



CRISIS NEWS

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A bulletin of news and theological reflection on the
South African emergency

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CHRISTIAN COLLABORATORS

RWCGS: part of the 'Total Strategy'

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LEGAL
DEPOSIT

At the conclusion of P W Botha's notorious 'Rubicon' speech in August 1986 he stated: "I look at the constellations in the sky at night and what are the words I see written there? 'Southern Africa for Christendom'!"

This 'Christendom', reflected in Botha's stargazing plays an essential part in the government's ideology. In the preamble to the South African constitution the government claims to uphold 'Christian civilisation'. This brand of Christianity is sold to the public as its primary protection against the approaching red tide of 'atheistic communism'. At the same time however, it practises systematic racism and institutionalised violence which conflict with the values of the kingdom of God.

These Christian beliefs or 'state theology' provide a religious means to maintain the status quo. In recent years there has been an alarming growth of right wing Christian groups (RWCGs) which share the government's vision for South Africa. They support the state's 'Total Strategy' which is designed to keep the present government in power by destroying meaningful opposition.

Many South Africans will have heard or seen the vicious attacks made by the RWCGs on church leaders like Archbishop Tutu, ecumenical bodies like the SACC and community organisations. They regularly accuse any opponents of the government of acting as puppets of the African National Congress, the South African Communist Party and even the Soviet Union's KGB. The zeal of their propaganda sounds similar to Nazi fascism in the 1930's and

1940's, which rallied Christians to support Nazism in order to save Europe from the 'communist menace'. The RWCGs warn Christians about the evils of socialism which "concentrates power in the hands of a tiny minority resulting in totalitarianism", ignoring the reality in South Africa that power and wealth is already controlled by a minority who deny individual and socio-political rights.



RWCGs distort evangelical Christianity by promoting a reconciliation devoid of justice, thus becoming witting or unwitting tools of the subtle warfare of the state against popular resistance. Religion is used in the struggle for the 'hearts and minds' of the majority of South Africans whose Christian beliefs provide a basis from which to exercise influence.

Traditionally 'church theology' has promoted obedience to authority and has taken a strong anti-communist stance. RWCGs have exploited this theology in their attempts to persuade Christians to support the government. They try to co-opt people into their structures and divide communities as well as discredit the work for justice in South Africa.

The question is : why are people attracted to and deceived by RWCGs ? A primary answer lies in the security offered by a 'christian' message which proclaims acceptance of suffering and deprivation in this world in the interests of full salvation in the future. This frees the individual from responsibility and all hope is placed in the actions of God. Human participation in the daily struggle to realise God's kingdom is obscured. This message provides the privileged with justification for their comforts and the oppressed with false assurances. The result is a passivity which benefits the state.

RWCGs in South Africa have obvious links with the international religious right which have been instrumental in bolstering conservative governments throughout the world.

Most RWCGs target the white community. They have generous funds for expensive publications. There are also numerous RWCGs springing up in the townships. At a conference held by the Institute for Contextual Theology earlier this year on the 'Misuse of Religion', delegates from the Eastern Cape, Northern Transvaal, Natal, Western Cape, Bophuthatswana and Namibia gave examples of these groups in their areas. While they lack the resources and sophistication of their white counterparts they attempt to train people to engage in direct propaganda at a low profile level. These RWCGs are reactionary forces which are readily exploited by the state to neutralise progressive church movements.

RWCGs are a small, if rapidly growing church based movement which gives direct support to the state. They must however, be distinguished from the larger christian community which is neither directly aligned with the state, nor its opposing forces. These 'moderate' groups are often critical of apartheid, yet they are vulnerable to the propaganda of RWCGs.

Although these groups claim to be fundamentalist they ignore the biblical condemnation of oppression. Despite calling themselves 'apolitical' they support the government in its apartheid policies and attack Christians with different views.

These RWCGs can be classified into five types:

- Militant activist groups which oppose ecumenical Christians.

They aim to provide "liberation from the fraudulent gospel which is poisoning the mainline South African churches". These groups include the *Aida Parker Newsletter*, *Frontline Fellowship*, the *Gospel Defence League*, *Signpost*, etc with the umbrella body *United Christian Association (UCA)* co-ordinating their activities.

- RWCGs organised in **specific denominations**, like the *Anglicans Concerned for Truth and Spirituality (ACTS)* and in the Catholic church the *Catholic Defence League* and *Tradition, Family and Property (TFP)*.
- **Whole churches** represent the right wing of their denomination like the *Church of England* or ultra-right *Afrikaner Protestant Kerk (APK)*
- **Evangelistic groups** like the *Bet-El Group of Ministeries*, the *Jimmy Swaggart Mission* and *Christian Mission International (CMI)* which aim to expose liberal/left ecumenism.
- **State-related structures** which overtly support the state in their political activity like the *United Christian Conciliation Party (UCC)*, the *Western Cape Council of Churches (WCCC)*, the *Reformed Independent Churches Association (RICA)* *Jesus Christ for Peace (JCP)* and the *Christian Alliance of South Africa*.

continued on pages 6 and 7



THE CRUCIFIXION CHALLENGES CHRISTIANITY: REFLECTION ON MARK 15: 18ff

"And the soldiers began to call out to him, 'Hail, King of the Jews! Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spat on him. Falling on their knees they worshipped him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they lead him out to crucify him.'" (Mark 15: 18ff)

Perhaps the most fundamental thing that characterises Christianity is that it has forgotten the significance of the crucifixion. Insofar as crosses of silver adorn our necks and crosses of gold adorn our sanctuaries it is true to say that we still recognise the symbolism in our religious experience. Yet, do we really take seriously the reality behind the symbol?

