

Downnn.....but not out???

(The Klibbe Principle)

A perspective on the morality and legitimacy pertaining to the controversial arbitrary removal from office of officers, as well as the systemic intolerance and apparent inability to deal with difference of opinion, in the OAC. Are the victims really down and out?

I Introduction

- 1.1 The arbitrary removal from office of officers in highly questionable situations, and with no recourse for the victims to an independent formal in-house structure for conciliation, mediation and arbitration, has been a hallmark feature of the administrative architecture of the Old Apostolic Church (OAC) since its inception; but more specifically after the major schism of 1972, which led to the formation of the now well-established and burgeoning Reformed Old Apostolic Church (ROAC).
- 1.2 The OAC was established when its founder, Carl Georg Klibbe, formally broke away from the New Apostolic Church in 1927, following his refusal to acknowledge and accept his removal from office as Apostle of the New Apostolic Church in South Africa by its Head Office in Germany. It is this stance by him that will henceforth in this paper be referred to as the *Klibbe Principle*, as the case is being advanced in an attempt to encourage the current leadership of the OAC to establish the necessary structures in the OAC to deal with the scourge of the controversial arbitrary dismissal of officers who dare to hold a different opinion or have conscientious objections to controversial measures in the OAC in the absence of any forum that allows for meaningful public discourse at any level in the Church.
- 1.3 The Klibbe Principle revisited the OAC in 1972, when the late Apostle Robert William Lombard adopted an almost similar stance when he, following his equally controversial removal from office, walked out of the OAC to found the ROAC. A common feature of the schisms of 1927 and 1972, is that in both circumstances the siblings (new churches) took custody of the Office of the Holy Prophet, an aspect which continues to this day to define the essence of the apostle doctrine as reflected in the New Testament.
- 1.4 In the post-1972 era in the OAC, controversial removals from office relate to officer ranks from Fourfold Office and lower. Unlike the situation of the Apostles Klibbe and Lombard, the officers in question did not leave the OAC, but still cherish the Klibbe Principle and is prepared to stand pat and fight back for the required reforms that would obviate the current authoritarian and immature way of dealing with conflict resolution in the Church. Some of them have resorted to litigation, which might in due course have certain apostles appear in court in this regard.
- 1.5 Born of such a sensitive set of circumstances, the leadership of the OAC ought to regard the Klibbe Principle as their moral compass when dealing with conflict resolution in the Church. Any denial of the impact of the Klibbe Principle on the DNA of the OAC, will render the

current leadership of the OAC bereft of the necessary moral authority to truly dispense the doctrine of Christ to the human race of today. Due process essentially provides for a fair trial.

- 1.6 How does conflict resolution by the apostles of the OAC compare with the manner in which Jesus and His apostles dealt with such issues? According to the New Testament, dissent of far more compelling proportion at that time seem to have been settled without having to resort to the manner in which their presumed successors of today are acquitting themselves. So, are we still on the right track?
- 1.7 The sole purpose of this paper is to stimulate thought and discussion about this issue. And by so doing, help to encourage the genesis of a culture of healthy debate in the Church about issues that are relevant to the existence and sustainable growth and development of the OAC.

2 Historical overview

- 2.1 Carl Georg Klibbe, the servant of the Lord who headed the first mission of the New Apostolic Church (Germany) to South Africa, was removed from office by Head Office (Germany) in 1913 and replaced by the Apostle Schlaphoff. He refused to accept his demise and continued ministering to his followers as their apostle. When matters became untenable for the mother body in South Africa, he was formally ex-communicated in 1924 (retrospectively, with effect from 1915) by the New Apostolic Church in South Africa. Eventually, Klibbe was legally sued by the New Apostolic Church (Germany) over the custody of financial shares and church assets. The plaintiffs, Apostle Schlaphoff and Priest Kreunen of the New Apostolic Church in South Africa, successfully secured a settlement in the landmark court case of December 1926 in the Supreme Court of the Witwatersrand. As part of the court settlement, Klibbe was allowed to pursue his religious activities under the new name of The Old Apostolic Church of Africa. His position as apostle of the Church was also affirmed as part of the settlement. That is how the OAC came into effect in 1927 and boldly proceeded to distinguish itself as the custodian of the Office of the Holy Prophet.
- 2.2 The sibling of 1927 grew by leaps and bounds and established a broad-based membership, reinforced by a significant majority drawn from the non-white communities around the country. Its development until the late 1960s had also been characterized by several smaller schisms of various dimensions, led by independent-minded and strong-willed non-white senior officers who opted to leave the Church, rather than accept arbitrary demotion or removal from office. This line of action by the OAC leadership at the time came to a head when the highly respected and influential Apostle Lombard took a moral stand in defence of the situation of the non-white constituency in the OAC. He did this against the backdrop of a white church leadership that was not serving the best interests of the OAC as a whole in the face of the onslaught by the unjust and inhumane policies of a ruthless, criminal, apartheid white political regime in the country. Favoured by the political situation of the time and bolstered by a clear lack of vision and moral leadership, as well as what later surfaced as apparent expediency, the primarily white leadership (apostles) arbitrarily removed the Apostle Lombard from office. He left and established the Non-white Old Apostolic Church. In 1972, he was hounded with court action by the apostles of the OAC (for obvious reasons)

