

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

BISHOP MICHAEL NUTALL: ...[inaudible] in their different and often exceedingly painful way in the policy of apartheid. It is with all of them in mind that this submission is being made. We need to be concerned about healing, reconciliation, reconstruction, not only within South Africa itself, but also in neighbouring countries where South Africa fought its wars, created serious destabilisation and drew on migrant labour. Many of the millions of landmines lying in the soil of Angola and Mozambique are a telling and terrible reminder of that process in the apartheid period. It seems to me that the churches, which straddle these national frontiers in the Southern African region, can play their part in promoting healing, reconciliation and reconstruction, in partnership with governments and others in this sub continent. Chairperson, it is well known, I think, that the church I represent was clear in its official and public condemnation of apartheid, eventually joining those who declared it to be a hierarchy and a sin. These pronouncements came from a synodical structure of church government in which black and white Anglicans participated together, providing an alternative model in our race ridden society, which helped to point the way to the model of true democracy which our country has at last embraced. During the last eight years of the apartheid regime, from 1986 to 1994, our church was presided over in its life and synodical government by a black Archbishop, who by sheer example demonstrated once and for all how crazy, let alone immoral the alternative apartheid model was for our society. Yet, this same Archbishop, I hardly need to remind you, Chairperson, did not have a vote in the land of his birth.

But the picture I have just painted of our church, though true, is far too rosy. The whole truth contains compromise, complacency, and complicity, alongside examples on the part of some individuals of great courage and compassion. The fact of the matter as our written submission makes clear, is that the membership of the CPSA, is varied and complex. Within the perspective of the TRC, it includes a clear majority – some 2 million people – who were victims of apartheid, and a minority were its beneficiaries, including some who were even its perpetrators. I well remember a synod resolution in which it was decided that any Anglican who was in the security police could not be elected to serve on a parish council. The opposition to this decision in some quarters of our church was immediate. Yet we did allow for the appointment of Anglican priests as military chaplains to minister to the pastoral needs of white conscripts and professionals in the South African Defence Force. This came to be a deeply divisive issue in our church, with parents of conscripts complaining bitterly that we did not have enough chaplains to minister to their sons and black Anglicans bitterly opposed to having any chaplains at all. In our diocese of Namibia, there was the particular embarrassment where the bishop there could not possibly approve of South African military chaplains coming to support what he and his people perceived to be an army of occupation. The liberation movements were also supported...[TAPE ENDS] ...[inaudible] between the pastoral and the prophetic in

the life and witness of the church. How does the church achieve a balance between these two? In the closing years of apartheid rule, the bishops of the CPSA resolved to appoint no more military chaplains. At about the same time, the call for economic sanctions which you, Chairperson, had issued much earlier in a single handed act of moral courage, was supported corporately by the bishops of the CPSA and indeed by its highest synod, in the year 1989.

It could be said, and I would include myself in this stricture, that we took too long to come to this place of a clearer uncompromising witness. We allowed others to proceed us and take the flack. Too late, conceded that they were right and we owe them an apology for our compromising and often complacent half-heartedness and sometimes, for a hardness of heart that could be extremely damaging and hurtful. Archbishop, you yourself bore the brunt of this critique not only in the nation at large, but even from the membership of your own church. May I, on behalf of the CPSA, offer to you a profound apology, ask for your forgiveness and thank you for your extraordinary graciousness and magnanimity. May I also, through you, extend a similar message to all our other prophets, both within the Anglican Church and beyond it, thanking them for their courageous witness in the name of Christ to the truth? Chairperson, paragraph ten of the CPSA's written submission says, and I quote: "That the CPSA acknowledges that there were occasions when, through the silence of its leadership or its parishes or their actions in acquiescing with apartheid laws, where they believed it to be in the interest of the church, deep wrong was done to those who bore the brunt of the onslaught of apartheid. What aided and abetted this kind of moral lethargy and acquiescence was the fact that in many respects, our church had developed, over many years, its own pattern of racial inequality and discrimination. It was all too easy to pass resolutions or make lofty pronouncements condemning apartheid. It was all too easy to point a morally superior finger at Afrikaner nationalist, prejudice and pride. English pride and prejudice was no less real and it was never very far below the surface of our high sounding moral pronouncements. The Anglican Lord Milner must be as problematic to Afrikaner Christians as D.F. Malan, the dominee, is to us. In a strange way, I think many white Anglicans in the CPSA owe an apology to the Afrikaner community for their attitude of moral superiority. I became aware of this need when as bishop of Pretoria from 1976 to 1981; I got to know such fine Afrikaner Christians as David Bosch and Piet Meiring. Perhaps, Chairperson, I could ask Professor Piet Meiring in his capacity as a member of the TRC kindly to receive this expression of apology from an Archbishop of "die Engelse Kerk".
APPLAUSE.

