

must challenge the iniquities around him, and politics has no immunity from this challenge. No less an authority than Calvin is cited (at second hand) as having fully endorsed the principle involved.

The twelve sermons that follow develop this theme of politically relevant preaching. Originally given to student congregations in the Western Cape, they nonetheless fully deserve the wider audience made possible by the printed version despite Dr. Boesak's modest reservations. In particular they need to be read where political muscle has yet to be chastened by a prophetic conscience. Some of the sermons respond to major recent events: Soweto, Biko, the Information scandal and SACL A. Others probe various aspects of the gospel in relation to contemporary society. Throughout the message is clear : apartheid is incompatible with that gospel. And at times the language is very telling indeed.

Some examples: "In South Africa God is white and votes Nationalist" (p 31).

"The resurrection community simply cannot excuse the gross exploitation of people by a vulture-like economic system as "our defective world" and then do nothing....." (p.48). Regarding the Information affair he says, ".....What we see here is the beginning of God's judgement on people who have long been trampling on his righteousness (p 83).

Charismatics will find food for thought, not say heart-burn, in Dr. Boesak's Pentecost sermon, which declares the real miracle of that occasion to be a clear utterance of the gospel so that all could understand it. (p.37). And there is a reminder that "reconciliation is not holding a "multiracial" SACL A congress where we suspend apartheid for a month and behave right fraternally "in the Spirit", only to go back home to a separate and separated life-style....." (p.61).

Kinship with an ancient Israel harried by the uncircumcised in its trek to the promised land has at times been claimed by Afrikaans churchmen and others. Now the question is this, will South Africa be favoured by a continued parallel?

Or will the Bible be shut once Joshua goes and the prophet Nathan comes? For Israel's greatness lay not in surviving a Goliath but in cultivating, painfully but nobly, a capacity for moral purification by standards far transcending those of narrow, sectional interest. To give an example : King David is not great because he smote the Philistines but because he smote his own breast in humble penitence after Nathan rebuked him to his face over the wicked Bathsheba affair. As a result the moral prophet becomes a major feature of Israel's life — and Israel becomes a light to the nations. For it lies in the nature of spiritual reality that the shameless shall know neither growth nor glory. Happy this country if its dominant tribe irózed resembles Israel as Nathan comes. □

# THE CHURCH STRUGGLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

(Published by David Philip)

## A review of John de Gruchy's recent book by Bob Clarke

Five years ago, I shared with Dr de Gruchy, the synopsis of a thesis I was about to begin on Church State relations in South Africa. I proposed to review all the major developments in Church State relations of the South African Churches from their beginnings to the present day. The principle emphasis would be upon the period since 1948, but I believed I would need to have a good knowledge of the important historical antecedents that had influenced church attitudes on this matter. For instance, in the case of my own church, the Church of the Province of South Africa—reaction to the Colenso Controversy had resulted in a constitution of the church wholly independent of the State, careful to avoid any hint of establishment. The reactions of my supervisors was unanimous, that whilst the comprehensiveness for my proposal was commendable there was enough material there for at least five doctoral theses. If my subject were to be accepted by the Senate, I would have to narrow it down to a limited period, and indeed consider whether it ought not also to be limited to one church. My initial reluctance to accept this advice was eventually overcome by the overwhelming burden of the research involved. I eventually reduced my subject to "The role of the Church of the Province of South Africa in Church State relations during the Archepiscopate of Geoffrey Clayton 1948—57 and Joost de Blank (1958—1963). That runs to two volumes of 20 chapters each.

I mention my own painstaking experience at some length precisely because I see Dr de Gruchy attempting in this book the impossible task that I had myself originally em-

barked on five years ago. His book *The Church Struggle in South Africa* derives from a series of five lectures delivered in the United States in 1977. Each lecture has been expanded into an extended essay to make up the five wide-ranging chapters of this book. Dr de Gruchy acknowledges that though the lectures were prepared for North American audiences, the book is addressed as much to his fellow South Africans as to those elsewhere. In this he succeeds. He avoids those explanatory comments which South Africans would find redundant, but also provides for the English-speaking reader essential background information about the Afrikaans-speaking churches.

