

Church of England in South Africa. Testimony before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, East London, 17 November 1999. [disclaimer](#)

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We call on the representatives of the Church of England in South Africa. My dear brothers, Bishop Retief, you will introduce your colleague, but we want to welcome you very warmly and say thank you for the witness of your church, and especially of St. James in Cape Town after the horrendous thing that happened there. I am sure there will be some reference to that but we just want to say that we were proud of what you and your congregation did and said in response to that and we welcome you. Thank you for coming. Do you want to introduce them first so that we know who are taking the oath, if they are taking the oath?

BISHOP RETIEF: Thank you Chairperson for your kind comments and warm welcome. Our presiding Bishop is unable to be with us today and our delegation consists of myself, the area Bishop of the Cape area, and next to me is Bishop Martin Morrison from Gauteng, then the Reverend Elias Majozi, who represents Bishop Jeremiah Ngobani from Bekethembi, and Mr. Noel Wright is the General Secretary of the Church of England in South Africa. We have another representative sitting, Reverend Ernie du Plooy, sitting up there in the audience, but he is there to cheer us on.

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you very much. Would you then stand to affirm or take the oath?

ADMINISTERS OATH.

BISHOP RETIEF: The submission that we're about to make, well I'm going to read with your permission, will last approximately 15 minutes and then we'll be available for questioning.

We thank the truth and reconciliation commission for the opportunity to forward a written submission earlier this year and again at this public gathering of the faith community today.

**Introduction:** The Church of England was established in this country around 1806, with the first Bishop being sent from England by the Colonial Office in 1847. The church in those days was largely evangelical and reformed in character. In 1870 a well-documented division took place which resulted in the formation of the Church of the Province of South Africa.

These developments had a huge impact on the life of the Church of England. It lost most of its properties and congregations and was finally rejected by the rest of the Anglican Communion. It was left to a small community of Christians, both black and white, to struggle for survival. Coloured and Indian congregations were established at

a later stage. It finally emerged from its struggle as the Church of England in South Africa, a small group of people who were committed to the evangelical reformed and Protestant convictions of its forebears.

**Development:** When I entered the ministry in 1966 there were no more than five churches in Cape Town and only two and half ministers, one being retired. In fact there were no more than twenty-five churches countrywide. I came into a denomination that was very small but committed to the bible as the word of God.

It was strongly pietistic in its ethos and consequently according to the times in which we lived, separatist in its mentality. In the wider Anglican Communion, we had been stigmatised as a recalcitrant schismatic group of unreasonable right wing evangelicals. Now to some extent, we have no one to blame for these views but ourselves. We saw our theological position under threat and we acted accordingly. When the government made legislation that accorded with our moral or biblical understanding we supported them. However, on the great issue of justice for all, we were often insensitive. We had not made the connection between gospel and society. One of our Bishops took part in the state funeral for the assassinated Dr. Verwoerd. Another of our Bishops by synodical decision took part in the inauguration of FW de Klerk.

These actions were performed under the influence of our belief that we needed to support and pray for the authorities ordained by God. [TAPE THREE] ...[inaudible] under other circumstances whoever the dignitaries were, but we now see that these things contributed to the impression that we endorsed the system. We consequently gave the impression that we were supporters of the regime. This impression has caused many of our members great pain in the past and all of us great embarrassment in the present.

Thus, some of the impressions we gave were justified. However, we ignored all these things because we felt we had a priority to preach and teach the gospel, consolidate our work and begin to build it up. By 1979, there were 54 ordained clergy in active ministry and within a further 10 years the number had increased to 96. The denominations are administered as a single unit, with area councils in the Cape Province, Kwa Zulu Natal Province and the Gauteng/Free State region.

There are presently 153 congregations in South Africa, 14 in Namibia and a similar number in Zimbabwe, which are all self-administered. So you can see we're a very small show. The establishment in 1989 of our own theological institution, George Whitfield College, has produced clergy and ...[indistinct] with a new awareness and involvement in the controversial moral, ethical and social issues of the day. Our new academics are generating valuable insights into the ongoing debates and tensions between faithfulness to the gospel and social responsibility, something we deeply lacked in the past.