to change the name to the Reformed Old Apostolic Church. Just like Klibbe in 1927, he also left, resolute to retain the holy office of the Prophet in its pristine form. As in the aftermath of 1927, this is the singular area of bold distinction today between the ROAC and the OAC.

- 2.3 As indicated above, the similarity in the schisms of 1927 and 1972 relates to the fact that the respective deposed apostles refused to acknowledge and accept their dismissals on spiritual grounds and proceeded to establish new church formations. Removals from office in the OAC since 1993, differed because the incumbents were not apostles, but Four-fold Officers and lower ranks. Just like Klibbe and Lombard, the relevant officers refuse to accept their dismissal for the same reasons. Some of them have taken the unusual step of resorting to litigation. Their cases, to which certain apostles may be summoned to appear, are currently pending in the courts of the land.
- 2.4 A poignant aspect of the status of all non-white officers who were elevated to the position of apostle from 1927 until the early 1990's, when the back of apartheid in South Africa was finally broken, is the fact that they were invariably always Helper Apostles, which suited the apartheid mentality of white supremacists in the Church. The non-white masses were never properly made aware of this distinction and continued to unwittingly revere these apostles as equal to their white counterparts. It is quite obvious why the caricature of non-white Helper Apostles suddenly disappeared (like the dinosaurs) from the pantheon of the apostles of the OAC after apartheid was formerly abolished in the country. However, the irony is that the apartheid policy of the day never prevented the OAC from ordaining them as full apostles. It would seem as if it was done to obviate a situation of them ever being equal in status with their white brothers. Apartheid did not forbid other churches in the country from appointing non-white officers on equal footing with their white counterparts. It is, therefore, intellectually dishonest and disingenuous of the current leadership of the OAC to hide behind vague and unintelligible explanations about the OAC's official position regarding apartheid. In fact, it points to a lack of morality and courage to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ who fearlessly pronounced on God's view regarding the fallacies and inequities of the human race during his time on earth. A public apology by the Apostolate to the non-white members of the OAC who had to (and still today) put up with the impact of racism within their own Church, is still outstanding. Until this blight has formally been addressed, the issue will continually be raised in the future by serious OAC members who are resolute about having the history of their church sanitized from the despicable actions of an impenitent generation of church fathers.

3 The "Klibbe Principle"

- 3.1 The Klibbe principle is not only about being able to distinguish between right and wrong, but also to have the courage to take a stand in defence of what is just and fair. For the leadership (OAC) of today, it should be about the capacity to accommodate criticism and conflict of opinion as part of the management process. How many more schisms is the OAC prepared to risk before it finally implodes as a result of a leadership that continues to ignore the gravity of the wave of fundamental change that is sweeping across the land as far as governance is concerned?