The question is posed because it is here that the scriptures most decisively stand against all religion that sanctifies structures of oppression and violence. What we have called right-wing religion has avoided this challenge by design; but in fact most South African Churches and Christians have avoided the challenge by default. Indeed, it is here that our own religious conceptions and expressions are brought to trial and found wanting.

It is not without reason that when the Apostle Paul came to challenge the false religious ideas of his day he recognised that "Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: as stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles" (1 Cor 1:23).

In the same way also, Martin Luther found the true meaning of the Christian faith in the Cross when he stood against the injustice, oppression and sick religion of the Medieval papacy. In the Heidelberg Disputation, Luther raged against the "Theology of Glory" which provided a religious legitimisation of the status quo. Against this, the "Theology of the Cross" recognised that "God is not to be found except in sufferings and in the cross...".

Let us look at the passage from Mark to get behind the symbol of the Crucifixion, and to come to grips with the reality. There are five things to note.

Firstly, Jesus is mocked with the words, "Hail, King of the Jews". Jesus' claims about the Kingdom of God were recognised by the state to challenge the political status quo, for he allowed no boundaries between faith and politics in the claim of God's reign. The rulers were threatened by this man from Nazareth who had entered triumphantly into the capital with many supporters. These very words, "King of the Jews" were written upon the cross, indicating that the charge against which he was found guilty was high treason (Jn 19: 19ff).

Secondly, he is guarded by soldiers. Jesus was



arrested not only by religious officials, but also by a detachment of soldiers. (Jn 18:12). Contemporary experience alerts us to the fact that soldiers are the tools a government uses to enforce its will

INCARNATION

*Jesus, the Word of God, has walked upon this earth
A humble girl from Palestine was she who gave him birth.
His infant days cut short, for they were forced to flee
A homeless child, an exiled son, his parents refugees.*

*Jesus, the Word of God, worked with his own two hands
A carpenter, he shared his life with other artisans.
Baptised by John, he rose, was filled with God's own breath
A prophet, teacher, comrade, friend, this man from Nazareth.*

*Jesus, the Word of God, proclaimed the Kingdom's News
Of freedom to the downtrodden, and love to the abused.
The rulers had him watched, arrested and detained.
He died an agitator's death in agony and pain.*

*Jesus, the Word of God, has broken Caesar's power:
The claims of governments denied that resurrection hour.
The memory lives on - he cannot be ignored.
Anointed as the Messiah; Alone is Christ the Lord*

Words: Steve de Gruchy
Tune: Diademata (Crown him with Many Crowns)

when the people reject its claims of legitimacy.

Thirdly, Jesus is struck repeatedly with a staff and spat upon. In other words, Jesus is tortured while in detention. Jesus has an experience that stands in continuity with thousands of ordinary people under many regimes who have been the victims of brutal interrogation.

Fourthly, Jesus is led away to be crucified. The cross was the symbol of repression for the Roman state. It was used against those slaves and conquered people who rose up against Roman rule. It was a particularly barbaric and gruesome form of murder; a public showing of the power of the state. It is not without meaning that Jesus was crucified between two convicted Jewish insurgents.

Finally, the soldiers worshipped him. This was obviously done as a sarcastic taunt; but it should remind us that there is such a thing as false worship and false religion. In fact, in the detention, torture and murder of Jesus we see very clearly the powerful alliance between sick religion and sick politics. The Roman soldiers, like the Jewish religious leaders, could not believe that God would be an enemy of the state.

These five points, illustrating the historical meaning of Jesus' death on the cross, indicate how the central experience of God's presence (Luther) is absolutely and fundamentally opposed to any identification of God with state power and legitimisation. For God in Jesus was detained by the army, charged for high treason, tortured and then executed.

Let us be clear that it is when 'Christianity' fails to see that God was a victim of state repression, and in fact provides a religious legitimisation for the very things that God suffered, that it is furthest from the truth. How ironic that precisely at the point that the soldiers thought they were being the most sarcastic, they were the closest to the truth.

And this truth challenges all religion - the English-speaking churches as well as the Dutch Reformed churches; right-wing religion as well as left-wing religion; your faith and action as well as my faith and action. For as Paul saw so clearly concerning the crucifixion, in his first letter to the Church in Corinth (1:28f.): "God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things - and the things that are not - to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him."

THE POLITICAL AB

THE FOLLOWING IS A STATEMENT ON RIGHT WING CHURCH GROUPS ADOPTED BY THE:

- Church of the Province of Southern Africa, Board of Social Responsibility (Diocese of Cape Town)
- Roman Catholic Church, Justice and Peace Commission (12 Bouquet St, Cape Town)
- Methodist Church of Southern Africa, Christian Citizenship Department (Cape of Good Hope District)

Right Wing Church Groups (RWCGs) have mushroomed during the last few years. The *United Christian Conciliation Party* of Bishop Mokoena and Thamasanqa Linda promoted and participated in the municipal elections. The *Western Cape Council of Churches* has emerged in opposition to the Western Province Council of Churches. Countless little groups have arisen in townships to teach people to think of heaven and not of their suffering here on earth.

