

1989-08-1

**ECUMENICAL  
DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION CENTRE  
FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA  
EDICESA**

**PROGRAMME**

# **RELIGION AND OPPRESSION**

**The Misuse of Religion for Social,  
Political and Economic Subjugation**

**SYMPOSIUM FOR GENERAL SECRETARIES OF  
NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCILS  
AND CHURCH LEADERS  
FROM EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA**

**DATE: 1 - 3 August 1989      VENUE: EDICESA,  
HARARE**

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**Right Wing Religious Attack on the Churches  
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*University of Cape Town*

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*Panel: Dr. Mazunda, Dr. Isaak, Rev. Lumbama,*

*Rev. Mugweru*

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To carry out its pastoral work and to engage in meaningful theological reflection on the life situation of our people, and to faithfully proclaim the gospel's message of liberation, the church needs to fully understand the real conditions of their lives.

Understanding right wing religious organisations which seek influence in southern Africa will help us accomplish all these missions more effectively. Right wing religious ideologies must be studied and analysed. Questions must be asked about the reasons that right wing groups place some church leaders and theologians under attack, and the methods they use to do so. We need to understand why these groups have sometimes been able to obtain a following even among the poor and oppressed themselves. Finally, we need to understand precisely what causes and ideologies these groups serve, and the manner in which political forces, organisations or governments fund and support them.

Studies of right wing religious groups have been done in many parts of the world, and more are now underway. In Africa, however, such research is only now beginning.

An Africa-based conference on right wing religion will make an important contribution to the process. It must look at political misuse of religion both within the established churches and through alternative right wing groups. The time has come for work to begin.

The objectives of a conference on this subject will be:

1. To share existing information on the misuse of religion for social, political and economic subjugation.
2. To integrate existing information into a form where it can be effectively used by those who need it.
3. To identify areas for additional research and develop plans for co-operation in conducting that research.
4. To share information on this problem with church leaders and other concerned parties.
5. To initiate a dialogue among all. Concerned toward developing strategies and guidelines for combatting the misuse of religion to subjugate the people of our region.

**CO-ORDINATOR : HARTWIG LIEBICH**



## **FIRST DAY: WHAT IS RIGHT WING RELIGION**

<b>8.30 - 9.00</b>	<b>DEVOTIONS</b> BISHOP SIYACHITEMA, PRESIDENT, ZIMBABWE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
<b>9.00 - 9.30</b>	<b>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION</b>
<b>9.30 - 10.30</b>	<b>TRADITION OF RELIGIOUS SUPPORT FOR RULING CLASS INTERESTS</b> PROF. CHARLES VILLA-VICENCIO UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
<b>10.30 - 11.00</b>	<b>T E A</b>
<b>11.00 - 12.30</b>	<b>INPUT FROM THE REGION</b> PLENARY DISCUSSION
<b>12.30 - 14.30</b>	<b>L U N C H</b>
<b>14.30 - 16.00</b>	<b>THEOLOGY IN SUPPORT OF IDEOLOGY</b> PAUL GIFFORD, University of Leeds AN IDEOLOGICAL PROFILE MOSS NTLHA, Concerned Evangelicals
<b>16.00 - 16.30</b>	<b>T E A</b>
<b>16.30 - 17.30</b>	<b>GROUP WORK: PROFILE OF RIGHT WING RELIGION</b>
<b>17.30 - 18.00</b>	<b>REPORT BACK: FIVE ASPECTS FROM EACH GROUP TO BUILD THE PROFILE OF RIGHT WING RELIGION</b>
<b>18.30 - 20.00</b>	<b>D I N N E R</b>
<b>20.00 - 21.00</b>	<b>AUDIO VISUAL EXAMPLES OF RIGHT WING RELIGION:</b> THY WILL BE DONE; THY KINGDOM COME

## **SECOND DAY : WHAT IS WRONG WITH RIGHT WING RELIGION**

**8.30 - 9.00**

**DEVOTIONS**  
REV. CHIRISA, PRESIDENT, METHODIST  
CHURCH OF ZIMBABWE

**9.00 - 10.30**

**MILITARISM AND RELIGION  
- A GLOBAL CONNECTION**  
STEVE ASKIN, Journalist

**10.30 - 11.00**  
**TEA**

**11.00 - 12.30**

**RIGHT WING RELIGION AND  
INTERNATIONAL LINKS**  
A CASE STUDY  
OVE GUSTAFSSON, University of Uppsala

**12.30 - 14.30**

**LUNCH**

**14.30 - 18.30**

**EXPOSURE TO HARARE**

**18.30 - 20.00**

**DINNER**

**20.00 - 21.30**

**RIGHT WING RELIGION AND THE MEDIA**  
LAWRENCE JONES,  
Frontier Internship in Missions

# RELIGION AND OPPRESSION EDICESA SYMPOSIUM

1 - 3 AUGUST 1989

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### *Angola*

Rev Augusto Chipesse  
Rev Ntoni-Nzinga  
Rev Jose Quipungo  
Rev Alvaro Rodrigues

### *Botswana*

Rev Scilo E Magashula  
Rev Joseph Matsheng  
Bishop Philip J Robinson

### *Kenya*

Mugweru Rev J

### *Lesotho*

Rev E N Gugushe  
Mr Ramolulelam Taole

### *Malawi*

Rev Major M Jiru  
Rev Dr Mazunda

### *Mozambique*

Rev Fernando Mosisés Magaia

## **THIRD DAY: HOW DO WE RESPOND**

<b>8.30 - 9.00</b>	<b>DEVOTIONS</b> BISHOP MUTUME, GENERAL SECRETARY, IMBISA AND ZCBC
<b>9.00 - 10.30</b>	<b>RIGHT WING RELIGIOUS ATTACK ON THE CHURCHES: A CASE STUDY</b> ROGER ARENDSE University of Cape Town
<b>10.30 - 11.00</b>	<b>TEA</b>
<b>11.00 - 12.30</b>	<b>PANEL: WHERE WE HAVE FAILED AS CHURCHES</b>
<b>12.30 - 14.30</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>
<b>14.30 - 16.00</b>	<b>GROUP WORK: DEVELOPING A PLAN OF ACTION</b>
<b>16.00 - 16.30</b>	<b>TEA</b>
<b>16.30 - 18.00</b>	<b>PLENARY: A PLAN OF ACTION</b>
<b>20.00</b>	<b>RECEPTION</b>

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<b>20.00</b>	<b>RECEPTION</b>

## **Namibia**

Rev Ralph Fabrik  
Dr Paul J Isaak  
Rev Vaikko Munyika  
Ms Rosalinda Namises  
Father Bernhard Nordkamp

## **South Africa**

Roger Arendse - W. - *W-V??*  
Rev Alex Bhiman - I. - *I. - ...*  
Dr James Cochrane - *I-V?*  
Rev Fumie Gqiba  
Rev Dr Wolfram Kistner  
Mbulelo Eric Linda - *SACE?*  
Rev S Lockett  
Sakumzi Macozoma - *SACE*  
Rev Harris Sitembile Majeke  
Shirley Moulder - *journalist*  
Archbishop Harry Ndumiso Ngada - *CE*  
Phumuzile Ngcuka  
Moses Ntsha *CE*  
Brother Jude Pieterse - *CE, ...*  
Miranda Vilakazi  
Prof Charles Villa-Vicencio  
Harald Winkler - *...*

## **Swaziland**

Rev S E Mkhontwa  
Rev M Shongwe

## **Tanzania**

Rev Ben Mlewa

## **Zambia**

Major Thomas Kagoro  
Ms Lucie Kasanga  
Rev Elijah K Lumbama

# OBJECTIVES OF THE SYMPOSIUM

One of the critical problems facing churches in southern and eastern Africa is the misuse of Christian language, Christian symbols and some Christian church structures to support political, economic and social subjugation of communities and entire nations. This misuse of religion to defend oppression and exploitation of the poor by the rich and of Third World countries by First World countries is an old phenomenon, but one which has become particularly acute in our region.

A theology which draws on the redemptive tradition of the gospel and favours the cause of the poor and the oppressed is gaining ground among the vast majority of our region's people, especially in the context of the struggle for democracy and liberation in South Africa and Namibia. At the same time, vast efforts are being made and vast amounts of money are being spent - often by foreign organisations with no genuine roots in the churches or in our region - to convince Christians that their faith requires acceptance of injustice.

The same organisations have also become involved in disseminating a false image of our region to the developed world. Propaganda produced by some of these groups:

- Implicitly or explicitly supports apartheid in South Africa.
- Supports destabilisation of the Frontline States.
- Projects false images of Africa as a continent of helpless people seeking handouts from the "developed" world.
- In some cases, organisations falsely claiming to be motivated by Christian values have actually provided material support for gruesome South Africa-backed violence and atrocities against the people of the Frontline States.

This right wing religious movement is highly complex, extremely well funded, and appears to enjoy support from repressive state structures in South Africa, from some foreign governments and from independent or quasi-independent political organisations. Most disturbing, it sometimes receives support from within the Christian churches.

# RELIGION AND OPPRESSION EDICESA SYMPOSIUM

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Mr Ramolulelam Taole

### *Malawi*

Rev Major M Jina  
Rev Dr Mazunda

### *Mozambique*

Rev Fernando Mosisés Magaia



## ***Zimbabwe***

Steve Askin  
Rev Farai Chirisa  
Rabbi Ben Isaacson  
Mrs Naomi Kowo  
Rev M C Kuchera  
Rev Wolfgang Lauer  
Rev Mrs Masamba  
Rev L Moyo  
Bishop Patrick Mutume  
Rev N Shava  
Bishop Jonathan Siyachitema  
Father Timmermans  
Rev Solomon Vhudzijena

## ***International***

Dr. Paul Gifford  
Rev. Ove Gustafsson  
Dr. Lawrence Patrick Jones

## ***Reporters***

Rev Dr Wolfram Kistner  
Harald Winkler

# RIGHT WING RELIGION - WHAT DO WE MEAN?

- After the inputs of the first day, all participants were involved in group work which aimed at formulating a definition of what we mean by Right Wing Religion. The results of the group work were summarised in the following way.

## Preliminary comments

There is confusion about the phenomena we are trying to analyse. It means different things depending on who is talking, and what experience one has in one's own situation. Two things need to be separated to make sense of our conversations.

First, there is inherently conservative establishment Christianity with many institutional forms, and a built in tendency to support an oppressive status quo, or to undermine movements and institutions of liberation. Such Christianity can present severe problems to liberation (e.g. Namibia). A lack of pastoral responsibility with the oppressed, and of liberating activity, makes it easy for right-wingers to exploit the church. Much establishment Christianity also promotes "third way" theologies without accountability to the poor and oppressed; access to sources of establishment power in society is utilized to set an agenda for the people (e.g. Africa Enterprise). All of these tendencies are very problematic, even if they are not politically right-wing.

Secondly, there is what we properly should call right-wing Christian groups. They are a recent phenomenon, virtually unknown before the 1970's, whose influence and massive growth is clearly connected to the rise of a particular contemporary form of advanced capitalism we call Reaganomics or Thatcherism. This "radical capitalism" makes everything subservient unchecked market forces freed from all ethical or moral constraints. Technically, this is neo-classical monetarist capitalism; theologically it is an idol of death. Right-wing Christianity is the religion defense of this secular force. This is what the following criteria when taken together, define:

## Right-wing Christian groups

Right-wing Christian groups:

1. serve an economic ideology of radical market capitalism which they propagate actively, aggressively, and in service of neo-colonial ends.
2. strongly preach anti-communism, against liberation theologies, while creating and sustaining an enemy image - a scapegoat - for evil in the world.
3. are elitist, non-egalitarian, authoritarian.

4. promote a dualism which separates the material and the spiritual, the religious and the political, this world and the after-world, the body and the soul - leading to a simplification of reality, a narrowness of perspective, a rigid shutting-off of dialogue.

6. offer charity, but in a non-liberatory way in which structural sin is specifically avoided.

7. make a strong claim to be "truly biblical" over and against establishment churches, thus presenting themselves as "pure, simple Christians".

8. are anti establishment churches, anti-ecumenical, and most often openly dispensationalist.

9. aggressively, even sensationally, use media, often in a way attractive to marginalized groups in society.

10. develop strong international networks, often sponsored by USA sources (or South African, in our region).

11. exhibit a powerful missionary zeal and commitment to their task.

## Postscript

Though right-wing religious groups all bear most if not all of the above points, they will not always appear the same in different contexts. They are likely to use different strategies from one country to another, one situation to another - but to achieve the same goals.

Some analyses thus described the church situation as one in which they is:

(1) a relatively small, prophetic movement on the left of the church;

(2) a relatively small activist right-wing, and

(3) a large body of members in the "middle-ground".

This middle-ground is what oppressive forces most want to dominate, or hold in passive obedience. Right-wing Christian groups function to destabilize the bulk of the membership by confusing people with their virulent, often vicious attacks on prophetic groups and individuals in the church.

# **A PLAN OF ACTION**

## **(Group Work and Plenary )**

An asterisk (\*) indicates that initiative is to be taken primarily by EDICESA, a plus sign (+) that it is to be done by churches at the local level.

### **Database**

\* A database for the Southern and Eastern African region is required. The database would include lists of RWCGs in each country, their links with each other, oppressive structures and international RWCGs, their theological and political identity, and their social base.

+ \* It is necessary to broaden the constituency for collecting and sharing information beyond the churches, so as to include political organisations.

### **Research and Study**

+ Lists of RWCGs in all the participating countries should be drawn up in each country, collected centrally by EDICESA and redistributed to each country.

+ \* A great need for further study of RWCGs in countries other than South Africa exists, especially in Eastern Africa. EDICESA will depend on contributions received from the participating churches.

\* + An urgent priority before November 1989 is the study of the evangelisation campaign which is being planned by RWCGs to coincide with the election campaign in Namibia, and RWCGs in Namibia in general.

+ In the independent countries, the abuse of the freedom of religion by RWCGs needs to be examined.

+ Research needs to be promoted on the local level in the different countries.

### **Education**

\* EDICESA is requested to offer a workshop with delegates selected by the Councils of Churches from each country, to be trained in research on RWCGs.

+ \* More literature (as well as other forms of media, e.g. videos) on the RWCGs, in accessible form, needs to be produced for the churches by EDICESA and the churches themselves. A particular way of presenting the issue is to contrast the RWCGs' message with a holistic gospel.

+ Media on the RWCGs must be produced at a local level, taking into account the local context.

\* The EDICESA newsletter can be used to disseminate data on RWCGs.

\* A 6-8 page study guide to alert people at the grassroots of the issues should be produced.

+ Music, drama, poetry and dance can be appropriate means to communicate the information.

- \* A methodology and skills to make knowledge accessible to the middle ground church constituency needs to be developed.
- + Workshops for church members at the local level are a priority.
- + The need to educate all church members about the existence, names, links and roots of RWCGs was stressed.
- + There is a need for conferences in each church at a regional level to disseminate the information already gathered, and to collect further localised information.
- \* + Care should be taken that conferences at all levels are more democratic and comprise a greater spread of church people, in particular people who are in touch with the problems discussed.

## Church Structures

- + The mainline churches must take a clear stand on their relation to the RWCGs.
- + The issue of RWCGs should be a regular item on the agenda of Church Assemblies.
- + Steps are to be taken for alternative, holistic theological education for the laity. The teaching on economic matters of wealth, prosperity and work is particularly important to counter the prosperity teachings of the RWCGs.
- + The long-term need is to democratise our churches so that they can empower people, and address the real spiritual and material needs of the people. This must not be done from the top down, but with participation.
- + A problem for which no practical solution was suggested is the financial situation of our churches. It is the low pay of ministers that often opens the way for RWCGs to recruit members simply by offering money and resources.
- + Churches need to examine their dependence on overseas funding and its consequences for church life. The practice of stewardship needs to be taken seriously.
- + In their relationship with their respective governments, churches should make use of the rights they have with regard to the registration of new churches.
- + Churches should inform the governments of independent African countries of the issues relating to RWCGs.
- + Churches should reach out to the African Independent Churches, without domination on the part of the mainline churches. The mainline churches should empower the AICs to develop their theology, by helping them to organise theological education.
- + It is important for mainline churches to establish links with evangelical churches in order to share information on RWCGs, and to form alliances with concerned evangelicals.

## Resolutions

In the plenary discussion, three issues were selected from the above, and accepted as resolutions.

Firstly, the conference suggested that EDICESA organises a workshop for two delegates from each of the participating Councils. These delegates could be either members of the national Councils of Churches' research, theological or communications departments, or other individuals selected by the Councils for this purpose.

Secondly, that the Namibian delegation takes to the Executive Committee of the Council of Churches in Namibia the suggestion of investigating and monitoring the of Right Wing Religious Movements in Namibia. A particular focus would be the election campaign. The Namibian



# SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

From 1st to 3rd August the Ecumenical Documentation and Information Centre for Eastern and Southern Africa (EDICESA) hosted and organised a symposium on Religion and Oppression in Harare. The symposium devoted its attention to the misuse of religion for social, political and economic subjugation, particularly in the Southern African Region. Invitations had been sent out to the General Secretaries of National Christian Councils and church leaders from Eastern and Southern Africa. Approximately sixty leading representatives of churches in the Southern and Eastern Africa Region participated in the symposium. At the beginning of the symposium a general introduction was given in various lectures into the particular features of Right Wing Religion. The historical background and the general trends in their interpretation of particular Christian concepts were outlined. Participants received an insight into the pattern of interpretation of Scripture by right wing religious movements and into their use of media. Explanations were given for the rapid growth and expanding influence of right wing religious movements. A further series of lectures concentrated on a number of right wing religious groups and movements that are active in the region.

Particularly on the second day the symposium concentrated on what is wrong in the right wing religious movements. Participants were made aware of a use which the apartheid regime makes of right wing religious groups to legitimate its unjust war and to cause confusion in the churches. Furthermore experiences and insights were exchanged on the participation of right wing religious groups in efforts to destabilise independent African countries in the Southern Africa Region.

On the third day the symposium concentrated on what action the churches should undertake with regard to the right wing religious groups and the threat they constitute not only for the churches, but also for the stability and development of societies in Southern African countries. A detailed plan of action was worked out.

The symposium offered ample opportunity for discussion and exchange of experiences. A particular problem the participants had to wrestle with was the definition of what is to be considered as right wing religion. Does the term merely apply to religious groups and movements that are separate from the 'mainline' churches. It was found that a considerable section of the constituency of established churches have a leaning towards right wing religion. Should this section of the constituency of the established churches also be considered under the concept of Right Wing Religion? Eventually the symposium came to the conclusion that a distinction should be made between right wing religious groups and leanings within the church constituencies towards views that are very close to right wing religion. With regard to right wing tendencies within the established churches the symposium stated that

"there is an inherently conservative establishment Christianity with many institutional forms, and a built-in tendency to support an oppressive status quo, or to undermine movements and institutions of liberation. ... Secondly, there is what we properly should call right-wing Christian groups. They are a recent phenomenon, virtually unknown before the 1970's, whose influence and massive growth is clearly connected to the rise

of a particular contemporary form of advanced capitalism we call Reaganomics of Thatcherism."

The main features of the right wing Christian groups are described as follows.

"They:

1. serve an economic ideology of radical market capitalism which they propagate actively, aggressively, and in service of neo-colonial ends.
2. strongly preach anti-communism, against liberation theologies, while creating and sustaining an enemy image - a scapegoat - for evil in the world.
3. are elitist, non-egalitarian, authoritarian.
4. promote a dualism which separates the material and the spiritual, the religious and the political, this world and the after-world, the body and the soul - leading to a simplification of reality, a narrowness of perspective, a rigid shutting-off of dialogue.
6. offer charity, but in a non-liberatory way in which structural sin is specifically avoided.
7. make a strong claim to be "truly biblical" over and against establishment churches, thus presenting themselves as "pure, simple Christians".
8. are anti establishment churches, anti-ecumenical, and most often openly dispensationalist.
9. aggressively, even sensationally, use media, often in a way attractive to marginalized groups in society.
10. develop strong international networks, often sponsored by USA sources (or South African, in our region).
11. exhibit a powerful missionary zeal and commitment to their task."

