, Alex Ball and Geoff Clark. I would like to express sincere thanks to my husband, Neill Clur, and my mother, Phyllis Ryan, for their unwavering moral and practical support. I am also grateful to all the staff at the Unisa library, and especially to the Unisa subject librarian for history, Mary-Lynn Suttie, for her efficiency, sympathy and help. Finally, I am indebted to my promoter, Professor Ken Smith, and joint promoter, Professor Albert Grundlingh. They have been supportive, patient and rigorous teachers. Without their guidance, this dissertation would not have been possible.

## **1 Early influences and DRC years**

For the first 45 years of his life Christiaan Frederick Beyers Naudé's first loyalty was to his Afrikaner people. He rejoiced when the National Party came to power in 1948 and did not question when it began implementing the political policy of apartheid, which consolidated segregation and white domination that had long been a feature of South African society. But 12 years later the Dutch Reformed Church minister concluded that support for apartheid was incompatible with his faith, and so began a long struggle with the ruling white establishment.

This chapter is devoted to the first years of his life. Beyers Naudé's early story has been well-chronicled by several writers, but it is important to survey the major features in his early life for an understanding of his actions during the Christian Institute years of 1963 to 1977, which is the prime focus of this dissertation. This chapter also examines the theological and political developments in the DRC which led it to support apartheid.

Beyers Naudé has identified a number of important themes in his own life. One does not necessarily have to accept his views, but they are a useful starting point in trying to understand his life and the contribution he made to South African history. Firstly, as stated in the preface, he always saw himself as an Afrikaner and this chapter highlights aspects of his traditional Afrikaner nationalistic background. Later chapters will explain why Naudé, in his political struggle, always sought to be identified as an Afrikaner.

Secondly, he believed that his Christian commitment provided an answer to understanding why he challenged apartheid. The emphasis placed on mission and evangelism by the Dutch Reformed



Church and by ministers like his father strongly influenced Naudé. One of his initial concerns about apartheid was that it could hinder the DRC's attempts to minister to the black community. But later, as he became better acquainted with the complexities and hardships associated with apartheid, he felt that it was unchristian not to speak up.

The third point, not remarked on by Naudé but one nevertheless generally accepted about his life, is that he became a rebel among his people. What enabled him to challenge the Afrikaner establishment while many of his colleagues stood silent in the 1960s and 1970s? That is a complex question. It can partly be answered by highlighting aspects of his character which showed him to be rebellious as a young person. Therefore, this chapter also focuses closely on these aspects of his character.

Naudé's parents were closely involved in the struggle for Afrikaner political freedom. His father, Jozua Francois Naudé, also a Dutch Reformed Church minister, championed the cause of Afrikaans and Afrikaners throughout his life.<sup>1</sup> After completing school, he attended the Normaal Kollege in Cape Town where at the age of 20 he qualified as a teacher. His first post was in the small village of Riebeeck-West and during this time, while visiting the Van Huyssteen family at Wittedrif, near Plettenburg Bay, he met his future bride. Adriana Johanna Zondag van Huyssteen, or Ada, was only 15 years old at the time, but their meeting led to a lengthy courtship and eventual marriage in 1906.<sup>2</sup> Ada, who studied teaching at the Huguenot College in Wellington, appears to have been a highly strung woman. Like her husband, she believed in the justness of the

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<sup>1</sup>M Jordaan, Jozua Naudé as kultuurdraer en kultuurleier, p 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, pp 10-20.

Afrikaner's cause and was given to expressing strong nationalistic sentiments.<sup>3</sup>

Sharp contrasts have often been drawn between Jozua Naudé, the zealous Afrikaner nationalist, and his son Beyers, held up as one who "betrayed the *volk*". In spite of the differences in the causes they espoused, there were similarities between father and son; both were deeply religious, with strong convictions and a sense of justice, not afraid to go against the stream and to risk criticism when they felt their principles were at stake. Jozua displayed great energy and drive, and piled on himself numerous commitments and responsibilities, a characteristic also recognisable in Beyers Naudé.

Jozua was strongly committed to the DRC's evangelism and fervently believed in the need to spread the gospel. He also agreed with the view then emerging that God had created the Afrikaner nation, like the Israelites of old, for the purpose of spreading His Word, and for keeping the Christian faith alive on the dark continent of Africa.<sup>4</sup> Jozua believed that for Afrikaners to fulfil their destiny, their language and culture had to be set free and allowed to develop. With the outbreak of the South African war in October 1899, Jozua Naudé, living in the South African Republic, resigned his post as a teacher and joined the war effort as unofficial pastor to the Boer forces. Jozua Naudé kept detailed notebooks throughout the war, some of which he buried and later dug up and used when he wrote a book in Dutch on his own experiences and on the campaigns of his close wartime friends, generals Jan Kemp and Christiaan Frederik Beyers. As

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<sup>3</sup>C F B Naudé and R O'Brien Geldenhuys interviews with C Clur, 1988.

<sup>4</sup>P 69 Sermons by Jozua Naudé 1920 - 1930; diverse sermons, Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk Archives, Cape Town: Private Paper J F Naudé. In several of these sermons, Naudé compares the Afrikaners to the Israelites.

the war dragged on, Jozua realised that the struggle of the Afrikaner *volk* would not be an easy one, but he believed that ultimately his people would triumph. He described this vision in his book: one day, riding alone through the veld on his horse, he stopped to rest at a small waterfall on the Tugela River. As he watched the trickling water he thought about the long battle which lay before the Afrikaner people. Upstream, the river was merely three little rivulets meandering through a shallow river bed but, as the streams neared the waterfall, they flowed into a big rock pool and then, joined as one, tumbled powerfully down. It struck Jozua that just as the waterfall had only become a force when the separate streams had been joined, so, too, the Afrikaner people would only triumph when they were united.<sup>5</sup> These metaphysical musings of an Afrikaner nationalist are enlightening in that they show an almost romantic or idealistic side to Jozua Naudé. It was a characteristic his son also showed in his idealistic commitment to a non-racial South Africa in the era when the odds seemed heavily stacked against an end to white domination.

But by 1902 the Boers were close to surrender. The formal treaty in which the Transvaal and Free State surrendered their independence was signed on 31 May 1902, but not before a bitter debate among the Boers. Jozua Naudé was one of the *bittereinders* who personally told General Jan Smuts that he could not agree to surrendering.<sup>6</sup> Again, it is possible to draw a parallel between Jozua Naudé's refusal to surrender against all odds and his son's refusal to surrender his beliefs, even when faced with the wrath of the Afrikaner establishment.

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<sup>5</sup>J F Naudé, Vechten en vluchten van Beyers en Kemp, p 55.

<sup>6</sup>Jozua Naudé jun interview with C Clur, 1988. A letter written by Jozua Naudé, addressed to his two sons, Jozua and Beyers, as well as to his son-in-law, F E O'Brien Geldenhuys, dated 31 May 1948, rejoices in the National Party's victory and recounts how Smuts tried in vain to win him over to surrender.

The war and the ultimate defeat of the two Boer Republics profoundly affected Jozua Naudé and he believed a spirit of unity had emerged among Afrikaners throughout South Africa. He dedicated the rest of his life to the struggle to regain their independence and was at the forefront of the Afrikaner nationalists' struggle for freedom. Jozua completed his theological studies at the DRC's Theological Seminary in Stellenbosch in 1909 and worked briefly at the Goedemoed work colony, established by the church in the Orange Free State as a refuge for poor, dispossessed white tenant farmers; he moved to the DRC in Roodepoort in 1911, shortly after the unification of the four former British colonies of the Cape, Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal in 1910. There were deep divisions among Afrikaners, who were split between the policy of conciliation as espoused by the first prime minister of the Union of South Africa, General Louis Botha, and the pro-Afrikaner sentiments of General J B M Hertzog; the Naudés strongly supported Hertzog. Jozua Naudé also sided with the rebels in the 1914 rebellion and was close to General Beyers, who drowned while attempting to evade capture by crossing the Vaal River. It was during the turmoil of the First World War, on 10 May 1915, that the Naudés' youngest son was born at the Roodepoort parsonage. He was named Christiaan Frederick Beyers, in honour of General Beyers.<sup>7</sup>

Beyers, his older brother and sisters (Ada bore two sons and four daughters) grew up in a home where broader community and political issues were often discussed. As a *dominee*, Jozua commanded great respect in the community and people streamed to him with their problems. Thus Beyers Naudé came from a home where there was a focus on broader issues, not just personal family concerns. As an adult, and particularly after the changes that occurred in his thinking in the 1960s, conversation in Beyers Naudé's home was similarly often focused on political issues.

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<sup>7</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview and P Randall (ed), Not without honour: tribute to Beyers Naudé, p 3.

Jozua Naudé was also involved in the struggle for the recognition of his own language at a time when English was still favoured in the courts, in schools, in the civil service and business, and when Dutch, and not Afrikaans, was the official language of the DRC. At successive synods Jozua put forward the case for Afrikaans. He pointed out that Afrikaans, not Dutch, was the language of the people and that the time had come for the church to recognise it. The arguments made by him and others eventually won the day and in 1916 the synods of the Orange Free State and Transvaal accepted that Afrikaans should have the same status as Dutch in the church. In 1919, after a motion introduced by Jozua at the General Synod of the DRC, Afrikaans was accorded the same status as Dutch throughout the church.<sup>8</sup> Jozua played a prominent role in fighting for Afrikaans in schools, starting in Roodepoort where he triumphed in pressuring the authorities to create an Afrikaans-medium school which opened in July 1918. It was the first school in the Transvaal where the medium of instruction was exclusively Afrikaans - an important victory for the nationalist cause.<sup>9</sup>

Jozua was also at the forefront of the movement which led, in 1918, to the founding of the Afrikaner Broederbond (Brotherhood of Afrikaners). It was to be a service organisation "for the reconciliation of all Afrikaners in a single brotherhood - an organisation in which Afrikaners could find each other in the midst of great confusion and disunity and be able to work together for the survival of the Afrikaner people in South Africa and the promotion of its interests". Jozua Naudé was elected its first president. In 1920, a constitution was adopted and it was decided that the

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<sup>8</sup>P B van der Watt, Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, 1905-1975, p 307.

<sup>9</sup>Jordaan, Jozua Naudé, p 84.

Broederbond should become a secret body.<sup>10</sup> Highly selective about who could join, the Broederbond cultivated the cream of Afrikaners within its ranks. Beyers Naudé later joined the Broederbond and his traumatic break with the movement in the 1960s was a turning point in his life.

In 1919, at the same time as the Broederbond was establishing itself, Jozua accepted an invitation to the eastern Transvaal town of Piet Retief, where the family lived for two years. The Naudé family moved to Graaff-Reinet in the winter of 1921 when Jozua Naudé took up the post as senior minister; he contributed in advancing the nationalist cause and helped win recognition for Afrikaans both in the church and in the classroom. Jozua Naudé remained in Graaff-Reinet for the remainder of his life and so it was in this town that Beyers Naudé spent his formative years.

How then can we begin to explain the seeming contradictions in Beyers Naudé's views, which by the 1960s were at odds with the Afrikaner nationalist tradition in which he was raised? I believe we need to separate the "Afrikaner" from the "nationalist". The Afrikaner cultural tradition - where the home language was Afrikaans and all friends and family were Afrikaners, where the religion was Reformed and where the father was the clear head of the family - was something he was proud of and never attempted to deny. As a young man he also supported the prevailing views of Afrikaner nationalism, and identified with his community's struggle for political freedom and power. As we briefly outline his young life, we begin to see a picture of a very intelligent young man with a natural propensity to question. As a teenager he even became something of a rebel. Yet he could only become a true rebel against nationalism when he was sufficiently

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<sup>10</sup>I Wilkins and H Strydom, The Super-Afrikaners, inside the Afrikaner Broederbond , pp 35 - 52, Commission of Inquiry into Secret Organisations, p 4 and Jordaan, Jozua Naudé, p 183.

informed about the errors that led the DRC and Afrikaner society in attempting to find Biblical justification for apartheid.

As a child Naudé was energetic and sociable, quite different from his older brother Jozua, nicknamed Joos, who was quiet, introverted and often plagued with illness. Ada kept Joos out of school for a year because of ill-health and, from their third year of school, the two brothers were in the same class. In this way the boys almost became "twins", with Beyers taking the leading role, at both school and in their games.<sup>11</sup> He began developing leadership qualities as a very young person.

Jozua and Ada shared two ideals which dominated the Naudé home: they had a deep, unshakable faith in God and felt strongly about the future of their volk. They adhered to old-style pietism, and every morning and evening they held Bible reading and prayer. The children had to attend at least one church service on a Sunday. Ada Naudé made sure her children lived sheltered, almost secluded lives. Her two sons were not allowed to play contact sports like rugby, but in his teens Beyers became so insistent that Ada reluctantly allowed him to play rugby.

As a child, Naudé saw that his parents concerned themselves mostly with their white Afrikaner parishioners, but they also extended a helping hand in the form of overnight shelter to destitute white tenant families who moved from the country to the towns in search of work. Naudé was moved by the hopelessness of these people, and as an adult he came to feel the same empathy for the impoverished black people of South Africa. He said of his contact with poor whites:

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<sup>11</sup>R O'Brien Gelendhuys- Clur interview and J Naudé-Clur interview.

“Through that experience my social consciousness was formed: of hunger, of poverty, of people in situations of dire distress, of the helplessness of people who experienced forces or events over which they were powerless, either to control or to direct; this left a very deep impression on my mind.”<sup>12</sup>

Beyers Naudé made this point frequently in interviews when asked to explain his concern for the suffering of others. There may have been other factors which led him to challenge apartheid which he could not pinpoint. But judged by his later actions, where at considerable sacrifice to himself he broke with the Afrikaner establishment, it is clear that he developed a genuine compassion for oppressed people which made it possible for him to challenge apartheid.

Jozua Naudé was drawn into several controversies in Graaff-Reinet, starting with his decision in 1921 to deliver his induction service in Afrikaans instead of the conventional Dutch.<sup>13</sup> He later was involved in a bitter dispute with some members of his church which led to a split in the congregation and the founding of a splinter church in 1927.<sup>14</sup> Jozua Naudé also joined the battle to establish an Afrikaans school in the town. The language debate began in earnest in 1916, before the arrival of the Naudés, but Jozua Naudé, as the senior minister of the DRC in the town, was an important voice in the battle which ultimately led to the establishment of the *Hoër Volksskool* in the town in January 1922. It was not achieved without considerable acrimony and division among English and Afrikaans townsfolk and it was a battle in which Jozua Naudé played a pivotal part.<sup>15</sup> It is outside the brief of this dissertation to examine these events closely, but the important

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<sup>12</sup>C F B Naudé interview with P Randall, 1982.

<sup>13</sup>P 69/2: Sermon by Jozua Naudé June, 1921; diverse sermons, J F Naudé papers.

<sup>14</sup>R van Graan, “Graaff-Reinet, 1786-1986”, Lantern, Journal of Knowledge and Culture, p 83.

<sup>15</sup>A de V Minnaar, Graaff-Reinet 1786-1986, pp 109 - 110 and Jordaan, Jozua Naudé, pp 224 - 236 and C F B Naudé-Clur interview.



point was that as a youth Naudé became accustomed to controversy and supported the Afrikaner's right to speak his language freely. His father received his share of criticism for his actions and withstood them all. It was a trait his son also demonstrated in his adult life.

During these years of conflict, Jozua managed to maintain an aura of self-control and composure, but his wife was not as composed. Her large family responsibilities added to the pressure on her. The situation was not made any easier by Ada's own sense of her status as the minister's wife and the impression she conveyed in her daily conduct that her family was slightly superior. Ada was also beset with health problems. Jozua was kept busy with his church work and with his campaign to promote Afrikaans, and so Ada took full control of the children and the home. Beyers later realised that this arrangement had sometimes led to tensions between his parents. He gained the impression that Ada resented Jozua's constant preoccupation with his work; Jozua, in turn, did not always know how to handle his volatile wife.<sup>16</sup> Ada encouraged her daughters to take an interest in church work and three of them eventually married DRC ministers. She also wanted both boys, but particularly her eldest son Joos, to follow their father's example and enter the ministry. The Naudé children later developed different opinions about their mother's motives. One of the Naudés' daughters, Reinet (Netta), said:

"My mother was a perfectionist and she wanted the best for her family. She went to great lengths and made many sacrifices to get the few things she wanted for us. She did not ask much for herself but she absolutely insisted on the best for her children. And she adored those two sons."<sup>17</sup>

Naudé agreed with this to some extent, but felt his mother was very conscious of status. He felt that she wanted to bask in the glory of her sons' success. Being one of the middle children in a

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>R O'Brien Geldenhuys-Clur interview.

large family and with his father away from home a great deal, Naudé became an independent, self-sufficient boy. His mother tried to impose her standards and values on all her children, but Naudé built up a resistance to this. He would sometimes go to great lengths to win this war of wills, as was the case when he finally won the right to play rugby at school.<sup>18</sup>

In 1924, after General Hertzog won the general election, the government attempted to address the “poor white problem” with programmes and legislation that further prejudiced the black population. The Land Act already barred blacks from owning land in white South Africa; legislation such as the Wages Act of 1925 and the Mines and Works Amendment Act of 1926 ensured that skilled jobs would remain the preserve of whites. Hertzog also introduced legislation to promote Afrikaans language and culture. Jozua Naudé applauded all these steps. The question of whether blacks were being unjustly treated was not an issue in the Naudé household; the children grew up with the belief that their parents were justified in their battle for Afrikaner freedom. Jozua and Ada were very clear in their minds about what they believed should be the correct relationship between whites and “non-whites”. In South Africa the former were destined to act as political leaders of the country, while blacks were intended to occupy inferior positions in society. At the same time, Afrikaners had a duty to spread the gospel to the blacks and civilise the country, and to do this they would need to maintain themselves as a separate race. While Afrikaners would fulfil their Christian responsibilities towards non-whites, there would be no social mixing of the races.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>C F B Naudé interview with B Bilheimer, for A cry of reason: an Afrikaner speaks out and C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

In line with this thinking, and because of his own strong evangelical background, Jozua supported mission work among the coloured people of Graaff-Reinet provided it took place on segregated lines. In the 1930s the DRC accelerated mission work in the coloured areas of the town and converts were expected to join the coloureds-only Sendingkerk.<sup>20</sup> The influence of his father's work, which was also a prominent trend in the DRC, is clear from the fact that Beyers Naudé, in his early ministry, also showed a great commitment to mission and evangelism.

When Naudé was 15 years old, he underwent one of the most important experiences of his life: he experienced a Christian "rebirth". It was the practice in the DRC to hold a series of prayer meetings and church services leading up to the day of Pentecost. Naudé was deeply moved by the Pentecostal sermons his father delivered in May and June 1930 and decided to give his life to Christ. This brings us to another central thread in Naudé's makeup: his Christian, Reformed tradition. After he accepted Christ as a young man, he never deviated from a strong faith and weighed up major decisions on this basis.

His commitment to the faith of his father did not however prevent him from becoming somewhat rebellious as a teenager. Towards the close of his final year at school, Naudé joined his brother and four other boys in drawing up a letter of protest against the "authoritarian" attitude of their headmaster, U J Cronje. The boys regarded him as extreme and short-tempered. They had their letter professionally printed and distributed it around the school. In Naudé's words, the letter "created a hell of a row". His father, who was chairman of the school committee, was acutely embarrassed by his sons' involvement in the affair, and if it had not been for his position, the boys

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

could have been expelled.<sup>21</sup>

While many factors influenced Naudé's later rejection of traditional political values, early family experiences appeared to have played some part. It is evident that already as a youngster he had already developed the ability to question rather than accept. One possible reason for his rebelliousness is that he was seeking liberation from his domineering father. But if one searches for early influences, it seems his independent nature stemmed more from resentment of his mother. Naudé himself said that his mother was the stronger influence in the home, and he admitted it was from maternal captivity that he sought to escape. Naudé did not speak as readily of his mother as he did of his father, and when he did so it was sometimes in negative terms.<sup>22</sup>

Of his family relationships Naudé commented later:

"My father was a person with very deep convictions, strong convictions which he held firmly to, and which he defended. I respected him for that. On the other hand, as a teenager I could not agree with a number of viewpoints which he expressed. I felt very strongly that he should have opposed my mother much more with regard to certain of her views which she wanted to impose on us, especially on her two sons. I came out in strong resistance against that, and I also conveyed that to him in my second or my third year of university when I said that I felt in that respect, he had allowed her too much, and that she was using her illness very skilfully in order to create the necessary sympathy where she could then impose her thoughts and her ideas, or force him in order to impose those ideas. Certainly a measure of my deep concern for the underdog grew out of the conviction that if there was a person whose ideals, wishes were suppressed in this way, and not given the necessary opportunity, that could never be a way in which one could really reach your highest potential. I rebelled against that and felt that was unfair."<sup>23</sup>

And so Naudé, by the time he left for Stellenbosch University in 1932, had developed an

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid

<sup>22</sup>C Villa-Vicencio, "Life of Resistance and Hope", in C Villa-Vicencio and J W de Gruchy (eds), Resistance and hope: South African essays in honour of Beyers Naudé, p 5 and C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

independent streak. He began his BA studies with a career in the ministry, or teaching, in mind. Beyers and Joos started university together and, following in their father's footsteps, they entered Wilgenhof, the oldest residence serving students in Stellenbosch. Naudé became a well-known figure in the hostel and was later elected its student chairman. The brothers spent their university days with many Afrikaners who were destined for top positions in church and political life - including future prime minister John Vorster, one of Naudé's adversaries in debating circles.<sup>24</sup> During the years he spent reading for his BA and just over a year completing his MA, Naudé immersed himself in numerous student activities. A natural public speaker like his father, he joined the *Universiteitse Debatsvereniging*, one of two debating societies on campus, the other being the *Unie Debatsvereniging*, in which Vorster was a dominant figure. As a senior Naudé was elected on to the Students Representative Council for two years and served as president in 1937. He was also a regular churchgoer and member of the *Christelike Studentevereniging (CSV)*. Joos Naudé, speaking about his university days with his brother, remarked:

"Beyers and I were very different in our personalities. I took part in student affairs and enjoyed it, but Beyers was far more active. He was more outgoing and was marked out as a leader."<sup>25</sup>

Naudé also joined the hiking club, the *Berg en Toer Klub (BTK)*, on which he served several times as chairman. It was through the BTK that Naudé met his future wife, Ilse Hedwig Weder, who was studying for a BSc. She was born at Genadendal, the oldest mission station in South Africa, to Moravian missionary parents on 21 August 1913. Naudé soon became a frequent visitor to Ilse's home at Genadendal where he was welcomed. What impressed him most was the openness of relations between white and coloured people, both in Ilse's home and in the congregation.

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>J Naudé-Clur interview.

Unlike most Afrikaner missionaries who were emphatic that there should be no social intercourse with their "non-white" flock, the German missionaries were less rigidly separatist in their attitudes to race and mission. All races worshipped in the same church and coloured people visited Ilse's parents in their home - quite a revelation for Naudé. For the first time in his adult life he spoke to people of another colour on a basis approaching equality. He started to develop an interest in race issues and missionary work, but it would be many years before his feelings and thoughts on these issues would crystallise.<sup>26</sup>

Naudé himself was not deeply interested in politics, but the subject was hard to ignore altogether, especially since new political ideas had begun to appear on the university campuses in the 1930s. Young Afrikaner nationalists, dissatisfied with the economic and social status of their people, challenged the notion that there should be closer co-operation with English-speaking whites, and asserted the need to preserve and promote the separate language and culture of the Afrikaner. This mobilisation was encouraged by the Afrikaner Broederbond, which set up various political and cultural organisations to promote the cause of Afrikanerdom in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>27</sup>

On university campuses the mouthpiece for this assertive nationalism was the *Afrikaanse Nasionale Studentebond (ANS)*. This was established in 1933 after the three Afrikaans universities in the Transvaal and Free State withdrew from the English-dominated National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). Stellenbosch was at first not in favour of pulling out of NUSAS, and the ANS-NUSAS row became a hot issue on the campus. Finally, in 1936, the Stellenbosch SRC

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<sup>26</sup>I Naudé interview with C Clur, 1988, C F B Naudé-Clur interview and C F B Naudé-Randall interview.

<sup>27</sup>J H P Serfontein, *Brotherhood of power*, p 34.

seceded from NUSAS to throw its full weight behind the ANS. Although Naudé regarded himself as a nationalist and a loyal Afrikaner, he disliked the all-embracing control which the nationalist movement sought to exert and so shied away from the more exclusive claims of Afrikanerdom. He also began to read widely, in English, Dutch and Afrikaans, and was already something of a “moderate” in Afrikaner nationalist terms. He said later:

“I was questioning all the time. I wanted a justification and an explanation for whatever stand I took. But it was not a very probing, critical questioning, because we were not allowed to do that. In our whole upbringing we had been too much part of an authoritarian structure, which emphasised the authority of the parent, teacher, minister, or party. But there was at the back of my mind that constant question: Is this the real truth and the full truth?”<sup>28</sup>

The two brothers also demonstrated their independence by joining the editorial staff of the clandestine student newspaper, Pro Libertate which was launched in 1932 by a small, anonymous group of more liberal-minded senior students; the newspaper challenged some of the less sacred but nevertheless stultifying aspects of Afrikaner culture and politics. Naudé and his brother were keen readers of Pro Libertate. Although only mildly provocative, critics accused it of practising “underhand politics”, of being negative towards the church and the Theological Seminary, and of usurping the function of the official student newspaper, Die Stellenbosse Student. Pro Libertate denied the charges and, while affirming its respect for authority and the Christian faith, it declared itself in favour of freedom of thought and expression.<sup>29</sup> The newspaper’s editors had to guard their identities very closely because once exposed they were often subjected to pressure and criticism; for this reason Pro Libertate experienced a frequent turnover of staff. Naudé and his brother joined the journal to fill gaps left by other departing students. Their parents were upset to hear of their involvement in the journal. Ada in particular was angry when she found that her

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<sup>28</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

<sup>29</sup>Pro Libertate, issues from 1932 - 1934.

sons were coming home with strange ideas which did not conform with her outlook. She also disapproved of her son's relationship with Ilse Weder, whose family were not Afrikaners. Although Ilse's father was a missionary, Ada did not regard him as a real "*dominee*", and Ilse was not a member of the DRC.<sup>30</sup>

Naudé completed his BA at the end of 1934 and, still unsure about a career, he decided to devote the following year to his MA. The love Naudé felt for his language was evident in the thesis he chose, an examination of Afrikaans poetry. The thesis showed a good understanding of the works of Naudé's favourite poets, many of whom were staunch nationalists, including C J Langenhoven, Totius and Uys Krige.<sup>31</sup> At the end of 1935 Naudé decided to enter the Theological Seminary of the DRC.

To understand the larger social forces which shaped his career, it is necessary to deal briefly with the political and theological issues which influenced the church's decision to support the policy of apartheid. It was during Beyers Naudé's student years that the foundation was laid for apartheid theology in the DRC. New theological ideas from Europe began to influence the church, enabling leaders who propounded a racist theology to win ground. But it was not only the new imported ideas which made apartheid theology possible; the historical traditions of the DRC provided fertile ground for their growth. The Calvinist notion of the "elect" or chosen people was seized on by Afrikaner ministers, who encouraged their followers to identify themselves with Israel of old. As they had been called by God to bring Christianity and civilisation

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<sup>30</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview, I Naudé-Clur interview and J Naudé-Clur interview.

<sup>31</sup>C F B Naudé, Die waardering van poësie: enkele aspekte van die vraagstuk, toegelig met voorbeelde uit die Afrikaanse poësie.



to the African continent, no claim could be made for the equal treatment of Afrikaners and blacks, as this was not the will of God.<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, for the first 150 years of white settlement the DRC had concerned itself almost exclusively with white colonists. There were only sporadic efforts to minister to slaves and the indigenous Khoikhoi, and although these “non-whites” were permitted to join the DRC, the church in no way challenged discrimination in early Cape society. Indeed, as early as 1857 the Cape synod considered the question of segregated worship and holy communion, and while agreeing that it was scriptural for blacks to be admitted to white churches, accepted the principle of racially-segregated churches as necessary, because of the “weakness of some”.<sup>33</sup>

In 1881, a separate, “daughter” church for Coloureds, the Sendingkerk or Mission Church, was established; and in time the NGK in Afrika was founded for blacks and the Reformed Church in Africa for Indians. At a later stage, when the DRC had formalised its apartheid policies, its mission work came to be seen as an integral part of the church (and state) strategy to keep the races apart, as a way of ensuring white self-preservation.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>D J Bosch, “The roots and fruits of Afrikaner civil religion”, in J W Hofmeyr and W S Vorster (eds), New faces of Africa: essays in honour of Ben Marais, p 15.

<sup>33</sup>The full resolution said: “The Synod considers it desirable and scriptural that our heathen (black) members be received and absorbed into our existing congregations wherever possible; but where this measure as a result of the weakness of some, impedes the furtherance of the cause of Christ among the heathen, the heathen congregation, founded or still to be founded, shall enjoy its Christian privilege in a separate building or institution.”, as quoted in J Kinghorn, (ed), Die NG Kerk en apartheid, p 76.

<sup>34</sup> Z E Mokgoebo, Broederkring: a calling and struggle for prophetic witness within the Dutch Reformed Church family in South Africa, p 130.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, patriotic Afrikaans students who went abroad were searching for a new brand of Reformed theology which could accommodate their new-found nationalism. They found it in the ideas of Abraham Kuyper, the founder of the Free University of Amsterdam. Kuyper was an influential figure in the Gereformeerde Kerken, a splinter church in Holland which had rejected liberalism and rationalism, and he developed a new theology. He said that human life consisted of separate spheres, such as the church, the state and the family, and that each had sovereignty over its affairs through God. He emphasised the principle of “diversity” and this was seized on by Afrikaner theologians, who searched and found biblical passages which apparently proved that God willed separate nations.<sup>35</sup>

Throughout the 1920s and the 1930s there was conflict between theologians who adhered to the old evangelical tradition of the DRC and those who favoured the new ideas from Holland. Between them stood a large group of ministers like Jozua Naudé who remained faithful to evangelism and were committed to their church’s missionary work, but also identified with the idea of the Afrikaners as a “chosen people” and a separate race. The final influence which swayed the church into adopting apartheid was romantic nationalism emanating from Nazi Germany.<sup>36</sup>

Prominent Afrikaner nationalists, such as Nico Diedrichs, Piet Meyer and Geoff Cronje, who studied in Germany and sympathised with the Nazis because they were the enemies of the British, were influenced by the Nazi idea of racial purity.<sup>37</sup> This group began to work out a racial blueprint

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<sup>35</sup>J Durand, “Afrikaner piety and dissent”, in De Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio (eds), Resistance and hope, p 42.

<sup>36</sup>J Kinghorn, “Vormende Faktore”, in Kinghorn (ed), Die NG Kerk, p 86.

<sup>37</sup>Bosch, “The roots and fruits”, in Hofmeyr and Vorster (eds), New faces of Africa, p 32.

for the future. Building on the established pattern of segregation in South Africa, they envisaged a Christian Nationalist country where the solution to the racial problem would be found in the separation of the races. They declared that because the Bible supported the diversity of nations, the introduction of apartheid in South Africa could be regarded as the will of God. The DRC, now falling more closely into line with the thinking in the Broederbond and the National Party, started to give attention to race issues. In 1926, for example, the Native Commission of the DRC's Federal Council held a conference with English-speaking churches to consider the "native question". At the conference the DRC managed to gain acceptance for a resolution, which declared that it was not necessarily unchristian to "seek the progress of the native people separately from the whites".<sup>38</sup>

However, a few voices in the DRC began to speak out against the national and political mission the church was taking upon itself. The principal of the DRC's Theological Seminary at Stellenbosch, Professor Johan du Plessis, was a man who adhered to the evangelical, missionary traditions of the church and clashed with nationalists on this issue. In 1928 his opponents seized on a non-political issue, a biblical interpretation in which he held that Christ had completely laid down his divine nature when he had lived on earth, to charge him with heresy. The presbytery commission at first rejected all the charges against him, but his political adversaries continued with a series of appeals, until two years later a special synodal commission found him guilty of heresy and had him removed from his Chair. He took the case to the civil court, which declared his conviction of heresy invalid, and he was technically reinstated. But the church, while it continued

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<sup>38</sup>As quoted in E Regehr, Perceptions of apartheid: the churches and political change in South Africa, 151.

to pay his salary and subsidise his house, never allowed him back in the Seminary.<sup>39</sup>

When Beyers Naudé entered the Theological Seminary in 1936, there was still tension over the firing of Professor du Plessis and students were divided into two groups - the more liberal “Du Plessis men” and the conservative “*Oupajane* men”. The name “*Oupajane*” was derived from Die Ou Paaie journal, edited by Dr Dwight Snyman, which had been founded to counter Professor du Plessis’s journal, Die Soeklig.<sup>40</sup>

Naudé read both journals to gain greater understanding of the controversy, despite his father’s support of the “*Oupajane*”, his natural sympathy for the underdog brought him to side with the Du Plessis faction. He was upset by the “pettiness, the corruption and the closed-minded attitude” of the DRC, and felt that the action taken against one of the church’s most eminent and committed academics was “totally unjust”:

“I didn’t know Du Plessis, I knew nothing about the theology, but on the human level, what they had done to this man was an absolute shame.”<sup>41</sup>

In the aftermath of this episode, the DRC embarked on a purge, and the Seminary came to be staffed by anti-Du Plessis academics: Professor D G Malan, who was Du Plessis’ successor in New Testament studies; E E van Rooyen, professor of Old Testament studies, and D Lategan, professor of Church History, who all contributed to Ou Paaie journal. Naudé felt his lecturers were proponents of second-rate theology; stifled and frustrated by what he regarded as a lack of meaningful intellectual depth and clarity in the classes he attended, he developed an aversion to

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<sup>39</sup>F E O’Brien Geldenhuys, In die stroomversnellings: vyftig jaar van die NGK, pp 1 - 11.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid, pp 3 - 11.

<sup>41</sup>Villa-Vicencio, “A life of resistance and hope”, p 8 and C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

his studies. Some students pursued other courses while at the Seminary. Naudé completed his MA during his first year at the Seminary and his friend Frans O'Brien Geldenhuys, his future brother-in-law, completed his LLB.<sup>42</sup>

One exception to the theologians Beyers regarded as “second rate” was Professor B B (Bennie) Keet. A brilliant theologian who taught ethics and dogmatics, Keet had a profound impact on Naudé. A Stellenbosch graduate, Professor Keet came from the old evangelical and mission-oriented tradition of the church and, like Du Plessis, was firmly opposed to the racist theology that had been introduced into the DRC. When Naudé first entered the Seminary, Professor Keet was the only “Du Plessis” man left among the teaching staff and contributed to Soeklig. Keet never openly supported all aspects of Du Plessis’ theology. Often statements made by the lecturers were scrutinised in the theological magazines, and Professor Keet was careful to avoid charges being brought against him. But later, when the DRC began to work out its apartheid charter in detail, Keet spoke openly against it. In 1939 he sounded his first public warning that hostility between the races was increasing as a result of the agitation for racial segregation. In the decades that followed Professor Keet frequently clashed with apartheid-supporting theologians.<sup>43</sup>

At the end of 1937 Ilse, who had completed her BSc and MSc with distinction, accepted a teaching post in Pretoria. Naudé still had two years to complete at the Theological Seminary, and

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<sup>42</sup>C F B Naudé-Randall interview and O'Brien Geldenhuys, In die stroomversnellings, p 11

<sup>43</sup>Durand, “Afrikaner piety” in De Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio (eds), *Resistance and Hope*, pp 467 - 47.

they decided to get engaged. Naudé's mother, still bitterly opposed to the relationship, was upset when he informed his parents that he would be spending Christmas with Ilse at Genadendal, where they planned to announce their engagement. Ada pleaded with Beyers to change his mind, and also begged her husband to reason with her son. But Naudé refused to consider their pleas and he travelled to Genadendal as planned. On Christmas Eve, 1937, the night before the couple were to announce their engagement, Ada sent her daughter Hymne to the mission station to try to dissuade Beyers. It was under this cloud that their engagement was announced on Christmas Day. The episode created a rift between him and his parents and, although they later accepted his marriage to Ilse, the emotional break was never completely healed. In January 1938 Ilse began teaching mathematics at an Afrikaans girls' school in Pretoria, but after a year she moved to a teaching post at La Rochelle School in Paarl so that she could be closer to Naudé.<sup>44</sup>

In May 1938, Beyers Naudé had voted for the Nationalists in an election which produced a massive victory for Hertzog and Smuts's fused United Party. But this unity was smashed by the outbreak of war in September 1939; Smuts wanted South Africa to enter the war on the side of the Allies, while Hertzog insisted on a neutral stance. The vote in parliament went against Hertzog, and so began a new era in South African politics. It was also the end of a chapter in Beyers Naudé's life: he began his career in the ministry in December 1939 when he moved to Wellington to serve as a trainee minister. The following year, on 3 August 1940, he married Ilse at the Genadendal mission station.

For the next 23 years he served as a *dominee* in the DRC and rose steadily through the ranks. During this "middle period" of his life he went along with the system of apartheid and did not

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<sup>44</sup>I Naudé-Clur interview.

speaking out in spite of growing misgivings. His failure to speak out in these crucial years, when biblical support for apartheid in the DRC was consolidated, can be partly ascribed to his personal desire to succeed and be promoted to senior positions in the church, and because of the pressure he perceived the church and Broederbond put on members to conform; over the years it was his loyalty to the Broederbond which made it difficult for him to challenge conventional wisdom in his community.

Naudé joined the organisation at the start of his career, while working in Wellington in 1940. The senior DRC minister in Wellington, the Reverend Evert J du Toit, was a member of the Broederbond and considered that Naudé met the requirements necessary for membership. An aspiring member had to believe in the destiny of the Afrikaner as a separate nation; promise to give preference to Afrikaners and Afrikaans firms in public, economic and professional life; speak Afrikaans in his home and outside; be a Protestant of "firm principles and strong character"; be financially secure and prepared to participate as an active and loyal member of the Broederbond.<sup>45</sup>

When their first son was born in 1941 a dispute arose with Ada over his names. Beyers and Ilse Naudé had baptised him Johann, after the disciple John, and Friedrich because it was the German word for peace and expressed their longing for an end to the war. Ada Naudé was upset that her grandson had not been given family names - and so the tensions between Naudé and his mother continued.<sup>46</sup> The couple had four children, three boys and a girl.

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<sup>45</sup>Serfontein, Brotherhood of power, p 35 and pp. 130 - 140.

<sup>46</sup>I Naudé-Clur interview and C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

In his ministry within the DRC three issues always remained pre-eminent in his thinking and activity: youth work, evangelism and mission work. Having held leadership positions in various youth organisations during his student days and being the junior minister, he concentrated on establishing contacts with young people in the college town. The emphasis he placed on evangelism in his ministry was also not unexpected. Both his parents had stressed its importance and his own conversion had been the result of a profound experience at Pentecost. His father had impressed upon him the need to win new converts, and his interest in mission work was heightened as a result of his visits to the Genadendal mission station. He was exposed to the mission policy of his church at the DRC's training college in Wellington, where white students were trained for careers as ministers of the coloured Sendingkerk. Naudé did not voice his misgivings, but he was uneasy that the training given to these men was inferior and of a shorter duration than the instruction given at Stellenbosch to ministers for the white church.<sup>47</sup>

In April 1943 he accepted an invitation to be minister in the small Karoo town of Loxton. He developed a very close relationship with the townsfolk since most people belonged to the DRC. In addition he visited the families on farms in the district twice a year. His years in Loxton coincided with the Second World War, which created bitter divisions in South Africa. Naudé was opposed to his country's participation in the war and, like many Afrikaners, was sympathetic to the Germans' cause because they were the enemies of the British. Although Naudé regarded himself as a loyal Afrikaner nationalist, some questions began to disturb him. As a result of his contact with the impoverished coloured people who lived in a township outside of Loxton he began to feel uneasy. A white lay preacher served the small Sendingkerk in the township and

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid



occasionally Naudé was asked to officiate. He said later:

“Once a quarter, or when there was communion and baptism, I conducted services in the little mission church in Loxton. Looking at the terrible poverty, the lack of any real or proper education, I began to ask, ‘How can we justify this?’ Whites were always justifying why the people got the wages they did, and that there was very little they could do about it. I started to question this.... This was also linked to my very strong sense of mission.... I said to myself, ‘part of your mission, certainly, is to uplift the people’. And in that sense the knowledge and experience I gained in Genadendal, where at least you had a community of coloureds who were living on a higher standard and who were able to sustain themselves to a certain degree, raised the question why it was not possible to have this in other parts of the country.”

However, in spite of these misgivings, his preoccupation with his own congregants meant that he did nothing to challenge the status quo.<sup>48</sup>

He left Loxton in 1945 and moved to the Transvaal to minister to a congregation in Pretoria South. The church had been established to serve members who lived in an extensive rural area on the southern border of the capital city. By 1948 it had become clear that the Pretoria South region was far too large to manage. When it was decided to split the congregation Naudé accepted the invitation to Olifantsfontein.<sup>49</sup>

In 1948 the National Party came to power on the platform of apartheid. While the political programme of apartheid had been developed by nationalist ideologies in the 1940s, the DRC had also elaborated on theology which supported apartheid. In 1942, members of the DRC formed a Federal Mission Council and assigned a special commission to refine the policy of segregated churches for the various race groups.<sup>50</sup> The Federal Mission Council also promoted segregation

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid

<sup>50</sup>J Kinghorn, “Die groei van 'n teologie: van sendingsbeleid tot verskeidenheidsteologie”, in Kinghorn (ed), Die NG Kerk, p 91.

in other spheres. Its commission on education, for example, proposed that the education of black children be organised under the Department of Native Affairs rather than under the Department of Education, so that the school programme for blacks “could be made more suitable for their special character and circumstances”. The Council also pleaded for the prohibition of sex and marriage across the colour line.<sup>51</sup>

In the 1940s, too, DRC theologians extended their search for biblical texts to substantiate their call for apartheid. Theologians cited “evidence” from both the Old and New Testaments, and one of the cardinal texts was the story of Babel, which they claimed showed that God willed the creation of separate nations. A comparison between the nation of Israel as it existed in the old Testament and the position of Christian Afrikaners was made to prove that apartheid was not against God's will. Similar interpretations were given to several other passages in the Bible.<sup>52</sup>

Naudé did not concern himself too much about these political and theological developments. He said later:

“It never really worried me. I didn't get involved, I didn't look at apartheid theology critically, compare it to real, meaningful theology. I did not look at the specific texts of the Bible and try to get the correct interpretation. I was not enough of a theology student. That was the tragedy - my lack of theological training and my unwillingness to be really involved.”<sup>53</sup>

This “unwillingness to be involved” is probably the key to understanding why Naudé kept silent about apartheid, because there is evidence that as early as 1948 he felt unhappy about this policy.

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<sup>51</sup>Regehr, Perceptions of apartheid, p 151.

<sup>52</sup>G Cronje, W Nicol and E P Groenewald, Regverdige rasse-apartheid, pp 14-17 and J H Kritzing, “Rasse-apartheid in die lig van die Skrif”, in Op die horison, pp 22 - 31.

<sup>53</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

In that year, the Transvaal synod of the DRC gave its sanction to apartheid. Professor Ben Marais stood virtually alone at the synod, as he had also done at the synod four years earlier<sup>54</sup>, in opposing a church report which set out a biblical justification of apartheid. In spite of his protestations, the report was accepted by an overwhelming majority. But at the close of the synod Naudé and 12 other ministers asked that the records reflect that they did not support the report. Ben Marais later said of Naudé:

“He did not say a word, but had his name taken afterwards. My point of view was that if you were against something, you had to stand up and say it in the circle where it was appropriate....”<sup>55</sup>

At this stage of his life Naudé was reluctant to rock the boat and so continued to accept, with misgivings, the route his church was taking.