But our chief expression of apology must be to our own black membership, and I am using the word "black" inclusively. Here we are speaking of the overwhelming majority of the CPSA, both in Southern Africa as a whole and in South Africa particularly. Interestingly, our black membership increased significantly in the early apartheid years, especially on the reef where the witness against the new ideology was strong. Ours is primarily a black church; it has been and still is in many ways, a suffering church. Suffering at the hands of the church itself. Chairperson, our so-called white parishes like white businesses, and I am thinking of last week's TRC

hearings, have unquestionably benefited from apartheid and its political predecessors, in that church facilities, including housing and transport for their priests, they have been bastions of relative privilege. So-called black parishes by contrast, like black businesses, have been decidedly disadvantaged in these respects. Within the black Anglican community, there has been a further disparity in that very often, as in the secular apartheid scenario, the African church has been worse off than the coloured, and the coloured church worse off than the Indian. We have simply reflected in so many ways the economic and social disparities at large. There was a time, as you pointed out earlier this morning yourself, your Grace, there was a time when even clergy stipends were paid on a racially different basis, with all kinds of clever justifications produced for what was essentially and ethically unacceptable practice.

Attempts are now being made to rectify these long-standing inequities within the life of our church. Black advancement into leadership roles has been significant, but still within our church structures, we are significantly dependant on white skill and expertise which can easily look and feel like white power blocking the aspirations of black people. A transformation process is underway, spearheaded by a recently created black Anglican forum. This will promote and facilitate an adjustment process for the CPSA, as it moves into the new millennium, seeming to provide a new authenticity for our life together as a church, setting us free to be more truly African in the broadest sense, to engage in our mission and ministry in a more authentic incarnational way. Chairperson, this is one of the ways in which our denomination sees its commitment to the future of this country and this sub-continent. To be a transformed church under God, serving a transformed society. Central to that task will be our desire to contribute to a continuing process of healing and costly, not cheap, reconciliation. I speak as a church leader now in a province which has seen well over 15 000 politically motivated killings in a decade of traumatic transition. The healing of the resultant wounds, let alone the other wounds, which are the legacy of apartheid, will engage the faith communities and others for a long time to come. One of the things which the Kwa Zulu Natal Leaders Group is planning for 1998, is a series of pastoral visits to places of pain, where in the company of local communities, liturgies of healing and cleansing will occur and symbolic actions will take place to facilitate reconciliation. Similarly, trauma workshops and workshops of repentance and restitution are available in our province to enable people bruised by a divided past to come together in a wholesome healing atmosphere in the presence of skilled facilitators which seem so essential to find new hope for their lives.

