The Church as an Agent of Change: reflections on the role of the Church in Carnegie I, II and now III?

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This paper will provide a comparative analysis of the findings of the first (Carnegie Commission on the Poor White Problem) and second Carnegie (Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa) Inquiries with regards to role of the church as an agent of change, as well as reflect on its current praxis with a view to its positioning within the context of Carnegie Three. The first Carnegie inquiry acknowledged that the social consciousness of the church awoke much sooner "than that of the state or society at large" (The Poor White and Society 1933). The role of the church in initiating and even assisting Carnegie I was significant and it was acknowledged by the researchers who included it in the study of the upliftment of the poor white.Carnegie II on the other hand identified religious organisations as one of the key 'organisations for change' and included as part of the study a 'Church, Poverty and Development Workgroup', which sought to highlight that the church in South Africa at that time was part of the problem, but was and could be a significant part of the solution.The workgroup proposed that churches were a source of strength and initiative in confronting poverty through their Christian identity, loyalty, history and people.It should be noted that both inquiries also drew attention to the Churches failure to comprehensively address issues of social transformation. Despite these failures it is my contention is that the church should continue to play a role, as it has in the past, in addressing the kinds of issues reflected in a number of the themes proposed for Carnegie III. I hope, therefore, also to not only to reflect back on such findings, but to re-imagine the role of the church in engaging issues of poverty and inequality.

1. Introduction

It would not be out of place to state that the church has had an intrinsic relationship with social delivery in South Africa since colonialism and continues to play a significant role in our relatively new democracy. Not only did the church (as is the case with many nations) lay the first soft infrastructure such as schools and hospitals, she also played a significant role in the opposition of Apartheid and is still regarded by state and civil society as a key player in welfare delivery. However, it would also not be out of place to note that the church has not always been a positive agent of change with regard to social transformation. Many churches in fact lent tacit support to the regime and provided the theological justification for Apartheid. Today the church is at times viewed with ambivalence, despite being widely acknowledged as a key contributor. It is this tension that the paper will endeavour to navigate by exploring through remembrance the role the church has played within the context of both the first and second Carnegie Inquiries[1] and by proposing that through renewal of both theology and praxis she may continue to act as an agent of social transformation. This paper provides a comparative analysis of the first two Carnegie Inquiries (both in terms of their origins and the role played by the church), followed

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[1] The first inquiry was entitled the "Carnegie Commission on the Poor White Problem" and the second inquiry entitled the "Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa". These inquiries will be referred to throughout the paper as Carnegie I and Carnegie II respectively. It should be noted that sections of this paper is based on the researcher's own doctoral work at the University of Stellenbosch, entitled: *Mission as Transformation: the Church as an Agent of Change in a Post Carnegie II Context* as well as several research projects I have been involved in over the past 6 years.

by reflections on the inquiries in light of the church's current role and challenges. Finally, the role and contribution of the church within our current context will be explored.

2. Brief Overview of the Origins of Carnegie I & II

The visit of the president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York to the Union of South Africa in 1927 led to a request initiated by the Dutch Reformed Church[2] to investigate the plight of the poor white largely Afrikaans-speaking sector of the population (Macquarrie 1933:26). The church and the rulers of the country at that time were deeply concerned about the growing poor white population who dwelt or originated in rural areas and had made their living from farming. The majority of those studied were Afrikaans speaking and what the study termed as "mainly from a Dutch-French-German heritage".[3] Reasons given for focusing on this particular group of the population were, according to the report, based on what they regarded as a progressive economic and social decline during the forty years preceding the inquiry. The economic deterioration of this sector of the population troubled the government of the day.[4]

Although the "first commission did note the problems of black poverty as not being any less acute than those of poor whites and would require study on their own", blacks were excluded from the inquiry (Wilson &Ramphele 1989:x). Blacks and coloureds were viewed as an economic hindrance to the economic progression of the white population, and the population growth of the black and coloured sectors of the population were viewed as alarming. This, combined with their acquisition of skills that were on par with those of many poor whites, was seen as both economically threatening and psychologically demoralising for the poor white (Albertyn & Rothman 1932:xix). Job reservation, which the inquiry proposed for a set, temporary period, was therefore proposed as the answer to this quandary (Albertyn & Rothman 1932: xx; cf. Maquarrie 1933:28).[5] The success of this first inquiry is evident today. The poor white problem receded as many of these findings were incorporated into National Party policies, which formed, in part, the sociological and ideological motivation for apartheid and its subsequent policies which included recommendations such as job reservation (Albertyn& Rothman 1932: xx; cf. Wilson & Ramphele 1989: x).

By the time of *Carnegie II* more than 50 years later, poverty had become a "profoundly political issue". Gross inequality was the direct result of the racial policies that flowed, in part, from recommendations such as job reservation, resulting in the racially correlated distribution of income. *Carnegie II* therefore identified poverty as being largely the "consequence of deliberate policy": "racist policies that are an assault on people's humanity" (Wilson & Ramphele 1989:4).[6] At the Conference on the *Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development*, the president of the Carnegie Corporation labelled the first inquiry "a partial success" due to this omission. He went on to comment that it "failed to recognize fully the humanity of black Africans", and that "this was the direct result of the thinking of the day" when "so

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[2] The Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa is also commonly known by its Afrikaans name *Die NederduitsGereformeerdeKerk* (NG Kerk) and is referred to as such in the inquiry. During the apartheid era, this denomination helped to propagate the concept of separate development on which the policy of apartheid was based.

[3] In the original Afrikaans, it reads "hoofsaaklik van Hollands-Frans-Duitse afstamming".