On 26 May 1948, white South Africans, along with a minority of coloured people in the Cape still entitled to vote, went to the polls. Naudé voted Nationalist. There was a national swing against Smuts's United Party which propelled the National Party to power by a narrow margin. Naudé's father was jubilant. Shortly before his death, on 31 May 1948, the anniversary of the Treaty of Vereeniging, he wrote a joyful letter addressed to his sons and son-in-law:

“It is now 6 in the morning. We have drunk coffee and read the old chapter, Lamentations 5, which I have been reading for the last 46 years on this day.... Thank you very much for your lovely telegram. It meant so much to me because it showed that you have also found that the Word ... has become real.... The sun of freedom which went down at Vereeniging, has after 46 years risen more magnificently and more wonderfully than when it disappeared. My vision at the Tugela waterfall has been fulfilled.”<sup>56</sup>

The letter symbolises the triumph that Afrikaner nationalists felt at this electoral victory, which

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<sup>54</sup>B Marais, “*Voorwoord*”, p 8, in C F B Naudé, *My land van hoop*.

<sup>55</sup>B Marais interview with C Clur, 1988 and *Handelinge van die Transvaalse Sinode van die NG Kerk*, 1948.

<sup>56</sup>J Naudé letter to “Jozua, Bey and Frans”, 31 May 1948.

compensated for the defeat they had suffered in the South African war. The next phase of the Afrikaner nationalist struggle continued until the formation of the Republic of South Africa in 1961, under the leadership of Prime Minister Dr Hendrik Verwoerd. Beyers Naudé's enthusiasm and support for the nationalist cause wavered decidedly in this period, but for most of it he was still not prepared to speak out.

Naudé continued to make steady progress in his work and in 1949 he was appointed student pastor in Pretoria East, where he worked with Ben Marais and Johann Luckhoff. His special responsibility was the welfare of the students at the University of Pretoria and in the six years he spent there he worked hard to promote youth work. One of the theology students at Pretoria at the time was Dr Nico Smith, a man who later also rejected apartheid. The two men's paths crossed several times in their careers, and Dr Smith later said of his student pastor:

"I had very close contact with him when he was student chaplain. He had come out of the Stellenbosch Seminary and it was unbelievable how little he knew about theology. At the time I thought, 'What this chap knows about theology is dangerous.' But he had the gift to make you enthusiastic, and you didn't know why because there was no theology behind it."<sup>57</sup>

During this time steps were taken to unite the four provincial synods of the white DRC, and Naudé helped found the *Kerk Jeugvereniging* (KJV) - a national youth group for young, working Afrikaners. He assumed his first executive position when he was elected chairman of the KJV in 1951, and by then was also secretary of the Synodal Youth and the Federal Youth Council.<sup>58</sup>

While Naudé was going from strength to strength in his church work, the National Party

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<sup>57</sup>N Smith interview with C Clur, 1987.

<sup>58</sup>Vaderland 19 July 1951 and C F B Naudé-Randall interview.

government was pressing ahead with apartheid legislation, including the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949), Group Areas Act and Population Registration Act (1950), the Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents Act (1952), Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (1953) and Bantu Education Act (1953). Moreover, in 1950 the government gave itself wide powers to suppress “radical political activity” by enacting the Suppression of Communism Act. Naudé, however, paid little attention to the enactment of these laws.

In 1950 the DRC's Federal Mission Council held a conference to discuss the “native question” and called for the total separation of the races. The council went much further than the government's policy at the time in backing drastic structural change to South African society. The findings of the conference, which were laid before the government, were based on the premise that apartheid, correctly applied, would help the development of the black, coloured and Indian race groups.<sup>59</sup>

In 1952 Ben Marais published a controversial book on the race issue in which he examined racism in North America and Brazil. According to Marais, segregated churches were a very late development in the history of Christianity and were a fruit of slavery. He firmly rejected any biblical defence of segregated churches but said it could be justified on practical grounds - provided it did not break down Christian brotherhood. Marais put the arguments of apartheid theology to the test by asking 13 of the world's leading theologians to reply to a series of questions dealing with nationalism and segregation in the Christian church. The theologians, who included Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, J H Bavinck, H Berkhof and Franz Leenhardt, were

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<sup>59</sup>J Kinghorn, “Die groei van 'n teologie” in Kinghorn, Die NGK Kerk, pp 98 - 99.

unanimous in their rejection of racial segregation.<sup>60</sup> The book sent shockwaves through the DRC and Marais encountered a great deal of hostility from many of his colleagues and members of his congregation. A review in the official church journal Kerkbode was equally critical, and rejected Marais's claim that apartheid in the church was destroying Christian fellowship. Professor Keet sprang to Marais's defence in Kerkbode as the debate raged.<sup>61</sup> Marais's work had a great impact on Naudé. He said:

"The book was a very clear and disturbing challenge to the traditional theological concepts which I held up till then. Reading the book brought home to me a number of crucial questions about the biblical understanding of church, of race, of human dignity, of the unity of the church, of the whole pattern and structure of the DRC. Pronouncements were made by theologians of great repute, and they all challenged the basic theological presumptions on which we based and justified our whole policy here."

New questions were beginning to surface in Naudé's mind, but he held back, fearful of being disloyal to the Broederbond:

"On the one hand I was a member of the Broederbond, looking at all these issues from primarily the interest of the Afrikaner people, and on the other hand Ben Marais was a colleague, a friend. He was criticised and partially ostracised, but I never discussed it with him - I was cautious because of my allegiance to the Broederbond."

Although Marais had not said so in his book, he was highly critical of the Broederbond because it operated in secrecy. Naudé continued:

"This led to tremendous tension within the church council and within the congregation. Johann Luckhoff and I were both members of the Broederbond. I was in the invidious position where my loyalty to a secret organisation made it very difficult for me to feel free to study and evaluate certain basic theological views which were in conflict with the traditional views of the DRC. I had this increasing feeling of doubt and unhappiness about the position in which I found myself. It was virtually impossible for me to be open to a fellow theologian, to differ with him, to debate and to discover the truth."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>B Marais, Die kleur krisis en de Weste.

<sup>61</sup>Kerkbode, 10, 31 December 1952.

<sup>62</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

Marais's book made Naudé determined to improve his knowledge of theology, and from 1953 he began an intensive programme of reading and self-study. He concentrated on interpretations of the Bible, on church history in South Africa and other countries, and on the role of race in the Christian church. For the first time he seriously studied the works of Karl Barth and the modern Dutch theologians and realised there was something fundamentally wrong with the DRC's race policies.

It was during this crucial period, in July 1953, that Naudé, as chairman of the *Kerk Jeugvereniging*, embarked on a six-month study tour overseas. He was accompanied by the KJV's general secretary, the Reverend Willem de Wet Strauss, and they toured the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Holland, France, Italy, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland. The South Africans received a polite reception from the various overseas Reformed churches which had helped draw up their itinerary, and they were also assisted by the youth department of the World Council of Churches to which the DRC then belonged. The two men naively thought they would be able to avoid political issues merely by declining to talk about them, but everywhere they went - at youth camps, conferences and seminars - people would question them about South Africa. At first Naudé tried to defend his church's race policies:

"I used all the arguments, all the references in the Old Testament, I knew them by heart, the whole lot of them. But I realised very soon that I was up against theologians who could shoot down the one straw doll after the other. I became increasingly cautious about using these arguments, realising that something was wrong."<sup>63</sup>

On their return the two men published a book giving details of their tour. It dealt with the various types of youth work they had encountered, but made no attempt to analyse their experiences. It

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

also made no mention of the issue with which they had been confronted day after day - South Africa's race policies.<sup>64</sup> The book contained not the slightest indication of the real impact the overseas tour had on Naudé. The tour broadened his vision and understanding of church and society. Now convinced that the DRC was wrong to support apartheid, he still refused to speak out:

"I felt I was theologically inadequate and I was still a member of the Broederbond.... I felt that I first had to prepare myself, find the necessary theological insight and knowledge and justification for my stand. I began to see if I could find allies within the DRC, ministers who could be convinced, because I knew I was up against an ideological barrier that would be very difficult to break."

Naudé continued his private theological study and the more he read, the more uneasy he became. He became convinced that the policy of apartheid could not be justified on scriptural grounds.<sup>65</sup>

In 1954 Naudé received an invitation from the Potchefstroom DRC and the family moved to the town in 1955. The five years Naudé spent there were important in his theological and political development. As Naudé's ministry unfolded, so he came to be increasingly driven by a tremendous energy. According to Ilse, her husband "worked himself to pieces" in Potchefstroom. She said he discovered "entire families that had never been baptised", and so he had to devote much of his time in visits to farming families. Ilse also worked hard to revitalise the women's organisations and accepted as well all the responsibilities in the home:

"Bey was of the old stock who thought the wife was there for the children, to run the house and to see to all the work of the minister's wife".<sup>66</sup>

This statement reinforces the argument that culturally Naudé was no different to most of his

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<sup>64</sup>C F B Naudé and W de W Strauss, Kerk en jeug in die buiteland en Suid Afrika .

<sup>65</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

<sup>66</sup>I Naudé-Clur interview.



fellow-Afrikaners in many respects for the first half of his life at least, believing that the husband and father was head of the household.

While privately Naudé's thinking was moving away from acceptance of the prevailing racial order, he steered away from all controversy in his sermons and interaction with his conservative congregation. During that time the National Party government continued to extend apartheid. In 1954, Native Affairs Minister Hendrik Verwoerd spelled out his ideal for the future: total separation of the races in every sphere of life, social, political, economic and religious. In the next decade, under the leadership of Verwoerd and later John Vorster, apartheid began to be applied systematically across a broad social front. While there were some differences between Verwoerd and Vorster about the implementation of apartheid, the key goal was to reverse the movement of black people to the "white" cities and more than two million black South Africans were forcibly uprooted and moved to the ethnically designated homelands in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>67</sup>

While the majority of ministers in the DRC sided with the government, Keet and Marais continued to oppose the biblical justification of apartheid. Privately Naudé agreed with Marais's views, but a hurdle remained: he was still a member of the Broederbond, although he felt uncomfortable about his membership. Naudé's uneasiness about belonging to the Broederbond is evident from an incident that occurred at the DRC's Transvaal synod of 1955. The synod had been discussing the Freemasons when Ben Marais rose and criticised the Broederbond. Marais recalled:

"I was not a member of either organisation and I had no intention of taking part in the debate. But when I saw that the loudest critics of Freemasonry were all Broederbond members, I stood up and proposed that we accept that no minister of the NG Kerk should

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<sup>67</sup>T R H Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history*, pp 339 - 340 and M Nash, *Black uprooting from 'white' South Africa: the fourth and final stage of apartheid*, pp 1 - 23.

belong to any organisation which had an oath of secrecy...The next morning when the synod reopened, the moderator stood up and said he had decided that my motion was not in order and could not be discussed. He put his decision to synod and by about a three-to-two majority, they supported the moderator's stand. That night Beyers Naudé came to me and he told me what had happened the previous night after the synod had adjourned. He said to me: 'You know, Ben, I can't look you in the eye.' And I said: 'Why, Beyers?' Then he told me that after the adjournment, by word of mouth and by telephone, the Broederbond had called a special meeting of members. They had discussed a strategy should my motion be accepted for debate. Then Beyers told me that at that meeting one speaker after another got up and said: 'Now, Ben Marais must be broken in the church.' Beyers told me he felt ashamed, he felt he did not belong at that meeting."<sup>68</sup>

Other non-Broederbond colleagues also noticed ambiguities in Naudé's thinking at the time. Nico Smith, who worked for a while with Naudé in Potchefstroom as assistant minister and who was not yet a member of the Broederbond, said:

"We often had long, involved theological discussions. I knew that Beyers was in the Broederbond but I didn't know how it functioned. What always puzzled me was that we would have discussions and decide what we believed was theologically the way, but then at a church meeting Naudé would take another stand. I realised that Beyers had changed his mind. That was the influence of the Broederbond. They forced you to conform to a certain way of thinking."<sup>69</sup>

Naudé agreed with this assessment of the Broederbond:

"At Broederbond meetings I began to feed in my ideas and concerns and asked what we were going to do about them. I told them we can't close our eyes. But they would come up with counter-arguments, and so I would say to myself, 'Perhaps I am wrong, perhaps I should take more seriously what these people are saying'."

The prospect of advancing his career also caused Naudé to temper his criticism of apartheid:

"I was told by my colleagues that if I handled my career wisely I would become the moderator of first the regional synod and then of the national synod. I think it is important to realise that at that stage the moderator of the NGK was the second most powerful

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<sup>68</sup>B Marais-Clur interview and Handelinge van die Transvaalse Sinode van die NG Kerk, 1955.

<sup>69</sup>N Smith-Clur interview. Smith later joined the Broederbond but ultimately resigned from the organisation.

position in the country [after the prime minister]. So I kept silent.”<sup>70</sup>

Naudé’s recollections of the promises made to him by Broeders about his prospects for advancement in the church are borne out by what happened in 1963 when he was elected moderator of the Southern Transvaal synod of the DRC, at a time when he again came under pressure from Broederbond colleagues to conform.

During his ministry at Potchefstroom, Naudé’s political and theological views came to be shaped in a number of decisive ways. The influence of the smaller Afrikaans Reformed Church, the Gereformeerde (or Dopper) Kerk was strong in the town, with the university it founded, the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, a focal point for many academic and religious activities. Kuyperian theology was strongly entrenched in the Gereformeerde Kerk and its leading theologians believed in the biblical basis of apartheid; in general the Gereformeerde church preached a conservative brand of Christianity in which all actions had to be tested against the Bible.<sup>71</sup> In spite of their ultra-conservatism on race issues, Naudé found more depth in the theology of the Doppers than in his own church. Gereformeerde Kerk members who attended his church services and Bible studies gave him a new understanding of the demands of the Scriptures. The *Doppers*, according to Naudé, showed more concern for evaluating their actions and political and social issues in the light of Scripture. This strengthened his approach to assessing and evaluating what was happening in the country in terms of his Christian faith. Charles Villavencio has also noted that in spite of the Gereformeerde Kerk’s conservative stance in general,

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<sup>70</sup>C F B Naudé-Bilheimer interview.

<sup>71</sup> R T J Lombard, Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke en rassepolitiek: met spesiale verwysing na die jare 1948 - 1961, pp 130 - 150.

Naudé, from his contact with the *Doppers*, “gained a decisively new existential understanding of the Word of God, within the life of the Christian”.<sup>72</sup>

The period was also significant in that the 1950s was the last period until 1986 that major criticisms of apartheid were allowed to be heard within the DRC. Thus, three years after the appearance of Ben Marais’s book on race issues, Keet published a short work in which he challenged the biblical validity of apartheid. He set out to demolish the arguments from Scripture in defence of apartheid, pointing out that it was only because segregation and discrimination existed in the first place in South Africa that DRC theologians had searched for passages in the Bible to support the policy. He warned Afrikaners who dreamt of complete racial separation that they were living in a make-believe world. The response of the DRC was summed up in a review of the book in *Kerkbode*. It criticised Keet for being negative and defended the church and government's apartheid policy as having had a “positive” impact on all the country's races and on the church's mission work.<sup>73</sup>

Ministers like Naudé who disagreed with the policy of apartheid but who were still loyal to the church often took ambiguous and contradictory positions on controversial issues. One telling example of this was after the government's attempt to prevent inter-racial mixing in the churches by introducing in 1957 an amendment, the so-called “church clause”, Clause 29 (c), to the Native Laws Amendment Act. The government believed the English churches were provocatively and intentionally arranging multi-racial services to make a political point, and the “church clause” was

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<sup>72</sup>C Villa-Vicencio, “A life of Resistance” in Randall (ed) *Not without honour*, p 8 and C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

<sup>73</sup>B B Keet, *Whither South Africa?*, pp 19 - 85 and *Kerkbode*, 15 February 1956.

introduced to head this development off. The clause empowered the government to prohibit the holding of classes, entertainments and even church services if they were attended by blacks in white group areas.<sup>74</sup> The publication of the draft amendment prompted an immediate protest from the English-speaking "multi-racial" churches, and the Archbishop of the Church of the Province of South Africa, or Anglican church, Geoffrey Clayton, in an open letter, warned the government that it would be forced to disobey the law. The Federal Council of the DRC was also opposed to the amendment. The council drew up an eight-point statement, unusually critical, which emphasised the complete freedom the church should enjoy and which warned the government against exceeding its power and impinging on the sovereignty of the church. In keeping with the close co-operation between the DRC and the state, a delegation from the church met Bantu Affairs Minister Hendrik Verwoerd to discuss the issue. After listening to their views, Verwoerd explained how English churches were provoking the government by deliberately arranging multi-racial church services. After he assured them that the new law would be applied circumspectly, the DRC decided not to release the full eight-point statement to the public, but instead released only the first, more general, part of the statement. The points more critical of the government were excluded in the release. The unpublished points were specific in criticising the government for going beyond the bounds of what the state was entitled to do, suggesting it was interfering with religious freedom.<sup>75</sup>

The decision to release a shorter, less critical statement caused division within the DRC. Beyers Naudé was one of those who tried, not very successfully, to reach a compromise at the Transvaal

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<sup>74</sup>Davenport, South Africa, p 344.

<sup>75</sup>J W de Gruchy, The church struggle in South Africa, p 61.

synod in 1957. He proposed that the Federal Council's original, full statement be *approved* as "an explanation of the church's standpoint as it is grounded in God's Word". But his motion also thanked the government for granting the church an audience and called on the synod to accept "*officially*" the church's less critical statement. R Lombard has summed up the DRC's contradictory behaviour:

"The anomalies in the decision of the Transvaal synod were evidence of the conflict of conscience the church clause caused the DRC. The church was aware that the government, with the clause, was infringing on the terrain of the church, but at the same time did not want to withdraw their support for the government and apartheid".<sup>76</sup>

The government's controversial clause was finally promulgated but was never strictly enforced, partly because even in the so-called "multi-racial" English churches there was not a great deal of racial mixing.

Another important event in Naudé's development during this time was the world Reformed Ecumenical Synod which met in Potchefstroom in August 1958. Hosted by the Gereformeerde Kerk, the conference brought together representatives from the smaller, conservative Reformed churches worldwide. Naudé attended all the public sessions of the synod. It dealt with a variety of social and church issues, but placed particular emphasis on the crisis facing Africa and the problem of race relations. The synod devoted four days to the latter, during which time strong critiques of apartheid in the church were launched by various overseas delegates. DRC theologians also contributed a great deal to discussion at the synod, and the South African influence on the proceedings was reflected in the cautious statement issued by delegates on the

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<sup>76</sup>Lombard, Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, p 170 and Handelinge van die Transvaalse Sinode van die NG Kerk, 1957.

race issue, based on a report submitted by a commission on race relations.<sup>77</sup> The report found no “direct Scriptural support for or against the mixing of races by marriage”. Despite the failure of the synod to condemn apartheid, the contribution of the overseas delegates made a profound impression on Naudé and he was aware of the gulf which already separated the thinking of his church and the world Reformed community.<sup>78</sup>

The political and theological climate in Potchefstroom, while generally conservative, had also created conditions for a minor challenge to the Verwoerd government - the so-called “*professorale rebellie*” at the University of Potchefstroom in 1959 when Professor D W Kruger predicted that Dr Albert Luthuli would probably be the Republic of South Africa’s first president - not Verwoerd. Professors L J du Plessis and J H Coetzee were considered part of a trio of rebels, having themselves also criticised Verwoerd before Kruger’s startling “prediction”. The row that these statements provoked resulted in the three having to answer for their statements before a University Council. Although no action was taken against them, the episode, in the words of C J Coetzee, demonstrated the “all-encompassing rigid monopoly exercised by the Verwoerdian regime on race relations whereby the very basic principles of academic freedom and the lifeblood of being a university had been smothered on a national level”.<sup>79</sup> Naudé had not been directly involved in this controversy, but he had come across some of the group of more liberal-minded

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<sup>77</sup>Acta van die Vierde Gereformeerde Ekumeniese Sinode, Potchefstroom, 6 - 13 Augustus 1958 and Lombard, Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke, pp 150 - 153.

<sup>78</sup>BC 2B85 80, Beyers Naudé interview with Andre du Toit, Hermann Giliomee and Rykie van Reenen, 1984, Christian Institute Collection, African Studies Library, University of Cape Town.

<sup>79</sup>C J Coetzee, “Luthuli for president or ‘die professorale rebellie’ of 1959 at the PUK”, Journal for contemporary history, pp 136 - 154.

academics at the university, such as Professor S du Toit, an associate of the three rebels, and a member of the race relations commission that had sat at the Reformed Ecumenical Synod in 1958.<sup>80</sup>

During 1958 Naudé was elected to the moderature of the Transvaal synod as vice-chairman. One important consequence was that younger ministers who had encountered him as students in Pretoria began to seek him out to discuss their dilemmas about apartheid. Most of them served as missionaries in the separate African, coloured or Indian churches, and they were disturbed by the implementation of residential apartheid which deeply affected their members. Charl le Roux, a minister in the Indian church, recalled approaching Naudé for help:

"I had known Beyers as a child when I was growing up in Wellington. He was an open, friendly, communicating minister. In those days many ministers were quite stuffy, but he was relaxed and approachable. In the 1950s I had been involved with mission work in the Indian community and they had many problems and frustrations. We took Beyers to the heart of all this. At that stage many people were living in slums, they were pushed into a corner. He saw all this and it changed his whole outlook."<sup>81</sup>

In many parts of South Africa, the authorities had begun uprooting "non-whites" in terms of the Group Areas and Natives Resettlement Acts, and removals occurred in Johannesburg's Sophiatown as well as areas where many coloureds and Indians lived.<sup>82</sup> DRC ministers who served these communities were disturbed by this and Naudé recalled that ministers like Le Roux, Chris Greyling, Francois Malan, and Gert Swart came to him for advice:

"They told me about the problems they were experiencing and of the growing resistance of African, coloured and Indian Christians to the stand the white NGK was taking on apartheid. These people were challenging the white ministers by saying, 'How do you

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<sup>80</sup> Acta van die vierde Gereformeerde Ekumeniese sinode, 1958.

<sup>81</sup> C le Roux interview with C Clur, 1988.

<sup>82</sup> Davenport, South Africa, p 344.



justify what is happening to us on the basis of Scripture?' The ministers invited me to come and share their experiences with them. And when they told me what they were experiencing, I said to them: 'I have to accept that you are telling me the truth, but I cannot believe it.' And so they invited me to come and look for myself. And I did. And what I found was a shattering experience."<sup>83</sup>

Naudé went on four or five visits to the Indian communities of Pageview and Fordsburg in Johannesburg, to the new Indian township of Lenasia, to the black migrant compounds and to coloured slum areas and was confronted with the human misery created by apartheid. He was horrified by his ignorance of his own country:

"I realised I had been living in a wonderful 'white world'. And right next to me was a black world and a brown world and an Indian world that I knew nothing about. I went to the South African Institute of Race Relations and bought their annual surveys on race relations. I bought copies of all the laws, and for the first time in my life I began to study the race laws of the country. It brought me to the conclusion, not only on theological grounds, but also on practical grounds, on the grounds of justice, these laws were even less acceptable."<sup>84</sup>

Naudé believed it would be futile for him and the small group of like-minded ministers to try to change the policies of their church. He felt that the only effective way of changing the church's race policy was to convince enough of its ministers that it was wrong. Yet because of their shallow theological and political education especially in respect of racial issues, they were unable to do so. He urged them to study to improve their theological knowledge.<sup>85</sup> He was convinced that armed with better theological arguments, they could start challenging prevailing political and theological convention in the DRC.

Speaking of Naudé's concern about race issues, the late theologian David Bosch believed that it

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<sup>83</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

<sup>84</sup>BC 2B85 80, C F B Naudé-Du Toit, Giliomee, Van Reenen interview, C F B Naudé-Bilheimer interview and C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

<sup>85</sup>C F B Naudé-Randall interview

stemmed from his commitment to missionary work:

“I would say Naudé's early interest in race issues stemmed from his deep commitment to mission, and this was the tradition out of which he had come. In the late 1950s the DRC experienced a missionary revival, and it was because of his interest in spreading the gospel to black South Africans that he was willing to make contact with DRC missionaries. They then introduced him to their black congregations and he was able to witness their suffering under apartheid. His typical evangelical approach created the opportunities for him to be exposed to what was happening in South Africa.”<sup>86</sup>

In 1959 Beyers Naudé received an invitation to the new Aasvoëlkop church in the suburb of Northcliff, north-west of Johannesburg. The church was an offshoot of the Linden congregation, served by a close confidant of Verwoerd, Gideon Boshoff. The Aasvoëlkop church was originally responsible for about 600 adult members spread out over a very large area, and including the affluent suburbs of Northcliff, Emmarentia, Blackheath and Roosevelt Park, as well as the poorer area of Greymont. The congregation was therefore primarily made up of prosperous and middle-class families who were enjoying the fruits of government policies which favoured whites. Its members included very influential and powerful Afrikaners, such as the chairman of the Board of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, Dr Piet Meyer, and the former editor of Transvaler, Jannie Kruger. This elite position, it was generally thought, was Naudé's reward for faithful service to his people. He himself realised that he was being brought into the heart of the cultural and political life of Afrikanerdom to fill a leading role. Not all Naudé's friends were in favour of his move to Aasvoëlkop. Dr Willie Jonker, a close family friend and minister in the Johannesburg area at the time, said there was a generally accepted view that the Broederbond had engineered Naudé's appointment to the prestigious new church:

“Beyers was very popular and was being brought to Johannesburg, not only as a church leader, but as a leader of the Afrikaner community. The Broederbond had advised him strongly to accept the position. I had never joined the Broederbond and had strong

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<sup>86</sup> D Bosch interview with C Clur, 1988.

reservations about the way it operated. They did not only want a minister, but a strong Afrikaans cultural leader in Johannesburg, and Beyers was invited there for that purpose.<sup>87</sup>

While in Aasvoëlkop, and in consultation with other moderate voices in the Afrikaans churches, Naudé helped establish Bible study groups to consider apartheid. Study groups were formed in Johannesburg and Pretoria, and these eventually expanded to include some black and coloured churchmen as well as ministers from other denominations, but to start with the study circles were attended by Afrikaans, Reformed ministers. At first the meetings were held on a very informal basis, but early in 1960 the Johannesburg circle became more formalised when Gert Swart was appointed secretary of the Rand Ecumenical Study Circle. The study circle was strongly supported by the ministers in Naudé's circuit, and at one stage all but one of the 13 ministers took part in the meetings. Another important figure who lent weight to the group was Naudé's friend Willie Jonker. As the groups expanded the organisers battled to find suitable places where blacks and whites could meet. The Methodist Church in Johannesburg was sympathetic and offered a venue, but throughout their existence the groups struggled to find venues. The study groups kept as low a profile as possible but they were always viewed with suspicion by the conservative majority in the DRC.<sup>88</sup>

Naudé's thinking had come a long way since the mid-1950s, yet he knew very little about the major black political movement, the African National Congress. In the urban areas the ANC's protests centred on the pass laws but organised opposition was complicated by the divisions

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<sup>87</sup>W Jonker interview with C Clur, 1989.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid and AD 1752 (2) Rand Ecumenical Study Circle Memo 1960, Department of Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand Library, Fred van Wyk Papers.

which had appeared in the organisation's ranks. The breach culminated in March 1959 in the establishment of the breakaway Pan-Africanist Congress. In 1960 the ANC and PAC simultaneously launched campaigns to protest against the pass laws and, on 21 March 1960, 69 black people were shot dead by police at Sharpeville while taking part in a pass law protest. The Sharpeville massacre was followed by the declaration of a state of emergency and both the ANC and PAC were banned.<sup>89</sup>

Naudé, although shocked by the events of March 1960, was still reluctant to challenge the government's policies openly. Indeed in the months to come, he would even agree with his church when it placed the major responsibility for the township unrest on "communist agitators". He was still preoccupied with the interests of his own congregation and in advancing as a leader in the DRC. After serving for three years on the Transvaal moderation he had become a familiar figure at important church meetings and in the course of 1960, while still serving as vice-chairman on the Transvaal moderation, he was nominated as acting moderator of the newly formed Southern Transvaal synod.

Outwardly, he was not considered a "great theologian", but he was well liked by most of his fellow ministers. His relaxed style, his warmth and his concern for people's personal problems made him very popular with his congregation and it was these qualities that helped make him such a prominent media personality in the years which followed. Klippies Kritzing, a DRC minister who later served in the Indian Reformed Church, commented:

"Beyers was a very friendly person and had a great pastoral heart. We were living in a

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<sup>89</sup>Davenport, South Africa, pp 358 - 359 and South African Institute of Race Relations, A survey of race relations in South Africa, 1959-1960, pp 39 - 89.

neighbouring congregation, but my parents no longer attended church. I went to a service at Aasvoëlkop and liked it, so I joined the church. It had nothing to do with political considerations, I was attracted to him as a person.”<sup>90</sup>

Naudé, in his public utterances on Sharpeville at the time, regarded black unrest as a threat to the mission of his Church and displayed no deeper understanding of the political forces at work.

Writing about the Sharpeville massacre in his church newsletter in May 1960, he said:

“The NG Kerk stands condemned before the whole world as a church which has neglected its Christian calling with regard to the non-whites, which has not done enough to plead for their legitimate needs. It is clear that the NGK has a great responsibility to correct the outside world's twisted image and to convince overseas churches of the sincerity of our intentions and the scriptural basis of our standpoint.”<sup>91</sup>

Sharpeville created a serious rift between the DRC and the English-speaking churches. Although the DRC in the Transvaal and the Cape were still members of the World Council of Churches, the disagreement over Sharpeville threatened to destroy the bonds between the churches. In their statements, most of the country's English churches blamed the violence on apartheid. In March 1960, nine leading members of the Transvaal, Free State and Cape moderates of the DRC issued a statement deploring the “shocking” declarations against the government which had been made by churches at home and abroad and called on these churches’ leaders to behave more responsibly.<sup>92</sup> The Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Joost de Blank, responded to this by delivering a strong attack on the DRC and in a letter to the World Council of Churches he

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<sup>90</sup>K Kritzinger interview with C Clur, 1988.

<sup>91</sup>Maandbrief van die NG Gemeente Aasvoëlkop, 1 May 1960, No. 3. My translation.

<sup>92</sup>“Statement on the Riots in South Africa”, by members of the NG Kerk moderates, as reproduced in Handelinge van die Transvaalse Sinode van die NG Kerk, 1961. (The Cape and Transvaal synods of the DRC had been founder members of the Christian Council of SA, but had withdrawn in 1941 for political regions.)

demanded that the DRC be expelled from the world body.<sup>93</sup> In response to appeals from the Archbishop, the WCC decided to send a representative on a mission of fellowship to try to heal the rift. One of the associate general secretaries of the WCC, American Dr Robert Bilheimer, was chosen to mediate and WCC-member churches agreed to take part in a consultation at Cottesloe, Johannesburg.

The December 1960 Cottesloe consultation has been described as “a compromise that failed”<sup>94</sup> and this observation is correct in the light of the eventual rejection of the Cottesloe statement by the synods of the Afrikaans churches. For a week, 80 South African delegates, one observer from the Christian Council, forerunner of the SACC, and six representatives of the World Council of Churches gathered at a hostel in Cottesloe, Johannesburg, to discuss the pressing problems facing South Africa and the churches. Memoranda prepared by the churches, including important submissions from the DRC churches which were to remain confidential, were intended to form the basis of discussion but not limit it. A drafting committee was appointed by the conference and it began to draw up a statement based on points which the majority of delegates supported. The draft statement was discussed and amendments were proposed. Finally, the amended document was voted on, paragraph by paragraph, with an 80 percent majority being required for acceptance of any point. As the statement took shape the conservative Hervormde Kerk delegation withdrew and in a separate statement reaffirmed its commitment to the policy of “separate development”.

Among the more important proclamations of the statement were that all population groups had

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<sup>93</sup>As quoted in A H Luckhoff, Cottesloe, p 8.

<sup>94</sup>Regehr, Perceptions of apartheid, p 189.

equal rights to share in the privileges and responsibilities of their country, that no Christian should be excluded from any church on the basis of race, that there were no scriptural grounds for prohibiting mixed marriages but that “due consideration should be given to certain factors which may make such marriages inadvisable”, that the migrant labour policy was unacceptable, that wages paid to “non-whites” were unacceptably low, that the policy of job reservation for whites should be replaced with a more equitable system, that South Africans of all races had the right to own land wherever they were “domiciled”, that a policy which permanently denied such people the right to partake in government was not justifiable, and that there was no objection to direct representation of Coloured people in parliament.<sup>95</sup>

For the English-speaking churches, the statement was moderate, and it has been suggested that they compromised to the extent that they had joined the “architects of apartheid in asserting unity and equality in terms compatible with separate development”.<sup>96</sup> Far more significant, however, was that the DRC delegates, for the first time, had come to express marked differences from government policy. The DRC delegates were aware of the risks they were taking in departing from official policy, and much discussion took place among them on how they should proceed. It was decided that they should issue an additional, separate statement, motivating their reasons for signing the Cottesloe declaration. This separate statement, written in Beyers Naudé’s handwriting, made it clear that in supporting the Cottesloe statement, the DRC was not giving up support for the government’s policy of apartheid. “We wish to confirm that ... a policy of differentiation can be defended from the Christian point of view, that it provides the only realistic

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<sup>95</sup>AD 1752 (3cd2b1), Van Wyk, Statement of the World Council of Churches Consultation, Cottesloe, Johannesburg, 7 - 14 December 1960.

<sup>96</sup> Regehr, Perceptions of apartheid, p 193.

solution to the problems of race relations and is therefore in the best interests of the various population groups. We do not consider the resolutions adopted by the consultation as in principle incompatible with the above statement.”<sup>97</sup> Naudé supported the DRC’s qualifying statement, including approval for a policy of “differentiation” or apartheid, in spite of his own misgivings. Commenting about this later, he said he did so because he still believed he had an important future in the church and hoped to lead the membership away from its conservative direction.<sup>98</sup>

Opposition to the Cottesloe conference began to emerge even while the deliberations were still in progress, after an unfavourable report appeared in Transvaler.<sup>99</sup> Afrikaans newspapers, with the exception of the Burger, took an extremely negative view of proceedings, while the enthusiastic support for Cottesloe among the English newspapers only served to confirm Afrikaners’ fears that the DRC delegates had been infected by the “liberalism” of the World Council of Churches and the English-speaking churches. A statement issued by the DRC’s Transvaal moderature defending their delegation’s position and reiterating support for the policy of “differentiation” failed to calm DRC adherents. They had reason to doubt the moderature since three out of its four members had been present at Cottesloe.<sup>100</sup>

Crushing blows to Cottesloe came from the Prime Minister, Hendrik Verwoerd, and then the Broederbond. In his New Year’s message broadcast in 1961 Verwoerd said Cottesloe had been an attempt by outsiders to interfere in South Africa’s internal affairs. The Cottesloe statement had

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<sup>97</sup>AD 1752 (3ca2b4), Van Wyk, Statement by the DRCs of the Cape and Transvaal.

<sup>98</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

<sup>99</sup>Transvaler, 9 December 1960.

<sup>100</sup>Luckhoff, Cottesloe, p 126.



not yet received the support of the DRC, but only of a few individuals in the church who had attended the consultation. The DRC synods would have the final say on the matter.<sup>101</sup> The Broederbond sent out a special circular after a meeting of members in Pretoria saying it “wished to prevent any serious detrimental effects on our nation as a result of this conference”.<sup>102</sup>

The leadership of the DRC in the Free State and Natal churches, neither of which was a member of the World Council, had also opposed the Cottesloe declaration, and in March the Federal Council of the DRC followed suit. The “Cottesloe men” thought it likely that the Cape and Transvaal synods would vote to leave the WCC. Cape delegate A J van Wijk voiced his concerns to Bilheimer in a letter, warning of this likelihood. He was also concerned that Naudé would lose his leadership position at the next synod.<sup>103</sup>

The Hervormde Kerk had voted at a synod in March 1961 to leave the WCC. A month before the Transvaal synod met, the General Synodical Commission of the Transvaal DRC appointed an “ad hoc committee” to study the merits of the Cottesloe statement and to determine whether the church should stay part of the World Council. The committee was dominated by men opposed to Cottesloe. When the DRC’s Transvaal synod met on 5 April 1961 the tone of the synod was set immediately by elections to the moderation. Moderator and Cottesloe delegate A M Meiring clung to his position by a narrow margin of only nine votes, while Naudé and his brother-in-law Frans O’ Brien Geldenhuys both lost their places. The synod first considered the recommendations and findings of the ad-hoc committee; a report compiled by the Cottesloe delegates and submitted

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid, p 116.

<sup>102</sup>Wilkins and Strydom, The super-Afrikaners, p 296.

<sup>103</sup>Luckhoff, Cottesloe, p 123.

to the committee was merely available for information. The committee found that in some respects the Cottesloe findings intruded into areas on which only the synod was empowered to speak. Among its many objections, the ad hoc committee remarked that at the start of Cottesloe the intention had not been to issue and vote on a statement: as a result of the change in procedures, black church delegates had represented and voted on behalf of the white DRC. The committee also found that while the Cottesloe delegates might have believed the policy of "differentiation" was not incompatible with its findings, some of the Cottesloe statement did indeed conflict with the policy of apartheid.<sup>104</sup>

Using the ad hoc committee report as a basis, the synod discussed the Cottesloe deliberations for two-and-a-half days, with speaker after speaker condemning the findings. When discussion ended on 10 April 1961 the Cottesloe delegates were asked to sit in the front of the hall and were given an opportunity to speak. While most still supported the spirit of the findings, some, in their utterances, began to retreat. Naudé said of this time:

"For me it was a turning point in my life, because the night before the final decision was made at the synod, I had to decide - would I because of pressure, political pressure and other pressures which were being exercised, give in and accept, or would I stand by my convictions which over a period of years had become rooted in me as firm and holy Christian convictions? I decided on the latter course...I could not see my way clear to giving way on a single one of those resolutions, because I was convinced that they were in accordance with the truth of the Gospel."<sup>105</sup>

Six Cottesloe delegates addressed the synod. Most defended the findings in apologetic tones. In

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<sup>104</sup>Handelinge van die Transvaalse Sinode van die N G Kerk, April 1961 and Ibid, pp 131 - 138.

<sup>105</sup>As quoted in International Commission of Jurists (eds), The trial of Beyers Naudé: Christian Witness and the rule of law, p 65.

his address to the synod, Naudé said he was prepared to admit the possibility that the Cottesloe delegates had made errors with regard to procedure, but added that he would accept changes to Cottesloe only if these were based on the Scriptures. In an attempt to appease the conservatives he argued that the delegates had never agreed to voting and land-ownership rights for all “non-whites”, but submitted that if complete segregation was impractical they were entitled to something. “I will admit if I am wrong, but what is the alternative?” he asked. Finally the synod voted to reject all the Cottesloe findings, claiming that these should first have been debated by the church. The synod also reaffirmed its support for what it called the policy of “differentiation”. It resolved further, without allowing any debate, to withdraw the Transvaal DRC from the WCC.<sup>106</sup> Six months later the Cape synod considered the Cottesloe findings and was, on the whole, less hostile to them. Some of the findings were accepted, some were rejected, and a study commission was appointed to investigate the issue further. But the synod followed the Transvaal DRC by voting to leave the WCC.<sup>107</sup>

The failure of the WCC to keep the DRC churches faithful to Cottesloe occurred because the weight of Afrikaner opinion, led by Verwoerd and the Broederbond, was overwhelmingly against the resolutions that had been adopted. At the same time as the Cottesloe controversy had been raging, Verwoerd had sought in a referendum a mandate from white voters to take the country out of the Commonwealth and create a Republic. The Republic of South Africa came into being on 31 May 1961. The Afrikaner nationalist movement had realised its major mission, complete freedom from British imperialism and Commonwealth influence, and this led to the elaboration

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<sup>106</sup> Handelinge van die Transvaalse Sinode van die NGK, 1961 and Luckhoff, Cottesloe, p 139.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, pp 145 - 149.

of apartheid ideology and policy during the next decade.<sup>108</sup> It was hardly surprising, given this political climate, that there was tremendous hostility to those who were still faithful to Cottesloe.

Naudé went back to his church in Aasvoëlkop uncertain of the future, although he realised he was headed for conflict with the conservative majority in the DRC. At that stage Naudé had still not considered leaving the church. He was deeply involved in his pastoral work; the church-building programme was progressing well and the new parsonage in Northcliff had just been completed.<sup>109</sup> Before Cottesloe, the inter-church Bible study sessions had been progressing steadily. Groups were meeting at several places on the Witwatersrand and in Pretoria. After the synod, when a notice was sent out to all participating churchmen to attend the next study session, the response was devastating. Two-thirds of the DRC ministers, referring to the decision taken at synod, answered they were no longer prepared to consider an alternative race policy based on a study of the Bible.<sup>110</sup>

In September 1961 Bob Bilheimer returned to South Africa for a three-week visit, much to the alarm of leading members of both the Hervormde Kerk and the DRC. He had been invited by A J van Wijk, minister of the DRC "*moederkerk*" in Stellenbosch, to address theological students at the Seminary, but because of the negative reaction from the DRC establishment and a critical editorial in *Kerkbode*, the meeting had to be cancelled.<sup>111</sup> In his report on the visit, Bilheimer remarked on the fear in church circles about being associated with the "Cottesloe men". Referring

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<sup>108</sup>S Bekker, *Ethnicity in focus: the South African case*, pp 38 - 39.

<sup>109</sup>C F B Naudé-Bilheimer interview.

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup>*Kerkbode*, 6 September 1961.

to the “Cottesloe men”, Bilheimer said that about 12 out of 20 of the original delegates were “fighting hard”. “I have no hesitation in saying that this little group of DRC men is engaged in one of the most decisive struggles of the Spirit and the Church that we are privileged to witness. Their verdict is: We shall lose a battle or two, but we shall not lose the war.”<sup>112</sup>

Bilheimer also made contact with Naudé and Fred van Wyk, and the media came out in force when Naudé arranged for Bilheimer to address the Rand Ecumenical Study Circle in Johannesburg, the surviving Bible study group in Johannesburg. Afterwards Bilheimer met privately with some of the Cottesloe men, including some from the English-language churches. Among those present were Naudé and Frans O’Brien Geldenhuys. Bilheimer told the ministers that he was convinced it was necessary for people in the churches to make contact with one another because they were trapped in isolation. “It is also of crucial importance for people across the colour line to get to know and trust each other, as happened at Cottesloe, because without that trust there is no hope.”<sup>113</sup>

The ideas outlined by Bilheimer corresponded with the thinking of Naudé and some of his colleagues. By 1962 the small group who still supported the Bible study sessions felt the time was ripe to launch an independent Afrikaans theological journal to stimulate theological debate about racial and political issues in South Africa, and to promote the ideal of Christian unity. They decided to name the new monthly journal Pro Veritate, “For the Truth”, a name similar to the rebel student newspaper on which Naudé had worked, Pro Libertate. Naudé was its first editor.

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<sup>112</sup>As quoted in Luckhoff, Cottesloe, p 152.