Ironically, the emergence of these groups corresponds to the shift in government strategy evident in the Eloff Commission which rejects all forms of "political theology" whether for or against the state. According to the Eloff Commission Report the true gospel addresses "only truly spiritual purposes", and politics are best left to the secular forces of "national interest" ... in other words, to the national security apparatus of the state.

We now discover, however, that having tried to exclude the participation of the institutional churches from the political arena, the state is encouraging and facilitating the direct involvement of the reactionary RWCGs in the political struggle.

This should be a matter of real concern to all Christians. What is the agenda of RWCGs? Who finances their operations? Whose interests do they serve? These are some of the important questions to which answers need to be found.

How does right-wing religion affect our faith?

The RWCGs misuse theology and Christian symbols. They abuse the Christian faith to legitimate injustice and oppression. They use the teachings and the language of Churches to further the ends of the state and its allies. They deny the absolute sovereignty of Christ over all dimensions of human life by confining it exclusively to spiritual matters. In brief, the RWCGs promote belief in a God who cares little about real human suffering. This contradicts both Jesus' identification with human suffering on the Cross, and the hope of new life implicit in the resurrection. As Christians we cannot ignore this kind of heresy and idolatry.

How do RWCGs co-operate with the state?

Whatever their original intentions, they have been drawn into the structures created by the state to deal with the crisis in the country. RWCGs encourage ministers and priests to sit on the Joint Management Committees and co-operate with other initiatives of the National Security Management System, which under the guise of development are meant to upgrade communities. In reality, however, they also help the army and police to monitor the townships and identify people who work for the liberation of the oppressed. Consciously or unconsciously, RWCGs are part of the attempt by the state to undermine the work of the churches and others who work for the good of the people. RWCGs also seem to be

involved in the destabilisation campaigns of the South African government across the border. Members of *Frontline Fellowship* are reported, for example, to lend direct support to groups such as Renamo and UNITA.

What are the immediate goals of these groups?

RWCGs directly support government campaigns. They have been active in canvassing for the October municipal elections. They promote participation in the National Statutory Council. They actively promote the anti-sanctions campaign. They confuse and divide communities, furthering the state's strategy of 'divide and rule'. They support the national and international campaign to present a positive image of South Africa as a Christian country where apartheid is giving way to a broadening of democracy. They suggest that communism and not Apartheid is the real problem in South Africa. South Africa is promoted as being part of Western Christian civilisation, and this is presented as an excuse to legitimate its many crimes.

Why are the RWCGs so opposed to communism?

RWCGs claim that it is because communism is an atheist ideology. Is the real reason not a subtle attempt to justify the exploitation of the capitalist system in South Africa? If communism can be shown to be "all bad", the implication seems to be that capitalism is O.K. Our faith demands that all ideologies (capitalism included) be

USE OF RELIGION

subjected to the careful critique of the gospel which is always more concerned for the poor than the rich.

Why is the message of the RWCGs so negative?

Another important feature of RWCGs is their negative message. They attack prophetic Church leaders such as Desmond Tutu, Allan Boesak and Frank Chikane, as well as the World Council of Churches, South African Council of Churches, the South African Catholic Bishops Conference, the Western Province Council of Churches and similar organisations. They misuse Christianity to dissuade blacks from active protest and resistance, and demoralise those who engage in the struggle for justice and liberation. The question is what are they "for"? It appears to be the maintenance of the existing order.

How can one identify RWCGs?

RWCGs come in many shapes and sizes. Some are highly organised, and put out glossy newsletters to people on lengthy mailing lists.

These include:

- *The Gospel Defence League.*
- *Tradition Family and Property.*
- *Frontline Fellowship.*
- *Jimmy Swaggart Missions.*
- *Signposts Magazine.*
- *The Catholic Defence League*

United Christian Action and the *Conference for Christian Action*, in turn, form umbrella bodies to link groups together. Other groups are very small, operating only in a single township and with few links to other RWCGs. In some areas, however, these small groups are being brought together in co-ordinating umbrella bodies such as the *Western Cape Council of Churches*; the *United Christian Conciliation Party*; the *Bophutatswana Ministers' Fraternity*; the *Reformed Independent Churches Association*; a group called *Jesus Christ for Peace in South Africa*; and the *Christian Alliance of South Africa*, which recently invited the South African Foreign Minister to be the guest speaker at its conference.

How ought we as Christians to respond to RWCGs?

We need to know more about them,

their activities and their links with the forces of oppression. But beyond information, we need to read in the Bible about similar experiences which the people of God had with false prophets and gospels during biblical times. How did the true prophets respond to these experiences?

By drawing on the resources of our faith we can best respond to those who defend the oppression of the poor in the name of the Christian faith.

The behaviour of RWCGs is wrong. It is sinful. It is heresy. It is our evangelical task to proclaim the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ which exposes the damage inflicted on true faith by the false doctrines and ideologies of the false teachers who have today come among us.



"This is one text from the bible the government will allow us to read".

I. More militant-activist RWCGs

The **Alda Parker Newsletter (APN)** is controlled by Aida Parker, an old friend of Eschell Rhodie who was discredited during the Information Scandal in 1977. Her glossy and expensive publication, *the Alda Parker Newsletter*, has an extensive local and overseas distribution network. She claims substantial church support from Europe, the USA and Canada, among others.