[4] Wilson and Ramphele (1989:viii) explain it in the preface of their book as an introduction to the second inquiry: "Large numbers of whites, uprooted from the land during the previous generation by war, drought, pestilence, population growth, and the capitalization of agriculture, were pouring into the cities to live, ill equipped for modern industrial society, in dire poverty".

[5] It is important to note that the expansion of gold mining in the 1930s and industrial developments of the Second World War also contributed to the proposal of job reservation (Wilson &Ramphele 1989:x).

[6] See also the entire chapter in Wilson &Ramphele (1989) on "Apartheid's Assault on the Poor".

many dark skinned people around the world, were dimly viewed as peripheral to human society, almost as non-persons" (Hamburg 1984:10). The suggestion of a separate inquiry into black poverty had, however, been made by several researchers at the time of the first inquiry. In the 1930s, one of the Carnegie commissioners proposed such an inquiry and in the 1940s, the historian C. W. Kiewiet added his voice to this proposal. The *South African Outlook* of March 1933[7] (in Hamburg 1984:12) had also observed:

> We shall have to learn to view the Non-European population as an integral part of the socio-economic system of South Africa and to let them fit into the whole as effectively as possible, both as producers and consumers.

Nevertheless, the omission of this sector of the population was rectified only with the process of the initiation of *The Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development* in 1980.

3. "Rise up and Walk": The role of the church in Carnegie I & II

Dr D. F. Malan challenged the church in 1923 with regard to the condition of the poor white: "if the church wishes to say to the paralysed poor white: 'your sins are forgiven', it must also be prepared to tell him: 'Rise up and walk'" (Boesak 1984:8). It was this selfsame challenge that Dr Allen Boesak cleverly used to challenge the churches at the time of *Carnegie II*, and it therefore served as a bridge between the two inquiries. The role of the church in each inquiry will be dealt with separately to provide a clear comparative basis.

3.1. Carnegie I

The first Carnegie inquiry acknowledges that the social consciousness of the church awoke much sooner "than that of the state or society at large" (The Poor White and Society 1933:151). The role of the church in initiating and even assisting *Carnegie I* was significant and it was acknowledged by the researchers who included it in the study of the upliftment of the poor white.[8] This commission consisted largely of clergy from the Dutch Reformed Church and operated in much the same way as the other commissions.

The methodology used in *Carnegie I* appeared to combine the commissioners' reports with church statistics and a brief history of ecclesiastical endeavours (Albertyn& Rothman 1932:4, 49). The role of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in the life of the Afrikaner nation is a significant one and has been traced by the 1932 inquiry in its "KortGeskiedenis van die KerklikeArmsorg in die Verlede" ("A Short History of Church Charity in the Past"). Their many welfare institutions ministered to the orphaned, sick, widowed, handicapped and aged, and continue to exist today (Albertyn& Rothman 1932:50-51). In addition to institutional care, the report also outlined what the Dutch Reformed Church referred to as "kerklikearmsorg", namely caring for the poor within the context of their local churches and area groupings in the form of commissions, various associations and a broad federal commission on national level (Albertyn& Rothman 1932:52, 53). Deacons and elders were also part of the local church's diaconate work in "the allocation of a small monthly grant to a few chronic sick, widows and others in distress who are not old enough to receive the old-age pension" (Albertyn & Rothman 1932:60).

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[7] The *South African Outlook* is a journal that dealt with ecumenical and racial affairs since 1870.
[8] It should be noted that "church" refers here to the Afrikaans family of Reformed churches, namely the Dutch Reformed Church, Hervormde Church and Gereformeerde Church – these churches ministered mainly amongst the studied group (The Poor White and Society 1933:151).

In this way, the Dutch sister churches' involvement in poverty upliftment was viewed as having great value by the first inquiry. In fact, the church was viewed as a powerful preventative measure against despondency and apathy during disasters, as well as against selfishness and extravagance in times of prosperity (Rothman & Albertyn 1932:51). The findings indicated that, where the church continued to play an important role in the poor white family, the family was protected from descending into what the inquiry referred to as a demoralising state of "poor whitism".[9] It furthermore showed that the church played a key role in maintaining the moral structure of the Afrikaner nation and that the decline of morality was a direct by-product of the breakdown of the church's authority and traditions (The Poor White and Society 1933:151). While social work was considered relatively new at that time, the church was acknowledged as having "woken up" to social needs much sooner than the state, as illustrated by the establishment of the many social institutions that the church had initiated (Albertyn & Rothman 1932:57).[10]

Nevertheless, the church, largely owing to its conservatism, was regarded as not fully alive to the situation created by the vast social changes of later years, and was "found wanting both with respect to its methods and to the number and equipment of its workers" (Rothman & Albertyn 1932:56; The Poor White and Society 1933:151). The second inquiry's evaluation of the church's policy looked critically at the need for "greater enthusiasm" on the part of the church with regard to social work, in comparison to the state and broader civil society. Its methods were also identified as being inadequate – even at this time the institutional approach was regarded as inadequate in addressing the "complicated problems of poverty, pauperism and crime" (Albertyn & Rothman 1932:58). The church was encouraged to "take steps for the more efficient training of its agents in charitable work". Theological seminaries were criticised for giving "almost no training in practical sociology", despite large congregations. The use of qualified social workers was also encouraged and the teaching of the church was to be more "pertinent and practical" (The Poor White and Society 1933:151).