**The struggle years:** The apartheid years, with the struggle for liberation caught us completely off guard and unprepared. There were a number of reasons for this:

1. Our tiny group of churches was simply trying to survive. We considered ourselves as nobodies. We had no influence, no outside contacts, apart from a few exceptions, no money, no property of note. Yet we found a ready response to our message in all sections of our society. While the struggle for liberation was deepening, we got on with the job of building our churches.

2. We had no theologians nor thinkers of note in our ranks, having been cut off from the rest of the Anglican communion, we were not exposed to the thinking and debate taking place there, nor were we privy to the wider network of information to assist in raising awareness. Our church was led largely by lay-people because of our lack of clergy. It was only in later years that theologically trained men arose who were able to see things in better perspective and better understood the times in which we lived.

3. Many members of the Church of England in South Africa generally and honestly believed the government's propaganda about the Communist threat. Like most other whites, our white elect church believed that we were in a struggle for western values and freedom, and that the liberation groups were all pawns of the Communist regime.

4. Many victims of apartheid and oppression find it hard to believe whites when they plead ignorance. We ask them to moderate their judgement. Most of you here today will remember that Jesus once performed half a miracle. He touched a man's eyes, who was blind, and he only half saw and described his experience as seeing men as trees walking. He needed a second touch. The truth is that the full extent of the atrocities exposed by the TRC were in fact not known to us. Many suspected but were probably reluctant to believe these stories. Previously when stories of atrocities leaked out, it was usually attributed to Communistic forces trying to undermine the government. The exposures by the TRC have filled many white people and many of us in the Church of England in South Africa with shock, shame and revulsion. Looking back, it is amazing that we were so naïve. Be that as it may, the fact of the matter is that we allowed ourselves to be misled into accepting a social, economic and political system that was cruel and oppressive.

5. A further complication was the development of liberation theology. Now the impact of this particular ideology on evangelicals must not be underestimated. First of all, evangelicals have often been misunderstood and misrepresented in the popular media. Sometimes, of course, it is their own fault because of their unwise behaviour, but fanatics, unschooled rejecters of technological development, bible punchers who are unconcerned with the social needs of people and huge hysterical performances of healing and hysteria are not representative of true evangelicals. But this is the way evangelicals were sometimes represented in the media and by some who expounded liberation theology. We certainly deserved a lot of the criticism we received as evangelicals. But we ask that the difficulties we faced at least be understood, even though not condoned. Some evangelicals saw liberation theology as a sell-out of the gospel of Christ crucified and risen to a secular vision of Utopia on earth. There was a sense of dismay among evangelicals as we saw the gospel of Christ's redemption redefined to suit the mood and the agenda of the day. Many evangelicals felt that

while liberation theology had recaptured the important truths of justice in society, it had in the process assimilated an ideology that undermined the basic message of the gospel. That is how we, in the Church of England in South Africa felt at the time. And therefore we in the Church of England in South Africa found ourselves in a dilemma. To get on board the social action programs and protest movements was to identify with the theological emphasis, which we saw as a betrayal of Christ's message. As we distanced ourselves from liberation theology, we were therefore seen to support the system even further. Yet we knew by this time that the struggle for justice was justified. We, however, had different views and were uncertain about what to do. The Church of England in South Africa thought that, because of its smallness and insignificance, because of our lack of debating power, and also because of the reigning confusion of the age, our way forward was to continue with the teaching and the preaching of the word of God and to establish churches and help programs where we could. We declared ourselves to be a-political and in this way failed to adequately understand the suffering of our many black members who were victims of apartheid. Our failure to be involved in the political struggles of our land was a major error in both understanding and judgement and this mistake has caused us a great deal of embarrassment, heartache and pain.

6. In spite of these failures, during those tumultuous years, we established social community projects such as feeding schemes in under privileged schools, a community centre with various activities in Khayelitsha where one of our white volunteer workers was shot and maimed, AIDS centres for adults and children in Kwa Zulu Natal, nursery schools country wide, amongst other things. We held to our conviction that Christ's kingdom is ultimately not of this world. But we did believe as do most Christians, that it must be demonstrated in this world. And yet we remained confused at the every deepening political crisis and the challenge to our own theological pre-suppositions.