The APN targets influential conservative opinion-makers, media and lobby groups locally and overseas. The editorial philosophy of the APN is clear: "We have a responsibility to South Africa. And we have a responsibility to the West".

Frontline Fellowship (FF) which is led by a Baptist, Peter Hammond, is an organisation which grew out of a prayer fellowship among S.A. soldiers. It now operates as a Christian mission into the frontline states. Some goals of FF include warning South Africans of the dangers of Humanism, Marxism and false religion, and restoring patriotism. This is done through its magazine *Frontline Fellowship News*, numerous pamphlets and seminars.



Gospel Defence League (GDL) is led by Dorothy Scarborough, wife of a dissident Congregationalist minister, and ex-missionary. Conservative West German evangelist Peter Beyerhaus and herself worked on a lengthy denunciation of the Kairos Document. In regular monthly newsletters; study documents providing conservative biblical comment on topics like capitalism, reconciliation, peace and democracy; through the magazine *'Vox Africana'* and occasional public meetings, GDL propagates its particular Christian ideology (see analysis).

Signpost Publications and Research Centre is led by Dr Edward Cain. *Signposts*, the regular magazine specifies the



organisation's goal which is "to inform Christians of all denominations of the threat to their faith by the infiltration of Marxist-based ideas under the guise of new interpretations of the Gospel".

United Christian Action is an umbrella organisation of 14 RWCGs also under the leadership of Edward Cain. These include **APN; Bet-El (Group of Ministries); Christians for Partnership Association; Foedergesellschaft Africa; Frontline Fellowship; Gospel Defence League; German South African Friendship Association; Good Hope Christian Group; Reformed Independent Churches Association; S.A. Catholic Defence League and Signpost publications.**

UCA is clearly an ecumenical body opposing progressive ecumenism represented by organisations such as the SACC, WPCC, SACBC and ECC. Its overall goal is to provide "liberation from a fraudulent gospel which is poisoning South African mainline churches... and generating the necessary Christian action to prevent a Marxist take-over of South Africa".

Other militant non-denominational RWCGs include **Women for South Africa** (leader Garille Malan); **Veterans for Victory** and **Victims against Terrorism**.



**VETERANS
for VICTORY**

II. Right Wing Christian Groups with clear denominational ties

Anglicans Concerned for Truth and Spirituality (ACTS) was formed in July 1985 as a conservative response to the perceived politicisation of the Church of the Province of South Africa.

Tradition, Family and Property (TFP) and **Young South Africans for a Christian Civilisation (YSACC)** both represent strong Catholic opposition to the progressive SACBC. TFP societies was founded in Brazil by Catholic leader Professor Plinis Correa de Oliveira over 55 years ago and today exists in 22 countries. It claims its primary goal is "the Defence of three basic values of Christian civilisation, ie. tradition, family and private property, against the Socialist and Communist penetration of contemporary society". YSACC, an affiliate body, recently published a virtually full page article opposing the SACBC (Weekend Argus 22 Oct 1988).



Rhema Bible Church was founded by Rev. Ray McCauley in

1978 and has close ties with the American Rhema Church founded by American conservative Kenneth Hagin. It is renowned specifically for its 'prosperity teaching'. McCauley makes regular appearances on SATV either denouncing sanctions or liberation theology and the American and South African flag are hoisted outside its Randburg Centre.

The Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk (APK), a break-away of the NGK, is an ultra-right wing movement under the leadership of Ds. Willie Lubbe. Another example of a RWCG originating in the Afrikaans churches is the **Centre for Reformed and Contemporary Studies (Cercos)**. Founded in August 1985, and under the present leadership of Ds. Chris Jordaan, its aim is "to study and resist the infiltration of ideologies into the church and the theology of the Reformed Protestant Churches".

Other denominational RWCGs are emerging in the Methodist Church especially in conservative response to the 'Peace Document'. Many Pentecostal and Charismatic church movements such as the Evangelical-Pentecostal Full Gospel Church of God and Hatfield Christian Church have also emerged.

III. Aggressively evangelistic RWGCs

Christian Mission International (CMI) was founded by Richard Wurmbrand in 1967. It details its three "unique features" of mission as aiming to "expose the liberal, leftist, ecumenical movement", doing social and relief work, and organising a "vast literature outreach". Its magazine, *Voice of the Martyrs*, is largely anti-communist, concerned with evangelism in communist countries.

Bet-El Group of Ministries was founded by evangelist Robbie Engelbrecht and claims to be "an evangelist, inter-church, and non-denomina-



tional organisation". Its mission is shared in numerous cassettes, films, videos and in its magazine, *Pendulum*.

Other evangelistic RWGCs in South Africa include: **Christ for All Nations** (leader Pastor Reinhard Bonnke); **Campus Crusade for Christ** (Asian and White) and **Life Ministry South Africa** (its black expression); **Jimmy Swaggart Missions** (local leader in Johannesburg is M D Lock); **Mission to the Communists** (Ds. P W de Wet) and numerous other smaller movements which run evangelistic campaigns or tent missions in the townships.



IV. More direct state-related RWGCs

Reformed Independent Churches Association (RICA) was founded by Bishop Isaac Mokoena in 1970 and the United Christian Conciliation Party (UCCP) was launched in October 1986 and is headed jointly by Mokoena and the controversial mayor of the E.Cape, Thamasanqa Linda. Both groups exist primarily to validate government reforms and played an important role in the build up to the October Municipal elections.