Nevertheless, the evaluation of the church's involvement in the social diaconate included critique of both its methodology and the theological assumptions underlying its response to poverty. The direct involvement of the church offices of deacon and elder respectively, according to the commission's evaluation of the New Testament's characterisation, appeared to be inadequate. The comparison was made between the early church's definition and its role today, and it was found that "a misconception of the deacon's office and the neglect of his true work" in terms of the scriptural definition were partly to blame (Albertyn & Rothman 1932:60). The next reason put forward by the inquiry was that it was incorrect to place the responsibility largely in the hands of the state. The misconception that the responsibility should lie mainly in the state's hands, the commission believed, led to a one-sided charity approach which often led to dependency. Many churches were more prone to give a "small sum towards charity" and, considering their duty fulfilled, left "the rest to the local authorities or the government" (Albertyn & Rothman 1932:60, 61). This form of charity without personal care was considered to have led to an increase in "dependency and pauperism".

Perhaps one of the most prominent reasons put forward at the time for the church's insufficient social care (one which many evangelical churches are still accused of today) is that

> The Church has in the past aimed too exclusively at preparing it's people for the hereafter, and has therefore bestowed too little attention on the amelioration of present conditions. It taught the poor to resign themselves to want and poverty, in the

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[9] In Afrikaans this is referred to as "armblankedom".

[10] It is a widely acknowledged fact that much societal transformation, from the church's founding up until today has been initiated be the church (Cf. Pierson 1993:8).

hope of better conditions hereafter, instead of actively assisting them to a better and higher life here (Albertyn& Rothman 1932:58).

This spiritualisation of the Gospel neither proclaimed nor acted on the whole calling of the church and was therefore quite straightforwardly addressed by the first inquiry. The dualism which underlay this separation of the sacred and secular was pointed out as being incongruent with the message and ministry of Christ. Social action (the social) and the 'religious calling' (the spiritual) of the church were stated as not being antagonistic, but complementary. One of the questions that arose out of this critical analysis was the following: "Is it the duty of the church to interest itself more closely in the social conditions under which its people are living? If so, will its spiritual calling necessarily suffer as a result?" The answer appeared to be that, if the church refused to take up the gauntlet, its work would be taken out of its hands and it would lose "influence and authority with regards to the great social questions of the country" (Albertyn& Rothman 1932:58). Needless to say, the role of the church in the poor white problem was significant and not without its bias as the church was deeply involved in both sponsorship and research.

3.2. Carnegie II

The second inquiry took place largely against the background of the success of the first, and was no different with regard to the involvement of the church. Boesak (1984:6, 7), when researching the role of the church in the second inquiry, had gone so far as to use *Carnegie I* as a foil in order to highlight the Dutch Reformed Church's balanced view of social upliftment as part of the missiological calling of the church in contrast to the apathy of many churches at the time of the second inquiry.

> One cannot help but notice the important role played by the white Dutch Reformed Church in the Carnegie Commission on Poverty. It was very much part of the initiative, it helped to define a new relationship with the state in coping with the problem of poverty, and in the process it defined a new role for itself as agent for change in society (Boesak 1984: 6).

Yet, their inability to apply it universally to their black brothers and sisters in much the same plight was challenged.[11] He attacked the Dutch Reformed Church, which had so significantly improved the lot of its members and *volk*,[12] and which now supported a system, Boesak argued, that led to the deprivation of other sectors of the population. It is within the context of liberation and upliftment of those ignored by *Carnegie I* that the church's study took place. However, the challenges posed to the church in terms of meeting its social challenges in *Carnegie I* are not unlike those that were faced at the time of the second inquiry.[13]

Perhaps because of (or in spite of) *Carnegie I*, *Carnegie II* had clearly continued to regard the input of the church as being significant enough to warrant a working group on Church, Poverty and Development, which was initiated in the early stages of the inquiry. Unlike the first inquiry, the working group was intended to be interdenominational and "members were invited from a variety of backgrounds – denominational, rural/urban etc."   However, those who attended represented a very narrow

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[11]Boesak (1984:7) states that "this church persistently denies that apartheid, even though the evidence is abundantly clear, is responsible for the deprivation, misery and poverty in which millions of black people are forced to live… apartheid is executed according to the principles of love and justice, and is therefore not in conflict with the demands of the Word of God".

[12] Cf. *Ras, Volk, Nasie en Volkverhoudinge* (1975) for the Dutch Reformed Church's theological justification for the support of apartheid.

[13] The approach of the workgroup was based largely on the Liberation Theology of Latin America and the WCC/CCPD (Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development) (Nash 1984a:3).

constituency (Nash 1984a:2).[14] The more open and strategically orientated format of the *Carnegie II* workgroup included meetings and workshops on both urban and rural development (the former in Montagu and the latter in Lavender Hill). Meetings were "devoted to information gathering, review and analysis of church situations vis-à-vis poverty and development, identifying resources and exploring possibilities of practical action, especially in community development projects" (Nash 1984a:3). A field trip was undertaken by two members of the group who backpacked for a week through poverty-stricken areas in the Eastern Transvaal[15] in order to interview people and obtain firsthand information. A letter was also addressed to church leaders inviting them to place poverty and development high on their agendas (Nash 1984a:2-4). The aim of this workgroup was to conscientise churches and to provide resources for addressing the challenges of poverty and development.

The South African church at the time was divided along lines of privilege as much as the country was:

> In South Africa the governing bodies of the 'multi-racial' denominations tend to be
> dominated by those who enjoy secular privilege and are predominately white, although
> most of the members are black, poor and ill-educated (Nash 1984b:38).

