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THE CHRISTIAN INSTITUTE GETS MORE SUPPORT THAN EVER BEFORE

The Christian Institute which has been declared by the government to be an affected organization has received more support from churches, church organizations and individuals within South Africa than ever before in the twelve years of its existence. Moral and/or financial support have been received from all the big churches (excepting of course the N.G. Kerk) as well as from the South African Council of Churches which has associated itself closely with the CI. For all this support the CI is very grateful. It is quite clear that the "findings" did not succeed in casting suspicion on the CI but had in fact the very opposite result. People in general are more conscious of the important message and task which are the CI's objective in the present situation.

In the meantime the support of the churches, church groups and individuals outside South Africa for the work of the CI continues although one part of such support — the financial contributions — has been prohibited by the government. The Church as the body of Christ is however one in word and deed throughout the whole world, and even though the CI has been prevented by the government in a most arbitrary fashion from putting this unity into practice in the financial sphere, nevertheless the normal Christian fellowship remains. Intercession, critical reflection on the historical situation, witness, counsel and encouragement go on in a mutual relationship. Just as little as Christ's Kingship could be nullified by his crucifixion, just so little can the unity of the church in Christ be nullified by arbitrary persecution by governments.

From the statements made by the government, amongst others that of the Minister of Justice, and furthermore from the reaction of the other political party which collaborated in the Schlebusch-Le Grange Commission, it is clear that the government found itself faced with an extremely delicate dilemma. The government had apparently realised that in the commission's report to it, grounds for neither legal prosecution nor for any arbitrary authoritarian action had been brought to light. Earlier on the Prime Minister had declared himself to be firmly convinced of the existence of a *prima facie* case against the CI but none such appeared from the report. In fact the report was virtually unmotivated. Consequently in taking action against the CI the government tried to save face by making use of the powers conferred on it by the law, viz. by announcing a second report — that of three magistrates — on which the CI could be prosecuted. This second report however was not published and the investigation took place in even greater secrecy than the first. No one except the government itself seems to have known of this "investigation". The government then announced that it was taking action against the CI on the grounds of the second report. Thus it tried to save itself from the dilemma by a further "judicial" investigation, but in the strictest secrecy.

In the meantime the second report on the basis of which the government then declared the CI to be an affected organization created a dilemma for the United Party which it could not evade. This party had supported action against the CI on the ground of the Le Grange investigation, and after all that had gone before, when it realized that the action against the CI was based on an even more secret investigation, the UP then resorted to asking for a "more just re-trial" of the CI. Participation in the Le Grange Commission having impaired its public image, the UP tried thus to save face by making a political football of the CI.

The continuing problem of the government is that from the beginning of its term of office it has exceeded its bounds in its apartheid ideology. Instead of basing its task on service for the protection of society and the extension of the rights and freedom of its citizens, it has based its rule on power with a view to enforcing this ideology. The fact that it was elected by a majority of the whites — those whites themselves constituting a minority group — has been magnified and misinterpreted to mean that it has the final authority and power over society. Anyone who, whether or not in terms of the gospel of Jesus Christ, questions and opposes this false assumption of authority, is prosecuted either in terms of arbitrary legislation or by arbitrary action. The action against the CI is but one of a consistent series of actions by the government, and it must be realized that such government action will not end there; inevitably it must go on. No individual, group or church which advocates change on the grounds of Christian justice, unity and freedom can be tolerated by the present domination through power politics.

The "Christian Institute" however cannot be halted or destroyed because in the final analysis it is not a matter of the continued existence of the CI as an organization; it is a matter of what the CI stands for. In Southern Africa, having regard to the change that has taken place in Mozambique and the developments in Rhodesia and S.W.A., the desire of *all* groups for liberation will not decline. More and more the whites will want liberation from the need to dominate and the need of absolute control over other people, with its accompanying threat to themselves; and the black people more and more will want liberation from a system which is an affront in all spheres to their dignity as human beings. In this situation the church and the CI as part of the church, have a primary task to perform — a task which they dare not renounce! **THEY MUST SHOW STRAIGHTFORWARDLY THAT THERE IS ANOTHER CHOICE OPEN TO THEM BETWEEN THE VIOLENCE OF DOMINATION AND THE VIOLENCE OF LIBERATION; THERE IS A THIRD WAY OUT, NAMELY BY LIBERATION BASED ON JUSTICE AND UNITY IN TERMS OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.**

DIE CHRISTELIKE INSTITUUT KRY MEER STEUN AS OOI TEVORE

Die CI wat deur die regering as 'n geaffekteerde organisasie verklaar is, het meer ondersteuning van kerke, kerklike organisasies en individue binne Suid-Afrika gekry as ooit tevore in sy twaalfjarige bestaan. Morele en/of finansiële steun is van al die groot kerke, behalwe natuurlik die N.G. Kerk, ontvang, sowel as van die Suid-Afrikaanse Raad van Kerke wat hom ook met die CI geïdentifiseer het. Vir al die steun is die CI baie dankbaar. Dit is heeltemal duidelik dat die „bevindings” nie daarin geslaag het om die CI verdag te maak nie, maar die teenoorgestelde uitwerking gehad het. Die mense in die algemeen is meer bewus van die belangrike boodskap en taak wat die CI hom in die huidige situasie ten doel stel.

Intussen gaan die steun van die kerke en kerklike groepe en individue buite Suid-Afrika vir die werk van die CI ook voort, alhoewel een deel van die ondersteuning, naamlik finansiële bydraes deur die regering verbied is. Die kerk as liggaam van Christus is egter in woord en daad oor die hele wêreld één, en al word die CI ook nou deur die regering op 'n arbitrêre wyse verhinder om hierdie eenheid ook op finansiële gebied uit te leef, gaan die normale Christelike gemeenskap voort. Voorbidding, kritiese besinning oor die historiese situasie, getuienis, raad en bemoediging gaan in wedersydse verhouding voort. Net so min as wat Christus se Koningskap deur sy kruisdood tot niet gemaak kon word, net so min kan die eenheid van die kerk in Christus deur arbitrêre vervolging van regerings tot niet gemaak word.

Uit die verklarings van die regering, onder ander deur die Minister van Justisie, en verder deur die reaksie van die ander politieke party wat met die Schlebusch/Le Grange-kommissie saamgewerk het, is dit duidelik dat die regering voor 'n uiters delikate dilemma te staan gekom het. Die regering het blykbaar besef dat daar in die verslag van dié kommissie aan die parlement nie enige grond vir geregtelike vervolging was nie en ook nie vir enige arbitrêre magsoptrede nie. Geen „prima facie-saak”, wat vooruit reeds met groot oortuiging deur die eerste minister aangekondig is, is bewys nie. Die verslag was maar bra ongemotiveerd. Gevolglik het die regering probeer om sy aansien te red as hy teen die CI sou optree deur gebruik te maak van die magte wat die wet hom bied, nl. deur 'n tweede verslag van drie magistrats aan te kondig waarop die CI dan vervolgt sou word. Hierdie tweede verslag is egter nie gepubliseer nie en dié ondersoek het in nog groter geheimhouding as die eerste plaasgevind. Niemand behalwe die regering self het blykbaar van hierdie „ondersoek” geweet nie. Die regering het toe aangekondig dat hy sy stappe teen die CI op grond van die tweede verslag neem. So het hy homself uit die dilemma probeer red deur 'n verdere „geregtelike” ondersoek, maar in die diepste geheimhouding.

Intussen het die tweede verslag, waarop die regering dan die CI tot geaffekteerde organisasie verklaar het, ook vir die Verenigde Party 'n onontwykbare dilemma veroorsaak. Dié party het optrede teen die CI op grond van die Le Grange-ondersoek gesteun. Na alles toe hy besef dat die optrede teen die CI op grond van 'n nog groter-geheime-ondersoek was, vra die VP nou „'n meer geregtelike hervörhoor” van die CI. Die VP probeer so sy aansien, wat met die deelname aan die Le Grange-verslag 'n knou gekry het, te red deur van die CI 'n politieke speelbal te maak.

Die voortdurende probleem van die regering is dat hy vanaf die begin van sy regering sy perke met sy apartheidsideologie oorskry het. In plaas daarvan dat hy sy taak op diens gebaseer het om die samelewing en die inwoners se regte en vryheid te beskerm en uit te bou, het hy sy regering op mag gebaseer om sy apartheidsideologie deur te forseer. Die feit dat hy deur die meerderheid van die blankes, wat 'n minderheidsgroep is, verkies is het hy geïnterpreteer as dat hy finale gesag en mag oor die samelewing sou hê. Enige een wat hierdie valse gesagsposisie, ook vanuit die evangelie van Jesus Christus, fundamenteel bevraagteken en teenstaan, word eenvoudig op grond van arbitrêre wetgewing of optrede vervolgt. Die optrede teen die Christelike Instituut is maar slegs een van 'n reeks konsekwente optredes van die regering. Wat besef moet word is dat dit gevolglik ook nie daar sal eindig nie. Enige een, groep of kerk wat die samelewing wesentlik op grond van Christelike geregtigheid, eenheid en vryheid wil verander, durf nie deur die huidige magspolitiese heerskappy geduld word nie.