7. There were occasions after our annual synods when we communicated with and sought meetings with various government officials to protest privately about various matters. A delegation of senior leaders once met with Mr. P.W. Botha when he was State President to express concern about the wrongs in South Africa. While on several occasions our presiding Bishop, personally encouraged Mr. F.W. de Klerk when he was State President, to hasten change. We found both men receptive to our approach, although we do not know what it accomplished. It was dialogue rather than confrontation. That was our *modus operandi*. However, we now see that instead of helping our cause, it hindered it. The reason for this was our failure to report back to our local leadership and their congregations and this reinforced the view that we were supporters of the government and not critics. It must also be said that on local levels, stands were taken on certain issues which we failed to publicise or to which we failed to draw attention. For instance, one of our churches in the Northern suburbs of Cape Town opened a pre-school education facility which was open to all race groups. They resisted considerable government pressure to change their policy. In addition in years gone by, protest was may by our previous leadership to the army's activities in Ovambo. And also after World War 2, to the educational policies of the government

as they applied to black people. In 1988 the late Reverend Murray Hoffmeyer and I spent two hours with a government commission discussing the question of the Group Areas Act in which we vigorously argued for the abolition of that Act. In addition to that, we also over the years, voiced our opposition to the migratory system which had disruptive impact on families. Now these things are mentioned not to exonerate us, but to indicate that we were not entirely unaware or silent. However, we were too naive to keep minutes and records, because many of these activities took place spontaneously off the cuff, so to speak. Nor did we think it important to inform all our church members of what we were doing. In any event, we recognise and fully admit that whatever we did was too little and too late.

8. It should be noted at this point that when we were able to travel overseas, we were surprised by queries concerning segregation in the churches. Many of our friends thought segregation was practised by all churches, including us. But this has not been our practice. Our understanding of the gospel led us to believe that all people should be welcome at any worship service. While some denominations may have held to a policy of segregation, the Church of England in South Africa did not. However, it must be added that while our services were always open to all, not all could come. The apartheid laws had created both geographical and language problems so that it remained true that most of our congregations were either predominantly white, coloured, Indian or black. During these times, the leadership of the Church of England in South Africa was not discerning enough to see the significance of this. But since the early eighties, any indications of discrimination in the Church of England in South Africa's constitution, in our national structures and practices have been systematically removed. This is an ongoing process, assisted greatly by new awareness and sensitivity as well as new thinking by all in leadership. Now these reasons are not offered as excuses, but rather as an explanation of whom we were during the struggle years. We do not apologise for our stand on the central message of the bible. However, we do want to express our apology, our sorrow and regret at the things we left undone. We refer to article 12 in our statement of faith, 39 Articles of Religion entitled: Good Works. Quote: "Although good works, which are the fruits of faith and follow after our justification, cannot put away our sin and are subject to the severity of God's judgement. Yet inasmuch as they are done in Christ and for his sake, they are pleasing and acceptable to God for they spring necessarily from true and vital faith and are indeed the evidence of a vital faith, just as a tree is recognised by its fruit". Insofar as the search for justice is part of the Christian's good works, we believe we have failed.

9. **The awakening:** Our own awakening to the true state of oppression in our nation developed gradually. In the Cape particularly, where contact with the coloured community was easier than with the black community, the heartache and injustice were increasingly conveyed to us. Bishop Martin Morrison worked in Sowed and Bishop Joe Bell worked in Natal. They were regularly faced with the consequences of the political system and became increasingly distressed. The tense years of the early nineties with the freeing of Nelson Mandela and the subsequent election brought political reality home to us all. The culmination for the Church of England in South



Africa came on Sunday night the 25<sup>th</sup> July 1993 with the massacre at St. James Church, which had from its inception been a non-racial church. Apart from other considerations at the time, we realised with what fear many people in the oppressed communities lived. It brought a new awareness to us. As stated, the subsequent revelations made the truth and reconciliation commission have left us all deeply shocked and our own experience reinforced this sense of shock. The truth had come home to us.