<sup>113</sup>As quoted by Rand Daily Mail, 25 August 1961

Fred van Wyk played a significant role in securing finance for the project for the first year.<sup>114</sup> The initial issue appeared on 15 May 1962 and was sent to DRC ministers countrywide free of charge, with appeals to them to subscribe to the new journal. The front-page report attacked biblical justification of apartheid by citing biblical texts which emphasised the unity of the Christian church. In his first editorial Naudé highlighted the need for co-operation between Christians and churches in South Africa and for a more serious and intensive study of the Bible to find answers to troubling questions. Recalling the spirit of Cottesloe and referring implicitly to the Afrikaner churches, he wrote:

“Churches can no longer operate in isolation ... and hope to challenge worldwide movements like communism, Islam and secularism. Churches which do not want to work with others in areas where a united witness is essential are weakening their own witness and are inadvertently strengthening the forces of evil.”<sup>115</sup>

Beyers Naudé’s growing interest in ecumenicism is evident in this first editorial and his emphasis on Christian unity was one of the factors that prompted him to launch the Christian Institute the following year.

There was negative reaction in the DRC community to the new journal. Members of the Aasvoëlkop church council asked Naudé to withdraw from the journal. In neighbouring Linden, the Reverend D. Beukes introduced a motion to that effect in the local church circuit. Naudé was also approached by individual members of the Broederbond who expressed serious reservations about Pro Veritate’s attack on apartheid. Naudé would not hear of withdrawing, however, and Pro Veritate, despite its precarious financial position, continued to appear once a month. Critical items began appearing in Kerkbode and the secular Afrikaans press.

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<sup>114</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

<sup>115</sup>Pro Veritate, 15 May 1962.

In a report to Bob Bilheimer about developments in the church, Fred van Wyk wrote that Naudé was being warned by friends in the DRC not to risk forfeiting his status as DRC minister by undertaking any other ecumenical work.<sup>116</sup>

Confusion and unhappiness over Naudé's role in the ecumenical movement grew steadily in the Aasvoëlkop parish, in spite of his pastoral work which was appreciated; he had been the driving force in raising funds for the new church and hall, the foundation stone of which had been laid in February 1962. In an attempt to clear the confusion Naudé decided to depart from his non-political approach in the pulpit and to state his views plainly. Preaching in the Emmarentia school hall on Sunday morning, 27 May 1962, Naudé told his congregation:

"Nobody can be excluded from the Church of Christ on grounds of race or colour. I am not saying for a moment that the church only exists when people of all races worship together ... history has shown time and time again that God wills rich diversity ... But to try to forbid mixed worship is against the Word of God."<sup>117</sup>

The address served to antagonise and anger the conservative element in his church further. At the June council meeting a formal complaint was lodged against the sermon by some members of the church. One of the leading voices against Naudé at that meeting was Jannie Kruger, former editor of Transvaler. Naudé was not without support, however, and some of his friends spoke up on his behalf. After a long debate, a motion censuring Naudé for the sermon was put to the vote, but it was defeated by a two-thirds majority.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup>As quoted in J W de Gruchy, "A short history of the Christian Institute", in Villavicencio and De Gruchy (eds) Resistance and hope, p 15.

<sup>117</sup>C F B Naudé sermon, Aasvoëlkop, Sunday 27 May 1962. My translation.

<sup>118</sup>AD1752, (4cB2), Van Wyk, Letter from C F B Naudé to W Landman and A van Wijk, 6 August 1962, and G Kotze interview with C Clur, 1988.

As the events in Naudé's church were being repeated in DRC circles elsewhere, the small group of dissenting Afrikaner theologians began to give serious thought to the establishment of an independent, ecumenical organisation. The aim was to present Afrikaners with alternatives to apartheid theology and to unite Christian witness, especially on race issues, in South Africa. Prominent figures in those early days included Beyers Naudé, Hervormde Kerk theologian Albert Geyser, Fred van Wyk and Dr Jan Schutte, a leading minister from the Gereformeerde Kerk. In the search for support for the proposed ecumenical body Naudé wrote a carefully worded letter in August 1962 to two former "Cottesloe men" in the Cape, Willem Landman and A J van Wijk. It gives a good indication of the role of Bilheimer in encouraging the dissenters and outlines Naudé and Van Wyk's thinking about the goals of such an organisation. It further shows that Naudé was serious about taking up the leadership of the new body, even at the risk of losing his status as a *dominee*. He wrote:

"You will remember that the possibility of full-time ecumenical work was raised for the first time in August 1961 when Bob Bilheimer visited South Africa.... You will also remember that the reason for creating such a mobile Christian institute (preferably with the head office in Johannesburg) was among others, to organise and initiate courses, conferences, Bible study weeks and discussions ... for different church groups and Christians on issues which affect the church in Southern Africa. A further goal would be the creation and building of ecumenical study groups in various centres, the distribution of factual information on the ecumenical movement, and to help Fred van Wyk with his ecumenical activities....

"As for my own position, I want to make it clear that I am not looking for any other work than what I am presently doing. It is going well in the congregation.... The point is simply that I can't go on for much longer with all my congregational work and carry out all the other activities as I am doing at present - in any case not for longer than the end of this year. If we are convinced that the work of Christ can be done from within but also from outside the DRC, then I am prepared to make myself available for such work. Preferably, I would like to retain my status [as minister], but if that is not possible, then I would be prepared to lose that status after all possible channels to retain it are exhausted."<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>119</sup>AD 1752 (4cb2), Van Wyk, Naudé letter to Landman and van Wijk.



In the closing months of 1962 several meetings were held among ministers and laypersons in Johannesburg to discuss the Institute's formation. On 1 November 1962 about 200 people met at the Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg at which Naudé hoped the Institute would be launched. But the meeting, chaired by the Reverend J B Webb of the Methodist Church, did not go according to plan. The views of mainly Afrikaner laymen and clergy, who were afraid of an open clash with the DRC and who claimed that the time was not right for the launch of the CI, prevailed. They warned that the Afrikaans churches, through their synods, could make it impossible for their members to participate. One of the strongest arguments against formation of the institute was that the southern and northern Transvaal synods of the DRC were due to meet in April 1963, and it was suggested that the CI's establishment be delayed until after this date to escape condemnation at the synods. A provisional committee including Fred van Wyk and Naudé was appointed by the meeting to consider the objections, and it decided to go ahead with the establishment of the CI. Even before the CI was formally constituted, the provisional committee had opened an office in Dunwell House, Braamfontein, in December 1962.<sup>120</sup> The fact that the CI had established offices before its official launch demonstrated Naudé's commitment to his ecumenical vision. He had travelled a long way to this new position, which was to represent a fundamental, Biblically-based challenge to apartheid. In the next 14 years, as director of the Christian Institute, he would still travel much further.

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<sup>120</sup>AD 1752 (4Bb(2)), Van Wyk, Minutes of the Meeting held on 1 November 1962 to discuss the proposed Christian Institute.

## 2 The launch of the Christian Institute, 1963

In 1963 Beyers Naudé upset both the DRC and the Broederbond when he launched the Christian Institute. He took this significant step because he could no longer reconcile himself with the DRC's defence and support of apartheid. But, as I have shown in Chapter 1, Naudé's views on the apartheid issue had long differed with those of the DRC. A factor that swayed Naudé into a definite course of action to challenge the DRC was when he became a victim of the system of pressure which existed in DRC-Broederbond circles to force members to stay in line. As the leader of the DRC group which defended the Cottesloe declaration, he had become a direct target for censure in church, Afrikaans media, political and Broederbond circles. As I have already argued, he began to realise there was no middle course: he believed an independently-run study group had to be launched to challenge the DRC from the outside.

Naudé, in his conflict with the Broederbond, was also influenced by his friend Dr Albert Geyser. Geyser was extremely bitter towards, and critical of, the Broederbond, believing the organisation to have been behind trumped-up heresy charges his Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk had brought against him because of his attack on the Hervormde Kerk's biblical justification for apartheid. Geyser was active among a group of Afrikaners, in the Hervormde Kerk and DRC, who from 1962 had begun questioning the Broederbond's control over the Afrikaans churches. The Broederbond was concerned about this questioning trend that had been evident in the DRC since Cottesloe. In August 1962 the executive council of the Broederbond issued a special three-page memorandum on the tendency within the church to question apartheid, warning that:

"Even within our own circles it is sometimes argued with a great measure of fanaticism that our policy of apartheid is not Biblical. The executive council solemnly calls on our Church leaders to combat this liberalistic attack on our Christian spiritual convictions and

on the Christian-National philosophy on which our national struggle on the cultural, social, economic and educational front is founded, and to expose it firmly and clearly.”<sup>1</sup>

Another document issued by the Broederbond in October 1962 voiced similar sentiments. In an apparent reference to Beyers Naudé and the study circle he had helped found, the Rand Ecumenical Study Circle, the circular from the executive council declared that the “Afrikaans churches cannot allow the formation of groups outside or within the church to continue”. And in an attack directed against Pro Veritate, it called on ministers to stop criticising their church in public:

“Everyone is surely aware of the fact that in each of the churches there exist groups who are not only acting disloyally to the Church but are also busy with the formation of groups alongside or against the church. This should not be permitted, and these elements should be forced to work through the ‘official channels’.”<sup>2</sup>

These documents, which show how deeply the Broederbond was involved in church matters, had been in Naudé’s possession; he handed them to Geyser, who later leaked them to the Sunday Times. In order to understand Geyser’s motives for making the documents public, it is necessary to elaborate on the struggle Geyser had waged against the Broederbond. Geyser, a member of the Hervormde Kerk, had begun his academic career as a loyal Nationalist, and was a professor of theology at the University of Pretoria. He became involved in the apartheid debate in the mid-1950s after the Hervormde Kerk was challenged by the World Council of Churches to provide biblical justification for its race policy. Geyser, a New Testament expert and linguist, was appointed to the Hervormde Kerk’s two-man commission to find such justification. The commissioners began their study confident that they would find support for their church’s Article

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<sup>1</sup>Translation as quoted in Sunday Times, 21 April 1963.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Three which confined membership to whites only. But contrary to their expectations, both theologians came to the conclusion that the Scriptures did not provide justification for apartheid.<sup>3</sup>

In October 1961 Geyser was charged with heresy on an unlikely technical offence - he had been accused of teaching an heretical tenet of Arianism, an ancient heresy in church history involving the claim that the Son is subservient to the Father<sup>4</sup>. At the hearing Geyser blamed the Broederbond for orchestrating the campaign against him. On 8 May 1962, the church commission, which was dominated by Broederbond members, found by a 13-2 majority that he was guilty of heresy. Geyser was defrocked as a minister of his church. He challenged his dismissal in a civil action brought in the Transvaal Supreme Court. In May 1963 the church offered an out-of-court settlement, agreeing to pay all costs, amounting to R100 000; in exchange, Geyser dropped his case. He finally left the Hervormde Kerk in May 1964 when the church's general synod refused him a second hearing.<sup>5</sup>

Geyser was convinced that the Broederbond had engineered the charges against him, a view he shared with Naudé. Naudé also discussed his concerns about the Broederbond with Geyser's loyal supporter in the Hervormde Kerk, Professor A van Selms, who served on the editorial board of Pro Veritate. Van Selms upset the Afrikaner establishment in June 1963 with a 15-page booklet attacking the Broederbond and describing Christians who were members as hypocrites.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>I Wilkins and H Strydom, The Super-Afrikaners, inside the Afrikaner Broederbond, pp 293 - 294.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, p 298.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, pp 301-305.

<sup>6</sup>J H P Serfontein, Brotherhood of power, p 244 and C F B Naudé interview with C Clur, 1988.

Naudé gave Geyser a number of Broederbond documents, and later said that it was Geyser who asked to see them:

“Geyser said to me, ‘I cannot judge your concern about the Broederbond, except if I am able to read what the Broederbond has been saying all these years.’ ... He also wanted the documents because of the fight with his own church, to fight the injustice which they did to him.... His was a desperate stand, on his own, against his whole church leadership. They were more militant and much worse than the NG Kerk. I can understand why he felt he was standing with his back against the wall, that he needed every possible form of evidence.”<sup>7</sup>

Geyser later said he realised the documents were invaluable; never before had the Broederbond’s secrecy been breached. He said he took the documents to his offices at the university and painstakingly photographed every page with his Leica camera and then returned them to Naudé. A little later Geyser contacted Charles Bloomberg, who was political reporter on the Sunday Times, and gave him the negatives of the Broederbond documents.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time that Naudé was involved in this intrigue with Geyser, he was also preparing to take part in the DRC’s Southern Transvaal Synod, which began on 26 March 1963. Just a few days before the synod, Naudé finally resigned from the Broederbond.

At the synod, quite unexpectedly, Naudé was nominated and elected moderator. His friend, Willie Jonker, another Cottesloe supporter, was elected as actuary. But their elections did not indicate a sudden sway of support among members for their viewpoint. The mood of the synod was in fact hardline. Naudé was asked to give up his editorship of Pro Veritate. On April 9, a report was tabled which dealt in hostile terms with Pro Veritate; Naudé was forced to recuse himself from

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Rand Daily Mail, 21 November 1963.

the chair while the debate was heard. Proposed by the minister from the Farrarmere congregation, the motion accepted the principle of free-thinking theological magazines but called on ministers of the DRC not to go on with the “dangerous” business of Pro Veritate because it could split the church. Numerous speakers voiced their opposition to criticism from outside the church, and the synod passed a motion which stated: “Owing to the tension and divisions which this newspaper has caused, and because of the dangers it poses to the unity of the church, the synod calls on members and office bearers not to participate in the Pro Veritate efforts and asks them to support our own church newspaper.” In another reference to Pro Veritate, a motion was accepted-urging members to abide by decisions of the synod and not to criticise these publicly.<sup>9</sup>

He believed that the motion on Pro Veritate was the Afrikaner establishment’s way of telling him that he would be given another chance, and that he still had a big future in the church, provided he abandoned his challenge to apartheid. It was a moment of truth for him. He commented later:

“It was tempting, but for me the decision was clearly taken. I remembered how many people had withdrawn from the issue after Cottesloe and I knew there was not the least possibility that there would be enough ministers willing to take a stand in public. I knew that - I had no doubt in my mind. I was open to conviction if there was any real, valid indication that this would not be the case. I remained open to it, but I think, rationally and emotionally, knowing the Afrikaner people, and especially realising what had happened since Cottesloe, I realised it simply would not happen.”<sup>10</sup>

On the last day of the synod Naudé was called on to state whether he would resign from Pro Veritate. He asked the synod for time to consider the request and promised to supply the answer within a few weeks. From his later actions it appears that he never had any intention of changing

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<sup>9</sup> Acta van die Vierde Vergadering van die Suid-Transvaalse Sinode van die NG Kerk, Pretoria, March 1963. My translation.

<sup>10</sup> C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

his mind. He continued to edit the journal and make plans for the formation of the CI. In an editorial in Pro Veritate, on 15 May 1963, he said he would not resign as editor. To resign, he said, would create the impression that "here is a minister who is willing to sacrifice or give up his deep convictions for the sake of an important position of trust which his synod has conferred on him".<sup>11</sup>

It might seem strange that Naudé was elected to high office in the DRC at a time when the Broederbond, from which he had shortly resigned, wielded such power; but Naudé and his friends such as DRC ministers Willie Jonker and Ben Marais were convinced that the Broederbond was indicating that it had not yet given up on Naudé. It was hoping to entice him back into the fold.<sup>12</sup>

Another event at the synod involving the Broederbond also occurred on April 9. There were two motions on the agenda calling for an investigation into membership of the Broederbond; when the issue came up for debate at the synod the motions were strongly opposed by the Reverend D Beukes, the minister in Linden. Beukes, who later went on to become moderator of the General Synod of the DRC, was a member of the Broederbond's executive committee. He declared that such an investigation would only divide Afrikaners. Beukes then issued an official Broederbond statement at the synod which defended the organisation and claimed it was working in the interests of the Afrikaner and his church. When the issue was put to the vote, the Broederbond's strong influence became clearly evident - the motion to launch an investigation was defeated and

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<sup>11</sup>Pro Veritate, 15 May 1963.

<sup>12</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview, W Jonker and B Marais interviews with C Clur, 1988 and 1989.

the synod reaffirmed a previous finding that the organisation was “wholesome and healthy, merely seeking the progress and best interests of the Afrikaner nation.”<sup>13</sup> The involvement of the Broederbond at the synod points to the extent of the influence the organisation had on members. It would therefore have been unlikely that Naudé would have been elected moderator without the support of Broederbonders. It substantiates Naudé’s argument that the leadership position given to him in the church was a “carrot” to induce him to end his disagreement with the DRC on its stand on apartheid.

Naudé’s election as moderator had surprised most of his close friends, including Fred van Wyk, who had been spending a great deal of time preparing for the launch of the Christian Institute. A few days after the election he wrote to Naudé to inform him of the latest developments with regard to the CI: “The fact that both you and Dr Jonker are ... on the moderation is not only a miracle, but one that demands that we rethink our position.... I am hoping to write a short letter to Bob Bilheimer to tell him that he must accept that we will do the best we can given the changed circumstances.”<sup>14</sup> But while Van Wyk may have been having second thoughts, Naudé was determined to push ahead with Pro Veritate and the establishment of the Christian Institute. He seemed to think it inevitable that he might lose his position as a minister in the church. In a letter to Fred van Wyk written in April 1963, Naudé discussed the various tactics that were being employed by the small group of ministers opposed to the decision of the Southern Transvaal synod. The aim was to voice their opposition to the clamp on external criticism of the DRC in as

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<sup>13</sup>Acta van die Vierde Vergadering van die Suid Transvaalse Sinode van die N G Kerk, 1968.

<sup>14</sup>AD 1752 (4cb2), letter from Fred van Wyk to C F B Naudé, 29 March 1963, Department of Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand Library, Fred van Wyk Papers. My translation.



many newspapers as possible, and also to promote Pro Veritate. He wrote: "Don't be afraid that I might resign - we must go forward!"<sup>15</sup> Naudé's letter to Van Wyk indicates that he had made up his mind to continue with his course of action and that his election as moderator would not sway him.

A few days after he wrote this letter to Van Wyk the first major exposé featuring the Naudé documents appeared in the Sunday Times, on 21 April 1963. The report said there was a plan to oust "new dealers" in the DRC such as Beyers Naudé. The newspaper also published copies of the Broederbond notices issued in 1962 which called on Afrikaner churchmen to stop criticising apartheid. In the months that followed other reports appeared. One revealed how the Broederbond, through its *Helpmekaar* service, ensured jobs for its members in business and the public service.<sup>16</sup>

The reports upset the Broederbond and the government. The week after the first report, the prime minister Hendrik Verwoerd attacked the Sunday Times in Parliament, describing it as the newspaper which printed the most "untruths". Verwoerd's attack was widely reported on the state-controlled South African Broadcasting Corporation, whose chairman Dr Piet Meyer was also chairman of the Broederbond. The extent to which there was co-operation between the government and the Broederbond was evident when the chief of the security branch, General Hendrik van den Bergh, himself a Broederbonder, was appointed to investigate the case. In October 1963 security police raided the Sunday Times offices in Johannesburg and confiscated

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<sup>15</sup>AD 1752 (4cb2), Van Wyk, Letter from C F B Naudé to F van Wyk, 19 April 1963. My translation.

<sup>16</sup>Sunday Times, 21 April, 5, 12, 26 May, 2 June and 22 September 1963.

the documents after a two-hour search. Once in possession of the photocopies, the Broederbond began to recall numbered documents issued to members, and by a process of elimination identified the leak.

On Monday 11 November 1963, a security police delegation, led by Colonel van den Bergh, called on Beyers Naudé. Colonel van den Bergh told Naudé that he had been identified as the source of the leak and demanded a full explanation. Naudé told him that he had lent the documents to Geyser and denied giving the documents to the Sunday Times. The security police called on Geyser, who verified Beyers Naudé's story. Naudé realised it was only a matter of time before the whole matter became public. He commented later:

"It was a terrible, absolutely terrible time. That was the period where I went through hell. I deeply regretted it. I understood why Albert Geyser, with his terrible experience at the hands of the Broederbond, did what he did. I conveyed to him my deep regret and said that it had damaged the whole witness we were going to give."<sup>17</sup>

More than a week after the visit by the security police, Naudé issued a lengthy statement and copies of letters to the media in Johannesburg. The issue dominated the front pages of both the Afrikaans and English newspapers for days afterwards. In his statement released on the night of Tuesday 20 November 1963 and published the next day, Naudé provided copies of two letters he had sent to the Broederbond. The first was a copy of his letter of resignation to the Broederbond, dated 14 March 1963, giving the reasons for his decision. Some detail of the letter is given since it sheds light on Naudé's state of mind with regard to church-Broederbond-race relations. Naudé refers to a Broederbond circular on 1 August 1962 which calls ministers to task for challenging 'traditional views' on race relations in church and State, and for fostering 'liberal-

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<sup>17</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

mindfulness'. Naudé's letter also reveals his political views at the time - a fundamental disagreement with all the apartheid laws:

"My objection ... is that the basic doctrines of the Broederbond, on grounds of which sweeping conclusions are drawn, are based on an interpretation of the Scriptures to which I decidedly do not subscribe and which I was not ashamed to say either in my preaching or at meetings of my church. By imposing itself on the field of religion and making categorical theological judgments, the Broederbond is unlawfully influencing the Church in a dangerous manner that is preventing the Church from drawing independent and sober conclusions from the Scriptures.

"...The manner of leading Broeders towards me, and other clergymen in the organisation, left the indelible impression that my conclusions are correct. It is no secret, and you are all aware of the fact, that I have very serious misgivings about some of the legislation, views and practices of the State and the Church which concern our relations with other population groups. From the political stand I wish to mention the Immorality Act, the Race Classification Act, the Group Areas Act and the new Bantu Laws Amendment bill, all of which contain stipulations that violate the demands of the Bible for neighbourly love, justice and mercy.

"I also wish to mention the impossibility of implementing total apartheid without seriously endangering the existence of the Afrikaner people and the injustice perpetrated on millions of non-whites. As far as the Church is concerned I want to mention the refusal to allow non-whites to attend services in our Church, the fear of making closer religious contact with these people and the irreparable harm it inflicts on our efforts to Christianise the heathen.

"...When I joined the movement I satisfied my conscience with the justification that secrecy was necessary because of the plight of the Afrikaner people at the time ... The Broederbond creates a rift between minister and minister, church member and church member, and Afrikaner and Afrikaner, on matters where there should not be a rift between us."

The second letter, to the chairman of the Executive Council of the Broederbond, was dated 12 November 1963. In it he admits supplying Broederbond documents to a "fellow theologian" because he wanted his advice about conflicting loyalties. He cited as his reasons for breaking his secrecy oath his concern about the Broederbond's involvement in church matters:

"...And my concern increased after further circulars and study documents were issued by the Executive Council from August 1962 onwards ... it was becoming clear that the

Broederbond question would be discussed at the Southern Transvaal Synod ... I realised ... that if I delayed my decision any longer it would impair any clearness of conscience and the Christian convictions before the Synod. As I only had a short time at my disposal I decided to call on the advice of the fellow clergyman I mentioned before.”<sup>18</sup>

The Broederbond reacted the following day by issuing its own statement in which it accused Naudé of dishonesty about the leaks and of breaking his promises. The Broederbond quoted from another letter that Naudé had written to the organisation in June 1963 in which he had promised not to break his undertakings to the organisation. The Broederbond also accused Naudé of removing documents from the home of the area secretary who was out of town at the time. The Broederbond statement declared:

“In his letter of resignation to the secretary of his area, Mr Naudé says that he felt convinced that further discussion with him would make no difference to his decision and would therefore be useless. After Mr Naudé’s resignation had been accepted and he had been congratulated on behalf of the Bond with his election as Moderator of the Southern Transvaal Synod ... he assured the executive council in a letter dated June 3 1963, that he would not break his undertaking to the Bond, while at the same time he had already broken his undertakings ... as he now admits in his letter of November 13 1963.

“The Bond does not apologise for the fact that it has, since its founding, wholeheartedly supported and actively propagated the apartheid policy of our country and is still doing so. If this has now become a bone of contention to Mr Naudé, the executive council is sorry that he waited 22 years to fight in the way he is doing now....”<sup>19</sup>

The statements were followed by an admission from Geyser that he had leaked the documents to the Sunday Times without Naudé’s knowledge. Many Broederbond members did not believe him, as is evident from the tone of the official Broederbond statement. Long-standing critics of the DRC’s political and theological policies, such as Dr Ben Marais, believed the CI was damaged

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<sup>18</sup>Translation of C F B Naudé statement and letters, as quoted in Rand Daily Mail, 20 November 1963.

<sup>19</sup>Broederbond statement issued 20 November 1963, as quoted in Rand Daily Mail, 21 November 1963.

from the start because of the Broederbond row.<sup>20</sup> There are several possible explanations about what exactly had occurred between Naudé and Albert Geyser. The Broederbond was convinced Naudé was lying and that he had intended the documents to be published. The other explanation, offered by Naudé, was that he had genuinely intended the documents to be read only by Geyser. He was to regret very deeply the way in which the organisation had been exposed. He said later:

“I made a mistake and I have publicly apologised for it. What I should have done, I should have gone to the Broederbond and said, ‘This is where I disagree with you, here are my reasons and I now want to notify you that I am duty-bound to make this known. You may shoot me or you may kill me if you want to, but this is what I feel I must do.’ I should then have released the information to the public as I saw fit. That was the mistake. I should have had the courage to do it on my own. I did not have it.”<sup>21</sup>

While the implication of the above quote suggests Naudé knew that Geyser intended to make the documents public, Naudé has always claimed that he did not know Geyser intended to hand them to the Sunday Times. If this is true, then the incident can be seen as an example of how Naudé sometimes allowed himself to be manipulated: Geyser needed the documents in his fight against the Broederbond and he used his influence with Naudé to gain access to the secret information. But if Naudé handed the documents to Albert Geyser in good faith, he was probably naive to believe the information would remain confidential.

This episode, combined with Naudé’s decision to join the Christian Institute, had disturbing repercussions on his family. Their large circle of friends dwindled. One of Naudé’s sisters, Hymne, severed all contact with the Naudés. Two of their children, Liesel and Herman, still at school, were victimised. Ilse Naudé, after years of happy and busy service in her church, was suddenly

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<sup>20</sup>B Marais interview with C Clur, 1988 and B Marais, “Voorwoord” in C F B Naudé, My land van hoop, p 9.

<sup>21</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

cut off from her social and church circles.<sup>22</sup> Naudé, the main object of attack, was aware of the pain his family was enduring but would not alter his course of action. He said later:

“But if I look back today at that period, I would say however painful it was, it was necessary. It was a period in which I personally had to rediscover the deepest roots of my life, of my convictions, of my commitment to the whole cause of justice and love in South Africa.”<sup>23</sup>

The open breach between Naudé and the Broederbond contributed to the difficulties Naudé and his supporters experienced in the early days of the CI in reaching out to Afrikaners in the DRC. Beyers Naudé was aware he had complicated his task, but he was determined to push ahead. His drive and ability to withstand controversy are reminiscent of the stand that his father took in many of his political battles. Apart from the political and theological factors which motivated Naudé at this time, his strong personality, and the example of his father, could also be cited as reasons for his taking the stand that he did.

At the outset of the CI, then, what were Naudé’s political views? From the documents written by Naudé quoted above it was clear he placed himself outside of the NP camp. Yet he did not fall into any other defined political grouping that existed at the time. Although friendly with leading Liberal Party politicians such as Alan Paton, who had also been present at Cottesloe as a representative of the Anglican church, Naudé, as an Afrikaner, still harboured a suspicion of “liberalism and humanism”.<sup>24</sup> His knowledge of the underground ANC, PAC and SA Communist

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<sup>22</sup>I Naudé interview with C Clur, 1988.

<sup>23</sup>C F B Naudé interview with B Bilheimer, for A cry of reason: an Afrikaner speaks out.

<sup>24</sup>Paton, in his autobiography, recalls having a supportive and friendly conversation with Naudé during the Cottesloe conference - A Paton, Journey Continued, p 216. Naudé denied his involvement in “false liberalism and worldly humanism” in a letter written to the Broederbond on his resignation on 14 March 1963, as quoted in Rand Daily Mail, 20 November 1963.

Party was virtually non-existent. He showed no interest in the United Party. I would suggest that he still regarded himself as a religious leader of stature in his own NP-supporting community. While critical of the practical realities of apartheid, he took particular exception to the DRC's biblical justification of apartheid and hoped, through the Christian Institute, to offer an alternative. In setting up the CI, he drew his closest support from people from backgrounds similar to his own: Afrikaans and Reformed, and he still identified with this world view. An important founder member of the CI, Ben Engelbrecht, who later fell out with Naudé, defined the philosophy of the CI and Pro Veritate in the early stages as having a genuine "Reformed Christian view with respect to our church and societal problems".<sup>25</sup>

Moves to launch the CI had been gaining momentum since May 1963. Several meetings of the provisional committee to establish the Christian Institute were arranged by Fred van Wyk and Naudé, and it was agreed that the two men would be entrusted with writing the first draft constitution. At a meeting on 13 June 1963 the formal decision was taken to establish the Christian Institute. An inter-denominational sub-committee was appointed to consider the draft constitution and a 16-member provisional board of management was elected, made up of leading figures in the English-speaking churches, as well as several prominent Afrikaners, including Albert Geyer, Fred van Wyk, A J van Wijk and Beyers Naudé. There were only two black members of the board. In July, invitations were sent out to all interested parties to attend the launch of the Christian Institute at the Methodist Church in Johannesburg the following month.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Beeld, 10 April 1980.

<sup>26</sup>AD 1752 (4Cc), Van Wyk, Letter on the Christian Institute issued by Mrs J S Lubbe, 3 July 1963.

On 15 August, about 180 people gathered at the Methodist Church under the chairmanship of the Methodist minister, Rev J B Webb, to launch the Christian Institute. According to the constitution which was adopted, the aim of the Institute was to serve the church of Christ in every possible way. It was to be based on the Word of God and on the conviction that it was desirable and necessary to foster Christian unity. Membership was open to any Christian and was not intended to “detract from the loyalty of any member to his own Church or creed”. The functions of the Christian Institute were to search for a deeper insight into the will of Christ for his church through study circles and discussion groups and to strengthen the witness of the church by holding courses and conferences. Other functions were to distribute publications, serve bodies which complemented the CI, and “render any other services which the Institute may be called to perform in the name of Christ”. The CI was to be controlled by a board of management and a chairman would be elected annually. The CI also set up an executive committee and a board of trustees to oversee finances. Pro Veritate was to remain a separate entity not formally connected to the CI.<sup>27</sup> But the newspaper did become the mouthpiece of the Institute, reflecting the changes which occurred within it over the years.

Beyers Naudé was offered the job as director of the CI, which caused further unhappiness with him in mainstream DRC circles. Afrikaners who supported the Christian Institute, DRC ministers like Ben Engelbrecht, Bennie Keet and Ben Marais, supported Beyers Naudé as the best candidate for director. In their opinion the CI would have no hope of swaying the Afrikaans churches and their members away from apartheid unless it was led by a respected Afrikaner minister. There were a few significant figures who could not go along with the formation of the Institute. One of

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<sup>27</sup>AD 1752 (4Cc), Van Wyk, Constitution of the Christian Institute of Southern Africa.



them was Naudé's friend, Willie Jonker. He agreed with Naudé's principles but felt that the ecumenical study circle, and not a formal organisation like the CI, was the most effective way of challenging the DRC. Dr Jan van Rooyen, minister of the Parkhurst DRC, did not believe the CI was being launched in the right way. Van Rooyen was not happy that Dr Webb, a Methodist and a "liberal" opponent of the government, was playing such a leading role in the CI. He felt this would discourage Afrikaners from joining and he favoured the launch of an ecumenical movement for Afrikaans Reformed Christians only.<sup>28</sup>

Several DRC church councils, including Aasvoëlkop, passed resolutions calling on Naudé to reconsider his relationship with the CI and Pro Veritate. The Paardekraal Monument church council convened a special meeting to discuss the formation of the CI. It resolved to send a letter to the synodical commission of the DRC in the Southern Transvaal, requesting that a special session of the synod be convened.<sup>29</sup>

In September the examining committee of the DRC met in Pretoria to consider Naudé's request that in the event of his accepting the directorship of the CI, he would be permitted to retain his status as minister. The committee ruled against him. During this time, a group of DRC ministers in the Southern Transvaal synod, distressed by the possibility of open conflict between Beyers and the church, called for "brotherly discussion" to avert the crisis and Naudé delayed making a final decision.<sup>30</sup> The moderation, perhaps fearful of the support Naudé might receive at such a "brotherly discussion", decided against holding the meeting. A few weeks before this, six DRC

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<sup>28</sup> W Jonker interview with C Clur, 1989 and J van Rooyen interview with C Clur, 1988.

<sup>29</sup> Star, 30 August 1963.

<sup>30</sup> Star, 5 September and 6 September 1963.

ministers, led by his brother-in-law Frans O'Brien Geldenhuys, came to see him to plead with him not to leave the church. They were men who had supported the Cottesloe findings but who believed change should come from within the church. Naudé described that meeting later:

"Six of them came to see me in the parsonage, including Frans, my brother-in-law. They pleaded with me to change my mind and to stay on in the church. Then I asked them: 'If I were to decline the CI job, what guarantee do I have that there would be enough ministers who would be prepared to stand with me, not by me but with me, in order to challenge the DRC on our biblical understanding of its prophetic task at this point in history?' I said that if there was an adequate number, say ten, I would be prepared to stand down. They said they would go home and think about it.

"A week before I had to make my decision, I phoned Frans and asked him: 'Do you remember that discussion we had?' He said, 'Yes.' I said: 'Could you give me any indication of where you and the others stand? Is there any indication of any commitment?' And then he said to me, 'But Bey, you should know the answer. Do you really believe that you will find 10 people to stand by you?' I said, 'Frans, if that is what you feel, then, in a certain sense, you have made my decision for me.' "

Naudé's recollection of the tone of his discussions with O'Brien Geldenhuys is corroborated by the latter in his own autobiography. In the latter's account, he explains that he believed Naudé would never have been permitted to retain his status as a minister. O'Brien Geldenhuys opted to work for change from within the DRC.<sup>31</sup> Naudé commented later that he decided that in order to "to remain obedient to my Christian calling, if I wanted to also help my own people in a wider sphere, I had to accept this directorship."<sup>32</sup>

Naudé did not ask his wife's opinion about what he should do, claiming later that he was motivated by a desire to protect his family. In this respect he was still the patriarchal figure who made the decisions for the family and expected his wife to follow him.<sup>33</sup> Naudé announced his

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<sup>31</sup>F E O'Brien Geldenhuys, *In die stroomversnellings: vyftig jaar van die NGK*, pp 59-61.

<sup>32</sup>C F B Naudé-Bilheimer interview.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid and I Naudé-Clur interview.

decision to take up the CI work to his congregation on 22 September 1963. His sermon was based on Acts 5: 17-42 in which Peter and the other apostles tell the Council of Elders in Jerusalem that they “must obey God, rather than men”. At the service Naudé said:

“The decisions of synods, presbyteries and sessions, and the consequent reactions, have clearly indicated to me that although the synod has not in so many words prohibited pronouncements which are not in accordance with church policy and the traditions of the past, in spirit and in practice these decisions come to this: that the God-given right and freedom of the minister and member to witness to the truth of God’s Word in the spirit of the prophets and the Reformers is so restricted that the minister of the gospel in principle no longer enjoys the freedom to declare his deepest Christian convictions...

“Consequently the choice facing me is not primarily a choice between pastoral work and other Christian work or between the church and Pro Veritate, or between the church and the Christian Institute. No, the choice goes much deeper: it is a choice between obedience in faith and subjection to the authority of the church. And by unconditional obedience to the latter, I would save face but lose my soul.”<sup>34</sup>

Naudé’s sermon was attacked in an editorial in Kerkbode, at the time edited by Andries Treurnicht:

“We are prepared to accept the sermon as a struggle between a brother and his church ... but as a church we also struggle with our brother in all love, and especially on points where we believe that his stand is without foundation.”

The editorial added that the church could not accept that the choice Naudé faced was simply one between “faith” and “authority”.<sup>35</sup>

Naudé’s state of mind as he set out with the CI can be clearly understood from this 1963 sermon. He was convinced there was no way of swaying the DRC away from its support for apartheid from within the church. His Christian principles had finally forced him to leave and try to bring pressure from the outside.

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<sup>34</sup>As translated in C F B Naudé, “My Decision”, 23 September 1963, issued by the Christian Institute.

<sup>35</sup>Kerkbode, 9 October 1963.

While the Aasvoëlkop congregation was deeply opposed to Naudé's decision, there was still a great deal of affection for him and this was reflected in the farewell the church gave to him and Ilse. They held a special function to bid them goodbye, addressed by Professor N P van Wyk Louw, who had been a member of his church and had also served in the same Broederbond cell as Naudé.<sup>36</sup> The church editorial committee issued a farewell newsletter with glowing tributes to both. One of the contributions was written by Naudé's friend and the actuary of the Southern Transvaal synod, Willie Jonker. He wrote:

"In the course of years we often spoke together about many things... I can say one thing about him, and that is he is a man who goes his own way. He asked my opinion about many things ... but in his haste he never followed my advice. The worst was I could never be angry with him for not listening to me, because I knew that he was always trying to be honest with himself and with others.... I had to believe he had good reasons for ignoring my well-intentioned advice."<sup>37</sup>

Naudé gave his farewell sermon on 3 November 1963 at which he said:

"Even if you forget everything else, if you remember only that for the first four years of the life of this congregation, God sent you somebody who in the midst of many human failings continually tried to summon you and bind you to obedience to God's Word, then my ministry here has not been in vain."<sup>38</sup>

At the end of the service, the chairman of the Linden circuit called Beyers to come down from the pulpit. He handed him a document of dismissal, whereupon in symbolic and dramatic gesture, Beyers drew off his black minister's robe. One member of the congregation, Gie Kotze, later recalled what happened that morning:

"He delivered a magnificent sermon and the people were very touched, even those who

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<sup>36</sup>C F B Naudé, My land van hoop: die lewe van Beyers Naudé, p 70.

<sup>37</sup>W D Jonker, "Huldigingsuitgawe", Maandbrief van die NG Gemeente Aasvoëlkop, October - November 1963. My translation.

<sup>38</sup>C F B Naudé, "Flame of Fire and Sledgehammer", 3 November 1963, issued by the Christian Institute.

were against him. When he pulled off his gown, a man sitting in front of me who was a big shot in the Railways, and one of the men who blamed Beyers, he sat there and wept like a baby. Beyers was loved and so well-liked that even his enemies couldn't take it."<sup>39</sup>

Dr Frederik van Zyl Slabbert, former leader of the Progressive Federal Party and co-founder of the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (Idasa), was a young member of the Aasvoëlkop church. He later recalled the emotions evoked by Naudé's decision:

"Beyers was highly respected. There was something verging on adoration of him among establishment Afrikaners. He had been mixing with the who's who of Afrikanerdom, and he was their unquestioned spiritual and moral leader. It took enormous courage for him to leave. It's the kind of courage people don't normally respect or understand."<sup>40</sup>

The views of Kotze and Van Zyl Slabbert gave an indication of Naudé's stature in the Afrikaans community. His challenge to the establishment was therefore taken seriously. In all his endeavours and battles with the DRC in the years to come, he was never given any room to manoeuvre. He was clearly regarded as a potentially dangerous enemy and so he was denied any position from which he could possibly try to attract fellow-Afrikaners to his view. An example of this campaign was the Southern Transvaal synodical commission's decision, in November 1963, to refuse to review the removal of his minister status. The commission also adopted a resolution disapproving of the formation of the Christian Institute, claiming it would create opposition to the racial and ecumenical views of the DRC. Another indication of the hostility towards the Institute came a few days later when the general moderation of the DRC issued a statement likewise disapproving of the formation of the Christian Institute<sup>41</sup>, a step which was the beginning of a long battle between the DRC and the CI. Speaking later about his early hopes and aspirations for the Christian

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<sup>39</sup> G Kotze interview with C Clur, 1988.

<sup>40</sup> F Van Zyl Slabbert interview with C Clur, 1988.

<sup>41</sup> As quoted in Star, 18 November 1963.

Institute, Naudé said:

“Although I was still not fully aware what awaited me at the CI, I at least had enough awareness of the Afrikaner people and especially the DRC to realise that it would be a long and lonely road.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>C F B Naudé interview with P Randall, 1982.

### **3 A new ministry unfolds, 1963 - 1965**

The Christian Institute was in existence for only 14 years and this story is largely also the story of Beyers Naudé. It is beyond the scope of this study to detail all the events involving the CI, and the focus is on issues that had a direct impact on the theological and political thinking of Naudé and on the events which he influenced. The one overarching factor motivating Naudé during this period and beyond was his battle with the DRC over its support for apartheid, and in the early days he sought to retain a foothold in the church by attempting, unsuccessfully, to retain his status as a minister and later to at least serve as a church elder. His preoccupation with the DRC was matched also by his growing commitment to ecumenicism, and much of the CI's work in the early days revolved around these matters.

Beyond a plan to encourage Christians to study further and join discussion groups, the CI had no definite plan of action, and Naudé's only real goal was to present an alternative to the official theology of the DRC. Thus his work broadened out in several different directions in an almost haphazard fashion as he responded to new challenges and requests. His open, engaging personality meant that he was constantly being influenced by new people who entered his life. His political thinking was continually subject to change.

One of the crucial factors that brought Naudé to believe in the usefulness of inter-church contact and co-operation, or ecumenicism, was his experiences at the Cottesloe conference, and specifically his friendship with the WCC's Bob Bilheimer, who had played such a crucial role at Cottesloe. Fred van Wyk was an important intermediary, and there was regular contact between

the three when the CI was being established.<sup>1</sup> The offices of the CI were established in Dunwell House in Braamfontein, near the Johannesburg city centre, and close to the offices of the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), where Fred van Wyk still worked as assistant director. Van Wyk played an extremely important role in the practical arrangements of the CI in those early years, serving on the board of management and board of trustees and helping in the running of Pro Veritate, joining the CI as its full-time administrative director in April 1965.

Naudé, on his first trip to the US on behalf of the CI in April and May 1964 - as a guest of the US government - met again and consulted with Bilheimer and many other church representatives in Atlanta, Phoenix, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Rochester, New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Washington DC. The trip was important in that it gave him the chance to set up contact with organisations and individuals who would assist the CI in the coming years.<sup>2</sup> His commitment to ecumenicism had been evident from his first editorial in Pro Veritate in May 1962 when he asserted that churches could not operate in isolation. A year later, under pressure from the DRC to give up editorship of the journal, he had again shown his commitment to ecumenicism when he said Pro Veritate would only be prepared to cease publication if the DRC joined with the other churches in South Africa in creating a broad, ecumenical journal.<sup>3</sup>

From the inception of the CI, Naudé took every available opportunity to involve the organisation

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<sup>1</sup>AD 1752 (4cb), Fred van Wyk letter to C F B Naudé, 29 March 1963, Department of Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand Library, Fred van Wyk Papers. Van Wyk mentions that Bilheimer was being kept abreast of developments in South Africa.

<sup>2</sup>AD 1752, Van Wyk, (4cb2) Van Wyk-Naudé letter, 30 April 1964, and 4cb2(5a) Naudé-Van Wyk letter, 15 May 1964.