Die „Christelike Instituut” kan egter uiteindelik nie gestuit word of ondergaan nie, omdat dit nie om die voortbestaan van die CI as organisasie gaan nie, maar om dit waarvoor hy staan. In Suider-Afrika, met die verandering in Mosambiek, die ontwikkeling in Rhodesië en in S.W.A., sal die begeerte van *alle* groepe na bevryding slegs toeneem. Die blankes sal al meer smag na bevryding van die behoefte aan oorheersing en absolute beheer oor ander mense met die bedreiging wat dit vir hulself inhou, en die swartmense sal al meer smag na bevryding van 'n stelsel wat hulle menswaardigheid op alle gebiede aanrand. Hierin het die kerk, en die CI as deel daarvan, 'n primêre taak wat hy nie mag verloën: **HY MOET ONOMWONDE AANDUI DAT DAAR 'N DERDE WEG IS UIT DIE KEUSE TUSSEN GEWELDVOLLE MAGSOORHEERSING OF GEWELDADIGE BEVRYDING, NAAMLIK BEVRYDING WAT OP GEREGTIGHEID EN EENHEID OP GROND VAN DIE EVANGELIE VAN CHRISTUS GEBASEER IS.**

AN EVALUATION OF THE LE GRANGE REPORT ON THE CHRISTIAN INSTITUTE

douglas bax

The following evaluation of the report of the Le Grange Commission on the Christian Institute was presented to the Presbytery of Kingwilliamstown recently by the Rev. Douglas Bax, convener of its Church and Nation Committee. The Presbytery represents 20 churches in the Border and Transkei area. 39 Delegates consisting of ministers and elders were present. The Presbytery passed six resolutions relevant to the report and which we now publish.

The most notable event in Church-State relations that has happened since Presbytery last met is the tabling of the Le Grange Report on the Christian Institute and the Government's subsequent declaring of the CI "an affected organization" in terms of the law.

In 1972 the Prime Minister set up the Schibusch (later the Le Grange) Commission to investigate NUSAS, the SAIRR, the CI and UCM. Even the United Party then protested on the grounds that a commission of partisan politicians by the very nature of their job and their training could not judge the activities of such organizations objectively and fairly and because the rights of an open court would be denied to them. The UP therefore urged that a judicial rather than a parliamentary commission should be set up. However, when the Government insisted, the UP co-operated by appointing 4 members to the commission. (One member, Mr Marais Steyn, later left the UP to join the Government, partly as a result of the tensions caused by this co-operation.)

The director of the CI, Dr Beyers Naudé, and its staff have consistently stated their complete willingness to give evidence before a judicial commission in an open court but have refused to appear before the Schibusch Commission. The Commission therefore gathered its evidence from other witnesses and the Security Police (and BOSS?). Its method of investigation has been to conduct secret interviews in which no cross-examination of witnesses has been permitted. Neither the interviews nor even the names of the witnesses have been published.

On the 28th May 1975 the Commission tabled its report on the CI in Parliament. This accused the CI and its branch organization, SPRO-CAS (Study Project of Christianity in Apartheid Society, later Special Project for Christian Action in Society) of:

1. Seeking "alternatives to apartheid in economics, education, law, politics, church and society". It admits that what was aimed at was "practical Christian alternatives" (*Daily Dispatch*, 29.5.75.).
2. Having "a carefully worked out strategy to bring about radical political, economic and social change in the Republic". At the same time it admits that the aims and terms of reference of SPROCAS were "to examine South African society in the light of Christian principles and to make recommendations aimed at achieving a new social order" (*ibid.*)
3. "Discrediting the capitalist system", supporting "Black power" and aiming to substitute for the present order "a Black-dominated socialist system" (*Argus*, 28.5.75).
4. Helping to formulate and publish the "Message to the People of South Africa" which "purported to be a theological

critique of apartheid society" and "was intended to play a political role". The Commission cites a so-called "expert on Communism" (a member of Dr J.D Vorster's *Antikom*, one suspects) who accused the Message of making "nice use of Communist tactics". However, when the "expert" explains what he means by this it is to add that "the first step" of Communist tactics is "to arouse criticism (!), unrest and opposition (!) within the existing political order"! "The document engenders basic dissatisfaction and resistance founded on principle as does Marxist-Leninism" — and this, moreover, "at the deepest possible level, the religious level." (*Daily Dispatch* and *Rand Daily Mail*, 29.5.75). The Commission also found that the CI was to be associated with "classical liberalism" and was guilty of using neo-Marxist terminology — in that it called for "radical change" in South Africa (*Argus* 28.5.75). As the *Rand Daily Mail* commented: "in other words, any and all criticism of South Africa-as-it-is is unpatriotic, revolutionary, Communist and dangerous. That is the real burden of what the commission is all about ... an absurdity" (*Rand Daily Mail*, 29.5.75). (Note that the General Assembly of the PCSA in 1970 overwhelmingly endorsed the critique of the ideology of apartheid in the Message to the People of South Africa and sent down a summary of it to all Sessions for study.)

5. Setting up Bible Study circles which promoted "the ecumenical idea" and often discussed "social and political questions rather than ... the Scriptures" and were "intended to be a propaganda campaign against the existing order" (*Rand Daily Mail* 29.5.75). (The fact is that the material prepared for these Bible Study circles was always theological and based on the Bible.) The Commission also accuses the CI of having appointed as director of Bible Studies an "ultra-Leftist person", the Rev. Colin Davison, who had "revolutionary ideas", and of singing songs like "We shall overcome" and Nkosi Sikelela Afrika at Jan Smuts Airport when he was deported (*Ibid.*).

6. "Propagating in a disguised form the basic principles, ideas and objectives of Marxism" in the theological periodical, *Pro Veritate*. "This is done ... by attacking apartheid" and "by stressing the necessity for ... structural change" (an idea which the Commission calls "Marxist-oriented") so that a "socialist" social order can be established. However, the Commission admits that *Pro Veritate* advocated "revolution, but without violence": this is what is meant by "structural change" (*Rand Daily Mail*, 29.5.75). But, it maintains, *Pro Veritate* is now publishing articles "in which violence and revolution are discussed as possible means of effecting change" (*Daily Dispatch*, 29.5.75). (But *Pro Veritate* still opposes violence!)

7. Being willing to use violence to bring about change. However, the Commission is not quite consistent here: on the one hand it accuses the CI and SPROCAS of deliberately supporting change "inter alia by means of a revolution", but on the other hand it later says that they pursued their objectives "regardless of the possibility that their actions might lead to the violent overthrow of the authority of the State" (*Argus* 28.5.75). It thus seems to contradict itself when it comes to giving its opinion of the actual intention of the CI and SPRO-

CAS.

8. Lending its aegis to, and collaborating in the organization of, a winter school held in Cape Town by Nikki Westcott at which a game was played with a "message of violence as a means to power", the ANC and PAC were glorified, terrorists were "verontskuldig" and "inflammatory poems" were used (*Rand Daily Mail*, 29.5.75, *Die Burger* 29.5.75).

9. Receiving "such a big proportion of its finances from foreign organizations.. (87,8% in 1972, 85,8% in 1973) that it was forced "to dance to the tune of such organizations in order to retain their financial support" (*Argus* 28.5.75).

10. Receiving money to help combat "racism" from the WCC, which the Commission asserts has "supported violent action against the Republic". However, the Commission admits that it has no real evidence for this: the WCC was not mentioned in the financial records of the CI which the Commission "seized" by means of the Special Branch (and which it found properly audited) and Mr Fred van Wyk, ex-administrative-secretary of the CI and still chairman of its finance committee denied it "categorically". It was merely its own "irrefutable" "inference" that the WCC was likely to have given such funds to the CI! (*Rand Daily Mail*, *Daily Dispatch*, 29.5.75). Naudé himself calls it "patently untrue" (*Sunday Tribune* 1.6.75).

11. Not hesitating to "embarrass the Government" by reporting overseas "that the State was persecuting the Church" and that the CI "was constantly attacked by Government leaders and intimidated by the police" (*Argus*, 28.5.75).