The interpretation and the authority of Holy Scripture was a theological issue that played an important part in the discussions of the symposium. Right Wing Religious Groups tend to select particular passages of Scripture to isolate them from the context and to exploit them in their interpretation for their open or hidden political agendas. At the same time they emphasise their submission to the authority of Scripture. However the question was raised, whether the pattern of the use of Scripture by Christians in the established churches, even by Christians who espouse the cause of liberation, is not very similar. Do they not also make use of Scripture passage in a selective way? Very soon it became clear that the problem which was discussed in this area pertains not merely to the use of Scripture, but to Scripture itself. Does not Scripture itself comprise contradictory images of God? In some passages this God is the God of the poor and the oppressed. In other passages he is portrayed as the God of war who sides with the powerful or even legitimises the abuse of power. The symposium did not arrive at satisfactory and concluding answers to this problem. However, the direction in which solutions can be found which do justice at the same time to the historical and the present-day relatedness of Scripture, as well as to its authority which protects it against arbitrary abuse was indicated in the discussions. The Bible was recognised as a book in which the experiences of faith of the people of God have been collected throughout the ages and have been re-interpreted in situations which constituted new challenges to the community of believers. Such re-interpretation is not a matter merely of individuals but of the fellowship of believers as a whole.

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A further important issue that was raised, was the principle of religious freedom. Some Right Wing Religious Groups are obviously reactionary groups and threaten the security of states in Southern Africa which have achieved their independence. At the same time the governments of these states hesitate to restrict the activities of these groups. They are anxious not to be seen as governments which do not respect the principle of religious freedom which plays an important role in the concept of human rights.

The symposium worked out a plan of action with regard to the activities of Right Wing Religious Groups. The recommendations comprised proposals for the establishment of a database on Right Wing Religious Movements and their activities in Southern and Eastern Africa, for research on this topic and for the education of the church constituency so as to alert them of the danger which these groups constitute. At the same time educational measures are suggested to help church members to understand the gospel in its relevance to all dimensions of human life. Furthermore a number of recommendations pertain to church structures and to the need to democratise the churches and to empower each and every member to make a meaningful contribution to the life of the church and of the society to which he or she belongs.



# RELIGION AND OPPRESSION

## THE MISUSE OF RELIGION FOR SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SUBJUGATION

*ADDRESS BY THE RT REV J SIYACHITEMA, PRESIDENT OF ZIMBABWE  
COUNCIL OF CHURCHES.*

My brothers and sisters, I take this as a great honour and privilege to be asked to open the deliberations of this Symposium. I appreciate this privilege because it will enable me in a very small measure to associate with what will go on here for the next three days. I bring you fraternal greetings and sentiments of good wishes from the Executive of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches of which I am the current President.

I take my text this morning for our meditation from Luke 11:33-36.

"No man when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed, but setteth it on a candle-stick, that they which enter in may see the light."

One of the many wonders of the Bible is to be found in the simplicity of the words and the figures used, together with the depth of their meaning.

It is this, in part, which makes the Bible the book of the young and the old; of the working man in his house and the student in his study. The Bible is the life-long companion for us all.

Men shall never out grow it. It taught us when we were children, and if we have but a Spiritual eye, we shall still say, when we are old, "Lord, teach me the wonderful things of thy law."

My text this morning is an example of both the simplicity of language and the figures used.

A child, in the rural areas of Zimbabwe, or in any country in this region, knows what a lighted candle is; and knows further, that no one would think of putting a candle when it is lighted under a bushel or under a bed, but on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house. A lighted candle is meant to give light, and 'we all know that' you will say.

True, but then, what did Our Saviour really want us to think about when he used these simple words? He really meant us to think of all Christians, that they were intended to be as lights shining in this sinful and naughty world - and so he said plainly to His Disciples,

"Ye are the light of the world."

And to the Saviour Jesus Christ, it would seem as foolish, or more so, to light a candle and put it under a bushel or under a bed - as for a person to wish to be called a Christian and not to be a light so bright that people will notice his good work and give Glory to Our Father in Heaven; for this was certainly in the mind of Jesus when he used the simple words of the text.

From His words, recorded in other parts of the Bible, we can carry His meaning further. When he called His Disciples "lights" he meant they had derived their lights from Himself, because He said, plainly speaking of Himself - "I am the Light of the world, He that followeth me, shall never walk in darkness but shall have the Light of Life."

Yes, this was what the Psalmist said long before:-

"With Thee is the Well of Life, and in Thy Light shall we see light."

This is what St John tells us when speaking of Jesus,

"In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men.

That was the TRUE Light that lighted every man that cometh into the world."

Now we may see something of the meaning hidden under the simple words of Scripture

But you will wish to ask me why I have chosen such a text for our meditation and opening ceremony this morning.

Well, it is my privilege this morning to speak to a body of men and women who acknowledge themselves to be Christians - Yes, i.e. to a body of people who are Christians in the fullest and best sense of the word according to our belief, and my object in speaking to you is to remind you that Christian ought not only to be good himself/herself.

But try to make others good, that as a member of Christ he ought to expect to have the Light of Christ shining in him that he would be a light to others - that it would be absurd to light a candle and put it under a bushel or under a bed as for calling himself a Christian not to try to let his light to shine before men that he would help them to walk more safely on the path of life.

Jesus said plainly, speaking to His Disciples, "I mean you to be the lights of the world. I am the Light of the world, and when I am gone back to Heaven, I send you down the Holy Spirit upon you, and He shall be in you, and you must carry on My work, as be as lights in the world."

I believe that if we take our Christian duties seriously - this is true to all of us - of all true members of the Body of Christ.

Now I think you will see my meaning, but they you will want further to ask me - How can we let our lights shine before men so as to help them?

You know how many ways the lights of the sun bring blessing to us,

- the light of the sun enables man to go forth to his work
- the warmth of the sun makes the crops to grow

sins against God and against fellow human beings. They are contrary to the justice and the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. They destroy the human dignity of both the "racist and the victim". We would wish to add that it is a denial of the fulness of life which is Christ's gift to the world, for in Him there is neither Greek nor Jew, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female

But all are ONE. Yes, Christ on His Cross tore down the barriers of hostility which keep people apart (Eph 2:14-16), thus establishing peace.

I would like to believe that it is this kind of misuse of religion which makes this Symposium very essential if we indeed need to redress this situation.

And so the question I should pose to you all is "How can we mortal men and women undertake all this? How can we be in a position to enlighten our people on these issues in this busy and confused region? Dear friends, how did our Saviour live when he was visibly living in the World of Caesar? I call upon you all to study the life of Jesus who spent most of his earthly life teaching and who is so fit to represent Him and carry on His work as your dear brothers and sisters assembled at this Symposium.

Yes, Jesus displays to us a life of unworldly patient sense of duty - imagine day after day in the little village shop, nothing exciting, only doing today what he did yesterday, just doing the common jobs that might want to be done.

And yet Jesus does not only give us an example of patience and self-restraint. When Jesus was confronted with issues he was forthright in his replies:-

Some Pharisees and some members of Herod's party were sent to Jesus to trap him with questions. They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know that you tell the truth, without worrying about what people think ... Tell us, is it against our Law to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor. Should we pay them or not?" But Jesus saw through their trick and answered, "Why do you want to trap me? Bring a silver coin and let me see it." They brought him one, and Jesus asked, "Whose face and name are these?" The Emperor's, they answered. So Jesus said, "Well, then pay to the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor and pay to God what belongs to God." And they were amazed at Jesus.

Yes, when we too are confronted with twisted theology which is used in order to oppress other people, think about the forthrightness of Jesus. We are indeed Christ's light in his dark and oppressive world. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in Heaven.

Here we are assembled at this Symposium to serve our people. Because the engine is rusty in some places and beyond repair in others, there is no reason to lose hope. New parts can be fitted, and this Symposium can fit them. Why should this Symposium be satisfied with six cylinders when eight would transform the whole machine?

This is an exciting time to be part of the whole transforming process in this region. Yes, this region needs men and women with a vision, men and women who are not afraid to question and criticise their presuppositions, men and women of practical experience, sensitivity and lively im-

agination, men and women who are prepared to expose the injustices and the oppressive situations in our region. The men and women I mean are you gathered here today.

I believe this is why the EDICESA has thought it fit to start these far-reaching deliberations with Prayer because prayer gives us access to the throne of God our Father, who through His Holy Spirit can give us guidance and clear direction for true vision and purpose. Yes, through the unfailing guidance of the Holy Spirit

- we can tackle the issues before us with confidence
- we can deepen our relationships
- we can break down all those degenerating laws which were imposed on us by minority governments
- we can live and work together as true sons and daughters in these our countries of heritage
- we can learn to trust each other despite the fact that we come from different countries

and

- we can work collectively together in developing our countries so that they can remain shining countries in the world.

I thought I should share with you these few thoughts so that when we pray we can pray intelligently. I wish you all the blessings from above as you deliberate this week.

And so let us pray

Father, you do not create us to live alone  
and you have not made us all alike.  
We thank you for the varied society of mankind,  
into which we come,  
by which we are brought up  
and through which we discover your purpose for our lives,  
In gratitude we pray for the Symposium and all those  
assembled from all parts of this country.

We pray for the places where we work,-  
that there we may be workmen who have no need to be ashamed.  
We ask to be reliable rather than successful,  
worthy of trust rather than popular.  
Whether those we work with be many or few may we help to give them the sense that they are  
personally  
wanted and cared for.

We pray for our countries and our leaders,  
that we may be good citizens  
Make us willing to accept responsibility.  
Amen.



# RIGHT WING RELIGION

## Have the Chickens Come Home to Roost?

*Charles Villa-Vicencio*

Religion is a complex, many faceted and multi-functional/dysfunctional social phenomenon. Throughout history it has been used to legitimate, sustain and promote political tyranny, repression and economic corruption as well as political liberation, good government and social renewal. It has functioned both as the 'opiate of the people' and a 'source of social renewal'.

I have elsewhere argued, historically in *Between Christ and Caesar* (1) and with regard to the church in South Africa in *Trapped in Apartheid* (2), that the dominant tradition of the church at least since the time of the Edict of Milan (AD 313) has been an oppressive one -- legitimating successive ruling classes, often at the cost of the poor and oppressed.

The present upsurge of right wing religion around the world must be understood as an accentuation of those dimensions of the Christian tradition which stem from historic alliances with successive ruling classes. It is this that poses the question: *Does right wing religion constitute a qualitative deviation from the Christian tradition -- or are the chickens simply coming home to roost?*

It is important to recognise that an alternative theological tradition of liberation and social renewal has throughout history haunted the church and contradicted its location on the side of the dominant classes. As this latter tradition gains recognition among marginalised people and is affirmed in Third World situations so the well-funded, aggressive campaigns of right wing religious groups are promoted with new determination. This much is clear from the *Road to Damascus* document recently published by Christians engaged in struggle for liberated societies in El Salvador, Guatemala, Namibia, Nicaragua, the Phillipians, South Korea and South Africa.

Contemporary struggles between the forces of renewal and the forces of repression that are taking place in virtually every ecclesial and social situation in the world are *materially* shaped and influenced. At the same time they feeds on this double theological tradition of resistance to social change on the one hand and the acceleration of social renewal on the other.

Debate on whether religion is essentially a brake on or accelerator for social change, which has plagued so much abstract and doctrinaire discourse, is here bracketed with the recognition that (depending on its social context) religion functions as either and often as both. The identification of the liberatory dimensions of religion in society, which I would argue constitute the essence of the Christian gospel, need also for the purposes of this presentation to be set aside. This allows discussion to be focussed exclusively on the oppressive sources of reactionary Christianity.

Ecclesial history is cluttered with the wreckage of alliances between corrupt rulers and co-opted churches. Conquistadors in central and southern American history, the 'pilgrim fathers' (there were also mothers) who occupied North America, colonisers who oppressed the native peoples of south-east Asia, and the British, French, Belgian, Italian and German conquerors who scrambled for Africa during the last century all did so in the name of the Christian gospel. Indeed, the birth of the church in Africa was through a canal of blood, bitterness and death. Some want to shout from the rooftops that this was a flagrant misuse of the gospel. But what is it in our heritage that has made our tradition such a viable instrument in the hands of the oppressor?

## Historical Context

In order to identify the doctrinal beliefs, ecclesial symbols and oppressive biases of our theological heritage that have consistency shaped the socially conservative stance of the church, it is necessary to identify the biblical and historical context within which this culture has emerged.

### 1. *Biblical trajectories*

Walter Brueggemann identifies two trajectories, the "Mosaic trajectory" and the trajectory of "royal consolidation" as charactering the literature of the Hebrew Bible. The former, suggests Walter Brueggemann, identifies "the social innovation of Moses and its theological novelty of a God aligned with the marginal ones". (Others have preferred to identify this trend as the "Abrahamic vision", recognising that there are already within the Mosaic tradition teachings that legitimate notions of authoritarianism.) The "royal consolidation" trajectory, on the other hand, systematises the legitimation of the Israel's ruling class, against the prophetic message which favours the cause of the poor and marginalised.(3)

Both traditions, the one sacralising the dominant structures of society and the other inspiring the quest for liberation by the oppressed, are central to the Bible. New Testament scholarship, in turn, identifies a similar double and sometimes contradictory message in the New Testament. The one legitimating the status quo, the other favouring the forces of social renewal in response to the gospel.(4) This double tradition suggests that the women and slaves of Ephesus and Corinth understood the gospel better than St. Paul.

Albert Schweitzer's analogy of the nineteenth century quest for the historical Jesus, which he likened to people staring at their own reflection in a well, has much to teach us about the use of the Bible as a source of social hermeneutics.(5) The rich and the powerful see that which reflects and legitimates their status, while it takes the poor and the marginalised to discern the liberatory messages of the Bible. And to the extent that the ruling ideas (theological or otherwise) of any society are invariably the ideas of the ruling sectors of society, biblical sources which support the status of the dominant classes have come to dominate the teaching of the institutional churches.

It is this that makes contemporary hermeneutical debate in black, feminist and other liberation theologies pertinent to the renewal of the church. It recognises the necessity to weigh and measure contemporary quests for human emancipation against the biblical message of God's redeeming

acts, but it also insists that the Christian and biblical message needs to be weighed and assessed against each new experience of human liberation. The residue of social oppression, a hang-over from former cultural, political and economic repressive societies, needs to be discerned and distinguished from the renewing power of God's liberatory message to those whose lives are marred and crippled by the oppressive impositions of both secular and religious agencies in society. The sexist, racist, classist and social prejudices that reside within the Christian tradition need to be transformed, to ensure that the full and egalitarian personhood of all people created in God's image be affirmed. Rosemary Ruether puts it this way: "New liberating experiences empower us to write new stories, new parables, new *midrashim* on old stories."(6) The implications of God's liberatory revelation in Christ are still being learned. To refuse to learn new theological lessons is to turn the Christian heritage into an oppressive achronism.

### *Historical Transitions*

The first major post-biblical point of transition in the history of the church came with the disintegration of the Roman Empire, and the social transformation of the church as it gained adherents in the more dominant sectors of society, including the army and state bureaucracy. It soon became expedient for the Emperor to negotiate with the church. The Edict of Milan followed and within a little more than a decade, as a result of a series of treacherous and bloody deeds, Constantine emerged as the sole ruler of the empire, and Christianity practically a state religion. By the high Middle Ages it had become the single most despotic political force in Europe. The character, content and symbols of theology were shaped accordingly -- and with many of these we live still today. Of course dominant theology was haunted throughout this period by the ever-present liberatory themes of medieval resistance, often clothed in the spirituality of exploited monks, nuns and peasants (who were not infrequently condemned as heretics). Yet ultimately theology functioned as an ideology which legitimated the social privileges of the dominant classes. This it did in the exploitation of the local poor through ecclesial and sacramental dependancy, while the Middle East was conquered and plundered in the crusades.

Yet even while this was happening there were new economic and political forces beginning to shape the social identity of the region, and this too was beginning to take its toll on the character of the church, leading to the Protestant and Catholic Reformations. Whatever the fundamental cause of these reform processes (economic, the rise of nationalism and/or the spiritual renewal) the consequence was the emergence of a bourgeois church. The control of the church, and more particularly the Protestant church, had shifted from the imperial aristocracy to the bourgeois princes, but the peasants continued to be marginalised and excluded from the socio-political identity of the church. This became most clear in the peasants revolts in and around 1525, when the peasants of Germany sought to extend the Protestant affirmation of spiritual freedom to socio-political liberation. Luther sided with the princes, counselling them to kill the peasants who were in revolt. Zwingli drowned the Anabaptists in Lake Zurich and Calvin, despite his social democratic tendencies, ensured that Geneva was ruled by the middle and upper class burghers of that city.

The shift in ecclesial identity from a church of the subversive poor to a church of the ruling classes, carried with it the emergence of a religious individualism grounded in the Protestant emphasis on the what Kierkegaard would in time call the "lonely" individual before God. This, in turn, gave rise to a reified religiosity that was a short step from the church insisting that engage-



ment in politics constituted a dangerous deviation from a truly spiritual gospel. In its very concern to be most pious and most spiritual the church, suggests Gerhard Ebeling, became most worldly because it left "the world without God and God without a world."(7)

It was this gospel that formed the nexus of the nineteenth century age of mission. Driven by a desire 'to save souls' (with few exceptions) missionaries found themselves in, at very least, what De Kiewiet calls "unintentional collusion" with imperial officials.(8) Recognising that their proselytising activities could bear fruits only to the extent that the structures of African traditional society were destroyed, their desire to save souls necessitated support for the colonial process. At the same time the mission churches quickly condemned the participation of their converts in nationalist politics, a factor that led directly to the emergence of the African Indigenous Churches.(9) Bluntly put, the well-worn axiom which teaches that support for the ruling classes should not be interpreted as 'politics' while the support for the forces of resistance be condemned as a deviation from the true spiritual center of the gospel was firmly planted on African soil.

Since those heady days of missionary triumphalism this distinction between two different kinds of political involvement has left an indelible mark on the church. Confessing Christians in Nazi Germany were condemned by church and state alike for resisting Hitler, while the involvement of the *Deutsche Christen* on the side of Hitler was regarded as theologically legitimate. In Smith's Rhodesia the church vacillated in its affirmation of social justice, in Latin and Central American dictatorships the institutional churches have in many instances preached an ethereal spirituality that has left the poor to die in the streets, and in the Philippines, South Korea and elsewhere Christians who dabble in resistance politics are a constant source of embarrassment to at least sections of the church hierarchy. In South Africa the formative support of the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* for white domination, the historical support for the structures of oppression by the English-speaking churches and the continued legitimation of South Africa's armed forces through a uniformed chaplaincy staffed by ordained ministers of all the major churches in South Africa has only in recent years come to be questioned theologically by *some* Christians inside and outside of South Africa. On the other hand, even the most 'liberal' churches question the more radical involvement of Christians against the state. The response of these churches, for example, to the decision of the World Council of Churches to offer humanitarian aid to liberation armies fighting against oppressive regimes in southern Africa continues to fester as a sore on the body of most member churches of the South African Council of Churches.(10)

## Some Theological Propositions

Against this background the question is now asked concerning the specific ingredients within the Christian tradition that account for this tendency of the church to side with the dominant forces? It is addressed by way of enunciating three propositions for debate, each of which must be discussed (tried and tested) at far greater length than is undertaken here -- for they stand central to the Christian faith.

### *God*

In addition to all else, the Bible is a collection of the stories of ordinary people who slowly and often reluctantly begin to discern the liberating presence of God in their midst.(11) Yet, those



on earth.'"(14) Christians have always insisted that God's name is a name above all names. We need to enquire to what extent our theological nomenclature shapes our attitude to life. To share in the renewing power of God, we are obliged to reassess our language about God in each new age.

## *Salvation*

The New Testament message of salvation is broad and inclusive. It is a message of goodnews to the poor, liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, freedom for the oppressed and the announcement of the jubilee year (Luke 4:18-19). The question needs to be asked whether, especially in Protestant churches, the unqualified affirmation of the doctrine of justification by faith *alone* has not been corrupted, spiritualised and privatised to contradict the message of Jesus.