**10. Conclusion:** As we reflect on the past and look to the future, there are several things we would like to say.

10.1 Notwithstanding that many in the white community saw the evil of apartheid and its out working, many did not and may not have chosen to. That stands as a sombre lesson of how whole communities and countries can be misled by skilful leaders. It has happened before and no doubt it will happen again.

10.2 While we believe that many of the government officials of the old regime were sincere Christians, nevertheless, we were a witness to how the bible and its message can be misused to support an evil ideology. National government used the bible to support its policies, to give the impression that they were a Christian government. But then so did some liberation theologians who finally supported violence as a means of continuing the struggle. They argued that the crucifixion of Jesus sanctioned violence as a method of obtaining freedom. At least we heard that argument. This particular interpretation of the death of our Lord was highly offensive to us and served only to alienate us and other evangelicals even further from those involved in the more visible aspects of the struggle. It is well worth noting at this commission that many evangelicals would have been more involved in the struggle had it not been for the particular theological justification which was presented and which served to confuse us even further. In the Church of England in South Africa, we remain convinced that the primary task of the ordained minister is to explain the true message of the bible without adding his own agenda to it. This message fully explained and applied includes the proclamation that Jesus is Lord over all, including our society and its laws. It further includes the command to love our neighbour with special reference to the poor, the needy, the oppressed and the doing of good works. Not as a ground for our justification before God, but as our expression and fruit of it as explained in article 12 referred to earlier. We in the Church of England in South Africa therefore feel the need to pray the words of the confession in our morning service: Almighty and most merciful Father, we have strayed from your ways like lost sheep. We have left undone what we ought to have done and we have done what we ought not to have done.

10.3 The Church of England in South Africa, especially the whites, must accept collective responsibility for its role in the injustices of the past. Although largely ignorant and unwitting, we were nevertheless passive and compliant. We benefited from the status quo. Up until the early 1970's our largely white leadership, and I'm sure all too many of our white church members being children of their culture, no

doubt practised some forms of discrimination either in action or attitude. With hindsight, we should have been more aggressive in campaigning against the evils and injustices of apartheid, more vociferous in opposing violence in all its forms and far more active in our programs of social upliftment and evangelism. We should have been more aware, more vocal and insightful, but we were not. For this we are guilty. We confess our imperfections and are truly repentant. Where we have been negligent, careless and insensitive to biblical injunctions and mandates as we have been, may the Lord graciously forgive us. Where our actions, our silence or our acquiescence has been the cause of added hardship, pain and suffering to any of our Christian brothers and sisters, to any of our other fellow South Africans, we ask for forgiveness. In regard to the black members of our own denomination, we admit that we were unable to fully understand the full extent of their pain and suffering. However, we attempted to provide leadership in terms of financial support for their churches and families, spiritual encouragement and the arm of fellowship. There were occasions when we spoke to the authorities on behalf of our members who were harassed or in trouble. In fact it is true to say that all our presiding Bishops gave a great deal of time and effort, probably most of their time and effort to minister, encourage and assist our black congregations. In our ranks at present, various discussions are taking place to facilitate confession, repentance, reconciliation and healing. Our stance that we were not a political church was an attempt to emphasise our commitment to the central message of the gospel. But it was also a great failure to truly understand and apply the gospel. In this regard, we were guilty of sinning against our Lord and our brothers and sisters. We pray for grace that never again will we fail in our duty.

10.4 We are conscious that any participation we may now have in public debate must arise out of the context of our understanding of our past failure to speak out. Our response to society must arise out of a response to the gospel and not out of political pragmatism. Or a hypocritical desire to create the right impression. As our understanding of the gospel and its implication grows, so must our obedience. This includes a new understanding of the need to seek greater understanding and fellowship with other church groups, even those with whom we may not see eye to eye.