In reply Dr Naudé has criticized the report as "unsubstantiated and strongly tendentious" (*Daily Dispatch*, 29.5.75). He has criticized the Commission's failure to distinguish between the quest for radical social change and Communist revolution. "Long before Marx our Lord Jesus promoted a cause of such deep and radical change that it revolutionized the whole world," he stated, and quoted Christ's words, "Behold, I make all things new!" (*Rand Daily Mail*, 2.6.75). He emphasized that the CI has repeatedly and at all times rejected the way of violence and pointed out that Afrikaans newspapers which accused him of advocating violence in a speech in Holland last year had subsequently to apologize for mis-reporting and the Prime Minister himself tacitly acknowledged that this was a mistaken report (*Daily Dispatch*, 29.5.75). He warned: "If the Blacks eventually conclude that peaceful efforts of bodies such as the CI are not heeded, not understood and not supported, then one cannot predict what the despair in their hearts may bring forth.. (*Rand Daily Mail*, 3.5.75).

The Commission's report has also been sharply attacked by others, including the RC bishops (*Rand Daily Mail*, 30.5.75), Archbishop Hurley, Archbishop Burnett and the Chairman of the Congregational Church (*Rand Daily Mail*, 31.5.75). Cardinal McCann commented that declaring the CI an affected organization was "an act of persecution" (*Rand Daily Mail*, 31.5.75).

It should be noted that our Moderator Designate, Prof. Calvin Cook, was chairman of the CI Board of Management for many years. Over a quarter of the Board are in fact DRC members. Moreover those who worked on the original SPROCAS project were 150 specialists in various fields, including several MP's presently in the UP and PP.

The Commission seems to have made five basic theological and logical errors:

1. It has regarded "Bible Study" as properly having nothing to do with "social and political questions". To deny

that the Scriptures and thus the Word of God are concerned with sin and righteousness also in the political and social areas of life, however, is to deny the sovereignty of God over all of life and commit blasphemy.

2. It has thought that the use of such terms as "radical change" necessarily means that their users are Communistic, just because the Communists also use them. The fallacy of this is self-evident.

3. It has failed to see that Christians must always be critical of the status quo of injustice in society because they believe in the coming Kingdom of God.

4. It has misunderstood the advocating of radical change as necessarily involving the encouragement of, and willingness to use, violence. The fact, however, is that *unless* radical change occurs in our society violent confrontation will become inevitable — and therefore to plead for change may be precisely to strive to avoid violence. Thus Dr Naudé regards himself "as a person who wishes to do everything in order to promote ... the true safety and the abiding security of the State" (*Sunday Tribune*, 1.6.75).

5. It has been over-anxious to find the CI guilty of supporting violence. The evidence it puts forward for this is extremely shaky, namely:

- (a) that the CI is an agent of the WCC — a completely unproven allegation (and one which in any case misunderstands the point of the WCC grants to liberation movements for social, medical, educational and information services);
- (b) that the CI receives money from the WCC — again an unproven allegation, emphatically repudiated by Dr Naudé;
- (c) that the resolution on Conscientious Objection to Violence passed at the SACC national conference last year after having been seconded and supported by Dr Naudé compels "die gevolgtrekking dat hy geweld teen die bestaande orde goedkeur in 'n poging om dit te verander" — a complete misinterpretation of the point of the resolution, as the Convener can attest, having drafted it himself! (*Die Burger*, 29.5.75).
- (d) that articles in the periodical, *Pro Veritate*, have not clearly enough for its liking repudiated violence in urging structural change in our society. As a regular reader of *Pro Veritate* the Convener can testify that he has never seen any article in it supporting violence in any way!
- (e) that Dr Naudé supported violence in a speech which was originally misquoted by some Afrikaans newspapers and then acknowledged as having been misquoted — but which the Commission misquotes again! (*Rand Daily Mail*, 5.6.75).

We conclude by quoting the comment of one of the United Party MP's who has repudiated the Commission's report, Mr Japie Basson: "Judging by the body and nature of the report ... and my own knowledge of the background to the Government's longstanding vendetta against Dr Naudé and the CI, I cannot identify myself with the conclusions and recommendations of the commission" (*Daily Dispatch*, 6.6.75).

RESOLUTIONS

1. Presbytery reaffirms emphatically the Biblical and Cal-

vinistic principle that God and his word are sovereign over all areas of our lives and therefore that Christians must be concerned to hear, to discuss and to witness to what this Word of God says regarding righteousness (justice) and sin in society and politics as well as in the spiritual life of the individual.

2. Presbytery rejects any claim by the State or by any ideology to be the final authority in any area of our lives in the place of God.
3. Presbytery reasserts the right and indeed the duty of Christians to be concerned about the need for any change in our society which will eliminate injustice and oppression by peaceful means.
4. Presbytery maintains that any offences of which the

Christian Institute was suspected should have been judged in a court of law rather than by a commission of party politicians acting as a secret tribunal.

5. Presbytery deplores the Government's further slide away from the Rule of Law into executive action against its political opponents which is uncontrolled by the courts and therefore dictatorial.
6. Presbytery views with profound concern and apprehension the Government's reported intention to set up a permanent commission for internal security which will continue to operate by means of secret investigation and secret trials without the benefits of a presiding judge, an open court and the opportunity for those who are accused to cross-examine witnesses. *

A TENSE TIME FOR CHURCHES

June was certainly one of the most crucial months of 1975 for churches in South Africa. There were three dominant events:

- the declaration of the Christian Institute as an Affected Organisation;
- the Synod of the N.G. Kerk at Worcester;
- the expulsion of Bishop Richard Wood and Mr. Rolf Friede from South West Africa.

These developments took place against a backdrop of important political events. These were:

- the attainment of independence by Mozambique;
- the renewed political activism of Black Groups in South West Africa;
- two parliamentary by-elections, fought out between the Government and right-wing groups, in the Transvaal.

The happenings in the church sphere should be seen against the backdrop of the political developments. The independence celebrations of Mozambique were accompanied by some tough talking by the new head of state, President Samora Machel. His promises of support and sympathy for Blacks striving for liberation in Rhodesia and South Africa set alarm bells ringing in those two countries, and despite the Government's current detente policy there was a perceptible undercurrent of hostility and fear in Government organs of opinion towards the new regime. The flexing of political muscle by both SWAPO and the Namibia National Convention in Windhoek, emphasised that the pressures on South Africa were two sided.

In this climate of nervousness, the results of the parliamentary by-elections in the Gezina and Middelburg constituencies in the Transvaal could not have been more unwelcome. The Government was faced in both seats by a strong challenge from the extreme Right-wing Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP). In the face of this, even cabinet ministers used in the Government's election campaign, played down the movement away from discriminatory practices which constitutes the internal side of the detente policy.

But this did not satisfy many voters in the two constituencies. Although well-beaten, the Government's rightist opponents drew significant numbers of votes and did not lose their deposits, as has invariably happened in the past. The warning was clear; slow and cautious though it has been in dismantling some peripheral aspects of apartheid, the Govern-

ment is faced with right-wing backlash which could slow the pace even further.

Yet the chief casualty in the election was not the Government; it was the official parliamentary opposition United Party. Its candidate in the Middelburg constituency trailed in a long way behind the HNP, and as a result it is being confidently said by political commentators that the UP is no longer the second largest party in the country areas of South Africa. This would mean its being forced back into a number of urban citadels, where it is threatened on the left flank by the liberal Progressive-Reform Party. Thus the by-elections could spell the beginning of the end for the United Party.

Since the Progressive-Reform Party is too small as yet to have any decisive influence — and in any case stands in too polarised a position from the Government's point of view — this development could give rise to even more strongly right wing policies as the Government attempts to deal with the threat from the right posed by the HNP.

No detente for churches

This development holds no comfort at all for the embattled English-language churches, particularly in the light of the fact that through its actions against the Christian Institute and the Anglican Church in South West Africa, the Government has made it clear that there is to be no detente in its relations with these churches.

Just the opposite in fact, if the report of the Le Grange Commission on the Christian Institute, the expulsions from South West Africa, and various Governmental statements are anything to go by.

What the Le Grange report made clear was that the Government — and the official United Party opposition — are increasingly impatient of any criticisms or solutions being put forward by churches which do fall within the ambit of official White political thinking. The tendency is to accuse all agencies which fail to subscribe to the policies and thinking of the Government, of favouring violent change.

Thus, without adducing any concrete evidence, the Le Grange Commission found the Christian Institute guilty of propagating violence. And towards the end of the parliamentary session, the Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration, Mr. Punt Janson, demanded of the Progressive and Reform Parties whether they would "publicly dissociate themselves from all the axioms of the World Council of Churches and the South African Council of Churches, urging violent

change in South Africa”.

Any cursory investigation of the public standpoints of the two organisations would show the violence accusation to be groundless.

The Government and the conservative sector of the United Party however, nowadays tend to ignore publicly stated standpoints, and to use implication and association to substantiate charges of supporting violence. Very probably this type of thinking accounts for the actions against Bishop Richard Wood and Mr. Rolf Friede in South West Africa, and the rightwing backlash against both the external and internal detente moves can be expected to increase this tendency.