- 3.2 The history of the OAC has shown that the Klibbe Principle shall always overcome. The Klibbe Principle is the real OAC, and vice versa. The Principle is there to safeguard the Church against the vagaries of tyrannical tendencies within its administration that are fuelled by greed and shortsightedness among the dominant elements in the leadership of the day.
- 3.3 The OAC incontrovertibly has its origin in the Klibbe Principle. Whereas Klibbe and Lombard had no option but to leave the respective mother bodies, the category of similarly deposed officers of the post 1972 era had stayed put and opted to denounce their dismissal; to oppose it with any viable means at their disposal and thereby attempting to change the system from within. Although it may be argued that the Apostolate acted within the confines of the current constitution of the OAC, their controversial actions must also be judged in terms of the Klibbe Principle. The situation is exacerbated by the absence of the requisite constitutional structures to deal with dissent in the spirit of governance principles of the modern age. Even in biblical times, fairness and integrity guided the doctrine that was established by Christ. The Klibbe Principle, therefore, casts a long shadow over the moral leadership and actions of members of the Apostolate. The Klibbe Principle ought to be the guiding light for Head Office when it comes to matters of serious difference of opinion and conscientious objection by officers to controversial issues. Ignoring or trivializing the moral significance of the Klibbe Principle, will therefore seriously question the legitimacy of the Apostolic Mission of the Apostolate. It would imply that a great lie is being perpetrated by the leadership.
- 3.4 The Apostle Klibbe believed that he was doing the right thing and the OAC since then used to pride itself on the fact that it had retained the full capacity of the Office of the Holy Prophet. Similarly, the Apostle Lombard in 1972 was of the same disposition, as borne out by the manifestation of the Prophet in the current ROAC. Incidentally, Lombard was an anointed officer under the Apostle Klibbe back in the 1920s. The Klibbe Principle therefore endures. In the case of Fourfold Officers and other anointed officers who have similarly been deposed since 1993, they also still recognize the potency of the gift of holy office within them and those of us who closely interact with them bear witness to this phenomenon. In view of the anomaly that exists within the administration of the OAC regarding the resolution of conflict, the leadership is therefore confronted by a formidable moral issue and a crisis of conscience about the balance between the management of temporal and spiritual affairs. In terms of the Klibbe Principle, the post-1972 victims of controversial dismissals are thus innocent until proven guilty through due process. Blame for the expected shameful court appearances of the apostles of the OAC in the near future, should be laid at the door of a deficient constitution that does not serve the best interests of the OAC by making conflict resolution almost impossible.
- 3.5 More than eighty (80) years after the founding of the OAC by the Apostle Klibbe, it is incumbent upon the current leadership, especially in a socio-politically free and democratic South Africa, to have in place an administration that is governed in accordance with the norms and values of our time. A classic example of responsible governance and best practice was the recent case of the Bishop of Johannesburg of the Methodist Church who was faced with expulsion from office on a serious charge of alleged misconduct. He was

temporarily relieved from duties and was summoned to appear before an independent permanent formal in-house disciplinary structure (tribunal) of the Church, assisted by his own legal representative/s. He was vindicated and his return to official duties publicly announced. The OAC has no such structures in place and neither does its constitution even remotely lean in that direction. In fact, its constitution is not member-friendly. Members/congregations are voiceless and powerless. Dissent by officers are met with arbitrary dismissal and dissident members are subjected to severe sanction by junior officers who have no formal religious training and are hardly conversant with the essence of the constitutional precepts of the Church.

- 3.6 It is all too obvious to a keen observer of developments in the OAC that a vital element in the situations that gave rise to the perennial outbreaks of discord among the senior leadership of especially the OAC since 1927, is the absence of the required forums in the church to provide for a healthy discourse about issues. An absence that had spawned a culture of authoritarianism which thrives upon the resultant alarmingly high levels of ignorance and inactivity among the members/congregations regarding the administration of their church. Even more disconcerting is the comfort zone the leadership appears to be defending, as well as the absence of any discernible signs of the necessary will among them to address this shortcoming in the system. Unlike the sacred apostle doctrine, the OAC as a legal person and man-made structure cannot divorce itself from the impact of the transformation process that is permeating the entire political landscape in the world of our time. The current system of administration in the church is no longer sustainable. If left unchanged, it will ultimately debase the spiritual mission of the OAC.
- 3.7 The incidents that led to the controversial arbitrary dismissal of apostles and other officers since the inception of the OAC, pale into insignificance when compared with the issues that gave rise to conflict between Jesus and his disciples, and also between the Apostles Peter and Paul. Despite the intensity and magnitude of their differences, nobody was removed from office. The stand-off between the Apostles Peter and Paul over the gentiles, dwarfs whatever the Apostolate of the OAC can conjure up. Then there were the differences between the Apostle Paul and Barnabas and Silas over the role of Timothy and other issues. How about the defiant stand by Thomas regarding the resurrection and the re-appearance of Jesus? And then, the ultimate conflict scenario: Jesus who did not remove Judas Iscariot from office. Where do all these vivid demonstrations of tolerance and understanding leave the Apostolate of the OAC? There is no doubt that the conflicts that led to the arbitrary dismissals of specific leaders of the OAC down the years, invariably relate to temporal matters - money, power, status and greed. It had nothing to do with Christ and the apostolic mission. In light of the obsession with money and power, they (the anointed servants) are no longer untouchable; they can be challenged head-on and their actions subjected to scrutiny and sanction by man. As far as conflict resolution is concerned, the above-mentioned biblical figures displayed a profound measure of emotional and spiritual maturity, qualities that are apparently in short supply among the leadership of the OAC. The Klibbe Principle, therefore, still stands.