In 1987 Bishop Mokoena received the prestigious Declaration of Meritorious Service which attests the love and support the S.A. government gives him. Yet Mokoena has a background of scandal involving sex and money. Seen as the black counter part to Archbishop Tutu he received widespread coverage in his visits to the USA in 1986-87. At one public meeting he was personally introduced by Ronald Reagan.

Jesus Christ for Peace is a movement founded in 1985 and led by Bishop Mzilikazi Masiya, "with the help of God". His aims are to avoid suffering of the South African black people under a black government. It is possible that JCP was one of 11 right wing groups initiated by ultra-conservative American David Balsinger who twice visited South Africa in 1985. Balsinger heads up the 'Biblical

Scoreboard' and 'Restore a more benevolent world order' in the USA. Both are designed to defend and fight for western interests in America and internationally.



The Western Cape Council of Churches (WCCC) is an ecumenical body which was launched last year and seems to be a clear example of a government initiated and supported religious structure. While the state's role remains more covert, it operates through people like Johnson Ngxobongwana, the mayor of Old Crossroads. A front page Cape Times picture which captured the launch of the

WCCC, showed church people seated next to community councillors and government officials. The WCCC claims membership from independent churches, Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans and the N.G.K., although most members come mainly from independent churches in Old Crossroads and Site C, Khayelitsha.

Some other RWGCs

AmaAfrika Movement (Rev. Mzwandile Ebenezer Maqina)

Christocentric

Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International

Nederduitse Gereformeerde Bond (Prof Carel Boshoff)

Network Analysis

Operation Esther

Operation South Africa (Dr Francis Grim)

Operation Advance and Upgrade (John Gogotya, also leader of a political party Federal Independent Democratic Alliance formed to participate in the NSC)

The Protestant Association of South Africa (Rev. A H Jeffree James)

Protest Informationsdienste (Pastor P G Kauffenstein)

Good Hope Christian Group (leader W Dennis Walker)

Underground Evangelism (P. Schrimpton)

Vereniging Bybel en Volk

World Vision International

In Namibia the military have orchestrated the formation of ethnic religious groups like **Etango**; **Ezuve**; **Ejiwa** and **NamBweza** which are strongly counter-revolutionary; preparing youth for conscription and war against SWAPO.

Similar groups in the bantustans include **Thari ya Sechaba** (Lebowa); **Shimola sRa Rishakat** (Gazankulu) and **Venda Youth** (Goedehoop, Venda).

"The Enemies Within": RWCGs

Right Wing Christian Groups (RWCGs) attempt to portray 'political priests, radical trade unions', the anti-military movement and other "Enemies from Within" as being controlled by a communist conspiracy to take over South Africa.

Extensive ideological and theological propaganda is a powerful weapon to mobilise a broad-based Christian support for RWCGs. Not all the points RWCGs emphasise are identified in this article, nor is each point characteristic of every group, but they are typical of RWCGs. Their fanaticism distinguishes them from other church or christian movements.

I. IDEOLOGICAL WEAPONS

The Communist Bogeyman

The unifying, pervasive ideology of all RWCGs is their militant opposition to communism. 'Communism' assumes a variety of forms and most often it is a blanket term for all that is evil. Everything resistant to the South African government or even slightly different from what RWCGs define as 'christian'/'western' interests, is labelled as 'communist'.

There is no compromise. The communist bogeyman must be eliminated or neutralised, especially in the church. RWCGs see that the problem in South Africa not in apartheid but the international East-West conflict. S A is placed with the West (equated with 'christian') bloc against the enemy East (equated with 'communist') bloc. The *Good Hope Church Group* calls on all Christians "to combat the plans which the communist bloc have for South Africa".

RWCGs translate 'evil' into concrete terms viz 'communism' and offer a 'christian' way to deal with it. RWCGS promise a stable society as a result of defeating 'communist' forces which may explain why it appeals to both oppressor and oppressed in South Africa.

'Blessed be Capitalism'

The *Gospel Defence League* declares categorically that the only correct way for

South Africa is "private property orientated, free market capitalism. There is no other basis for economic growth and political freedom". No account is given of the practices of pro-capitalist states which deny political freedom and debilitate economic growth. Nothing is said about capitalist dictators or monopoly capital where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

Socialism and socialist states are denounced as anti-church and anti-biblical because they are totalitarian.

RWCGs in S A seem blind to the repression of the South African government which denies freedoms such as the freedom of association, speech and

the press, and detains thousands of individuals and restricts many democratic organisations.

In order to protect capitalist interests there is an increasing coalition of business and government to mobilise churches and other religious groups to support the status quo. The *Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International* which started in 1952 in Los Angeles and now operates in 92 countries is one example of this co-operation in South Africa.

The 'Necessary' State Military Machine

RWCGs unconditionally support the SADF and SAP. *Veterans for Victory* feel it is "our duty to expose any developments



"The Enemies Within": RWCGs

we believe may be aimed at undermining the effectiveness and morale of the SADF". They are seen to be a necessary service to protect state security and defend 'western and christian civilisation'. Some groups even call for direct support of vigilante groups (eg. witdoeke) who are allies in the battle against the 'comrades'.