Stalemate danger for churches

Despite the pressures being exercised on them, the position of those Christian organisations radically opposed to apartheid is not crumbling. True, the Christian Institute has lost its overseas financial support, but there has also been a strong surge of internal support for the organisation. Not only have church leaders such as Cardinal Owen McCann of the Catholic Church and the Executive of the S.A. Council of Churches come out strongly for the CI, but, said its director Dr. Beyers Naudé in Natal last week, there had also been strong new financial support for the CI from within South Africa.

What is clear by now is that the CI will have enough funds to maintain a vigorous, if somewhat curtailed, existence. And that, for the moment, means the CI has won its battle with the authorities. For the significance of the CI has never lain in its projects needing heavy funding, but in its prophetic witness in South Africa as a focus of Christian opposition to apartheid. Even on a reduced budget, the CI can and will continue to perform this function — as it did very effectively in its early years before its activities expanded. Only outright banning is likely to silence the voice of the CI.

The CI demonstrates that anti-apartheid Christian forces in South Africa have a remarkable resilience. The Synod of the Black N.G. Kerk in Afrika demonstrated that those forces, despite Governmental attacks, are actually gaining strength. This “daughter church” of the White N.G. Kerk, struck out on

a boldly independent line that took it a long way towards the ecumenical Christian camp. Its decision to become a full member of the S.A. Council of Churches was one of its most significant moves, and is likely to prove a big source of additional strength to the SACC.

Yet this is only one more of the many indications the SACC has had over the past year of a growing consolidation of its strength. That must be considered remarkable in the light of the furious assaults launched on the SACC after its national conference at Hammanskraal last year, famed for its “conscientious objection” resolution.

Almost a year after the event, it is possible to say that the effects of Hammanskraal 1974 have been overwhelmingly beneficial. Despite the creation of a huge cloud of suspicion about the SACC, far from weakening its support within its own constituency, Hammanskraal has had the effect of making the constituency take the SACC far more seriously.

And while the accession of the NGKA to full membership has added to SACC strength, indications are that support is equally solid in older member churches of the constituency. This was very clear from the recent meeting of the conservative, White-dominated Kingwilliamstown “Presbytery” of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa which decisively rejected a move to break links with the SACC.

The lesson, in the case of both the CI and the SACC, would seem to be that Governmental propaganda attacks on church organisations in South Africa seem to have the opposite effect from that intended. For the organisations themselves this is, in the short term, a welcome development. But clearly it has its dangers. Aware of threats to its own security from the advancing tide of Black independence without, and from rising right-wing backlash within, the Government might come to the conclusion that the best way to deal with opponents such as the CI, is to forcibly silence them. That, it would seem, is the policy which has been applied to churchmen in South West Africa.

*David Thomas,
—Ecunews, 2.6.75.*

THE GOSPEL AND POLITICS ACCORDING TO CALVIN

roelf meyer

By declaring the CI to be “an affected organization” the government has passed judgment on it as being “engaged in politics”. As the term “politics” has not been defined there is confusion in the minds of many people as to what it means. There are at least two clear ways of being “engaged in politics” and they differ fundamentally. One way is to initiate a political party having a specific practical political programme and policy. The other is to bear witness in word and deed as a church body, or as a Christian body which is part of the political field. Virtually all main churches are in this way “engaged in politics” in South Africa. The CI could well be included in the second way, but definitely not in the first way, as it has — to name but one crucial aspect — no practical political programme.

As many of the people in the government and many in South Africa supporting the government are “Protestants”, it may serve a good purpose to publish the following article as a reminder to them of what Calvin, the main reformer, said about the Church’s involvement in politics. It is also very significant what Prof. Willie Jonker, professor in theology of the D.R. Church at Stellenbosch, has said about the issue and the stand of the D.R. Church in history.

1. The gospel has a direct bearing on politics

Calvin had a great and lively interest and actively participated in politics devoting himself zealously to the

cause of bringing politics within 'a religious norm and control'.¹

Yet one must interpret Calvin's thoughts in depth in order to do justice to the strength of his conviction that the gospel must influence the political sphere directly. He says that one errs grievously if one expects a state to prosper which is not controlled by the sceptre of God, i.e. his Holy Word.²

André Biéler who is a recognised authority on Calvin also concludes that the spiritual aspects of the Reformation had an effect on the social aspects and that the spiritual aspect penetrates all facets of life without exception and has its impact on everyone everywhere.³

Calvin called upon the king to regard as untrue the imputations levelled against the Reformers, and in connection therewith said: "One cannot separate political and spiritual truth. Your first task as ruler is to build your kingdom on justice. But if you are not interested in the religious aspect, if you allow yourself to be misled by the vilification of those who call the evangelical Christians revolutionary, so that the awkward questions they ask may be evaded, you make yourselves party to injustice and your rule deteriorates into mere hooliganism ('mais brigandage')."⁴

Calvin went on to say that the king must not deceive himself since even the greatest politician ... utterly deludes himself if he thinks that he can build a prosperous regime without concerning himself in the truth which is in Christ. This is not a question of religious or private matters; this concerns politics directly ...⁵

According to Biéler, Calvin and the reformers saw the re-forming of the Church, however, not merely as an isolated "spiritual" and theoretical event inspired by the Word of God, but to them it represented 'by reason of its origin, a revolutionary spiritual power which necessarily questions social injustice'.⁶ Biéler described Calvin specifically with reference to his political action as a Christian as follows: "Calvin who was Catholic, humanist and conservative, after his conversion became the head of the popular 'subversive' movement".⁷ According to Biéler Calvin exerted himself to show why a Christian must always be a disturbing element in an unjust social order. Calvin took pains to make it clear that faithful Christians always in a certain measure must be disturbers of the social order—because, explicitly or implicitly, they showed up the injustice and unfairness of the society in which they found themselves, whilst they took the Word of God earnestly and lived by it. This they did in the same way as that in which they dealt with the impurity of conventional religion".⁸

Calvin makes it crystal clear that it is the conservatives themselves who want to retain the *status quo* of an unjust regime and who are the real trouble-makers. "It is not the reformed Christians who are the instigators of disorder. In fact they are the very people who want to establish the new order which God wills should reign in religion as well as in society. The real trouble-makers are those who spread religious and social disorder in the

very act of protecting it. It is the reactionary conservatives who by their injustice and violence promote falsehood and refuse to listen to the truth".⁹

It is thus clear that Calvin's 'subversive action' is nothing more than the 'sabotaging' through politics of *injustice* in society and the government. "Apart from this one aim which emerged from their loyalty to the gospel, the 'authentic Christians' had no other revolutionary aim."¹⁰ According to Biéler it is therefore abundantly clear that Calvin believed that the ruler cannot separate politics from the gospel.¹¹

2. A minimal civil order without the gospel as measuring rod is of little use

If Calvin maintains that there is a direct connection between the gospel and the political sphere, *what then does he mean by his differentiation between the realm of 'politics and law' and the realm of 'the gospel', ... the 'morale minimum' and the 'morale optimum'?*

Some people interpret Calvin's separation to mean that the political sphere *only* must be controlled by a minimum moral standard of justice and fairness and that the gospel must not be taken as the norm for this. Their solution for the political situation in accordance with this interpretation of the two spheres is accordingly that boundaries between Church and State be fixed.

Once again we must first look at Calvin's teaching and also Biéler's to decide precisely what their words mean.

Biéler explains Calvin's thoughts on the 'minimum moral code' as follows: He says that it is necessary that Christians as well as non-Christians must observe at least a minimal moral level of living even if this is effected by means of the power or force of an external moral law. "This external moral law will insinuate itself upon unbelievers by way of an 'external' or political influence; it will compel them to remain within a definite moral framework restraining them from destructive excesses; ... and on believers this law will have the effect of reminding them of the moral level upon which they are called to live in the freedom which Christ enjoined upon them"¹²

But what is of utmost importance here is that Biéler interprets Calvin's thoughts in the framework of Calvin's elucidation of the 'uses of the moral law revealed to the people by Moses'. In other words, the 'external or moral law', the 'minimal moral code' which is to be applied externally or politically, *is according to Calvin none other than a derivative of the ten commandments.*

In this whole connection Calvin says that man possesses within himself 'a natural law' which gives expression to the will of God.¹³ For man, however, this law is fragmented because of his sins, "so that ultimately this law is of no use as a guide line for his ordinary existence."¹⁴ Calvin explains the purpose of this 'lex naturae' in these terms: "The purpose of the natural law is to make it impossible for man to justify himself."¹⁵ What is interesting here from our point of view is that Calvin says of this law that "it is subject to so many mistakes on

the part of men and makes its stumbling way over so much of man-made error ... that it is quite impossible for this law to guide us in a certain (determined) way."¹⁶ The result is thus that "this natural law must be alleviated by a special grace of God to make it usable ..." And "... The law of God is thus a spiritual law before it is a moral law."¹⁷ Therefore, says Calvin, man needs Jesus Christ who alone fulfils the law, and so Calvin maintains that there is a direct linkage between the gospel and political life, or the minimal moral code, or the minimal law.