I end with a final reflection or meditation on facets of the life of the CPSA, which I represent here today, which I dearly love and for whose failings and frailties I repent before God and this commission. I think of the Mother church, St. George's Cathedral in Cape Town. Site of faithful witness and struggle over many years, beacon of hope to the people alongside the parliament where so many draconian laws were passed. I think by contrast of the faithful Nsekekuni Land, going on annual pilgrimage to the gravesite at the top of a hill of Masemola, their Martyr and ours. I think of the elderly member of the great mothers' union, coming forward slowly and painstakingly to receive a certificate in honour of her fifty years membership and I hear her

responding in grateful thanksgiving by singing in shaky voice, a hymn from the depths of her being. I think of a small child coming forward to be confirmed: "Defend O Lord, this child", and how I am struck by the innocence of her eyes and her folded hands. I think of a colleague as a teenager, taking his critically ill father to hospital, unaware that he would be refused admission because it was the white man's hospital and going to another "acceptable" hospital where there was only room for his father to lie on the floor, there to die, a short while later. I think of this colleague, carrying this pain into adult life, into the black consciousness movement, where he found his dignity was affirmed, and finally finding full healing when as a priest, he was asked to be Rector of a white congregation. I think of our present Archbishop, incarcerated as a young man for three years a political prisoner on Robin Island, and there mysteriously finding his vocation to be a priest. I think of Zeph Motokeng, standing as a brave young layman in synod in the early apartheid years and challenging unsuccessfully the unequal stipends paid to the clergy. I think of Trevor Huddlestone's naught for your comfort and the costly intercessory prayer of the monks and nuns, fighting apartheid on their knees, and yearning for a new freedom to dawn. I think of those who understood none of these things, who were lost in their own limitations, trapped in their own small world. I think and I think, and as I do so, I say Lord have mercy. Nkosi siya ukele. Morene ragaukele. And then I say also: "Thank God for your faithful ones, those who were clear sighted, those who endured against all the odds to the end".

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you very much. We normally try to observe a moment's silence at about midday and the ending of that submission leads us into that period of quiet. [MINUTE'S SILENCE] God bless Africa, guard her children, guide her leaders and give her peace, Amen. Thank you very much. Bishop Dlamini is there anything you're wanted to add? Not? Thank you very much. Piet Meiring?

PROF. P MEIRING: Bishop Michael, it's been a privilege to listen to you. Thank you for a most moving and inspiring and very comprehensive statement. What you've said about the Dutch Reformed Church, I gladly take through to them and think in the spirit of great gratitude and humility they will accept that and it will give them food for thought, because the apology that you brought to the NG Kerk, the NG Kerk owes to a number of people all through the country, and churches. May I thank you from the bottom of our heart, the Anglican Church, for not leaving the NG Kerk behind, but that you kept challenging the church, talking to the church all through the years. Thank you ever so much for that. I have one question. I know that the panel have many questions they would like to put to you. You said in your submission, you spoke about the majority of congregates who were victims of apartheid, but then there was also the minority in the Anglican church, mostly white people, who were the beneficiaries, in some cases even the perpetrators, of the past. We have had this problem in the TRC in the past months. It seems by and large that the black section of South Africa owns the process. It's been difficult to get the white people on board. In some instances, gloriously, white people, white Christians embraced the process. In many instances we were disappointed. Do you have advice for us? How do we get the white Christians, the people of good faith to really embrace the process of the

truth commission, but especially to get them on board for the road for reconciliation after the life of the TRC?

BISHOP MICHAEL NUTALL: Thanks very much. I'll hazard an answer and perhaps Bishop Zamabuhle may be able to add something. I think for those who have been the beneficiaries of the apartheid regime and sometimes even the perpetrators of the system, it's quite a threatening thing perhaps to come before a body of this kind. It's certainly a risky process and I guess that is what is encouraging a lot of white people in this country, including white Christians, to stay away. Insofar as our own church is concerned, I think the fact that it is chaired by who it is had encouraged many of us to accept the integrity of the commission and look at the example that the commission has set over these last two years, in my view, establishes its integrity in a very real way and one would simply hope that people will be willing, even at this late stage to set aside their unnecessary reservations and to recognise that part of their own healing and their own liberation will involve coming forward out of their own integrity and participating in the process.