10.5 The Church of England in South Africa remains convinced that its function is to continue to clearly teach and preach the word of God. To this task we re-dedicate ourselves. We have no wish to repeat past mistakes, nor to compromise our message in any way in the future. But Christians now face new challenges. The rebuilding of our society and the establishment of an ongoing culture of justice and compassion is an obvious case in point. To this end, our theological institutions are training a new generation of thinkers equipped to minister within the socio-political realities of South Africa and to enter into dialogue and debate with those with whom we formerly had very little contact. Another challenge is the ongoing struggle to uplift the poor and needy and to think through the issue of the redistribution of wealth from a Christian perspective. To this end we shall continue to develop our existing programs dealing with education, health and poverty. In addition, there are other ethical challenges of the day in relation to crime and corruption, abortion, pornography,

gambling and the proposed decriminalisation of prostitution, to mention just a few. To this end we remain committed to active participation in these debates. One of the most challenging issues is the rise of religious pluralism. We agree that respect and tolerance are called for and we welcome the opportunity for other faiths to state their case. If I may pause here for just a moment to say the during the days of the trauma of the massacre in our church, there were representatives of the other faiths who were there at our doorstep as soon as they could get there to express their solidarity and condolences with us, for which we are deeply grateful. However, we need to say that we do not feel able to accommodate all the compromises asked for in relation in other faiths. We have distinctive convictions which are non-negotiable. The fact that the bible was used in the past to condone injustice does not mean its true message may be ignored today. We believe in the uniqueness not only of Jesus, but also of the God of the old and new testaments. We believe the message of the gospel to be as relevant today as it was 2000 years ago. We still believe that that message is the message of reconciliation to God first and foremost and that reconciliation of one to another is a fruit of our reconciliation to God. The re-establishment of a moral framework referred to earlier this morning also in our opinion stems from a living relationship with God, the power of the Holy Spirit and the teaching of the bible. We believe in the return of our Lord Jesus Christ to this world and in the setting up of a day of judgement. To this end we work in witness. We pray for courage to hold to the truth and for endurance to reflect that truth in the way we serve our Lord in society and for humility in all aspects of our witness. We do not expect all to agree with us and we pray for grace to accept any criticisms. We pledge ourselves, nevertheless to the search for fellowship where possible, and to work for Christian reconciliation as far as we are able. I conclude by saying that we received very little notification that we were to make a submission and consequently were not able to consult extensively with all concerned parties regarding this document. Nevertheless, the sorrow and repentance that we express today is real. Our desire to truly live for Christ and proclaim his gospel is genuine. Our determination to right past wrongs in our own ranks as far as possible is sincere. In spite of sins and imperfections, we still declare ourselves Christians. We can do no other expect to pledge ourselves to do better. It is our belief that this day and hour calls for men and women of conviction and integrity to apply the message of the bible more accurately and faithfully to our emerging society. Regretful though the past may have been, we know that we cannot live in it forever. Changes have come and no doubt will still come, but the duty of all Christian churches is to preach Christ Jesus, who is the same yesterday, today and forever. As representative of and on behalf of all members of the Church of England in South Africa, I thank you Chairperson for the opportunity to make this public submission on our particular role in South Africa's history. May we all by God's grace grasp this opportunity to secure a righteous and a just future for those who have suffered and especially for our children.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you very, very much. I am very deeply grateful. Are your colleagues wanting to make any contribution to this or will they participate in the question and answer session?



BISHOP RETIEF: I think they are participating in the questions that you put to us.

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you very much. Bongani Finca?

REV. B FINCA: Thank you your Grace. The submission by the Church of England is the main submission submitted to the commission in July. It is very brief and very scant. I see that the submission that you have been reading from just now is really supposed to be the main submission on which we should have formulated our questions. Unfortunately, we are not going to be able to raise any questions which are contained in that submission at this stage, because we have to study it and then prepare our questions. Perhaps, your Grace, we could come back to the Church of England with questions on that main submission once it is submitted to us. For now I'm going to be raising questions which are based on this submission which is a two page document.

You mention in your submission that gruesome attack on your members in worship at St. James and the Chairperson has already referred to that and conveyed our sympathy. That attack shocked the whole country. But I want to ask what impact did that have for your own church, for your own denomination in terms of opening up your hearts and minds to other gruesome attacks which have taken place in the country. Not very far from here there is a church here in Mdanstane, which was equally attacked by the Ciskei Police. People were shambokked and teargassed. Did this event make your members relate to these kind of events which have been happening to other people who are Christians, in this country.