In spite of this, 'enforced justice' still remains necessary in the political sphere. He says: "Nevertheless enforced justice remains necessary for society to ensure the peace and stability which our Lord gives us when He controls all our affairs — preventing revolts ... which would ensue were we to be allowed complete freedom from restraint."¹⁸

On grounds of the above, Biéler then concludes: "We see thus that in the reformed doctrine there is no authentic morality outside of that which flows from the spiritual life and which is the natural fruit of life in the fellowship of Jesus Christ". It is therefore of no avail merely to employ ideas of Calvin, such as e.g. 'morale minimum', without linking them with the gospel, as Calvin certainly does.

3. No separation between the political and spiritual terrains without departing from the Gospel

In the light of the above it then becomes necessary to determine what Calvin meant by the terms 'spiritual and temporal kingdoms'.

The traditional 'reformed' view based on Calvin, does not lend support to two independent areas or spheres, namely that of politics and the Church, "because this aloof indifference on the part of the church ... creates a spiritual vacuum within the secular realm which is then inclined to occupy itself fully with ideological and mundane views. As a result a hopeless rupture between the Church and politics, or spiritual and secular responsibility comes about."¹⁹ This is also precisely what has happened in South Africa, viz. that the national government opposes Church action in the terrain of politics because it wants to make claims for itself on this terrain with its worldly ideology of apartheid. As far as some church groups and the Christian Institute are concerned, they are trying to make their contribution to the 'prophetic task' of the Church in the political terrain.

If Calvin speaks of the distinction between the sphere of politics and the sphere of the gospel, he does so against the background of his conviction that "a theoretic distinction between them (church and state) is not possible."²⁰ Nevertheless Calvin makes a practical distinction, but he does so not for the sake of withholding the influence and authority of the gospel and the church from politics, as a so-called independent territory, but from purely pragmatic reasons to enable them to carry out their several specific tasks.²¹ As far as the structure

of their work is concerned, the territories differ, but *as far as the content of the political sphere and the spiritual sphere are concerned, the gospel continues to be the norm for both.*²² Christ and his gospel remain thus the norm for both separate spheres in respect of their function, albeit the two spheres still form an 'indivisible whole'.

Biéler also affirms the unity between the two separate spheres in Calvin's thoughts. He says: "Calvinism is not a kind of 'spiritualism' as humanism understands this term which separates the material life of our human existence from the spirit. The 'reformed' doctrine is opposed to this sort of alienation of human existence."²⁴ In his conclusion Biéler says further that according to Calvin the truth is that "the totality of human existence is contained within and controlled by God. It is in our earthly (material) life that He confronts us and tests our faith."²⁵

It is clear according to Calvin that the gospel must be the measuring rod in all spheres of life, and, where he makes a distinction between the civil and the spiritual life, this means that the civil government must only provide an external order; it may not make claims upon power or authority over the 'inner life' of the people.²⁶ On the other hand the terrain of the spiritual sphere is separate "because it is fanatical to argue on the strength of our Christian doctrine that no external order must be imposed on us". He says that this fanatical standpoint is "Jewish vanity designed to try to encompass Christ's Kingdom within the elements of the world".²⁷ Moreover, the external order and its maintenance do not in Calvin's view form part of the 'apostolic task' of the Church.

For Calvin the government thus has the task of maintaining the "external order" which is *not* the "apostolic task" of the church. This external order must be there to keep non-Christians as well as Christians in check. Nevertheless there were people who said that this "external order" was not necessary because society must live simply according to the gospel. Calvin, on the other hand, said that this could not be so because it would mean that a person would try 'to encompass the Kingdom of Christ within the elements of the world'—and this would constitute 'Jewish vanity'. What Calvin propounds here is not a separation of the terrains of church and state, each with its own norms and independence, as some people interpret him, but he affirms that the external political order is necessary and that it is the specific *task* of the government. *AS FAR AS THE EXTERNAL POLITICAL ORDER IS CONCERNED, THE TASKS OF CHURCH AND STATE DIFFER IN THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST DETERMINE THE EXTERIOR POLITICAL ORDER, BUT THE CHRISTIANS (THE CHURCH) MUST, ACCORDING TO CALVIN, DETERMINE THE NORMS FOR THE POLITICAL ORDER BASED ON THE GOSPEL.*

From the above it is then clear that Calvin saw a

specific task demarcated for the civil authority, namely the maintenance of external order, while the spiritual terrain extended over all without limit, the gospel providing the measuring rod for life as a whole.

4. This standpoint is also the traditional 'reformed' standpoint in South Africa

The above-mentioned Calvinist doctrine is interpreted in this way not only by the Frenchman, André Biéler, and the German Helmut Thielicke; it is also so expounded by South Africans. For the purposes of this article one example will suffice. Willie Jonker, Professor of Theology at Stellenbosch, writes as follows: "We find the most thought-provoking impact regarding socio-ethical questions in the time of Calvin and the Reformation. This is so because Calvin accepted Holy Writ as the norm in every field including matters affecting the social order."²⁸ According to Jonker Calvin does not think in these terms merely for the sake of building up an ethic on the ground of the general grace of God (or a 'minimal morality'—own addendum) even though the concept 'general grace' is important for the maintenance of civil justice in an orderly society. He says: "Calvin maintains Holy Scripture to be the only norm for ethics. This means that the natural law—(lex naturae and the so-called morale minimum can in our opinion be included)—cannot in respect of the theological ethic become a norm side by side with Holy Scripture. For the social ethic this implies that the Institutes of God cannot be accepted as a fixed and immutable premise willed by God. They must be subject to critical review in terms of the Word of God."²⁹

Relative to today's situation what Jonker writes further is also of importance: "Behind the manifest aloofness of the Church in the political field there often lurks nothing other than support of the ruling political system."³⁰ He says moreover that the Bible keeps itself fully occupied with political questions. "Not only is the Old Testament a 'political book', but even the actions of Jesus have political significance."³¹ He urges that we should not shut our eyes "to the injustice, poverty, oppression and frustration under the weight of which so many people throughout the world are bowed."³²

Jonker says outright that the gospel must provide the norm in the political field as well, and that such always has been the Calvinistic and 'reformed' view. "In terms sharp as a rapier, so sharp as to startle us into resisting conditions in which people are treated unjustly and forced to endure misery, Holy Scripture directs its censure against every form of injustice. And thus it follows that we dare not identify ourselves with the belief in pietistic aloofness from the world which contends that church and theology are not to concern themselves in the burning social and political questions of our day. Who would travel this road forsakes not only the way which the Ned. Geref. Kerk trod in the past, but he abandons also the 'reformed' way, and reveals that he understands nothing of the real meaning of the gospel in all fields of human life."³³

While we are considering Calvin's views it might perhaps not come amiss to test in the light of Calvinistic doctrine the Christian Institute's standpoint which it is endeavouring to maintain in terms of the gospel against the government's policy of apartheid. People, as e.g. Dr A.P. Treurnicht, have, according to a news item in *Hoofstad*, 11.4.1969, tried to impute to Calvin such ideas as that of 'separate development'. Therefore it might be a good idea to conclude with a few extracts from Calvin.

"The human race is bound together by a holy tie of fellowship. Every man is every man's neighbour. That everyman may be our neighbour, it is sufficient that he be a human being, for we are not entitled to obliterate our human nature which we have in common."³⁴

"The Bible shows that people are born one for the other and, that, as a result, they must have mutual association one with the other in order to perpetuate the fellowship of the human race."³⁵

"And now that we see that God created the human race in such a fashion that we are bound together, and that no one should keep himself or his abilities apart, (unshared), but that we should all contribute our abilities that all and everything may serve the community, it is meet that we be encouraged to such liberality?"³⁶

"God willed that we should all spring from the same source so that we should all the more be in need of mutual support and unity and that each should embrace the other as his own flesh ... And as concerns inequality which is in conflict with His purpose, this is nothing other than a corruption which flows from sin."³⁷

"God wills that there should be such a similarity and equality between us that each one shall help the poor and needy according to his means, so that some shall not have abundance while others suffer lack."³⁸

"Consider well that God has ordered that everyone must love the stranger as himself. From this it is clear that the term 'neighbour' is not confined to the family, and the next-door neighbour and acquaintances, but encompasses the whole of mankind as Jesus Christ showed in the person of the Samaritan ..."³⁹

In the light of this article on Calvin, we conclude by saying that we can see no reason why the Christian Institute should turn away from its principles to divert its energies into other channels. In summary the Christian Institute, as stated in its Principles and Programme for Action, stands for the following:

"TO BRING EVERY FACET OF LIFE INTO OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST."