BISHOP ZAMABUHLE: It would also be a good thing, I think, for our church in this process of healing to be able to meet as Christians and share these problems that happened during the apartheid era, influencing the healing process, because I do feel that it cannot be a one day building up towards healing. It's going to take a long time. But I think it will hasten the process if the church decides as early as possible to come together, black and white congregates in parishes and really talk about these problems. Address these problems that happened and say now: we are opening our hearts to one another, accepting one another in the Lord, forgiving one another. Because I do feel that there is still that attitude of not accepting one another in a true way and opting to embrace one another and work together as a church of God. Not to get affiliated groups for this particular thing and that particular thing, but the church to be together in one spirit.

BISHOP MICHAEL NUTALL: May I add one thing to that, Chairperson. I refer to repentance and restitution workshops which we have been having in our part of the world. Here again, it's quite difficult to encourage people to participate in what is involved in that, but assisted by the insights and contribution of Father Michael Lapsly, we have engaged upon a process whereby people across the parish boundaries, as my brother Bishop was saying, have come together, normally in fairly small groups so that there can be an interchange of depth, have come together over a weekend to undertake an experience which involves actually telling one another stories. And out of that process of listening to one another, finding a new measure of healing and then gathering all that together into an act of Eucharistic worship at the end of the weekend. These have been remarkable successful as a supplement if you like, something complementing our whole truth and reconciliation process in the nation.

REV. M XUNDU: Thank you very much Mr. Chairperson. I want to commend Bishop Michael for the way he presented that submission. It was moving. There are two areas that I just want to have clarity on. One is that the CPSA in 1970 moved a

resolution which condemned the World Council of Churches for its support for the program to combat racism and thus by doing so, affirming the policy of the National Party, and those among our congregations who were against the liberation movement. How does the church hope to handle that? To make an apology, or make reparation, because I think ...inaudible. And the second one is Michael Lapsly as you just said, on arrival at the airport was told that "your license has been withdrawn because you have publicly announced your political affiliation" by a bishop of the CPSA. Has there been an apology made to him for the way he was handled, which in fact clearly gave the government of South Africa that churches here were not going to take people who have declared themselves to be part of the liberation movement. I think that there could be a significant way that could be done to show that we acknowledge the wrongs we did at the time.

BISHOP MICHAEL NUTALL: Thank you. I think on that first matter of the decision in 1970 in regard to the World Council of Churches grants to liberation movements, the whole issue has gone by default. I am not aware that there has been any revisiting of that officially, within the life of our church. The reason for that resolution, if I recall, it was the first time I attended a Provincial Synod. I was quite young and immature at the time. But the reason for it was that we didn't want to leave the impression that we were lending our support, or that the church should be lending its support to movements that had decided to engage in violence, as part of their strategy and we didn't hear the argument, even if there was legitimacy for that point of view, we didn't hear the argument that the grants were intended for humanitarian purposes within those liberation movements and not for the purchase of arms. We didn't see any distinction between those two. Looking back now, I would wish to say here that I think we erred in that resolution in 1970, because it included a decision to withhold our subscription from the WCC. Subsequently, we were prevented by government anyway from sending any subscriptions to the WCC so we were nicely covered by the government itself, but initially we took that decision and we have to take responsibility for it. And I think it is right that we should acknowledge that that was a mistaken decision looking back now, with the benefit of hindsight. On the issue of Father Michael Lapsly and his license, I think if I may, I would prefer not to comment. That may sound very much like chickening out, but I'm not sufficiently well informed on the circumstances that surrounded that, something that I think happened within the diocese of Lesotho at the time and it has been written about in the biography of Michael Lapsly, that has now been published, maybe it is something that needs to be visited. What I would like to say is that Michael Lapsly as a result of (at least partly) what happened to him in the bombing, whereby he lost both his hands and one eye, has become what I would consider to be a living icon of redemptive suffering in the life of our church and our nation at this time and somebody to be truly honoured and respected for that fact.

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. Virginia?

MS V GCABASHE: Thank you, Chairperson. Bishop Michael, I'm going to ask you a question which has bothered me, and I don't think it only refers to the church, but it

also refers to the situation in general. You said in your submission that the church has embarked in black empowerment and we hear about this black empowerment everywhere, even in industry. But my concern about that is that black empowerment doesn't usually go with training, and I would like to know what the church is doing in terms of trying to really empower people by giving them skills so that they are able to take up the challenge of that empowerment?