4 Introspection

- 4.1 Neither the Apostle Klibbe nor Apostle Lombard had the benefit of engaging members of the respective mother bodies they left behind to formally explain their actions and positions. Whereas the records and supporting documentation relating to the court case of 1926 are in the public domain, OAC members (and officers) are still denied the right to be exposed to all the facts and events entailed in the schism of 1972. It is heartbreaking to listen these days to scores of faithful staunch elderly OAC members who served under Apostle Lombard, lamenting about not being told the truth about the developments of 1972. However, they vow to remain resolute and steadfast to pursue till their dying day the apostolic mission in the idiom and tradition as taught and exemplified by an apostle who they (Coloureds and Blacks) often affectionately referred to as "The Lion of Judah", or "Ingonyama", as the chants used fill the air on those unforgettable, glorious days in the picnic arena at Kraaifontein during what many still regard as the golden days of the OAC.
- 4.2 Similarly, the same fate befell the Overseer in the Western Cape who was arbitrarily deposed in 1993 on account of his questioning of the drastic and highly questionable changes to the format for the serving of the sacrament of the Holy Communion, which was bulldozed through the OAC within a matter of weeks without proper consultation or explanation to congregants. Closer scrutiny of the information circular that set out the rationale for the changes, will reveal that a holy sacrament had been defiled by the Apostolate to presumably suit the agenda of white prejudice, in anticipation of the advent of a new South Africa in 1994 that would outlaw racial discrimination. More crudely put; it was about obviating the inevitable possibility of white and black lips drinking from the same cup during communion in the OAC (not to mention the spooky stainless steel tweezer that replaced the human hand). A formal request by the Overseer – a highly respected and influential Fourfold Officer at the time – to meet with his apostle to explain and discuss his position, was reportedly met with the callous reply via a third person that he was no longer an Overseer (*finish and klaar*). Incidentally, and in tune with the Klibbe Principle, that same Overseer is still in good shape today, still in the OAC, and the power of the Overseer in him as potent and undiminished as ever. However, he has survived the relevant apostle. Having also been responsible for the removal of Apostle Lombard, that same apostle's traumatic demise was no credit for the image of the OAC. There is also the case of a former Evangelist in the Western Cape who was manoeuvred out of office in apparent equally unseemly and irregular fashion. He is also still in good shape and awaiting his day in court.
- 4.3 Members of both mother bodies and siblings of 1927 and 1972 respectively, as well as the OAC of the post-1972 era, have an inalienable right to know what really happened in their Church. It is morally reprehensible, if not criminal, for a leadership to hide from its members the real history of their Church. The story of the late Apostle Ndlovu, who was deposed under seemingly sinister circumstances in 1970, also need to be put into proper perspective. In the case of the OAC, it is impossible for the big lie to continue unabatedly, as papers like this and future students of history will increasingly probe this issue in the years to come. The fact that the perpetrators (past leadership) of these unsavoury deeds are no longer alive, should make it possible in an unencumbered fashion for the current leadership of the Church to set in motion a process to ensure that the historical records of the Church are

brought into line with accepted norms for preserving posterity. After all, the meticulous recording and preservation of records about the life and times of our biblical forbears afford us the facility of the Holy Bible, which is our anchor in life.

- 4.4 Although technically sanctioned by a deficient and unstable constitution, the actions by the Apostolate in this regard, especially after 1972, constitute unfinished business by Head Office. Issues that will continue to haunt the leadership OAC until they have been resolved through a process of Truth and Reconciliation. The reason? It is the kind of stuff that defines the moral rectitude and legitimacy of any public institution, especially a church. Therefore, the leadership of the OAC owes its constituency a public apology, backed up by a programme for redress that will allow the Church to develop to its full potential.
- 4.5 If the step taken by the late Apostle Lombard is vindicated in terms of the Klibbe Principle, then we are saddled with a similar situation of biblical purport; the two houses of Israel and Judah (OAC and ROAC) which have to be re-united in order to allow the apostle doctrine to manifest itself as prescribed by its ultimate Founder. The important element that distinguishes the two from each other is the extent to which the Prophet is allowed to fulfill its role. There is also no secret about which of the two have persisted with tradition. As indicated elsewhere, history seems to have repeated itself, as in both the schisms of 1927 and 1972 the sibling ended up with “the covenant of the Ark”.
- 4.6 In the absence of any discernible signs of more schisms in the near future, it seems fair to assume that the leadership of the OAC will increasingly be confronted by resistance from within. Dissenters that will be resolute to entrench themselves in the spirit of the Klibbe Principle in order to bring about the kind of change that is vital for sustained growth and development of the OAC and its membership. Denial of this reality, will not only be naïve on the part of leadership but also highly irresponsible as far as serving the best interests of the Church are concerned.
- 4.7 It is pathetic, demoralising and downright humiliating to observe how often highly respected strong men (non-white officers in the OAC) are too scared to take a stand on issues out of fear for being removed from office. Their situation is exacerbated by the fact that they are doing this in the face of a membership that are looking up to them for moral leadership. To a certain extent there may be sympathy for them for being hamstrung by a draconic church ORDER/constitution, but on the other hand a little backbone and character is also expected from them as shepherds of the flock. Also, the church constitution is outdated and in contravention not only of the law of the land on this issue but also in terms of the gospel of freedom and justice as defined by Jesus Christ himself. Any constitution that keeps on being amended as often as the one of the Apostolate of the OAC, is not worth the paper it is written on. The authoritarian mould is therefore not unbreakable and the juggernaut not unstoppable.
- 4.8 Pending court cases lodged by officers who have been controversially removed from office, will further tarnish the image of the OAC and thereby possibly help setting the stage for the mobilization of an unprecedented growing constituency of protest and possible mass action in the church. Church management will remain incomplete and immature until such time as the necessary structures have been put in place to allow for meaningful formal discourse by