Ernst Troeltsch suggests it is this that has caused Christians to "retire behind the line of battle of all external events and outward activity, into a purely personal spirituality." Left theologially unequipped to cope with the demands of the political realm, "as soon as the Christian believer turns from this spirituality to take his place in real life, he can only express his inner liberty through submission to the existing order."(15)

What right wing groups are doing is to demonically take this a step further, and theologially argue that it is wrong for Christians to concern themselves even with such 'external' issues as human rights. This comes out no where more clearly than in a *Gospel Defence League* newsletter which attacks the major institutional churches in South Africa, including the white Dutch Reformed Church, for supporting the South African Law Commission's proposed Bill of Rights for South Africa. The newsletter states (quite incredibly) that there is no biblical material that supports this concern for human rights. Dutch Reformed theologian Prof D.A. du Toit is, for example, attacked for turning human rights into a gospel of salvation because of his observation that human rights is "... the only and perhaps the last means of saving our world from final destruction." Insisting that people have no inherent worth or right to human dignity, the newsletter insists that the Law Commission has capitulated to the demands of the *Kairos Document* which demands the "the common good of all people"!(16) In this and similar instances right wing religious groups are promoting and defending the most reactionary forces to the *right* of the present regime in South Africa. It is this that must ultimately alienate right wing religious groups from even conservative Christians who prefer not to get involved in politics, but do support the affirmation of fundamental human decency.

Rather than respond to the absurdity of this argument we would do well to ask what in our proclamation of salvation allows people in the name of theological teaching to adopt this reactionary stance. It has something to do with accentuation of human sin to such an extent that it leaves humankind worthless and expendible, devoid of the image of God. Simon Maimela's article, entitled "An Anthropological Heresy", dealing with the notion of human sinfulness in Western thought as opposed to African thought, is of significance in this regard.(17) The preoccupation with exaggerated notions of the corruption of humankind opens the door to Christians being ready and willing to abuse and kill other human beings who are judged not to have seen the light or responded to the gospel. The crusades in only one historical instance of this and the emphasis of the *Road to Damascus* document on the "anti-people" ingredient of this kind of religion is well documented and justified.

To suggest that humanbeings (especially the 'unsaved') can do positively no good nor make any ameliorating contribution to society, being required only to respond to God in religious faith (narrowly defined) and faith *alone*, is to affirm certain morbid dimensions of the Christian heritage and totally ignore God's all-embracing grace that calls us to share in the recreative process of an entire world that is groaning in anticipation of its liberation. Krister Stendahl argues that "justification by faith" is one among many Pauline symbols of the gospel, and that different symbols were used by Paul in different contexts. We would do well to rediscover these other biblical symbols, such as adoption into the family of God, cosmological unity, the reality of the body of Christ, faith as praxis, love of neighbour as obedience to God and so. Unless justification by faith is interpreted in relation to these symbols it has the capacity to function as an inhuman instrument of oppression.

## *Evangelism*

Religious revivalism is a world-wide phenomenon, and evangelism need not in itself necessarily be a source of conflict and discrimination. We would, however, do well to enquire to what extent we as Christians carry the blame for fanatical and extremist forms of religious revivalism, through a tradition of intolerance, discrimination and inquisition. Gabriel Habib, in a paper on religious revivalism in the Middle East situation, provides several helpful insights in this regard.(18) He argues that religious revivalism is a reaction against the affirmation of the intrinsic value to the human being (independent of God) in western secular society, and resulted in the separation of the human being from God and sometimes the replacement of God with the human being. He secondly ascribes religious revivalism, especially in regard to the Middle East, as a response to the failure of the European model of nation-state to resolve the fundamental questions of identity and human rights.

In summary, he suggests that secularism has failed to address many of the most fundamental needs and demands of oppressed and emerging, as well as established nations in many parts of the world. In this situation the appeal of religion is inevitable -- it can be misused to legitimate division, conflict and the perpetuation of socio-economic, cultural and class oppression, or it can be affirmed as a means of creating a sense of human dignity and mutual acceptance of all people as a part of God's greater creation.

Continuing the theme of this essay, my concern is to identify the religious sentiments central to evangelism most likely to fuel the fires of conflict and exploitation.

Central to these are forms of *religious particularism* based on a doctrine of election which is wedded to ethnocentric or religious bases. Closely related to this is a sense of superiority that results in the theological undergirding of the privilege for the 'chosen'. For this kind of particularism to function effectively there is always a need to create an enemy or scapegoat, which must be demonised in order that it may be effectively exploited to legitimise and benefit the 'chosen'. This narrow and chauvinistic notion of election and covenantal mission has effectively been used to promote a variety of exploitative ideologies, not least in anti-semitism, apartheid and political Zionism. More recently it has functioned central to right wing religion's support for exploitative capitalism and its attack on communism. Against this corruption of theology we need to rediscover the liberatory dimensions of election and mission which affirms God's preferential

option for only one group of people, namely the poor and oppressed -- knowing that the identity of this group may change from one age to the next.

Concerns about *true doctrine* are also central to evangelism. The pursuit of truth is central to the Christian. When this, however, degenerates into absolutising *our* particular notions of God and doctrine it becomes tyranny. Ecumenical debate and inter-faith dialogue are vigorously opposed by right-wing religious groups, and differences of perceptions often used as a basis for justifying divisions and conflicts that are escalated to the level of "Armageddon theology".

In solidarity with liberatory Christian groups in various parts of the world, we need to rediscover the the Hebraic notion of truth as *praxis*. The teaching of Jesus was summed up by the early church as "the way", being a pattern of behaviour and existence summed in the love of neighbour as a manifestation of the love of God. To quote Miguez Bonino, "there is no truth outside or beyond the concrete historical events in which we are involved as agents." (19) If our doctrinal teaching is not grounded in liberatory *praxis* it is perhaps not theology at all. To allow theology to degenerate into the sterile arguments about dogmatic belief is to turn the goodnews of Jesus for the poor into an ideology of oppression that has little to do with true evangelism. The institutional churches are not without guilt in this regard. They have prepared the ground for the appeal of the more extreme right wing groups.

Latent to many forms of evangelism is a heavy handed form of *authoritarianism*. Reference was made in the opening section of this essay to the two traditions within biblical teaching. The prophetic tradition in the Hebrew Bible and the Jesus tradition in the New Testament is a tradition which favours the perceptions and interests of the common people and especially those who have little or no say in the dominant structures of society. The Hebrew prophets and Jesus were repeatedly accused of having deviated from authority (in and by both temple and state). Today too many Christians cling blindly to conservative theologies and political ideologies, using this as a excuse to uproot believers from their communities and from history as if Christ were not incarnate. (20) Indigenous people have throughout the history of missions in Africa and elsewhere resisted the cultural imperialism of this kind of gospel, and the affirmation African and Black theologies in more recent times continues to do so. Right wing religious groups openly espouse authoritarian notions of truth. The minister or spiritual leader in right wing churches (and many institutional churches as well) is seen to know best, democratisation of church structures are opposed, and conservative values are clung too as a means of resisting all forms of change. The Gospel Defence League, taking a reactionary position on virtually every issue of the day, again provides a useful illustration in this regard-by opposing attempts (in this instance of Dr. Nico Smith) to 'decolonise' theology and oppose the cultural values imposed by missionaries on African Christians. (21)

Unless the gospel is incarnated and culturally adapted to the specific demands of specific situations, addressing the the oppressive powers and principalities of those situations and liberating people from the spiritual, socio-economic and political structures of oppression which characterise those situations it is not the gospel. It is the opium of the poeple. Churches have throughout history fallen victim to this temptation and in many instances affirmed a tradition into which right wing religious groups neatly fit.



# The Challenge to the Church

The mainstream churches are concerned about right wing religious groups and the appeal of these groups to some established church members. The time has come for us to ask to what extent we have spawned them? The present manifestation of right wing religion is a phenomenon whose roots extend deep into the reactionary dimensions of the Christian tradition. This is a tradition that the mainstream churches are required to reassess and transform in the light of the liberating message of Jesus.

## Footnotes

1. C. Villa-Vicencio, *Between Christ and Caesar: Classic and Contemporary Texts on Church and State* (Cape Town: David Philip. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).
2. C. Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid: A Socio-Theological History of the English-Speaking Churches* (Maryknoll: Orbis. Cape Town: David Philip, 1988).
3. Walter Brueggemann, "Trajectories in Old Testament Literature and the Sociology of Ancient Israel," in *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983), p.313. Also Norman Gottwald, "Church and State in Ancient Israel: An Example or Caution in Our Age?" The Department of Religion Lecture Series, University of Florida, January 12, 1981.
4. See Anton Mayer, *Der Zensierte Jesus: Soziologie des Neuen Testaments* (Ollen u. Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter Verlag, 1983). Also Yann Redalie, "Conversion or Liberation? Notes on Acts 16:11-40," *Radical Religion* Vol.II, Nos.2 and 3, pp.102-108.
5. Albert Schweitzer, *Quest for the Historical Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p.4.
6. Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Theology as Critique of and the Emancipation of Sexism," in Theodore Jennings (ed.), *The Vocation of the Theologian* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), p.28.
7. Gerhard Ebeling, *Word and Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p.358.
8. C.W. De Kiewiet, *The Imperial Factor in South Africa* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1937), p.159.
9. See, for example, the case of the Rev. Nehemiah Tile in Edward Roux, *Time Longer than Rope: A History of the Black Man's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), p.13.
10. Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid*, pp.107-117.
11. Cornelius Van Peursen, *Him Again!* (Richmon, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1969), p.13
12. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-talk. Towards a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Deacon Press, 1983), p.61.
13. Elizabeth G. Watson, "Renaming the World," *Pace*, Vol.21, No.1, Spring, 1989, p.3.

14. *Ibid.*, p.7.
15. Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1956), Vol.2, pp.540-76.
16. *Gospel Defence League* newsletter, June 1989.
17. Simon Maimela, "An Anthropological Heresy: A Critique of White Theology," John W. de Gruchy and C. Villa-Vicencio (eds.), *Apartheid is a Heresy* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1983), pp.48-58.
18. Gabriel Habib, "Misuse of Religious Sentiments, Religion in Conflict Situations." A paper delivered at the CCLA/WCC Human Rights Advisory Group Meeting on June 29, 1987.
19. Jose Miguez Bonino, *Toward a Christian Political Ethics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), pp.44.
20. Habib, p.7.
21. *Gospel Defence League* newsletter, May 1989.

## ***Questions and Comments***

The speaker was asked to make additional comments on how the gospel should be culturally incarnated. He pointed out that the gospel as it is being proclaimed in the mainline churches in Southern Africa is the gospel in the form in which it was inherited from the missionaries, who came to this region in association with colonialism.

It was pointed out that we condemn the other camp, in this case the conservative groups in churches, very often without giving reasons. Nevertheless, the RWCGs offer something attractive to the youth. They therefore are not critical of the born-again movement. This can have the effect of encouraging the youth to turn to the born-again movement. How should we respond to the questions of the youth? The speaker pointed out that we have to try to read the Bible with a new pair of spectacles. We should read the Bible not from the perspective of the rulers, but with the eyes of the people who experience oppression. The dominant trend in our churches has been to read the Bible from the perspective of the rulers. We have to learn to discover the theological resources of the church in the hands of the people.

# CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN REGION

## (PLENARY DISCUSSION)

### *Namibia (Rosalinda Namesis)*

The speaker pointed out that Namibia has become the testing ground of the South African government for promoting right wing religious movements, and utilizing them for the support of oppression. In this way, the system has identified the church as an important site of their struggle against liberation. The French professor Pascal has done research on this topic. Already since 1978, strategies have been devised by the SAn government for using theological arguments in support of its regime. SAn government realized that the Namibian people are intensely Christian people. One therefore has to use Christian arguments to obtain their cooperation. A variety of programmes were developed. They had their origin in the WHAM strategy of the Defence Force (Winning Hearts and Minds). Since the SADF had no credibility with the people, they used religious movements to get access to the people. Such movements were for example Gospel Outreach, Full Gospel, Ichthus, Mission World (the equivalent of World Vision), Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, Watchtower, Youth with a Mission (YWAM), Africa Evangelical Fellowship (Church planters and Hospital fellowship), Bible Study College, Media Centre for Christ, and the services of Billy Graham. Jimmy Swaggart's programmes are shown every Sunday on SWABC-TV. The Action Christian National programme of the DTA is another example. Cultural-religious-ethnic programmes like Etango (meaning Sun) in the North and Namwesa in Caprivi are used to counteract progressive church leaders and organizations and to demoralize communities. Other such groups are Flamingo, Ezuwa, Nacos, Nasok and Eroc. They distribute free copies of the Revised Version of the Gideon Bibles. They destabilize the independence process and prepare for continuing to do so in the post-independence period. They organize rallies in tents and hold healing services. They also introduce new methods of healing from China (acupuncture). On the whole one has the impression that they do not have too great an impact on the Namibian people. The people know that these organizations are supported by the South African government. Therefore, they do not expect any benefit from them. The Namibian Council of Churches (CCN) tries to unite the people. A document which stems from these uniting efforts is the Ai Gams Declaration. On the other hand, the South African government organises groups to counter-act these efforts. An example of these organizations is ECSWAM. There is a great need for research into the activities of these organizations. Such organizations exploit the poverty of the communities. What they are doing is not always easily to be recognised as involvement of the South African government.

## *Questions and Comments*

Question: Are the programmes of these organisations parts of the Winning Hearts and Minds campaigns of the SADF. In reply, the speaker pointed out that this is the case. These groups fall under the social aspect of the WHAM strategy. The SADF, however, keeps behind the scenes.

It was pointed out that a huge evangelistic campaign is being planned and supported by RW religious movements from the USA to coincide with the election campaign. The participant raised the question whether anyone is watching the groups engaged in these campaigns. In reply, the speaker said that little research had been done, because of the many demands on the churches in the present situation. The General Secretary of the CCN is doing research on the Etango programme. However, in view of existing pressures, research work makes slow progress.

Question: What is the position of the African Independent Churches (AICs) in Namibia. The speaker replied that the AICs initially were not aware of the strategies of the South African government. In the meantime, this awareness has grown -- the progressive part of the AICs is open for cooperation with the CCN.

A participant emphasized the need for a group of experts to come and do research on Right Wing Christian Groups (RWCGs). At the same time he said, that the people on the whole appeared to be happy with the churches. In Namibia, the churches are close to the oppressed people. For this reason, he does not expect the RWCGs to have much impact.

Question: What does the CCN do against right wing Christian movements. The speaker pointed out that the CCN has started a "Unchain your Brain" programme. This programme offers one-day workshops. They start with an introduction into the Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) strategy, and explain the activities of RWCGs in this context.

A participant asked for more information on the Ai Gams Declaration. In reply, a Namibian delegate said that the name refers to the Catholic centre Ai Gams, where the churches held a conference for all progressive organizations. This had to be done because SWAPO was banned at the time. The religious and political progressive forces demanded particularly the implementation of UN Resolution 435.

### *South Africa (Br. Jude Pieterse)*

Within the South African situation, there can be no doubt that 'Right Wing' religious groups are active. For all practical purposes, one can consider such groups and their activities under four categories.

Firstly, there are a variety of church or church-related and evangelistic groups, not all of which have an active political programme, but who at least support the political and economic status quo, e.g. Christian Mission International, Campus Crusade for Christ, Christ for All Nations, the Rhema Church.

Secondly, we have small groups and individuals who vigorously attack any church or church personell critical of the South African situation, and equally vigorously defend so-called Western values. Examples here would be the Gospel Defence League, Frontline Fellowship, United Christian Action (an umbrella body for a number of like-minded people and organisations, and the Aida Parker Newsletter. These publications abound, and arrive regularly in church offices, presbyteries, etc. People such as Archbishops Tutu and Hurley, Rev.s Frank Chikane, Beyers Naude and Allan Boesak, and institutions such as the SACC and the SACBC are invariably the objects of attack. Accusations of communists and communism flow freely.

Thirdly, there are several right wing groups associated with most of the mainline churches.



Fourthly, we have more directly government-related RWCGs, and government-related action. For the purposes of this brief presentation, I wish to confine myself to the latter two categories, and recount briefly some experiences that may help illustrate the actions typical of them.

1) Right Wing Groups within Specific Denominations: Though most, if not all, mainline churches have such groups, I shall confine myself to those active within the Catholic church.

a) The Catholic Defence League: This is a small group composed mostly of immigrant Catholics drawn from the Dutch and Belgian communities. They monitor closely any statements emanating from the Bishops Conference and on occasion have attempted to hold demonstrations. Their statements or responses receive prominent coverage on the government media. And this despite repudiation of their position and standing by the bishops. The Catholic Defence League's position is very much one of pro-establishment.

b) Tradition, Family and Property (TFP): This group was founded in Brazil 55 years ago, and today exists in 22 countries. It claims its primary goal is the defence of three basic values of Christian civilisation, tradition, family and private property. It is very anti-communist and anti-socialist.

c) Young South Africans for a Christian Civilisation is very closely associated with the TFP movement. It claims that though inspired by religious principles, its action is essentially civic. It has published several well-researched documents attacking the position of the church. One dealt with the New Nation newspaper, and another with a position taken by the Bishops Conference on the October 1988 municipal elections.

d) Opus Dei – Catholics Against Communism and Terrorism. I do not believe this group, if it exists, is related to the international Opus Dei movement. I would like to read some extracts from a document received some time after the attack on Khanya House, the secretariat of the Southern African Bishops Conference, and titled as above, i.e. Catholics Against Communism and Terrorism: Opus Dei.

"Opus Dei is a group of Catholics united in action and committed to the eradication of all forms of communism within the church. We believe that the church hierarchy has lost its direction and is walking along a path of self-destruction and chaos.

"We resent the divisive influences which the alien teachings of liberation or contextual theology have ...

"These tendencies ... must be ruthlessly weeded out.

Throughout history, the defenders of the church have reacted swiftly and ruthlessly ... and have not hesitated to take action...

"We cannot allow the subversion process which took place in countries such as Nicaragua, to be repeated again, and must take drastic action ...

"We reject these false priests who masquerade as the defenders of the people and will continue to strike at heretic priests!

"They continue to poison the life blood of the church with their lies and deceit.

"We have seen this happen in Latin America, and will not allow it to happen here.

"Opus Dei will not stand back ... and commands the hierarchy to refrain from their involvement in revolutionary activities.

"Opus Dei will not hesitate to again take severe action against the heretic priests of the SACBC. We will not be deceived by your falsehood, and will weed out this poison from the ranks of the church!"

This document was the first and only statement or communication received. It came within a week of a senior police official asking whether the SACBC had yet received any communication from a group "within" the church. The activities and influence of this category of right wing



church involvement is, I believe, confined largely to the white Catholic population, and has little direct influence within the black community.

2) As mentioned earlier, for the purposes of this presentation, I would confine myself to experiences with two categories of right wing involvement within church life, the first being right wing involvement within specific denominations, the second being more direct government-related RWCGs, and government-related action with regard to the churches.

Even more specifically, here I wish to confine myself to the latter, that is government-related involvement in church affairs. The use of the government-controlled radio and television to launch attacks on the churches and church leadership is well known in South Africa. Selective and distorted quotations and programmes are used to discredit anything and anyone critical of the government's position. The programmes broadcast on TV supposedly dealing with liberation theology were classical examples of this. More recently, we witnessed a deliberate attempt by the Religion Department of the SABC-TV to discredit and distort the Pastoral Plan for the Catholic church in Southern Africa. In an interview with Bishop Orsmond, vice-president of the SACBC, deliberate attempts were made to associate the Pastoral Plan with base communities, with Nicaragua, all in turn of course associated in the thinking of the SABC with communism and evil. The interview itself, only part of which was screened, was constantly directed by the head of the SABC-TV Religion Department, and not by the interviewer who all along was primed to keep her questions on particular issues.

We have also witnessed government officials involving themselves directly in church affairs. A classic example of this was that of the Minister of Law and Order. Mr. Adriaan Vlok launched a public attack on what he termed 'some activist priests' within the Anglican and Roman Catholic Church, who in a scandalous manner, lead the good ordinary and moderate Christian people by their noses and misuse them. These people, it seems, have exchanged the true gospel for the devilish so-called liberation theology. The style of some of the language used in this speech is, in my opinion, similar to that used in the Opus Dei document quoted earlier.