The first chapter on "Historical Origins" sets the ecclesiastical scene for the assumption of the church struggle in 1948. In 52 well documented pages Dr de Gruchy makes a panoramic sweep through the history of the Afrikaans, English and Black churches. It is a tour de force, that by its very nature could achieve only the most superficial sketch of the principal developments of 150 years of South African Church history. And yet despite the inevitable criticism which one must level here of skating so swiftly over such huge areas of church history, this chapter provides a perceptive analysis of historical origins and does succeed in giving that panoramic view of the South African Church situation so essential to understanding the main subject of the book, the Church Struggle in South Africa since 1948. As an introduction to a book of this kind, or to a series of lectures, it is exemplary.

My serious criticisms are reserved for Chapter Two "Apart-

heid and the Churches" in which Dr de Gruchy attempts to trace the course of the church struggle with the Fort Hare Consultation on Christian Reconstruction of 1942 as the starting point, and the Catholic Bishops Call to Conscience of 1972 and the FELCSA Appeal to Lutheran Christians in South Africa of 1975 as the cut-off point. Whilst one can see what Dr de Gruchy is trying to do: to provide an overview of what each major denomination has stood for in relation to the apartheid issue, his omissions are so blatant and so extensive as to discredit this chapter altogether as responsible scholarship. I cannot understand how any book which purports to discuss the church struggle in South Africa, can make no reference whatsoever to Bishop Clayton's Church and Nation Report of 1944, Michael Scott, and the Church's response to the compulsory takeover of Mission Schools under the terms of the Bantu Education Act of 1953. Incredibly Bishop Reeves is not mentioned at all, nor is his deportation nor that of four other Anglican Bishops nor is Dr Arthur Blaxall. The briefest of reference is made to Father Trevor Huddleston. Nor was Geoffrey Clayton Bishop of Johannesburg in 1956 as is stated on page 60. No mention is made of the Freedom Charter, the Treason Trial, nor of the Treason Trial Defence Fund, nor of Canon John Collins. No attempt is made to assess the role and effectiveness of overseas pressure groups. He scarcely does justice to the significance of the churches resistance to the Church Clause Legislation of 1957. No mention is made of the important multiracial conference held in the Great Hall of the University of the Witwatersrand in 1957 organised by IDAMASA. With the assistance of Dr Luckhoff's recently published doctoral thesis on the Cottesloe Consultation of 1960, he does deal more fully with this deeply important turning point in South Africa's Church-State and Ecumenical relations. However he neglects to mention the significant role of Dr Visser T'Hooft, beginning with his visit to South Africa in 1952, and his patient correspondence with Afrikaans leaders, notably Ds. Brink, Moderator of the NGK (Transvaal) Although the series of conferences promoted in the 1950's by the Afrikaans Churches in 1950, 1953, 1954, etc. are mentioned it is surprising that the names of Fred van Wyk, and Ds Reyneke receive no mention, for the work of the Continuation Committee with van Wyk as Secretary laid the essential foundation for planning of the Cottesloe Consultation. One redeeming feature of this chapter is the discussion pp 91-97 on what Dr de Gruchy describes as "the chasm that exists between the prophetic utterances of church courts and the attitudes and actions of church members". He perceptively observes that the "credibility gap" is only half-true because the majority of the members and congregations are black and not white.. the gap is really between the synods and leadership on the one hand, and some white congregations and many white members on the other. This does not deny white support from their membership, "although one suspects that one reason why schism has not happened is simply the knowledge from past experience that resolutions are seldom implemented anyway" (p 93). Dr de Gruchy throws down a stiff and justified challenge to the so-called multiracial churches to practise what they preach.

The contributions of the Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches are dealt with in five slight pages at the end of Chapter Two. Whilst it is indeed true in the early period since the formation of an hierarchy in 1952 "that the Roman Catholic Church's witness was far more diplomatic in its relation to the State than the other English-speaking churches" (p 97) this is certainly not true of the period since Vatican II. But this bland assertion is left unsubstantiated either by example or facts. An analysis of the Pastoral Letters issued by the South African Catholic Bishops Conference from the formation of the hierarchy in 1952 would reveal a most remarkable development from initial attitudes of extreme caution in 1952, when Bishops timidly discussed their right to make pronouncements on public issues, to more recent statements that have been argued with

cogency and courage which are comparable to the boldness and authority with which Archbishop Clayton addressed state authority in the 1950's. It is certainly not possible within the span of three brief pages to do justice to the Roman Catholic Church's contribution. The same criticism is true of the attempt to deal with the Lutheran Church in two pages. Though admittedly the Lutherans have made a late entry in the witness against apartheid, and this entry dates very much from the pioneering work of Dr Hans Florin's publication 'Lutherans in South Africa' (1967) which is mentioned in the bibliography, it is an insult to the seriousness with which Lutherans have been grappling with this problem, to dismiss them in just two pages.