BISHOP ZAMABUHLE: That is done individually by respective diocese through its parishes. The skill training is a priority of every diocese in our church. Each bishop has been given a mandate to see to it that he builds up leadership in his diocese. Taking whatever effort and whatever resources that may be available, so it's a thing that is opened in such a way that every bishop is taking it seriously and therefore we think in the future we will be seeing a good result.

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

MS V GCABASHE: Can I just follow that up please? My next question would then be: What happens in a situation where the bishop in the diocese does not encourage or does not see to it? Is there any other higher body that would make sure that this happens?

BISHOP ZAMABUHLE: Maybe - I do think there is a body, the Black Forum, because it spearheaded this, so it's still alive.

BISHOP MICHAEL NUTALL: You have touched on a delicate point being the way in which we organise our life, because of the diocesan autonomy and I hear within your question an assumption that maybe the bishops have too much power or something like that...obviously we need to be gracious enough to recognise our profound need to be in partnership with other people across the board and we're slowly learning the need for that.

DR. K MGOJO: Just a very short question, which is easy. I have been very much impressed by your submission about the transformation process in your church, which we hope is going to lead to what we call the African church and I commend you for that. Now the question I have in my mind: what is the criterion or criteria of appointing your priests in the parishes at the present moment as a way forward? Do you appoint priests according to colour? If you have got an opening at Umlazi, they need a parish priest, do you look around the black priests to be appointed at Umlazi or do you just look for the priest all over and say that we think that this one must go to Umlazi?

BISHOP MICHAEL NUTALL: You call that an easy question? Yes, yes, um...Chairperson, Dr Mgojo knows the situation in Umlazi because he ministers there himself, so he knows our situation there. Yes. We are better than we have been in the past, I think, in making our appointments freely across the board. We are even better at it at the moment perhaps within what I would call parishes (in the situation

that I come from) where the language is English and I don't mean only so-called white parishes, but parishes where the language spoken is English. More and more we are inviting clergy whose mother tongue is Zulu to take appointments either as rectors or assistants in those parishes. For instance at the beginning of next year we have a black African priest becoming rector of our parish at Overport, which is traditionally an Indian area and one of the things that we are discovering as indeed we are discovering the presence of women clergy in our church now is that people, as a result of the actual experience of clergy coming from different backgrounds, are experiencing a new inner liberation which they didn't realise would happen and so it's an exceedingly pleasing process to see. We are not doing it to the same extent the other way around – appointing white priests into black parishes, if I may use that terminology. That is partly for historical reasons because we used to have those parishes or those missions as they were called in the past serviced by white clergy, mainly from overseas and there has been a certain reaction to that. Within the black community itself, with black priests wanting to take responsibility within their own cultural and linguistic ...[indistinct] and idiom for that work. So I think we are going to be moving in the not too distant future, back into a more healthy mixture, but that is the historical reason that mixture doesn't exist to the same extent there. We have moved away from something that was there before in order to facilitate the advancement of black leadership at the request of black leadership in those particular congregations. Of course, the challenge to English speaking clergy whether they're white, coloured or Indian is that they need to learn the language, and something of the culture. And that is something that we are continuing to wrestle with in this time and I hope that as time goes by in this transformation process, we will begin to make further progress in this field.

BISHOP DLAMINI: My diocese has got white Christians as well, but not a single white priest and the black priests minister to everybody, so there is no problem at all. The work of God is going speedily ahead.

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you father. Joyce?

MS JOYCE SEROKE: Bishop Michael, I would like to through you, commend the CPSA for coming to grips at last after a long and painful process of accepting women as priests in the church, but I would like to know what is the church doing to empower those women for meaningful participation with in the church?