the membership/congregations, especially conflict resolution. Whereas deposed officers in the past have always opted to leave the Church, the pending court cases by aggrieved officers of the post-1972 era should compel the current leadership of the OAC to anticipate dealing with internal dissent on a grand scale for the first time in the history of the Church. The proverbial Rubicon has been crossed and an assault on Rome seems inevitable.

5 An Agenda for taking the Klibbe Principle forward

- 5.1 **Constitutional and Administrative reform:** Changing the constitution to make it member-friendly. Independent, permanent in-house structures (tribunal) to deal with conflict resolution. Have a Truth and Reconciliation type of initiative to deal with existing unresolved conflict issues involving former officers who have been unfairly treated. Meaningful say by congregations in the running (finances and other assets included) of the OAC. Leadership should prepare for a future of greater autonomy for congregations and smaller head offices. Also, the oversight role regarding church finances and asset management should be assigned to an authority that is free from the control/influence of the apostles and other salaried executive officers. Recognition of General Affairs (Head Office) and autonomy for congregations over Own (congregational) Affairs. Entrenchment of a culture of democratic and accountable governance at all levels in the Church. Own Affairs should also include the right to determine the design of their particular church premises in order to provide for truly functional multi-purpose centres that can be put to optimal productive use for both congregation and the society at large. And to get this one right, the day for the institution of routinely elected church/community councils and local parish administrative offices in the OAC cannot be too far off.
- 5.2 **Bold and visionary leadership:** The hitherto voiceless and powerless masses are entitled to expect from their leaders, even under present undemocratic rule, strategic and moral leadership in order to empower them to take charge of their own (congregational) destinies. There is a pressing need for the OAC to grow as a religious/theological institution, and less of a Head Office seemingly hell-bent on expanding and surviving as a financial and administrative empire. The current system is not sustainable and there are no clear signs of the necessary will among the current corps of Church leaders to address this issue. However, time is of the essence and the next generation of leaders have their task set out for them. Democratic governance is the order of our time. Failure to heed this warning, always create the kind of circumstances that usually drive a patient people to decide on a bright and clear day to take back what actually belongs to them. Is it possible that this will ever happen to the OAC? History and the evolution of the human race loudly acclaim, YES!!!
- 5.3 **Racism and continued apartheid practices in the OAC:** In view of the scourge of continued racist tendencies and practices in the OAC today, it is incumbent upon the Apostolate to publicly adopt a formal policy position in this regard. It is common knowledge, for example, that a white officer can move all over the country without having to relinquish office, whereas a non-white officer who moves into a traditionally white congregation has to give up rank. As long as the Apostolate prefers to look the other way on such issues, they will stand accused of committing and perpetuating a grave sin against God's creation and

humanity. Any denial by the leadership of this cancer in the body of the OAC, will render them not fit for office or the kingdom of Heaven.