BISHOP RETIEF: The answer to that is most definitely so. It was obviously an horrendous event and an event that traumatised not only our church but actually quite an interesting experience for us in the aftermath for us to be able to see how events like this traumatise people. For instance, not only were our church members traumatised, but their relatives living around the country who knew that they attended the church were all traumatised. The neighbours living in the area were traumatised. The children who were in our service that night – we have scores and scores of children coming on Sunday nights as well as Sunday morning – who happened to be in a different part of the building for their own program were deeply traumatised, but all of their school friends were also traumatised because they knew that those friends of theirs come to our church. So it was a vast network of hurt and pain that was created by that event and we had to try to deal with all of that. Without a doubt one of the first reflections that came home to us after we were able to dust ourselves off, if I can put it that way, is that this is how large numbers of our fellow South Africans were living. It was with this kind of terror and fear and we took great pains to state publicly at the time that we realised that that massacre was not the only massacre that had taken place in South Africa and that we were not the only victims of violence and it gave us a fresh appreciation of the absolute terror with which many, many people lived, especially in the townships where unprotected people lived. Many of them who did not have the infrastructure to be able to cope with it as we had, or the support systems that we had. It did have a profound impact on us in that regard.

REV. B FINCA: Thank you very much Bishop. Again in your submission you refer to the spiritual roots from which your denomination come and how these have influenced your style of worship, your concern for unbelievers and your attitude to justice for all racial groups. Social justice for all racial groups. I want just to question you on the last aspect: your attitude to social justice. How do you spell out your denomination's attitude to social justice? Especially at the time which we are examining, the time of apartheid?

BISHOP RETIEF: Let me try to explain that by referring again to my comment that we came out of a strongly pietistic background and as you will all well know when you are governed by a strong form of pietism, there's nothing wrong with all kinds of pietism, but a strong form of pietism does lead to a sort of separatism. So we were part of that group of people that had separated church and society. Now having said that, I want to also say that it's not that we had no concern for society or the needs of the people around and about us. We were evolving in our thinking and were not helped by the fact that we did not, at that stage in our church's history, have thinkers in our ranks who could help us and assist us. Our theological training was limited and we had a largely lay leadership in those days because of the historical aspect of our church's beginnings and many of those lay leaders, many of them, came from overseas and they had their own view of things and we were younger and not able always to understand what they doing or saying or thinking. It's only as we grew and developed and matured ourselves, that things began to change. But as we did begin to evolve and change, what we would like the commission to know is that our conviction is that all social justice stems out of a prior commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. It is the fruit of being a Christian, it's not the root of being a Christian and it is at that point that we were so stumbled, so confused and bewildered by the arguments of liberation theology at the time, because it seemed to us that the message of liberation theology had changed the very root of the gospel. We may have misunderstood it, but that is how it appeared to us at the time and formed part of our confusion.

REV. B FINCA: Thank you very much. Again in your submission you refer to your position on the bible as the only authority and the final standard of faith and life, which is a very radical statement. What did this affirmation mean for you as a denomination in terms of your relationship with the state which was passing legislation which seemed to be so contrary to the basic tenants of the gospel? And also what did this mean to you for your own lives as a denomination? We have just listened to the Anglican church's moving confession of how with the good theology that they had, they continued to not apply that in terms of the payment of stipends to their ministers in a manner that said there is no ...[inaudible]. Did this acceptance of the bible as the only authority affect what perhaps we could call your mundane life, your day to day life as a denomination?