They thus tended to reflect the same divisions of wealth as the secular society did. Nash (1984a:16) strongly attacked those churches as offering little resistance or alternative to a racist system beyond lip service. Even the leaders of the African Independent Churches were accused of subscribing to "conspicuous consumption" patterns and living a lifestyle far removed from those of the underprivileged /oppressed black sector they served. Allan Boesak's attack (in Wilson 1989:83) on the Dutch Reformed Church clearly highlighted the fact that sectors of the church in South Africa were still not fully involved in facing the crises of poverty, which he saw as being political, "not metaphysical or God-given, but structural and historically explicable".[16] In his paper "Rise up and Walk", he conducted a sociological analysis to paint the picture of poverty in South Africa at that time, with particular reference to the role political oppression played in widespread deprivation.[17]

> For the powerlessness of the poor is the precondition for the continued dominance of
> the rich. We must expose the relationship between poverty and wealth. The poor are so
> poor because the rich are so rich. The process of accumulation of wealth and the law of
> the market prevailing in many countries including our own, create and sustain wealth
> for the wealthy and poverty for the poor (Boesak 1984:2, 3).

The churches were therefore urged to take political action in campaigning for the abolition of pass laws, influx control, land ownership laws[18] and therefore the improvement of family life. Churches were called upon to face these issues on an institutional level and use their church structures to "mount large scale campaigns" on a macro level as well as on the micro, in terms of short-term schemes and action on the congregational or parish level (Wilson 1984b:82.83). Margaret Nash (1984b:38) however does acknowledge the efforts of various clergy, laity and other Christian organisations in bringing a holistic Gospel of good news to the poor, doing so often in the face of controversy and risking the wrath of the

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[14] They did not officially represent their respective Churches and there was only official consultation and cooperation with the NGSK Commission on Poverty (Nash 1984a:2)

[15] Now known as MpumalangaProvince

[16] One of the key tenants of Liberation Theology is to be committed "to a lifestyle of solidarity with the poor and oppressed and involvement in action with them" (Thomas 1995:185).

[17] Liberation Theology views poverty as a result of oppressive and exploitative practices exercised by the "haves" over the "have nots" and therefore poverty is not merely as a result of "just ignorance, lack of skills or cultural or moral factors" (Bosch 1991:434).

[18] The Native Land Act (1913) and Native Laws Amendment Act (1937) limited black land ownership and settlement to existing tribal 'reserves'. Africans could not own land in urban areas and their movement was limited – they could only reside in an urban area if they were employed and carried a pass (Van Donk 1994:5, 6).

state. In this way, the Church, Poverty and Development workgroup sought to highlight that the church in South Africa at that time was part of the problem, but was and could be a significant part of the solution.[19] The workgroup proposed that churches were a source of strength and initiative in confronting poverty through their Christian identity, loyalty, history and people (Nash 1984a:18).

The role of the church in combating poverty was therefore often ambiguous. It is interesting to note that one of the key reasons noted for this situation differs very little from that noted 50 years earlier by *Carnegie I*. Yet again the church (albeit now not merely the Reformed sister churches as in *Carnegie I*) is accused of a dualistic spiritualisation of the Gospel, which is cited by Nash (1984b:38) as "directing hope towards the life hereafter and has the same effects as valium…tends to buttress rather than challenge the status quo".[20] It is the researcher's impression that what Nash subtly hints at is the 'protestant work ethic' with its "heavy emphasis on the individual, who is encouraged to work hard, spend wisely and give generously to the Church" as a value system, has a similar effect on church members. The key challenge by the workgroup appeared, therefore, to be that "poverty is a moral challenge!" (Boesak 1984:3) Nash (1984b:38) challenged the church "to be liberated and liberate" in confronting this challenge and set forth the following as markers in this path:

> These change seekers [21] will make headway only as they:
> 1. develop solidarity with one another and with their servant-Lord; and
> 2. 'walk on two legs'- act both in the secular society and in the organized church communities.

The key question was how best to mobilise and equip the poor who were dominated in their local or denominational contexts by a privileged minority. The answer was that renewal of the church in South Africa was perceived within this liberation paradigm, whereby the church was to be renewed from the bottom up through basic Christian communities (consisting of class betrayers and the poor) committed to the values of the Kingdom and therefore a holistic gospel.[22]

The latter shaped the way that recommendations for action were then made. Far removed from the methodology of *Carnegie I*, the workgroup had composed a 'dossier' consisting of case studies of church and community; a draft chapter for use in a manual or resource book; lines of action to combat poverty and promoting development in local churches; and a paper on the use of regional church structures in community development.[23] These recommendations, it was hoped, would provide a resource and challenge to the churches in dealing with poverty.

4. Looking Back/Moving forward

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[19] Many churches made submissions to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with regard to their sanction of apartheid in the past (Cochrane, De Gruchy& Martin 1999:15-77). Many, however, fought the policies and ideology of apartheid labelling it heresy (cf. De Gruchy, J. & Villa-Vicencio, C.1983. *Apartheid is Heresy*. Cape Town: David Philip).

[20] Cf. Albertyn& Rothman (1932:58) for a similar identification of a dualistic spiritualisation of th gospel during the first Carnegie Inquiry. It should be noted that one of the characteristics of Liberation Theology, operating withing South Africa at that time, is its rejection of both an interpretation of faith "in otherworldly categories and excessive individualism" (Bosch 1991:438)

[21] It is interesting to note that "these change seekers" are viewed by the author to be a select group who may be from differing socio-economic and ecclesiastical backgrounds, and who could be "class betrayers".

[22] See Boff (1986) for a discussion on base communities and their role in liberation in the Latin American context.

[23] Five lines of action were identified by the workgroup as ways for the church to address poverty:
1. Relate preaching and teaching to social reality;
2. Fact find and analyse findings of needs and resources;
3. Encourage self help initiatives and "collective self reliance";
4. "Identify and oppose unjust social structures"; and
5. "Search for and promote just social structures" (Nash 1984a:21).