<sup>3</sup>Pro Veritate 15 May 1962 and 15 May 1963.



in international church deliberations. Thus, at the end of May 1964, he cut short his important visit to the US to attend the all-Africa Council of Churches' Mindolo Consultation on Race Relations in Kitwe, Zambia.<sup>4</sup> Naudé had shrewdly gauged the importance of the Mindolo conference, which coincided with the granting of independence to the former British colony of Northern Rhodesia. The mood of a new, post-colonial Africa swept through that consultation in its focus on South Africa and other southern African countries still under colonial rule. Mindolo was the first major church conference since Cottesloe to examine South Africa's race policies closely. While church leaders were divided in their support for measures such as sanctions and the armed struggle to end white rule in South Africa, all felt that discrimination on the basis of race could no longer be condoned.<sup>5</sup>

At Mindolo, Naudé began to believe that the English as well as the Afrikaans churches bore a major responsibility for the race problems in South Africa. Writing in Pro Veritate on his return to South Africa, he commented:

"This meeting was of considerable importance ... because ... it brought to light the weakness and guilt of the church. While this guilt was firstly seen as that of guilt by virtue of silence, ... we would mention another form of guilt: that of ambiguity. With regard to South Africa, the Afrikaans churches, if they want to be honest, must acknowledge that their guilt in the area of race relations is their silence about many forms of injustice which no Christian, in the light of the Word of God, can defend or approve of with a clear conscience.... With regard to the English-speakers, there is also a heavy burden of guilt - the shame of making decisions or policies which carry the message of justice, while in practice ... these are so watered down that they present no real challenge to the racial attitudes of thousands of their members."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>AD 1752, Van Wyk, (4cb2) Van Wyk-Naudé letter, 30 April 1964, (4cb2(5a)) Naudé-Van Wyk letter, 15 May 1964 and (4Dc7(b)) Provisional Committee of the All Africa Church Conference statement, 19 March 1963.

<sup>5</sup>As reported in Pro Veritate, 15 June 1964.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

This article was an early indication of a trend at the CI that would develop fully later. The CI would extend its challenge to all the churches in South Africa, not just to the DRC. But in the early years, Naudé and his colleagues had hoped to concentrate on winning over Afrikaans-speaking, Reformed Christians, and the tone of Pro Veritate is an indication of this.

The DRC and the Broederbond, in all their actions during this and later periods, made it clear they would not give Naudé any standing in the DRC. In February 1964, the Southern Transvaal DRC refused his appeal against the decision to deprive him of his status as a minister. When he was subsequently elected as an elder of the Parkhurst DRC in May 1964, two members of the Parkhurst church council resigned in protest and lodged appeals against his election with the Johannesburg circuit of the DRC. The Parkhurst minister, Jan van Rooyen, refused to take action against him. In July 1964 the Johannesburg circuit declared Naudé's election invalid, but there was an immediate appeal by six DRC ministers to the synodical commission. Among those who supported Naudé were his old friend Dr Willie Jonker, then chairman of the Johannesburg circuit, and the secretary, Dr A J Venter. Others included Ben Engelbrecht, Jan van Rooyen, and Roelf Meyer.<sup>7</sup>

The DRC's Southern Transvaal synodical commission refused to hear the appeals that had been lodged and referred the matter back to the Johannesburg circuit. The Johannesburg circuit in turn referred the matter back to the source of the dispute - the Parkhurst church council. In February 1965 the Parkhurst council under the leadership of Dr van Rooyen again approved Naudé's

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<sup>7</sup>DDBnC a-1 Buitengewone Sinodalekommissie Vergadering, 11 Februarie 1964, Sinodale Kommissie, N G Kerk, Suid Transvaal, Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk Archives, Pretoria and Star, 11 - 12 February 1964 13 August 1964, Vaderland, 24 June 1964.

election as an elder. He was inducted at a service in March 1965 after the church council had rejected a new complaint against him. The matter was then taken up by two other DRC ministers who lodged complaints with the synodical commission. Finally in May 1965 the commission declared his election as elder invalid.<sup>8</sup>

The dispute over Beyers Naudé's election to the church council was an indication of the depth of opposition to him in official church circles. As an elder Naudé could have been elected to attend church synods, and it appeared his opponents wanted to make quite certain that he would never again have an official platform from which to air his views. Naudé continued to insist that his removal from the church council was invalid in terms of church law.

Throughout 1964 the campaign against Naudé, waged in newspapers like Transvaler, showed no signs of easing. Under great pressure, a number of the approximately 100 DRC members who had initially joined the CI began resigning from the organisation, and the organisation's hope of reaching Afrikaners receded even further. Kerkbode also kept up the attack. In January 1964, for example, it hit out at the "alarming trend" of having a Roman Catholic (Mrs Margaret Malherbe) on the CI's board of management. Naudé wrote numerous letters to the Afrikaans press, defending himself against highly critical reports and letters.<sup>9</sup>

The criticism of Naudé and the CI continued in 1965 in Afrikaans church, media and political

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<sup>8</sup>DDBnC a-5 Notule van 'n buitengewone vergadering van die Sinodale Kommissie van die Suid-Transvaal, 26 May 1965 and DDBnC a-1 Notule van die 13de gewone vergadering van die Sinodale Kommissie van die Sinode van Suid Transvaal, 16 November 1965 and various reports in Star and Transvaler, May 1964 to May 1965.

<sup>9</sup>Kerkbode, 1 January 1964 and various reports in Star and Transvaler, 1964.

circles. Apart from writing letters to the media, Naudé had no opportunity to engage ordinary Afrikaans congregations or audiences since most DRC ministers were opposed or reluctant to invite him to preach at their churches. However, one of his surviving DRC-supporters was Roelf Meyer, then minister of the Belgravia congregation; through Meyer's efforts, the church council agreed that Naudé could address the church youth group, the *Kerk Jeugvereniging* (KJV). This caused a controversy in the Belgravia church and in the broader DRC. It was claimed even that Naudé's speech would influence the outcome of an upcoming provincial by-election. When Naudé arrived at the church to speak, several members of the church council had gathered, determined to prevent him from addressing the KJV. Two men then grabbed Naudé by the arms and marched him outside the church gate. The small number of KJV members who had turned up for the meeting departed with Naudé and Roelf Meyer to hold the meeting at a private house. The Johannesburg circuit of the DRC criticised the incident, but Kerkbode refused to do so. In an editorial it declared that the incident could not be seen as a very "happy" one, but went on to say:

"The fact is that our brother has taken standpoints and has involved himself with an institute which our church has spoken out against. We cannot deny someone the right to their views or to belong to organisations. But where church channels are searched for and are offered with the idea of promoting those ideas, then in our opinion there is reason for dissatisfaction and efforts must be made to ensure healthy order is maintained in the church."<sup>10</sup>

This editorial substantiates the argument that every effort was made to keep Naudé from holding any meaningful position in the church, and to deny him a platform from which to address DRC members.

From 1965 a new aspect was evident in Naudé's thinking. He began to call for the establishment of a confessing church movement in South Africa. The event that propelled him into thinking

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<sup>10</sup>Kerkbode, 17 March 1965. My translation.

along these lines was a police raid on the CI's offices and on his Greenside home in May 1965, at a time when he was in Europe on a fund-raising trip. During the raid, the security police claimed to be searching for documents relating to "communism and the ANC". The raid came three months after Pro Veritate had mentioned a book which was banned for distribution in South Africa. Police confiscated a few copies of Pro Veritate as well as copies of a critical report on South Africa by the British Council of Churches. The English press rose to Naudé's defence, accusing the police of becoming involved in a political vendetta and United Party politicians demanded an explanation for the raid in Parliament. The then Minister of Justice, John Vorster, said the purpose of the raid had been to gain evidence for an alleged contravention of the Suppression of Communism Act<sup>11</sup>, but no charges were brought.

In June 1965, while Naudé was still in Europe, the Jeppestown DRC church council demanded that the divisions being caused by the CI be considered at a special synod of the Southern Transvaal DRC.<sup>12</sup> This request was refused, but the synodical commission finally did hold a special meeting to discuss the various controversies surrounding Naudé and the CI. With Naudé unable to defend himself, the meeting approved a report which condemned the CI and any minister or church council member who belonged to it. This statement was distributed to all member churches in the Southern Transvaal area, and placed new pressure on DRC ministers to resign from the CI. On the basis of this report the Johannesburg circuit terminated Naudé's position as elder of the Parkhurst congregation.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Pro Veritate, 15 June 1965 and various reports in Star, May - June 1965.

<sup>12</sup>Star, 5 April 1965.

<sup>13</sup>DDBnC a-1 Notule van die 13de gewone vergadering van die Sinodale Kommissie van die Sinode van Suid Transvaal, 16 November 1965 and DDBnC a-5 Notule van die 14de gewone vergadering van die Sinodale Kommissie van die Sinode van Suid Transvaal, 26 April 1966.

Naudé had been out of the country when the news of the police action appeared in South African newspapers and he was concerned about the impact it would have on the CI. He had been reflecting over parallels between National Socialist Germany and South Africa and, while still abroad, wrote the first in a series of controversial articles for Pro Veritate in which he called for the creation of a confessing church movement in South Africa.

The German confessing church movement was to have an important influence on Naudé's thinking and so it is necessary to briefly describe it. In the Nazi years the German Evangelical Church, which represented the majority of Protestant Germans, collaborated with the Nazi regime because of the close historical links between church and state. But there was also a large group of pastors who rejected this compromise. In 1933, six thousand pastors joined an emergency league to reject the church leadership's support for the Third Reich. "Free synods" were held in various centres in Germany where the foundation for the confessing church movement was laid. The name "confessing church" came from the desire of the pastors to restore the true confession of the Evangelical Church and root out the false doctrine planted by the Nazis. These efforts culminated in the holding of a national synod in Barmen in 1934. The synod adopted the "Barmen Confession" - a six-point statement which reaffirmed Christ as the highest authority from whom all human freedom came and rejected the notion that the church should serve or be controlled by the state.<sup>14</sup>

Naudé's first article calling for a confessing church movement in South Africa appeared in the July

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<sup>14</sup>E C Helmreich, The German churches under Hitler: background struggle and epilogue, pp 157 - 162, 317 - 343, 463 - 469 and A C Cochrane, The church's confession under Hitler, pp 140 - 180.

1965 issue of Pro Veritate. He wrote:

"It should be clear to anyone who is familiar with the development of the church situation in the Third German Reich, and looking at events in our country affecting the church and the state, that there are more and more parallels between Nazi Germany and present-day South Africa.

"This parallel is not just found in the methods used in South Africa, not just in the creation and spreading of slogans in the press and on radio, but also in the general reaction of fear on the part of an increasing number of Christians. This fear leads to untenable compromises and unacceptable silences, and strengthens the power of an authority which ... because of the race philosophy underlying its policy, can do no other than to apply increasingly stronger measures against anyone - including the Churches and Christians - who act out of pure Biblical and Christian convictions and condemn unchristian elements in our race policies.

"If I think about all these signs, then it is clear that the time has arrived for a Confessing Church in South Africa.... I want to make it clear ... that this has nothing to do with establishing a new church ... but that it means that Christians of the various faiths ... should call on their churches to take an unambiguous stand and deliver a fearless witness based on the Word of God."<sup>15</sup>

Naudé, in this and subsequent articles, did not elaborate on parallels he saw between South Africa in the 1960s and the Third Reich, except for general observations about discriminatory race policies in both countries and the "fear" that he believed was being created in the churches. The situations in the two countries, in reality, were far from identical - a point he himself conceded in a further article on the subject.<sup>16</sup> His first article unleashed a great deal of protest in Afrikaans church circles, indicating a raw nerve had been struck.<sup>17</sup> Kerkbode described the Nazi label as "misplaced":

"Those who want to attribute to us the German sins of a quarter of a century ago can do so only out of ignorance or with other motives, but such a person has no hope of arousing a sincere feeling of guilt in us about sins which we have not committed.... Our church is not too proud to confess our failures and sins. But we find unfair and abhorrent the

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<sup>15</sup>Pro Veritate, 15 July 1965.

<sup>16</sup>ProVeritate, 15 November 1965.

<sup>17</sup>Pro Veritate 15 October 1965.

insinuation that we are being taken into tow by an evil dictatorship.”<sup>18</sup>

In another article, Naudé conceded that the situations in Nazi Germany and South Africa were not identical, but said that there were certain parallels. He compared Nazi Germany’s concern with racial purity and discrimination against Jews with the Afrikaner’s obsession to maintain a racially-pure volk. He described how the German Christians had used the Bible to forbid intermarriage between Aryans and Jews - and compared it with the Afrikaner’s use of Scripture to forbid racial mixing. He also argued that in Nazi Germany there was close identification between church and nation, and that eventually the church was expected to serve the ideals and aspirations of the people. He warned that letters and articles in newspapers in South Africa demonstrated this same tendency of wanting a close relationship between church and “volk”, and that writers expected the church to support the political vision of the people.<sup>19</sup>

In the final article on this issue, Naudé identified further parallels between the situations in the two countries. Highlighting intimidation in Nazi Germany, he asked:

“Is it necessary to quote examples of the situation in South Africa?... I think of scores of DRC ministers and laymen who have told me that they are frightened to speak up about their deepest Christian convictions ... because, if they are white, they will either be ostracised or lose their jobs ... or if they are black, face possible intimidation from the authorities.”

He also drew a parallel between the “sinful silence” of German Christians on the issue of the persecution of the Jews and injustices suffered by black people in South Africa. He ended with the claim that the confessing church in South Africa had already arrived. Its voice was still small

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<sup>18</sup>Kerkbode, 4 August 1965.

<sup>19</sup>Pro Veritate, 15 November 1965.



and uncertain, but there was already a new life and spirit in the church.<sup>20</sup>

The DRC's attitude to the call for a confessing church was summed up by Kerkbode editor Andries Treurnicht in a SABC radio broadcast:

"The intention is to create unrest among the Afrikaner in regard to his church membership and the unity of the *volk*. It is not the first attempt to estrange the Church and the *volk* or to replace the Afrikaans churches, with their particular role in the life of the *volk*, for another religious organisation.... The target is clear - control of the Afrikaners. And to get control of the Afrikaner, control of the churches is necessary."<sup>21</sup>

A confessing church community, on the scale of the German model, was never established in South Africa. Many individual members of the Christian Institute, both laymen and ministers, did oppose the "false doctrine" of apartheid, but their witness cannot be directly compared to the German situation where many pastors of the same church united behind the Barmen confession. Furthermore, a direct comparison between South Africa in the 1960s and Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s shows up vast differences, politically and theologically. John de Gruchy also asserted that a confessing church never materialised because the German model was both impractical and inappropriate for South Africa.<sup>22</sup> Naudé and Roelf Meyer conceded that the confessing church ideal was never fully achieved because the CI "could not muster enough support and a clear and strong vision of its aims and goals".<sup>23</sup> In some respects, however, the CI did fulfil the role of bringing "confessing" elements in the various churches together by giving

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<sup>20</sup>Pro Veritate, 15 December 1965.

<sup>21</sup>A P Treurnicht, Die Afrikaner en sy kerk. My translation.

<sup>22</sup>J W de Gruchy, The church struggle in South Africa, p 107.

<sup>23</sup>R Meyer and C F B Naudé, "The Christian Institute of South Africa: a short history of a quest for Christian liberation", in I Liebenberg, F Lortan, B Nel and G van der Westhuizen (eds), The long march: the story of the struggle for liberation in South Africa, p 170.

support to individual Christians in their struggle against injustice as well as backing important Christian-motivated projects. As De Gruchy put it: "What the CI did ... was to provide resources and an ad hoc supportive community for those who were at the cutting edge of the churches' witness. And this proved an immense strength to those involved."<sup>24</sup>

Towards the end of 1965, Afrikaner hostility towards Naudé and the CI continued and he was forced to step down as chairman of the governing body of his daughter's school, *Helpmekaar Hoër Meisieskool*.<sup>25</sup> In a final, desperate effort to counter this "organised campaign" as they saw it, CI supporter Ben Engelbrecht, Beyers Naudé, Fred van Wyk and another member of the Christian Institute, J D Smith, sent a letter to 1 500 DRC ministers in South Africa. The letter pointed to a "new development" in Afrikaner church circles:

"The development which is taking place before our eyes is that a point of view or attitude which is held by someone in respect of its permissibility, integrity, acceptability and Christian character, is no longer tested against the Word of God, but against a political ideology, which no matter how well-intentioned it originally may have been, ... becomes in many of the ways in which it is applied, increasingly less able to stand the test of the Word of God."<sup>26</sup>

Naudé's strong contention that the DRC was being corrupted by the political pressure that was being applied on anyone who was associated with the CI comes through in this letter, but it failed to drum up any significant support from the DRC ministers.

Before moving on to discuss another aspect of Naudé's work in the mid-1960s, it is necessary to

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<sup>24</sup>De Gruchy, *The church struggle*, p 107.

<sup>25</sup>C F B Naudé, *My land van hoop: die lewe van Beyers Naudé*, p 75.

<sup>26</sup>AD 1752 (4da(3)), Van Wyk, Translation, Open Letter to Ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church, November 1965.

provide some context of political and church attitudes towards the CI's witness in this period. The raid on the CI and Naudé's home in May 1965 had elicited sympathy from the English press and the United Party, and the tone of several editorials that appeared at this time was that of condemnation for the "organised campaign" being waged against Naudé in Nationalist circles. With the exception of a slightly more questioning stance displayed by Burger, the Afrikaans press, led by Transvaler, was virulently opposed to Naudé. An example of this unrelenting campaign was the publication in this newspaper of a list of all DRC ministers and members who were members of the CI in September 1965. Exactly how this list was procured and the manner of publication caused Kerkbode to word vague ethical misgivings, but it nevertheless approved of the publication of this list because it gave "a much clearer view of this contentious organisation" by virtue of identifying who supported it.<sup>27</sup>

Until he left the DRC in 1963, Naudé's most meaningful contacts had been almost exclusively with people from an Afrikaans, Reformed background. With the opening of the CI, he became exposed increasingly to Christians from other backgrounds, and many of these people had a profound impact on his thinking. The CI, when it started, concentrated on establishing prayer and study groups and had an initial membership of about 150 people. By the end of 1964 the figure had risen to more than 1 000, but most were white English-speakers. In 1965 the CI decided to look for a full-time black fieldworker to increase awareness of the Christian Institute in the black community. Young white ministers, such as James Moulder and Danie van Zyl, joined the Institute and developed a close relationship with Naudé. In the 14 years of its existence, the CI was to have a high turnover of staff and board members. Some left when they moved to new jobs and towns,

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<sup>27</sup>Various issues Star and Transvaler, May - November 1965, Burger September 1965, Kerkbode 29 September 1965.

but many broke away because they were opposed to the direction the CI was taking or did not like its organisational structures. Naudé's style as director dictated the path the CI took. Many of Naudé's former colleagues questioned the impulsive way he hired staff and felt he often displayed poor judgment of character. There were several unsuccessful appointments over the years but Naudé also attracted a number of very talented people to the CI.<sup>28</sup>

The composition of the board of management in 1965 reflected the mixture of South Africans who supported the Institute's work. The English churches and the Christian Council of South Africa were well represented by people such as Basil Brown and Bill Burnett, while individual Afrikaans Reformed ministers still enjoyed a high profile, notably Ben Engelbrecht and Albert Geyser. Notable by their absence from the board, however, were any Afrikaner ministers in important positions of leadership in their churches. Black representation on the board was expanded to include ministers J C M Mabata and S A Mohono, in addition to long-time supporter E E Mahabane, but the CI was still largely unknown in mainstream black church circles, a reflection of Beyers's own obscurity among these groups.<sup>29</sup> His earliest meaningful contact with Africans, beyond the handful of black ministers who were members of the CI, was with the African Independent (AI) Churches, and from 1965 his dealings with AI ministers became an important new dimension in his work.

The separatist or independent churches had their origins in black Christians' disillusionment and

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<sup>28</sup>C Clur interviews with D van Zyl, B Engelbrecht, T Kotze, B Brown and H Kleinschmidt, 1988.

<sup>29</sup>AD 1752 (4Ab1), Van Wyk, List of members on Board of Management, elected 27 August 1964.

unhappiness with the missionary churches, and their desire to pursue their faith unhindered by white control. Broadly, they fell into two categories, the Ethiopian churches which often retained much of the doctrine and liturgy of the missionary churches but stressed the idea of “African churches for Africans”, and the Zionist groups which emphasised the charisma and strength of their prophet leaders, incorporated some traditional African ideas and placed great importance on the power of the Holy Spirit, faith healing and baptism by immersion. Members of separatist churches generally came from the very poorest communities, and their ministers and prophets, often with only a few years of schooling, usually eked out a precarious living.

The CI’s involvement with the AI churches began in December 1964 when a number of independent church ministers, led by Z J Malukazi from the Ciskei, asked for help to establish a theological school and set up study courses.<sup>30</sup> Naudé’s involvement with these churches was to absorb a great deal of his time, and spanned more than 10 years. In many ways Naudé failed to reach his goals in helping the indigenous churches. However, his eagerness to respond to their unexpected appeal for help was typical of his enthusiastic approach to new projects. Naudé and the CI were pioneers in recognising the need to reach out to these rapidly-growing churches, isolated from mainstream Christianity, which already had millions of followers in the 1960s. His daily contact with these black churchmen was also to have a direct impact on his political thinking in the years ahead and made him increasingly supportive of black-led initiatives.

Overseas church organisations were impressed that AI members had enough confidence in Naudé

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<sup>30</sup>C F B Naudé, Director’s report of the Christian Institute, August 1964 to July 1965 and Naudé, My land van hoop, p 83.

and the CI to ask for help.<sup>31</sup> The AI churches' refusal to approach mainstream churches for assistance was a reflection on these churches inability to perform this aspect of their Christian mission. There was a history of tension between AI churches and missionaries because mainstream churches frowned on unorthodox practices. The fact that AI leaders felt comfortable in approaching the CI was a testimony to Naudé's non-judgmental, welcoming style. Martin West, who spent two years under the auspices of the Christian Institute studying the separatist phenomenon in Soweto, believed it was significant that the African independent churches trusted Naudé sufficiently to approach him:

"The AI churches had been going for a hundred years at that time and had a reputation of being ... very cautious and sceptical about involvement with whites and mission churches. They felt inferior and were always worried about being looked down upon by the conventional churches. It is quite extraordinary and an enormous tribute to Beyers that a number of them were prepared to co-operate with the CI when they were not prepared to do so with others.... I attributed this to two factors. Firstly, the CI was not a mission organisation, not a denominational organisation, as the AI churches were cautious about falling under the wing of a particular denomination. The fact that it was an ecumenical body was one of the attractions. The second factor was the political aspect - the fact that the CI was non-racial and had got some political flak for being non-racial."<sup>32</sup>

Naudé felt that to achieve anything with the AI churches it was necessary for them to maintain their independence and he agreed to assist them, provided they set up their own organisation with which the CI could deal. In January 1965 an exploratory conference attended by about 75 church leaders was held in the township of Daveyton, east of Johannesburg. A resolution was adopted giving "our fullest confidence to the Christian Institute of Southern Africa and inviting its director, the Rev C F B Naudé to guide us through every difficulty in the Christian field". Two months later

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<sup>31</sup>Naudé, Director's report of the Christian Institute, 1964 - July 1965. He makes it clear that his European fundraising trip of May - June 1965 was primarily devoted to raising funds among European churches and missionary societies for the work of AI ministers.

<sup>32</sup>Martin West interview with C Clur, 1988 and K I Brown, "The independent churches of South Africa: a progress report", Religion in life, pp 80 - 81.

the CI's board of management officially agreed to help the AI churches, and in June 1965 the African Independent Churches Association (AICA) was formed in Queenstown in the Eastern Cape. The CI and AICA worked out an ambitious programme for setting up Bible study correspondence courses. A committee to coordinate assistance efforts was set up, consisting of representatives of the CI, AICA, the Christian Council (forerunner of the South African Council of Churches) and other black churches. Els te Siepe ran a parallel women's group.<sup>33</sup>

James Moulder and later Danie van Zyl took much of the responsibility for AICA, but the work also absorbed a great deal of Naudé's time - solving internal disputes, fundraising and arranging conferences. The major problem which was to lead to the collapse of AICA by 1974 was related to disputes over money and position. From the start Naudé insisted that members of the AICA board of management should be given financial compensation for travelling to meetings. For people with little or no fixed income, representation on the board was to become very important and lead to endless disputes and the formation of breakaway organisations. West remarked:

"In my view there was a lot of financial mismanagement in AICA, not in a criminal sense, but in the way things were organised, which was part of the downfall of AICA.... The men were always fighting over money ... The expenses paid to the men to attend meetings were something they could not afford to lose and it added a dimension to AICA politics. It wasn't just being thrown out of the presidency or the board of management, it was actually the loss of the money. Money was the root of evil in the whole thing... The women ... did more practical things with their money, the men didn't. Much of it was used on travelling about and on politicking at a local level...

"One of Beyers's strengths and weaknesses was that he could never say no. I was there often where he would say: 'There is no more money, it's finished, you've used it all up', and they wouldn't believe him, and the money would come. Every time he delivered the goods it made it worse, he just could not say no. It stemmed out of a positive aspect of

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<sup>33</sup>Pro Veritate, 15 April 1965, Pro Veritate, 15 October 1966 and M West, Bishops and prophets in a black city, p 145.

his character, but it became a negative thing.”<sup>34</sup>

This aspect of Naudé’s personality, his desire to give and to help to the point of excess, had negative consequences in some respects and it was a pattern of behaviour repeated in the CI itself. But Naudé’s involvement with AICA was significant in that it was his first experience of close interaction with a black organisation. His open, sympathetic approach enabled him to develop relationships of trust with many of the individuals involved in the separatist churches. Danie van Zyl has described this aspect of Naudé’s personality:

“I think the one outstanding feature of Beyers is the way in which he was trusted. People believed in him and they trusted him. I saw this specifically in terms of the black people who really trusted Beyers. Regardless of the conflict within the AICA groups, they all trusted him.... Beyers was good at holding things together when it became very difficult. He would call them all in and they would sit and talk. They would not resolve a thing, but we would say we won’t do anything until we have at least met again. And then Beyers would be overseas. And in four months’ time they would still be there... Even when Beyers had little to do with this whole [AICA] thing, because he got so involved in other things, he remained the important figure in the background.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>M West-Clur interview.

<sup>35</sup>D van Zyl-Clur interview.



#### 4 Changing direction, 1966 - 1968

By the mid-1960s Beyers accepted the fact that the CI had not made progress with winning over DRC members and realised that his organisation would have to find a new direction if it wished to become relevant in South Africa. Yet he had no clear strategy and in the next few years the CI's work would branch out in a random, almost erratic way. However, Naudé's actions and the CI's programme must be seen in the context of the political climate in South Africa. The decade from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, the core years of the Christian Institute, was also the era of grand apartheid, when very tight political control was exercised by the state. Beyers Naudé and other staff members were constantly challenged to respond to crises that arose from this situation.

Some of Naudé's closest associates felt that the "mushrooming" of the CI was a fault and that Naudé failed to consolidate sufficiently. Peter Randall, who worked closely with both the CI and the SACC in the late 1960s and early 1970s on the Spro-Cas project, said later:

"One of the greatest strengths of the CI was that it was constantly grappling at the theoretical and practical level with issues as they arose, experimenting with styles of organisation. But if I had a major criticism of the CI, it would be ... that at times it seemed to be too open to every new influence, to new demands made upon it. I was considerably frustrated at times at the CI's apparent inability to set a clear order of priorities."<sup>1</sup>

The style of the CI's operation reflected to some extent Naudé's own personality; he has been described as "konsekwent",<sup>2</sup> displaying stubbornness and a step-by-step logic that led him from one action to another. In the early years he travelled extensively to promote the CI. Early in 1966, he undertook a four-week trip to the Cape Province where he visited all the major towns

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<sup>1</sup>C F B Naudé interview with P Randall, 1982.

<sup>2</sup>P Randall interview with C Clur, 1988.

1966, he undertook a four-week trip to the Cape Province where he visited all the major towns and spoke at various meetings. Gradually the focus of the CI would swing away from Afrikaners and the white community in general to concern itself more with black issues, Naudé's method of operation never really changed. As head of a very small organisation with limited means of communication he had to spread himself very thin, making contact with as many people as possible. Extensive travelling, speaking engagements and meetings with numerous groups and individuals became the pattern of his life. By September 1966 membership of the CI stood at about 1 700 and discussion groups had grown from 33 to 45. Bible study material was also issued to many churches. The CI also initiated several public symposia where topical issues were discussed.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of the CI's concern about the plight of black South Africans, the CI was still a white-dominated organisation which relied on the support of mainly white English-speakers. Black membership was small and Afrikaner support was falling. Indeed there was no let-up in the opposition from within mainstream Afrikanerdom to the CI. Opponents continued with their insinuations that Naudé was a communist - a rumour that was fuelled when it was revealed in February 1966 that communist trialist Bram Fischer had sent him a letter while on the run from the police. The letter was intercepted before it reached Naudé, but this did not deter police from conducting a thorough search of his home on the pretext that they were looking for the note.<sup>4</sup>

One major ecumenical initiative in which Naudé was involved in the mid-1960s was the

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<sup>3</sup>C F B Naudé, Director's report of the Christian Institute, August 1965 to July 1966.

<sup>4</sup>Star, 23 February 1966, and C F B Naudé interview with C Clur, 1988.

ineffective body, ill-equipped to deal with the critical developments facing the South African churches, and it was not taken particularly seriously by the member churches. This troubled church leaders, and after the retirement of Basil Brown as general secretary, they searched for a successor who had vision, an understanding of the problems facing South Africa and influence among the English-speaking churches. In 1966, Bill Burnett, Anglican Bishop of Bloemfontein, was appointed the new general secretary. Burnett, assisted by involved lay community leaders like Fred van Wyk, took the lead in restructuring the Council, later to become known as the South African Council of Churches (SACC), while behind the scenes Naudé also made an important contribution. The restructuring of the council enabled it to play a greater role in the socio-political debate in the years that followed.<sup>5</sup> A sign of the growing co-operation between the Christian Institute and the Christian Council (and later by extension the SACC) was the decision to affiliate the CI to the Council during 1966, and Naudé served on the SACC executive for many years.<sup>6</sup>

In July 1966 Naudé and Bill Burnett attended the World Council of Churches conference on Church and Society in Geneva, which was to set the debate on Christian involvement in social issues for the next decade and where the foundations were laid for the WCC's strong anti-apartheid stance and its support for liberation movements such as the ANC. Naudé was initially invited as an ordinary participant, but in June 1966 he was asked by WCC secretary Paul Albrecht

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<sup>5</sup>The council was renamed the South African Council of Churches (SACC) in 1968, to emphasise that it had been established by the churches for the purpose of inter-church co-operation - J W de Gruchy, The church struggle in South Africa, pp 115 - 116 and R Meyer and C F B Naudé, "The Christian Institute of South Africa: a short history of a quest for Christian liberation", in I Liebenberg, F Lortan, B Nel and G van der Westhuizen (eds), The long march: the story of the struggle for liberation in South Africa, p 168 and C F B Naudé-Randall interview.

<sup>6</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview and AD 1752 (4cB3) Christian Institute of Southern Africa, Minutes of meeting of Board of Management, 27 September 1966, Department of Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand Library, Fred van Wyk Papers.

to act as one of the convenors on the working group dealing with “Action of the Church in Society”. Naudé readily took on the job; the invitation to get involved at a high level at the conference reflected his growing status in international ecumenical circles.<sup>7</sup>

In its final statement the WCC conference condemned racism in churches, urged Christians to oppose the myth of racial superiority, and demanded that all races have equal rights in society. It laid the foundation for the adoption in 1970 of the WCC’s Programme to Combat Racism (PCR), which was to cause upheaval for member churches in South Africa. At the conference, the leadership of the churches had to grapple with the question of Christian participation in revolutionary struggles.<sup>8</sup>

Naudé placed great significance on the WCC Geneva conference, and it influenced the contribution he was to make on crucial issues in South Africa, including the drafting of the “Message to the people of South Africa” two years later. While still in Geneva, he gave an interview to a newspaper which already showed the influence the conference was having on his thinking. He stressed that there was growing consensus in world ecumenical circles for action to be taken against not only racial discrimination, but economic injustice.<sup>9</sup> His view of the conference was spelled out in similar terms later when he reflected:

“I realised that a very important development was taking place because it was leading us to the wider area of social and economic justice, of getting to grips with the deeper roots of the situation of racial oppression and injustice in South Africa. It helped me to expand

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<sup>7</sup>AD 1752 (4Cb1), Van Wyk, P Albrecht letter to C F B Naudé, 4 June 1996 and C F B Naudé letter to P Albrecht, 13 June 1966.

<sup>8</sup>A J van der Bent (ed), Breaking down the walls: World Council of Churches statements and actions on racism, 1948-1985, p 15 and De Gruchy, The church struggle, p 117.

<sup>9</sup>Rand Daily Mail, 27 July 1966.

and widen my thinking of how we would have to deal with the racial situation.”<sup>10</sup>

In 1966 Naudé also travelled to the Netherlands and extended his contacts in Dutch church and political circles. One of his strongest supporters was Professor J Verkuyl, an influential figure in the Gereformeerde Kerk in Holland. Verkuyl had spent many years in the former Dutch colony of Indonesia as a missionary, where he had been concerned with the problems of racism and the struggle for power at the time the Indonesian people were fighting for independence. Verkuyl, who had returned to the Netherlands in 1963 and who was then working as general secretary of the Netherlands Missionary Council, believed that Naudé and the CI were tackling the very issues which the world churches ought to be confronting. He was influential in helping to lead his own conservative Gereformeerde Kerk out of its isolation, and he helped mobilise support and interest for Naudé during his Dutch visits. Largely as a result of efforts of men like Verkuyl, Naudé was introduced to prominent politicians, journalists and churchmen during his trips abroad. Naudé’s fluency in Dutch and his Afrikaner Reformed background all contributed to the favourable impression he made among the Dutch churchmen. He so impressed them that the Hervormde Kerk promised to donate a sizeable sum for the CI’s work with the African Independent churches.<sup>11</sup>

Another of Naudé’s staunch Dutch supporters was Hervormde Kerk theologian Jone Bos. Bos was closely involved in raising funds for AICA as part of the Dutch churches’ “Kom oor de Brug” fundraising campaign to assist South Africans opposed to apartheid. He later remarked:

“Like most of Beyers’s Dutch friends, I was brought up in a Reformed family ... and we

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<sup>10</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

<sup>11</sup>J Verkuyl, J Bos, and B van Kaam interviews with C Clur, 1988 and Star, 6 July 1966.

had a very friendly attitude toward the Boers... During one of Naudé's first trips to the Netherlands, Professor Verkuyl phoned me and said: '...Dominee Beyers Naudé will be at the synod of the Hervormde Kerk. I am bringing him there and I would like you to be there too.' That afternoon a lot of important people, including a man from the Netherlands Bible Society, the chief editor of *Trouw*, and one member of parliament met Naudé. They were very impressed and said they wanted to help. And that was the start.... Verkuyl told me that the CI needed money and I was appointed a sort of secretary to an unofficial committee to help the CI.... In the 1960s Naudé would come to the Netherlands two or three times a year and he always came for money and help."<sup>12</sup>

In the latter part of 1966, on Naudé's return from Europe, the Christian Institute and the Christian Council began to consider holding regional conferences to consider the implications of the WCC conference resolutions for South Africa. Although co-operation was steadily improving with the English churches, there was no contribution forthcoming from the Afrikaans churches, and the tension between the CI and the DRC continued to build up. One of the flaws Naudé identified in the DRC's campaign against the CI was its refusal to subject the Institute to a thorough theological examination. In the three years of its existence, and in the context of Naudé's battle to retain his status as a minister and remain an elder in the church, the CI had repeatedly asked the DRC to substantiate its criticism; in anticipation of the DRC's general synod which was meeting that year, the board of management of the Christian Institute in May 1966 issued a formal invitation to the DRC to investigate the CI. In his letter to the secretary of the general moderation responsible for arranging the 1966 general synod, Naudé assured the church that the CI "welcomes any investigation by the DRC into the aims and activities of the Christian Institute and that there is nothing the Christian Institute desires more than that the NG Kerk should judge the Institute on the basis of the only criterion which should bear weight with the Church:

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<sup>12</sup>J Bos-Clur interview.

Scripture and Confession".<sup>13</sup>

The general synod, which met in Bloemfontein in October 1966, passed a resolution on the CI, but based its decision on a report compiled by the general moderation. Taking "note" of Naudé's letter of invitation, the synod accepted, with only one dissenting vote, a resolution declaring the CI an extra-ecclesiastical organisation that acted in competition with the church and professed to perform the task "better than the church did itself". The resolution also noted that the CI, by including Roman Catholics within its membership, was denying the Protestant confession. The synod claimed that the CI opposed the DRC's mission policy, had a "highly questionable church concept and view of ecumenicism", and was creating discord in congregations. The synod accused the CI of having "heretical tendencies" (*dwaalrigting*) and instructed office-bearers and members of the DRC to withdraw from the CI "out of loyalty to their church".<sup>14</sup>

Naudé and three other members of the CI who were also members of the DRC informed the church that they would not resign from the CI. The statement sent to the DRC, signed by Beyers Naudé, Ben Engelbrecht, Fred van Wyk, and the CI's publicity officer Dr Bruckner de Villiers, declared:

"It is our deepest desire to remain members of the NGK, the church of our fathers, but we do not find it in our hearts and consciences to resign as members of the Christian Institute and thus deny the Scriptural truths and principles for which the Institute stands.... We find the fact that the NGK could take such a decision a most disturbing indication that the Church is in the process of removing itself from the reign of Christ and lapsing into

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<sup>13</sup>Letter from the director of the CI to *Bree Moderatuur*, 28 May 1966, as published in *Handelinge van die tweede vergadering van die Algemene Sinode van die NG Kerk*, October 1966, my translation, and AD 1752 (4D1a1), Van Wyk, *Memorandum* on "The Christian Institute and the NG Kerk", 1966.

<sup>14</sup>*Handelinge van die Algemene Sinode van die N G Kerk*, October 1966. My translation.

the grip of human arbitrariness.”<sup>15</sup>

The DRC’s decision brought support for the CI from the Christian Council. Its statement reflected the disparity between the attitudes of English and Afrikaans churches in South Africa and expressed “complete confidence in the Christian Institute as a sincere attempt on the part of individual Christians of all denominations and races to meet, study and confer together.”<sup>16</sup> Kerkbode, on the other hand, welcomed the synod’s decision and claimed that the “liberal” Institute of Race Relations - probably a reference to Fred van Wyk’s involvement - had been responsible for the founding of the CI.<sup>17</sup>

After a formal investigation of the synod’s decision, the Parkhurst church council issued a statement rejecting that action be taken against Beyers and Ilse Naudé, and Ben Engelbrecht and his wife. The council said it had based its decision on the DRC’s own Church Order, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Netherlands Confession, and argued that a member could only be censured if he had sinned against God. Formal complaints were laid by DRC members against the Parkhurst council, but despite this and accusations that it was guilty of “mutiny”, the council, under the leadership of Dr Jan van Rooyen, refused to back down.<sup>18</sup>

The synod’s decision had the desired effect of forcing most of the few remaining DRC members

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<sup>15</sup>AD 1752 (4D1a1), Van Wyk, as quoted in Memorandum on “The Christian Institute”.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Kerkbode, 2 November 1966. My translation.

<sup>18</sup>AD 1752 (4dA1) Statement by the DRC Parkhurst church council, February 1967, and Star, 20 June 1967 and 14 August 1967, 23 February 1968.



to leave the CI, but it also helped marshal support for the CI in South Africa and, perhaps even more important, in international church circles. Overseas Reformed churches were in effect forced to choose between the CI, which preached against racial injustice and in favour of Christian unity, and the DRC, which at its 1966 synod, in accepting a commission sub-report on "*Ras, Volk en Nasie in die lig van die Skrif*", reaffirmed its support for apartheid and the development of racially separate DRC churches.<sup>19</sup>

Professor Bennie Keet believed the DRC had made a major error in the strong stand it had taken against the CI. He commented at the time:

"It has been an unwise step for the Synod to force the issue, and it will cause a great deal of ill-feeling and harm. The resolution taken by the General Synod of the DRC is quite wrong.... The whole objection to the CI is that it wants to work with other churches. I am very sorry that the step was taken by the Synod because it tells members of my church what to do and think. It is against the freedom of thought of the entire church."<sup>20</sup>

Typical of the attitude towards the DRC's decision on the CI in Dutch church circles was an editorial in the Dutch newspaper Trouw which said:

"It is not a theological decision.... It is a political decision in favour of the policy of apartheid of the South African government. The synod has set foot on an iniquitous road which can only lead to further disaster."<sup>21</sup>

The Hervormde Kerk in the Netherlands, the spiritual "mother" church of the DRC, was equally disturbed. Cabling for clarification, the board of the general synod of the Hervormde Kerk said: "Relations between the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk and the NG Kerk will become so strained that it is questionable whether the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk can continue to recognise the

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<sup>19</sup>Handelinge van die Algemene Sinode van die NG Kerk, October 1966.

<sup>20</sup>1752 (4D1a1), Van Wyk, as quoted, in Memorandum on "The Christian Institute".

<sup>21</sup>Trouw, 1 November 1966. (My translation)

NG Kerk as a church".<sup>22</sup> The extent of Dutch concern about the synod's decision was evident when 14 leading academics from the Free University and the Theological Seminary in Kampen wrote a letter of protest to the DRC.<sup>23</sup>

The strong negative reaction from the Dutch churches and universities had serious implications for the DRC. The latter placed a high premium on academic exchange between South African universities and Dutch institutions such as the Free University, and valued the opportunities its ministers and theologians had to study abroad. During the course of the next decade the doors would close. As fewer opportunities arose for white ministers to study abroad, their places were taken by ministers of the Dutch Reformed "daughter" churches, and Naudé, together with figures like Professor Verkuyl at the Free University, were influential in opening doors for these black and coloured ministers.<sup>24</sup> The DRC's action also led to increasing support for the work of the CI from churches in other countries. In the next decade, the budget and operations of the CI would expand rapidly, largely as a result of the growing sponsorship from the overseas churches.

Kerkbode defended the synod's ruling, but Naudé warned at the time that the DRC's inability to provide scriptural grounds for its decision had damaged its credibility:

"This decision has placed the church on a road the outcome of which is uncertain. This is not in the first place about the Christian Institute, but about a cardinal principle which determines whether the church wishes to be and will remain a church. The question is - what is the yardstick which is recognised by the church as the highest and final authority ... the Word of God, or the word of a synod?"

Naudé accused Kerkbode editor Andries Treurnicht of basing his attacks on political rather than

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<sup>22</sup>As quoted in Star, 5 November 1966.

<sup>23</sup>As quoted in Star, 15 December 1966.

<sup>24</sup>J Verkuyl-Clur interview.

## Biblical principles:

“The editor has used a church newspaper to promote a decidedly party-political view of the Christian Institute, covered by a thin veneer of religion.... Our deepest concern is that Kerkbode has been used as the launching pad for the flight from Church to politics. In this exercise, Dr Treurnicht has been regularly and faithfully supported by Dr J.D. [Koot] Vorster.... It was these two brothers (brothers-in-arms in the ideological struggle they are conducting), who in their ... teamwork in the church, are so close to the views of a current political extremism which is being carried further and further into our Church and which is going to plunge our Church further and further into misery.”<sup>25</sup>

The decision taken at the DRC's 1966 synod had been intended to block the influence of Naudé in the church, but increasingly the international church movement, including the Reformed churches, sided with the CI's stand against apartheid. The implication of this was growing isolation for the DRC. The DRC had severed ties with the World Council of Churches, but it was still sensitive to criticism from the Reformed churches overseas. The DRC was shaken in 1967 by the strong condemnation of apartheid issued by the Reformed Church of America. In reply, the DRC's director of information, Dr Willem Landman, wrote a book asking for “understanding” of his church's policies.<sup>26</sup> It later emerged that the Department of Information provided financial backing for the book, which caused further embarrassment for the DRC.<sup>27</sup>

An attempt was made to promote official SA government policy at the 1968 Uppsala assembly of the World Council of Churches which focused, among other things, on South Africa's racial policies. During the conference South African agents dropped two Department of Information “fact sheets” outside the door of each Uppsala delegate, and also left copies of Landman's book. Referring to the incident on his return to South Africa, Naudé said:

“This action caused very serious harm to the witness the DRC wished to give through the

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<sup>25</sup>Pro Veritate, 15 August 1967. My translation.