BISHOP RETIEF: Well, I'm going to try to answer that and then maybe some of my colleges might want to comment on that as well. The bible affects our day to day lives quite obviously and it did even in those days. However, let me just say that our style

of operating our church, our denomination, is not the same as say the church of the province of any other Anglican diocese anywhere in the world.. We had no central resources, we had nothing. All of our churches are self-supporting. We had no buildings, most of our churches today are new churches that have been built. Our congregations have been carved largely out of the rocks of the ground, if I can put it that way. If the congregations do not pay the stipend, the ministers to not get paid. That is how we work. We do not have a central payment system, so there was no need for us to enter into the sort of debates that the church of the province had as far as stipends were concerned. Except that most of our black churches were in poor rural areas, where there was no hope of them ever paying for themselves. So they were heavily subsidised by the white churches. So white churches usually paid for their own expenses and for one or two black churches, or paid into a central fund to help the black churches as far as we could. It was always a struggle for money as it is even today. It was mentioned earlier on today, and it always will be. But that was our commitment then and that is our commitment now. And so we continue to try to help at the same time and to try to uplift the various congregations. That's how we operated as a denomination in regard to each other. As far as the laws of the state were concerned, I refer to my comments in our submission where I tell you that we needed the second touch from the Lord Jesus Christ. We had blind spots, we were wrong. We have no excuses except to say that we believed the lies, the subterfuge, that we were blind and looking back now we can't believe that we were so blind, but I suppose that all people who are converted feel like that after they have been converted. And so we are grateful to our Lord, Jesus Christ, for touching our eyes a second time. I do not know if some of the others would like to comment.

BISHOP MARTIN MORRISON: Perhaps just to add to that, Chairperson. I think although we are firmly committed to the bible as the word of God as our source of truth for all of life, there have been times, certainly in our past and I'm sure even in our present when we don't read it properly or obey it as we ought. And I think as was stated in the submission, one of our real faults and sins is that in the areas of society and culture, we were somewhat short-sighted to say the least. And in that way we did not bring credit to the gospel or to the word of God and for that we clearly do repent.

CHAIRPERSON: I am not sure that I shouldn't exercise my power gently [LAUGHTER] but the look on your face is so - I mean it melts my heart. I will allow you a very small question, yes.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Thank you, Sir. I just want to hear from this church whether there has been a change of heart. You did make a very serious statement in your presentation from what we don't have, that you believed in dialogue which was your modus operandi, not confrontation. If you look back to what has been happening in South Africa where there were no opportunities of dialogue, what other alternative would you have suggested when you look back? That is number one, number two ...[interevention]

CHAIRPERSON: No, no, no. You said one.

BISHOP RETIEF: The question is if there was no opportunity for dialogue, what would we do. Obviously you are referring sir to the oppressed masses who had no opportunity for dialogue and you're asking me what would I have done. My honest answer to you is I do not know. We are fairly late thinkers. We are late starters. You've got to view us as being a little bit dyslexic. We are trying to find our feet and it is not our intention in any way to pass judgement on the actions of others. We do not know what we would have done ourselves. Our main concern at the time was in some way to express our concern without betraying what we believe. That was an enormous struggle for us and it is that struggle we are trying to convey to you today.

CHAIRPERSON: Yes, Joyce.

MS Y GCABASHE: You mentioned the trauma and the shock that engulfed the St. James congregation after that massacre and yet I have been intrigued, in fact pleasantly surprised by some of the positive pronouncements that were made by some of the victims of that massacre. How can that church, in fact your whole church, use that horrible traumatic experience, use it positively to bring about the healing that we are now talking about in this hearing?

BISHOP RETIEF: Our response to that event in our church was a spontaneous response with nothing orchestrated or planned and it came out of a church that I believe is committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Notwithstanding our weaknesses and our failures as we've tried to explain them today. We do, at the end of the day, love Christ and because of our commitment to the bible we felt that we could integrate what had happened to us into our world view and into our view of God. And so we were able to deal with it and what we believe is true now is that in some way we can in fact identify with other victims of violence. We do have something to say to people who have suffered violence and live in bitterness. We do have an alternative way forward to offer people who have suffered great loss and great sadness and tragedy because of the system in which they live and where they see no way forward. There is a way out and we have experienced that for ourselves. It is rooted in our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and we can share that were we are given permission to do so and where people are open to it. We believe that we can offer a hand of fellowship in suffering which is genuine and true and without forcing any of our views on anybody, we believe that as Christians we can point to another way.

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