- 5.4 **Social development:** Engaging the expertise prevalent throughout the OAC to institute internal social programmes aimed at uplifting and improving the quality of life in the Church, especially among the least developed communities. The OAC has yet to come up with cogent programmes for the Aged. Also, pursue initiatives to link up with external (non-OAC) social programmes in order to make the OAC more relevant in the broader South African society. Credible programmes for the personal development of adults, youth and children in order to give meaningful content to the concept of “an Apostolic way of life”. There is room for the creation and development of organs/movements/guilds/orders to galvanise the activities and energy required to achieve such an ideal. These developments should be seen as an opportunity to add value to the evangelical mission of the Church.
- 5.5 **Cultural development:** Recognizing the untold wealth and potential of the multicultural mosaic in a supposedly non-racial OAC; an aspect which became the first casualty of the mad rush by the post 1972 leadership to super-impose a White cultural hegemony throughout the OAC at the expense of Non-white cultures that showed unmistakable signs of rejuvenation at the time. The Nyanga’s of the OAC will never be “White” and neither will the Ravensmead’s, Elsie’s River’s or Bloekkombos, etc. Until 1972, they provided a distinct and dynamic cultural dimension that contributed significantly to the growth and development of the OAC since its inception. There is an obligation upon the leadership to respect these cultures and to let them flourish again. White cultural hegemony is a major problem in the OAC of today. Although all the levers of real power are still firmly in the hands of a socio-politically conservative minority White cabal, the OAC is not a *White church*. This is a damning testimony about the integrity, fortitude and level of maturity of the non-white leadership, who through their inaction or lack of the necessary strategic leadership acumen become instrumental in keeping non-white members of the OAC in a perpetual state of second-class membership. So, for heaven’s sake: let the Non-whites sing, prophesy, celebrate, mourn and bury their dead according to their wishes and cultures, as it used to be during their “good times” in the OAC. The success of multiculturalism lies in a healthy respect by all sides for cultural differences and its promotion through deliberate policies and programmes. That was the recipe for keeping the twelve tribes of Israel together. But a warning, though: this statement should not be confused with keeping the races separate in the Church in an apartheid fashion in order to suit a racist political agenda that still prevails in the OAC in this enlightened age.
- 5.6 **Performing Arts:** There is a need to define more clearly and ambitiously the purpose and goals for all the energy that is invested in the choral, orchestral and theatrical activities in the Church. The sky will be the limit, if only the artistically gifted ones in our midst could be rid of the heavy hand and prescriptive disposition of a leadership who clearly have no idea where to take the Church from here in this regard. There should be room for unfettered dialogue as to how the treasure trove of artistic talent and flare could be utilized for the greater good of the Church. The particular congregational structure, character and psyche of members throughout the OAC, provide an ideal opportunity for the establishment of, for example, a regular eisteddfod that would elevate the Church to an enviable position

in the bigger world of the arts and culture. All the elements/ingredients are present to make this a reality. And if expertise is lacking in crucial areas, then there is always the example of the measures that Kings David and Solomon employed to make Israel succeed in their endeavours.

- 5.7 **A more profound role for women:** If women are good enough to brave the odds to knock on doors on Monday and Thursday nights to carry the banner for the OAC, then they should be eligible for higher office in the Church. In fact, women have been robbed of an honourable status they enjoyed in the good old days of the OAC. Many elderly members often still reminisce nostalgically about the era when women were the backbone of congregations in their role as deaconesses. It is very disheartening to see how exceptionally talented women are vegetating in the pews, hidden under outlandish hats which are more suited for fashion parades at horse racing events or the opening of parliament. If Jesus or the Apostle Paul were in the flesh today, women would have had a far more productive life in the OAC. Women are the mothers that gave birth to the men that run the OAC today. And since they outnumber men and in many respects also supersede them as far as skills levels are concerned, it remains a challenge for the leadership of the Church to come to terms with this reality. There is no biblical justification for the current male sexist prohibition on a more dynamic role for the woman in the OAC. When the Apostle Peter had qualms over engaging the gentiles, he was commanded to “slay and eat”. Maybe this is the kind of wake-up call that would be required, if only the Prophet were allowed the latitude to do His work in this day and age in the OAC.
- 5.8 **Training Institute, College or Seminary:** If informal training has served the OAC well until now, common sense dictates that it cannot be the chosen path for the future as far as growth and development in the Church are concerned. Bible literacy levels, administrative skills and cultural development need to be enhanced. This plea is not about ivory tower academic education standards, but an environment where growth and development are possible and the concept of “an Apostolic Way of Life” can keep up with progress in the world around us. If attracting more converts, especially from the well-heeled sector of society, is still going to be a priority for the leadership then the OAC will have to get its house in order. The future requires of OAC members and officers not to work harder, but smarter. The age-old adage about healthy bodies and healthy minds equally applies to the work of the Prophet and the Evangelist.
- 5.9 **History of the OAC:** The real and comprehensive history of the OAC - warts and all - has yet to be recorded and made available for public consumption. The existing cursory chronology from a Head Office (White) perspective about developments in the Church since 1927, is only part of that history and can therefore not be accepted as the alpha and the omega. An unwitting membership/congregations whose trust and obedience have been exploited and abused for too long, is entitled to know everything that has transpired during the authoritarian rule by the apostles since 1927. For all the millions that have gone into salaries to sustain the cosy lifestyles of well-paid senior church officers down the years, the various Head Offices should have been resplendent by now with archives brimful with detail about the great feats brought about by congregations across the country, as well as by scores of officers who did not make it to the coveted rank of apostle. This much, the current