Whether these omissions are due to censorship, or to Dr de Gruchy's ignorance of the period 1942 - 1965 or merely to oversight, this chapter represents the most serious weakness of his work. It is perhaps because, in a period where little original research has been completed, he relies almost entirely on published sources. The omissions are inexcusable, for even without expecting Dr De Gruchy to have done some original research, biographies have already appeared on Clayton, Reeves, de Blank and Collins and autobiographies of Scott, Dr Blaxall and Bishop Winter. Although brief mention is made of the work of the Revd Basil Brown as Secretary of the Christian Council in the years 1961 - 1966, it is surprising that Dr de Gruchy, a fellow Congregationalist, should seem to have no acquaintance with the Christian Council's Action Committee which based in Cape Town under Basil Brown's leadership valiantly took up issue after issue with the Verwoerd government. Nor does Dr de Gruchy appear to be aware of the deeply significant consultation organised by the World Council of Churches at the Mindolo Centre near Kitwe in Zambia in 1964, at which the Christian debate now turned to the question of violence'. Prof. Z.K. Mathews gave a paper entitled "The road from non-violence to violence". Dr Visser T'Hooft in a paper attributed anonymously to "A Theologian" pointed out how the Reformation had long before established the principle of the just revolution. Among the South Africans present were Dr Edgar Brookes and Bishop Bill Burnett. Professor Pont of the Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk made certain false allegations about this consultation and in 1966 a civil action set the record straight. It is again astonishing that neither of these vitally important events are mentioned.

If my criticisms of Chapter Two have been damning, I would like to encourage readers to buy the book for the sake of Chapters 3, 4 and 5. Dr de Gruchy seems to stand on much firmer ground once he begins to deal with events after 1968. From 1968 - 1973 he was Director of Communications and Studies at the South African Council of Churches and thus closely associated with the principal participants in the church struggle. Thus there is a sureness of touch discussing the work and witness of the Christian Institute, the Message to the People of South Africa, the SPROCAS Reports, the French Beytagh Trial and Appeal, The Programme to Combat Racism, the controversial Conscientious Objection resolution of the 1974 SACC Hammanskraal Conference. Although the Christian Institute is now a banned organisation and Dr Beyers Naude a banned person, and the archives of the Christian Institute are in the possession of the Security Police, somehow Dr de Gruchy does manage to say something significant despite the shackles placed on him by censorship. Particularly important for many will be the perceptive and sympathetic appraisal of the role of that saint and martyr of the South African church struggle, Dr Beyers Naude. I found in contrast this chapter authoritative and absolutely absorbing; his discussion of conscientious objection concise and penetrating.

The fourth chapter on Black Consciousness and Black Theology rightly deserves the accolade given by Dr Allan Boesak in the "blurb" on the front cover. In terms comprehensible to the intelligent laymen, we have a sensitive and perceptive analysis of what black consciousness and black theology are



in the South African context. Black theology is rightly described as a theology of liberation. By its very context here it is distinct from both Latin American Liberation Theology, and from the black theology of North America genre as evidenced in the writings of men like James Cone. As Manas Buthelezi puts it, black theology is "nothing but a methodological technique of theologizing", or as John de Gruchy himself says more simply "it is reflection on 'doing the truth,' that is, on 'praxis' in obedience to the gospel amid the realities of contemporary suffering, racism, oppression, and everything else that denies the Lordship of Christ" (p 161). This chapter in sharp contrast with Chapter 2 is well researched and documented and the writer makes a perceptive appraisal of and displays a close acquaintance with the principal sources.

He deals briefly but well with the expropriation of the Federal Theological Seminary in 1974 and at somewhat greater length but with succinctness and a keen perception with the Soweto Riots of 1976. Both these events exemplify the arrogant use of power by the state (my comment) and Dr de Gruchy supplies a well documented summary of church commentary on that tragic event. "Clearly the churches in opposition to apartheid saw the cause of the Soweto protests as apartheid itself. They regarded the escalation of violence as generated in varying degrees by the tactics of the police and the enforcement of security legislation." (p. 175) Citing an editorial in Kairos the monthly paper of the SACC: "in choosing the path of confrontation and seeking to bind black consciousness the authorities will be shown in time to have been merely trying to wish away reality. Out of Christian conviction we and others will continue to accept Black Consciousness as naturally as we breathe. No state can prevail against a mass spiritual movement in the long run". Dr de Gruchy concludes, "(Black Consciousness) forces whites to face the implications of Christian faith for their own existence, and therefore for the structures of social life, human rights and economic justice".