4.1. Reflections on the inquiries in light of the church's current role and challenges

It is evident that both inquiries greatly valued the role of the church in addressing issues of poverty and that the government (during the time of Carnegie I) and civil society (at the time of Carnegie II) felt it had a vital role to play in this regard. Carnegie II argued that the church's Christian identity, loyalty, history and people were a source of strength and initiative. Several more recent studies confirm this in noting that the church is able to mobilise far more people than any other social movement and reach all sectors of society, is better positioned than the state to address issues of moral decay, has the greatest level of trust than any other institution in society and contributes more than the state to social welfare (Krige 2008:132; cf. Erasmus WGRIP report). In fact, the church continues to be recognized, particulary in marginalized and poor communities, as an institution to be trusted which indeed points to the fact that churches "could be viewed by policy makers and other strategists as an important channel of opportunity to enter the respective communities and establish contact with the local people" (Swart 2010:343). Furthermore, Churches, as pointed out by Carnegie I, often provide a "buffer" against the powerlessness and despair engendered by poverty as spirituality is often a key resource for the poor in weathering the many challenges they face.

It is further evident in both Carneigie I & II that the church has a socio-political role to play. While the church's prominent role in driving the first inquiry, may now be tainted with the bias of the first inquiry towards the Afrikaner, it is nevertheless evident that the reformed churches of that era regarded it as part of their role to be engaged in society. Boesak's borrowed challenge in Carnegie II that the church 'rise up and walk', was in no way different as it re-posed this challenge for the church as a whole to engage within a new context of poverty and inequality. More specifically, Boesak was challenging the powers that be (and the church community that often supported them) to recognize that poverty cannot be spoken about without touching on power. Poverty in South Africa was of course, therefore, not only a socio-economic issue, but a profoundly political issue. Gross inequality was the direct result of the racial policies that flowed from recommendations such as job reservation, resulting in the racially correlated distribution of income that remains our legacy. According to Nkomo's (2011) findings from her study on 'The Response of the non-poor Church in addressing poverty in a post Apartheid context", the issue of power, reconciliation and restitution are still not adequately being addressed within the context of poverty. She argues that you cannot talk about the church and poverty without engaging with issues of restitution in a context of inequality. Sadly, some sectors of the church gave theological justification to the heresy of apartheid and therefore formed part of perpetuating the system of inequality.However, others, in response to the institutionalised discrimination of the apartheid system, were often the voice of the voiceless black masses in the vacuum created by the banning of the black political organisations such as the ANC and PAC.The challenge made by Boesak is of course that the church had to mobilise its powerbase – power through numbers, reach and moral authority to engage the government of the day if united. This challenge was indeed taken up by many sectors of the Christian community. Llewellyn Mc Master (2008:6), himself a theologian arrested under Apartheid cites Allan Boesak in arguing that for millions of South Africans "the struggle for a free, democratic South Africa... was based on their religious convictions".

While poverty remains a political issue as the inequality rendered by the Apartheid legacy remains, only today lines are no longer drawn by race alone. While a recent study of the churches involvement in social development in the Paarl area reveals that the local government authorities in the area were unanimous in their belief that that the church had a positive role to play in social welfare, churches appear to be avoiding the arena of civic interaction. Many respondents interviewed for this study felt that the churches role had diminished in comparison to "the activist role of the churches before 1994 and how this helped to oppose and in the end, topple the Apartheid government". These respondents

felt that the church could be playing the same role of mobilising people as they did in the past, but now to address the welfare problems communities face currently (Erasmus 2009:53). Some respondents felt that the church was becoming almost invisible, "afraid to voice their opinions on certain issues and this makes them seem weak to the public" (Erasmus 2009:53). The church appears to be losing its moral standing within the public sphere and is often silent on issues of injustice and poverty. The church, therefore only appears to be 'walking on one leg', rather than the two proposed by Carnegie II, which was to act both in the church and society. Academics have echoed the same concern and even gone so far as to state that the church has "moved to the margins"(Mc Master 2008:3).

This move "to the margins" may have something to do with one of the key challenges mentioned by both inquiries: an inadequate theology. Marx once noted that 'religion is the opiate of the masses' and in the case of the churches engagement (or disengagement) with society and issues of poverty and inequality is largely shaped by theology(see Bowers du Toit 2012:257). Margaret Nash in the first inquiry had noted that a spiritualisation of the gospel tended to have the "same effects as valium…tends to buttress rather than challenge the status quo". All too often – as evidenced by the findings of both inquiries – the church has overemphasised the spiritual dimension of its calling over the social. In fact the first inquiry had pointed out that should the church continue to overemphasise the spiritual dimension of its calling, it would eventually cost the church its "influence and authority with regards to the great social questions of the country." The focus of my research over the past few years has been largely on the role such theologies (good or bad) play in the churches engagement with poverty and there is significant evidence that the failure of the church to meet Carnegie II's goal of 'relating teaching and preaching to social reality' has largely been because of inadequacy here. One is the so called troubling theologies has been that of the so called 'Prosperity Gospel' which has taken root in many poor communities. This theology, promises the faithful success, health and prosperity based on how much money they contribute to the congregation. Those who suffer from a lack of prosperity are regarded as 'cursed' and are simply promised that the key to financial prosperity is to give more (Huliselan 2008:33; cf. Williams 1987:33).Good theology is of course also shaped by adequate training, a fact mentioned by Carnegie I.