"THE SYSTEM OF APARTHEID IS MAINTAINED WITH VIOLENCE AGAINST INNOCENT PEOPLE AND THIS CALLS FORTH REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE. THIS WAY OF LIFE MUST BE CHANGED IN A RADICAL, ALBEIT PEACEFUL, MANNER TO A LIFE OF LOVE AND JUSTICE IN OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST."

FOOTNOTES

1. "Theological Ethics", Vol. 2, Helmut Thielicke, Fortress Press, 1969, p. 565.
2. "Le Pensée Economique et Sociale de Calvin", André Biéler, Geneva, 1961, p. 77.
3. Ibid., p. 30.
4. Ibid., p. 76.
5. Ibid., pp. 76-77.
6. Ibid., pp. 30-31.
7. Ibid., p. 65.
8. Ibid., p. 80.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 81.
11. Ibid., p. 77.
12. Ibid., p. 211.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., p. 209.
15. Institutes of Calvin, II, 2:25.
16. Ibid.
17. A. Biéler, op. cit., p. 209.
18. Institutes of Calvin, II, 7:10.
19. H. Thielicke, op. cit., p. 568.
20. Ibid., p. 593.
21. Ibid., p. 595.
22. Ibid., p. 596.
23. Ibid.
24. A. Biéler, op. cit., p. 307.
25. Ibid.
26. H. Thielicke, op. cit., p. 595, Calvin, op. cit., II 8:6.
27. Calvin, op. cit., IV, 20:1,2.
28. Sol Justitiae, P.A. Verhoef, N.G. Kerkgewers, 1973, pp. 84, 85.
29. Ibid., p. 85.
30. Ibid., p. 92.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., p. 96.
33. Ibid., p. 97.
34. Calvin Commentary on the New Testament, Luk. 10:30.
35. Calvin Commentary on Ex. 22:25.
36. Sermon on 1 Cor. 11:11-16. Works of Calvin, Vol. XLIX, p. 740.
37. Calvin, Commentary on Gen. 1:27.
38. Calvin, Commentary on II Cor. 8:13.
39. Calvin, Commentary on Ex. 22:21-24.

CITATION: MANAS BUTHELEZI

Copy of the citation that was read at the time an honorary degree in theology was granted to Dr Manas Buthelezi by the Wartburg Theological Seminary on 18th May, 1975.

Manas Buthelezi, director of the Natal Region for the Christian Institute of Southern Africa, is known internationally for his participation in Lutheran and ecumenical events. Professor Buthelezi is a courageous and powerful representative of the growing numbers of theologians and church leaders from Africa and other parts of the world who have much to teach us as together we seek to witness and serve as the followers of Jesus Christ in the world today. In thankfulness to God for his ministry to us and the world church, Wartburg Theological Seminary wishes to indicate its encouragement and support to Professor Buthelezi and all like him who urgently call all of us who name the name of Jesus Christ as Reconciler, to our inescapable responsibilities in working for human justice and freedom.

Manas Buthelezi is an articulate and brilliant spokesman against apartheid, the policy of racial separation rigidly imposed on South Africa by the ruling government. In spite of a five-year ban levelled against him in December 1973 and which prohibited him from engaging in public preaching, teaching and writing, Dr Buthelezi continued to preach and conduct worship. After a flood of protests from all over the world, the ban was lifted in May 1974.

Dr Buthelezi was a member of a "Mission on Six Continents" team of international visitors sponsored by LWF and LCUSA in 1973.

His career has included three years at Yale Divinity School and earning a doctorate in theology from Drew University. He has been a lecturer at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Mapumulo, South Africa; Heidelberg University, Germany; and this year at Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C. He has served as pastor in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa and is author of numerous articles and studies.

In a recent address to the Eastern District Convention of our Church, Dr Buthelezi said: "When American churches welcome native churchmen (from overseas), we discover that you are human too, that you have problems too. That generates hope in us that we can join hands and deal with our problems together". He spoke of church support in many parts of the world that helped "lift" the dreaded "ban" imposed on him by the South African government and said: "There are many people suffering and needing the kind of service you rendered to me".

We believe that we are more honored by being allowed to present this small expression to Dr Buthelezi, than any honor that we may be presenting to him, but in doing so we express the prayer and hope that together the church in Africa and our church may be increasingly bound together in faithful witness to the reconciling love of God in Christ our Lord.

AN HISTORIC MOMENT IN THE SYNOD

ivor shapiro

There was no emotion in the face or the voice of the Rev. E.T.S. Buti at 3.56 p.m. on 11 June as he said to the assembled delegates to the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa: "Those in favour of this motion, raise your hands."

Only one white man at the synod voted. He asked the Synod Scribe to record the fact that he had voted against the motion, and this was duly done.

He was a "missionary". One of the last of a particular breed that the synod had now formally made extinct. The DRCA is a "mission church", or a "daughter church" of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk. Up to now, white ministers of the mother church have been called or sent as missionaries to this and other daughter churches.

Now the post of Missionary has been scrapped, and with it the concept of the N.G. Kerk in Afrika as a subordinate church has been rejected. The DRCA — with its overwhelming African membership — has decided that the NGK and itself are two independent churches over each of which Christ reigns directly.

White ministers will be welcome as ministers of the church, but they, like their brother ministers, must become members of the DRCA, and resign their membership of the NGK. In turn, the synod demanded, the NGK must open its doors to black ministers. "Otherwise", the hastily-worded resolution ends, "it is racialistic."

The Rev Sam Buti, newly elected Synod Scribe, was one of the moving forces behind the historic decision. Proposing the resolution, the son of the new Moderator in turn referred to and rejected each of the alternatives which the synod could have adopted.

To retain the present position? "A missionary is a person who is sent to break new ground, to establish the word of God where it has not been heard before. Once he is serving an established and independent church he is a missionary no longer, he is a minister of that church."

To allow double membership of the NGK and the DRCA? "Double membership applies where a person goes for a time to a far-away place to serve the church there and later returns to his home. From South Africa to Malawi, or from Holland to Indonesia. This is not the case with us. Each minister must choose which church he is a member of, responsible to, and may be disciplined by."

To start a system whereby whites serve the DRCA in an advisory capacity (with a voice but no vote at synod)? "No. What is an advisory minister?"

"We do not ask for missionaries or advisors. We ask for ministers," he said, and sat down.

For four hours the synod hall in Worcester was filled with the tension that surrounds a debate when a decision is to be taken that will mark a decisive point in the history of a church, a culture, a people. Yet almost all the speeches, black and white, were marked by courtesy and politeness. The rows of black delegates were conscious of the hurt felt by the whites whose life services were implicitly being classed dispensable, and they were cautious to repeat time and again that what they were saying they were saying in love.

"I came into this church so many years ago in love," one

missionary boomed down the centre aisle. "Now, if you must send me away, let me leave it in love."

White N.G. Kerk has taken unilateral decisions

The quiet, reasonable tones of the moderator of the "Mother Church" were heard with due courtesy. The Rev. D.P.M. Beukes urged delegates not to take a unilateral decision on the matter, as it concerned the relationship between the two churches. But in summing up, the Rev. Sam Buti pointed out that the NGK had already taken its own unilateral decision, and had sent it to the DRCA for approval. Now the DRCA itself had to take its own decision. The Moderator added — "We must obey the Word of God rather than the word of the N.G. Kerk."

Nor did the figure of Dr Koot Vorster — the man who once was thought of as the second most influential man in South Africa, — next to his brother, the Prime Minister, — carry much weight. "I am a serious man, he said, before reiterating the points made by Ds. Beukes. There was not the slightest feeling in the NGK that Christ did not reign directly in the DRCA. "Naturally, the DRCA is independent." This was not to say that the terms "mother church" and "daughter church" should be scrapped. They symbolised for him the love of a mother for her child.

"With great love, we have helped this church to independence," Dr Vorster said, probably unconsciously using the terminology of government politicians talking about homelands, and thereby emphasising how symbolic of and significant for the country's political situation this debate was.

But eventually, the words ran out. The elder Buti, the first black Moderator of his church, had throughout the debate remained neutral except to dismiss with disdain any suggestion of postponing judgment or referring a recommendation once again to the NGK. "I have been hearing debates on this matter since 1963. The time for a decision has come." Now he rose and called for the vote. In silence the votes were counted by the official tellers, ironically and again symbolically, both white.

The voting was 82 for the motion, 17 against. Without ado, the Synod moved on to consider points of order arising, and then adjourned for tea.

Most of the delegates were smiling. *

NGKA BURSTS INTO SONG AS IT DECIDES TO JOIN SACC

Worcester — June 13: The importance which the N.G. Kerk in Afrika attaches to the decision of its Synod to become a full member of the S.A. Council of Churches could be gauged from the prolonged applause by the 150 representatives which greeted the announcement by the Moderator that the vote in favour of the move had been overwhelming.

There was singing and chanting when the Moderator, the Rev. E.T.S. Buti, said: "The decision we have taken is final".