The State of Emergency and the repressive clampdown, the deployment of troops in the townships and SADF cross-border insurgency raids are accepted as crucial in the 'christian' war against 'anti-christian' forces.

'State force' is justified as 'Law and Order' and revolutionary violence condemned on conservative moral grounds. "The use of force within the framework of God's Laws by the civil government is of a totally different moral quality than the violence used by revolutionaries to overthrow the government". The bitter irony however is the militant RWCGs's encouragement for anti-government resistance movements like MNR (Mocambique) and Unita (Angola).

Anti-conscription campaigns by the ECC and even the Methodist Peace Document are denounced as unpatriotic as they demoralise the security forces. The arguments propagated in RWCG literature to support the military machinery of the S A state are synonymous with propaganda pamphlets distributed by the SADF.

Reform -is that the answer ?

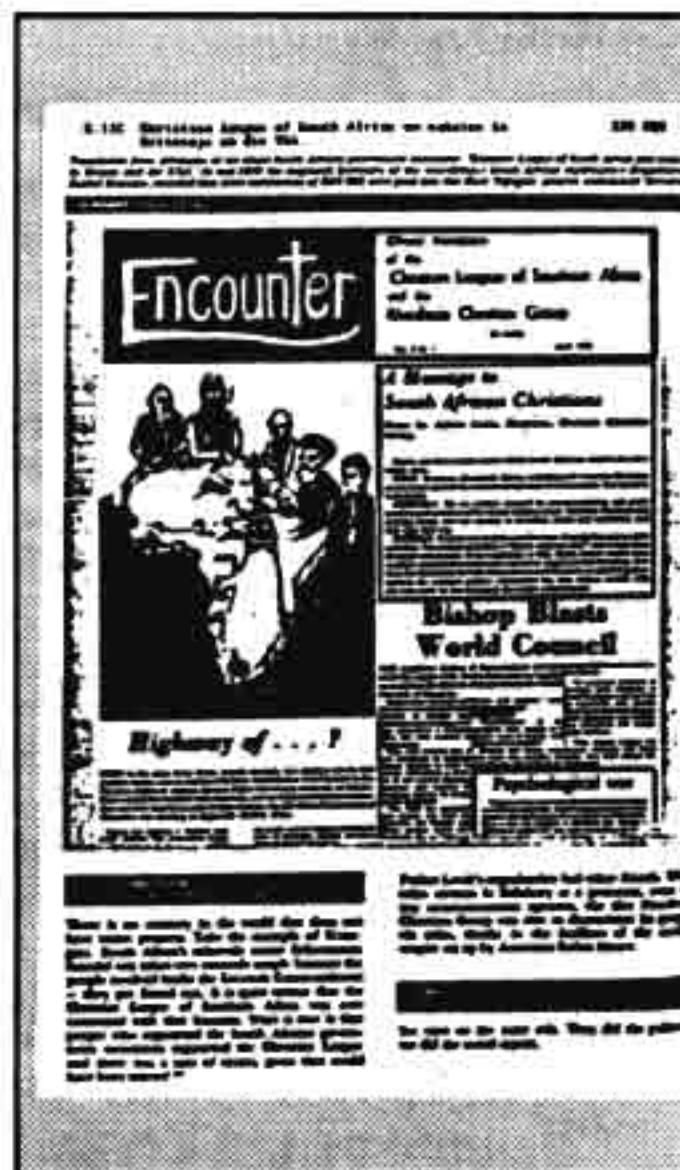
Bishop Mzilikazi Masiya, leader of Jesus Christ for Peace reflects a typical RWCG reformist attitude : "The S A government is prepared to enter into dialogue with anyone in any organisation interested in the welfare and future of the country". Are Mzilikazi and others aware of the many peoples' organisations which have been brutally banned, or whose leaders are either in prison or exile, and with whom the S A government reflects no genuine willingness to dialogue with unless they accept the 'Nationalist dream'.

The reformist stance of the RWCGs

finds its most vehement expression in emotionally charged anti-sanctions campaigns. Pastor M L Badenhorst, President of the right wing *Evangelical Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa*, recently formed a united 'Anti-sanctions forum' as a strategic offensive against sanctions. He appeared regularly on SATV promoting the position of the forum which includes member churches like the *Full Gospel*

good against (vs) evil; spiritual vs material; the Kingdom of God vs the kingdom of satan; individual vs social; divine vs human (sacred vs secular); Christian vs anti-Christian. This makes it simple for RWCGs to define the 'enemy' and call for strong counter-action.

It allows RWCGs to insist that the church ministry remains apolitical. Yet RWCGs are free and right to engage in blatant



It was proved in the Information Scandal that government funds were provided by Dr Eschel Rhoodie to establish two conservative Christian groups to oppose the World-Council of Churches and the South African Council of Churches.

The Ecumenical Organisation Bureau was given R127 000 with "no conditions attached". Its task was to organise churches against the WCC and to draw up pro-South African documents for publication all over the world.

The Christian League of Southern Africa run by Rev Shaw was given R229 314 which helped to promote its newspaper, Encounter. Rev Shaw consistently denied receiving funds from Rhoodie but was found to have been given R10 000 by the South African government to defend an action brought against him by the SACC.

Reference: Muldergate, The Story of the Information Scandal

Church, Rhema Christian Church, the Zionist Christian Church, the Reformed Independent Church Association, the Fellowship of Pentecostal Churches and Baptists.