The findings of Carnegie I indicted that the Reformed churches had tended to place the responsibility of addressing poverty largely with the state, which the inquiry argued led to a 'one sided charity approach which promoted dependency'. Today, the church is said to contribute more money to poverty relief than the government (Erasmus 2012:60), but how effective is this really? It has certainly been found that many churches engage in some form of poverty relief, however, these efforts are largely in the form of the charity or relief approach so critiqued by Carnegie I (source?). Relief work, while well meaning and legitimate in many contexts, focuses more on the symptoms than causes of poverty and implies a 'charity' approach to welfare and development rather than the community development approach advocated by the South African state (Lombard 2009). This approach, most famously identified by David Korten (1991:115) as a 'Generation One' approach "involves the direct delivery of services to meet an immediate deficiency or shortage experienced by the beneficiary population, such as needs for food, health care or shelter". One of the 'lines of action' identified by Carnegie II's workgroup, was that of the church encouraging self reliance – where communities would be empowered to help themselves. Theological training that is more "pertinent and practical" was also identified by Carnegie I as one of the ways in which the church could be more relevant and move away from a charity approach. This clearly has not happened to the degree required and is key if the church and FBO's are going to be able to address the scourge of poverty in a more effective and sophisticated manner in line with the key competencies required for community development work such as project management, M&E, community and resource mobilisation etc. It is interesting to note that while several tertiary institutions

were key in shaping the liberation theologians at the time of Carnegie II, other institutions such as UKZN, the University of Stellenbosch and Cornerstone Institute now have training that is specifically focused on preparing theological students for community development work. Faith Based Organisations such as The Warehouse (and Anglican FBO) have also recognised the need for congregations to be trained and equipped and have begun the work of training and 're-training'

In a post Aparthied context it is clear that the church appears to struggle with what Erasmus (2012:241) terms a "double legacy."

> .. while on the one hand there is evidence which suggests that chuches are trusted institutions, much involved in serving the poor and hence perceived positively by the population. On the other hand, similarly pervasive evidence suggests that churches inhibit change, are reluctantly involved with poor and vulnerable people, and that they supported Aparthied".

4.2. Re-imagining its role today

In re-imagining the role of the church today, I would like to reconstruct some the challenges already mentioned and reflect them in a way that re-positions the church vis-à-vis the current role it could play within the issues put forward by Carnegie III. Many of these propositions are based on recent grassroots studies within the South African context concerning the church and poverty and reflect the voices of both clergy and community role players[24].

4.2.1. The Church as community mobiliser

During the Apartheid era, mobilisation was used to great effect in addressing the scourge of the day and so a re-mobilisation of the laity in a post Apartheid context is in my opinion, perhaps one of the ways, in which the church can again re-vitalise its involvement in civic life. The fact that poorer congregations are often overwhelmed by the challenges in their communities and have scant financial resources means that they may feel powerless to address them. Charity is, therefore, often the most familiar and simplest to co-ordinate. Harnessing congregations as agents of community mobilisation is perhaps one of the simplest ways for the church to contribute to development. Congregations have also for a while now been identified as effective generators of 'social capital' – "those connections of communication and trust that make the organisation of the complex society possible" (Ammerman 1997:362; cf. Swart 2012:74,75). One US study for example has noted that African American churchgoers were more likely to be actively involved in civic life "due to the development and fostering of social trust and a sense of mutual obligation that exists within these (sic) churches" (Brown & Brown 2003:618). Furthermore, although Putnum (2009) states that "altruism (doing good for other people) is not part of the definition of social capital" in his opinion, he does acknowledge that "it turns out empirically, at least in the United States and probably elsewhere, that a very strong predictor of altruism is social connectedness". Besides financial giving to social welfare, altruism through the volunteering of time and services is one of the things the church is good at. The culture of volunteerism is inherent to the church's inner organisation and mission mandate and so it is unsurprising that recent South African studies affirm the Christian faith as an important factor in shaping and motivating volunteerism in our country. In fact several community volunteers in the Paarl study expressed that the roots of their involvement as stems directly from "their calling as Christians" (Green 2009:35). There appear to be many opportunities for greater volunteerism.

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[24] It should be noted that I largely refer to 'church' here in terms of local congregations. Faith Based Organisations and denominational groupings are also viewed as being legitimately referred to under this heading, however, I have chosen the local congregation as focus in the majority of my discussion.

Women, children and the disabled were just some of the vulnerable groups mentioned by the report, which require the mobilisation of volunteers. Crime prevention was also an issue in which congregants as concerned community members could play a role and home based HIV/AIDS care is also an important avenue for volunteerism.

4.2.1. The Church as 'voice for the voiceless'

Perhaps the most interesting response to the perceived silence and lack of mobilisation of the church came from the public authorities in the Paarl study, who stated that due to the strong moral or value orientated basis of the church, the church should be more involved in the moral debate on welfare issues such as women and child abuse, substance abuse and crime (Erasmus 2009:52). The latter of course highlights the very challenge posed by the Carnegie Inquiries for the the need for the church to take its place in the public arena both through the mobilisation of its congregants and through public theology. During the Apartheid era – and certainly too during the time of first Inquiry - church leaders such as Desmond Tutu, Beyers Naude and Allan Boesak played a vital role in holding politicians and society in general to account with regards to the vulnerable and marginalised in society[25]. Swart (2012:84) raises this point quite decisively in pointing out that that the church should be posing a serious moral challenge to "the vast and ever-increasing disparity between rich and poor in the country, to the self obsessed culture of enrichment at the cost of the vast majority, to the lack of moral sensitivity on the part of the rich, to the ongoing exclusion from development of the poor masses." On a community level, advocating for the voiceless in situations such as domestic violence or concientising the community on key issues concerning their communities is also important. The silence on many such issues by churches, is often yet again rooted in an over-spiritualisation of the gospel, which often muzzles churches on socio-political issues as they are not viewed as 'spiritual' in nature. With an increased interest by several universities and colleges in theology and development training, it is my hope that this theology will be addressed and that a new generation of church leaders will be equipped to advocate once again for the voiceless and marginalised.