<sup>26</sup>W A Landman, A plea for understanding: a reply to the Reformed church in America.

<sup>27</sup>F E O'Brien Geldenhuys, In die stroomversnellings: vyftig jaar van die NGK, p 75.

book. Delegates were also deeply upset by the fact that this gave the impression that while the DRC had withdrawn from the World Council - and had therefore officially ceased ... dialogue - it was now presenting its case through unknown individuals.”<sup>28</sup>

In an acceleration of the world church campaign against apartheid, the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES) at Lunteren in September 1968 also considered race issues. The synod, at which Naudé was present, issued a statement, which was couched in moderate language, but posed a direct challenge to apartheid theologians by declaring that Christian unity should be expressed through “common worship, including holy communion, among Christians regardless of race”. The resolutions attracted widespread publicity because they directly confronted the two white South African members of the RES, the Gereformeerde Kerk and the DRC, with the need to reconsider their race policies. The CI endorsed the Lunteren resolutions, calling on the DRC to do the same; the latter put the issue on the back-burner by appointing the Landman Commission. This delayed issuing a report until 1974. The DRC faced more discomfort when one of its “daughter” churches, the Sendingkerk, endorsed the Lunteren resolutions. The DRC’s refusal to reassess its support for apartheid led to tension and conflict with the daughter churches, and Naudé became drawn into this dispute.<sup>29</sup>

It has been necessary to digress chronologically to trace and explain the consequences of the DRC’s conservative stand on apartheid. To return to Naudé in 1966: another event related to the CI’s operation was the libel suit which Naudé and Albert Geyser instituted against Adriaan Pont. Pont, a professor of Christian History at the University of Pretoria, was one of the CI’s fiercest

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<sup>28</sup>Van der Bent (ed), Breaking down the walls, p 15, Rand Daily Mail, 27 July 1968.

<sup>29</sup>AD 1752 (42D), Van Wyk, Christian Institute memorandum on the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, 6 September 1968, and P Walshe, Church versus state in South Africa: the case of the Christian Institute, p 80.

critics, and as early as 1964 he had attacked Beyers Naudé and Albert Geyser during a congress on communism held in Pretoria. Pont continued his criticism in 1965 in a series of articles which were published in the *Hervormde Kerk's* journal. He claimed that the CI had openly sided with "communist-inspired and directed Pan-Africanism". One article claimed: "The Christian Institute is in its deepest essence a carefully planned and well-equipped front organisation - a means whereby leftist and communist thoughts are being spread into the South African church world." Another article dealt with the Mindolo church conference which Naudé and Albert Geyser had attended in 1964. It said that the "fellow-theologians" who had participated in the conference had "sold themselves to the Devil" and that they were "traitors to God and their churches, traitors of their country and people". Pont also insisted that the CI's membership drive, based on the principle of establishing small "circles", was similar to the "communist cell system" and later accused the two men directly of supporting communism. They threatened to sue unless an apology was published, but Pont was unrepentant.<sup>30</sup>

The case against Pont began in the Rand Supreme Court on 15 February 1967 and lasted 40 days. Naudé and Geyser demanded R40 000 damages from Pont. The plaintiffs argued that it was clear Pont had been referring to them in several articles when he accused "fellow-theologians" of being communists and supporters of sabotage, war and revolution against South Africa. On 9 June 1967 Mr Justice Trollip awarded Naudé and Geyser R10 000 each plus costs, then the highest amount ever awarded for libel in South Africa. Pont's appeal was also later dismissed with costs.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>*Sunday Times*, 3 December 1965, *Die Hervormer*, "Christenne wat die Christendom Haat", p 8, *Pro Veritate*, 15 January 1967.

<sup>31</sup>National Archives Repository, TAB 496325927, Batch no 008350740000, Ref 1705/1966, A Geyser and C F B Naudé vs A Pont and various reports in *Star*, February, March 1967 and South African Institute of Race Relations, A survey of race relations in South Africa,

The Pont issue was, in the greater scheme of things, a distraction for Naudé's work at the CI, but Naudé and Geyser believed an important issue was at stake and they were vindicated by the courts. The conflict is an example of how Naudé responded and acted on crises as they occurred. His main preoccupation, however, remained challenging apartheid, and the CI increasingly co-operated with the SACC on this issue.

One joint SACC-CI project which helped influence the direction of Naudé's life was the issuing in 1968 of a Christian declaration challenging apartheid, entitled "A message to the people of South Africa". The background to this was that in 1967, following Naudé and Burnett's participation at the WCC's 1966 Geneva conference, regional church consultations, arranged by the Christian Council and the CI, were held around South Africa to discuss the implications of the Geneva decision. The meetings culminated in a national conference on church and society held in Johannesburg in February 1968. The conference, which had considerable input from the laity as well as from theologians, tried to define how South Africa could become a more just society. The SACC, also in response to Geneva, established a theological commission to consider "what obedience to God requires [of] the Church in her witness to her unity in Christ in South Africa".<sup>32</sup> The final report, "A message to the people of South Africa", was compiled by John Davies, Ben Engelbrecht and Calvin Cook, who were also leading members of the CI. The "Message" was finally released at a press conference in September 1968. The six-page document sought to show that apartheid was contrary to the Christian message and that Christ had made reconciliation between people possible and essential:

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1967, p 11 and South African Institute of Race Relations, A survey of race relations in South Africa, 1968, p 20.

<sup>32</sup>De Gruchy, The church struggle, p 118.

“The Gospel of Jesus Christ declares that God is love; separation is the opposite force of love ... apartheid is a view of life and of man which insists that we find our identity in dissociation and distinction from each other; it rejects as undesirable the reconciliation which God is giving to us by His Son; it reinforces distinctions which the Holy Spirit is calling the people of God to overcome; it calls good evil. This policy is, therefore, a form of resistance to the Holy Spirit.”

The “Message” did not simply reject apartheid as unchristian, but warned that the system of racial segregation presented a threat to the church itself. Christians could not ignore what was happening in the wider society and were “under an obligation to live in accordance with the Christian understanding of man and of community, even if this be contrary to some of the customs and laws of this country”.<sup>33</sup>

The “Message” was attacked by the Prime Minister, John Vorster, and came in for criticism from the DRC, and Baptists who said it confused man’s eternal salvation with political issues. Later, a radical, black critique of the “Message” emerged that questioned the document for being a white initiative which had stopped short of understanding the gospel as a call for the oppressed to take their future into their own hands. But at the time the “Message” represented a significant challenge to many Christians and churches.<sup>34</sup>

The conflict between Vorster and the drafters of the “Message” signified a worsening of relations between the state and the CI-SACC. Vorster warned churchmen not to “disrupt order in South Africa under the cloak of religion”. He declared that if anyone had ideas “about doing the kind of thing here in South Africa that Martin Luther King did in America” they had better “cut it out, cut it out immediately for the cloak you carry will not protect you if you try to do this in South

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<sup>33</sup>J W de Gruchy and W B de Villiers (eds), The message in perspective, pp 10 - 14.

<sup>34</sup>De Gruchy, The church struggle, pp 120-121 and Walshe, Church versus state, p 62.

Africa". In response Naudé and a number of other leading figures in the CI and SACC sent an open letter to Vorster, insisting that as long as the government tried to justify apartheid in terms of the Word of God, they as Christians would deny and challenge it. Vorster's reply to this was:

"It does not surprise me that you attack separate development. All liberalists and leftists do likewise. It is with the utmost despal, however, that I reject the insolence you display in attacking my Church as you do. This also applies to other Church ministers of the Gospel ... who do in fact believe in separate development.... I again want to make a serious appeal to you to return to the essence of your preaching and to proclaim to your congregations the Word of God and the Gospel of Christ..."<sup>35</sup>

This public exchange set the tone for the relationship between the government and the anti-apartheid church leaders. Increasingly, Naudé would play a leading role in this conflict.

As 1968 drew to a close, the Christian Institute and its supporters became frustrated by their inability to attract Christians from the Afrikaans and black communities. As the CI's board chairman Calvin Cook put it in his address to the August 1968 annual general meeting:

"How frustrating to those who have shown such faith that we have produced so little to justify their hopes.... There is a growing suspicion that our influence was like King Log: one big splash, then a few ripples, and finally a tranquil pond once more. Despite the Institute, South Africa remains the most stable country in Africa: a financiers' dream. Again, the close scrutiny of the Institute's affairs showed that the fears of Professor Pont were completely unjustified: what he saw in the dark was not even a paper tiger; it was a domestic tabby. We seem headed for the limbo that awaits the politically unsuccessful: will Beyers Naudé end up in some niche alongside of Tielman Roos and Robey Leibbrandt?"<sup>36</sup>

Before concluding this chapter, it is necessary to reflect on the socio-political climate in which Naudé and the CI was operating. Undoubtedly, the National Party still felt unassailable; Vorster's threats to churchmen sounded more as if he were dealing with an annoying side-issue than

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<sup>35</sup>South African Council of Churches, Pseudo gospels in South Africa, pp 31-34.

<sup>36</sup>C Cook, Address to annual general meeting of the Christian Institute, October 1968.



tackling a major threat. Legislatively, the government was honing its apartheid policies and the thrust was to force surplus urban blacks to return to homelands, in accordance with the recommendations of the Tomlinson Commission, which had investigated rehabilitating black “reserve” areas in the 1950s. By the late 1960s the Vorster government had not succeeded in significant industrial decentralisation and enacted legislation further limiting residential rights to blacks and to encourage migrant labour.<sup>37</sup> Despite these failures, the prevailing view in Afrikaner nationalist circles was that separate development was the only viable political system for South Africa, and that whites had to retain power of the state. But in the midst of what seemed unshakable Afrikaner confidence, from the late 1960s Afrikaner unity began to crumble. N J J Olivier broke away from the National Party because he believed apartheid had become “a cloak for massive discrimination”<sup>38</sup>, and liberal Afrikaans writers and poets became part of the *Sestigers* generation. The period between 1966 and 1969 also brought about the first major breakaway in Afrikanerdom since 1948. In 1968, Vorster, reacting to the creation of right-wing pressure groups which he felt were usurping the right of the NP to speak exclusively for the *volk*, dismissed Albert Hertzog and two other ministers from his Cabinet. In 1969, this conservative group, or *verkrampies*, formed the *Herstigste Nasionale Party* (HNP). The HNP was never a threat to the NP’s supremacy, but as Davenport points out, the “success of the Government’s campaign against the *verkrampies* also required constant assertiveness against the liberals... for it could not be seen to lack the courage of its convictions and still hope to stay in power”.<sup>39</sup> In the late 1960s and early 1970s, one of Vorster’s major “liberal” targets was Naudé and the Christian Institute.

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<sup>37</sup>T R H Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history*, pp 341 - 372

<sup>38</sup>S Bekker, *Ethnicity in focus: the South African case*, p 39.

<sup>39</sup>Davenport, *South Africa*, pp 383 - 385.

## **5 Challenge of Black Consciousness, 1969 - 1972**

The last chapter concluded with a brief overview of developments in Afrikaner politics in the late 1960s. At the same time, significant stirrings were evident in black politics, and the most important development was the emergence of the Black Consciousness (BC) movement which was to have a major impact on Naudé.

BC stemmed from black university student leadership of the late 1960s and early 1970s and found support on the campuses of the ethnically-divided homeland universities. At that time, the National Union of South African Students (Nusas), which offered a liberal critique of apartheid, was permitted to operate on white campuses only, but the exception was the black section of Natal University (Wentworth) where medical student Steve Biko was enrolled. Biko became involved in Nusas in 1966 but he began to question the unequal and artificial integration of student politics in a movement dominated by whites. Biko engineered a black walkout from the Nusas conference in Grahamstown in 1967. He also attended the Nusas conference in July 1968, again held in Grahamstown; at the same time the multi-racial United Christian Movement (UCM) was holding a meeting in nearby Stutterheim, and Biko also attended this conference where he began to canvas support for the creation of a black student grouping. By late 1968, Biko and his friend since boyhood, Barney Pityana, had formed a black student caucus. The South African Students Organisation (SASO) was officially launched in December 1968 at Mariannhill as a breakaway from Nusas. In July 1970 SASO convened its first General Students Council at the University of Natal, and it had defined its position as encouraging black people to rely entirely on themselves in the struggle for liberation. In July 1972 an umbrella Black Consciousness organisation, the Black People's Convention (BCP), was launched in Pietermaritzburg and the

inaugural conference of the BPC was held at Hammanskraal in December 1972. BC sought to unify black people, infuse them with pride and fight for their freedom. BC strongly rejected white superiority and political control. There was an understandable loathing of official white authority for policing the apartheid system, but there was an equal resentment of white “liberals” who were regarded as being patronising of blacks and enjoying the fruits of the apartheid system which they claimed to oppose.<sup>1</sup>

Biko was unquestionably the chief architect of BC in South Africa; its chief motivation at the earliest stage was to break free from the bonds of white control. Most Nusas liberals were highly critical of SASO, accusing its founders of falling into line with apartheid ideology. Biko was often on the defensive in those early days, as was the case in his presidential address to SASO in December 1969 when he defended the creation of the all-black student movement. He said the “idea of everything being done for the blacks is an old one and all liberals take pride in it; but once the black students want to do things for themselves suddenly they are regarded as becoming militant”.<sup>2</sup> Biko and his colleagues gradually developed a policy and a programme, by reflecting on their own experiences and by borrowing from foreign sources. American proponents of black power such as Frantz Fanon, Eldridge Cleaver, Stockley Carmichael and Charles Hamilton all influenced Biko’s writing, while James Cone’s contribution to Black Theology also had a marked

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<sup>1</sup>G M Gerhart, Black power in South Africa: the evolution of an ideology, pp 257 - 263, D Hirschmann, “The black consciousness movement in South Africa”, The Journal of Modern African Studies, pp 1 - 4, M Mangena, On your own: evolution of black consciousness in South Africa/Azania , pp 11 - 32 and S Biko, “The definition of black consciousness” (appendix in Mangena, On your own), pp 153-154 and B Pityana interview with C Clur, 1997.

<sup>2</sup>S Biko, “SASO: its role, its significance and its future” in S Biko, I write what I like, p 17.

impact on the local Black Theology movement.<sup>3</sup> In 1970, Biko wrote that the “first step is to make the black man come to himself...to remind him of his complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme...This is what we mean by an inward-looking process. This is the definition of Black Consciousness”.<sup>4</sup>

Mention has already been made of the United Christian Movement (UCM), but it is necessary to provide greater context because both Biko and Naudé interacted with this organisation, and the UCM also had an influence on the development of the BC movement. The UCM, which was headed by white Methodist minister Basil Moore, was founded in 1967 by a small group of whites who were attempting to unite Christian students of all races in the study of the social implications of the gospel and in working for change in South Africa. With an approach to worship that orthodox white denominations considered too “free and easy” and a theology that was “avant-garde”, the UCM soon drew a black following at homeland universities where Nusas was barred. The University of Fort Hare had not allowed the official establishment of the UCM; however, students organised a mission in July 1968 at which Moore, who was smuggled on to campus, and Steve Biko spoke. At this meeting students had an opportunity to develop relationships across campuses and began to consider educational and political issues, and these developments provided a boost to SASO.<sup>5</sup>

Also in 1968 a UCM delegation headed by Moore travelled to the US and on its return Moore published a position paper on Black Theology. A Black Theology project was set up which

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<sup>3</sup>Gerhart, Black power in South Africa, p 275.

<sup>4</sup>Biko, “We blacks”, in I write what I like, p 43.

<sup>5</sup>J W de Gruchy, The church struggle in South Africa, p 154 and B Pityana-Clur interview.

focused on black experience and Black Consciousness in relation to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and several publications on the new ideas were issued. Advocates of Black Theology believed that white colonialists and missionaries had succeeded in destroying African culture and economic and family life in the process of “civilising” and “converting” the indigenous people. Although they rejected traditional Western Christianity, they did not reject Christ. They found signs of hope in the gospel, in Christ’s identification with the poor, the suffering and the oppressed. The task of Black Theology was to “Africanise” Christianity, to relate it to the history of black people and to help people recognise that they were equal in God’s eyes. The Black Theology issue was formally raised at SASO’s 1970 congress when students were called on to support it, and following this there was close interaction between SASO leaders and Black Theology proponents.<sup>6</sup>

There is some difference of opinion on how much influence Black Theology exerted on the BC movement. Barney Pityana plays it down, but Gail Gerhart says that BC thinking was taken on ardently by many black churchmen “under the rubric of black theology” before the Vorster government began to crack down on both movements.<sup>7</sup> Bonganjalo Goba asserts that Black Theology had a major impact on BC. Goba notes the foundation Black Theology laid for future church opposition to the apartheid state, and this view is soundly backed by the events of the following years.<sup>8</sup> Leaders of Black Theology in the early 1970s who were involved in the BC movement, and who began to work with black churchmen at grassroots level, became targets of state action. In 1970, the Vorster government demonstrated its antagonism by banning UCM

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>B Pityana-Clur interview and Gerhart, Black power in South Africa, p 294.

<sup>8</sup>B Goba, “The influence of three political movements on the church’s role in the South African liberation struggle”, South African Outlook, pp 45 - 46.

literature and confiscating Moore's passport. The white church leadership was also alarmed at the radicalisation of the UCM. The Methodist Church showed its disapproval by transferring Basil Moore from the student chaplaincy at Rhodes University in Grahamstown. When he joined the staff of the CI in 1971 he was deprived of his ministerial status.<sup>9</sup> The action against Moore, not unlike the treatment the DRC had meted out to Naudé, struck the latter as typical of how the English-speaking churches were not prepared to extend their thinking as the direction in the battle against apartheid changed.<sup>10</sup> The growth in the BC movement coincided with mounting State harassment of the UCM, and in 1972 the organisation decided to disband. Moore played an important role in developing the Black Theology debate and he was also influential in helping Naudé and other white people adjust to the new political reality.<sup>11</sup>

All of the other events and activities in which Naudé was involved in the period between 1969 and 1972 took place against the backdrop of the developments in the BC movement and the UCM, and Naudé was profoundly influenced. If one asks why Naudé was so open to these new influences, the answer is that in this period he began to regard blacks as equals. Many of Naudé's colleagues have identified his involvement with the black AICA churchmen as a significant factor in his new openness to black people and black-led initiatives. Cedric Mayson, a former Methodist minister who worked closely with Naudé in the CI in the 1970s, commented later that "a central theme in everybody who made that change, including Beyers, was that they got to know black people". Mayson suggested that Naudé's first real face-to-face contact was with AICA

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<sup>9</sup>Pro Veritate, 15 April 1972.

<sup>10</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

<sup>11</sup>P Walshe, Church versus state: the case of the Christian Institute, p 95.

ministers<sup>12</sup>. Barney Pityana, who was introduced to Naudé through his SASO and UCM involvement, also identified Naudé and the CI's involvement with AICA as the starting point for his growing acceptance of black initiatives.<sup>13</sup>

Naudé's knowledge of black people was enhanced by his continuing involvement with the African Independent (AICA) churches. Naudé's CI colleagues were often driven to despair by the high priority he gave to this work. Many former CI workers have cited instances where Naudé, instead of attending to pressing CI business, would be locked in inconclusive meetings with AICA representatives trying to resolve a leadership feud, or else negotiating with garages and mechanics for a new car for a black minister. One of the AICA leaders who developed a close relationship with Naudé was Bishop Harry Ngada of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Ngada worked for the CI for four years and later for AICA as a literacy worker before founding his own Spiritualist Churches Association. Ngada said:

"I first met Beyers in 1967 when he helped me to get a scholarship to study at my church's seminary.... He became a precious friend, in some instances he was like a father, even a grandfather. If you went to Beyers with a problem you were sure, if he had a way of helping you, he would.... After I completed my studies I was stranded in the sense that the church couldn't pay me a stipend because the African Independent Churches and their members are poor in the true sense of the word. I was in a desperate situation, with a wife and two children and a mother to support. Through Beyers and Brian Brown, who was the CI's administrative director, I was offered work with the CI. I worked there for four years and carried on with my ministry. The source of my strength during my involvement with all the struggles of this country came from Beyers and the CI. I don't think a day would pass without Beyers attending to an AICA problem. He dedicated his life to it. He always said that the African Independent Churches were an important part of the church.

"Most Christians in South Africa are members of these African Independent Churches and they have been ignored. Through his base at the CI he tried his best to help.... He has been a father to us, in good times and bad. If the history of AICA is ever written, then Naudé

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<sup>12</sup>C Mayson interview with C Clur, 1988.

<sup>13</sup>B Pityana-Clur interview.

should be described as the spearhead, because he introduced the idea of unity to the AI churches.”<sup>14</sup>

The CI had always maintained AICA's records and budget because the organisation lacked administrative skills but by 1972 Naudé felt that this arrangement could not continue. Dissatisfied with AICA's inability to spend its funds wisely and influenced by the prevailing sentiment in the Black Consciousness movement and by the wishes of overseas donors who wanted AICA to have financial autonomy, Naudé moved to reduce AICA's dependence on the CI. Recommending that AICA hire a qualified bookkeeper and other administrative staff, the CI handed financial control over to the organisation in January 1973. By the end of the year the organisation had virtually collapsed and the college had been closed down as money via the CI dried up.<sup>15</sup>

Another CI worker who was closely involved with the AICA work was Methodist minister Brian Brown. Born in Cape Town, Brown had studied accountancy for four years before entering the ministry. He joined the CI in the late 1960s and became one of Naudé's closest colleagues and friends, serving the CI until its closure in 1977. Of his and Naudé's involvement with the independent churches, Brian Brown later commented:

“I think AICA is a success story on one level and a disaster on the other. The success story is that the CI had created an image of openness and sensitivity which enabled people to come to Beyers and seek a relationship which had either not been sought, or had been sought and denied, within the historic churches.... The AI churches were as a result of this in a large measure put on the map ... they became part of the body of Christ and even in my time we stopped talking about separatist sects and talked about the Independent churches.”

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<sup>14</sup>H Ngada interview with C Clur, 1988.

<sup>15</sup>AD 1752 (4D) C F B Naudé, Memorandum on the relationship between AICA and the Christian Institute, 1972, Department of Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand Library, Fred van Wyk Papers, and M West, Bishops and prophets in a black city, p 161.



Brown said part of AICA's problem was that it was a community's "first attempt at togetherness" and divisiveness had been the pattern all along". He partly agreed with a criticism that Naudé was not firm enough when it came to requests for money:

"We were in a situation of professing a Christian ideal, which was to allow democracy to prevail, and doing so in the context of a society where white paternalism had always determined black responses. Beyers was trying to break away from that. The kind of strength of response which could be called correct and responsible in healthier societies was so easily viewed as either paternalism at best or racism at worst in the context of the CI. And if I am to defend ourselves and damn ourselves, we did not want to be racists and so we yielded in terms of financial disbursements when we were not always happy that they were being properly used. So the criticism of Beyers is legitimate but it has to be seen in the context of the bedevilment of interpersonal relationships in South Africa, by the history of white domination and by the enduring reality of racism, and it was in that vice that we were crushed."<sup>16</sup>

By the late 1960s many of the initiatives of the CI were in decline. The CI's Bible study groups, which had been one of its central features in the early years, were showing signs of stagnation. In 1969 there were some 55 groups, and by the next year this number had risen to 78, but members felt that the groups amounted to a great deal of talk but no concrete action. The aim of the groups had been to encourage inter-racial and interdenominational contact between Christians, but the major problems were apathy, the distances between white and black residential areas, and intimidation by official church and state structures. The centralised structure of the CI, with major initiatives being taken by staff rather than by members, contributed to the decline. It was an aspect of the CI's ministry that never lived up to expectations.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>B Brown interview with C Clur, 1988.

<sup>17</sup>AD 1752 (4D) CI memorandum: "Evaluation of the Christian Institute of Southern Africa", August 1970 Department of Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand Library, Fred van Wyk Papers and AD 1752 (4C) Minutes of the CI Board of Management meeting, 18 February 1969.

Another sign of the change in the character of the CI was the steady decline in Afrikaner membership. Initially between 40 to 50 ministers of the DRC had joined the CI; by 1969 there were none left. Subscriptions to Pro Veritate by Afrikaners were also falling.<sup>18</sup>

The waning influence of Afrikaners was also seen in the departure of several prominent Afrikaans-speakers from the staff of the CI. Important staff members Ben Engelbrecht and Fred van Wyk left in 1970. Founder member Albert Geyser also withdrew. Van Wyk, who returned to the SA Institute of Race Relations as director, continued to serve on the CI's board of trustees for several years. It seems there was a general concern that Naudé was becoming "too radical" and men like Van Wyk and Geyser fell away, not because of the pressure from the DRC which had seen earlier followers fall by the wayside, but because they disagreed with Naudé on political issues.<sup>19</sup>

The parting between Naudé and Engelbrecht was not cordial. Engelbrecht said his decision to leave the CI and join the University of the Witwatersrand's faculty of divinity, which Albert Geyser headed, was prompted by dissatisfaction with the changes that were occurring within the CI. Engelbrecht appeared to have clashed with Naudé from the start; Engelbrecht was unhappy that Naudé, and not he, was the first editor of Pro Veritate, and that he assumed full editorship only after the CI had been in existence for a few years. He also said later that he felt Naudé had not behaved consistently and that he had exaggerated South Africa's problem to overseas

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<sup>18</sup>Argus, 23 August 1969 and B Engelbrecht interview with C Clur, 1988.

<sup>19</sup>J van Rooyen, B Engelbrecht and M Marais interviews with C Clur, 1988. Engelbrecht, in a letter to Beeld, 10 May 1980, draws a clear distinction between the activities of the CI before and after 1970 and finds the CI's mission before this period to have been morally justified.

churchmen. He said:

"It seemed that Beyers Naudé developed more and more in the direction of radicalism. When I left I never ever looked back. I just closed the door behind me and didn't want to have anything to do with Pro Veritate and the CI. Looking back I think that I was quite right. After my departure from the CI everything became so radical: the viewpoints, the way they acted. It was throwing down the gauntlet to the state."<sup>20</sup>

Engelbrecht's statements give an insight into the feeling of disappointment among some of Naudé's Afrikaner friends who felt he had betrayed their original mission. The late John Rees, who was to follow Bill Burnett as the next general secretary of the SACC, and who observed many of these reactions, commented later:

"They accused him of having started the CI with one aim in mind, and then changing it when he was unable to succeed with his original goal. They were not being totally fair since it was a very difficult job to change whites, but that is how they perceived it. Naudé evoked strong reactions and there were some who hated him. But his role as the conscience of Afrikaners was still crucially important. Afrikaners were quietly beating tracks to his door all the time. Even though some of them disliked him so much they still used to call him 'Oom Bey'."<sup>21</sup>

The departure of these Afrikaner supporters from the CI reflected that state of flux in the organisation. But it was not only the CI that was undergoing great change. The SA Institute of Race Relations was experiencing a crisis of its own, especially after the Vorster government had forced the closure of the Liberal Party; by the late 1960s the Institute's director, Quintin Whyte, conceded that the organisation need to reassess its aims and direction.<sup>22</sup> Van Wyk returned to the SAIRR in 1970 to replace Whyte and was confronted with the same challenges as the CI with regard to the BC movement. Under Van Wyk's leadership, and influenced by a group in the

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<sup>20</sup> Argus, 23 August 1969 and B Engelbrecht-Clur interview.

<sup>21</sup> J Rees interview with C Clur, 1989.

<sup>22</sup> P Rich, "Liberals, radicals and the politics of black consciousness, 1969 - 1976", African Studies Seminar Paper, p 5.

Institute who favoured a cautious line, he continued to emphasise attracting support from traditional white liberals, such as supporters of the Progressive Party. Paul Rich has argued that Van Wyk's view of the BC movement was that it was similar to the racist ideology underpinning apartheid and Van Wyk refused to bend to it.<sup>23</sup> Van Wyk's support for more conservative politics supports the contention that, like Engelbrecht and some others, he moved away from the CI because of political disagreements with Naudé.

The departure of Ben Engelbrecht from the CI signalled a gradual change in the character of Pro Veritate. Naudé had been the first editor, followed by Engelbrecht, who had always been primarily responsible for the production of the journal when he had worked for the CI. He was replaced by another Afrikaner theologian and long-time worker at the CI, Bruckner de Villiers. Although he also came out of the DRC, De Villiers had broader and more progressive political and theological views than his predecessor and under his editorship the journal's circulation steadily increased to the CI's growing membership of mainly white English-speakers. When De Villiers left after two years his place was taken by another former DRC minister, Roelf Meyer. Abandoning its theological emphasis, Pro Veritate began to devote more attention to social issues and current affairs. The journal also followed the progress and course of the BC movement, by giving prominence to the Black Theology and BC ideas. Throughout its life, Beyers Naudé contributed regularly to Pro Veritate and the articles he wrote are a valuable source for charting the changes in his political thinking over the years.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid, p 14.

<sup>24</sup>Various copies of Pro Veritate, 1963 - 1977 and Report on Pro Veritate by Roelf Meyer, for the Annual General Meeting of the CI, 9 September 1972.

One of the most important new influences in Naudé's life in the late 1960s was Theo Kotze, who in 1969 became director of the CI's newly established Cape Town regional office. Kotze had been the Methodist minister of a successful parish in Sea Point in Cape Town. As a member of the CI, he developed a close friendship with Naudé. Kotze's involvement in the CI deepened after he agreed to head the CI's Bible study group in Cape Town and to serve on the CI's board of management. It was decided that the CI should open a Cape regional office and the funds for the project were raised from the Methodist Church in the USA.<sup>25</sup>

A development which affected the CI was the launching of the Study Project on Christianity in an Apartheid Society, known as Spro-cas, in March 1969. Sponsored jointly by the SACC and the CI, it was to play a decisive role in advancing Naudé's thinking on political issues. Spro-cas was meant partially as an answer to the criticism that the "Message to the people of South Africa" had not spelt out an alternative to apartheid. Spro-cas set out to examine various aspects of South African society, including political, social and economic, and spell out strategies for change. Naudé believed that with the issuing of the "Message to the people of South Africa", a new note of hesitancy had crept into the attitude of the government and the DRC. The CI decided to spell out alternatives which were more just and Christian than those of apartheid. The CI became the moving force behind Spro-cas because member churches of the SACC were still hesitant to take a leading role.<sup>26</sup>

The "slowness" of the SACC to react also highlights the tensions that existed between the CI and

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<sup>25</sup>AD 1752 (4E(a)), Van Wyk, Christian Institute memorandum: Budget 1969 to 1970.

<sup>26</sup>C F B Naudé interview with P Randall, 1982 and P Randall interview with C Clur, 1988.

the council. The more cautious approach of the SACC was partly dictated by the SACC's relationship with its own member churches, whose support for programmes which challenged apartheid varied a great deal. An example of these conflicting styles was the reaction to the appointment of Peter Randall to head Spro-cas. Randall came from a liberal English-speaking background, and although he had a Methodist upbringing, he had no claims to being a practising Christian. He nevertheless was keen to take on the challenge presented by the Spro-cas project. There were members of the SACC who were unhappy with the choice of Randall as director of Spro-cas because of his lack of Christian commitment. Naudé, however, insisted that he was the best man for the job. For someone who had practised his faith so piously, Naudé's openness on this point might have surprised many. But he had come to accept and work with people of different backgrounds and religious convictions. Naudé commented later:

"There were people who said, 'Kindly find a committed Christian for Spro-cas.' And I said if you can find such a person who has the same capability of handling this effectively from a purely academic viewpoint, then bring him, let him do the job. If not, then I am not bothered by such nonsense.... To me the important thing was the intrinsic value, the capability of a person, and his commitment to our goal."<sup>27</sup>

Spro-cas was intended to advance the church's critique of apartheid, contained in the "Message" which had been based on five biblical principles: faith in human dignity, acknowledgement of individual responsibility, commitment to uplifting the oppressed, working for constructive social change and building a shared society. The guiding idea behind Spro-cas was to use this biblical commitment to social renewal in order to present alternatives to apartheid in crucial areas of society - economic, educational, church, legal, political and social. Six study commissions were set up to analyse these areas and propose alternatives. Randall set out to recruit experts from

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<sup>27</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview and J W de Gruchy, "The relationship between the state and some churches in South Africa, 1968 - 1975, Journal of church and state, p 439.

various fields, and 130 people were drawn into the Spro-cas studies, which issued reports over five years.<sup>28</sup>

An immediate problem was black reluctance to participate. Randall approached numerous important black figures to serve on the commissions, but the prevailing suspicion of white liberal initiatives made it very difficult for him to attract more than a small number of black panellists. In spite of this, the BC movement had a profound effect on Spro-cas, and especially its successor, Spro-cas 2, and the CI. Naudé later said:

“Even though the number of black participants was not as high as we would have wanted, the discussions we had in the different commissions revealed very clearly the nature and depth of the differences in the English-speaking churches between a reformist and a more radical stand. It also became very clear that for us to gain acceptance with the black community we would have to move forward and to take a more radical stand.”<sup>29</sup>

The recognition shown by Naudé, Peter Randall and others of the need to adopt a more radical approach did not always accord with the findings of the Spro-cas reports. As Peter Walshe has pointed out, the Spro-cas project was limited by its origins and the composition of the study commissions, and contained many contradictions. The Spro-cas Economics Commission report, for example, attempted to envisage a more equal economic order but only hinted at the need for structural changes to the capitalist system and did not present the proposal of Black Consciousness critics.<sup>30</sup> The Political Commission also revealed in its report the dominance of white thinking. The commissioners were concerned about the lack of political rights for black South Africans, but they rejected a black majority government. Instead they favoured a federal-style government in South Africa, with “proportional representation”, “regional

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<sup>28</sup>Pro Veritate, 15 August 1969.

<sup>29</sup> C F B Naudé-Randall interview.

<sup>30</sup>Walshe, Church versus state, pp 104 - 105.

autonomy” and pluralism as a “necessary counterweight to the power of government and as a necessary base for a free society”.<sup>31</sup>

Biko, criticising Spro-cas as a white liberal initiative, remarked at the time that the Spro-cas commissions were “looking for an ‘alternative’ acceptable to the white man. Everybody in the commissions knows what is right, but they are looking for the most seemly way of dodging the responsibility”.<sup>32</sup>

Spro-cas had no immediate impact on socio-political change in South Africa, but it defined many of the issues that would dominate public debate in the next decade. Spro-cas also helped the CI and Naudé to understand the new challenges confronting the church in South Africa. However, in the late 1960s and early 1970s the Institute was still battling to make the adjustments and the transitions this involved, and was coming under pressure from its overseas donor bodies to take a stronger, more active stand against apartheid. Referring to this in his 1969 director’s report, Naudé said:

“We are deeply grateful for the moral and financial support which we receive from... [overseas] bodies and groups and we are aware, sometimes with trepidation, of the expectations they hold of our witness and work. In the past two years, partly because of the increase and strength of the militant Black Power and anti-apartheid groups throughout the Western world...the feeling against South Africa, because of our racist policies, has been steadily mounting, and calls for violent action have been made from within Christian groups who see no other way to resolve a situation of serious discrimination.”

Naudé was still hesitant about adopting a radical course in 1969 and he said that “despite criticism

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<sup>31</sup>P Randall (ed), A taste of power: the final co-ordinated Spro-cas report, p 99.

<sup>32</sup>As quoted in Z Mbali, The churches and racism: a black South African perspective, p 50.



from some overseas groups of our being too conservative (and exactly the opposite indictment from many whites in South Africa) we will have to pursue the course of obedience to God and his Word as we understand it through Christ".<sup>33</sup>

At this time there was also growing concern in DRC circles about Naudé's influence and relations with churches overseas. When the Gereformeerde Kerk in the Netherlands met in synod at Lunteren in March 1970, tensions between the DRC and the CI came to a head. An important issue to be debated was the resolution on racism adopted by the Reformed Ecumenical Synod two years earlier. Representatives from the DRC and Gereformeerde Kerk in South Africa, and a representative from the black NGKA were invited to attend the Lunteren synod. Pro Veritate editor Dr Bruckner de Villiers was present as an observer. At Lunteren numerous Dutch speakers spoke out strongly against Christian collaboration with apartheid. The DRC delegation used the public platform to criticise the CI and Naudé. During his address to the synod, DRC actuary Koot Vorster claimed that the CI was misappropriating funds intended for the African Independent churches and further suggested that Naudé was immoral for allowing himself to be addressed as "*dominee*" when his church had defrocked him. This attack was rebutted by De Villiers, who was permitted to speak because of the severity of the accusations that had been made. To demonstrate that the DRC was "reasonable", Moderator Kosie Gericke intimated that his church was prepared to enter into dialogue with the CI. In this climate, in which Dutch churchmen thought they detected a slight softening in the attitude of their South African sister church, a decision was taken not to condemn the policy of apartheid outright, for fear of jeopardising future talks. The synod adopted a moderate condemnation of racial discrimination without any direct reference to South

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<sup>33</sup>C F B Naudé director's report of the Christian Institute, 1969.

Africa. Mindful that the white DRC might use this resolution as “proof” that the world did not condemn apartheid, the synod also sent the South African church a letter containing a plea to reconsider its racial policies and to begin negotiations with the CI.<sup>34</sup>

Although in Holland the DRC had seemed willing to meet with the CI, Gericke promptly denied this on his return to South Africa. Frustrated by these developments Naudé wrote in Pro Veritate:

“There is a serious contradiction; the Gereformeerde Kerk in the Netherlands has formally taken notice of the undertaking of the DRC to a discussion, while Dr Gericke immediately denies it. It can only give the impression that leaders of the DRC are willing, when confronted overseas, to make certain promises in order to prevent criticism from members of sister churches, but they are then anxious to evade the responsibility of giving a hearing to the Christian Institute.”<sup>35</sup>

Increasingly the world church community was moving in the direction of wishing to take active steps to oppose apartheid and the CI’s commitment to this was gaining it strong support in the ecumenical community. This was evident when Professor Verkuyl visited South Africa shortly after Lunteren as a guest of the CI and the SACC. He was accompanied by Jone Bos, secretary of an inter-church aid agency in the Netherlands. The two men were members of a new Dutch organisation, known as the Kairos working group, which promoted awareness of South Africa’s race policies in the Netherlands and lent moral and financial support to the CI. Kairos, which had been formed at the request of Naudé, was headed for the first few years by Professor Verkuyl and was important in mobilising support for the CI in the Dutch church community.<sup>36</sup>

Numerous colleagues and friends have identified Naudé’s responsiveness to change as one of his

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<sup>34</sup>As reported in Pro Veritate, 15 April 1970.

<sup>35</sup>Pro Veritate, 15 March 1970.

<sup>36</sup>B van Kaam and J Verkuyl interviews with C Clur, 1988.

most notable character traits. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when shifts took place. Very often an ambiguity seemed to creep into what Naudé was saying and doing. In seeking to win people over to his side Naudé would avoid long debates on issues that could cause conflict. This often led people to believe that he actually agreed with them when he did not do so fully. A complicating factor was the reactionary political climate in South Africa. Statements and projects that were considered moderate and even conservative in overseas or black circles were often considered revolutionary and subversive by white South Africans, and seized on by the Vorster government. Naudé sought to play down issues that would further alienate white South Africans, and this sometimes gave the impression of contradictory behaviour. Kor Groenendijk, head of the Kairos group in the Netherlands for many years, said:

“Everybody had his own idea of Beyers. People would visit him and speak to him and come back and say that Beyers agreed with them. What usually happened is that Beyers would listen to people and not say very much, he would be kind and not disagree. They did not understand his understatement or the fact that he was often in a difficult position in South Africa.”<sup>37</sup>

As was argued in the previous chapter, an issue which became a crucial test for Naudé and the church community in South Africa was the World Council of Churches’ decision to create a practical programme to combat racism. The Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) was proposed at a consultation held at Notting Hill, London, in 1969 and was endorsed by the central committee of the WCC at Canterbury later that year. The idea was to tackle racism in all spheres of life and to give active aid and support to oppressed communities. This included support for the idea that Christians were entitled to use force as a last resort to end injustice. The SACC, affiliated to the

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<sup>37</sup>K Groenendijk interview with C Clur, 1988.

WCC but still largely dominated by whites, expressed strong reservations about these proposals.<sup>38</sup>

The opposition from South Africa did little to sway the WCC. In August 1970 the central committee of the WCC agreed to set up a special fund to provide humanitarian aid for liberation movements as part of the PCR programme. The PCR consisted of many other, less controversial projects but the main media focus was on the special fund. In the first year \$200 000 was distributed to 19 organisations, with most of the money going to liberation movements fighting racism and colonialism in the southern African region. Beneficiaries included the PAC and ANC (representing South Africa), ZAPU and ZANU (then Rhodesia) and SWAPO (then South West Africa).<sup>39</sup>

In South Africa the programme was attacked by the government and government-supporting churches and media. Naudé, in his first reaction, again anxious to shake off any suggestion that the CI supported the use of violence, also expressed reservations about the WCC's plans.<sup>40</sup> The issue was prominently reported in the press, but there was no reflection of the views of black Christians, which began to concern Naudé. Pro Veritate, in a special issue, published in full the decision of the WCC, as well as all available points of view. At first the CI opposed the grants, but there was evidence that Naudé and his organisation had begun to give more thought to the matter. In a perceptive article on the PCR's special fund he wrote:

"I venture to suggest that this decision ... will be a catalyst, a parting of the ways, not only for the world churches, but also for the churches in South Africa; the consequences

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<sup>38</sup>J W de Gruchy, The church struggle in South Africa, p 129 and E Adler, A small beginning: an assessment of the first five years of the programme to combat racism, p 15.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Star 5 September 1970.

of this decision cannot yet be foreseen.

“The general reaction of whites, who have, with saintly indignation, raised their hands to the heavens, as if they have no part in the guilt ... as if they have no injustices to right, no involvement in the situation which has led to this decision - this reaction has widened the gulf between them and the world community....

“In the middle of all the storm ... there has been a great silence ... the silence of the more than 18 million voices of the black population of South Africa.... Those of us who have had the opportunity and the privilege of contact with some of these non-white leaders, know and understand: they dare not speak out about their true feelings.”<sup>41</sup>

Naudé, after consultations with blacks and white CI colleagues, had begun to reconsider his position. It would be many years before his new views on the black liberation movements would crystallise; his willingness to consider why black people had resorted to an armed struggle was an important pointer to the change he was undergoing.

The Vorster government reacted extremely negatively to the PCR and ordered South African churches to withdraw from the SACC. Vorster also bitterly attacked Naudé, saying he owed the country an “explanation” for his stand.<sup>42</sup> The SACC member churches all criticised the WCC’s Programme to Combat Racism, but the SACC elected to stay in the WCC, believing it important to keep open the lines of communication. The churches’ stand angered the government, which then blocked a proposed meeting between the SACC and WCC representatives to discuss the PCR. The state also refused visas to any foreign visitor from the WCC, ending a long tradition of close contact between South Africa and the Council.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Pro Veritate, 15 October 1970.

<sup>42</sup>As quoted in Rand Daily Mail, 2 October 1970.

<sup>43</sup>De Gruchy, The church struggle, p 133.