The decision came after much debate and resistance from mainly the White representatives of the Synod. Their argument was based on the fact that the SACC was an affiliate member of the World Council of Churches which supports "liberation movements" operating in Southern Africa.

Another argument was centred around the controversial Hammanskraal Resolution on conscientious objection which was taken by the SACC Annual Conference last year. Those who spoke against joining the SACC said they did not want to see their church co-operate with what one White minister termed "an un-Christian" body.

On the other hand, those representatives who spoke in favour of the NGKA becoming a full member of the SACC, said it was the NGKA's duty to "convert" SACC if it needed conversion. There was also a strong feeling that the NGKA needed ecumenical contact outside its own NGK family, and that the SACC was the answer.

Most of the representatives seemed anxious that the whole NGK family become members of the SACC. This desire was summed up in the words of Dr. H.L. Pretorius, of the Transkei, who said: "The NGKA's decision to become a full member of the SACC could pave the way for the N.G. Kerk to return to the body it once founded". He said when the NGK left the SACC it was on the question of the race problem, rather than on theological grounds. He said the SACC could never be truly ecumenical if the NGK family in South Africa was not included.

After the decision to join the SACC was taken, those in opposition raised another problem. They argued that the NGKA Synod decision should be referred to the Federal Council, on which the mother church was represented, for approval. Reacting to this, the General Secretary of the

NGKA Synod, the Rev. Sam Buti, said the NGKA was an autonomous body which could take independent decisions.

A typical White reaction to the decision to join the SACC, came from the Rev. W.A. Rossouw who said he wondered where the Black church was heading for. He remarked to the Synod "Black man, Black man, where are you going?" He and another White missionary, asked that their names go on record as having voted against the move.

The NGKA will become the first church in the NGK family to join the SACC as a full member since World War II when the N.G. Kerk broke ties with the Council. The other two daughter churches, the Mission Church, and the Indian Reformed Church, are observer members of the SACC.

State must listen to church, says NGKA black moderator

Worcester — June 13: The new Moderator of the N.G. Kerk in Afrika, the Rev. E.T.S. Buti, who has become the first Black to lead the church, warned that the Church must not allow itself to be dictated to by the State. He was addressing the General Synod of the NGKA.

The Moderator was replying to a question as to whether the Church should only operate within the limits of Government policy. The question was prompted by constant reminders by representatives during debates at the Synod that the Church could not do certain things because of legal restrictions.

Mr. Buti reacted strongly to the suggestion that the Church ought to operate only within the bounds of Government policy, saying: "If the Government says "no" to the Church, then the Church must ask Why". Mr. Buti said it had become common practice in South Africa to refer to those who did not agree with certain Government policies as "anti-White".

Stressing that the Gospel knew no colour of skin, Mr. Buti said: "We are looking forward to the day when we in South Africa shall see each other as true brothers and not in terms of colour".

Mr. Buti's stance on the Church-State relationships, could be seen as "militant" in terms of the traditional attitude of the NGK. In the past, only rarely have ministers of the NGK family expressed views which could be seen as contrary to Government policy.

— *Ecunews*, 17.6.75.

letter to the editor:

Sir,

In both April and May issues of your magazine, something to the effect of the Resolution on Conscientious Objection, which was passed at the National Conference of the SACC at Hammanskraal last year, was mentioned. This is however the so-called Dialogue between the Rev. Douglas Bax, the proposer of the resolution and a "friend". One thing which I do not understand in this is that one party of this "dialogue" is simply called a "friend". Why is his name not disclosed, while that of Rev. D. Bax is disclosed? With this in mind one cannot help but recall to mind what our Lord Jesus says in the Gospel according to St. John 8, verse 12: "I am the light of the world;

he who walks after me will not walk in darkness". Why then does this follower of Christ want to have this Dialogue in "darkness"? Is he ashamed of the Gospel which he preaches? Well, let him remember what St. Paul says in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel: it is the power of Salvation to every one who has faith... "Why then is it that this wonderful "friend" is ashamed of his name being disclosed?"

— *Ishmael Mathebula*
Federal Theological Seminary

DIE NEDERDUITSE GEREFORMEERDE KERK IN AFRIKA OP PAD VAN BEVRYDING

roelf meyer

Die sinode van die Ned. Geref. Kerk in Afrika (NGKA) het sonder enige onduidelikheid getoon dat daar 'n historiese proses van bevryding van oorheersing en eensydige gesagsuitoefening in swart denke aan die gang is wat hom snel voltrek.

Op die gebied van *sy verhouding met die blanke Ned. Geref. Kerk* het die NGKA besluit dat albei volwaardige kerke is sodat die „sendelinge” met hulle eensydige bevoorregte posisie van die verlede, gewone lidmate en leraars alleenlik van die NGKA moet wees en dat swart leraars ook na die blanke kerk beroep behoort te word. Op *ekumeniese gebied* het hy die bevangenhouding van die NG Kerk in Suid-Afrika deurbreek en besluit om by die SARK aan te sluit. Op *politieke terrein* het hy sy kritiese profetiese taak in die Naam van Christus nagekom deur verontregting uit te wys en die politieke stelsel van afsonderlike ontwikkeling, met sy basiese onreg, af te wys.

Op *kerklike gebied* het die NGKA besluit dat die eenheid van die kerk op organisatoriese en praktiese vlak tot uitdrukking móét kom en het hy besluit dat die verskillende NG Kerke, wat op grond van ras ingedeel is, een behoort te word en dat hy inderdaad een met die ander, wat daarvoor gewillig is, gaan word.

Hierdie is 'n paar van die besluite as voorbeelde van die riglyne van die pad van bevryding wat die NGKA ingeslaan het. Meer besluite en aksie sal sekerlik nog volg. Daar is ander belangrike sake deur swart leraars genoem wat nog nader uitgewerk moet word, soos bv. een teologiese opleidingsrigting i.p.v. van vyf; die beoefening van aktuele teologie ook deur middel van swart teologie in plaas van wit oorheersingsteologie; die gebruikmaking van meer Engels in die plek van Afrikaans as 'n meer ekumeniese taal in die teologiese opleiding en die kerklike wêreld; die stigting van 'n blad waarin die swartman sy onbelemmende profetiese getuigenis van Christelike bevryding en eenheid onomwonde kan laat hoor. Daar lê nou vir die kerk harde werk voor om al hierdie begeertes en sinode-besluite te verwesenlik. Een ding is egter duidelik, naamlik die geestelike krag en vrymoedigheid waarmee die broeders die sake aanpak. Dit toon dat daar reeds bevryding aanwesig is. Bevryding kan slegs deur bevryde persone bewerkstellig word en daarom sal die strukturering van dié vryheid in kerk en samelewing ook nie kan uitbly nie.

As 'n mens sou vra hoe dit moontlik was dat die sinode sulke verreikende besluite kon neem, kan 'n mens baie redes aantoon. Een saak wat seker die deurslag gegee het, was die feit dat dit die eerste keer in die geskiedenis van die NGKA, die NG Sendingkerk of die Indian Reformed Church was dat 'n swart leraar die moderator was.

Die bruin leraars het verlede jaar by die NG Sendingsinode ook probeer om soortgelyke besluite te neem, maar moes uiteindelik swig voor die oorreding van die blanke „sendelinge” en blanke moderator wat duidelik die blanke NG Kerk se belange in die oog gehad het, en gevolglik gepleit het dat daar eers met die blanke kerk oorleg gepleeg moes word voordat daar finaal oor kardinale sake besluit sou word. Die gevolg was dat daar in baie gevalle slegs kompromie-besluite aangeneem is, soos bv. oor die posisie van die „sendeling”, die eenwording van die verskillende NG Kerke en die aansluiting by die Suid-Afrikaanse Raad van Kerke. By die sinode van die NGKA was die stem van die swart moderator helder en duidelik en is geen kompromie gemaak nie. Dít het van die begin af koers aan die sinode gegee. Dit is gevolglik duidelik dat die

blanke leraar homself volledig op grond van die evangelie van Christus met die lyding en stryd van die swartman in SA sal moet vereenselwig indien hy wil help om leiding aan dié kerk te gee, of om sinvol daarin te dien. Dit sal egter nie in die geheim of op 'n basis van kompromie kan geskied nie, omdat die evangelie eis dat die kerk 'n duidelike stem in woord en daad in die openbaar moet laat hoor, en die blanke wat nie daarvoor bereid is nie, sal nie die vertrouwe van sy swart broeder ontvang nie.