4.2.2. The Church and the reconciliation agenda
In a post Apartheid context, South Africa's inequality ratio remains one of the highest in the world, with income distribution still largely skewed along racial lines.Widespread inequality continues to exist today and, while the radical political power shift has already taken place peacefully, empowerment of the poor who are powerless against the ravages of economic, social and even political poverty remains a challenge (Roberts 2006:116). Apartheid also served to fragment society, so that according to Villa-Vicencio and Doxtader (2004:27) :"viable communal reparations, which focus on economic growth and the restoration of human dignity, are not easy to realise". It is within this context that the church has an opportunity to embody an ethic of sharing and redistribution. Furthermore, the provision of social welfare by the church cannot be looked at without acknowledging that the ethic of sharing and redistribution has not only socio-economic significance, but also a deep theological significance. As De Gruchy (1999:130) notes in his book 'Facing the Truth' which deals with the aftermath of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC): "religious notions of reconciliation expect from perpetrators an ethical commitment to making redress, restitution and reparation". While in Christian theology there are no simplistic inferences to be drawn from biblical examples of equality, the "implication within the biblical text is sharing and possibly restitution for those oppressed, is one that addresses unjust structural relationships and power dynamics" (Bragg 1987:42).

It is not insignificant, therefore, that several church leaders interviewed across denominations and race groups in two separate recent studies mention the importance of economic "sharing" (Bowers

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[25] This of course has also been true of many countries in Africa (Oladipo 1999:224).

2009:103-104; Nkomo 2011). However, due to the divisive nature of Apartheid town planning white, black and coloured neighbours remain fairly isolated both geographically and socio-economically. Furthermore, the legacy of denominational divides along racial lines (i.e. Dutch Reformed Church and the Uniting Reformed Church) continues to raise issues of trust between local congregations (Bowers Du Toit 2009:107)[26]. One of the ways in which this division may be addressed is though an inter-congregational model, which 'twins' wealthier (usually white) congregations with poorer congregations (Hammet 2000:204-205). This 'twinning' will possibly create the space for the creation of a pool of voluntary professional expertise from which poorer congregations can draw for technical services. Such a model, could in essence, promote redistribution through sharing of resources – whether they be financial, technical or material. Some church leaders interviewed, in fact mentioned this as a possible model and greater co-operation between churches regarding welfare issues were also noted as needed in what is regarded by most church leaders as a divided community (Erasmus 2009:40). How such relationships will be defined and created by the church in areas such as Paarl will be interesting to observe should they seek to implement such an initiative, because such models also raise issues of power and paternalism, which are so fresh in the minds of many black, indian and coloured South Africans. The latter could, however, go a long way towards bridging social divides. A 2005 US study documented the success of such a program which "twinned" poorer African American congregations and wealthy white suburban congregations and claim that whites reported that they "gain as much if not more than they give in these programs"(Lockhart 2005:55).

4.2.3. The church as participant in cross-sector engagement

It is clear from the study that a greater need for partnership is not only confined to "intra-church" partnerships. There is a definite need for local congregations and FBO's to co-operate to a greater extent with government welfare services. This engagement with the state was used to great effect (albeit for a minority group) by the Dutch Reformed Church during Carnegie I. Partnership between the public and voluntary sectors through a community based approach is one of the cornerstones of our current welfare system, however it appears that some of the church representatives interviewed felt that there needed to be greater co-ordination between the government and the church and should liaise with churches at grassroots because "they are more sensitive to the problems of the community" (Patel 2003:1). Patel further adds that "given the limited institutional capacity of the new democratic government to deliver the services itself, collaboration with the voluntary sector is imperative if the government is to achieve its ambitious social development outcomes". However, she also adds that this might come at the cost of the "autonomy and independence of such voluntary organizations as they struggle for survival in a public management milieu". This is confirmed by Davids (2002:71) who also notes that within the South African context NGO's "do not operate in a political vacuum. Government policy can limit or advance NGO activities".This challenge will certainly apply to local congregations, who wish to actively respond to the felt needs in their grassroots communities. It is interesting to note while most respondents in the Paarl study felt that such co-operation would be advantageous as the common vision is the good of the community, others felt that there would be a tension between the church's identity and calling and the state's approach (Erasmus 2009:31). Still others went on to comment that the church nevertheless needed to be sensitive to the process and structures of the state welfare system and work through these channels. Findings indicate that there are not many existing examples of co-operation between churches, NGO's, government and business in this area. Faith Based Organisations (there are several in the Paarl community), however, are viewed by public/government

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[26] A regional partnership initiative between the Dutch Reformed Church and the Uniting Reformed Church has resulted in the formation of a joint NGO (Badisa), however this partnership does not appear to be happening at congregational level.

officials as doing good work in particularly assisting "the cases that were not catered for by the state" (Erasmus 2009:51-52)[27].

