

Institutes, considers the whole question of the Christian's duty in relation to the state. He sees government as a God-given vocation and obedience as the only justifiable attitude of the governed. He sets out five different propositions:

- (1) It is the duty of the godly ruler to insist on obedience from ungodly (i.e. non-reformed) subjects.
- (2) It is the duty of every citizen to obey a ruler.
- (3) The Christian must normally obey the ungodly ruler.
- (4) But Christians must not obey the ruler if this involves disobedience to God.
- (5) Even violent resistance against the ruler in such a case can be justified if it is approved by someone constitutionally vested with a subordinate authority.

It is clear in the context that Calvin believed that the fifth case would arise only in very rare circumstances, but because he set this scheme out in the *Institutes*, i.e. in the context of dogmatic theology, it was treated as a doctrinal principle by some of his followers, rather than as a piece of situational ethics. Calvinism became, in many parts of Europe, a militant, revolutionary and violent movement, rebelling against Catholic govern-

ments and fighting in many a religious war.

Sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe was the scene of a great many such — down to the thirty years war in Germany and the Civil War in England where many fought in order to establish the rule of Christ's saints on earth. Though small radical Christian movements, such as the Quakers in England, continued to advocate the rejection of all violence the overwhelming opinion was that to fight for the true religion must be to fight justly. But, partly as a natural revulsion against the devastations resulting from such wars, partly because of the rise of rationalism, in the late 17th century, men began to turn away from such fanaticism. This is not to say, of course, that wars ceased but they were fought openly and frankly for political advantage. Where principles were involved at all they were principles like patriotism, liberty and so on, rather than direct religious issues. God's aid was still invoked upon the cause. The British national anthem is such a prayer from this era and God is asked to "frustrate the knavish tricks" of the king's enemies. (In the original version he was also asked to bless General Wade and the "roads he made"!) But the age of religious wars proper had passed.

RECENT TRENDS IN CHRISTIAN THINKING

It must be remembered that, apart from Napoleonic France and one or two other exceptions (like the British naval press-gang), there was not usually any system of conscription. Armies were either professional or volunteer. Moreover the peasant class was illiterate, not equipped to argue morality, and they believed what they were told by the social "betters". For most Christians the question of whether a man ought to fight for his country did not arise. When the Boer War started there were many in England who had doubts for the first time about the justice of fighting to destroy the independence of a very much smaller and less powerful state. And the First World War, with conscription and total war, made conscientious objection a serious problem for the first time. This did not prevent English and German religious leaders from claiming that God was on *their* side, each against the other. In World War II, the situation was somewhat different. Conscientious objection still existed but German Christian leaders were, on the whole,

opposed to Hitler and the Allies believed themselves quite clearly to be fighting to defend themselves against a manifestly evil power. It was only a rare and brave voice, like A. R. Vidler, who could ask whether the whole war was not better understood as "God's judgment on Europe". But as recently as the Suez Crisis it was possible for an Anglican bishop in the English House of Lords to defend England's attack on Egypt, in Thomistic terms, as a "just war".

Recently, I think it is possible to distinguish three growing trends in general Christian thinking:

- (1) a widespread feeling that pacifism of some sort is the only really Christian attitude;
- (2) that however justifiable war may be in theory, the hugely destructive nuclear weapons make all war immoral;
- (3) (a most interesting development) that one may have conscientious objections to a particular war even if not to war in general. This is a rapidly growing opinion in America (vis-a-vis Vietnam) and is in some ways a return to medieval thinking about the just war.

I have already gone on for far too long and yet hardly done more than scratch the surface of Christian thinking about war and its morality. Inevitably what I have said has been generalised and superficial. I hope you may be generous enough to forgive this.

VERSOENING EN „SKEIDSMURE“

'n Lewe in versoening hou in dat ons die „mure“ wat volke, kerke en mense (ook binne die gemeente!) telkens tussen mekaar oprig, nie kan erken en aanvaar nie. Wanneer Jesus Christus die tussenmuur tussen Israel en die volke, die heidene, weggebreek het, hou dit in dat die gemeente hom by geen enkele tussenmuur kan neerlê nie. By alle begrip vir die eie aard van kerke, modaliteite, rasse en volke wat tot ontwikkeling mag kom, sal die gemeente apartheid in die sin van volstreekte skeiding moet afwys. Ook op hierdie manier word die „kosmiese“ aspekte van die versoening verwerklik.

(Uit: *De Tussenmuur Weggebroken*)

PUBLIKASIES

Die volgende en ander publikasies is by die Christelike Instituut verkrygbaar (Posbus 31134, Braamfontein, Transvaal).

DIE EKUMENE

'n besinning oor inter-kerklike verhoudinge, met artikels deur ds. W. A. Landman, dr. J. J. F. du Rand, dr. G. J. Swart, prof. dr. Ben Marais, dr. J. F. Stutterheim en ds. A. J. van Wijk en 'n voorwoord deur wyle prof. dr. G. B. A. Gerdener — uitgegee deur Kosmo-Uitgewery (Edms.) Bpk., Stellenbosch. Prys R1.55, plus 5c posgeld.

★

DIE VOLLEDIGE HOFUITSPRAAK IN DIE GEYSER EN NAUDÉ vs. PONT-SAAK (In Afrikaans). Prys R1, insluitende posgeld. ('n Opsomming in Engels is ook beskikbaar teen 50c, insluitende posgeld).