The controversy resulted in the government taking a hard line against critical clergy. In January 1971 Pro Veritate published a list of seven South African ministers whose passports had been seized and 17 foreign church workers whose residence permits had been withdrawn or who had been refused entry to the country.<sup>44</sup> Several of the people who came under state pressure were members or workers attached to the CI. In February 1971 the CI's group worker, Anglican minister Colin Davison, was deported. Cosmas Desmond, then a Catholic priest working for the CI, had his passport confiscated and was later banned for five years and placed under house arrest. Action against churchmen continued in 1972 and two ministers who had taken up posts with the CI, Basil Moore and David de Beer, were among those banned. In April 1972, Pro Veritate listed well over 100 cases of severe action against church people.<sup>45</sup>

In the midst of the WCC controversy, the DRC held its general synod in October 1970. Four years had elapsed since the DRC's general synod had ordered its members to withdraw from the CI, and the small number of DRC members who still belonged to the CI faced disciplinary action for their "disobedience". Before the synod met, Naudé and 33 fellow CI members wrote to members of the synod appealing to them to reverse the 1966 decision.<sup>46</sup> The Parkhurst DRC, still under the leadership of Jan van Rooyen, also made representations explaining why it had not acted against Naudé and others in the church who were still CI members. A number of other church councils, critical of the Parkhurst stand, tabled resolutions attacking Parkhurst for failing to adhere to church discipline. Conscious of the attention of the world Reformed community, especially after the promise to enter into dialogue with the CI at the Lunteren synod, the church

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<sup>44</sup>Pro Veritate, 15 January, 1971.

<sup>45</sup>Pro Veritate, 15 April 1972.

<sup>46</sup>Pro Veritate, 15 November 1970.

leadership appeared anxious to avoid another protracted debate on the CI. It came as no surprise to Naudé when the synod shelved the CI debate by referring the issue to a permanent commission on current affairs. A special three-man committee was appointed to investigate the representations made by the Parkhurst church council and the CI members.<sup>47</sup> Nothing further came of the proposed DRC-CI talks.

Although Naudé had by the early 1970s come to regard the Black Consciousness movement as central to the struggle for justice in South Africa, this recognition had not come easily. For many years he shared the suspicions of many white liberals that the BC movement amounted to “black apartheid”.<sup>48</sup> However, a speech given in May 1971 showed that he was developing new political perceptions of the situation in South Africa, although he still harboured fears about Black Consciousness, or Black Power, as it was then commonly known. Speaking in Pietermaritzburg on the topic of black anger, Naudé reminded his audience that he was talking under the shadow of real demonstrations of black anger - violence had erupted at the Gelvandale township outside Port Elizabeth, and black homeland leaders had also expressed frustration and anger at white selfishness:

“From every quarter of our country many voices are heard which prove how rapidly (almost overnight) and how widespread the concept of black power has grown.... Think of SASO [the South African Students’ Organisation], the black counterpart of Nusas, already operating over a fairly wide field.... Think of the new mood amongst African clergy as reflected in the call for black clergy to stand together for the ideal of a united black church....

“More and more Coloureds are rejecting the Afrikaans language as the language of the

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<sup>47</sup> Handelinge van die derde vergadering van die Algemene Sinode van die NG Kerk, October 1970 and Rand Daily Mail, 26 October 1970, Star, 26 October 1970 and Pro Veritate, 15 November 1970.

<sup>48</sup> C F B Naudé, “Apartheid”, Ster, 13 November 1970.

oppressor; more and more young coloureds are calling for closer links to be forged with the African and Indian communities in the solidarity of a common black front against the white. The circle is now complete: white power has created its counterpart of black power, white identity has now led to the emphasis on black identity and white separate rights have now developed an impetus for black separate rights. The Frankenstein creation is now slowly turning against its creator.

“In such a situation it is inevitable that white power, privilege and prestige must assert itself in order to curb any dangerous growth and to contain the possible development of bitterness and anger which could so easily lead to violence... Black anger as a reaction against white supremacy is like a rumbling volcano which could erupt at the most unpredictable moment in the most unpredictable way.”

Naudé went on to predict further rapid growth in popular support for Black Consciousness organisations and institutions. Referring to the challenges this presented to liberal white organisations and white people like himself, he predicted that these organisations would find themselves in a dilemma; he realised blacks would increasingly go it alone, saying that this estrangement was inevitable unless such organisations “are willing to change their understanding and methodology”.<sup>49</sup>

This address, which Peter Randall collaborated in, represented a milestone for Naudé, and he correctly forecast many developments. In his political development, Naudé was influenced by numerous people, both inside and outside the CI. Former CI worker Danie van Zyl explained this later by saying:

“Beyers began from a conservative point of view. In the early days I don’t think he would have supported universal franchise... Yet he had an intuitive feeling for the needs of the oppressed. Very often it was as if it was this that led him, and he had to fit his intellectual patterns and plans to fit that feeling. I saw him again and again latch on to ideas that other people had raised, and sometimes I said: ‘But Beyers, you are just taking over somebody else’s thought.’ Until I discovered that it was not that at all: he was seeking to work out intellectually that which he somehow already felt intuitively.... I saw it in his dealing with SASO. He had a real feeling for the needs of those students, although at that stage I don’t

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<sup>49</sup> C F B Naudé, “Black anger and white power in an unreal society”, Edgar Brookes Lecture at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 19 May 1971.



think his political or social philosophy was at that level at all.... I remember the address he gave on black power, which he had worked on with Peter Randall. At the time I said to Peter: 'That's not Beyers's thinking, he's not there yet.' But afterwards, looking back at it, in a sense Naudé was there without having thought it through.... Maybe this is why in a true sense people have called him a prophet in South Africa.... Because he has got this feeling about where people are and what their needs are...and he could feel with them and have the courage to change."<sup>50</sup>

Naudé's acceptance of the BC philosophy was gradual. As argued earlier, one of the individuals who influenced him was Basil Moore, who joined the CI in 1971 to run AICA's theological course, but after his banning in 1972 he left the country. Commenting later about his gradual acceptance of black theology and Black Consciousness, Naudé said:

"There were a large number of significant people who helped me to change.... In the Spro-cas studies we entered into discussions and dialogue with the leaders of the Black Consciousness movement who told us why they could not participate officially.... That in turn led to very meaningful debate amongst ourselves about where we were in relation to the demands made by the BC movement. We spoke about this with the leaders of the UCM, with Basil Moore, for instance. We had fascinating discussions about the place of the Christian church, and how it could be reconciled with the demands of the BC movement. That stimulated my understanding of the Christian faith and challenged me. I was aware a totally new dimension had entered the life and future of South Africa. In the beginning, much about Black Consciousness was strange; it was totally new and I had to re-evaluate. I had to ask myself to what degree this could be seen to be in conflict with the basic truth and assumptions of the Christian faith and to what degree this was due to the fact that we as Western Christians had certain traditional concepts, both theological and political, which we took for granted as being the only valid ones. Here were people, coming from a different background and perspective, telling us that from their experience as black Christians, they saw South Africa's future to be totally different. This required extensive re-evaluation of my understanding both of the reality of what was happening in the country and of the role which the church had to play.

"I was being re-educated, with every new phase of life and development in the country; every new crisis was a reassessment and a re-evaluation. I think the reason why problems arose with some of the others in the CI is that they were willing to go up to a certain point but not willing to go any further. I felt I had to approach as honestly and objectively as possible the challenge which was being presented and ask: What is the validity of this? Am I prepared to face this honestly, and if so what is my response?"<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> D van Zyl interview with C Clur, 1988 and P Randall- Clur interview.

<sup>51</sup> C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

The general reaction of the white church establishment was one of suspicion and disdain. Writing about racism in South African churches, minister Zolile Mbali remarked that while the DRC rejected Black Theology, the exception to Afrikaner's mistrust was Naudé. He wrote that while white people were "ignoring possible black reaction to the Programme to Combat Racism, the Christian Institute together with some of the staff at SACC were beginning to take note of Black Consciousness leaders".<sup>52</sup>

Naudé's support for Black Consciousness and for black liberation did not mean that he had ceased to regard himself as an Afrikaner. Many people who became involved with him in the struggle against apartheid have been struck, and some even irritated, by this commitment. According to theologian Charles Villa-Vicencio, Naudé believed emphatically that the white Afrikaner ought to be part of his new vision for South Africa. He said later that he detected in Naudé an almost "disturbing attachment to his own, 'die eie', he clings to it in a way I cannot quite comprehend. He is an international man, but his roots are deep in the Afrikaner community. This is not necessarily a contradiction, but if it is, it is a disturbingly powerful contradiction. He is an Afrikaner to the nth degree".<sup>53</sup>

Elia Thema, a black minister from the NGKA who has had a long association with Naudé, said that Naudé never tried to be anything other than an Afrikaner. According to Thema, Naudé "would always say, 'I am not trying to be a black man, I don't have that experience ... I am crying for my Afrikaner people. I am trying to say to them that they will never have a future unless they

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<sup>52</sup>Mbali, The churches and racism, p 58.

<sup>53</sup>C Villa-Vicencio interview with C Clur, 1988.

are prepared to live with others.' This is what Naudé always tried to do."<sup>54</sup> Naudé would often remind people of his own roots. An article he wrote for Ster in November 1970 setting out why he was opposed to apartheid began:

"I am writing as a Christian and as an Afrikaner: As a Christian who, though realising numerous shortcomings and failings in my Christian witness, nevertheless knows that obedience and loyalty to Christ's word ... towers above other love and loyalty. But I also write as an Afrikaner who, on account of my love for my people, wants to try to direct their attention to the catastrophic results of a racial policy which is threatening the future and continued existence of the white man (and particularly the Afrikaner) on account of its moral unacceptability and practical unfeasibility - and the continued application of which will cause more damage, harm and misery to the Afrikaner than to any other South African population group."<sup>55</sup>

Despite, or perhaps because of, Naudé's commitment to the Afrikaner, his actions in the 1970s were motivated by concern about the oppression of the black majority - and in his opinion the Black Consciousness movement represented the best way to tackle oppression in South Africa. The CI's commitment to BC became evident as the Spro-cas project entered its second phase. The individual Spro-cas commission reports had largely based their recommendations for change on the assumption that whites and white institutions would be prepared to make the necessary adjustments, but increasingly Beyers Naudé and Peter Randall recognised that the future of the country depended on black initiatives.<sup>56</sup>

When overseas sponsors began inquiring about a follow-up project to the Spro-cas studies, Peter Randall and Beyers Naudé discussed the issue with various organisations. It was decided that Spro-cas should adopt an action programme designed to translate the recommendations of the

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<sup>54</sup>E Thema interview with C Clur, 1987.

<sup>55</sup>Naudé, "Apartheid" in Ster, 13 November 1970. My translation.

<sup>56</sup>Randall (ed), A taste of power, p 6.

Spro-cas reports into concrete deeds. The new programme, Special Project for Christian Action in Society, became known as Spro-cas 2 which was formulated with the help of BC leaders such as Biko and Bennie Khoapa. Two programmes were created, a white consciousness programme and a black community programme, and in this process there was close consultation with the CI and Naudé.<sup>57</sup> Spro-cas 2 was officially sponsored by both the CI and the SACC but the latter was more cautious about the radical nature of the project. Again it was the CI that provided the main support, with Naudé acting as chief fundraiser. The foreign funding of Spro-cas was criticised both by government supporters who saw it as foreign interference and by some opponents of the government who felt it was dangerous to become reliant on this source. The 1969-1973 Spro-cas budget came to just over R200 000. Apart from a R22 000 donation from Anglo American's Chairman Fund, most of the big grants came from the Dutch, German and Scandinavian churches.<sup>58</sup> Naudé later said that everything possible was done to secure local donations, but because of the shortfalls, the CI increasingly relied on foreign donors. It was this aspect of the CI which made it vulnerable to state attacks later in the 1970s, and Naudé had been aware that this might happen.<sup>59</sup>

Peter Randall was appointed director of Spro-cas 2, and the main focus was on trying to bring about change in the fields of education, labour, church and social issues. The decision to create separate black and white programmes had been taken in the prevailing political climate and out of a recognition of the different needs and problems of the divided communities. The goal of the white community programme, run by Peter Randall and with former student leaders Horst

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<sup>57</sup>P Randall-Clur interview.

<sup>58</sup>Randall (ed), *A taste of power*, p 129.

<sup>59</sup>C F B Naudé-Randall interview.

Kleinschmidt in Johannesburg and Neville Curtis in Cape Town, was to help white people recognise their own often racist attitudes, to help them change their values and to work for a redistribution of power in South Africa. The black community programme, based in Durban and headed by black social worker Bennie Khoapa, aimed at helping blacks become aware of their identity and power. The idea was to enable the black community to analyse its own needs and problems and to develop black leadership and potential.<sup>60</sup> One of the people who influenced the direction of Spro-cas 2 was Rick Turner, who had served on the Spro-cas Political Commission. Turner, who in 1973 released a radical Spro-cas discussion booklet on politics named "The eye of the needle" which was banned, is credited by Paul Rich as having developed the notion of "white consciousness"; Turner argued that it was wrong to simply dismiss whites as racists and liberals, none of whom could be trusted by the BC movement. He believed white radicals, who were different to liberals, could make a useful contribution to undermining the apartheid system<sup>61</sup> and his views were supported by Kleinschmidt and Curtis.

The white programme had little impact beyond symbolic actions, such as when in December 1972 eight pilgrims led by CI member the Reverend David Russell embarked on a walk from Grahamstown to Cape Town to protest against the policies of migrant labour and the pass laws. They were joined on the final stage of their pilgrimage by Roman Catholic Archbishop Denis Hurley and by Beyers Naudé. Later the men addressed a crowd of several thousand which had gathered at the Rondebosch Common to adopt a six-point Charter for Family Life, which called on the Government to allow black workers to live in the cities with their families. A Family Life

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<sup>60</sup>Pro Veritate, 15 January 1972.

<sup>61</sup>Rich, "Liberals, radicals and politics", pp 8 - 12.

Office was established to continue to promote this cause, but it was disbanded because of an apathetic response.<sup>62</sup>

In spite of the poor response to this campaign and other projects, the CI launched a new white programme in 1973, the Programme for Social Change (PSC). The programme's organisers hoped to create a coordinated base for whites working for change and through publications and conferences tried to promote alternatives to the existing social order. The results of the programme were disappointing and by mid-1975 it was disbanded. Naudé, who served on the PSC's advisory committee, said later:

"We were aware of the fact that we were trying to achieve the impossible. There was no naivety, no utopian idealism.... We were fully aware that we would be up against a stone wall of either indifference or prejudice in the white community.... But the black community was challenging us and saying: 'Your first and primary task is towards your own white people.' So we said: 'Okay, we accept the challenge, we will try.'"<sup>63</sup>

While the white programmes were stuttering along, Spro-cas 2's other sponsored project, the Durban-based black community programme (BCP) showed better results. At the start of its life in 1972, the BCP identified more than 70 different black-controlled organisations, in its desire not to create duplicate bodies, but rather to support existing ones such as SASO and the Black People's Convention. It also hoped to create networks through which black trade unionists, political leaders, students and churchmen could communicate and to act as a catalyst in advancing Black Consciousness. The programme had attracted several important BC leaders, including Khoapa, Pityana, Bokwe Mafuna and Biko. It seems odd that at the time when the BC movement was gaining political clout, leaders of this calibre were prepared to be involved with an initiative

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<sup>62</sup>Walshe, Church versus state, p 131.

<sup>63</sup> C B F Naudé-Clur interview.

sponsored by a white-run organisation. This was made possible by the way in which Beyers Naudé and Peter Randall worked - they provided the BCP with the resources and then left them to do their job without interference. By 1973 the BCP became an autonomous black company with its board of directors, and although hampered by continual state harassment and banning of its members, produced numerous important BC publications.<sup>64</sup> Sam Nolutshungu has said of the BCP:

“It was politically important from the start, since it published most of the material produced by and about the Black Consciousness movement, and provided employment for key SASO militants after they left university and a framework within which they could continue to work towards their political objectives.... It also provided a model of politically minded, public action independent of white South African liberal patronage and hostile to official policies and plans.”<sup>65</sup>

One area where the co-operation between the BCP and Spro-cas was particularly successful was in the field of publishing. A publishing company, Ravan Press, had been formed by Peter Randall, Beyers Naudé and Danie van Zyl to handle Spro-cas reports and papers, and it was used by the BCP for their publications. These included an annual survey Black Review and a quarterly magazine Black Viewpoint. The popularity and success of these publications brought increasing attention from the government in the form of bannings of the publications and the writers. By March 1973 all the leaders of the BCP had been banned, which made circulation of their publications illegal.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>AA S20, Black community programmes brochure, Black Community Programmes collection, 1972 - 1977, Unisa Documentation Centre for African Studies and Walshe, Church versus state, pp 140- 149.

<sup>65</sup>S Nolutshungu, as quoted in P Randall, “Spro-cas revisited: the Christian contribution to political debate”, in C Villa-Vicencio and J W de Gruchy (eds) Resistance and hope: South African essays in honour of Beyers Naudé, p168.

<sup>66</sup>Walshe, Church versus state, pp 152 - 153.

Naudé in the early 1970s was leading the CI into accepting and working closely with BC leaders, but there is evidence that not all BC adherents accepted the bona fides of the CI and Naudé. Referring to the generally hostile reaction of white liberals to the emergence of the BC philosophy, Themba Sono acknowledged that Naudé and the CI were among a small group in the white liberal spectrum who reacted differently. He said “these ... respondents were wise enough to adopt a charitable and paternalistic attitude to the movement, and simultaneously to keep firing harsh salvos at the apartheid government; accusing it of having created this black consciousness phenomenon - some called it the apartheid monster”. Sono, however, also pointed out that BC leaders were outwardly unmoved by the help offered: “I say outwardly because whenever a financial crunch loomed it was not unusual for some prominent member of SASO to approach these liberals for some ‘guilt’ money.” But in spite of accepting financial help, Sono argues that BC leaders continued to question a coalition with a white, powerless group.<sup>67</sup>

Sono also refers to the troubled relationship between SASO/BCP’s relationship with Spro-Cas and the SA Institute of Race Relations, and refers to a resentment that fundraising was done by these groups “in the name of working with black communities and multiracial groups for ‘social change’”. Sono goes on to say that there were accusations that little of this money found its way into black coffers. Sono’s comments illuminate a troubling dimension that existed in Naudé’s relationship with his BC colleagues. Naudé, who was an excellent fund-raiser, was often approached to help financially, but among some BC adherents there appears to have been a resentment of his power in this regard. Barney Pityana commented:

“When we started SASO in 1969 we had no money to start anything and we felt able to go to the CI to seek funding support to start the things we felt needed to be done. The

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<sup>67</sup>T Sono, Reflections on the origins of black consciousness in South Africa, p 67.



only other avenue was the SACC, and we had a problem, in fact we had a fight with (general secretary) John Rees. He had not understood the political force of what we were doing. He wanted to control."

Pityana contrasted the behaviour of Rees and Naudé, saying the controlling tendency was not apparent in the latter. However, Pityana confirmed Sono's contention that the SASO leadership did not feel they had to be terribly grateful for help:

"We didn't want to be dependent on white people for funding and Beyers knew that. We were very angry with funders who would only channel money through Beyers and we always resisted that. Where Beyers was useful, and it did not mean that we accepted his role and his ability to get funds, but whenever we got stuck we could go to him and we would say 'we need money for this', and he would find money to do it because he believed in us and what we wanted to do. And he didn't expect us to accept that he would necessarily always raise funds on our behalf. But we never did receive large sums of money."<sup>68</sup>

By the very nature of the BC philosophy, relations with an organisation like the CI could never be easy, but Naudé had earned a grudging acceptance by and even the respect of the BCP workers, including Steve Biko. Speaking about Biko, Naudé said:

"I learnt so much from him about the feelings and the aspirations of the black community.... We supported the actions of the Black Community Programme, and gave our blessing when the Black People's Convention was formed.... The point we wanted to make to the white community was to say: 'The time has arrived where the future initiatives of the country can no longer remain in white hands. It has to be an initiative emanating from the black community, and we as whites ... must find a new role - a supportive, complementary role, to get rid of the old spirit of paternalism, of white liberalism, to say to the black community: Over to you.' To the vast majority of whites that attitude was treason: treason in the real sense of the word. And that is why the government increasingly began to take action against the Christian Institute."<sup>69</sup>

This chapter has sought to explain the BC movement and why, in spite of seeming contradictions, Naudé was sympathetic and open to its influence. Part of Naudé's fascination, particularly as a

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<sup>68</sup>B Pityana-Clur interview.

<sup>69</sup>C F B Naudé interview with B Bilheimer for A cry of reason: Beyers Naudé, an Afrikaner speaks out.

media figure, is the incongruity of a man who looked and spoke like a typical middle-aged Afrikaner and who insisted that he saw himself as an Afrikaner, seeking common ground with young black radicals. What deepened the irony is that these young BC leaders' ideology for liberation was grounded in a rejection of help from whites. Two issues need closer examination. Having rejected Afrikaner nationalism, could Naudé still assert his close identification with the Afrikaner people? In his autobiography, and in various statements and interviews over the years, Naudé, while rejecting apartheid, continued to sympathise with his father's involvement in the Afrikaner's struggle for political freedom. In spite of his conflict with the Broederbond, Naudé writes that the organisation had "in its time" made a positive contribution "to help the Afrikaner, to develop his language and culture, to overcome the Afrikaner's old sense of inferiority". Naudé draws a comparison between the struggle waged by men like his own father and the generation of BC leaders. This prompts the second question: was it the fact that Naudé had maintained a sympathy for the original struggle waged by Afrikaner nationalists that predisposed him to being sympathetic to a similar movement in the black community? Naudé, in his autobiography, certainly draws parallels between the struggles of the Afrikaner and black people in South Africa. Referring to his father's fight against Milner's policy of obliterating Afrikaans, he says what happened to black people in the BC struggle was "precisely the same" and adds that "if there is one group in South Africa which should understand the black community's striving for independence and self-reliance, then it is the Afrikaner".<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>C F B Naudé, *My land van hoop: die lewe van Beyers Naudé*, pp 76 - 77. My translation.

## 6 Escalating conflict with the government, 1972 - 1974

The period 1972 to 1974 was significant for Beyers Naudé in that it brought his conflict with the government to the point where he and his Christian Institute colleagues were prepared to defy the law by refusing to give evidence before the Schlebusch Commission. In the political sphere, the NP government continued to maintain a tight grip as apartheid policies were extended; self-government first granted to Transkei was conferred on other territorial homelands such as the Ciskei and KwaZulu. Control of urban blacks was centralised in the form of administrative boards. The Vorster government permitted some criticism of its policies by co-opted homeland leaders such as Chief Matanzima of the Transkei, yet it was intolerant of both liberal and especially radical critics. In February 1972 Vorster appointed a select committee, which included NP and UP members, to investigate a range of organisations, including Nusas and the CI;<sup>1</sup> and the UP's participation in the Schlebusch Commission was a major factor in the ultimate split of the party in the mid-1970s. The state began to take strong action against white radicals and BC leaders from 1973, banning a number of SASO and BPC leaders as well as some CI staff members. This action occurred after a wave of strikes in Durban in January and February 1973; the labour disputes were not directly linked to any political organisation, but the government's bannings served to demonstrate its determination to take a tough line against radical dissent.<sup>2</sup>

In May 1972 Beyers Naudé became the first South African invited to preach at the seat of the Church of England, Westminster Abbey. He visited several European countries on that trip but

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<sup>1</sup>T R H Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history*, pp 374 - 379

<sup>2</sup>G M Gerhart, *Black power in South Africa: the evolution of an ideology*, p 297.

the time spent in Britain had the greatest impact. Apart from delivering the Westminster sermon, he met leading politicians and government leaders. Well aware of the importance of these meetings and speaking engagements, Naudé concentrated on two key issues which would often dominate debate on South Africa in the years to come: the question of violence and international trade sanctions against South Africa as a means of forcing political change. Both these topics had been placed on the agenda by the World Council of Churches (WCC). The “violence issue” stemmed from the WCC’s Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) which, since 1970, had given monetary support to liberation movements in Southern Africa, and the question of a trade embargo became contentious after the WCC voted in 1972 to withdraw its funds from corporations which invested or traded with South Africa, South West Africa, Rhodesia and Portuguese African territories.<sup>3</sup>

In the early 1970s Beyers, like most white South African liberals, was still opposed to sanctions. During his trip to Britain he pleaded with a group of British peers, members of parliament, businessmen and industrialists to use their financial leverage to help black South Africans improve their economic position.<sup>4</sup> In spite of his caution, sections of the Afrikaans press distorted Naudé’s message. Vaderland, for example, said in a headline that “Beyers Naudé calls for a boycott of South Africa”.<sup>5</sup> His viewpoint at the time was far more conservative and was summed up in an interview he gave on his return to South Africa: “Give our blacks a better share of South Africa’s wealth. It will stem the tide of economic resentment towards us and help us economically.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>SA Institute of Race Relations, A Survey of race relations in South Africa 1972, p 48

<sup>4</sup>Rand Daily Mail, 6 May, 8 May, 9 May 1972 and Star, 6 May and 8 May 1972.

<sup>5</sup>Vaderland, 8 May 1972. My translation.

<sup>6</sup>Sunday Express, 21 May 1972.

Naudé had often expressed his views on the issue of violence. As early as 1966 he had warned that unless negotiations were begun with recognised black leaders, the confrontation in South Africa would eventually become a violent one. He had also frequently called for the churches to take the lead in a non-violent campaign against apartheid, citing the example of Martin Luther King. And, while opposing force in all its forms, he had also pointed out that the church was often selective in its condemnation of violence.<sup>7</sup> Dealing with this issue during his sermon at Westminster Abbey, Naudé said that while it might give partial or short-term answers to racial injustice and oppression, violence raised more problems than it solved.<sup>8</sup>

Naudé's frequent references to the potential for conflict in South Africa also provoked a strong negative reaction. In September 1972 Vaderland published a series of negative articles about him and the CI which took particular exception to a warning he had given that if black anger eventually erupted in violence, then whites, and particularly Christians, would be to blame for consistently ignoring black demands and suffering.<sup>9</sup>

On the recommendation of Professor J Verkuyl, in October 1972 the Senate of the Free University of Amsterdam decided to award Naudé an honorary doctorate. The university conferred the honour in recognition of his public challenge to racism in South Africa and of his Christian witness in establishing and running the CI. Such honours were only conferred in the

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<sup>7</sup>Dagbreek en Sondagnuus, 16 October 1968, Star, 14 May 1968 and C F B Naudé sermon in Utrecht at the Peace Week Programme, 19 September 1971.

<sup>8</sup>Star, 8 May 1972.

<sup>9</sup>Vaderland, 20 September 1972 and Rand Daily Mail 20 September 1972.

Netherlands with the concurrence of all the country's universities.<sup>10</sup> But while he was honoured outside his country, at home he was under pressure from the state.

The Naudés had received numerous death threats since 1960 when he had taken part in the Cottesloe deliberations, and these forms of intimidation had become a permanent feature of their lives. Right-wing thugs were more active in Cape Town, and Theo and Helen Kotze suffered continual harassment as part of the broader intimidation of anti-apartheid organisations and activists, mostly carried out by a two-man group called "Scorpio".<sup>11</sup> More troubling was the government's mounting attack on the CI and other multi-racial bodies. A new level in this battle was reached in February 1972 when Vorster announced that he intended appointing a parliamentary select committee to investigate the objects, activities and financing of organisations suspected of "subversion". The organisations against which he was convinced a "prima facie case" existed were the University Christian Movement (which disbanded the same year), the National Union of South African Students, the South African Institute of Race Relations and the Christian Institute.<sup>12</sup> The prime minister's decision was to lead to one of the most serious confrontations involving Christians since the Cottesloe crisis, and once again Naudé was in the midst of the storm.

The CI's initial objection to the committee was that its investigations would be conducted by party politicians operating in complete secrecy under the cloak of state security. At first Naudé

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<sup>10</sup>Pro Veritate, 15 October 1972, Star, 11 September 1972.

<sup>11</sup>P Walshe, Church versus state: the case of the Christian Institute, p 93 and Pro Veritate, 15 October 1972.

<sup>12</sup>SAIRR, A Survey 1972, p 52 and Star, 7 February 1972.

had been willing to co-operate, albeit reluctantly, with the select committee. But he became increasingly disturbed by the secret nature of the inquiries - and this would later form the basis of the decision taken by him and other CI staff members not to give evidence before the inquiry. Naudé, in a telegram, urged the government to appoint a public judicial inquiry, but the government went ahead with its appointment of a select committee. National Party MP Mr Jimmy Kruger, who would later become Minister of Justice and Police, was appointed chairman. Four months later Kruger requested that the committee be broadened into a commission of inquiry with wider terms of reference and powers to investigate any organisation or person connected in any way with the suspect bodies. It was decided that the commission would sit in camera and that the full evidence would not be published. No information about the proceedings could be divulged by witnesses or other persons present during the inquiry. Members of the organisations under investigation would not be entitled to view evidence which had been submitted against them, nor would they be permitted to cross-examine witnesses, lead their own evidence or call their own witnesses. Participation by counsel would be limited to advising clients of their legal rights. When Jimmy Kruger had to step down as chairman on being made a deputy minister he was replaced by Alwyn Schlebusch, after whom the commission came to be commonly named. Chairmanship would later pass into the hands of a politician who had been a deacon in Naudé's church council in Potchefstroom, Mr Louis le Grange, future Minister of Police.<sup>13</sup>

One unforeseen consequence of the commission of inquiry was the conflict it created in the opposition United Party (UP), which was a factor in the party's collapse. UP leader Sir de Villiers Graaff was uneasy when the commission was announced and urged the government to appoint

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<sup>13</sup> SA Institute of Race Relations, A survey of race relations in South Africa, 1973, pp 24

a judicial commission rather than a select committee. When this request was ignored, three UP members nevertheless agreed to serve on the commission along with six National Party MPs, on the grounds that it would give the party a “watchdog” role, “to see that there would be fair play, and to keep ourselves informed on vital matters affecting law and order”. Mrs Helen Suzman, then a member of the Progressive Party, sounded a warning at the time, arguing that the UP was making a mistake by serving on the committee. She said if the UP refrained and left it to the Nationalists, it “would make it clear what a farce the whole thing is going to be”.<sup>14</sup>

The first target of the Schlebusch Commission was the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), whose members agreed under protest to co-operate with the inquiry. In an interim report issued in February 1973 the commission recommended that no action should be taken against Nusas as a body, but it named eight student leaders as a threat to the security of the state. The same night the students were issued with five-year banning orders under the Suppression of Communism Act. The United Party said it had not been consulted about the bannings. Describing bannings as “odious”, it called for the students to be brought before the courts. Sir de Villiers Graaff defended the commission’s findings against the “small clique which was exploiting NUSAS”; the banned students were never charged and the UP continued to serve on the commission.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>28.1.19: “The United Party and the recent banning of people associated with student organisations” notes based on a speech made by Sir de Villiers Graaff at Rondebosch on 8.3.73, United Party Archives, Sir De Villiers Graaff, Schlebusch Commission, SAIRR, Survey, 1972, p 53 and H Suzman, In no uncertain terms, p 131.

<sup>15</sup>28.1.19: “The United Party”, Sir de Villiers Graaff, 8.3.73 and SAIRR, Survey, 1973, p 27.



During 1973 there were calls, stemming from the Schlebusch Commission's work, for the establishment of a Parliamentary commission on internal security, and the creation of such a bi-party commission was supported by UP MP S J Marais Steyn, who served on the Schlebusch Commission. There followed a wave of internal in-fighting and in August 1973 Marais Steyn defected to the NP. Throughout these months there were calls from some UP party members and the English press for the UP to leave the commission, but Graaff declined.<sup>16</sup> He appeared to think the UP could still influence the final report of the commission, even though the UP had admitted it had not been consulted on the student bannings. In reply to a letter of protest from a University of the Witwatersrand lecturer in September 1973, Graaff said:

"...our commissioners have signed an interim report...but no final report has as yet been presented. I believe they owe a duty to themselves and to the public to continue their work and to produce that final report which will justify their findings in the interim report...There are vital differences between us and the government which we shall continue to fight".<sup>17</sup>

Among those banned were several people who had been involved with the CI and Spro-cas, including Neville Curtis and Rick Turner, who was assassinated a few years later. Shortly thereafter eight leading members of the black South African Students Organisation and the Black People's Convention were also banned, including Spro-cas BCP workers Barney Pityana and Steve Biko. The director of the BCP, Bennie Khoapa, was banned a few months later.

The action against NUSAS confirmed the CI's view that the Schlebusch Commission was a vehicle enabling the government to take arbitrary action against its opponents. When the

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid, pp 2 -7.

<sup>17</sup>28.1.19: Letter De Villiers Graaff to W F Harris, 18 September 1973, Sir de Villiers Graaff.

Commission began to turn its attention to the CI, Naudé and several other staff and board members decided not to give evidence. A statement, adopted at a CI board meeting in March 1973 with 17 votes in favour and four abstentions, affirmed support for CI members who refused to cooperate with the commission, saying the banning of the student leaders confirmed the CI's impression that "the appointment of the Parliamentary select committee is calculated to permit punitive measures being taken under the guise of democratic procedure.... We reaffirm our conviction that the investigation ... should be undertaken through a judicial commission which can ensure impartiality...."<sup>18</sup>

This statement of defiance signalled a new phase in the conflict between the CI and the state, but CI members and Naudé himself felt strongly that their decision was primarily a Christian and moral stand and not a political one. In arriving at their decision, the CI members had raised the issue of the right of Christians to resist an unjust government. Drawing on the works of theologians such as Karl Barth, Reinhold Niebuhr and John Knox, Naudé and four other leading CI members drew up a document entitled "Divine or civil obedience?" which argued on the basis of the Scriptures for their right to resist unchristian governmental authority in the name of Christ. On the ground that the prime minister and chairman had shown prejudice against the organisations before the inquiries began, and because of the secretiveness of the commission and the subsequent state action against student leaders, the document argued that the government's clampdown was unchristian.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>As quoted in SAIRR, Survey 1973, p 29.

<sup>19</sup>B Brown, T Kotze, R Meyer, C F B Naudé and J E Phakati, Divine or civil disobedience?, pp 8 - 13.

Naudé regarded the Schlebusch Commission as the turning point for the CI. The battlelines were clearly drawn between the CI and the government. And for the first time black people began to support their stand.<sup>20</sup> The launching of government commissions to investigate its opponents had the effect of putting Naudé and the CI on the defensive. In many respects the CI was unable to set its own agenda and had to concentrate on reacting to pressure from the government. But it also used the commission to challenge the state's authority and this ensured a great deal of publicity for the CI. Naudé's CI colleague Brian Brown commented:

"While the Schlebusch Commission was the extraneous factor impinging upon our programme, by deliberate choice the CI chose to make it an issue. It became a matter of not just responding to the Schlebusch Commission, but asking: 'What is legitimate action against an organisation? Can there be a non-judicial action which is just? Is the rule of law being violated by the commission?' ...It gave us a vehicle, a platform, and using that platform in order to do what no manner of writing at that time would have achieved. And we saw in that process that the editorial stances of the liberal press changed. As the significance of the event dawned, we found that the English press, which had after all been supportive of the United Party, began to criticise their participation. Suddenly we found that participation was causing the United Party more problems than the CI... Our stand was ultimately a prime factor in the dissolving of the United Party. We survived Schlebusch, they didn't. They were utterly discredited by their participation and it led to a split which was so weakening of an already weakened party that politically its life was doomed."<sup>21</sup>

Brown's comments about the UP's difficulties are borne out by the increasing pressure it came under at the time. English newspapers became more critical of the UP's involvement with the commission. An example is an editorial in the Rand Daily Mail in September 1973 which urged the UP to quit the commission.<sup>22</sup>

It was not just the UP which was having difficulties with the Schlebusch Commission. A decision

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<sup>20</sup>C F B Naudé interview with P Randall, 1982.

<sup>21</sup>B Brown interview with C Clur, 1988.

<sup>22</sup>Rand Daily Mail, 28 September 1973.

on whether or not to co-operate with the commission had caused dissension within the SA Institute of Race Relations, but early in 1973 the Institute, led by Fred Van Wyk and with the support of leading and influential members such as Ellen Hellman, agreed to cooperate. The decision caused a split within the organisation and some young members, said they would not appear before the commission.<sup>23</sup>

In April 1973 the Schlebusch Commission had released another of its reports, this time into the activities of the ecumenical Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre, situated west of Johannesburg. Expressing disgust at the centre's sensitivity training programme, the government deported Eoin O'Leary, who headed the centre's Personal Responsibility and Organisation Development (PROD) project.<sup>24</sup>

In August 1973 the CI's executive, which consisted of Beyers Naudé, Theo Kotze, Brian Brown, Oshadi Phakati and Roelf Meyer, issued a formal statement refusing to testify. In all, nine people from the CI who were subpoenaed to give evidence before the commission refused to do so, and four individual SAIRR members also refused to testify.<sup>25</sup>

Naudé and six other CI members appeared before the Schlebusch Commission in the old *Raadsaal* building in Pretoria on 24 September 1973. When it was Naudé's turn to appear he refused to take the oath, but handed in the document in which the CI members had set out their reasons for

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<sup>23</sup>P Rich, "Liberals, radicals and the politics of black consciousness, 1969 - 76", African Studies Institute seminar paper, p 15.

<sup>24</sup>Commission of inquiry into certain organisations: third interim report, 11 April 1973 and SAIRR, Survey, 1973, pp 33 - 36.

<sup>25</sup>SA Institute of Race Relations, A survey of race relations in South Africa, 1974, p 39.

refusing to testify, "Divine or civil disobedience?".

Naudé had planned to fly overseas the day after he had appeared before the Schlebusch Commission. After checking in his baggage at Jan Smut Airport he realised that he had forgotten to note the expiry date on his passport and discovered it was no longer valid. When he explained his predicament to officials he was handed an undated letter from the Secretary of the Interior notifying him that his passport had been withdrawn. There was condemnation in the English press and from overseas church circles where Naudé was known. The DRC defended the government's action and, replying to a call from the Gereformeerde Kerk in the Netherlands to intervene in the issue, the moderation declared government had acted "completely within its jurisdiction and in the framework of the laws of the country. We cannot think of a valid reason whereby you can expect us to interfere in the matter".<sup>26</sup>

Within a few months, the passports of all those who had refused to testify were confiscated by the state. A series of police raids on the offices of the CI and Spro-cas followed, and financial records and other documents were seized. All those who had refused to testify before the Schlebusch Commission were charged under the Commissions Act, which carried penalties of a maximum fine of R200 or six months' imprisonment. Most of those who had been charged felt they would rather go to jail than pay the fines, and so began the saga of the Schlebusch trials which, with the long series of appeals and counter-appeals, dragged on for more than two years. The first person to be convicted was CI staffer Ilona Kleinschmidt, and when she lost her appeal and opted for jail

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<sup>26</sup>As quoted in Star, 3 October 1973.

instead of paying her fine, it was mysteriously paid by an unknown person.<sup>27</sup>

Naudé's trial, which began on 13 November 1973, became the focus of much media publicity, symbolising as it did the clash between Christians opposed to apartheid and the state. There was also widespread interest from the international church community and there were fundraising efforts in several overseas church movements to foot the bill for the CI trials. Even the Church of England, which generally took a more conservative stand than the Dutch churches and WCC movement on issues such as sanctions, gave support to Naudé. The issue was raised at the Church of England's synod of November 1973 by the Archbishop of Canterbury and a fund was established to assist him.<sup>28</sup> The trial was attended by Dr G O Williams, representing the British Council of Churches, and by Professor Antony Allott for the International Commission of Jurists. The International Commission later published a book giving a full transcript of the proceedings and Allott discussed the legal and moral issues involved.

Naudé pleaded not guilty to a charge of contravening the Commissions Act when he appeared before magistrate Mr L M Kotze. Defence attorney Mr J C Kriegler, later to become a judge of the Constitutional Court, admitted that Naudé had refused to take the oath or to testify before the Schlebusch Commission, but argued that on grounds of conscience there was "sufficient cause" for his refusal. Over the next four days the story of Naudé's life unfolded as the defence attempted to justify his plea of not guilty. The evidence described his personal journey of faith which had

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<sup>27</sup>AD 1752 (4Da23) "Summary of action taken against the CI and Spro-cas between August 1973 and January 1974", Department of Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand Library, Fred van Wyk Papers.

<sup>28</sup>V Austin, The Church of England as an international actor in Southern Africa: 1970 - 1980, p 222.

resulted in his decision to leave the DRC and to join the CI. It also dealt in detail with his beliefs, the principles of the gospel, the attitudes of the church in South Africa and the history and nature of the Christian Institute. As the trial progressed it became clear that this was the way Beyers Naudé had chosen to respond to the Schlebusch Commission. He was prepared to give a full account of his work - and to answer any questions put by the state - at this, a public hearing.<sup>29</sup>

When Naudé was called to the witness stand he described his background, the nature of the CI and all the factors which had led him to challenge the DRC. He described his decision to leave as a minister of the DRC the most difficult of his life. His attorney then asked him to read the sermon he had delivered in September 1963 in which he announced his decision to accept the directorship of the CI. The defence then tried to show why the Schlebusch Commission could not be regarded as a "neutral" inquiry, and why its secret method of operation had violated the rule of law. Naudé explained that he objected to the secret nature of the commission, and that his opposition to secrecy had deepened because of his experiences with the Afrikaner Broederbond. His understanding of the Scriptures had brought him to the conclusion that:

"through the grace of God I should try for the rest of my life to do everything in the open and in public. This is not to say ... that there are no circumstances and situations in which a person should not act confidentially, certainly there are many such situations in which confidential information is given, in which confidential relationships exist which a person would honour. But secrecy as a principle cannot be endorsed or supported by a Christian."

During the final stages of Beyers Naudé's evidence he was closely questioned by the magistrate.

Writing for Rapport, Rykie van Reenen said the court case was suddenly transformed into a

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<sup>29</sup>A Allott, "State law and the Christian conscience in South Africa, in Christian Institute News Digest, June 1974 and A Allott, "The legal background" in International Commission of Jurists (eds) The trial of Beyers Naudé: Christian witness and the rule of law.

conversation "between two Christian Afrikaners who were trying to reach each other across a gulf".<sup>30</sup> The magistrate noted that the State President had a legitimate constitutional right to convene a secret enquiry and that Naudé, by refusing to testify, was challenging the authority of the government. Naudé said:

"It is of greatest importance that we should realise for the Christian in any case, all authority is given by God, that God gives this authority to the State to govern, he also gives the authority to the Church to ... witness. The test is applied to both the Church and State to obey this authority with God gives."

The magistrate asked Naudé whether he did not hold a great deal "against" the Afrikaans churches. Naudé replied:

"I do not hold anything against the Afrikaans churches. I have something against the unbiblical points of view in our Afrikaans churches, in which it is my calling and duty as a Christian to bring to their attention everything which is in conflict with the Scriptures .... and in particular to the church to which I belong, the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk."<sup>31</sup>

In November 1973 Naudé was found guilty as charged. The magistrate rejected the defence's argument that Naudé had "sufficient cause" to refuse to testify before the Schlebusch Commission. He also rejected another more technical argument that the Schlebusch Commission had not been legally constituted since the State President did not have the right to impose secrecy on the commission. Naudé was sentenced to a R50 fine or one month's imprisonment, with a further three months conditionally suspended. Leave to appeal was granted and payment of the fine was deferred pending the outcome of the appeal. The initial appeal to the Transvaal Supreme Court succeeded on technical arguments, but this was overturned by the Appeal Court in December 1974. The case was referred back to the Supreme Court, but the two judges could not

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<sup>30</sup>Rapport, 18 November 1973.