generation of leaders owe to future generations, as well as their own legacies and descendants.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 A common feature of the schisms that befell the OAC since 1927, seems to be the fact that it had nothing, or little, to do with the gospel of Christ or the apostle doctrine, but invariably stemmed from the allure of big money and the power it generates. A sure lesson to be drawn from this phenomenon is the fact that the anointed of the Lord should always be kept at a safe distance from the cash register. In the maelstrom of church (OAC) politics, they are bound to end up serving both God and Mammon simultaneously with Mammon enjoying precedence most of the time. The hand that dispenses the heavenly blessings must at all times be seen to be clean. This conclusion only serves to reiterate the compelling need for urgent administrative reform in the OAC.
- 6.2 Non –white apostles of the 1960’s and early 1970’s had no alternative but to take the moral stand they took against the dubious policy position of their white counterparts as far as apartheid and the OAC were concerned. They did what was expected of honourable men, but more so as apostles of Jesus Christ. It was the time when the government of the day was reinventing and fine tuning apartheid, an evil system instituted and perpetrated in the name of Christianity. Neutrality, the fig leaf behind which the leadership of the OAC chose to hide, was no virtue. An eminent South African church leader of our time once said: “If you see an elephant standing with his paw on the tail of a mouse and you prefer to look the other way, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality”. The non-white apostles (helpers) in question expected of their White brothers (superiors) only what all other mainstream churches at the time, except the three Dutch Reformed mother churches, were doing for their non-white congregants. Their (White apostles) so-called neutrality emboldened and entrenched white racist tendencies and practices within the OAC, a cancer that is still festering in the Church today. If the current generation of white leaders do not rid the OAC of this disease, it will return as an unwelcome guest for them in their old-age when their children will have to atone for something they hardly know anything about. Incidentally, a liberal disposition as far as the apartheid era was concerned, had never been a defining feature of the White apostles of the OAC. Otherwise, they would not have remained neutral in the face of evil and sin. Therefore, they should be reminded that they cannot escape from their past. They should also continually be reminded that they still have to deal with the legacy of that past. The OAC must be the only Church left in South Africa today who have yet to publicly confess and atone for its tacit support for the ruinous impact of apartheid on its non-white membership. If the leaders of the Dutch Reformed Churches - the proverbial spiritual godfathers of apartheid - recognized and accepted their Christian obligation to do that, what moral leg does the apostles of the OAC have to stand on?
- 6.3 From the relative security of their so-called neutral corner during the heady days of apartheid, OAC apostles of the era might have proffered afterwards: “but what were we supposed to do? And from the equally relative security of their precarious comfort zone, OAC apostles of the post 1972-era seem to be saying: “ there is no need for redress of the OAC’s official position regarding apartheid, because the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission (TRC) of the country had not taken any action against the leadership of the OAC". The truth is that not even the apartheid government of the day prevented them from speaking out and acting like Jesus would have done, had he been alive during those years. Nothing stopped the apostles of the day from reminding white OAC members of the devastating impact of apartheid on their non-white brethren and the Church as a whole. Nothing stopped them from having been seen to be directing their energies at maintaining the moral high ground. While those apostles who have since passed on in life have a long list of missed opportunities to deal with, it would be prudent of those who are still in the flesh today to cherish the privilege of still being able to make good on what is part of their mandate. The legacy of Jesus, his apostles and the multitudes of his time on earth are well documented and continues to be eulogized by an ever increasing global constituency more than two thousand years later. The big question for today's apostles of OAC is: *what is there to be said about you and what will generations to come remember you for?* The name of Christ is looming ever larger in the world of today. After more than eighty years of existence, how much of that worldwide acclaim can honestly be attributed to the efforts/input of the OAC? The promise of Jesus Christ - whom apostles of the OAC proclaim as their Sender - to his followers was and still is: "you will do more, because you will have more time".

- 6.4 In retrospect, it would appear as if the removal from office of the Apostles Ndlovu and Lombard in quick succession in the early 1970's points to a deliberate strategy by the leadership of that time to eliminate two major obstacles to what seemed like the enforcement and entrenchment of white minority control in the OAC as it obtains today. Developments following the schism of 1972, depict a calculated centralization of all power at Head Office (Apostles). Prior to 1972, congregations had significant control over their monthly incomes. Whatever strands of democratic governance existed until then, soon evaporated to give way for draconic autocratic rule over the administration of the OAC by the Apostles. It was only possible for the leadership to effect these measures because the odious political climate of the day in the country benefited them. Their actions amount to an OAC landscape systematically littered with landmines that are now being detonated as ill-equipped officers charge roughshod over the terrain like cowboys, instead of treading carefully as committed shepherds who are prepared to venture their lives for the flock of the Lord.
- 6.5 Looking back at the controversial high-handed actions of White apostles down the years as far as the non-white protest voice is concerned, the bold question to the financially secure powerbrokers of the OAC has to be: *do you really understand what life is like for both members and officers in the lesser developed communities (non-white) in the OAC? Can you even begin to imagine what your officers have to endure when you prohibit them from speaking up or striving to live up to their full potential?* By all accounts, the answer seems to be a resounding NO!!! Therefore, it goes without saying that the current system on which they seemed to have placed all their bets, is not sustainable. And therefore they cannot claim to be serving the best interests of the OAC.
- 6.6 Part of the reason why the leadership of the OAC had never seemed to embrace conflict resolution seriously, is the fact that the aggrieved parties always preferred to walk out or