Verdagmakery oor die CI en sg. rassisme

Die Kerkbode, sonder dat hy oor eerstehandse inligting beskik het, maak die afleiding dat dié gesindheid rassisme inhou en verder ook dat die CI, met die teenwoordigheid van twee staflede, die gang van sake by die sinode beïnvloed het. Sy bron van inligting moes blanke lede van die sinode gewees het. Die gedagte egter dat die NG Kerk, volgens die Kerkbode, die situasie in die NGKA as rassisties beskou *op grond van inligting deur sommige van sy sendeling*, as dit waar sou wees, versterk alleenlik die uitgesproke vermoede by swart leraars dat die wit sendeling o.a. daar is om die belange van die wit kerk te waarborg. Die opmerking oor die gesindheid van die swart broeders, as dat hulle rassisties sou wees, is volledig deur die moderator van die NGKA verwerp en die Kerkbode is oor dié opmerking kwalik geneem. Die verbasende is dat die Kerkbode die getuigenis van die swart broeders as rassisties beoordeel, maar die hele kerkpraktyk van die NG Kerk, wat kennelik op eensydig bevoordeling van die blanke gebaseer is, totaal verswyg.

Die verdagmakery van die Kerkbode dat die CI die swart broeders beïnvloed, is 'n poging om die besluite van die NGKA van sy gewete te kry, aangesien daar dan gesê word dat die swart broeders tog nie regtig só sou voel nie. Afgesien daarvan dat dit eintlik 'n belediging vir die integriteit en die onafhanklike denke van die swartman is, is die invloed van die CI op grond van die evangelie van Jesus Christus en as die NGKA die evangelie in die CI se getuigenis herken, is dit sekerlik nie as die CI se sukses te beskou nie. Wat die Kerkbode en talle blanke leraars nie begryp nie, is dat die verhouding van die blankes in die CI op volkome gelykwaardige voet met die swart mense is. Dit is nie 'n paternalistiese verhouding van voorskryf en besluite neem namens die ander nie, maar dit is 'n verhouding waar twee volwaardige mense in kritiese Christelike gesprek en gemeenskap verkeer. Daar is wedersydse kritiek, aanvaarding of verwerping van die ander se standpunt en 'n sameworsteling met mekaar se probleme, soos in enige ander normale verhouding van mense. Dit is dan nie „blankes” wat met „nie-blankes” praat en voorskryf nie, omdat dié CI-staflede nie as „blank” in die Suid-Afrikaanse politieke situasie bekend wil staan nie, aangesien „blank” dan 'n politieke betekenis van oorheersing en rassisme het. Die „swart” broeders kan gevolglik ook nie as „nie-blankes” waardeer word nie, maar hulle word gewoonweg as medemense, soos in enige normale verhouding van mense, waardeer. 'n Mens kan verstaan dat dit vir blankes wat min of geen gemeenskap aan, en aanvoeling vir die nood van die swartmense het nie en wat slegs in 'n paternalistiese verhouding van „afsonderlike ontwikkeling” tot hulle staan, dit onmoontlik kan begryp. As gevolg van die gebrek aan gemeenskap met die mense is hulle nie instaat om dit te begryp nie en dit kan 'n mens verstaan, maar dan moet hulle

nie die CI beskuldig dat hy die swartmense so paternalisties eensydig beïnvloed soos wat hulle normaalweg van blankes gewoon is nie. Dit is eenvoudig nie waar nie! Ons almal in Suider-Afrika moet probeer om 'n normale verhouding tussen wit en swart (nie-politieke terme) *mense* te aanvaar en voor te staan.

Die NGKA sal vorentoe baie krag en ondersteuning benodig omdat hy gewaag het om deel van die sout, wat die verrotting moet stuit, en deel van die lig, wat die duisternis moet verjaag, te wees. Om hierdie getuienis struktureel in kerk en samele-

wing toe te pas, sal miskien veel lyding tot gevolg hê, aangesien sommige leraars alreeds ernstig verkwalik word. Tog glo ons dat as die kerk op die pad van Christus sal volhard, hy 'n waardevolle bydrae in Christelike eenwording van die NG Kerk, in die getuienis en aksie van die SARK en in die bevryding van die samelewing sal lewer. Hierdie taak durf hy nie verloën nie, al gaan dit met vervolging en lyding gepaard. Die gekruisigde Christus is sy simbool en lewenswerklikheid, en Hy *het* oorwin.

the root of the matter:

INWARD IS "IN"

brian brown

The painful truth for South Africans engaged in an outgoing ministry of social concern to the world is that they are now swimming against two streams. The inward is in!

For the decade of the 60's, prophetic voices within our situation were well aware of swimming against the stream of counterfeit justice, and of being in opposition to prevailing white political ideologies. Even if the Church was largely lax in taking its prophetic role seriously there was the feeling that this was a legitimate ministry and we *ought* to be thus engaged. This has changed slowly but steadily during the 70's.

New developments within the Church stress "otherworldliness", a religious separatism and a re-discovery of old secretarian attitudes. Biblical ideas about the oneness of humanity, of social justice, and of being a reconciled community, are "out". If during the 60's a body like the Christian Institute learnt to live with (if not comply with) the State's demands to confine its ministry to the four walls of the sanctuary, in the 70's the same call to remain imprisoned in ecclesiastical structures is increasingly heard from the Church itself. The streams have merged and are flowing strongly.

As Martin Marty ("Contemporary Spiritual Styles") reminds us: "The retreat of Christians from the streets back into the Church is upon us. Church leaders who advocate withdrawal from public issues are guaranteed a hearing". Although Dr Marty is writing of the North American scene, the situation he describes is with us in South Africa.

During the 60's two concerns assumed significance in the so-called "English Churches" — ecumenism and social reform. On the one hand the barriers of denominational suspicion, even hostility, were being thrown down. The man in the pew understood *ecumenical* even if he could not always pronounce it! Christians were moving towards unity and seemingly excited by these new ventures in fellowship and trust. On the other hand, Christ had been discovered in his world, suffering in and with humanity, calling on the children of God to identify with him in living for others. The church moved out into the world, proclaiming God's word in the realms of politics and economics, of law and society, using its energies to challenge injustice and reveal the way of the Kingdom. Bodies like the S.A. Council of Churches and the Christian Institute, concerned with both ecumenism and social activism, could claim to be a relevant and authentic Christian voice, even if the voice was often an embarrassment to the white South African public church-goer.

With the dawning of the 70's it became increasingly apparent that the conservative attitude of rejecting ecumenism, social reform and theological liberalism, was definitely the in-thing. The higher the walls, the more exclusive the group, the more ecstatic and introspective the spirituality, the more dogmatic the pronouncements — the greater the attraction! The new attitudes appeared to flourish, in many instances, by being deliberately anti-ecumenical and anti-social gospel.

Those who stress the prophetic ministry should take note that as never before they are voices in the wilderness. A growing intolerance, within the Church, is evidenced towards those who seek to relate biblical insights positively to concrete world

needs and social ills. The new and acceptable prophet is concerned with the private life and sees world need and inhumanity not primarily as a call to involvement, but as signs of the times, heralding the return of Christ to meet his redeemed community expectantly awaiting within the walls.

It is not my intention to decry the stress on personal experience as such. The mystical and emotional, the fervency of devotion and praise, the wonder of healing and unrepressed spirituality, these are the ways of God working his will. The great prophets of social concern whom I know, are the products of genuine internal spirituality.

Nor is it my intention to defend the 60's against justifiable criticisms of a social activism which neglected the inward look.

My concern is lest the retreat within the walls is to degenerate into a glory-for-me escapism from reality, and thus from God. If the retreat is to re-arm and be replenished prior to waging a fresh war, against social injustices, well and good. But if the drawbridge is never lowered, sweet as the sounds of praise may be to the love-denying souls within, they will not be heard beyond the battlements.

This is not only a danger, it is seemingly a development. In a recent CI meeting a Black member told of his having been asked by a "White brother" not to continue attending one of the flourishing inward-looking meetings in town as this fraternity was contrary to government policy. But a White CI member, who has been personally enriched through this inward and now all-white meeting, set the record straight by stating that the Black's presence had been viewed as a stumbling block to others (whites!) becoming believers. This making of "converts" at the cost of pandering to racism and denying the essence of Christ's Church was a puzzling to both the White and Black CI members as it was to myself.

Is this a rare and isolated instance? Time will tell whether the new inner revolution of the 70's has anything to say to the situation of political revolution which Southern Africa is increasingly experiencing. The temptation to seek to escape the age and the prophetic is understandable. People are so overwhelmed by the magnitude of life's problems that it is comforting to concentrate on that part of life over which some control can be exercised, the inner being. The temptation is the more insidious because the very selfishness which can motivate man to seek redemption can also cause him to seek for nothing else.

Should these inward-looking disciples become lost in wonder, praise and introspection, it is my fear that we are going once more to see God judge his church through the historical process. The comment of religion being the opium of the people was well deserved in its historical context, and if the cries of the oppressed are to be drowned in the "amens" of those within the rising sanctuary walls, we will repeat this history.

There is little reason for the new Mocambique to give thanks to God for the Church. What the new South Africa will think about the Church is a great enough challenge for the voices in the wilderness to continue their proclamation and witness. But let them know that the going is getting tougher.