<sup>31</sup>As translated by International Commission of Jurists (eds) The trial of Beyers Naudé, pp 18 - 131.



reach agreement and so the matter was referred to a full bench of three judges. On 9 October 1976 Mr Justice Hiemstra, although expressing his doubts about the composition, modus operandi and impartiality of the Schlebusch Commission, ruled against Beyers Naudé.<sup>32</sup>

Many of Naudé's CI colleagues faced similar charges for defying the Schlebusch Commission. Most received suspended sentences and in some cases the charges were withdrawn. The intense pressure that was being exerted on opponents of the state was evident in further charges being laid against Naudé and his colleagues. On 28 November 1973 Naudé, along with Peter Randall and Danie van Zyl, as co-directors of Ravan Press, were charged under the Suppression of Communism Act for quoting a banned NUSAS leader in one of their publications. In 1974 they were acquitted in the Johannesburg Regional Court.<sup>33</sup>

The Schlebusch Commission and the trials were an indication of the steps which the government was prepared to take to justify its actions against its white opponents. It displayed greater severity when it came to deal with black organisations. By the end of 1973 the staff and publications of the Black Community Programme had been banned, as had all important black student leaders. The CI estimated that by the end of 1973 altogether 28 whites and 186 blacks (including Coloured and Indian people) were banned. By January 1974 some 40 young leaders were being held without trial under the Terrorism Act, and later that year another 13 BC leaders were detained after they had attempted to hold a rally to celebrate the victory of Frelimo in

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<sup>32</sup> SA Institute of Race Relations, A survey of race relations in South Africa, 1975, p 33 and SA Institute of Race Relations, A survey of race relations in South Africa 1976, p 127.

<sup>33</sup> SAIRR, Survey, 1973, p 38, Survey, 1974, p 42 and P Randall, Not without honour: tribute to Beyers Naudé, p 37.

Mozambique.<sup>34</sup>

The CI began to reconsider seriously its role in a predominantly black society. The influence of Black Consciousness leaders working in the Black Community Programme had brought Naudé to realise that blacks needed to be brought into the mainstream of the CI's work. But the CI's history as a largely white-run organisation made it difficult for the organisation to adapt. It made a concerted if belated attempt, and an increasing number of black people were elected onto the CI's board of management and appointed as staff members. In 1973 the Reverend Manas Buthelezi of the Lutheran Church became regional director for Natal - but his appointment was short-lived after he was served with a banning order.<sup>35</sup>

Another new black staff member in the CI was nurse and social worker Mrs Oshadi Phakati, who was appointed community programme organiser for the Transvaal and Free State in 1973. Phakati was to have a close but troubled relationship with Naudé. During her years with the CI, Oshadi Phakati launched several community development projects in the Pretoria area, setting up self-help literacy programmes, day-care centres, and first-aid and home-nursing projects. Strongly committed to the BC philosophy, Phakati tried to use community projects to raise people's consciousness about the nature of their predicament. Explaining why she felt it worthwhile to work for a white-dominated organisation, she commented:

"I felt the CI's policies did not go far enough, but I thought it would be possible to use the CI's resources to reach people....I took the initiative most of the time, but the CI was always willing to support me. If the CI made some contribution it was that they did not

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<sup>34</sup>CI News, December 1973 and P Walshe, Church versus state in South Africa: the case of the Christian Institute, p 174.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, pp 162 - 163 and C F B Naudé-Randall interview.

try to directly control what we were doing. We had our own programmes, but you could fall back on the CI for many things, including moral support.... Beyers was a very good fundraiser and a generous person, and he did not control too much. In fact, sometimes I thought he lacked control. I always said that Beyers and Brian Brown made a good team. Beyers could say yes too much, while Brian could say no and stick to it. But he could also say no too much and then you needed Beyers's influence."<sup>36</sup>

By 1974 some of the old faces in Spro-cas and the CI had begun to disappear and move on to other work. One of these was Peter Randall, who went on to run one of the most successful spin-offs of Spro-cas, Ravan Press. Naudé believed that it was probably Randall's involvement in Ravan that resulted in his inclusion on the list of banned people in the crackdown of October 1977.<sup>37</sup>

Naudé was himself moving closer to a new group of people in the CI who, in their political views and actions, were regarded as more radical. One important figure was Horst Kleinschmidt, who had initially worked for the Spro-cas 2 project. Kleinschmidt joined the CI after he had left student politics, "not because I felt the great image of Christianity looming in my face, but because it was the group which I felt closest to politically". Kleinschmidt, friendly with both Theo Kotze and Peter Randall, became in 1975, at the age of 29, Naudé's administrative assistant. Shortly after this he was detained under the Terrorism Act for almost three months. He fled South Africa in April 1976 and later headed the International Defence and Aid Fund in London, where he gave strong support to the ANC.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> O Phakati interview with C Clur, 1988.

<sup>37</sup> C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

<sup>38</sup> SAIRR, Survey, 1975, pp 64 - 65, Star, 17 April 1976, Vaderland, 15 April 1976 and Transvaler, 15 April 1976.

Kleinschmidt, speaking of his involvement with Naudé, recalled:

“I was made Beyers’s assistant because he needed an administrative aide in the office who would support him. He had been through a long list of people who had been his deputies, but who in the end clashed with him quite seriously. There were some disastrous people. Many of them were also very nice people, but there were always problems. That is something you need to say about Beyers. His openness, his acceptance of people and of people’s faults has often made him make unwise choices about the people he was going to work with. There were real organisational problems and I also had some difficulties in working with him.... There are many examples of what looked from the outside like Beyers’s lack of consistency, yet today I feel that I can relate to these more philosophically.”

Kleinschmidt said an example of this was Naudé’s willingness to lend CI-owned cars to SASO, BCP and AICA members although many vehicles were damaged in accidents. CI staff finally challenged Naudé on this and a new CI policy was adopted on the use of cars. Kleinschmidt recalled that he was charged with implementing this policy and on one occasion clashed with a black theological student when he refused to lend him a CI car. The student appealed to Naudé.

Kleinschmidt continued:

“Beyers then told him that it was true that the CI had changed its policy and that cars were no longer available, but he then offered him one of his own cars. Beyers gave him the car, and he got as far as Uncle Charlie’s [to the west of Johannesburg] before he crashed it.... I felt very angry about that and when I challenged Beyers, he said something that I had never heard him say before.... He described how difficult it was for him to say no when he had to come to terms with his guilt as a white person who, for so many years, had been part and parcel of oppressing blacks. For him the dividing line of keeping a good and honourable relationship with black people was something that he still had to learn about.... But this reflected on one extraordinary part of Beyers, and that in my experience was his infinite ability to say: ‘I have been wrong and I will have to learn what is the right thing to do.’ Beyers had a remarkable ability and facility to change.”<sup>39</sup>

Naudé’s facility to change has been discussed in the previous chapter, as has a certain “inconsistency” in his behaviour which sometimes annoyed colleagues. John Rees sought to explain this behaviour as a consequence of Naudé not wanting to disappoint people. He said:

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<sup>39</sup>H Kleinschmidt interview with C Clur, 1988.

"The SACC's Dependants' Conference was caring for about 900 families at one stage and we could only afford to give them R25 a month. There would be people who would come and make representations for more, but our hands were tied. They would walk straight upstairs and get money from Beyers. That was very difficult and sometimes caused people to play us off against one another.

"Beyers never wanted to disappoint. He would agree with one group of people in one meeting, but then he would do the same thing at a meeting with people with an opposing view. Beyers did not want to take sides, he always fudged the issue, and some regarded this as duplicitous. My view was that he found it very difficult to say no and he never liked a confrontational situation. I don't think he deliberately set out to hurt anybody, but he was never totally aware of the consequences of what he did. He became so concerned with a particular goal that its effect on another matter became peripheral. And when you pointed it out to him he was genuinely repentant.... Like so many African giants, he had his strengths and weaknesses. A lot of Beyers's weaknesses were transparent, but because of his greatness in other areas people tended to overlook them."<sup>40</sup>

The year 1974 saw a new political climate emerge in southern Africa, with the collapse of Portuguese rule in Angola and Mozambique, the stepping up of guerrilla wars in South West Africa (Namibia) and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), and the resurgence of the South African liberation movements. South Africa became rapidly militarised and it was in this context that Naudé became involved in the issue of conscientious objection to compulsory military service. The issue was raised at the SACC's annual conference held in August 1974 at Hammanskraal near Pretoria. The 63 delegates represented 10 million members, 8,5 million of whom were black. Accommodation at the seminary enabled all the delegates to be housed together for the three-day conference, and this helped white representatives to develop a greater awareness of the concerns of their black colleagues. Several South African churchmen had attended the All-Africa Council of Churches conference in Lusaka in May 1974 where they had been challenged on their stand towards the liberation movements and this also heightened expectations at the SACC meeting.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>J Rees interview with C Clur, 1989.

<sup>41</sup>J W de Gruchy, The church struggle in South Africa, p 138.

Naudé was moved by the submissions of several black delegates who criticised the churches' stand on the growing strife. They declared that while the churches had all roundly condemned the World Council of Churches for giving aid to the liberation movements, they were silent about white participation in the conflicts on the country's borders which they saw as violence being used to maintain a discriminatory society. On the first day of the conference, the Reverend Douglas Bax, a white Presbyterian minister, asked whether the time had not come for the SACC to challenge young men to consider conscientious objection to military service. Bax then drew up a resolution on the issue which was to be presented to the conference the following day. He decided to ask Naudé to second it to give it more "impact". Naudé, then strongly attracted to the pacifist ideas of Martin Luther King, agreed immediately.<sup>42</sup> His ready agreement to back an issue he had not fully considered was typical of his impulsive, responsive style. The issue was to cause antagonism between the SACC and the government and its allies, including the DRC, which regarded the resolution as unpatriotic and even anti-Afrikaner.<sup>43</sup> Naudé's personal support for the motion provided further fuel for his critics.

The resolution consisted of a preamble and several items which were debated and voted on one by one. The preamble maintained that South Africa was an unjust and discriminatory society which was a threat to peace. Since Christians were called to "obey God rather than men", they could not accept military service blindly but had to consider whether the cause was just. Defence of an unjust society was ruled out. The preamble also focused on the need for consistency by

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<sup>42</sup>D Bax interview with C Clur, 1988 C F B Naudé speech on the Hammanskraal resolution, 6 September 1974.

<sup>43</sup>J W de Gruchy, "The relationship between the state and some churches in South Africa, 1968 -1975", Journal of church and state, p 442.

asserting that it was hypocritical to deplore the violence of “terrorists or freedom fighters while we ourselves prepare to defend our society with its primary, institutionalised violence by means of yet more violence”. It questioned the basis upon which chaplains were seconded to the military forces “lest their presence indicate moral support for the defence of our unjust and discriminatory society”, and raised the issue of ministering to the “other side”. The resolution deplored all violence and asked member churches to consider “whether Christ’s call to take up the Cross and follow Him in identifying with the oppressed does not ... involve becoming conscientious objectors”. After a fierce five-hour debate, the preamble was carried by 35 votes to 10 and the resolution as a whole by 48 votes to nil.<sup>44</sup>

Naudé was aware that the resolution would provoke an outcry. He said later:

“The whole question of violence had been a constant theme through all the years and I had been doing a lot of private thinking about it. When Douglas Bax came with the motion I was immediately willing to support it. But I warned him. I said: ‘Douglas, do you realise the storm that this will create?’, and he said: ‘I think so.’ But I doubt whether Douglas realised the measure of anger which would erupt, especially on the part of the government.”<sup>45</sup>

The media gave great prominence to the issue and it soon became a raging controversy. Even before the conference had debated the resolution its contents were reported in the Rand Daily Mail. The Hoofstad newspaper announced in a front-page story that Beyers Naudé had urged young men to refuse to serve in the Defence Force. This was followed by similar reports in other Afrikaans newspapers. The SABC in radio broadcasts referred to the “evil influence of the World Council of Churches” and in one of its daily commentaries said about the Hammanskraal decision:

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<sup>44</sup>SACC National Conference, 1974, motion on Conscientious objection and Ecunews, August 5 1974.

<sup>45</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

"In the past we have described the South African Council of Churches as unrepresentative and un-South African. It has now revealed itself as a menace to the security ... of this country.... The stand taken by the council is an offence to the common sense as well as the sentiment of the ordinary South African Christian."<sup>46</sup>

The English press and white opposition parties also opposed the resolution, claiming that the country's borders had to be defended. Prime Minister John Vorster warned that "those who play with fire ... must consider very thoroughly before they burn their fingers irrevocably". The adoption of the Hammanskraal resolution coincided with a debate in parliament on the Defence Further Amendment Bill in parliament to extend the period of citizen force service. After the news of the SACC resolution, then Defence Minister P W Botha introduced a further amendment containing harsh new penalties (a fine of up to R10 000 or 10 years' imprisonment or both) for anyone who incited any person to avoid military service. When the law was finally enacted by parliament, maximum penalties had been reduced to R5 000 or six years or both, and the only party which had voted against it was the small Progressive Party.<sup>47</sup>

Naudé perceived that just as in the debate about the WCC Programme to Combat Racism, the press and the government ignored the views of the black majority when they condemned the Hammanskraal resolution. As Naudé pointed out in a speech soon after the conference, it was because of the strong black representation at Hammanskraal that the resolution had been adopted:

"I believe that in this resolution we are listening to the voice of authentic black Christian conviction and concern, not only because ... more than two-thirds of the delegates were black, but because of the convictions and feelings so clearly expressed in the discussion in the conference as a whole."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Transcript of SABC Current Affairs, 5 August 1974.

<sup>47</sup>SAIRR, *Survey*, 1974, p 62.

<sup>48</sup>C F B Naudé, speech on Hammanskraal, 1974.



Hammanskraal presented an important challenge to the English-speaking churches, and although opposition was expressed by many rank-and-file white churchgoers, the resolution was later supported at many church synods. However, an effort to take the debate further at the SACC's 1975 conference, in the form of another resolution written by Douglas Bax and seconded by Naudé, was blocked by more cautious figures in the SACC such as John Rees. Member churches of the SACC rather reluctantly began to examine the issue of conscientious objection and military chaplaincy at subsequent synods. Most member churches asked the government to reconsider the position of the conscientious objector. But little concrete action was taken beyond this by English-speaking churches and in the early 1980s it was NUSAS students that took up this battle when they launched the End Conscription Campaign.<sup>49</sup>

The issue of conscientious objection had been firmly placed on the agenda of the churches and would assume increasing importance as militarisation and conflict increased in South Africa. Naudé and the CI and some leaders in the SACC felt that it was not enough simply to criticise apartheid or condemn the violence of those who opposed the government. In a sermon delivered shortly afterwards, Naudé declared:

“As a Christian community we are commanded by Christ not only to identify ourselves with those in suffering and distress, but also to take active and positive steps to prevent as far as humanly possible such suffering.... We are called not only to be peacelovers but even more - peacemakers. This is the crucial challenge which the situation of confrontation and conflict on our borders presents to us. Are we satisfied that it should develop into a dangerous, massive clash of open violence, bloodshed and warfare on and within our borders or are we willing to seek active ways and means to discover true peace which can only be founded on justice? What are we prepared to do to find peace?”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>D Bax-Clur interview, De Gruchy, *The church struggle*, p 145 and J Frederickse, *The unbreakable thread: non-racialism in South Africa*, p 214.

<sup>50</sup>C F B Naudé address at the service of United Christian Witness re the Defence Further Amendment Bill, St Mary's Catholic Church, Pietermaritzburg, September 15 1974.

At the same time that Naudé was trying to get this message across, the Afrikaans press practically accused him of treason. As one columnist put it: "What inspired you to support a motion which amounts to telling a democratic country to sit back and allow communist-inspired murderers and men of violence to overrun it?"<sup>51</sup>

By contrast with the attacks were the honours and awards conferred on him. In 1974 the University of the Witwatersrand decided to award him the honorary degree of doctor of laws. In his citation, Professor E Kahn described Naudé "as an international figure, the embodiment of the liberal spirit in this land".<sup>52</sup>

The same year, at the University of Chicago, Naudé, together with prominent Russian dissident Andrei Sakharov, was awarded the Reinhold Niebuhr Prize for human rights. Naudé's passport was briefly returned in November 1974 to enable him to receive the award personally and he made use of the concession by travelling first to the Netherlands. It was the last time for many years that he was permitted to travel abroad, and the opinions he expressed about his country's political future once again fuelled controversy in South Africa. He was interviewed by Dutch television, and featured prominently in press reports and in several radio broadcasts. In various interviews and addresses, he made it clear that the government should prepare the way for eventual black rule and begin negotiations with the country's legitimate black leaders both in exile

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<sup>51</sup>Rapport, 4 August 1974

<sup>52</sup>Graduation Programme, University of the Witwatersrand Graduation Ceremony, April 1974.

and in prison.<sup>53</sup>

Naudé addressed these issues in a speech at the Hervormde Kerk synod in Driebergen. Quoting John Rees who had been present at the All-Africa Council of Churches conference in Lusaka in May 1974, Naudé said the ANC had warned that guerilla warfare would reach South Africa within two years. At a press conference shortly afterwards, Naudé was asked whether the CI would continue to act as a buffer between the races in the event of open confrontation. He replied that it would be impossible for any organisation to remain neutral and that the CI would side with the oppressed. These statements were distorted in reports. Quoting from a Dutch source, Beeld said that Naudé had “sided against the whites”, that he predicted terrorism in South Africa and that the CI supported the “freedom fighters”. The SABC then announced that Beyers Naudé and the CI supported violence, and this was followed by a public attack on him by Prime Minister Vorster. But after Dutch church leaders publicly refuted these reports and Naudé had issued numerous statements to the contrary, Beeld admitted that it had misquoted him.<sup>54</sup> While Beeld had exaggerated Naudé’s views, in one sense its report was correct: Naudé was siding against the white, apartheid-supporting establishment.

Naudé may have been misquoted but he had correctly understood that South Africa was on the brink of violent confrontation. He had also come to demonstrate a far greater commitment to black liberation and sympathy for the liberation movements, a view which he also made public during his visit to the United States. An important shift in his public utterances was that he no

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<sup>53</sup>Beeld, 11 November and 15 November 1974.

<sup>54</sup>Beeld, 19 November 1974 and 25 November 1974.

longer condemned outright those who had resorted to violence, or the “armed struggle” as a means of fighting to end apartheid. Yet he continued to believe that another way to violence had to be found. Accepting the Reinhold Niebuhr award, Naudé once again noted how often the institutionalised church had closed its eyes to immense human suffering and abuse of human rights:

“I do not think that Christ gives us the right to judge or condemn those who, in finding themselves in such situations of tyranny and oppression, have come to the conclusion that, having tried all else, there is no option left to procure liberation ... through violence.”

But he added that violence was not the way of God and he looked forward to a time when, drawing on the tradition of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, conflicts could be resolved through means other than violence. He then referred to the CI and reaffirmed his organisation’s commitment to fighting for the “fundamental rights of every human being”.<sup>55</sup> In this speech Naudé had placed himself and the CI unambiguously on the side of the black majority and he and his colleagues would soon face the wrath of the NP government for doing so.

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<sup>55</sup>C F B Naudé, “Christian involvement in the struggle for human rights and justice”, address in reply to receiving the Reinhold Niebuhr Award, 1974.

## 7 Final years of the CI, 1975 - 1977

In the final years of the CI Naudé fully committed himself to black liberation. Both he, in his public utterances, and Pro Veritate were stridently critical of the government. Naudé had concluded that pressure for change could only be effective if it came from black South Africans, and so he largely abandoned his role of being a voice of pressure in the white community. In 1975 the Schlebusch Commission had declared the CI to be a danger to the state, and from 1976, as the government sought to put a lid on black foment with bannings, detentions and other forms of repression, it targeted the CI and the small group of whites who associated themselves with the BC movement and student uprisings.

By January 1975 Beyers Naudé felt it was only a matter of time before the state acted against the CI and used the long-awaited Schlebusch Commission report to justify its move. As a result of earlier reports by the commission, the government had enacted an “Affected Organisations Bill”, aimed at cutting off foreign funding to organisations involved in anti-apartheid activities.<sup>1</sup> The CI began to make contingency plans in the event of being declared an “affected” organisation. A new printing company was set up to put the organisation’s publishing initiatives on a better business footing, Pro Veritate was streamlined, and Naudé renewed his call for the CI to raise a greater part of its income from South African sources.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>SA Institute of Race Relations, A Survey of Race Relations, 1974, pp 25 - 26 and p 62.

<sup>2</sup>AD 1752 (4Ab14), C F B Naudé director’s report of the CI, August 1973 to July 1974 and (4Ab.15) Minutes of the meeting of the CI board of management, December 7 and 8 1974, Department of Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand Library, Fred van Wyk Papers.

He also wrote to CI members, warning them to expect the worst from the Schlebusch report. Summarising the most recent pronouncements of the CI's board of management, Naudé outlined the organisation's support for the struggle for liberation in South Africa:

"Steadfastly adhering to its policy of non-violence in working for radical social change, the Institute seeks to identify itself with the oppressed. Distinguishing between aims and methods used to achieve those aims, the Institute upholds as consistent with the Gospel the goal of a just and non-discriminatory society.... As members of the Board of Management we recognise that to spell out our alignment with the oppressed and with the aims of resistance to oppression is to incur the hostility and malice of those who defend exploitative power and privilege in South Africa."<sup>3</sup>

The full extent of this hostility was spelt out in the report on the CI, tabled in Parliament in May 1975. It found the CI to be a danger to the state, and in addition contained a scathing attack on Naudé. It claimed that Naudé and the CI were promoting violence and revolution in South Africa, their main objective being to use racial conflict in order to replace the existing order with a "black-dominated socialist system". The CI was "linked up" with the World Council of Churches and was "a completely political body with a political destination". Foreign organisations exerted undue influence on the CI through financial aid.<sup>4</sup>

Minister of Justice and Police Jimmy Kruger, referring to "that celebrated Calvinist Beyers Naudé", declared the report had "torn the mask of Christianity" from the CI. The Cape Times judged it to be "about the worst document of its sort we have ever set eyes on, when judged by the criteria of unsubstantiated assertion, guilt by association, unveiled innuendo and jumping to conclusions". Naudé and the CI board chairman Colin Gardiner described the Schlebusch

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<sup>3</sup>C F B Naudé letter to CI members, 3 February 1975.

<sup>4</sup>Final report of the commission of inquiry into certain organisations, Christian Institute of Southern Africa.

Commission as a “patchwork of outright lies, half-truths and facts taken out of context”.<sup>5</sup>

The report, which contained a long, personal history of Naudé, contained numerous factual errors, contradictions and made many personal comments. Although irrelevant to their investigation, the commissioners referred to Naudé’s involvement in the Broederbond exposes, commenting that “this incident placed a question mark against Dr Naudé’s integrity in the minds of Afrikaans-speaking persons”. The comment also sheds light on the attitude the commissioners had to Naudé as they set out on their investigation.

This negative attitude was also evident in the description of his break with the DRC. Claiming that he had founded the CI as a “substitute” for the DRC, the report stated:

“From then on Dr Naudé turned to the outside world for support for his ideas and philosophy, and at home he also sought contact with organisations such as the Separatist churches and others. In the process he began to turn against his own Church, and did not scruple, for instance, to use his version of the so-called unfrocking process to which he was supposed to have been subjected to make propaganda for the aims of his Institute.

“His opposition to his own Church is evidenced by the fact that, although he had laid down his status as a minister of the Church in terms of Article 11 of the Church Law, he claimed, to suit his own ends, that he had been deprived of it, and according to evidence he still wears his vestments when preaching a sermon, which according to the testimony of experts, is censurable because it is open defiance of the authority of his own Church.”

The irritation of the commissioners that Naudé still regarded himself as a minister was shared by critics in the Afrikaans press. Vaderland, in its reports over the years, always made a point of referring to him as “Mr”.

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<sup>5</sup>Cape Times, 4 June 1975, H Suzman interview with C Clur, 1994 and T R H Davenport, South Africa: a modern history, p 387.

The report claimed that since the CI was transparently a "political body", it had not been necessary "to make an analysis on the principles of canon law or the ecumenical or religious claims of the Institute and its offshoots". This reluctance to examine the theological basis of the CI did not prevent the commissioners from making a bold assessment of Black Theology, which Peter Walshe has described as a "virtuoso display of wilful ignorance". The CI's former Natal director Manas Buthelezi found the most positive aspect of the report the "revelation concerning to what extent the white man can fail to grasp the depth of the black man's soul".<sup>6</sup>

The commissioners suggested that Black Theology was communist-inspired, and that it was nothing more than the "theological arm of black power" which had been imported to South Africa from the United States. The commission's "expert evidence" on this issue referred to "vertical" and "horizontal" Christian relationships, asserting that liberation theology - "vertical in kind" - had become distorted by its over-emphasis on the social demands of the gospel. In keeping with the secret nature of its inquiries, the commission did not name this "well-known authority". The commissioners were not consistent in this practice and selectively named witnesses when it suited them, such as the Reverend E Maqina, a black minister involved in one of the many AICA disputes who, in his evidence, suggested that the CI had misappropriated AICA funds.

In arriving at the finding that Naudé approved "the use of violence against the existing order ... while condemning armed defence against terrorists", the report quoted selectively from CI documents and from newspaper reports. The most important "evidence" which the commissioners

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<sup>6</sup>P Walshe, *Church versus state in South Africa: the case of the Christian Institute*, p 176 and M Buthelezi, "Black Theology and the Le Grange-Schlebusch commission", speech at the CI's annual general meeting, 5 September 1975.



used to enforce this claim consisted of inaccurate newspaper reports of his speech in the Netherlands in 1974. The commissioners quoted the early reports, but they made no mention of the subsequent apologies which Beeld had carried.

In its conclusion, the report linked the spread of the "black power" concept to the University Christian Movement and to Spro-cas, and claimed the latter two groupings planned a revolution in conjunction with the Black Community Programme. Describing Black Consciousness (BC) as a process where "innocent black people are misled and recognised black leaders and institutions are undermined", it said the objectives of Spro-cas 2 had been "taken over by the Christian Institute itself". While the commissioners failed to understand that the BC movement was a significant attempt by blacks to fight for political change on their own, they had, correctly although somewhat misleadingly, made the connection between the BC movement and Christian "radicals" such as Basil Moore and Beyers Naudé who had supported black programmes. It is correct that there was a Christian support for the BC movement, particularly from Black Theology adherents,<sup>7</sup> but this was interpreted by the commission in an extremely negative light and was twisted to infer the Christian basis was merely a way for the communists to get a foot in the door of the revolutionary programme. The report asserted that the CI, Beyers Naudé and Pro Veritate were conditioning "public opinion to accept a possible, even an inevitable, violent change in the existing order". The CI's methods were "characteristic of revolutionary socialist technique" and the commission found certain CI activities a danger to the state."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>J W de Gruchy, "The relationship between the state and some churches in South Africa, 1968 - 1975, Journal of Church and State, p 449.

<sup>8</sup>Final Report, pp 120 - 165.

Two days after the Schlebusch report was tabled in parliament the government declared the CI an “affected” organisation. Yet the blow administered by the state produced an immediate resurgence of support for the CI. The South African Council of Churches and various individual churches reaffirmed their commitment to the CI, and the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference called on members to make donations to the organisation. Services of dedication were held and many local donations were made to the CI. Internationally, church groups to protest and offer support included the Dutch, German and American church councils.<sup>9</sup> In contrast to this, the DRC fully endorsed the Schlebusch findings. Assessor Koot Vorster expressed the hope that on the basis of the report action would at last be taken against Naudé by the DRC’s Parkhurst church, a step the church council refused to consider.<sup>10</sup>

The CI’s membership, which had declined to 900 people, climbed back to about 3 000. But the support was not forthcoming for long and after the publicity surrounding the CI began to die down, so did the donations. The CI had to work hard to maintain the morale of its members amid mounting state surveillance, raids, detentions and bannings. But Naudé believed the state action introduced the CI’s most significant phase.<sup>11</sup> Although the CI’s resources were extremely limited - it had been forced to cut its budget and its staff and projects - the staff who remained were steadfastly committed to their mission. At this time, too, the CI began to change its focus, concentrating on the issue of economic exploitation, which it saw as providing the foundation of injustice in South Africa, and on concrete ways of showing solidarity with those fighting for liberation.

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<sup>9</sup>SAIRR, Survey, 1975, p 35.

<sup>10</sup>Rand Daily Mail, 30 May 1975 and Transvaler, 30 May 1975.

<sup>11</sup>C F B Naudé Director’s report of the Christian Institute, August 1 1974 to July 31 1975.

The government's actions forced Naudé to the conclusion that it was almost impossible to use reason and moral persuasion to convince it to abandon apartheid. He concluded that the most effective way of bringing about change was to support black people in their fight against oppression. The CI, in turn, began to experience greater demonstrations of support from the black community. Manas Buthelezi noted that black people were beginning to relate to the struggles of the CI: "Black people can understand this theology because they have always lived it."<sup>12</sup>

An article in an SACC journal provided this assessment of the CI's position after it had been declared an affected organisation:

"What is clear by now is that the CI will have enough funds to maintain a vigorous, if somewhat curtailed existence. And that, for the moment, means the CI has won its battle with the authorities. For the significance of the CI has never lain in its projects needing heavy funding, but in its prophetic witness in South Africa as a focus of Christian opposition to apartheid. Even on a reduced budget, the CI can and will continue to perform this function - as it did very effectively in its early years before its activities expanded. Only outright banning is likely to silence the voice of the CI."<sup>13</sup>

During these difficult times the CI reviewed its methods of operation. Leading members felt that the CI should shed its "corporate" image and become more reliant on grassroots structures. This coincided with a feeling - particularly among Cape members of the CI - that there was insufficient shared responsibility and that too often Naudé and the small group around him took all the decisions. Naudé was receptive to this criticism and agreed that the Cape region of the CI be charged with the task of revising the CI's constitution.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>M Buthelezi, "The Significance of the Christian Institute for Black South Africa", speech given at CI rally, 26 October 1974.

<sup>13</sup>Ecunews, 2 June 1975.

<sup>14</sup>Letter from C F B Naudé to M Nash, 23 July 1976.

The CI's constitution, which was finally approved in 1976, emphasised and embodied the principle of decentralisation of the CI regions. The central aim of the CI, as outlined in the constitution, was "to witness to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, to seek the coming of his Kingdom on earth, to serve the Church in its vocation as the Body of Christ". In accordance with this, the CI would promote activities and relationships which strengthened the church in its struggle for Christian liberation in southern Africa. The constitution stressed a commitment to building up small communities of people who would, through the witness of their lives, show solidarity with the poor and the oppressed, and try to obey God in their lives. The groups, it was hoped, would contribute to public debate, stressing the biblical demand for social justice, and members would also strive to bring about change in South African society through "non-violent action". On an administrative level, the work of the Transvaal region was to be separated from the director's office, leaving Naudé free to concentrate on his "prophetic ministry", which included reading, writing, speaking and overall co-ordination.<sup>15</sup>

In the months after the Schlebusch report was released, Naudé gave a series of public addresses in which he expressed the fear that South Africa was on the brink of violent confrontation. In a speech in Pietermaritzburg in August 1975, he warned whites to take heed of mounting black anger. Looking to the future, he said:

"There are only two forces which will determine the nature and speed of social change in South Africa. On the one hand, the Nationalist Party, if it is able and willing to face the challenge of the fundamental change in the ... sharing of political power and wealth.... On the other hand there is the rising tide of black hopes, aspirations and demands.... I retain serious doubts of whether the development towards a shared society would take place without serious confrontation which could include some form of violence.

"If stronger and more concerted support for creating fundamental and rapid peaceful

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<sup>15</sup>Christian Institute Memorandum: "Proposed Restructuring in Transvaal", 1975.

change could be forthcoming from a larger number of bodies ... then I believe that the transition, though very turbulent, might be reasonably peaceful....It is ... the obligation of all those individuals who truly love their country to do everything in their power to prevail upon the whites to see the light, before the white community pays dearly and unnecessarily for its refusal or blindness to heed and change.”<sup>16</sup>

Naudé’s analysis proved to be quite accurate of what was in store for South Africa. He had been able, in simple terms, to explain how a new deal for South Africa had to contain the ingredients of white willingness to share power and black pressure for that power. The use of violence, he now believed, would be hard to avoid. His political vision was not shared by any other white leader in South Africa. It can be argued that he was able to see so clearly what path the country had to take because he really understood the Afrikaners who ruled the country. His exposure to blacks during the CI years had given him an understanding of the yearning of blacks for liberation. He put the CI and himself firmly in the liberation camp because he thought that their demands were just and that the realising of those demands was inevitable.

Mentioned has already been made of the support for the Schlebusch findings from the DRC. Assessor Koot Vorster’s statement showed that the passing of the years had done nothing to reduce the level of animosity felt by many Afrikaner leaders towards Beyers Naudé. Their dislike was also connected to his concern with the affairs of the church and his increasing identification himself with the problems faced by many ministers from the DRC’s “daughter” churches, the black N G Kerk in Afrika and the coloured Sendingkerk. Related to this was the great bitterness over Naudé’s stand on the cutting of ties between Afrikaans churches and overseas churches and universities. The matter came to a head in 1974 when the Free University of Amsterdam began

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<sup>16</sup>C F B Naudé, “A glimpse into the future of South Africa”, address delivered to the Convocation of the University of Natal at Pietermaritzburg, 22 August 1975.

to question seriously its close association with the Potchefstroom University for Christian National Education and the Gereformeerde Kerk. For 20 years there had been a regular exchange of staff and students in terms of a cultural agreement. For the Free University the question came increasingly to be posed whether this agreement should end because of Potchefstroom University's strong commitment to the government's race policies. In an exchange of correspondence between the two universities, it was clear that Potchefstroom was not willing to compromise in its support for apartheid.<sup>17</sup>

The Free University handed all this correspondence to Naudé and asked his views on the issue. On the basis of the principles which the Free University had spelt out with regard to racial justice, Naudé declared he had no option but to recommend the agreement be terminated. When the Free University announced the termination of the cultural agreement, it said that the letters received from the rector of Potchefstroom, Professor H J J Bingle, in which he defended apartheid, had played the decisive role in its decision. Beeld described Beyers's role in the matter as a "tragedy".<sup>18</sup>

It was not just the Gereformeerde Kerk, but also the DRC, which found itself increasingly in isolation, often self-inflicted. In 1974 the DRC delivered an ultimatum to the Hervormde Kerk in the Netherlands to end its support for the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism. When the Hervormde Kerk refused to do so and again called on the DRC to reconsider its race policies,

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<sup>17</sup>C F B Naudé, "Memorandum insake die huidige kultuurverdrag tussen die Vrije Universiteit van Amsterdam en die Potchefstroom Universiteit vir CHO", 24 September 1974.

<sup>18</sup>Beeld, 11 October 1974 and Star, 11 October 1974.

the latter announced the “severing of the close bonds” between the two churches<sup>19</sup>

It was in this context that there was resentment over Naudé’s open support for the rebellion which was occurring locally within the DRC “family” of churches. For decades the white DRC had controlled the racially segregated “daughter” churches through a firm grip on educational resources and church buildings and tight financial control. In 1974 at the DRC’s general synod the church reaffirmed its support for apartheid when it adopted a policy document on the issue of race relations and the Scriptures. Although the original document had been critical of some of the harsher aspects of apartheid, such as the migrant labour system, the final report supported, on the basis of Scripture, “autogenous separate development”, provided that it was carried out in a “fair and honourable way, without affecting or injuring the dignity” of any person.<sup>20</sup>

The daughter churches began showing signs of resentfulness towards the white church. Influenced by Black Consciousness and Black Theology, leading churchmen began to ask why white ministers who worked as missionaries in their churches refused to accept full membership and why black ministers were never invited to preach in white pulpits. They also questioned the basis of separation which prevailed in the family of churches, encapsulated in the reference to “daughter” churches, and the DRC’s determination to support apartheid at the cost of sacrificing relationships with other churches both inside and outside South Africa. In 1974, meeting in synod, the Sendingkerk cautiously criticised apartheid and called for mixed worship. The NGKA, which was in a very vulnerable position because of its almost complete financial dependence on the white

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<sup>19</sup>Walshe, Church versus state, p 187.

<sup>20</sup>Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, Human Relations and the South African Scene in the Light of the Scripture, Official translation of the report Ras, Volk en Nasie en Volkverhoudinge in die lig van die Skrif, approved and accepted by the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, October 1974.

church, took the challenge a step further at its synod in Worcester in the Cape in 1975. The significance of the occasion was underlined by the presence of Beyers Naudé and CI colleague Roelf Meyer, who had been invited as observers. Naudé, who had been warned by an anonymous caller that he would be killed if he attended, spoke to the synod on the need for reconciliation in South Africa. Representatives of the DRC protested against the presence of Naudé at the synod, but the Reverend Ernest Buti, the first black minister to be elected as moderator of the NGKA, dismissed these protests and warmly welcomed Naudé and Roelf Meyer.<sup>21</sup>

The decisions taken at the NGKA synod, which reflected the influence of Black Theology, were to prove of great significance. Apartheid was condemned as unscriptural and rejected as immoral and unchristian, and a call was issued for unity of the Dutch Reformed churches. All tribal divisions within NGKA seminaries were to be dismantled. Ministers of the white DRC would no longer be permitted to serve the NGKA as missionaries, but were welcome to join as full members of the black church and work as brother ministers. The white church was in turn asked to open its doors to black ministers. The synod, ignoring the protests of white DRC representatives, also voted to join the South African Council of Churches.<sup>22</sup>

In a veiled reference to Naudé and Roelf Meyer, Kerkbode criticised several of the Worcester decisions and suggested that “certain people” were trying to create a rift between the DRC and its daughter church.<sup>23</sup> This attack reflected the concern about the open support the CI had begun receiving from many African and Coloured ministers. For years many black Dutch Reformed

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<sup>21</sup>Walshe, Church versus state, p 189.

<sup>22</sup>SA Institute of Race Relations, A survey of race relations in South Africa, 1975, p 31.

<sup>23</sup>Kerkbode, 2 July 1975.



churchmen and theological students had played down their sympathy for the CI, since involvement could have cost them their careers. With the change in the political and theological climate in South Africa, black ministers became more willing to take a public stand, and some were now open in their support for the CI. The bond was further strengthened by staff appointments to the CI, such as that of NGKA minister Reverend Lucas Mabusela in 1975. Naudé also began to have a close relationship with Ernest Buti's son, the Reverend Sam Buti. He helped Sam Buti and many of his colleagues continue their studies abroad. Buti went on to produce a critical study of the DRC's relationship with its black churches.<sup>24</sup>

Naudé, just as he had once believed that his white colleagues could benefit from a better education, believed that one of the keys to the liberation of the black churches lay in further study, and he used his overseas contacts, particularly with Dutch supporters like Professor Verkuy1, to create opportunities for black ministers to study abroad. He was also influential in persuading the Dutch universities to extend the length of time South Africans could study abroad and, where there were only a limited number of places at these universities, to accept black and coloured students rather than white, apartheid-supporting ministers. Many in the new generation of leaders emerging in the Sendingkerk and the NGKA in the late 1970s and the 1980s, such as Allan Boesak, were products of the Free University of Amsterdam, the University of Kampen and leading universities in the United States. Although many abroad and in South Africa contributed to this education effort, the influence of Beyers Naudé and the CI was central. Naudé's constant promotion of the South African issue - particularly in the Netherlands - made it easier for sympathetic people overseas to raise the necessary funds to sponsor black students and their

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<sup>24</sup>S P E Buti, Black experience and the struggle for liberation in the relationship between the white Dutch Reformed Church and the Black Dutch Reformed Church.

families.<sup>25</sup> As NGKA minister Elia Thema put it: "Naudé could be called the father of the external theological programme for the orientation and improvement of the black ministers in the NGK."<sup>26</sup>

Naudé was also involved in the emergence of the *Broederkring* (BK), the forerunner of the *Belydendekring*, which consisted mainly of black and coloured but also a few white ministers of the DRC who wanted to bridge the racial divisions in their church and strive for unity. Although the BK was largely a black initiative, the CI played an important role in its establishment and Naudé was one of its founder members. Naudé and Sam Buti deposited the first R50 into the BK's bank account in 1974.<sup>27</sup>

Naudé was also close to the Reverend Hannes Adonis, lecturer and minister in the Sendingkerk.

Adonis recalled:

"When I was a minister in Philippi, I invited Beyers to preach in my church and to conduct Holy Communion. Some weeks after that the congregation invited a white minister from the NGK to preach. After this minister left the pulpit, he refused to shake my elder's hand because he was 'Coloured'. A week later the youngsters of the church came to me and said that no white minister should ever be allowed in our church. I tried to explain to them that their demand was a form of racism and I said to them: 'What about Beyers?' They said: 'We don't have a problem with Beyers. He is not a white man. He is just a man.'"<sup>28</sup>

But not all DRC ministers conformed to this racist mould and many rejected apartheid theology.

One such individual was Naudé's brother-in-law, Frans O' Brien Geldenhuys. But he believed

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<sup>25</sup> Z E Mokgoebo, *Broederkring: A calling and struggle for prophetic witness within the Dutch Reformed Church Family in South Africa*, p 120, H Adonis, J Verkuyl and B van Kaam interview with C Clur, 1988.

<sup>26</sup> E Thema interview with C Clur, 1987.

<sup>27</sup> Mokgoebo, *Broederkring*, pp 119 - 132.

<sup>28</sup> H Adonis-Clur interview.

Naudé had been wrong to leave the DRC, and he elected to stay in the church and try to change it from the “inside” and he struggled for many years to achieve this amid mounting isolation. By the mid-1970s the DRC was sensitive to this isolation and the leadership in the church was thus very amenable when the government offered it secret money to promote the church’s message abroad. Geldenhuys did not know that the funding - which lasted four years - was part of the Department of Information’s secret programme to promote the government’s policies abroad. The scheme ended in 1978 when the press exposed the “Information Scandal” and gave details of the secret funding that had been used for numerous propaganda projects. The following year the DRC’s role in accepting funding was also revealed. The exposes deeply shook O’Brien Geldenhuys. In his memoirs, published shortly before his death in 1982, he reflected on that episode, saying that he had a “a clear conscience about the manner in which I carried out my task. But the further away I stand from events, the clearer it becomes: I lived a lie for four years.” He had been shocked to discover the extent of the secret projects and felt that his church had been used as part of the state’s propaganda machine. O’Brien Geldenhuys began to face the fact that his church was not prepared to budge from its close relationship with the government and he eventually resigned as chief executive officer and director of ecumenical relations of the DRC. O’Brien Geldenhuys gives a clue to a symbolic role which Naudé began to fill - to some he had become the forgotten conscience of the DRC:

“Shortly after Cottesloe Naudé and I met at a friend’s farm near Pretoria and talked things out. We walked through the veld. What next? What was the best way to promote the insights of Cottesloe? Bey felt that he had to make use of the opportunity and found the Christian Institute. He hoped ... to retain his status as a minister and thought it would still be possible to take part in synods and church decisions as an elder. ‘You can forget about that, Bey,’ I told him. ‘The church will never accept it if you establish an organisation alongside it. I prefer to stay and work from within the church.’... Twenty years later I resigned as chief executive officer of the DRC, with the bitter realisation that I had not succeeded in moving my church from its complacent stand in favour of apartheid in church and politics. I thought back to that day in the veld outside

Pretoria and asked myself: Who was right - Bey or I?"<sup>29</sup>

O'Brien Geldenhuys's reflection accords with Naudé's own account of the troubling early 1960s; in an earlier chapter he is quoted as describing the soul-searching that he engaged in with his brother-in-law and other colleagues; it was Naudé's view then that it would not have been possible to change the DRC from "within".<sup>30</sup> O'Brien Geldenhuys's admission of failure suggests this could have been Naudé's fate had he elected to remain a DRC minister.

The black student protests which started on 16 June 1976 in Soweto were to profoundly change South African politics, and Naudé was intimately caught up in these events. The SACC, the CI and the SAIRR, through their black staff members, had been told that the situation in Soweto - where grievances focused on the government's insistence that some subjects at black schools be taught in Afrikaans - was becoming increasingly unstable. The SAIRR warned the government to take action, but its pleas fell on deaf ears.<sup>31</sup> Police killed seven and injured 18 in Soweto and after the first shootings rioting spread throughout the township. Police reinforcements were called in and army troops were placed on standby as buildings and vehicles were burnt. Horrified by the bloodshed, the CI called on the government to suspend immediately the compulsory use of Afrikaans in black schools. Only hours after word of the violence in Soweto had filtered through to the CI's offices, Naudé sent a telegram to the moderator of the DRC, Dr D Beukes, pleading with him to intervene and urge the government "to immediately terminate the instruction of school

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<sup>29</sup>F E O'Brien Geldenhuys, In die stroomversnellings: vyftig jaar van die NG Kerk, p 76.