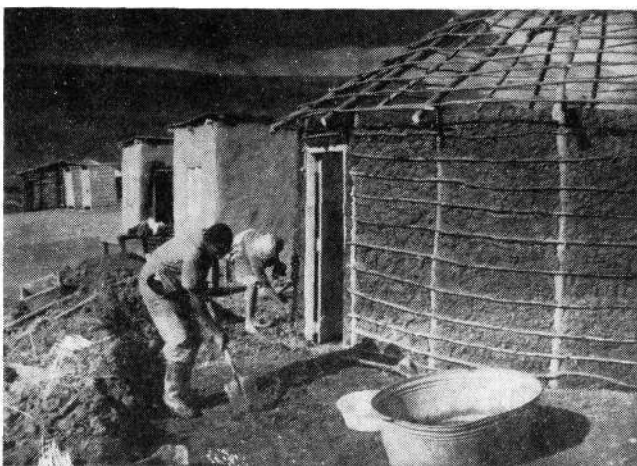
Dr de Gruchy's comments on white liberation at the conclusion of this chapter deserve close study. He alludes to those white South Africans who feel despair and adopt a mood of hopelessness and helplessness, intensified by a sense of isolation from the rest of the world. He rightly warns against "the despair that leads to cynicism, and a fatalism that erodes conviction and courage and the will to work towards a more just society". "When such fatalism is combined with fear, the result is usually flight. Flight can take two forms. The one inward – flight from reality into pseudo-innocence and pseudo-piety: the other is out-ward

– migration." As Dr de Gruchy rightly observes "... for the majority of whites emigration is not possible. For them the future must be here. There can be "no further trek", for there is no land beyond this". (p 192)

The final chapter, on the Kingdom of God in South Africa, provides a penetrating theological discussion of a great issue which faces the church and state in South Africa. Who is the Lord of History? The Church? The principalities and powers of this dark world? The State? Or the One God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? In this concluding discussion Dr de Gruchy uses his experience well as Editor of the Journal of Theology for Southern Africa since its inception in 1972. The yoking of theology with ideology is rightly condemned, and thus disagrees with the Latin American Methodist theologian Miguez Bonino's position on the strategic alliance (of Christianity) with Marxism. By the same token, and Dr de Gruchy does not mention this specifically, so too should the legitimization of the ideology of apartheid by the Afrikaans churches be equally condemned. With well chosen references to authorities as diverse as Bonhoeffer, G.B.C. Aird, Jurgen Moltmann, John Howard Yoder, Karl Barth and John Calvin ideology and culture are shown to be subordinate to the hope of the Kingdom of God. There can be no cheap reconciliation. "While the struggle of the church for justice and peace, for securing and maintaining of human rights, and for the reconciliation of conflicting peoples is central to the struggle for the Kingdom of God in South Africa today," as de Gruchy says, "Many Christians concerned about these very things feel totally inadequate for the task of bearing witness to them". (p 236) To them he offers this note of hope in conclusion:-

"In bearing witness to the providence of God over and in history, a providence radically transformed in our understanding by the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the church reaches beyond itself to the future, a future which is God's gift of shalom. Thus it keeps hope alive, and, in so doing, counters the powers of this "passing age" and worships God alone". (p 237). In such moments de Gruchy evokes a quality of prose and an authority which one has become accustomed to in his friend and mentor Alan Paton. Paton contributes a foreword and pays due tribute to the closing chapter on The Kingdom of God in South Africa. It is, says Paton, "a masterly one and a fitting conclusion".

Notwithstanding the appalling faults of Chapter Two, I hope nevertheless that many will buy and study this book for the admirable work of the other chapters. The full story of the Church Struggle in South Africa remains an ongoing and an uncompleted task. □



Mr. J. Mndaweni working on his new home.



Kwavulamehlo – on the farm Compensation – new 'home' for people from "The SWAMP"