It was not long after this public attack that the headquarters of the SACBC was destroyed by arson.

The government-controlled media are also very quick to give prominence to statements by individuals and small groups purporting to represent "moderate" church people in their attacks on the churches and the church leadership. Such attacks are aimed at discrediting the leadership as well as sowing division within the churches.

Much more could be said, but given the limited time available to me, this will need to suffice.

## *Questions and Comments*

The comment was made that in Nicaragua, the churches participated in the struggle for liberation, particularly through priests involved in the Basic Christian Communities. These priests live with the people. This changed the nature of the struggle and the new society.

A participant pointed out that important documents on the churches are passed on from the United States to the South African security establishment. He mentioned the Rockefeller Report, Santa Fe Documents and the Banzer Plan. He further noted that the churches in South Africa differ from those in Namibia; they do not have a tradition of identifying with the suffering people.

Remarks were made on the role which key representatives of established churches are playing in the boards of churches and church institutions, as well as in groups associated with RWCGs. A participant mentioned specifically that someone involved in the Standing for the Truth Campaign is at the same time active in World Vision. He also noted that 'yuppie' young black people

have sought refuge in central Johannesburg. These young people are uprooted and alienated, and are often attracted to RWCGs, who exploit their situation.

### ***South Africa (Alex Bhiman)***

Alex Bhiman complemented the report of Jude Pieterse. He pointed out that the activities of RWCGs have to be understood in the context of the Total Strategy of the SAn government. The National Security Management System is a structure parallel to the civilian government. It provides good structures for the activities of the RWCGs. He spoke about the climate in which these groups operate. On the one hand there is the massive propaganda of the State. On the other hand, the publications of Christians involved in the liberation movement receive more and more publicity, such as the Kairos Document, the Evangelical Witness in South Africa, the Relevant Pentecostal Witness, and the Road to Damascus. Through the groups standing behind these documents, the church emerges as part and parcel of the liberation movement. The Standing for the Truth campaign challenges Christians to become involved in action against oppression. The SAn government feels threatened by the activities of these groups, and in turn intensifies its support of RWCGs.

The RWCGs become very active in the townships. They have food supplying programmes for suffering people. Through such programmes, the Rhema Church for example tries to find supporters in the townships. Known apartheid agents sit on parish councils. The state has initiated rival councils to the existing regional Council of Churches (Western Cape Council of Churches). In the homelands, alternative ministers' fraternals are sponsored by homeland governments. In the schools, they try to take over or replace existing student Christian groups. They run three month crash courses for organisers. He mentioned various examples of how RWCGs try to make things difficult for progressive Christian structures, such as PACSA, SACBC, SACC Dependents Conference. Right wingers have directly attacked Khotso House and Khanya House, and have been involved in the attempt to poison Frank Chikane.

### ***Zimbabwe (Rabbi Isaakson)***

Rabbi Isaakson described the activities of the Rhema Church in Zimbabwe. He said that on Sundays, approximately 1,000 people assemble for the worship service in a building they have hired from the Jewish congregation for Z\$ 3,000. They offered Z\$ 1,000,000 to buy the building, but were refused. They have much money at their disposal. They are linked to the Rhema Church in South Africa, and have received Ray McCauley at their services. They are also tied up with the Christian Embassy in Jerusalem. They send their missionary material to the Jewish congregation. They are active in rehabilitation work in Mozambican refugee camps. Allegedly, they are recruiting for the MNR. Rabbi Isaakson asserted that there is universal connection between RWCGs in the USA, SA, Israel and Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean government is very hesitant to take action against RWCGs. They do not want to be seen to be acting against religious freedom

## ***Questions and Comments***

A question was asked about RWCGs other than Rhema who operate in Zimbabwe. Those mentioned were World Vision, Campus Crusade/Life Ministries, Cerello Group, Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, the Moonies, Reinhard Bonnke's Christ for All Nations, John Cutter, Wapusa Wapusa,

**Family of God.** The Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) also has a complete list. Participants were referred to Paul Gifford's book, The Religious Right in Southern Africa for more information.

A Zimbabwean delegate commented that RWCGs often use the method of breakfast meetings. RWCGs 'hypnotize' people to give all their money to their church. He cited the case of a young woman who could not even pay her rent for a flat, because she had given all her money to a RWCG.

# THEOLOGY AND RIGHT WING CHRISTIANITY

*by Paul Gifford*

The following pages deal with the theologies that often underlie forms of right wing Christianity. Note at the outset the plural "theologies". There is no one theology that underpins all the various Christian groups that can be said to promote right wing causes. Equally there is no one label that can be applied to all these different groups. Because of this complexity, I will deal separately with 5 different theologies. Some of these may be combined in the one person or group, but there is no necessity for this. This separate treatment may promote clarity in this important issue.

Let me make two introductory points. The first concerns religion in general, and the second concerns modern theology in particular. First, religions, considered sociologically, can be described as "social organizations for universe maintenance". They preserve the cohesion of a society, neutralize forces of disintegration, maintain a society's perceptions and values by providing an overall framework which can explain everything that happens within a society. In this way they validate accepted attitudes and received conceptions, and resist innovations. So all religions tend to cement and uphold existing structures, and thus act as a conservative force.

Second, the whole enterprise of "modern theology" -i.e. the theology beginning with Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and lasting right down to the present is often described, particularly by exponents of liberation theology, as a theology of control and domination. According to its critics, modern theology allowed its agenda, method and content to be determined by the forces that created the modern world and by those who benefit from it. Thus it represents a theological sell-out to the dominant ideology. There were stages in the forging of this alliance between theology and the capitalist revolution. Medieval Christianity totally opposed the stirring of the new class. It suppressed all opposition to the injustices of feudalism, and restricted financial matters to the Jews. Then at the Reformation, a large part of the Protestant church, especially the Calvinist wing, became the ally of the bourgeoisie - in some respects the two became identical.

This sector of Christianity helped the bourgeois revolution to succeed. However, by the middle of the 19th century, the bourgeois revolution was in difficulties. In the abortive French revolution of 1830 the new elites not only found themselves thwarting a popular uprising rather than sponsoring it, but they even resorted to installing a king to prop up their unlikely alliance with the same feudal monarchists they had once despised. The alliance was necessary if they were to defeat the newly emerging class, the urban workers. The bourgeoisie, who had earlier repudiated religion altogether, now brought religion, the church, theology back with a vengeance. They needed theology, but to perform the function they gave it - to legitimate their authority, to undergird law and order, to give the working masses a plausible explanation why this brave new world was so cruel to them. Theology accepted this role. It restricted itself (and the God with whom it dealt) to the realm of religious experience, staying out of politics, science, technology and economics, for these were accepted as autonomous realms with their own built-in, self-regulating mechanisms. Reality



became partitioned, divided between faith and reason, science and religion, sacred and profane. And at this stage modern theology took the step so criticized by liberation theology. It made the problem of scepticism its central concern, but not the angry agnosticism of the working classes, who, totally excluded from any dialogue with theology, became lost to Christianity. It became obsessed with the sophisticated unbelief of the educated classes. Theology became an enterprise performed within the bourgeois stratum of the modern world. A faith that had once proclaimed a Lord who lifted up and cast down emperors, who condemned extortion and profiteering, "was now reduced to being concerned exclusively with the inner spirit or at most frictions between individuals. God did not question the institutional structures of ruling and money making".(1) It was, of course, at this time that the massive missionary thrust took place; in this movement theology kept to the role given it, "to keep the natives in their place, and to cool everybody's mad impulses".(2) The radicality of today's new liberation theology is evident in the fact that it arises from the very people whom modern theology never considered, and who consequently reject the entire agenda of modern theology. Their viewpoint is put succinctly by Pablo Richard: "For those who suffer its injustice, the reconciliation between religion and the modern world is a sacralization of oppression".(3)

## 1. NATIONALISM

In the following pages I want to sketch some particular examples of theologies which underlie right wing groups. The first example is a theology suffused with nationalism. Anyone familiar with the history of South Africa will understand this, for Afrikaner Volk theology is basically the identification of Afrikaner aspirations with the will of God.(4) Nazism was a classic instance of this. For many Protestant theologians, the Volk was the carrier of God's will in history, and therefore a legitimate object of worship. Once you had brought yourself to believe that, it was only a short step further to believing that Adolf Hitler, the savior of the Volk, was the carrier of God's will in history and a legitimate object of worship. For example, the Lutheran Paul Althaus (1888-1966), regarded as a moderate, could write in 1937, "As a creation of God, the Volk is the law of our life". Again, in 1935: "We Christians know ourselves bound by God's will to the promotion of National Socialism, so that all members and ranks of the Volk will be ready for service and sacrifice to one another". And again, in 1934: "In this knowledge we as believing Christians thank God our Father that he has given to our Volk in its time of need the Fuhrer as a 'pious and faithful sovereign, and that he wants to prepare for us in the National Socialist system of government 'good rule', a government with new inner discipline and honor".(5)

The roots of this are deep. In the Old Testament, nationalism and religion are the same thing: God chose a particular people and promised them a particular land. The Christianity of Jesus and Paul repudiated any conception of an earthly promised land, and the link between religion and nationalism disappeared. The early Christians allegorized and spiritualized the Old Testament "promised land" out of this world and into the next. Augustine understood it in this heavenly sense. Soon, however, there entered - from classical antiquity - the notion of a "Christian fatherland" here on this earth. When Christianity came to clash with Islam, this sense came to predominate. This "earthly Christian fatherland" was applied to Christendom in general, to an individual city, and in the last two hundred years, to the modern nation state. Conor Cruise O'Brien distinguishes between three kinds of holy nationalism: in ascending order of arrogance and destructiveness, these are "chosen people", "holy nation", and finally "deified nation". The idea of "chosen people" contains within itself not only national pride, but also humility, anguish and

fear; the chosen people can rightly be punished, and God can use other nations as instruments of their punishment, or God can simply drop if for another, as he dropped (according to some N.T. writers) the Jews for the Christians. The idea of "holy nation" (or "chosen people with tenure") is getting more dangerous; the nation is still under God, but basks in his permanent favor. With "deified nation", however, there is no longer any entity, or law, or ethic superior to the nation. Whatever the nation decides to do, or whatever its leader does in the name of the nation, is inherently and intrinsically right, no matter how it appears to other peoples, who have by definition no rights, since all rights belong to the nation alone. This was the nationalism of the Third Reich, but it was also, thinks O'Brien, frighteningly close to an understanding in the US under Reagan. (6)

O'Brien gives two interesting examples of American "holy nationalism". He recounts attending the 1985 Annual National Prayer Breakfast, an assembly begun by President Eisenhower in 1953, and annually attended by the President and leading representatives of both houses of Congress, of the Supreme Court, of the Armed Forces, and by leading governors, mayors and thousands of ordinary Americans. The Congressman presiding in 1985 began with this prayer: "In the excitement of the presence of the President of the United States of America, help us to remember the presence of Your Son, Jesus Christ". O'Brien, startled, recounts how he looked around at his neighbors "but none of them seemed to find anything incongruous about the idea that Reagan might upstage Jesus, unless the Father threw His weight into the balance".(7) This breakfast serves a specific practical purpose. Instituted by a military President, and timed for a critical period in the US fiscal year, the Breakfast serves to call down God's blessing on the military budget and to mobilize support for the budget. In 1985 this point was made with memorable clarity in the closing prayer delivered by the US Army Chief of Staff: "O Lord, help us defend our freedom. Freedom is never free. It is the most expensive thing on earth. And it must be paid for in installments".(8) (Just how expensive is gleaned from the fact that the Stealth Bomber which first flew on 17 July 1989, cost US \$70,000,000,000, and this is just one element in the American defense budget.) The second example O'Brien gives is the Air and Space Museum in Washington. He describes it as "a huge, coldly cavernous cathedral dedicated to the glory of the United States, co-extensive with the cosmos...claiming not merely the earth but the heavens as well and clothing the nation with the omnipotence of God". He quotes Garry Wills on Star Wars: "What is Star Wars but another more complex projector meant to trace, in lasers and benign nuclear 'searchlighting', the image of America itself, across the widest screen of all". If he found the Prayer Breakfast disturbing, the Air and Space Museum made a "chilling impression" on him. At the Prayer Breakfast the Governor of California had spoken of "this sacred American compact with God"; there God and America remained distinguishable entities. "But in the Museum of Air and Space the distinction vanishes. The only God in that cosmogony is the United States".(9)

O'Brien shows that holy nationalism is not something held by only one group of Americans. US Catholics have been particularly prone to this, for reasons that are not hard to understand. The original Protestant settlers did not accept Catholics as part of the chosen people - they were not really Americans.(10) To win acceptance, Catholics had to prove themselves. So New York's Cardinal Spellman in the 1950s was forever preaching "Americanism", and the Catholic senator Joe McCarthy led his anti-communist crusade. McCarthy was so effective that he convinced the majority of Americans that Satan had, in O'Brien's words, "changed his address, moving from the Vatican to the Kremlin". Without McCarthy, says O'Brien, Kennedy could never have be-



fear; the chosen people can rightly be punished, and God can use other nations as instruments of their punishment, or God can simply drop if for another, as he dropped (according to some N.T. writers) the Jews for the Christians. The idea of "holy nation" (or "chosen people with tenure") is getting more dangerous; the nation is still under God, but basks in his permanent favor. With "deified nation", however, there is no longer any entity, or law, or ethic superior to the nation. Whatever the nation decides to do, or whatever its leader does in the name of the nation, is inherently and intrinsically right, no matter how it appears to other peoples, who have by definition no rights, since all rights belong to the nation alone. This was the nationalism of the Third Reich, but it was also, thinks O'Brien, frighteningly close to an understanding in the US under Reagan. (6)

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come President in 1960.(11) There are many Catholics in positions of influence today who are products of that era. Right wing Christianity is not something exclusive to US evangelicals.(12).

However, holy nationalism of US evangelicals is the form in which most of us will encounter it. There are 67,000 US Christian missionaries around the globe, and in the last few years the balance within them has shifted. No longer do most of them come from the mainline churches; the balance now lies heavily with the fundamentalist/charismatic camp, and many of these come from a subculture in which the identification of God with the US is almost axiomatic. Many of them do see the United States, as in Reagan's words, "this anointed land", and they view anyone not totally in agreement with them as under the sway of the "Evil Empire". However, I have written elsewhere on the issues that this raises, and will not repeat myself here.(13)

## **2. DISPENSATIONALISM**

In the Bible there are passages called 'apocalyptic' and two whole books of this type, Daniel and Revelation. This apocalyptic style developed from the prophetic style. Basic to apocalyptic is the belief that this age is irredeemably evil, because God, for reasons best known to himself, has let it fall under the sway of Satan. Before long, there will be a time of fierce tribulation and persecution for the just, but God will soon intervene to reward those who have remained faithful and to crush evil doers. There were variations within this overall framework: some spoke of God's direct intervention; others had God intervening through an agent like a Messiah or a Son of Man; some spoke of an anti-Christ who would lead the forces of darkness in the great struggle before the end; some held that God's intervention would usher in a thousand year kingdom on earth. This apocalyptic way of thinking is very important, for some key N.T. concepts like Son of Man, Kingdom of God, are properly understood only against this background. This way of thinking flourished between 200 BC and AD 100, and although it ceased to play any major creative role after that as the church settled down in a more organized way, there have always been peripheral and even anarchic Christian movements that have drawn on these images. The Montanists were among these, as were the Anabaptists. 17th Century Britain had many such groups.(14)

Last century in Britain a complete doctrine was elaborated from these apocalyptic writings which has been called pre-millennialist dispensationalism. This claims to deduce from the Bible that history is divided into ages or dispensations. Most of its proponents claim that we are living in the sixth dispensation, that of the "Church and Grace", which will soon end when Jesus returns to establish his millennial kingdom. Before he returns the world will experience a reign of terror or tribulation; either before, or during, or after this tribulation, (all three views are found) the church of true believers will be "raptured" or snatched up to heaven. The man most responsible for drawing up this system of premillennial dispensationalism, and the inventor of the idea of the "rapture", was John Nelson Darby (1800-82), the founder of the Plymouth Brethren. The Brethren did not flourish in the USA, but Darby's influence there has been enormous, as a result of seven preaching tours between 1867 and 1882, and through the Bible and Prophecy Conference movement. In the turmoil after the American Civil War (1860-65) his views gained ground and by the late 1880s premillennial dispensationalism was widely accepted in American evangelical circles. The Scofield Reference Bible (1909), which quickly became the fundamentalists' Bible and incorporated this system in its notes and commentary, entrenched it still further. In the 1970s there was an explosion of publications expounding these ideas.(15)



I do not intend to refute this premillennial dispensationalism, save to say that it is based on ignorance of what apocalyptic literature was in its original context, but I will mention a few ways in which it functions politically.

First, if the world is completely evil and doomed to destruction, there is no incentive to do anything about it. And if Jesus is coming very soon, we have no time to do anything about it anyway. Thus the doctrine often serves to withdraw people from social involvement - but we will return to this later.

Second, because it sees biblical prophecies as being fulfilled in the end time - our time - and because it understands all biblical references to the restoration of Israel as referring to the modern state of Israel, it sees modern Israel as part of God's plan. This is the doctrine of Christian Zionism. Falwell writes; "Anyone who truly believes in the Bible sees Christianity and the new state of Israel as inseparably connected".(16) The consequences of this view can be fairly sinister, for it leads to unquestioning support, on supposedly "biblical" grounds, for everything the Israeli government wants or attempts. In 1976 Begin's Likud bloc came to power on a revisionist Zionist platform which utilized biblical concepts. The US Israeli lobby realized fundamentalists could be a key to deliver the support of 50-60 million American evangelicals. Carter upset this lobby when he called for the creation of a Palestinian homeland, and consequently lost their votes. The Israeli lobby and the Christian Zionists began a national campaign against Carter's support for the Palestinians. They published full-page advertisements in major US newspapers, taking the full Christian Zionist line; the advertisements were headed "Evangelicals' Concern for Israel", and were signed by prominent fundamentalist leaders. This played some part in the election of Reagan, who with several of his cabinet, held premillennialist views.(17)

Falwell has openly supported Israel on all scores. "Whoever stands against Israel stands against God". He is in no doubt about the participation of God in the 1967 "miraculous six-day war". Israel would certainly have lost "had it not been for the intervention of God almighty". He fervently supports Israel's claim to the West Bank, because God's granting the Holy Land to the biblical patriarchs (Gen 15, 18ff) was irrevocable. In his denunciations of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, he repeatedly quotes God's covenant with Abraham; "I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you" (Gen 12,3). In June 1981, when Israel bombed the nuclear reactor in Iraq, Israeli Premier Begin immediately telephoned Falwell for support. His unqualified support has brought him Israeli-sponsored tours and decorations.(18)

This Christian Zionism finds its greatest expression in the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem, which promotes this doctrine. Its aim is to establish an "embassy" in Jerusalem for the Christians of the world who would bring support and comfort to Israel and its policies. They collaborate with the Israeli authorities in every possible way, and do all they can to promote Christian Zionism in the West. The Middle East Council of Churches has protested against this blatant use of Christianity for political purposes, and asks Christian churches to confront, theologically and practically, Christian Zionism in the countries where it originates or is organized.(19)

Third, many dispensationalists see not just Israel but all nations and events in what they consider "end-time prophecies". Most of them see the United States, the most godly nation in history, as God's agent in these last days. Since most dispensationalists are dualists who think in black and white, they see the Soviet Union as the agent of Satan's "Evil Empire". They interpret

Ezck 38-39 as referring to Russia, a view which President Reagan shared.(20) Many hold that in the last days Russia will be destroyed, either by God himself or by the USA, a tool in the hands of an angry God. Many hold that the USA will destroy Russia in a nuclear holocaust - naturally, these see US military spending and nuclear build-up as required by God. Falwell holds this view; he laments the slowness of US arms production.(21) The possibilities are endless. Many see Rev 17,3ff as foretelling centralized world government, so they oppose the United Nations or the European Community. Others see 2 Peter 2,1 as predicting the apostasy of the mainline churches, so they consider the World Council of Churches as the antiChrist. Once you are determined to relate strange apocalyptic texts to present or future events, there is no limit to what you can construct. The best example of such speculation is undoubtedly Hal Lindsey's *Late Great Planet Earth*;(22) it may have sold over 20 million copies, but it is hard to disagree with Barr's description of it as "a farrago of nonsense".(23)