II. THEOLOGICAL

Pie-in-the-Sky Theology

Characterising most RWCGs is an essentially conservative evangelical theology which is clearly used to forward solely political and ideological ends.

The basis of this theology is a dualistic worldview: the world is sharply divided into two opposing spheres:

political activity under the guise of 'spiritual warfare' against the 'evils' of 'communism' and its allies in 'political churches'. The contradiction in their position is deliberately overlooked.

RWCGs shout that the sole purpose of the church is to proclaim the message of reconciliation to God. The Kairos and Evangelical Witness in South Africa (EWISA) documents have offered a helpful critique of how this kind of reconciliation is unChristian. It is calculated to placate black radicalism and neutralise the socio-political struggle of the oppressed for legitimate political rights. The poor are made to believe that their material deprivation is not important to God, only their immortal soul which

"The Enemies Within": RWCGs

has the capacity to receive eternal salvation. For people who are suffering from hunger and homelessness, this pie-in-the-sky theology becomes an opiate which dulls the pain of their everyday existence, which RWCGs exploit to their advantage.

RWCGs ignore God's warning to his people:

"Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, who deprive the poor of their rights and rob my oppressed people of justice (Isaiah 10:1-2)

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:

to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and to break every yoke?" (Isaiah 58:6)

Any social analysis of the endemic plight of the poor is rejected as Marxist-inspired and detracting from the important task of 'winning souls' for God.

RWCGs do not address Christ's indictment of the pharisees as:

"Hypocrites...you have neglected the more important matters of the law -justice, mercy and faithfulness." (Matthew 23: 23).

The bible is appealed to as the absolute authority, the 'rule of law' in every sphere and RWCGs use it extensively until what RWCGs say becomes what God says. Yet RWCGs most often use the bible selectively and uncritically to support the right wing politics of the state.

It is a 'christian duty' to obey the S A government according to their interpretation of Romans 13, but they ignore the words that the authorities are established as "God's servant to do you good" (Romans 13: 4) and if they do not act for the good of the people they lose God's sanction. Central biblical themes such as God as a God of justice or Jesus' option for the poor and oppressed are seen as anti-biblical. RWCGs fail to see how their conservative prejudices distort the message of liberation throughout the bible.

Hostility to Liberation Theology and Theologians

State attacks and misinformation on Liberation Theology are common-place, assisted by RWCGs who play a decisive role in this defamation. Liberation Theology is caricatured as 'anti-Christian, anti-bible and pro-violence'. The unpardonable 'evil' of Liberation Theology is its stress on social sin, the need for structural change and the use it makes of Marxist analysis and socialism to strive for justice.

Any document, statement, pamphlet or book which supports Liberation Theology however slightly, receives outright rejection. This is usually on the basis of emotional and ideological arguments not a sober analysis of the theology. Consequently the Kairos document, Harare Declaration, Lusaka statement, Methodist Peace document and many others are seen as weapons of the anti-Christ.

The negative, destructive message of RWCGs include vicious, slanderous attacks on progressive church leaders or bodies. Church leaders like Archbishop Tutu, Dr Allan Boesak, Rev Frank Chikane and others become the victims of virulent right wing vilification in order to isolate them from their churches. They are maligned as 'false prophets and political wolves'.

Equally strong is the attempt to discredit ecumenical church bodies which are sympathetic to the struggle for justice and God's Kingdom in South Africa. These include the South African Council of Churches (SACC), South African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC), Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) and others. These ecumenical bodies are branded as illegitimate because they combine politics (the wrong kind) and the Christian faith.

Conclusion

It is not difficult to see how consciously and unconsciously RWCGs fit into the state strategy to 'win the hearts and minds

of the people'. Their ideology and theology coincide and the 'enemy' is the same to both.

**YOU can now choose
YOUR OWN
COUNCILLOR.**



- The BEST MAN for the job.
- Someone you can trust.

**SOUTH AFRICA
NEEDS THE RIGHT LEADERS so
YOU must choose the person
you can TRUST.**

If your NAME has been REGISTERED
YOU CAN VOTE for the councillor of
YOUR CHOICE on 26 October 1988.

- REGISTER RIGHT NOW!
- DO NOT DELAY!



Women for South Africa (WPSA) asked their membership "to encourage your maid (and gardener) to register" for the October elections, and distributed pamphlets telling people to vote. 'Apolitical' ?!

The challenge to progressive Christians and organisations is clear. Firstly, RWCGs must be thoroughly studied and critically researched, both in their literature and how they operate in society. This is especially vital at the grassroots level where information on RWCGs must be systematically gathered and disseminated in order to expose their harmful plans to divide communities. Secondly, Christians must actively work in their own churches and communities for the Christian message of justice and love. Thirdly, a theological response to RWCGs should be developed through reading the bible.

Crisis News receives many letters of support and some of criticism; we do not usually publish them. But, in this issue, we present edited versions of one such critical letter and our response to it. We feel they capture the essence of conflicting view about Christian political responsibility.

D

ear Brother in Christ,

I question the contribution being made by Crisis News to the socio-political-economic tragedy of contemporary South Africa. A righteous solution to this unhappy state profoundly concerns both God and all people.

Our country's condition is a source of mere apprehension for some people, but of stark and violent deprivation and horror for other. The majority of our brothers live in a suspended state of anxiety, humiliation, and hopelessness. For Christians, what is the implication of this harrowing situation?