BISHOP MICHAEL NUTALL: Do you mean women priests or clergy, or women at large? Women clergy. Thank you. Chairperson, as you will know this is a fairly recent development within the life of our church. It goes back to 1992. Perhaps we should have made that decision long before, but like so many other churches in this respect throughout the world, we have been on a journey and all of us have had to come to a profound change of mind when we've come to the point of accepting women clergy should be as free to operate within the life of our church as men clergy. So, we've only been involved in this for the past five years. We now have something like 23 women clergy out of 120 within the diocese, which I'm part of. I like to think that

increasingly we are making space for them to participate fully in our affairs. We already have one of these priests as an Archdeacon and as a member of the advisory body to the Bishop and the diocese of finance and trustees. So perhaps the progress has been reasonable within the short time in which we have enacted, but there's still a very long way to go, and part of that long way to go is the need for the mindset to change because so many of us across the board, this is not a white or black phenomenon, but across the board, so many of us particularly those of us who are male but not only men, have got to make a major inner adjustment to this new reality within the life of our church. But as I said just now, I think that a new liberating process is underway for men and women alike in this process.

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. Thomas?

MR T MANTHATA: Bishop, I'm not asking any new question. This has been raised by Brigalia when she was addressing the issue of poverty. It was raised by ICT and it was raised by Virginia and Joyce. That is the issue of education and the moral decay. My simple question is: does the Anglican church consider reviving or establishing schools at community level because that is where this country will begin to address the issue of moral decay. It is at that level that we can begin to address even issues of crime. Does the church begin to say we can revive church schools at community level? We quite appreciate what we have already, that is the St. Johns, St Marks and Barnabus and so on. To me they are valuable, they perform sterling work, but they are few and far between.

BISHOP MICHAEL NUTALL: Chairperson, I think that what Mr. Tom Manthata has raised is of enormous importance. I am not sure what the pattern is throughout the life of our church, but certainly I think there is a desire to move in this direction. We have recently in the diocese that I come from, seen the establishment of half a dozen schools at local community level, initiated by parishes as a result of a synod resolution asking for exactly that to take place. Together with the foundation of two new bigger ventures than local community ventures, schools more like the ones that you have just mentioned. So we are following up on that tradition and the whole idea is to try and fill that vacuum that has existed ever since the Bantu Education Act came into being and we lost our schools for one reason or another as a result of that legislation and a sense of the need for the church to re-engage in a whole new creative way in the whole education process. And certainly that will be one of the areas in which we will try to exercise our influence in regard to the spiritual and moral life of the nation. May I just add in that regard that for me in regard to moral reconstruction, one of the most crucial things as I see it is for people to be helped, young and older people alike, particularly the young, to be helped in this new dispensation of freedom in which we find ourselves to make responsible choices. There are some who seem to want to return to earlier tyrannies and censorships of the past. I say no. We need to accept the reality of the new atmosphere of freedom under which we now operate. But it lays upon us an even heavier responsibility to assist one another, and particularly the young, in the making of responsible choices and earning and living by those choices. And so there are a new set of r's. We talked about the three r's of

reading, writing and arithmetic. The three r's of rights, responsibilities and relationships. Rights with responsibilities exercised in the context of affirming relationships. That is where the making of responsible choices really begins to come in and have some impact. And certainly as part of that process we need to be engaging as much as we can with the schooling process.

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you very much. I had hoped that in the very moving submission that you made, that we might have had an opportunity of a description of one of the extraordinary moments when God just manifests God's self at that synod when one person got up to confess our complicity in apartheid and it started off with a white person and before the end of that session, virtually everybody in the synod...but I don't think we have the time to do that now. I just want to say thank you very much to both of you for the contribution that you have made to the particular process and might I use the privilege of being the Chairperson to pay my own particular tribute to you Michael, who was my, as you said, my number two to Tutu, when you were the Dean of the province, for your incredible support in those days made possible my own ministry. I just want to say thank you in this particular gathering. But also to say thank you to all of those in the synod of Bishops and in the CPSA who gave support at times when it wasn't so popular to give that support. Thank you very much. You may stand down.

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