Two of the studies drawn on for this section, note that the majority of welfare work done by congregations in Paarl is largely relief work in the form of soup kitchens, food parcels and clothing distribution – all forms of welfare that do not require the church to necessarily engage directly with the welfare system (Erasmus 2009:36; Bowers 2004:421). This certainly poses a challenge to local congregations who have the potential to be more responsive in terms of addressing felt needs more rapidly and contextually than government structures. Korten (1991:98) in fact states that the "small size, independence and focused value commitments of voluntary organizations" such as the church "give them the capacity for social and institutional innovation seldom found in either government or business" Large numbers of the population interviewed felt that government welfare offices were inaccessible to those who were most vulnerable (children, pensioners, HIV orphans) and that social grants were not sufficient to "uplift people" (Erasmus 2009:46). It also poses a challenge to congregations and FBO's to continue to engage government and possibly partner with other stakeholders in order to ensure what Green identifies as "more comprehensive delivery" to the needy and vulnerable (Green 2009:31). Participation in local development forums or residents associations on grassroots is also another way in which the church can engage both with government and other community role players in a constructive manner.

4.2.4. Church as comfort for the marginalised and oppressed.

I would like to challenge the notion that all local congregations need to be highly professionalised and differentiated organisations meeting every need of the community. Perhaps what some local congregations do for the poor is provide that "buffer" spoken of by Carnegie I – a place of hope and comfort where the poor's sense of identity and self are again restored. Escobar (2000:33) comments that governments and social planners throughout the world "have come to see churches as the source of hope from which the urban poor gain strength, courage and a language to cope with poverty."The church has always done this well and while this can (at worst) lead to the kind of valium effect spoken of by Carnegie II, it may also (at best) provide a space and place for the poor to voice their pain and experience respite from the harsh realities of poverty. [28]This has been evident in a study conducted with regards to the church in the area of Lavender Hill, an area well known for its gang activity. During a heightened time of gang activity a few years ago, the church was indeed a place of comfort and hope for many in this community as the church played its role through prayer, protest and vigils:

> *A glance at the programmes of such events reveals that they focus on*
> *either creating a space for expression of hope or sorrow during periods*
> *of community turmoil, or on conscientisation regarding a particularly*
> *pressing community issue (Bowers 2005:187).*

4.2.5. The Church, value formation and identity re-formation?

[27] It is interesting that two FBO's were identified by members of the population as being the most involved with welfare in the Paarl area and this perhaps highlights a need for FBO's to assist local congregations in capacity building with regard to government structures and policies so that they can better engage with government structures (Erasmus 2009:46).
[28] Idler (1995:685) notes that though religious behaviour such as prayer, religion is an accessible cognitive and emotional resource to the sick and disabled and is viewed as especially significant in reducing distress and embuing hope. These findings are no different when generalized to the role of religion in facilitating healthy family interaction, which in turn enhances the wellbeing of the members of the family – both as individuals and as a group (Abbot, Berry & Meredith 1990:43).

One of the most prominent contributions identified by community role players in the Lavender Hill study regarding the church is that of value formation. Social workers in particular felt that the church (and religious groups in general) are the only institutions that could publicly and powerfully proclaim the values of "love and peace" in the face of the kind of violence experienced by Lavender Hill residents. As a value-based institution, one of its functions in community is that of providing a certain amount of stability, which in turn is provided by stable family units within the congregations. Their influence is perceived as having the possibility to be quite powerful in the transmission of values as illustrated by the following: "I think that if there is any institution or organisation vehicle that can be used in terms of transforming society, I think that the church could be it" (Interviewee). Those who work with youth regarding sexuality and deviant behaviour identify the church as contributing "stability" to the community through moral formation. The "code of conduct of religious people" is understood by the local high school principal as possibly contributing to his learners leading a better life: "it can impact on school pregnancies, it can impact on the dagga smokers, on the boys who just beat their girlfriends and people who steal cell phones" (Interviewee) (Bowers 2005:189). This 'code of conduct' or personal ethics is rooted, for people of faith, in an understanding of God. It is also deeply linked to understanding of self in relation to God and others. The Christian faith teaches that we are all made in the image of God and that people must have the opportunity to become who they really are. Poverty deeply touches on the core of one's sense of identity: what one is and what one was intended for. Friere (in Ajulu 1999:115) highlights the fact that groups marginalized though inequality develop a "culture of silence" which is as a result of a sense of inferiority and acquiescence spawned by power inequality. Transformation in the biblical text focuses on the restoration and reorientation of the individual back to the image of God as expounded in Genesis (Samuel 2002:244). The church has the opportunity to share the message with communities that they are human beings made in the image of God, imbued with dignity and the opportunity to be productive stewards of their gifts and the world God has given to them. It is here also that the church can draw their motivation to 'shift gears', so to speak, from a dependency charity approach towards an approach that fosters self-reliance. Within a charity approach the poor, as passive victims, are not empowered to create and utilise their own resources. It is my view that should the church teach and preach more purposefully on the love of God and purpose of God in each individual and communities life, it may well challenge "...the poor to recover their identity as children of God and to discover their vocation as productive stewards, discovering that they have been given gifts to contribute to social well being" (Myers 2003:116).

5. Conclusion

The church still has some way to go in order to make peace with its "double legacy" and take the appropriate steps both theologically and practically in order to make the leap required for her work to be truly empowering. In addition, despite the fact that some congregations (and FBO's in particular) have professionalised their services to the point where they may engage with the themes put forward by Carnegie III, what the church (and religion in general) 'does best' is perform somewhat of a 'meta' role. The argument put forward by the 'Church, Poverty and Development' workgroup in the context of the second inquiry, which proposed that churches were a source of strength and initiative in confronting poverty through their Christian identity, loyalty, history and people, therefore, remains relevant. It is my contention that should Carnegie III extend beyond the scope of this conference, that religious organisations in general (and the church as part thereof) be recognised as having a key role to play in addressing the issues of poverty and inequality. It is hoped that such recognition may provide the basis for re-engaging religious leaders and re-energising the religious sector within such an important national debate.

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