break-away. By persisting with the controversial arbitrary removal from office of officers who raise questions about contentious issues, the Apostolate is defying the very principle that gave birth to the OAC. Such decisions taken without the facility of due process therefore have no moral base or legitimacy. The ruthless silencing of the non-white protest voice and the summary removal from office without due process, were lethal and very effective weapons in the arsenal of the apartheid government. The actions adopted by the current generation of defiant OAC victims are about to set the stage for an unprecedented showdown with the Apostolate, which must inevitably lead to a new dispensation in this regard. The leadership of the OAC should prepare for a future of more democratic governance, not less. More difference of opinion, defiance or resistance; not less. A constitution with the necessary checks and balances to put an end to the abuse of power that has become one of the defining features of the OAC management in the post-1972 era. This is not radical or extremist rhetoric! These are normal, evolutionary developments in the life of any society, organization or church.

- 6.7 Another critical question to the current leadership of the OAC- who still seem to prefer an authoritarian style of management, at the total exclusion of participation by the masses/congregations in the administration of their own Church - is: *what legacy do you intend leaving for the generations of OAC members to come and how do you expect them to view the strategic blunders and wasted opportunities that are currently populating the OAC landscape on your watch?* The OAC is a man-made structure and therefore man should be held accountable for its progress or failure.
- 6.8 It would appear as if the apostles and other senior officers came to a common understanding among themselves about reconciliation and burying the legacy of apartheid in the OAC. That is not the solution for a OAC where continued racist tendencies and practices are still prevalent to this day. What had apparently been agreed upon in the courtyard of the palace (Head Office) now needs to be translated to the threshing floor (masses/congregations). The morally correct thing to do must be a resolution by Conference to publicly denounce racism in the OAC and to institute a deliberate plan of action to ensure that this cancer is excised from the entire body of the Church.
- 6.9 It should be remembered that the inadequacies and apparent calculated treacherous actions by individuals in leadership positions in the Church, ultimately amount to unfinished business. Business, the consequences of which, if it remains unresolved at the end of their (leaders) earthly lives, will follow the particular incumbents even beyond the grave. The baggage they will then have with them requires flesh and blood to resolve, but unfortunately they will no longer have the necessary flesh and blood beyond the grave. So, how do you get around that one in order to redeem yourself in eternal life? Well, your only salvation will be to keep on hoping and praying that someone who is still in the flesh comes along one day to undo the mess you have left behind, no matter how long it may take to wipe the slate clean. That is part of the hell that awaits you beyond the grave. "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown", the timeless saying goes.
- 6.10 Since the teachings that emanate from the conferences of the Apostolate invariably seem to be a mere recount of what their biblical predecessors taught to a society more than two

thousand years ago, it is only reasonable to hold the Apostles of the OAC to those same standards and values . Way back then, they saw no need to arbitrarily remove colleagues who had different opinions. They reasoned, negotiated, made common cause and eventually triumphed on a win-win basis. Looking back at all the controversial dismissals in the OAC, can the apostles in question truly say that they have exhausted all options and came up with a solution that can withstand the test of time and the TRUTH? The clarion call to the leadership of the OAC should always be: QUO VADIS (where are you going)?

- 6.11 As indicated earlier, most of the former officers who are the victims of controversial removals from office and are still alive and church-going members, appear to have lost none of their spiritual prowess and continue to be living proof that the Klibbe Principle endures. The same Principle that became the foundation on which the OAC was established and revered since 1927. Therefore, it seems safe to declare that although they may be down (off the stage), they are definitely not out of what had once been bestowed upon them with fire.
- 6.12 All people are fallible. Therefore, tenure of office can never be sacrosanct. However, at issue in this paper is the absence of due process as far as conflict resolution in the OAC is concerned. All people, Old Apostolics included, have inalienable rights that are guaranteed by their creator as well as the constitution of the land. In this regard, the philosophy and modus operandi of the Apostolate seem to fall far short of the standards relating to morality and legitimacy that are always associated with the norms and values of a civilized Christian society; and consequently, they are also out of line with most of the things Christ stands for. A more liberal outlook on life and the administration of a church such as the OAC should therefore be a prerequisite for officers who aspire to leadership positions in the Church.

So, if the marching order for the day is “remove that heart of stone”, then it is only fair and just to expect of Head Office (Apostolate) to be seen leading by example. END

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