### 3. RECONSTRUCTIONISM

Reconstruction is a post-millennial theory. Whereas premillennialists (whom we have just considered under dispensationalism) hold that Jesus will return to set up his kingdom, postmillennialists hold that Jesus will not return until all things have been made subject to him. Postmillennialism, which was world-affirming, optimistic and socially involved, used to be quite common in the United States until about 1870, after which it gave way almost entirely to premillennialism. However, this new form of post-millennialism holds that Christians must restore all things, not by revival or by making individuals born again, but by consciously reconstructing the Church of God according to the dictates of Old Testament law. Its proponents are Americans who hold that the founding fathers established a sacred covenant with God, that America is the new Israel, and who want the USA transformed into a theocracy or "theonomy" where God's Old Testament law will be obeyed in every detail. Greg Bahnsen writes that reconstructionists or "theonomists are committed to the transformation of every area of life, including the institutions and affairs of the socio-political realm, according to the holy principles of God's revealed word".(24)

They do not believe in democracy. The separation of church and state, one of the key features of the American constitution, they consider anathema. It is the church's mission to govern the state. By separating church and state, Christians have given "secular humanism" a realm in which it can hold sway, and promote its "atheistic religion". As things are, agencies of the state - particularly education and the courts - not only promote but implement humanistic teaching. Thus biblical institutions have been replaced by humanistic institutions. Reconstructionists want to change all this. Everything non-scriptural must go. They make much of what they call "standing law"; this category comprises all policy directives applicable over time to classes of individuals, as opposed to particular directives for individuals (e.g. God's command to Noah to build an ark) and positive commands for distinct incidents (e.g. the procedure to be followed in sacrificing sheep). Standing laws are valid for all times.(25) Rushdoony, who expounds this theory in greatest detail, writes that O.T. laws must have "absolute and total jurisdiction over every aspect of life and thought".(26) He goes on to apply this to particulars. Tithing will be introduced. This will do away with any state welfare, for the church will look after the needy; the needy, however, will include no unbeliever and no sinner. Rushdoony reintroduces and updates several OT practices. For example, the OT makes much of gleaning (Lev 19,9f,-Dt 24,19) or gathering grain left behind by reapers. That suited an agricultural society. In the modern equivalent, according to

Rushdoony, the poor could scavenge over rubbish dumps, collecting broken machines, repairing them and selling them. He claims modern welfare has dissuaded the poor from doing this, but "its potentialities are very real and deserving of greater development".(27) Rushdoony thinks that reintroducing the biblical teaching on the death penalty will solve many of today's social problems. The Bible lays down the death penalty for adultery, murder, homosexuality, rape, incest, astrology, striking a parent, blasphemy and juvenile delinquency.(28) He thinks that executing all such offenders today would help solve the problems of America's inner cities. As a final example of what Rushdoony advocates, we can mention the reintroduction of slavery. People who have fallen into debt or on hard times generally can become slaves and redeem themselves by hard work. This will re-establish their self-esteem, and, of course, they will be given their freedom in the next sabbatical year. It is significant that the state is not permitted to exceed the commands God has given it. Bahnsen writes, "outside those areas where God's law prescribes their intervention and application of penal redress, civil rulers are not authorised to legislate or use coercion (eg the economic market place)".(29) In other words, execute delinquents, but do not interfere with market forces.

There is no need to describe this doctrine more fully. The average Christian will no doubt agree with Andrew Walker that it seems "politically extreme, if not nasty". But Andrew Walker goes on to say, that this "doctrine is fast becoming a cult in North America, where it is finding its way into many charismatic groups and is deeply influencing that broad fundamentalist coalition known as the Religious Right".(30)

## 4. THE GOSPEL OF PROSPERITY

The essential point of this Gospel of Prosperity is that prosperity of all kinds is the right of every Christian. God wants a Christian to be wealthy. True Christianity necessarily means wealth; it inevitably brings wealth. Conversely, poverty indicates personal sin, or at least a deficient faith or inadequate understanding.

In outlining this doctrine I will use the words of one of its proponents, Kenneth Copeland of Fort Worth, Texas, who conducted a seminar on "Evangelism and Prosperity" at the 1986 Fire Conference in Zimbabwe, which drew 4 000 delegates from 41 African countries.(31)

Copeland built on certain key texts. Among the most important were chapters 28-30 of Deuteronomy. In these chapters God is presented as offering Israel a choice; "If you obey the voice of the Lord your God... all these blessings shall come upon you" (Dt 28,1f). The blessings are then spelt out: material prosperity, success, abundance of every kind (Dt 28,3-13). On the other hand, "If you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God ... all these curses shall come upon you" (Dt 28,15). These curses comprise every kind of sickness, loss and deprivation (Dt 28,16-68). So it is as simple as that. God gives his people a choice, and he wants them to choose to follow him so that they may prosper: "Do the words of this covenant, that you may prosper in all that you do" (Dt 29,9).

The fourth chapter of Mark's Gospel was equally crucial for Copeland. This chapter contains three separate parables involving "sowing". It also contains Christ's statement, "That measure you give will be the measure you get" (Mk 4, 24), which Copeland links with the reference to the 30, 60 and 100 fold harvest (Mk 4,20) to interpret the three parables. The parables are understood



to teach what Copeland called God's "law of sowing", or "law of increase" or "law of prospering". The law is that if you sow (and to the extent that you sow), you are certain to reap. This "law of prospering" is of crucial importance. In the area of material wealth, if you sow, you will reap; if you sow abundantly, you will reap abundantly. On the other hand, if you selfishly keep riches for your own comfort, you cannot reap; if you have only a little and cling to that little, you will remain in your poverty.

According to Copeland, you sow by giving to the Lord or (effectively the same thing) by giving to the work of evangelism. Here he quoted Christ's words; "There is no one who has left house ... or lands for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time" (Mk 10,29f).(32) Copeland could be quite mathematical in calculating the returns. In a lengthy exposition he linked this text with the idea of the unity of Christians to argue that one can engineer a return even greater than a hundredfold; if ten Christians, each contributing \$100, club together to give \$1 000, each "actually has the right to believe God for a hundredfold of \$1 000 - are we not one?" But, more frequently, he used Paul's words, "God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory" (Phil 4,19), to show that returns will be paid according to the limitless abundance of God, beyond all human calculation.

In the course of the seminar it became clear that personal testimony or stories were even more important in presenting the key ideas than biblical exposition. Copeland's own personal testimony was the main vehicle. He recounted how he began to prosper; after "believing in the Lord" for twelve years, he came home one day in his pickup truck to find two Mercedes in his drive, one valued (then) at \$47 000 and the other at \$58 000. He told how in the course of his ministry he has given away two to three hundred watches ("to preachers walking around without a watch") and now he possesses a \$5 000 gold Rolex. He has over the years given away 14 cars, 5 trucks and 7 aeroplanes. Now (and consequently) he has a staff of 200, is on 200 TV stations, 400 radio stations, and ministers all over the world.

Copeland gave biblical examples, too. Because he believed in the Lord, Abraham prospered greatly - so much so that "the government had to ask him to leave" (Gen 12,19f; 13, 2-6). Copeland stressed that it is because they operate on biblical principles that the Jews have always prospered "in every generation, in every political system, in every location on earth... Everybody's afraid of the Jews. Why? They get all the money." But Christians should do far better; "The simple laws that the Jewish people have operated under are very, very limited and very, very basic compared to what we have in the New Testament".

From all the above, Copeland's central point is unmistakable: a true Christian who gives to evangelism will flourish financially. He made this perfectly clear at the end of his first session when he had his audience standing and shouting with him, "I'm not a poor man any more". He continued "My days of not having enough are over... God just gave me the keys to heaven's bank ... My father is chairman of the board! Alleluia!".

Although Copeland presents his prosperity gospel as biblical, it is obvious that his use of scripture is completely fundamentalist. Texts are taken in isolation with no reference to their contexts. For example, Copeland makes much of Deuteronomy 28-30 which links virtue and prosperity on the one hand, and sin and disaster on the other. Such thinking was part of an attempt to explain how disaster had come upon Israel. This explanation had the merit of avoiding the conclusion

that disaster had occurred through God's weakness or lack of concern, by attributing it to Israel's own faithlessness. This "solution" was part of the whole debate on the question of retribution, a debate found throughout the Old Testament Wisdom books. The book of Job was probably written to oppose this simplistic thinking found in Deuteronomy. I have never heard Copeland quote the dialogues of the book of Job. The doctrine does not come from the Bible but from the needs of the media evangelists. Copeland has admitted that only after committing himself to a TV series with no apparent capital did he come to understand "biblical prosperity" properly.(33)

In Africa it is not surprising that this doctrine has been received so enthusiastically by one group, the White Christians of South Africa and Zimbabwe. Among them it has a wide following. It is promoted in many White churches in South Africa, nowhere more so than in the flourishing Rhema Bible Churches founded in South Africa by Ray McCauley who studied under Kenneth Hagin in Tulsa, Oklahoma.(34) Among these Whites, the Gospel of Prosperity plays an important socio-political role. Any form of Christianity that insists that their disproportionate wealth is nothing to be guilty about, but on the contrary is the sign of a true Christian, provides considerable comfort - and some reassurance, in the face of the very real threat of losing that wealth. The Gospel of Prosperity assures them that wealth is their due and has nothing to do with the unjust structures with which Tutu, Hurley, Boesak and Naude are continually confronting their churches.

Among the nations of black Africa this doctrine is spreading like wildfire, mainly, I suggest, because it is presented as a way out of circumstances of increasing economic hardship. Its effect is to prevent any serious analysis of the causes of poverty. It gives no incentive to change any structures, merely an assurance that one can prosper within the present system. It is obvious how this prosperity gospel acts as a foil to any kind of liberation theology.

## 5. OTHERWORLDLINESS

Christianity has a long history of spiritualizing to such a degree that any earthly involvement becomes incidental. Many Christian traditions are prone to this excessive otherworldliness: Lutherans with some understandings of the Two Kingdoms doctrine; Catholics with their strong mystical and monastic spirituality; those Calvinists who emphasize predestination and the total depravity of this world. The result of this otherworldliness is to leave injustice unchallenged. As an example of this excessive spiritualizing, consider the message that Billy Graham broadcast by satellite from Earl's Court, London, to over 30 African countries between 28 June and 1 July 1989.

His sermon on 29 June (on the text Mk 8,34) he entitled "the Importance of the Soul". Billy Graham is completely dualist. We are made up of body and soul and what matters is the soul: "The body is the house, the soul is the tenant". He told a story about a juggler risking a precious diamond by juggling with it, and claimed that we are taking a similar risk when we delay giving our souls to Jesus. After enumerating the glories of the soul, he casually dismissed the body: "(But) the body is matter", and by implication rather unimportant. This was the message for Africa, where the body tends to have a very hard time of it. In many countries child mortality is rising; calorie intake per head is decreasing (even in Kenya and Nigeria, not normally considered among the poorest); Ghana and Uganda have fewer doctors now than in the mid-1970s. In most of Africa the body merits not less but far more attention than it receives.



Consider how Billy Graham refers to material goods. The danger with material goods is that they can distract us from the real task of getting to heaven. He told the story of a young clergyman being rebuffed by a belligerently irreligious farmer. The farmer told the clergyman: "Look in that direction. See all those fields? I own them. Look in that direction. See all those cattle? I own them. Look in that direction. See all those oil wells? I own them all". The pastor had his wits about him and pointed upwards and said, "Look in that direction. How much do you own up there?" Christianity, for Billy Graham is an investment in heaven which you collect when you die. Goods in this world are neither here nor there: He is clear that there is nothing wrong with riches; "Nowhere does the Bible say that having money is sinful. It's our attitude to money (that is sinful)." However, "you can't take it with you. I've never seen a trailer with the dead person's goods following the hearse in a funeral ...People often ask, 'How much did he leave?' The answer is, 'He left it all'". Goods have no bearing on the essential matter which is to make your investment "up there".

Moreover, everything is personal. Salvation is a question of a personal decision or commitment. Conscience bears on personal sins like bitterness or hate or fornication. In a typical Billy Graham list, to sin is "to lie, drink, cheat on wife, to disobey parents". On 1 July the sermon text was Romans 1, 28-32, and he expounded the story of Manasseh, "the wickedest man in the history of the world". The sins dealt with included adultery, anger, hate, covetousness, illicit sex, drunkenness, drugs, violence, murder, betrayal. The moral life is a personal struggle in which we respond to either God or Satan. Billy Graham goes beyond the personal only to the home or the family. There is no understanding of society at all. There is no understanding of oppressive systems or unjust structures, like apartheid or Burundi or Mobutu's Zaire. He has no understanding of the man-made systems that control the international world. Once, after cataloguing the world's ills, he asked, "Who is going to solve the problems of this world? The brightest men and women are working on solutions to our problems and don't find them. But some day we are going to have a new world!!" Consider those words carefully. The claim that experts cannot find solutions is untrue. For example, Susan George's *The Way the Other Half Dies*, and *A Fate Worse than Debt* (35) give detailed plans for tackling respectively world hunger and the third world debt issue. If implemented, they could go a long way in addressing these problems. But the solutions would entail changing western agribusiness and the international banking system - much more than any particular individual's change of heart. More importantly, however, note the implication of Billy Graham's last sentence; even if the most brilliant men and women came up with something, it would still be of no great moment. The real thing is the world to come. People who suffer now should not worry. Even if you lead a subhuman existence today, "Jesus gives hope for tomorrow. There's going to be a glorious tomorrow for those who have trusted him". He says, "You may have all sorts of problems in this life, but there's hope beyond the life when you come to Christ. There's a certainty that you are going to spend eternity with him".

My point here is not to deny that there is hope beyond this life; my criticism is that this message studiously avoids the issue of hope in this life. For Billy Graham the problem is the meaninglessness of Western affluence. He claims it is difficult to live as a Christian because of our secularized society. For millions in Africa it is difficult to live at all because self-styled Christian leaders like Botha, Mobutu, and others preside over systems that exploit, dehumanize - and kill. Billy Graham's message merely diverts attention from the social evils crying out for a remedy, and deters Christians from committing themselves to finding solutions. It is not just that Billy

Graham's is a slightly deficient gospel that we can supplement with social concern. The message itself precludes any such involvement.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion let me suggest two things that enable us to avoid swallowing beliefs like those discussed above. The first is a clear understanding of the nature of the Bible. All the above beliefs claim to be "biblical". The use of the Bible that makes it teach doctrines like the prosperity gospel or dispensationalism is illegitimate. The Bible is not one book, but an entire library, written over a period of more than a thousand years, by different authors with different assumptions and perceptions. Over that thousand years, the problems, questions and issues changed greatly. Individual books have to be seen in the contexts in which they were written. One cannot simply presume that different books are saying precisely the same thing. If we do not understand the questions a particular book was addressing we may well force it to answer questions it never envisaged. If the context is ignored, texts taken in isolation can lead anywhere, and ingeniously harmonized texts can be welded into the most amazing doctrines. That is why there is little use in bandying texts with advocates of, say dispensationalism. The issue is much deeper - that of the nature, or function of the Bible. In private devotion one can use the Bible in any way that is profitable, but for purposes of articulating doctrine any simplistic fundamentalism is out of order. It is beyond our scope here to discuss the function of the Bible in any detail, but this area has been well treated in recent years.<sup>(36)</sup> Above all, a Christian with some awareness of these issues should not be intimidated by fundamentalists spouting texts, or feel that the fundamentalist is taking the Bible seriously, whereas he is giving it less than its due. He is the one who lets each biblical book speak in its own voice and does not impose his own meaning on it. The self-styled "Bible Christians" often enough have elaborated a human theory, fathered it on the Bible, and try to pass it off with a spurious "biblical authority".

The second requirement is some sociological awareness, some idea of how societies operate, how power is exercised, and how ideology operates to maintain political and economic power. Religion is one of the social realities that can be used to consolidate power. As a social reality, religion is inevitably something political. It is unreal to say religion should not be mixed with politics; they are already mixed. The only question is: what is the nature of the mix, and what effects does it have? Christians aware of this issue are less likely to find themselves unconsciously used as agents of their country's foreign policy, or as obstacles to political reform.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Harvey Cox, *Religion in the Secular City : Towards a Postmodern Theology* (N.Y., Simon and Schuster, 1984), p. 200

2. *Ibid.*, p. 204

3. Pablo Richard, "El Evangelio Entre la Modernidad y la Liberation" *Servir*, XIV, 76 (1978), p. 471, quoted in Cox, *Religion*, p. 204. For this whole matter, see Cox, *Religion*, pp. 92-97, 163-204; Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology*, Maryknoll N.Y., Orbis, 1976; Gustavo Gutierrez, "Two Theological Perspectives: Liberation Theology and Progressive Theology", in Sergio Torres and Virginia Fabella, *The Emergent Gospel* (Maryknoll N.Y., Orbis, 1976)

4. See Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid: A Socio-Theological History of the English-Speaking Churches*, Maryknoll N.Y. Orbis, 1988
5. Conor Cruise O'Brien, "A Lost Chance to Save the Jews?" *New York Review of Books*, 27 April, 1989, p. 27
6. Conor Cruise O'Brien, *God Land : Reflections on Religion and Nationalism*, (Cambridge, Mass, and London, Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 41-42
7. *Ibid.*, p. 67
8. *Ibid.*, p. 68
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69
10. See W Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*, N.Y. Doubleday, Rev. ed., 1960
11. O'Brien, *God Land*, p. 36
12. Nor, although it is most often encountered in this form, need it always be right-wing theology that infuses nationalism. O'Brien has elsewhere written of the liberation theology component in Nicaragua's Sandinismo: see Conor Cruise O'Brien, "God and Man in Nicaragua", *Atlantic Monthly*, August 1986, CCLVIII, ii, 50-72
13. Paul Gifford, *The Religious Right in Southern Africa*, Harare, Baobab/University of Zimbabwe, 1988
14. For a good brief outline of apocalyptic, see James Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry Into the Character of Earliest Christianity* (London, SCM, 1977), pp.309-340. For a history of some millennialist Christian groups, see N. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, London, Paladin, 1970 (original 1957)
15. A brief survey of these developments is found in Donald E Wagner, *What Is Western Fundamentalist Christian Zionism?* Limassol, Cyprus, The Middle East Council of Churches, 1988
16. Cited in *ibid.*, p.2.
17. *Ibid.*, pp.13-14
18. Gifford, *The Religious Right*, pp. 18-19
19. Wagner, *What is Western Fundamentalist Christian Zionism?* pp. 16 - 17
20. See Gifford, *The Religious Right*, pp. 14-15
21. *Ibid.*, p. 19
22. Hal Lindsey, with C.C. Carlson *The Late Great Planet Earth*, New York, Bantam, 1970.
23. James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (London. SCM, 1977), p. 206
24. Greg L Bahnsen, "Christ and the Role of Civil Government: the Theonomic Perspective", *Transformation: An International Dialogue on Evangelical Social Ethics*. (V, no.2, 1988), p. 24. This 2 part article is a good introduction to Reconstructionism: V, no.2, 1988, pp. 24-31, and V, no. 3, 1988, pp 24-28. Bahnsen's major publications are *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, Phillipsburg N.J., Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 2nd ed., 1984; and *By this Standard: The Authority of God's Law Today*, Tyler TX., Institute for Christian Economics, 1985
25. Bahnsen, "Christ and the Role of Civil Government", p. 30
26. R J Rushdoony, *Christianity and the State* (Vallecito, CA, Roos House Books, 1986), p. 3
27. R J Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Phillipsburg, N.J., Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1973), p.249
28. On homosexuality, see Greg L Bahnsen, *Homosexuality: Biblical Perspectives*, Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Book House, 1982
29. Bahnsen, "Christ and the Role of Civil Government", p.25.