Surely it is to see the vast ripe field waiting for God's harvesters to get out and evangelize - flat out, while there is still time?

What born-again Christian with even a smattering of history and commonsense believes that the Kingdom of God is extended by an advocacy of those two traditional secular responses to oppression - confrontation and insurrection? Crisis News No 21 endorses this worldly response, and therefore I'm inclined to



conclude that the constituent churches of the WPCC do the same. I have complete understanding of frustrated leaders moved to fury and revenge through seeing and enduring the actions of the oppressors. These are the normal emotions of the world. We all have them. They are the manifestation of flesh rampant, and of sin.

But I am a Christian, and my priority task, the focus of all God's church, is to take God's saving word to our fellow men and women and children before somebody's bullets of tortures or necklaces remove the opportunities forever.

Only after people have found God's saving mercy and love can effective moves be made to secure universal social reform and lasting relief from suffering. If Crisis News No 21 reflected the views of Church leaders, then may God have mercy on their unbelieving souls.

Yours in Christ

D

ear Sir,

Thank you for your reactions to Crisis News 21. We think they reflect a false view of evangelism.

You suggest that evangelism concerns the spiritual (not "worldly") dimension of individual believers (their "hearts"). When you say that "relief from suffering" can only come "after people have found God's saving mercy", you imply that evangelism has no political or social meaning.

But Christianity does not grow from these assumptions. First, the idea of a separate spiritual world, superior to the everyday world, comes from Greek thought not Hebrew. It came into Christian Theology after Jesus. To him, the events of history showed God's power.

Second, your individualistic idea of evangelism does not come from Jesus. In his society people lived in close communities; the individual was part of the group. But in today's individualised world the Gospel has been reduced so it fits the privacy of people's hearts as though it cannot challenge our economic or political relationships. Thirdly, the assumption that Christian evangelism does not confront society and politics crumbles because human beings are not just individual



spiritual beings. A person cannot exist without human relationships and institutions. When the gospel of Jesus speaks to people it speaks to their relationships and institutions. Those who say that Christianity has no social and political witness are being political themselves. They are choosing to accept injustice.

Throughout the world Christians who live among poor and oppressed people and who reflect on the gospel find its message speaking directly to social and political issues.

Similarly we try, in Crisis News, to reflect the reality of our suffering world and to reflect on the Gospel's meaning within this world. Many others do this in South Africa; one example is a small book, Evangelical Witness in South Africa: a critique of Evangelical Theology and Practice by Evangelicals themselves (from Box 200, Dobsonville, 1865). Two other books on similar themes are Simon Maimela's Proclaim Freedom to my People and Hammering Swords into Poughshares edited by Tlhagale and Mosala.

We hope this explains our point of departure and trust you will continue to find Crisis News stimulating to read.

6 YEARS JAIL FOR BELIEVER WHO CANNOT SERVE TWO GODS ?

Few eighteen-year-old 'white' males in South Africa are bold enough to say they will "refuse to serve in the SADF, and take the consequences". Not so in the case of Charles Bester, a committed Christian who left school last year and spent a year working in African townships as a Christian volunteer.

Charles' trial takes place in Johannesburg early in December, and if convicted, he will be locked up until after his twenty-fourth birthday. Charles will be the third objector on trial this year. Earlier this year Dr Ivan Toms was jailed for 18 months and David Bruce was jailed for six years.

"It is a very difficult time for my family. It's difficult to think that for six years I may not be able to hug my father," Charles said in Cape Town recently, but he believes that Christ will go to prison with him - as his strength and refuge.

Another solace is "when I stand trial I will know that I am representing many unwilling conscripts" and others who have gone into exile. As a religious pacifist Charles could apply for community service, but he turned this down in solidarity with moral and political conscientious objectors - because the Board for Religious Objection would not allow his criticism of the role of the SADF.

Charles bases his objection on his belief in Christ and takes seriously the command to love God and to love our neighbours as ourselves. The words of St John "for anyone who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen," sums it up for him.

Charles sees the military as upholding the divisive aims of the National Party government. "Evil is manifesting itself in a political system and the government of the day is using the army and people of my age to uphold and defend that system." "I see it as incredible arrogance that eighteen-year-old boys, most of whom have never previously been to a township, let alone been involved in its life, are ordered to enter, armed, on the back of

military vehicles to impose 'law and order' on a community they neither know, nor identify with".

The minister of defence, General Magnus Malan said recently that "no citizen has the right to decide which laws to respect," but Charles is unconcerned. "I am fully aware that I am breaking the law of the land, and I have no guilt in doing so. After studying Christ's commandments and seeking God's calling in prayer, I personally cannot be obedient to this law and to God's calling".



Photo: Eric Miller

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who is proud that Charles is from an Anglican home and an Anglican school, said "one of the small signs of real hope that has emerged in the dark era we are entering, is the number of young white men who are refusing to serve in the SADF."

He said that Charles' refusal to serve was not just significant because of his age, but also because he faced the maximum sentence of six years, adding that previously most objectors have only felt called to refuse service after exposure to wider issues at university or elsewhere.

CRISIS NEWS readers please note that Issue No. 21 on "Violence and non-Violence" has been *banned for possession*. We also request readers to inform Crisis News if they know of people who have not received their usual copies in the post over the last few months, as the Security Police seized copies of Issues No. 24 and 25.