<sup>30</sup>CFB Naudé-Clur interview.

<sup>31</sup>SAIRR, Survey 1976, p 57.

subjects through the medium of Afrikaans".<sup>32</sup>

Demonstrations and violence quickly spread to other townships on the Witwatersrand and around the country as government properties, especially beer halls, administration offices and schools, were burnt down.<sup>33</sup> On 18 June church leaders gathered at the SACC's headquarters in Diakonia House to listen to an assessment of the situation from Soweto leaders and consider emergency action. Naudé was struck by the sense of helplessness which descended on the meeting, of the vast chasm which separated the white churchmen from their black brothers, as the litany of unresolved grievances and resentments poured out. The church leaders called for a day of prayer and the SACC, in co-operation with the CI, launched an emergency fund, the Asingeni Fund, to help the victims of the violence. On the same day Naudé and SACC general secretary John Rees were served with notices issued by the chief magistrate of Johannesburg forbidding them from "interfering with the present situation of unrest". Naudé issued a statement saying he completely rejected "any suggestion or inference that I have at any time interfered with the present situation of unrest in the Witwatersrand area, as the contents of the letter of the chief magistrate of Johannesburg implies - or in any other area of our country. I pray that I may be given the strength in this hour of national crisis, in obedience to God, to exercise my Christian ministry, both pastoral and prophetic, to all the people of our land".<sup>34</sup>

The Soweto uprisings marked a watershed in the country's history and a full analysis falls outside

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<sup>32</sup>Copy of telegram from C F B Naudé to Rev Beukes, Moderator of the NGK, 16 June 1976.

<sup>33</sup>SAIRR, *Survey*, 1976, pp 51 - 87.

<sup>34</sup>C F B Naudé, handwritten statement, 17 June 1976.

the scope of this study. What is clear, however, is that the authorities' suspicion that Naudé and Rees had had any influence on the events in Soweto was incorrect. The Soweto uprising had occurred after a buildup of youthful anger over repression, and was sparked by the Government's insistence on teaching some subjects in Afrikaans in black schools. TRH Davenport has described the riots, which later also spread to Coloured areas, as "the rejection by a rising generation of African and Coloured youths of a social system and a political philosophy"<sup>35</sup>, and Gail Gerhart has traced SASO's influence in building up the national school student movement, the South African Students' Movement (SASM), as one factor in the Soweto uprising. She argues that "events on June 16 resulted from the intersection of student tensions over the Afrikaans issue with SASM's renewed efforts to build a national following", and that if there had been any accommodation by the Vorster government on the Afrikaans issue, "South Africa might have been spared the cataclysm of violence and confrontation that swept black schools and townships"<sup>36</sup>.

The harsh police crackdown and State measures which followed throughout 1976 and 1977 showed the National Party still firmly in control, although there were signs that the divisions in Afrikanerdom over the policy and implementation of apartheid were growing. The economic crisis in South Africa which resulted from the uprisings, in the form of withdrawal of foreign capital, and a small, but increasingly questioning voice to the left of the NP, all contributed to the breakdown in unity. An example of this dissension was the official response to the State-appointed Erika Theron Commission into the position of coloured South Africans, which released its findings in June 1976. Most of the liberal proposals, for the reintegration of the coloureds into

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<sup>35</sup>Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history*, pp 389 - 392.

<sup>36</sup>G M Gerhart, "The 1976 Soweto uprising", seminar paper, pp 8 - 9.

the mainstream political system, were rejected, but many emerging Afrikaans *verligte* academics sided with the Theron commissioners.<sup>37</sup> The Verwoerdian dream of massive social engineering was failing and from the late 1970s there were signs of halting, ambivalent moves to reform by the National Party.<sup>38</sup>

The uprisings touched almost every facet of South African life, not least the churches. The DRC deplored the loss of life and called for a “worthy plan of action in which the example of the Lord can be followed”, but made no attempt to analyse the issues which had caused the violence. The leadership of the DRC, in the hands of Koot Vorster, brother of the prime minister, had not yet shown any openness to the *verligte* spirit which had begun to be introduced in some Afrikaner academic circles, with the University of Stellenbosch at the centre of this movement. In contrast to the conservative DRC leadership were academics in the DRC who, from the late 1970s, reopened the debate on racial issues. From 1980 onwards, these theologians began publishing books and articles which challenged the DRC’s support for apartheid.<sup>39</sup>

The English-speaking churches, in their reaction to the Soweto uprising, in statements which emanated from numerous meetings and synods, identified the system of apartheid, complete with its security apparatus, as the cause of the problem.<sup>40</sup> But for South Africa’s black community these protests were simply not enough. Increasingly Christians were being challenged to do more

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<sup>37</sup>C R Hill, Change in South Africa: blind alleys or new directions?, pp 130 - 131.

<sup>38</sup>H Adam and K Moodley, The opening of the apartheid mind: options for the new South Africa, p 40.

<sup>39</sup>D Bosch, A Konig, W Nicol (eds), Perspektief of die Ope brief, pp 24 - 25.

<sup>40</sup>Walshe, The church struggle, pp 173 - 175.

than merely issue statements calling for peace. In the next decade, as black ministers took the lead in the South African Council of Churches and in many of the member churches, they would identify themselves closely with the liberation struggle, and churches became polarised as white English-speaking church-goers disagreed with the SACC's increasing role in political affairs.

Exceptional in their beliefs was the small group of white Christians, some in the SACC and some in the CI, who believed they understood the challenge. Naudé, recalling the confusion and surprise of fellow churchmen during the Soweto uprising recalled:

“Afterwards, we tried to say to them: ‘Brothers, now do you realise what we have been trying to warn you about for so long? Whether we like it or not we have to take a decision. Either we have to side with blacks in their struggle for liberation or otherwise we are going to become irrelevant. At the moment we are not on the side of liberation.’”<sup>41</sup>

Opting for the “side of liberation” brought Naudé face to face with the issue of economic sanctions as a means of forcing change. It brought him into close contact with the chief minister of KwaZulu, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi. Buthelezi's rejection of the government's offer of independence for KwaZulu at a Sharpeville Day rally in March 1976 received strong support from the CI, and Pro Veritate published his address in full. Naudé and Buthelezi met on several occasions to discuss the political situation. Until then Naudé and the CI had refrained from calling for economic sanctions as a way of bringing change in South Africa. Yet Naudé now believed that capitalism had fed on the government's migrant labour policy and homeland system, and that foreign and local investors had done nothing to challenge injustice. Naudé took the first cautious step towards opposing foreign investment in a statement issued jointly with Buthelezi. The statement they issued contained a Marxist interpretation of the economy and this was a new

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<sup>41</sup>C F B Naudé interview with C Clur, 1988.



departure for Naudé. His openness to some Marxist thought was a result of his acceptance of BC, which in its analysis of South African society contained a strong critique of capitalism. Naudé began to read Marxist and socialistic critiques, and he was also influenced by the new editor of Pro Veritate, Cedric Mayson, who had a more radical view on South Africa's political order.<sup>42</sup>

In the statement, Naudé and Buthelezi declared:

"A radical redistribution of wealth, land and political power is essential for the establishment of a stable and moral society.... In South Africa for over a century capitalistic paternalism has produced the conclusive evidence which makes us reject government by minority elite.... If the homelands exist to make labour available to maintain the cash economy and standard of living of the elite ... and to establish an economic buffer zone of homeland economies to protect the central economy and provide benefits for the favoured few, we can come to only one conclusion. Foreign investment in the central economy is devoid of all morality."

They called for a national convention in which the blacks in South Africa could speak for themselves on the matter of foreign investment.<sup>43</sup>

The co-operation between Naudé and Buthelezi was short-lived. A year later Buthelezi officiated at the opening of a foreign-funded chemical factory in the homeland. When the CI questioned his actions, he replied that he could not deny jobs to the unemployed.<sup>44</sup> The parting of the ways between Naudé and Buthelezi was mirrored by the latter's estrangement with black anti-apartheid organisations. Buthelezi had been a member of the ANC Youth League before it was banned, and in the 1970s, while heading the KwaZulu homeland, appeared on platforms with BC leaders, condemning the government's divide and rule strategy. One of the events that contributed to his estrangement occurred in late 1976 after Zulu migrant workers attacked residents in Soweto.

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<sup>42</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview and C Mayson interview with C Clur, 1988.

<sup>43</sup>As quoted in Pro Veritate 15 March 1976.

<sup>44</sup>Star, 30 May 1977.

While Buthelezi was not connected to the attack, his reaction afterwards, in criticising the police for their role in the incident and for not rebuking the hostel dwellers, caused bitterness in black circles. As he moved further away from his former allies, he drifted towards the government, which funded his homeland and therefore his support-base, Inkatha, a Zulu party formed in 1975.<sup>45</sup> Naudé said later he thought he had been mistaken in working with Buthelezi; he had hoped that "Buthelezi, given his background and his position, would become a major force for political change. But ... he was not prepared to step out of the structure which gave him that position of political power".<sup>46</sup>

The CI became even more explicit in its support for the liberation struggle when its board of management met in Natal in September 1976. Shaken by events in the townships, the CI board declared a new stage in the struggle for liberation had been reached. It called for a national convention between black and white, and offered support for the goals of black political movements, both exiled and those still operating legally, insofar as their aims accorded with "biblical values of justice, freedom and human responsibilities". The CI also promised support "for all peaceful efforts to bring change, including work stayaways, economic sanctions and the discouragement of immigration".<sup>47</sup> Naudé realised this new stance could mean the State would take action to close the CI.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Mzala, Gatsha Buthelezi: chief with a double agenda, p 8.

<sup>46</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

<sup>47</sup>Resolution adopted by the Annual General Meeting of the Christian Institute of Southern Africa at Edendale, Natal on 18 September 1976.

<sup>48</sup>C F B Naudé-Clur interview.

The CI followed up this resolution with a fuller statement on the issue of investment in South Africa. It declared that the government's insistence on enforcing apartheid had produced a situation where it was difficult to prevent an escalation in violence and confrontation. One of the last remaining avenues of working for peaceful change was through economic pressure. The CI went on to assert that it supported the call against further investment in South Africa because investment in apartheid was "immoral, unjust and exploitative", and previously neither pressure from investors nor economic growth had helped change the situation. The CI stated that many black organisations opposed foreign investment in South Africa - "and we believe this would be the opinion of the majority of South African blacks if their voice could be freely heard".<sup>49</sup>

These resolutions not only angered the government, but naturally provoked criticism from the business community. They also upset a number of white members of the CI and many began to withdraw their support. Their unhappiness was summed up by a CI member who wrote to cancel his subscription to Pro Veritate:

"It seems to me ... that the Institute has lost patience with the churches so that the tone of voice it now uses has become strident and thus counter-productive.... Do you really still love the racist sinner while hating his sin or do you hate and ultimately condemn him too now? Are you speaking the truth in love? Or in condemnation? We know our problem and so it doesn't really help to rub our noses in it."<sup>50</sup>

During this time of mounting tension between the CI and the authorities, the long process of litigation surrounding Naudé's refusal to give evidence before the Schlebusch Commission at last drew to an end when the Transvaal Supreme Court in October 1976 upheld his conviction and sentence of a R50 fine or 30 days' imprisonment. Naudé chose to go to jail rather than to pay the

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<sup>49</sup>Christian Institute statement on Investment in South Africa, 22 October 1976.

<sup>50</sup>Pro Veritate, 15 December 1976.

fine. On 28 October 1976 Ilse Naudé drove Naudé to the Pretoria Magistrate's Court. He was taken to the maximum security section of Pretoria Central Prison and spent the evening in his cell reading the Book of Amos. He was released the next morning after Naudé's minister, Dr Jan van Rooyen, had driven to Pretoria to pay the fine. In justifying his action to the press, Van Rooyen said he had paid the fine because most South Africans had forgotten about the Schlebusch Commission and so Naudé's stand was therefore "irrelevant". He also feared that Naudé's imprisonment would spur unrest and tension and would give other countries "a chance to throw more stones" at South Africa. Naudé was upset by this action of his minister and it caused a rift in their relationship. For a long time Dr van Rooyen had felt that Naudé was too "extreme", and he regarded Naudé's decision to go to jail as provocative and typical of his style of "seeking publicity". The leadership of the CI, on the other hand, supported and sympathised with Naudé, who had taken a stand on a matter of principle. The rift between Naudé and Van Rooyen aroused bitterness in the latter, and is reminiscent of the earlier break between Naudé and Ben Engelbrecht. Van Rooyen, who had stood up for Naudé for years against the DRC as his minister at the Parkhurst church, could not identify with the radical political stance of the CI. He felt let down by Naudé, but Beyers, while regretting the personal rift, was adamant that he would not be diverted from his course of action. He had felt that by refusing to pay his fine he was demonstrating symbolic support for the black struggle and that Van Rooyen had taken this away from him.<sup>51</sup>

Less than a month after Naudé's brief stay in jail, in November 1976, security police conducted an extensive raid on the offices of the CI and the SACC in Diakonia House in Braamfontein,

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<sup>51</sup>Rand Daily Mail, 29 October 1976, 30 October 1976, C F B Naudé- Clur interview and J Van Rooyen-clur interview.

seizing books and documents from both organisations. One woman was detained during the search, and in the course of the day Naudé heard that Pro Veritate editor Cedric Mayson had been detained while on holiday in Mossel Bay in the Cape. British-born but a naturalised South African, the former Methodist church minister regarded himself as a “Christian revolutionary”. Under his influence Pro Veritate became increasingly strident in its criticism of “white” power. Mayson was held without charge for 15 days while other CI staff members, including Oshadi Phakati and field worker Mashwabada Mayatula, were detained for months. A few months later the CI’s Cape Town branch was subject to a similar raid.<sup>52</sup>

In 1977 anger and discontent continued to simmer in black and coloured townships and school boycotts continued. In spite of the systematic detention and banning of black leaders and publications, the spirit of resistance was kept alive at numerous mass funerals and meetings. Naudé continued to attract strong government criticism. In March 1977, as a director of Ravan Press, he was once again charged with publishing offences - for conspiring with four black journalists to produce an undesirable publication. The charges were eventually dropped.<sup>53</sup>

In a foretaste of what was awaiting the entire leadership of the Christian Institute, Transvaal regional director Oshadi Phakati was served with a five-year banning order in March 1977 and she was later detained under the new Internal Security Act from August to December 1976. After her banning Oshadi Phakati felt she had to choose between going to jail repeatedly for breaking her banning order, abandoning her work altogether or continuing it in another form outside the

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<sup>52</sup>P Randall, Not without honour: tribute to Beyers Naudé, p 39, Walshe, Church versus state, p 214 and Rand Daily Mail, 26 November 1976 and Star, 23 March 1977.

<sup>53</sup>Star, 11 October 1977.

country. Finally, she fled the country with her son and joined Horst Kleinschmidt in the CI's Netherlands office.<sup>54</sup>

Naudé continued to travel across the country and a note of desperation crept into his speeches. He repeated his fears and warnings again and again. In February 1977, addressing the University of Cape Town's summer school symposium on the future of Afrikaners, he suggested that the "greatest threat to the Afrikaner and his future is the Afrikaner himself". He said racial discrimination, not black consciousness or "Christian agitators", was behind the unrest in the country. He concluded:

"Even at this late hour I want to suggest it is not too late for the Afrikaner to change to ... prevent a tragedy - provided a sufficient number of Afrikaners are prepared to come forward, and by word and deed demonstrate their opposition to the current policy."<sup>55</sup>

In the speech Naudé called for whites to adopt a "new lifestyle". He tried to demonstrate his commitment to this "simpler lifestyle" by selling his large double-storey house in Greenside and buying a much smaller house in the same suburb. He said at the time he wished to "at least try to express some form of identification with the majority of the people in our country", and donated the profit to the CI.<sup>56</sup> In March 1977, Naudé, in an address to black ministers graduating from the Federal Theological Seminary in Edendale, Pietermaritzburg, predicted the death of the apartheid system: "I believe this transition is going to be a turbulent, painful one...but you are going to witness this birth: the appearance of a new independent and liberated state called Azania." He warned that ministers, both black and white, would face a dilemma about supporting

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<sup>54</sup>O Phakati interview with C Clur, 1988.

<sup>55</sup>C F B Naudé, "Die Afrikaner as Rebel", speech at panel discussion at UCT summer school on the theme: "Suid Afrika 1984: Afrikaner waarheen?", published in Pro Veritate, March 1977. My translation.

<sup>56</sup>Star, July 27 1977.

the demand for an end to white rule.<sup>57</sup>

Some colleagues felt that Naudé was wasting his energy, among them CI board chairman Calvin Cook:

“Beyers had moved towards black associations and to that extent he had disappeared from most white consciences. By that stage many regarded Naudé as crying ‘wolf, wolf’, they had heard it all before. In a curious kind of way I felt that his being banned was a way in which he was going to save his soul. I felt that he needed time in quiet and silence to reassess his mission. When you saw him in those days he was desperately tired, and when a person is tired they are sometimes driven to speak when there may not have been anything fresh to say.”<sup>58</sup>

Naudé presented what would be his final report as director of the CI at the organisation’s annual general meeting in Johannesburg in September 1977. It was a clear exposition of the problems confronting South Africa and the churches:

“The situation has developed into a struggle for power, with the majority of whites supporting the military, police and economic power of the government in the belief that this will guarantee their future security, while practically all blacks are convinced that the power of truth, the power of youth, the power of sustained black political aspirations, the power of numbers and of world pressure, will eventually enforce fundamental change and achieve liberation. The implications which this struggle has for the church are staggering and the challenge which this presents to the Christian faith is, I believe, only vaguely realised in our country.”

Naudé argued that the institutionalised brutality of the apartheid system had engendered so much bitterness and hatred that many black leaders were coming to the conclusion that counter-violence was a tragic inevitability. He declared he had been wrong to hope that the DRC would eventually put pressure on the government to abandon its race policies. The DRC had rejected the CI and the

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<sup>57</sup>C F B Naudé, “Christian ministry in a time of crisis”, address to the graduates of the Federal Theological Seminary at Edendale, Pietermaritzburg, March 16, 1977, published in Pro Veritate, April 1977.

<sup>58</sup>C Cook interview with C Clur, 1988.

SACC and was now experiencing opposition from the black Dutch Reformed churches. Referring to the multi-racial English churches, he said the CI was grateful for some support but was aware that most white church-goers were conservative and critical of the CI's stand.<sup>59</sup>

Two days after his address, on 12 September 1977, Steve Biko died of extensive head injuries and acute renal failure in police custody in Pretoria, tortured and killed by the security police. The CI joined South Africa's black community in mourning the death of Steve Biko and the last issue of Pro Veritate, of September 1977, was dedicated to him. An emotional editorial paid tribute to him and accused whites of sharing responsibility for his death.<sup>60</sup> Naudé was deeply saddened by his death:

"I remember so well that I visited him in Port Elizabeth in July 1977, just before he was arrested for the last time and tortured and killed. We spoke that night about the future: I asked him, 'Steve, what do you see the role of whites in South Africa to be?' And he said to me: 'There will be a period where blacks will move out on their own. They have to do this, and without it they will never be able to break the shackles of white domination, of white paternalism and of white power.' Then he said to me: 'After that, there will be a new reorientation where hopefully black and white will be able to meet each other as equals.' I asked him: 'Do you believe that you and I will be able to experience that moment?' And he was silent for a moment and then he said: 'It may be, but I don't think so'."<sup>61</sup>

The Christian Institute was banned on Wednesday, 19 October 1977, along with all the country's Black Consciousness organisations and the World and Weekend World. Police had struck first in Cape Town in a raid on the home of Theo and Helen Kotze. Helen Kotze left the house to phone Naudé and warn him.<sup>62</sup> In Johannesburg police did not search homes, but went directly

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<sup>59</sup>C F B Naudé, Director's Report of the Christian Institute, July 1976 to August 1977.

<sup>60</sup>Pro Veritate, September 1977.

<sup>61</sup>C F B Naudé interview with B Bilheimer for A cry of reason: an Afrikaner speaks out.

<sup>62</sup>H Kotze interview with C Clur, 1988.



to the CI's offices in Braamfontein. As CI staff began arriving they were ordered into the hall while Beyers Naudé and Cedric Mayson were escorted to their offices. Then the police began the systematic confiscation of all CI books, documents and furniture. By the end of the day the state had not only closed down the CI and Pro Veritate, but had banned the entire leadership of the CI for five years: Beyers Naudé, Theo Kotze, Brian Brown and Cedric Mayson. Also banned were Peter Randall, by then working at the University of the Witwatersrand but still involved with Ravan Press, David Russell, an Anglican priest and CI member, and Donald Woods, editor of Daily Dispatch. Naudé and the other CI members who were banned had to cease their work immediately. The government smashed in addition the entire Black Consciousness movement. The Black People's Convention (BPC), the Black Community Programmes (BCP), the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) and many other parent, youth, student and community organisations were declared unlawful in terms of the Internal Security Act. Police also swooped on scores of activists, detaining 70 Black Consciousness leaders.<sup>63</sup>

The BC organisations were the main targets of the bannings, and the action amounted to an unofficial declaration of a State of Emergency, aimed at putting a lid on black political resistance which had gathered momentum since June 1976. But the bannings were not simply designed to quell urban disorder. Gerhart argues that had this been the case, the organisations might have been closed "months earlier, before student pressure through the Soweto Students Representative Council had successfully effected in June 1977 the en masse resignation of the Soweto Urban Council and before a boycott of Soweto secondary schools had resulted by August in the virtual collapse of Bantu Education in Johannesburg". The crackdown came shortly before the

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<sup>63</sup>Rand Daily Mail, 19 October, 20 October 1977, Star, 19 October, 20 October 1977 and Argus, 19 October, 20 October 1977.

November white general election; Vorster's action was designed to please the NP right wing and pull in some confused former supporters of the disintegrated United Party.<sup>64</sup>

By the end of 1977, at least 700 people - 250 of whom were under the age of 18 - had been detained and more than 171 banning orders were in force. In addition, 35 people had been banished to homelands and 440 convicted political prisoners were serving jail sentences.<sup>65</sup> Most of the people the state acted against were black, but Naudé was by no means the only white person to have been banned. The common theme behind all the bannings was to stop or neutralise people who, from the government's point of view, were trying to overthrow the state.

Naudé's banning caused a considerable media outcry in South Africa and abroad, and in the course of the next few years the Minister of Justice received numerous requests, including calls from the DRC, for his banning to be lifted. Correspondence in the files of the Ministry of Justice indicate that in 1979-1980 period, when Alwyn Schlebusch was briefly the Minister of Justice, there was debate in the Cabinet and security circles over whether or not to lift his banning. Opinions were solicited from the newly formed National Intelligence Service (NIS) and the Commissioner of Police and, interestingly, there was disagreement. In a letter written in August 1980, the new director-general of the NIS, Niel Barnard, supported the lifting of the ban, arguing that unbanning Naudé would not make him a greater risk to the security of the state than if he stayed banned; he argued further that it would prove the government's bona fides in the context

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<sup>64</sup>G Gerhart, Black power in South Africa: the evolution of an ideology, p 313.

<sup>65</sup>SAIRR, Survey 1977, pp 106 - 107 and International Defence & Aid Fund, Prisoners of apartheid: a biographical list of political prisoners and banned persons in South Africa, pp 4 - 164.

of the talks that were taking place between the state and the SACC at that time. This *verligte* voice was countered by the Commissioner of Police, who was firmly of the opinion that Naudé should not be unbanned. A memorandum compiled by the Security Branch of the SA Police in December 1979 underpinned the Commissioner's decision. The report gives an exposition of the reason for banning Naudé. It said:

"The purpose of banning Naudé is twofold: first to neutralise him in respect of the role he was playing in influencing the domestic situation...Secondly the goal of the banning was to undermine his role as an external opinion-former."

The police report notes that it had only been partially successful in realising these goals. The police suspected he was breaking his banning order, communicating with Chief Buthelezi, the SACC and also supporting the ANC, and acting as a channel for funding activists in South Africa. Concerning external contact, the police report noted that "many influential foreigners visiting South Africa personally visit Naudé". The report also mentions that a leading unnamed theologian had met Naudé in November 1979 and had later reported his discussion to the police. The police report, quoting the theologian, said:

"In retrospect, Naudé would have followed precisely the same path, given the opportunity all over again. Because of his age he would not, however, try to re-establish an organisation like the CI. The most important voice that had to be heeded was that of the black man...In the light of 'injustices' he would not remain silent, but would have to speak out."

The report further argued that Naudé, by being unbanned, would have his credibility questioned by black activists, and that the only way to restore their faith would be by Naudé once again "protesting against so-called injustice in South Africa". The report argued that if Naudé was unbanned he would resume his role as a "*klimaatskepper*". It concluded that

"While the current restrictions have not eliminated completely his contact with leftist and black power elements, it is nevertheless an impediment to him. The restrictions on his freedom of movement, freedom to associate with people and the ban on publication of his ideas and thought prevents him from reaching most people."

The questions on whether or not to unban him was discussed at the State Security Council and in the Cabinet during 1980. Twice, in December 1979 and in August 1980, the police were asked for an opinion, and the Commissioner continued to insist that the ban remain. In his second written communication, in August 1980, the Commissioner notes that “no prominent international church figure who visits South Africa does not include a visit to Naudé. His stature as an international church figure has in no way been diminished”.<sup>66</sup> From the available documentation, it is clear that the security police played a key role in all security-related decisions and must have played a central role in having Naudé’s banning extended by a further two years when the original five-year order expired.

October 1977 represented the end of an era in South Africa. Steve Biko was dead, the Black Consciousness organisations were crushed, and the CI was closed along with them. But as Calvin Cook had put it, long before the closure of the CI Beyers Naudé had “moved towards black associations and to that extent he had disappeared from most white consciences”. With his banning in 1977 he was forced to abandon his CI work. For the next seven years as a banned person he worked from his Greenside, Johannesburg home. The police report was generally correct in what it believed Naudé was engaged in as a banned person. He was by then totally committed to the struggle for black liberation and worked in a variety of ways to support both the ANC and later the UDF, as Freedom Charter organisations moved into centre stage in the struggle for political freedom. It is beyond the scope of this study to delve into his activities during this time. But, as a result of his banning and the action taken against other opponents of

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<sup>66</sup>MJU 707 MJ 21/1 . File No 10/3/2/1-2468 (B/Bo) Inperking: Dr Beyers Naudé. Algemeen. Minutes, reports and notes in the Ministry of Justice files, 1979 - 1980. My translations.

the state, he had concluded that pressure had to be exerted more strongly to end National Party rule.<sup>67</sup> It was a commitment no less complete than that of his father's 75 years before when, at the end of the South African war, he committed himself to winning Afrikaner freedom.

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<sup>67</sup>C F B Naudé, My land van hoop: die lewe van Beyers Naudé, pp 109 - 123 and C F B Naudé interview in Beyers Naudé: pilgrimage of an Afrikaner prophet.

## 8 Conclusion

This study recounts Beyers Naudé's life, with emphasis on his years with the Christian Institute, from 1963 to 1977. It has sought to place his life within the context of the political events which shaped South Africa and in this conclusion, it is necessary to briefly touch on events since then: The decade from 1977 saw gradual change in National Party political thinking and moves towards reform, but at the same time there was an attempt to do it on white terms, which meant massive repression against black revolutionary organisations. Naudé, in one of his most perceptive speeches in 1975, had forecast a period of turbulence and recognised that the only hope of a political solution for South Africa would be when the National Party, in the face of black resistance, would agree to fundamental change; that process began in earnest in 1990 with the unbanning of the liberation movements. These recent events make it easier to assess the role Naudé has played in church and political affairs in South Africa.

Choosing a biographical study for a dissertation is problematic in that one cannot set out to conclusively prove a hypothesis. While patterns can be detected and certain actions can be interpreted and accounted for, there is also the random, human element that can never be adequately explained. But while acknowledging this difficulty, this biographical study has sought to explain certain key questions: What made it possible for Beyers Naudé to change and to keep on changing? Why did he have an impact on the South African political and church arenas? How strong was this impact? Where did he fail?

Beyers Naudé, referring to his own life, has often referred to the tight control exerted in traditional Afrikaner society. But he broke free and pursued a political agenda that so angered the

Nationalist government that it finally banned him. When seeking an answer to why it was possible for him to make this break it must be emphasised that this was a very gradual process of change in a person with an independent and headstrong character. His relationship with his parents, and particularly his resentment towards his domineering mother, had the effect of making Naudé a non-conformist. As a young person and a student he had initially shied away from organisations which promoted exclusivity, such as the *Afrikaanse Nasionale Studentebond* (ANS), yet he was not sufficiently independent to reject membership of the Afrikaner Broederbond when he began his career as a minister.

An aspect of Naudé's ministry that cut across his government-supporting days and his work outside the Afrikaner fold was his strong relationships with church and other colleagues. It is significant that when he came to question aspects of apartheid in the 1950s, he did so after counselling sessions with DRC missionary colleagues who were concerned with how apartheid was affecting their congregations. Throughout his life he set aside a great deal of his day to lengthy discussions with people who sought his counsel, but, as his colleagues have recounted, in many of these situations he absorbed other peoples' views in as much as he shared his own perceptions. The pattern of his life was to have meetings with many people every day. Hardly a day went by that Naudé did not have discussions with some group or person about a current issue. The frequent contact with black people profoundly altered his political views; he empathised with the problems apartheid caused black South Africans. Naudé fed on these meetings, and, assisted by his broader study of theology, and starting out with a genuine Christian concern and commitment to mission and witness, he made changes in his thinking.

But changes did not stop in 1963 when he started the Christian Institute with its moderate

programme of trying to unite Christian witness, and challenging the DRC to rethink its support for apartheid. He displayed a logic in his deductions, and that step-by-step approach took him much further in his political thinking than many of his liberal colleagues in the 1970s. His acceptance of Black Consciousness was not uncritical, yet he concluded that the black majority would not accept anything less than full political empowerment and so he supported the BC leaders in their endeavours. The government had recognised the threat posed by this black political awakening and the Christian Institute was closed down along with the BC organisations because it fully supported these black aspirations. After his banning, and throughout the 1980s and beyond, Naudé continued to adjust his political thinking and actions, always basing it on the basic acceptance of full black political empowerment.

The second question is: Why did he have the impact he had? The recognition he received and the particular impact he has made stemmed from the fact that he was born a white Afrikaner and became a rebel against the white Afrikaner establishment at the pinnacle of its power in South Africa. He became a leading minister in the DRC; his background would on the surface seem to have precluded or made unlikely any radical changes in his life, yet radical changes occurred. He was a widely regarded leader in the Afrikaner community in the 1960s and his decision to challenge apartheid made him an object of admiration to outsiders and derision within his own circle. The media in South Africa contributed to his emergence as a public figure. As a small organisation, the CI had a very limited impact on South African church and civil society, yet the continual media focus, assisted by Naudé's own flair for attracting publicity, kept him in the public eye. The English press sought to portray him as a martyred figure, but the generally critical Afrikaans press, whose agendas may have been better served by ignoring him, constantly reported on his activities.



Crucial to the impact he had was the international focus on his activities, and from the government correspondence quoted in the previous chapter, it is clear the NP establishment was extremely concerned about his external influence. The CI's attack on apartheid coincided with a worldwide movement among churches to focus on racism, a process which gathered momentum after the World Council of Churches launched its Programme to Combat Racism in 1970. The DRC's support for the government's race policies was an issue of major concern internationally, especially to Reformed churches to which the DRC had links. In Beyers Naudé the churches identified a prophetic voice; he was regarded by many Christians as a source of hope and a challenge to deeper obedience to God. As one American theologian put it: "He functioned as an important symbol and shared the optimistic conviction that God's rule will be established in the world and in South Africa."<sup>1</sup> For this reason the CI received a great deal of moral and also financial support which enabled it to carry out its public agenda.

The third question is how strong was the impact that he had? In brief, he challenged the Afrikaner establishment's claim that apartheid was in any respect a moral or Christian policy. He stimulated debate in the Afrikaans and the English-speaking churches about their responsibility in an unjust and unequal society. He promoted the ecumenical ideal of church and Christian unity. In all these goals he achieved only limited success and so this section will also focus on the fourth question: Where did he fail?

His work at the CI, although it spanned only 14 years, was a highpoint in his ministry. For Beyers

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<sup>1</sup>G H Wilson, review of C Ryan, *Pilgrimage of faith*, in *Mid-stream*, p 99 and J W de Gruchy, review of P Randall (ed), *Not without honour: tribute to Beyers Naudé* in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, p 88.

Naudé, the CI's first important contribution had been in exposing and destroying the DRC's biblical justification of apartheid. The CI may have won the battle intellectually and theologically, but it failed to win the hearts and minds of Afrikaners. His break with the Broederbond, and specifically his involvement in leaking secret documents, marked him out as a traitor in many people's minds. The extent of the bitterness the Broederbond saga provoked is shown by its mention, quite irrelevantly, in the Schlebusch Commission report on the activities of the CI. Early CI supporters recognised that in some respects Naudé was fighting an individual battle. Naudé, misjudging the strength of the ideological hold which Afrikaner nationalism exerted on the church, became marginalised and lost a great deal of his influence in the Afrikaner community. His unrelenting challenge and criticism of the DRC for supporting apartheid and maintaining ethnically separate churches in the 1970s and the 1980s attracted criticism not only from conservative churchmen, but also from "verligtes" who considered him extreme and overly provocative. Yet, while he was rejected by the majority of Afrikaners, he became a symbol of hope for a minority of DRC ministers who publicly opposed their church's policies in the 1980s.<sup>2</sup>

Naudé's early commitment to mission had made him open to establishing contact with black ministers and it was this commitment, combined with his newly awakened concern for black South Africans, which led to the CI's involvement in the African Independent Church (AICA) movement. Naudé's years of work with these churches - so frustrating and seemingly fruitless at the time - set an example to the churches in South Africa. In handing over funds and cars to AICA ministers Naudé was sometimes accused of being irresponsible to the point of recklessness. But these and other mistakes did not negate the significance of what he and others at the CI tried to

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<sup>2</sup>D Bosch interview with C Clur, 1988.

achieve. Naudé took these churches seriously and recognised that they were destined to grow within the South African church community. The SACC later followed the CI's example in accepting the Independent churches as full members of the body of Christ. The AI churches continued to be fraught with divisions, but the recognition they won undoubtedly helped towards developing and strengthening ecumenical links in South Africa.

Naudé realised that in the early years he had been mistaken in believing that the English-speaking, multi-racial churches could play a major role as agents of change in South Africa. He appreciated the courageous stand taken by many individuals in these churches, but he was disillusioned with the often racist or paternalistic attitudes of the majority of rank-and-file members and some of their leaders. He came to the conclusion that the CI had to encourage and nurture small groups within these churches that would challenge fellow members to reconsider their obedience to the gospel. In the same way that he had supported the emergence of the *Belydendekring* in the DRC, he gave his support to the emergent black caucuses in the English-speaking churches. It was out of these that the black church leadership of the late 1970s and 1980s would emerge - figures such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Father Smangaliso Mkhathshwa, Dr Allan Boesak and the Reverend Frank Chikane. Peter Walshe has also noted the CI's influence on the emerging black clergy, and even some individual white churchmen, such as Archbishop Denis Hurley, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Durban. Walshe argued:

“Through its (the CI's) statements and analysis, its range of ecumenical contacts, its openness to black leadership and the personal influence of its own officers, the Christian Institute contributed in an important way to the ongoing articulation of what over the next decade was to become a robust, indigenous strain of liberation or contextual theology. So it was that by the late 1970s most South African denominations were showing signs of internal tensions and contradictions.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>P Walshe, *Prophetic Christianity and the liberation movement in South Africa*, p 57.

In spite of the tensions evident sometimes between the CI and the SACC member churches, the CI played an important role in prodding the churches to take a stronger stand on challenging the status quo in South Africa. After the release of the "Message to the people of South Africa", with its attack on the government's race policies, it was the CI, led by Peter Randall and Naudé, which played the dominant role in the development of the Spro-cas 1 and 2 programmes. Spro-cas, in spite of its flaws and the radical critique of it as a liberal, paternalistic effort, represented, for its time, a weighty indictment of white South Africans. It spelt out clearly that apartheid was immoral and impractical and that it was possible to develop alternatives. In the same way, the CI gave attention to issues such as conscientious objection and economic inequality.

In the early years Naudé had been influenced by the history of the German confessing church movement and he had hoped a similar movement would emerge in South Africa. The CI performed the function of giving support to courageous individual Christians, but a confessing church was not established.

It was asserted earlier that part of Naudé's "success" as a public figure was the international recognition he received. Overseas, particularly in Europe, he also played a vital role in drawing the attention of the international community to apartheid. Naudé developed a network of contacts with influential church leaders, journalists and politicians to whom he could put across his views. His Reformed background gave him an entree to the Dutch churches, and his regular trips and numerous addresses and meetings focused the attention of European churches on the South African issue. His ability to speak Dutch fluently was a great advantage. Similarly his knowledge of German helped him gain influence with the German churches, despite the reluctance of the Germans to put pressure on the South African government. He also won the respect and support

of church leaders in the Scandinavian countries, Switzerland and Great Britain, and to a lesser extent in the United States. The honorary doctorates, the numerous prizes and invitations he received before, during and after his banning, and particularly the way he was sought out by international visitors to South Africa, were a testimony to his influence abroad.

Naudé felt that the CI had also been mistaken in initially regarding South Africa's problems as solely bound up with racial conflict. He came to recognise that it was a struggle between the haves and the have-nots, and that the CI had failed to make any impact on the lives of the poor. The last few chapters of this dissertation show that Naudé gradually began to use some Marxist analysis in trying to understand the political and economic situation in South Africa. The tone of Pro Veritate in its final year increasingly contained criticism of the economic order, and Naudé contributed to this debate. In spite of Naudé's acceptance of some socialist rhetoric, he never fully resolved his personal style of strong leadership with a theoretical commitment to "grassroots".

Naudé's impact was felt in church circles and in the wider political terrain. In the final years of the CI, throughout the seven years of his banning and beyond that period, he was a strong supporter of black political aspirations. His acceptance of black leadership, firstly BC leaders and later those involved in the United Democratic Front and the African National Congress, drew him to the centre of the "liberation struggle" and he played an important role as a leader in this movement. One example of his initiatives during this time was his strong support for sanctions, which he began to call for after he was unbanned in 1984. In white sectors of South Africa, Naudé came in for strong criticism for supporting disinvestment, from old critics, but also from liberal white friends. Alan Paton was one of many who, while maintaining affection for Naudé, could not

support his stand on sanctions and disinvestment.<sup>4</sup>

After he was unbanned Naudé served as caretaker general secretary of the South African Council of Churches between 1985 and 1987, in a difficult phase of the history of the church when conflict with the state had escalated. Naudé never changed his view that violence was counter-productive, but he believed the conflict was the inevitable result of apartheid and he refused to judge those who had taken up arms against white rule. He also believed that there was no turning back from change and that its people would finally be forced to resolve their differences around the conference table. He believed the ANC was destined to play a central role in negotiations. At a time when government propaganda against the ANC reached its height, he was a key figure in the drive for negotiations and meetings with the ANC from 1985.<sup>5</sup> In the DRC, several theologians who had been unhappy about Naudé's banning hoped that he would emerge from his banning somewhat chastened and willing to return to his church.<sup>6</sup> But they did not understand the change and growth in his thinking nor why he ignored their appeals to return to the Afrikaner fold. Naudé's life has been a process of change. His two main points of focus were his own Afrikaner people and the black community, even though, ironically, for many years, it was from the liberal English-speaking white community that he attracted the most support and admiration.

The Reverend Peter Moatshe, a minister of the black NGKA, encapsulated the attitude of many

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<sup>4</sup>"Beyers Naudé in conversation with Alan Paton", Leadership, pp 82 -93.

<sup>5</sup>F Van Zyl Slabbert interview with C Clur, 1988 and C Niehaus interview with C Clur, 1994 .

<sup>6</sup>B Engelbrecht, "The Outcast Dominee. Let the church welcome him back, and listen to what he has got to say", Sunday Times, 30 September 1984 and B Marais-Clur interview.

black colleagues interviewed for this study when he remarked:

“We see Beyers as a brother, as a father. He makes you realise that colour does not count, it is not colour which makes us different, but racist attitudes. Beyers has been received by all quarters of the black community. He has proved beyond doubt that he is a man of God. He is a symbol, a sign of hope, and I think the respect we give him will remain. What he stands for is people. It is for life. It is for a new future in South Africa.”<sup>7</sup>

In the 1980s and before the political changes of the 1990s many in the Afrikaans community still regarded him as a “traitor”. The less harsh view, expressed in Vaderland, was that he is a “half-tragic figure, an honourable and sincere person who, like a hero in a Greek tragedy, was led by forces outside of his control to a situation which he did not want but from which he could not escape”.<sup>8</sup> Naudé was also criticised for refusing to acknowledge watershed changes that were made in the DRC when it rejected apartheid at its 1986 and 1990 synods. In the late 1980s there was a feeling that he was not recognising the DRC and the Afrikaans community’s small steps to openness: he was still on the outside, highly critical of the government and the DRC. Ben Marais gave an inkling of these resentments when he remarked in an interview in 1988:

“The day Beyers was unbanned I wrote him a letter and told him that I rejoiced that he was free. I said to him: ‘Beyers, use every opportunity God gives to witness for what you believe, but don’t be used by other people.’ Even before he had my letter, I read that he had flown down to the British Consulate in Durban to identify with the UDF leaders who were hiding there. I wrote him several other letters but he did not reply.... More recently I spoke to someone involved in a political trial and he called Beyers a traitor to his people.... But if you ask me today I still like to believe Beyers is not a traitor in the ordinary sense. He acts according to his convictions, but I disagree with his methods.”<sup>9</sup>

In 1995 Ben Marais wrote the foreword for Naudé’s autobiography, and Marais still held the view that his old friend had immersed himself too much in politics. Marais had preceded Naudé in

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<sup>7</sup>P Moatshe interview with C Ryan, 1987.

<sup>8</sup>Vaderland, 25 November 1982.

<sup>9</sup>B Marais interview with C Clur, 1988.

challenging conventional Afrikaner political beliefs, yet he acknowledged that when Naudé set out on his mission against apartheid there was no stopping him. He recognised that it cost both Naudé and his wife, Ilse, a great deal: "When the great history of our church is one day written, their names will both appear in shining letters".<sup>10</sup> More recently Naudé has been held up by both blacks and Afrikaners as an example of a South African who had the courage of his convictions. There will probably be a resentment of Naudé among *bittereinders* for years to come, but he has recently begun to receive recognition from the quarter that he most wanted: Afrikaner church circles. The reception Naudé received at the DRC's general synod in Pretoria in October 1994 is the most important example. A motion passed almost unanimously stated that it had disregarded the prophetic witness of its church, in the form of Bennie Keet, Ben Marais and Beyers Naudé. When Beyers and Ilse Naudé attended the synod the next day to accept the apology, members gave him a standing ovation. Naudé was deeply moved by this gesture, but saddened that it could not be shared by the late Keet, David Bosch and others "who would not walk the apartheid road". The reconciliation between Naudé and the DRC marked the end of a bitter chapter in the history of the church. For Naudé, nearing 80, it was an event of great joy. It seemed to him as if God had spared him for this moment in his life.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>B Marias, "Voorword, in C F B Naudé, My land van hoop: die lewe van Beyers Naudé, p 9.

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