30. Andrew Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom: The Radical Christianity of the House Church Movement* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 2nd ed. 1988), pp.337-339

31. Tapes of this seminar are available from Christ for all Nations, Box UA 520, Harare, Zimbabwe. Copeland has published numerous books and pamphlets expressing the same ideas, among them *The Winning Attitude* (1987), *Giving and Receiving* (1986), *Prosperity Promises* (1985), *The Laws of Prosperity* (1974). His wife Gloria Copeland espouses the same viewpoint in *God's Will is Prosperity* (1978). These books are all published by and available from Kenneth Copeland Ministries, Forth Worth, TX, 76192.

32. Copeland's wife has written as commentary on this verse: "You give \$1 for the Gospel's sake and \$100 belongs to you. You give \$10 and receive \$1 000. Give \$1 000 and receive \$100 000. I know that you can multiply, but I want you to see (it) in black and white... Give one airplane and receive one hundred times the value of the airplane. Give one car and the return would furnish you with a lifetime of cars. In short, Mk 10,30 is a very good deal." (Gloria Copeland, *God's Will is Prosperity*, p. 48).

33. See *The Laws of Prosperity*, pp. 74-6; 95

34. Kenneth Hagin, the founder of Rhema Bible Church has even written that to drive a mere Chevrolet instead of a luxury car "isn't being humble; it's being ignorant" - ignorant of God's law of prosperity. (See D Hunt, *Beyond Seduction: A Return to Biblical Christianity* (Eugene OR, Harvest House, 1987), p. 65.

35. Susan George, *The Way the Other Half Dies: The Real Reasons for World Hunger*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin, 1976 and *A Fate Worse than Debt*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin, 1987

36. See James Barr, *The Bible in the Modern World*, London, SCM 1973; James Barr, *Fundamentalism*, London, SCM 1977; James Barr, *Escaping from Fundamentalism*, London, SCM, 1984 James Barr, *Explorations in Theology*, London, SCM, 1981; James Barr, *Canon, Authority, Criticism*, SCM, London, 1983; John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984; J L Houlden, *Patterns of Faith : A Study in the Relationship between the New Testament and Christian Doctrine*, London, SCM 1977; D.E. Nineham, *The Use and Abuse of the Bible*, London, Macmillan, 1976; John Barton, *People of the Book*, London, SCM, 1988; Peter C Hodgson and Robert H King (eds), *Christian Theology: An Introduction to its Traditions and Tasks*, Philadelphia, Fortress, 2nd ed. 1985.;

## *Questions and Comments*

A participant felt that the presentation had raised questions about whether we could still claim the authority of God when denouncing apartheid. The speaker responded that his comments about revelation coming not only through Biblical texts, but through a complex process also involving experience, had not denied the existence of revelation. The point was not to use the method of RWCGs, namely to quote Biblical texts to legitimate preconceived positions. Rather, we need to be honest about the process by which we arrive at our theological position. Using such a process, one could still speak of apartheid as evil.

The question was asked if liberation theologians did not legitimate their position with Biblical texts, in a similar way to the RWCGs. In response, the speaker indicated that liberation theology started with an examination of the situation in the light of the Bible. Thus the use of the Bible is different, and the involvement of other factors is acknowledged.

A delegate asked for examples of two of the forms of theology mentioned, dispensationalism and reconstructionism, operating in Southern Africa. In response, it was said that dispen-

sationalism is very common, for example in Trans World Radio, or Rhema. Reconstructionism is not so common, although a delegate said that a former worker for the Gospel Defence League, Mark Kreitzer, was a firm reconstructionist. Reconstructionism seems most likely to be imported by US missionaries.

A participant asked for the analysis of right wing theology to be placed into context, especially the social origins of Western theology. The speaker replied that we have only acquired sociological tools of analysis recently, and that it was unfair to judge periods before Marx in this light.

A delegate suggested that the problem is that the mainline churches fail to address the people's problems, and that this is the reason that RWCGs can grow. He felt that the mainline churches were groping, while RWCGs gave clear, simple answers. Can we be sure of anything? The response was that we are better off, and can be sure of some things. But we have a theologically more appropriate method, which is more complex than citing Biblical texts as direct answers to all questions. Gustavo Gutierrez was cited as an example of someone who admitted to not having all the answers.

It was suggested that we need a clear-cut position if we were to be able to mobilise against RWCGs. The speaker felt that throwing Biblical texts back and forth did not have a future, since one can legitimate everything with the use of Biblical texts. We need to go beyond a simplistically Biblicist theology.



sationalism is very common, for example in Trans World Radio, or Rhema. Reconstructionism is not so common, although a delegate said that a former worker for the Gospel Defence League, Mark Kreitzer, was a firm reconstructionist. Reconstructionism seems most likely to be imported by US missionaries.

A participant asked for the analysis of right wing theology to be placed into context, especially the social origins of Western theology. The speaker replied that we have only acquired sociological tools of analysis recently, and that it was unfair to judge periods before Marx in this light.

A delegate suggested that the problem is that the mainline churches fail to address the people's problems, and that this is the reason that RWCGs can grow. He felt that the mainline churches were groping, while RWCGs gave clear, simple answers. Can we be sure of anything? The response was that we are better off, and can be sure of some things. But we have a theologically more appropriate method, which is more complex than citing Biblical texts as direct answers to all questions. Gustavo Gutierrez was cited as an example of someone who admitted to not having all the answers.

It was suggested that we need a clear-cut position if we were to be able to mobilise against RWCGs. The speaker felt that throwing Biblical texts back and forth did not have a future, since one can legitimate everything with the use of Biblical texts. We need to go beyond a simplistically Biblicist theology.

# AN IDEOLOGICAL PROFILE

**MOSS NTLHA**

## INTRODUCTION:

One of the hardest things for a convinced christian such as myself to face is that christianity has a long history of being co-opted by right wing ideologies. I personally live through the trauma of being a black South African in a so called christian country.

A country that prides itself of being a bastion of christian civilization in the region, and that boasts of encouraging and promoting christian evangelisation. What they do not say is that only a certain form of christianity, a domesticated form, is permitted. A christianity that dovetails with the ideology of the so called national security state.

Two examples will clarify this point, one from South Africa and another from Argentina.

A few months ago a sermon of Billy Graham was scheduled to show on government controlled SATV. This was at a time of intense turmoil and upheaval. A three year long state of emergency was not proving effective in containing and controlling mass resistance and struggle. The authorities decided that Billy Graham had the solution. His sermon was advertised ahead of time as the message that South Africans needed to hear at that time. A kind of must message for the masses caught up in political frustration and repression.

When Billy Graham came on the air, the drift of his presentation was that whatever the problems and the frustrations, Jesus would take care of it all. The problems of the world, he said, were due to the depraved condition of the human heart. Jesus could save and restore peace.

Of course the oppressed asked the penetrating question: "Who benefits from this kind of preaching. The oppressor, or the oppressed? The 'law and order' doctrine of the national security state or the struggle for justice and peace?"

In Latin America, a christian activist Louis Alfredo was detained by the military Junta. His crime was that he sings offensive christian music. While in detention his interrogators asked him why he did not just sing about Jesus. About being born again. Just like other christian activists do. Why does he embarrass them by singing about justice issues? In particular, they asked, "why aren't you like Louis Palau? He does not threaten us". Now Louis Palau is a well known Latin American evangelist. Some say he is the next Billy Graham.

This I hope serves to clarify that the national security has a specific use and function for religion.

## **2. WHAT IS A NATIONAL SECURITY STATE?**

This is a concept that emerged in the U.S.A. after the WWII, when two political institutions were created by the American government which were to change the nature of politics and government, not only in the U.S., but in Third World countries as well. These were the National Security Council and the Central Intelligence Agency.

The aim was to enhance the imperial objectives of the United States. Obviously, the traditional legislative, executive and judicial powers of government were deemed as inadequate for the purpose. These functions needed therefore to be subordinated to the interests of the national security state.

We all know the nightmare to which many countries in the third world have been launched because of this development.

Presidents have been eliminated, community leaders killed by death squads, countries destabilised, wars fought both in high intensity and low intensity. Third World countries kept in abject poverty and underdevelopment while they served first world interests.

## **3. THE IDEOLOGY OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY STATE:**

As already pointed out, when the U.S. set up this concept, the goal was imperialism. After the second world war, the right wing in America embraced the hysteria of cold war anti-communism, giving qualified support to the containment, and counter-insurgency politics of Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy.

In the 1960's the right wing felt that both the Republican and Democratic parties were too accommodating to the 'red scare' and called for a more active defence of the "Free World". This led to the emergence of the so called "Reagan doctrine". This doctrine suggests that the U.S. must react "point by point" to perceived acts of Soviet aggression. That is, if the Soviets support leftist revolutionary movements in the Third World, America should arm and support rightist movements.

This also means that the world must be geopolitically divided into East and West. According to this dualistic vision of the world, there can be no neutral nation. A permanent rivalry and struggle between East and West is fostered. War, not necessarily HIW becomes a permanent state of affairs. Within this East/West conflict, there can be no peace. As Jose Camblin says, "Peace is nothing more than the conventional name given to the continuation of war by other means". (1984:71)

The so called Low Intensity Warfare is the new way in which this war is being waged.

## Why Low Intensity?

I quote from Michael T Klare and Peter Kornbluh's paper on 'The New Interventionism; Low Intensity warfare in the 1980's and beyond!

"Washington's growing adherence to LIC doctrine stems from two interrelated factors. The first is a consensus among policy makers and military planners that the U.S. has been preparing for an unlikely war in Europe while the 'real war' for the third World has gone unattended. In the mindset of the U.S. national security managers, the surge of revolutions, the escalating of terrorist incidents, and other forms of "ambiguous aggression" in the 70's and early 80's reflected not a nationalist effort to redress socio-economic inequality in the Third World, but an attempt by the Soviet Union to nibble away at U.S. interest on the periphery, while avoiding a nuclear confrontation in Europe. Through the Kremlin's use of proxies, and calculated exploitation of the political and economic instabilities endemic in the Third World, it was felt that the Soviets had successfully challenged U.S. credibility, authority and perhaps most significantly, access to raw material and markets of considerable economic importance to the West". LIC is therefore a War of the West along with client states, against the peoples of the Third World.

It uses military force only as a last resort. The chief instruments of this war are political, and economic reforms. Psychological operations, military civic action programme etc.

In this war, everything and everyone must be mobilised to play a role in what is referred to as Total Strategy. Even the church (as we will show later). People can be sacrificed in pursuit of the interests of the national security state. Human rights are a luxury seldom afforded. The survival of the national security state takes top priority.

## 4. THE AGENDA OF THE RIGHT WING IN OUR THIRD WORLD COMMUNITIES

What is the right wing agenda that the christian right wing groups have been courted to espouse?

This agenda can be distilled from the ideology above, and in South Africa, it goes like this:

(i) There is something such as a Western Christian Democratic foundation upon which South Africa is built. Which must be defended at all costs. Nevermind that apartheid, as a form of racial capitalism, is the most unchristian - antichristian ideology Africa has ever known. Several christian organisations have emerged in South Africa that have sought to plead for the current order on the basis that it represents the best possibilities for the church. Many of the pentecostal/charismatic Churches operate on this basis.

(ii) Anti-communism. The military generals in the state security council have engaged in an unrelenting propaganda battle to explain the conflict in South Africa as being instigated and orchestrated by Soviets.

Church groups have moved swiftly to locate themselves on the side of the government, against atheistic communism. Millions of rands have gone into funding aggressive christian groups such



While arguing against communism, christian right leaders posit that the free market is the best guarantor of space for christianity.

In a paper issued by the Institute on Religion and democracy a rightwing think tank in 1981, it was argued that: "The first task of the church is to believe in and defend democracy, as this is the Surest way to defend the freedom of the church, education, economic and other cultural enterprises. It is politically and theologically imperative for the church to be anti Marxist Leninist. Further, the free market is a necessary condition for democracy".

(vi) Pro nationalist party reform programme

Religious right wing groups, and their reason for being, is to nationalist the status quo and the political programmes of the rulers. In South Africa these groups accept that apartheid is rather too much, and needs to change. This however, is not being prophetic, as even the government says it is reforming. Reform however, means that the ruling elites are in charge of the nature of change, the scope of change, the extent of change and the speed of change. When you consider that the ruling elites actually benefit from the system, it is clear that reform cannot actually be authentic change.

An example of such an organisation is Jesus Christ for Peace. A declaration of the organisation says:-

**DECLARATION**

**WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS A LAND OF FREEDOM, PROSPERITY, JOY AND PEACE FOR ALL**

**WHERE:**

1. Biblical freedom according to the message of the Gospel is known and accepted by ALL people of our land;
2. Respect, trust and harmony abound amongst ALL the people in this beautiful country of ours;
3. The ethnic uniqueness of ALL who were created by the Almighty is accepted by one another, because we were created differently by Him;
4. We ALL love one another and work together for the benefit of everyone, Black and White alike;
5. The physical needs and the mental and spiritual aspirations of ALL are satisfied in adequate housing, equal educational facilities and equal opportunities for ALL;
6. A sense of responsibility is developed to its full potential towards our country and one another by ALL;
7. The trust and faith in God for peaceful change of attitudes towards one another directs every person in our country;
8. Mutual trust in one another abounds;
9. The victorious Prince of Peace reigns in the hearts of each and every citizen in this beautiful country with its limitless opportunities.

**This, we believe, is the shortest way to a land of Freedom, Prosperity and Peace for ALL.**



We therefore invite ALL people in our country to join us in this work to make this declaration a reality.

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# Mission to RENAMO:

## The Militarization of the Religious Right

*Steve Askin*

A century ago, John Cecil Rhodes told a Dutch Reformed missionary's mother that "your son among the natives is worth as much to me as a hundred policemen." (1) He was referring, of course, to the role many missionaries played in turning Christianity into an ideology which could be used to convince Africans to not resist white domination.

But Rhodes' modern-day successors - South Africa's white rulers and their allies - have gone one very dangerous step further. For them, it is not enough to use the church as a kind of ideological cheering section for white domination. Instead they are quite literally using pastors and missionaries as soldiers and policemen.

Here in the Frontline states, this phenomenon takes many forms. This paper will examine three of them.

### 1) Missionaries enlisting in military adventures

One classic case may be Thomas Schaaf, an American who called himself an agricultural missionary while working in Zimbabwe through the first half of the 1980s (2), but later re-surfaced in Washington as spokesman for the South Africa-backed Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO). In Zimbabwe, Schaaf was an employee of the Ministry of Agriculture and an active member of a small evangelical group, Mutare's One Way Christian Center, with a mission program in neighboring Mozambique. (3) Back in America, Schaaf - still well-connected in evangelical church circles - emerged as, quite literally, an anti-Zimbabwe and anti-Mozambique terrorist. Schaaf showed his new colors when his former employer, ex-Zimbabwe Agriculture Minister Denis Norman, went to Washington to seek new investment in the Beira corridor through Mozambique, which links Zimbabwe to its nearest port. When Norman held a public meeting with American businesspeople, Schaaf stood up and shouted "Don't invest any money, we will blow up anything you build." (4)

### 2) Genuine missionaries tricked into performing military functions

In Grey, an Assemblies of God missionary from Toowoomba in the Australian bible belt, says he went to Mozambique to spread the gospel but was unwittingly used as a military courier by Schaaf and Schaaf's collaborators in a group known as Shekinah ministries. (5)

### 3) Military men posing as clergymen

Back when South Africa and the United States made their first attempt to impose their will on a newly independent Angola in 1975, the Central Intelligence agency dressed the chief of its Angola task force - equal in rank to an army colonel - in a Catholic priest's uniform and sent him out

to inspect the battlefield with U.S.-funded insurgent Holden Roberto. (6) The agent was John Stockwell who, ironically, had grown up in Zaire as a son of Presbyterian missionaries. Partly because of that background (7), Stockwell later had a crisis of conscience and publicly repudiated his CIA role.

South Africa has provided numerous variants on the same theme. One of them was publicly exposed just last week: the cop, turned criminal, turned anti-sanctions "Archbishop," Mzilikazi Forie Masiya. Masiya became a policeman in 1973, was sent to Pretoria Maximum Security prison for robbing a police station in 1977, and later served three years in jail on a murder conviction. Today, operating from an office next door to Pretoria police headquarters, he heads an anti-sanctions campaign which is financed by white businessmen and avidly boosted by South African government television. (8)

All three elements - missionary turned soldier, missionary as pawn, soldier turned missionary - were present in the chain of events which led up to the March 1988 trial of Ian Grey before a military tribunal in Maputo, Mozambique.

It is also a chain of interconnections which runs from Pretoria to Washington and across the United States to California; from South Africa's former military outposts in southern Angola to its RENAMO stronghold in the ravaged Gorongosa game park of Central Mozambique. It involves organizations as small and obscure as the End-Time Handmaidens of Jasper, Arkansas, USA and Shekinah Ministries of Chipinge, Zimbabwe; as rich and notorious as Jimmy Swaggart Ministries and the South African Defense Force.

This unlikely set of partners came together around an even more unlikely mission - the use of Christian mission as a cover for providing food, military supplies, logistical support, propaganda services and links with external funders for RENAMO, a self-described "anti-communist" force covertly backed by a Pretoria government too embarrassed by RENAMO's anti-civilian violence to admit the connection. (9)

Though the repeated condemnations of RENAMO atrocities by religious and governmental leaders across a wide theological and political spectrum are well known, to place what will follow in context, it is worth citing the conclusions of a US government sponsored research project on the activities of RENAMO. (10)

"The level of violence reported to be conducted by RENAMO against the civilian population of rural Mozambique is extraordinarily high," according to U.S. State Department consultant Robert Gersony who "conservatively estimated that 100,000 civilians may have been murdered by RENAMO." Refugees from RENAMO offer "credible accounts about these killings, which included shooting executions, knifings, ax/bayonet killings, burying alive, beating to death, forced asphyxiation, forced starvation, forced drownings, and random shootings at civilians in villages during attacks," Gersony wrote, while women and girls captured by RENAMO are frequently "required to submit to sexual demands in effect to be raped, on a frequent, sustained basis." (11)

Speaking shortly after the publication of Gersony's study, U.S. Under-Secretary for African Affairs Roy Stacey issued an urgent appeal to RENAMO's external backers:

"RENAMO has been waging a systematic and brutal war of terror against innocent Mozambican civilians through forced labor, starvation, physical abuse and wanton killing. Condemn it as we do, condemnation of these acts is not enough. What has emerged in Mozambique is one of the most brutal holocausts against ordinary human beings since World War II; and the supporters of RENAMO, wherever they may be, cannot wash the blood from their hands unless all support for this unconscionable violence is stopped immediately." (12)

The story of right wing religion in Mozambique is the sad case of a group of self-described Christians deeply involved in supporting RENAMO's "systematic and brutal war of terror" who, to use Stacey's harsh language, "cannot wash the blood from their hands."

## I) Missionary becoming soldier

This writer's experience of right-wing religion's impact on Mozambique began in the most innocent-seeming of settings, at the bougainvillea-covered home of an elderly widow, "Auntie Betsy" Snyders, in the bucolic Zimbabwean eastern highlands town of Chipinge.

An oil painting of the late Mr. Snyders dominates the comfortable living room. He was killed in 1975, by black guerrillas fighting to overthrow the white minority government of Ian Smith. (13) Unlike many other white Zimbabweans, Mrs. Snyders did not let bitterness over her husband's violent death or the Rhodesian forces' defeat in Zimbabwe's independence war lead her to isolate herself completely from involvement with black Zimbabweans.

A member of a white Assemblies of God congregation, she and a few fellow members came to feel - in the years immediately following the 1980 transition from white-ruled Rhodesia to majority-ruled Zimbabwe - called to spread the word of Christ among their black neighbors. This led to a split with the more racist members of the congregation and, as described by Mrs. Snyders and her daughter Mrs. Lorraine Odendaal, to the formation of Pentecostal "fellowship" which worked with black pastors to distribute food, clothing and a Christian message in the communal (peasant) lands around Chipinge.

This splinter group, Shekinah Ministries, was led by a youthful, charismatic (in both senses of the word) and extremely energetic veteran of the Rhodesian war, the Reverend Michael T. Howard. Howard's travels to raise funds and spread his message have taken him to Israel, Ethiopia, the United States, Portugal, South Africa, Malawi and other points near and far. (14)

By January 1985, the month of Howard's first known mission to Renamo, his connections to the American religious right were already established firmly enough for him to casually suggest that a collaborator in the United States, Pastor Phil Freeman of the Believers' Church in Coalinda, California "slot us on" to two of America's largest evangelical TV programs - PTL and the 700 Club - for a campaign promoting Shekinah's Mozambican work. (15)

"It had long been our desire and the cry of our hearts to come into contact with RENAMO in order to preach the word to them," Howard and two of his collaborators - Rodney and Ellie Hein wrote in February of that year. (16) Unwilling to risk their own lives on a first foray into RENAMO areas, they sent a black man ahead to make the first, and most dangerous contact.

After receiving a positive response through this "African messenger," the three crossed into Mozambique and met with RENAMO military leaders, among them a "general."

"What a reward we had," the missionaries said, "when we preached to the commander and saw him and his friend take off their hats and kneel in the dust accepting Jesus." This leader, they said, declared "we need God" and granted Shekinah "freedom to preach in any area they control."

After this trip, the missionaries wrote that "Mozambique is under legal control of an anti-Christian government." Renamo is "not a bunch of bandits," they asserted, but "a real army with efficient military structure."

Fearful of the reaction which would greet them at home in Zimbabwe if anyone found out about their meeting with Renamo, the missionaries asked recipients to keep their letters secret. Security remained a constant pre-occupation. More than two years after that first foray, when this writer spoke with Howard at the comfortable home near the University of Zimbabwe campus in Harare



which had become his Zimbabwe operations base, the Shekinah leader said, "if I told you about our work in Mozambique, we would be stopped, forced out of Zimbabwe." Before going "off the record," however, Howard confirmed that he had travelled in "RENAMO-held" territory. He claimed to have seen much evidence of atrocities by Mozambican government forces but no RENAMO violence against civilians. (17)

Shekinah has "achieved favor with RENAMO," Freeman wrote in a fundraising letter he distributed in the U.S. on behalf of the group. "Now they move freely throughout their military camps, and revival fires are burning hot." (18) He requested money to "outfit the entire [RENAMO] army with bibles" before they took full control of Mozambique - an event which he and Shekinah predicted would take place by mid-1987.

Shekinah's appeals brought support from several conservative U.S. mission groups. Christ for the Nations Inc. (CFNI) in Dallas, Texas and Don Ormand Ministries of Melrose, Florida, provided financial support (19). The End-Time Handmaidens - who say they work throughout the world to implement "God's End-Time Battle-Plan on spiritual warfare" - served as Shekinah's U.S. operating base. (20) Strong circumstantial evidence also suggests that Shekinah was one of several groups through which Jimmy Swaggart Ministries worked in "Renamo territory." (21) Another U.S. mission group, Open Doors, says it, too, has sent food, clothes and medicine unofficially "under cover darkness across the border into Mozambique." Though no connection has been established between this group and Shekinah, it has made use of factually inaccurate documents provided by another Shekinah partner, Frontline Fellowship, of which more will be said below. (22)

Nonetheless, apart from the bizarre claims that a Christian revival was taking place within a military force known to other observers as perpetrators of "systematic and brutal terror," bible running in a war zone might seem more reckless than sinister. But the evidence provided by Grey, who was recruited to the Shekinah mission team in early 1986, shows that the mission group also performed vital military logistics functions for RENAMO.

## **2) Missionary as puppet. (23)**

Ian Grey, a 24 years old Australian plumber and Assemblies of God member, journeyed to Israel in late 1985, to "see the place where all the Bible events took place" and seek a way to live out "his inner compulsion to spread the word of the gospel." (24) An American couple involved with CFNI introduced him to Michael Howard. The secretive Pastor Howard (25) captured Grey's imagination with tales of "crossing rivers ... and swamps and taking the gospel into parts where there's danger." (26)

Howard brought Grey to Zimbabwe in early 1986, where members and friends of Shekinah - including American "missionary" Thomas Schaaf - preached to him constantly on the evils of "Mozambican communism." In April, Shekinah redeployed Grey to the Blantyre Christian Center (BCC) in Malawi. The Australian was told that he - as a single man with no family commitments - should take primary responsibility for Shekinah's dangerous mission to Mozambique.

With a Malawian pastor as his guide, Grey was sent on more than a dozen missions into Mozambique. He would cross the Shire river near Nsanje, entering Mozambique's Zambezia province by canoe, paddle through an elephant marsh, and walk about two hours to the nearest RENAMO base. Grey was only once allowed to venture beyond this base. It appears from his testimony that most missionary visitors were similarly confined to the same small area, suggesting that this border area may have been a place in which Renamo deliberately minimized visible anti-civilian violence to provide a showcase for foreign visitors.

When visiting Renamo, he sometimes liased with one of the few English-speaking Renamo officers a man known as "Commander Peter," who was introduced to Grey as Renamo's "religious affairs" director. Though Grey may not have realized it then, "Commander Peter" was actually one of the early wave Renamo fighters trained by the Rhodesian Special Air Service (SAS) to spy on the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA). (27)

At first, Shekinah asked him only to carry food and bibles. Gradually, however, Shekinah plunged Grey into a central logistical role, couriating military messages from Renamo president Afonso Dhlakama to Washington spokesman Thomas Schaaf. The coded messages were transmitted by radio from Renamo headquarters in Gorongosa to the base frequented by Grey. A Renamo communications man translated the codes into plain text, and handed them to Grey, who carried the information back to Malawi. On returning to the BCC, Grey read the information over the phone to Schaaf. Grey says that others who travelled with him were involved in relaying at least one Renamo appeal for American ground-to-air missiles.

In his courier capacity, Grey met with Dhlakama and other top Renamo officers. In addition to carrying messages, he also brought them communications equipment. (28)

Though nominally a "Christian Center," Grey gradually realized that the BCC was, along with a house set up by Shekinah in Malawi, also a key transit point for Renamo's visiting foreign friends, many of whom used Grey as their tour guide. Some of these visitors laid claim to a religious connection, among them Schaaf, who had left Zimbabwe in late 1985 to become Renamo's Washington representative; South Africa-based American missionary pilot Ron Kusmell; Peter Hammond of the South African Defense Force-linked Frontline Fellowship, and members of Harvesters International, the End-Time Handmaidens, Zion Bible College, and other fundamentalist groups.

Others - among them most of Renamo's key American backers - had no apparent religious link. These included:

--Jack Wheeler and Robert Mackenzie, writer/activists from the far-right mercenary magazine Soldier of Fortune (SOF). Mackenzie, an American Vietnam veteran and former officer in the Rhodesian and South African special forces, presented a Gerber BMF knife donated to Dhlakama by the manufacturers on his September 1986 visit, as a symbol of military support for the group. He has since become head of America's most important pro-RENAMO lobby, Freedom Inc. Wheeler, who heads the Freedom Research Foundation, once went to U.S. Marine Colonel Oliver North - the Iran-Contra operative - to seek U.S. government support for Renamo.

--Louisiana businessman James Blanchard III, who financed Wheeler's trip to Malawi, provided communications gear delivered on that trip, and reportedly gives Renamo \$3000 a month worth of supplies.

--Francisco Nota Moises, then a Renamo representative in Kenya, since transferred to Canada and named Renamo information director. (29)

--An "extremely foul mouthed" senior editor, whose name Grey no longer remembers, from Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Washington Times newspaper.

Grey says these visits gradually made him realize that Shekinah was no ordinary missionary group.

"One guy was telling me that he'd served time in Vietnam. These guys have done training, military training. They'd been in war, they'd been in fighting, and they wanted to go in and meet with these guys [RENAMO]. The [stated] intentions were to help them and to preach and everything else, but we noticed ... a lot of them even had liquor."

Disturbed though he was by this drinking, Grey remained loyal to his Shekinah friends.

In October 1987, following the reprint in Zimbabwe of an article exposing Shekinah's RENAMO links, (30) the group decided to close its Zimbabwean operations and move all their possessions to Malawi, a country more hospitable to pro-RENAMO missionaries. (31) They again sent Grey on the most risky mission, the final trip back to Zimbabwe to collect their possessions there. Ironically, he travelled through Mozambique's "Tete corridor" where he and other travelers were guarded against Renamo attack by Zimbabwean government troops. Grey was arrested November 2 after a customs officer glanced at the diary he was incautiously carrying and spotted references to his repeated visits with RENAMO.

Grey's arrest did not, however, end the religious right's collaboration with Renamo. When reporters from the New York Times, the Washington Post, and Newsweek interviewed Dhlakama at Gorongosa in July 1988, they found that sympathetic missionaries were still funneling supplies to Renamo from Malawi. (32) Dhlakama's closest foreign confidant was a missionary with intimate ties to American fundamentalists. (33) Organized by Mackenzie's Freedom Inc., this was not just a media junket. Renamo's visitors also delivered solar-powered battery chargers, sophisticated portable computers and printers linked to TR-48 radios (34).

By the time this trip took place, Grey had spent nine months in Mozambican prisons, was preaching to fellow inmates and, he says, had long since abandoned his former support for Renamo.

At the time of his arrest, Grey could not have dreamed that imprisonment would mean the beginning of a new kind of missionary work. Assuming, instead, that the "Mozambican communists" would surely murder and torture him, Grey had hardened himself to become a martyr.

These assumptions were shaken by Mozambican security men's rigorous but non-violent interrogation, even more by the prison authorities who, without hesitation, let him keep his Bible in jail and organize prison prayer groups. (35)

Even so, Grey was stunned when his father Alan in March 1988 - a devout Christian who came to Maputo for the trial - told him that Mozambique's churches were packed and thriving.

The elder Grey had been warmly embraced as a fellow believer when an American church worker took him one of Maputo's liveliest churches, the Assemblies of God congregation at the busy downtown intersection of Avenidas Vladimir Lenine and Eduardo Mondlane. He broke into tears and then started speaking in tongues as he tried to describe his son's plight to the congregation. At that moving moment, the entire congregation joined him in prayers for Ian's safety. (36)

"Son, you've been deceived," the elder Grey told Ian the next day. (37) Those words, Ian said were "like a knife going through me." Only then did Ian realize he had been "like a zombie, an android" used to do "the most hideous things." (38)

### **3) Soldier as "missionary"**

A self-described "ex-Rhodesian whose brother had often undertaken military raids into Mozambique," (39) Peter Hammond represented the clearest case, among Shekinah's "mission partners," of soldier operating in the guise of missionary.

Hammond heads Frontline Fellowship, the pivotal organization for deployment of South African military men and pro-apartheid mercenaries as "missionaries" in Mozambique and throughout southern Africa. Unlike other militarized mission groups this Cape Town, South Africa-based group makes no secret of its military links.



Hammond views the South African army as itself a "missionary force" (40). He says Frontline Fellowship was founded on a South African military base in northern Namibia as one of a group of soldiers who wanted to take "take Bibles into Angola during raids" against that country. (41) The group continues to work on South African military bases, "even on patrols and ops." (42) But its main work involves the sending of "missionaries" to work with South Africa-backed rebel groups, including Renamo and Unita, and dissemination of quasi-religious propaganda against those governments and movements which have been targeted for attack and destabilization by the South African military: Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) of Namibia and the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa.

Hammond boasts that his missionaries are hardened military men drawn from crack special forces units. Frontline's feeder organizations include South Africa's Parabats and Recces (Reconnaissance Commandos); the Rhodesian SAS, R.L.I. and Selous Scouts; the Australian Special Forces; and the British SAS. (43)

Former mercenaries have also found a home in the group, among them a Sergeant Rob Brown who says he has fought in Cambodia, Korea, Northern Ireland, Rhodesia and Namibia. Working with (unspecified) military units in southern Africa, Brown has "travelled thousands of kilometres over operational bush tracks [and] ... over 17,000 km by air, sometimes at tree-top level in Angolan airspace, in areas where Sam missiles and RPG rockets make life difficult, and preached the word of God in bases which have come under mortar, machine-gun and rocket fire." (44)

During Grey's tenure with Shekinah Ministries, Hammond made several visits to Renamo, travelling with some of the former SADF and South African Air Force men who struck even the gullible young Australian as more military than missionary. (45) After these trips, the Frontline Fellowship leader mounted a highly influential pro-RENAMO disinformation campaign.

In a 1986 pamphlet, titled "Eyewitness Testimonies of Persecution and Atrocities," disseminated worldwide by the "International Society for Human Rights," Hammond asserted that the Mozambican government was waging a war of "persecution and atrocities" against Christians in the northern provinces of Tete and Zambezia. He offered what purported to be a detailed list of cases in which government troops murdered civilians, destroyed crops and burnt churches or entire villages. (46)

ISHR was created by members of a Russian emigre society which collaborated with the Nazis during World War II and wanted a neutrally named front to give their propaganda against left-wing movements and governments a veneer of objectivity. They have mounted similar disinformation campaigns against other groups in southern Africa, including SWAPO. (47)

Despite the dubious background of its author and distributors, the pamphlet received widespread attention in conservative evangelical circles and significant media exposure. It was heavily used in the U.S. and Western Europe in campaigns by Renamo backers in attempt to counter the many reports made by church leaders, non-government organizations, United Nations agencies and western diplomats of systematic and unprovoked Renamo murders of civilians and violence against non-military targets. (48) It took on sufficiently great significance that U.S. Ambassador Melissa Wells felt compelled to carefully examine Hammond's charges. While noting that one can never definitively prove that something didn't happen, Wells found no evidence supporting Howard's claims. She concluded - after a series of extended trips throughout Mozambique - that Hammond appeared to have simply inverted the truth, attributing to Frelimo precisely the kinds of atrocious acts which had actually been perpetrated by Renamo. (49)

As can be seen here, Hammond represents the most obvious case of military man systematically operating in mission guise as an adjunct to South Africa's destabilization war in Mozambique. Whether or not he remains on a South African security forces payroll, he has - by his own



Hammond views the South African army as itself a "missionary force" (40). He says Frontline Fellowship was founded on a South African military base in northern Namibia as one of a group of soldiers who wanted to take "take Bibles into Angola during raids" against that country. (41) The group continues to work on South African military bases, "even on patrols and ops." (42) But its main work involves the sending of "missionaries" to work with South Africa-backed rebel groups, including Renamo and Unita, and dissemination of quasi-religious propaganda against those governments and movements which have been targeted for attack and destabilization by the South African military: Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) of Namibia and the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa.

Hammond boasts that his missionaries are hardened military men drawn from crack special forces units. Frontline's feeder organizations include South Africa's Parabats and Recces (Reconnaissance Commandos); the Rhodesian SAS, R.L.I. and Selous Scouts; the Australian Special Forces; and the British SAS. (43)

Former mercenaries have also found a home in the group, among them a Sergeant Rob Brown who says he has fought in Cambodia, Korea, Northern Ireland, Rhodesia and Namibia. Working with (unspecified) military units in southern Africa, Brown has "travelled thousands of kilometres over operational bush tracks [and] ... over 17,000 km by air, sometimes at tree-top level in Angolan airspace, in areas where Sam missiles and RPG rockets make life difficult, and preached the word of God in bases which have come under mortar, machine-gun and rocket fire." (44)

During Grey's tenure with Shekinah Ministries, Hammond made several visits to Renamo, travelling with some of the former SADF and South African Air Force men who struck even the gullible young Australian as more military than missionary. (45) After these trips, the Frontline Fellowship leader mounted a highly influential pro-RENAMO disinformation campaign.

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self-description - created an organization of trained military men using religion to do military support work for the South African government.

## 4) Concluding notes

This paper has distinguished among three types of religio-military actors: militarized missionaries, manipulated missionaries, and false missionaries.

Their activities in Mozambique were part of a global phenomenon which may be even more firmly entrenched in other parts of the world.

In Latin America, for example, El Salvador's US-backed army has received strong support from groups like Paralife Ministries, whose missionaries actively encourage the troops to kill left-wing rebels. "One such ministry," a report from Paralife said, "completed an eight-day tour of twelve military bases. Over 3,700 men, whose average age was 18, heard from an ex-soldier (Vietnam veteran) how much God loves the soldier ... He explained that killing for the joy of it was wrong, but killing because it was necessary to fight against an anti-Christ system, communism, was not only right, but a duty of every Christian." (50)

While an attempt has been made here to illustrate each type of religio-military actor with specific examples, the characterization of particular individuals and organizations often must remain tentative, absent access to detailed information to secret military information. There is no easy way to know with certainty which members of Renamo's religious cheering section are actually on a military or intelligence payroll, and which of them are acting out of a strangely politicized interpretation of Christian teachings.

Thus some observers have credibly argued that Renamo spokesman Schaaf has actually functioned as an intelligence operative from the time of his arrival in Zimbabwe in the late 1970s. Indeed, *Africa Confidential* (51) recently suggested that he has served as a key operative in a U.S. Central Intelligence Agency effort to "co-opt RENAMO, wresting it from the hands of South African military intelligence."

Indeed, even the naive Australian, Ian Grey, could be a more sinister figure than he seems from his own self-description. At Grey's trial, his lawyer's successful strategy for convincing a Mozambican military tribunal to acquit him on espionage charges - which can carry the death penalty - involved portraying the missionary as an "Australian innocent abroad" who was "ignorant of the wider political ramifications of his actions" and "totally lacking in knowledge about Mozambique." (52)

These ambiguities need not, for the most part, deter action by churches and religious believers against the militarization of religion. Some who use religious language and symbols to promote Renamo terrorism may be acting out of a perverted belief that they are doing God's will, while others may be soldiers or intelligence operatives on secret military missions. In either cases a strong response from genuine churches and religious leaders is essential to counter the false message. Though beyond the scope of this paper, the history of Frontline Fellowship - which started as a kind of church group within the SADF - also points to dangers inherent in an older and more traditional institution of militarized religion: the military chaplaincy.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Several individuals have provided important assistance and advice in the preparation of this paper: Carole Collins, whose reporting in 1985 first alerted the author to some of the problems addressed here; Mongezi Stofile, through his ongoing work in abstracting research materials; the staff of the Southern Africa Research and Documentation Center - especially Colin Darch and Masimba Tafirenyika - in locating hard-to-find published sources. Most of all, the author must acknowledge the vital information provided by a number of evangelical Christians who, acting from desire to stop the misuse of their faith, assisted the author in obtaining documents crucial to this study. The conclusions, however, are solely those of the author.

## Footnotes

1. Gifford, Paul *The Religious Right in Southern Africa*, Harare: Baobab, 1988, p. 46.

2. Unpublished interview with Schaaf, Mutare, Zimbabwe, 1985.

3. Askin, Steve "Is religious freedom misused in Zimbabwe?" *Moto* No. 59, October 1987, p. 9.

4. "MNR agent exposed in US," *New African*, October 1986, p.16. (The word "terrorist," though often overused, is appropriate here as Schaaf was using the threat of force to discourage lawful, peaceful activity.) Note also that Schaaf subsequently (10 March 1987) mailed Zimbabwean businesspeople active in Mozambique a 27 November 1986 statement by RENAMO leader Afonso Dhlakama warning that investment "undertaken on behalf of the illegitimate communist regime in Maputo can only be interpreted as a hostile act against the Mozambican people." Given RENAMO's record of extreme violence against economic targets, this was interpreted by many recipients as a threat to attack their Mozambican facilities.

5. Author's interview with Grey, at Maputo Mozambique, 4 July 1988, at Organizacao Mocambicana dos Jornalistas.

6. Stockwell, John *In Search of Enemies*, New York, W.W.

Norton & Company, 1978. see esp. p. 131, photo of Stockwell in priest's garb with Holden Roberto and FNLA commanders while on a reconnaissance mission 32 kilometers from Luanda.

7. *ibid*, p. 10

8. Maluleke, Elias, "The odd history of sanctions busting bishop," *The Weekly Mail* (South Africa), 21 July 1989, page 1.

9. For recent high-level confirmation of continuing South African support to RENAMO despite repeated denials see remarks of US Ambassador to Mozambique Melissa Wells, quoted in Steve Askin, "Massacre in Mozambique," *The Progressive*, December 1988.

10. U.S. pronouncements on African conflicts may sometimes lack credibility, due to Washington's tendency to uncritically embrace all entities which term themselves "anti-communist." That very bias, however, makes the U.S. government a uniquely credible witness on the rare occasions when it condemns violence by self-proclaimed right wing "freedom fighters" such as Renamo.

11. Gersony, Robert "Summary of Mozambican Refugee Accounts of Principally Conflict-Related Experience in Mozambique," a report submitted Ambassador Jonathan Moore, Director,



Tudlie Road, Harare, Zimbabwe, July 1988.

27. Rhodesian links of "Commander Peter" are described in Bob McKenna, "RENAMO: Freedom Fighters' Agenda for Victory," *Soldier of Fortune*, May 1987. On Renamo's origin as Rhodesian surrogates see Ken Flower *Serving Secretly*, Quest Publishing, 1987, esp. p. 192 and David Martin and Phyllis Johnson, "Mozambique: To Nkomati and Beyond" in *Destructive Engagement: Southern Africa at War*, Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1986.

28. Robertson, Geoffrey, *op. cit.*

29. Background information on Shekinah's visitors is drawn from McKenna, *op. cit.*; from Robert Pear and James Brooke, "Rightists in U.S. Aid Mozambique Rebels," *New York Times*, 22 March 1988; and from three articles in *Africa Confidential*: "Mozambique: Marketing RENAMO," 9 September 1988; "Mozambique: Plausible deniability," 2 December 1988; "USA/Mozambique: Politics and money in Freedom Inc.," 2 March 1989.

30. Moto *op. cit.* and Steve Askin "Mozambique terrorists backed by evangelical right", *National Catholic Reporter*, 18 September 1987.

31. Grey is certain that his work with RENAMO had tacit approval from the Malawian government: "There's a Malawian army base right in Nsanje ... and I'm sure that the Malawian authorities knew of our actions. I remember once that Pastor Howard told me that he'd written a letter to President Kamuzu Banda."

32. Battersby, John, "Pariahs Abroad, Mozambique Rebels Fight On," *The New York Times*, 31 July 1988, page 1.

33. Battersby, John, Profile of Afonso Dhlakama, "Focus on Africa," British Broadcasting Corporation, 23 July 1989.

34. "Mozambique: Marketing Renamo," *Africa Confidential*, 9 September 1988

35. While Grey was in prison awaiting trial, Frontline Fellowship leader Peter Hammond claimed on the British Broadcasting Corporation Africa Service that the Australian Ambassador responsible for Mozambique told him Grey had been tortured. In interviews, this claim was denied by the Ambassador, Philip Peters, who said that Grey was never treated violently by Mozambican authorities and that Hammond had fabricated a conversation which never took place, and by Grey himself.

36. Interview with Mark Van Koevering, Mennonite volunteer at Christian Council of Mozambique, June 1988, and with several members of the Assemblies of God congregation. The outpouring of reception for the father of a RENAMO collaborator was made all the more poignant by the fact that, in the words of one Assemblies of God member, "everyone in this church has lost relatives to RENAMO."

37. Australian Broadcasting Corporation, *op. cit.*

38. Ian Grey statement to press conference, Maputo, March 1988, quoted in "Evangelist Ian Grey 'duped' by bandits," AIM Information Bulletin No. 141, Mozambique Information Agency, April 1988.

39. Hammond, Peter "To Mozambique with Love," in *The Frontline Fellowship Story*.

40. Hammond, Peter, "A New Field: South West Africa," *Frontline Fellowship Prayer and Praise Newsletter*, July/August 1985.

41. Hammond, Peter, *Frontline Fellowship Prayer and Praise Newsletter* August/September 1984.

42. "Introducing the Fellowship," *The Frontline Fellowship Story*.

43. "Evangelism in the War Zones," *Frontline Fellowship News*, 1987, Volume 3.



44. Teeling Smith, Alastair, "Missionaries detained by Zambia preach to the MNR," *Weekly Mail*, 23 October 1987. Brown has left Frontline Fellowship to embark on a mission of even more direct military significance: leadership in "Veterans for Victory" group formed to combat South African anti-conscription activists.

45. Grey speaking at 26 March 1988 press conference, as reported in *Noticias*, Maputo, 28 March 1988.

46. ISHR press release September 1986, and attached pamphlet titled "Frontline Fellowship Mozambique Report: Eyewitness Testimonies of Persecutions and Atrocities."

47. Herbstein, Denis "The Propaganda War," *Africa Report*, September/October 1987.

48. Frontline Fellowship says the pamphlet received prominent press coverage in Australia, England, Holland, Hong Kong, Namibia, South Africa, the United States, West Germany. *Frontline Fellowship News*, 1987, Volume 1.

49. Author's interview with Melissa Wells, Maputo, Mozambique, June 1988.

50. Quotes in Nesbitt, Prexy, "Terminators, Crusaders and Gladiators: (Private and Public) Western Support for Renamo and Unita. ECASAAMA Conference, Bonn, December 1988

51. "Mozambique: Plausible Deniability," 2 December 1988.

52. Mozambique Information Agency, op. cit.

## *Questions and Comments*

**Comment:** A delegate reported that in South Africa, Frontline Fellowship does not act openly as an organization associated with the SADF. He reported about an Anglican conference in Cape Town in which Peter Hammond of Frontline Fellowship had participated, without being identified. Hammond reported back about this conference to newspapers, but also passed on information to the Anglican bishops. This distorted information did considerable damage to the Anglican Board for Social Responsibility, because certain bishops were thereafter hesitant to support it. It also did damage to ecumenical justice and reconciliation work. When a member of the Board was later detained, he noticed that the same information had also been passed on to the Security Police.

Another delegate said that he had also heard of members of the Assemblies of God who had penetrated into the interior of Mozambique under difficult circumstances. The speaker pointed out that this information could have its source in reports about Michael Howard.

**Question:** Are there connections between RWCGs in other Frontline States. In reply, the speaker pointed out that the Jimmy Swaggart Ministries (JSM) are active in all SADCC states. After the scandal surrounding Jimmy Swaggart, JSM changed its name to Child Care International. He was not sure how much Swaggart was involved in Mozambique. There were certain indications of possible links with Renamo.

**Comment:** A delegate questioned the speaker's remark that people like Michael Howard use Christianity as a platform for their own agendas. A delegate was of the opinion that most of these people are sincere. They are convinced that they act as Christians. Their understanding of the Christian faith is determined by their anti-communist and nationalistic outlook. Some of them use religious language. The speaker replied that there is a spectrum of people involved in RWCGs. Ian Grey represents the one end of the spectrum, being naively involved, while mercenary types who use religious language are at the other end. To him, Howard is an ambiguous person of the middle ground. He undoubtedly has charisma in appealing to the emotions of Christians. He does very bizarre things. It is not improbable that he became involved in a gang of terrorists out of a Christian conviction.

**Question:** Was the recruitment of Ian Grey a unique case? Were there examples of blacks being recruited? In reply, the speaker stated that there is no way of knowing whether Ian Grey is typical. There are indications that there are Africans involved in linking up with Renamo. They are referred to by the whites involved as 'our black pastors'. They are sometimes asked to do dangerous work.

**Comment:** Four of the five JSM office workers are also Rhema members. Another delegate said that there is a clearly continuing connection between Shekinah and Christ for the Nations in Dallas.

# INTERVIEW WITH IAN GREY

## Maputo, Mozambique, 4 July 1988

**IAN GREY:** ... I had a desire to get involved in mission work of some description. I had no idea of where I'd end up, but God was working in my life as I was travelling around, and I found myself at many times drawn, just like I was being led. I had it in my heart to always visit Israel, because to see the place where all the Bible events took place. ... I had some addresses from a pastor back home in Australia of people in Israel to get in touch with. ... a prominent woman in Israel ... sort of inter connected with the End Time Handmaidens in America.

**INTERVIEWER:** And was Michael Howard very much part of this, or was he just visiting like you?

**GREY:** He was in Israel, I don't know what for ... but I met up with an American couple ... and they told me that this fellow from Africa, a missionary from Africa was preaching in Jerusalem, and if I'd like to go and hear him, and I was very, very interested because I had Africa in my heart. ... I will never forget the first time I saw the man. I thought he was a tall Japanese, Michael Howard, because his hair was dyed jet black.

**INTERVIEWER:** But his hair's red ....

**GREY:** Yes, yes, it is, but his hair at this time was jet black, and he had contact lenses, and during the meeting he was describing what he was doing in Africa, crossing rivers and going through all these places and swamps and going, taking the gospel into parts where there's danger and everything ... I'm an adventuresome type of person, and that to me is my element because even back home I love to explore, I love to hike, I love to camp and that sort of thing, and taking Bibles and things like that, this is worth it, this is me, I love it, so I was drawn to him. I don't know, his personality and everything, I was drawn to the man. ... I spoke to him later and I just told him that I had a desire to go on to the mission field and to be involved in something, and well, he listened to me; he didn't say anything at that stage. And my time was drawing to a close in Israel and well, I was going to head back to Australia now. I had an opportunity even maybe to go to a Bible college in America ... Christ for the Nations ... a couple of weeks before I was to leave Israel, Michael Howard rang up from the United States and told me he said: 'Listen, if you want to come and join us, you're most welcome.' And I was excited, I just about jumped through the well, this is my door, it's opened this is the next step.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was he doing in the US?

**GREY:** I don't know, he was travelling, he was touring, and well, they travel and tour quite extensively.

I got a visa to go to South Africa at first. It was just a stop over flight from South Africa to Zimbabwe. ... They took me on up to Chipinge, up in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe.

**INTERVIEWER:** And this would have been still 1985?

GREY: No, this was now in '86.

INTERVIEWER: January of '86?

GREY: Yes, this was in '86. I spent Christmas of '85 in Israel, so January, February, '86. I met a lot of folk up there, because Pastor Howard he had a church. He was working for the Assemblies of God. He had a church in Chipinge, but there was some confusion or something he broke off with the Assemblies.

GREY: Yes, they used to meet together in a house because it was only a small community, a community type of a fellowship. And I stayed with these people and I did some local work around Zimbabwe in the Chipinge area, going to schools and just sharing with the children, getting through interpreters sharing stories from the Bible. They had a farm there as well. They used to have conventions. They had quite a few African pastors working with them...

INTERVIEWER: And you had no trouble going into schools?

GREY: No.

INTERVIEWER: These were government schools?

GREY: Yes, no problems. They sort of started then telling me about things that are happening in Zimbabwe, how things were going there they're going towards the left, and Mozambique too is communist, and it was like a wave that was coming through and just what happened to them and everything, because they went through the war ... Now these people, I suppose, looking back now, they well, I suppose if you went through a thing like that, you could well be very embittered perhaps, but I'm not saying they were embittered, but it's just they've been through a hard time

....  
INTERVIEWER: When did the notion of coming across the border into Mozambique come up?

GREY: Well, they told me they had a work going on in Mozambique not in Mozambique at the time in Malawi, and would I like to go up to Malawi and assist them up there, and I said: "Sure." ... They showed me they had a lot of slides, which they've shown in the States, of conditions that were like here in Maputo, with no food in the shops and people queuing up as a result of, they say, communism. ... And their slides are very convincing, and when I got up to Malawi I met [the people] who run the Blantyre Christian Center. ...

INTERVIEWER: When did you get to Malawi?

GREY: Round about April. ... We got our own house and I sort of was looking after the house. I met [a] Pastor ... who runs a Church of Disciples in Malawi. He's in charge of about 1000 churches throughout Malawi, and he lives in the southern end in Nsanje, which is like an icicle into Mozambique. ... He's a Malawian pastor, but he worked into Mozambique as well, because there's a lot of churches in that area, that's where the Renamo are, and of course to go in there you have to be affiliated with the Renamo they allow you to go in there and preach and everything. ... Rod



and Ellie Hein told me all about what was happening and they said ... you'll be working with him because they had children. They had to go back to Zimbabwe, and they wanted the work to keep going. So I was the ultimate man because I haven't got a family or anything and I can work.

**INTERVIEWER:** Has Michael got a family?

**GREY:** He's not married, no. He's got brothers and sisters, but he's not married. What Pastor Howard's main ambition was to get a group of people trained to go into Mozambique and penetrate into different areas and preach the word of God in there and take Bibles, and the only way that could happen was by working with and through the Renamo because they were, as it were, seemed in control of that area at the time, so we had to work in and through them. Now how that came about was that Michael Howard was captured by them at one stage, this is the story he told me. He went in there to see what was happening, and he met up with these people and they captured him and imprisoned him and he nearly died in there. He had malaria and he really suffered. I don't know the actual instances of why he was released. I think a lot of it was to help them with the setting up of, ... getting journalists in there to help them, and to set something up in the United States. This is the connection with Tom Schaaf. I met Tom Schaaf in Zimbabwe. He used to come along to some of the fellowship meetings. I didn't know that he was involved in Renamo at the time. He was working as an agricultural adviser. ... Of course later I found out that he was very much involved with Renamo. ... When I met him, from what I'd gathered, he'd been quite involved in Christian churches. ... But right around then Tom Schaaf left Zimbabwe very suddenly.

**GREY:** Yes, well, he left well, of course now we know because if he had stayed he would have been arrested.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you know this at the time? Did anyone tell you Tom Schaaf is leaving and he had to leave?

**GREY:** Well, later on I found out they told me that he had left and the reason why. And also well, they told me once I got an inside and found out what was happening in Mozambique well, I had to keep my mouth shut too, ... they told me if they were to be found out, that they could be imprisoned or shot, and their families. They've children and everything. So I kept confidences very much so with them on that issue, and even when I was writing home to my parents, I told them that I was working, crossing rivers, but not too much detail to get them worried. I didn't want to worry anybody.

**INTERVIEWER:** Where did you first go into Mozambique?

**GREY:** I crossed from a point our crossing point was Nsanje, a place called Kulumbi Village, which is right on the Shire River. It's about an hour's canoe ride across the Elephant Marsh. You go across the Shire river and there's a lot of elephant marsh, and then you enter in across onto the Mozambique well, once you cross the Shire River you are in Mozambique province in Zambezi province. There you walk about an hour or two and then you come to the first little central base, because I had to be with [the] Pastor ... because he knew the men. If I was to walk in there unescorted, I would have been put in prison myself by these guys. There I met them and I met all the commanders and ... the people that were living around there. We had a church meeting with the

people there. I was sharing the word of God with some of the soldiers there as well. They had a little place in the bush set aside where they'd go and pray, and we handed some Bibles out to them.

**INTERVIEWER:** And these were Renamo?

**GREY:** They were Renamo soldiers. A lot of ways we became very attached. I can just look back and experience now, but I have some very memorable occasions that happened to me over there. It was like even when you meet people here, you get to meet people, you get to know them, and now I'm like in the middle of both, I can see either side, and I see they're all people and God loves them and Jesus died for them all. Tom Schaaf, because I was working backwards and forwards to Mozambique, asked me to relay messages for him.

**INTERVIEWER:** When did you start doing this?

**GREY:** It would have been April, May some time '86. We went in there and I met up with a lot of Mozambican pastors there, and at first we did a lot of walking, but we had to seek the permission of the Renamo people before we could do anything. The first thing we had to go to was their base to get permission to do, so that they knew that we were there and everything, and sometimes they would not allow us because it was too dangerous and they refused us to go any further. In fact most of my visits there were no further than the little Shire base. The only time I ever did go to the central base was for that big convention, which I organized food mealie meal, goats, chickens, Bibles, tracts, pens and notebooks for people to take notes.

**INTERVIEWER:** When was that?

**GREY:** I think it was about June, a lot of Americans came over to attend. American missionaries. There was a team of about ten of them.

**INTERVIEWER:** From what organization?

**GREY:** From different churches in the States, lots of different Pentecostal organizations and groups in the States.

**INTERVIEWER:** Was Shekinah an American organization?

**GREY:** Well, it started. I think in Zimbabwe. ... One of the main reasons they went to America was for support and to show people what was happening over there, because Rod and Ellie Hein went across quite often made numerous trips with their slide presentations and gave talks in various different organizations.

**INTERVIEWER:** Christ for the Nations had raised some money for Shekinah Ministries did they send anyone to this big meeting?

**GREY:** Well, they had a young guy ... an American that was working up in Malawi. When I started in Malawi, he left to go back to the States to continue on with his studies his studies with Christ for the Nations. He came back again in '87 to rejoin Shekinah Ministries. He was getting

prepared, and I don't know whether he made trips into Mozambique himself he could have done to the same sort of thing I was doing, because that was the ambition, to get young men and that in there and work with the pastors and assist them.

INTERVIEWER: And where was this place that you had the big meeting?

GREY: It was at the central base, which was about a good day, day and a half's walk from the water from the water where we landed in Mozambique. It was quite a big base. Of course we never saw anything of the inside, just we were on the outside they prepared a place for us to stay. They made little huts out of raw materials for all of us, toilets and they fenced the whole thing off for us, like a little quarter for us to stay, and for the other people that were staying they had huts and everything, the people that came, and they had a massive big church there that had been built out of raw material....

INTERVIEWER: Built by them?

GREY: Built by them. But of course they've got people in the organization that are well, one guy, one commando's in charge of religious affairs. ... Commander Peter. He was in charge of religious affairs. He helped organize well, they do have meetings in that church, because it had been there for a while.

INTERVIEWER: How many people came to this convention?

GREY: There was about a thousand people, easily.

INTERVIEWER: And these were the people from right nearby?

GREY: No, these were people some of them had walked for nine days as far as the ocean from different provinces, Sofala and neighboring provinces of the Zambezi. Some of them had walked nine days straight to get there.

INTERVIEWER: Were they pastors?

GREY: Yes, a lot were pastors, and then there was women and a lot of men, few children. Mainly men and women of pastors and their wives.

INTERVIEWER: And did Renamo soldiers participate in it?

GREY: There wasn't too many of the, but a few of them participated in this, yes. there was one guy, Ron Kusmull. He's an American based in South Africa. He has a missionary organization in South Africa... He's a pilot, and he came in as well with the Americans. He is an American himself. ... He's been in a lot of countries in Africa as a mission worker, because he's got a plane and he can fly. ... He was very closely affiliated with the Blantyre Christian Center. He helps that church in Blantyre. End Time Handmaidens is another group that Shekinah Ministries got [in] but these people they never came with us into Mozambique. The leader, Gwen Shaw, and her husband, they went into Mozambique they went in legally by road once into the Beira district,

with Rod and Ellie Hein, and they just went in there to see what the needs were to get an understanding of what was happening.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do that's wrong? So far you've been talking about participating in gospel outreach?

GREY: Well, my thing that was wrong was participating in taking messages and things. Well, Tom Schaaf used me because I was working in there.

INTERVIEWER: When did this start was it the first time you went in or the second time you went in that you started sending messages?

GREY: Well, it was after about a month or so of working in there he asked me. ... he wanted to get in there, boots and all sort of things, and help these guys with radio communications and everything. They wanted me to help with radios, and I don't know anything about radios, so I was like a runner when I was in there. These guys would get messages, give them to me like they'd be coded messages.

INTERVIEWER: They'd get the messages from where?

GREY: Well, they'd come from Gorongosa or wherever it's come from, and then it'd come through to this little base by airways in a code ... and then the guys in communications would get that and code it out for me, and I'd word it out and then take it ... where I was staying, and Tom Schaaf would ring me up and I would speak verbally to him of accounts of the numbers of soldiers and helicopters and all this sort of stuff, Zimbabwean forces and all this activity for their office over there.

INTERVIEWER: So these were military messages?

GREY: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And were you taking messages back from Tom Schaaf?

GREY: Yes, like when they were going to visit. Tom Schaaf came over a couple of times to go in there and visit with the, and other people, journalists. I met journalists in there that was the Italian fellow that was shot and Lord Michael Cecil, that worked for the BBC. I met these guys in there. One of the first trips I went in there, these guys were coming in from a trip in there. They'd witnessed battle scenes and all this, and they were surprised to see me and they just asking me what I was doing. This was at the time I was preparing for that convention. I'd just brought over bags of mealie meal on the canoes, and I was just seeing that the things got to the destination and organizing these guys everything was carried on head I was the organizer of that and ....

INTERVIEWER: Were the people who were carrying those things on their heads doing so voluntarily because they wanted to?



**GREY:** Well, there were soldiers that did that. Sometimes there was other people that did help them as well, but the people that were carrying were the sometimes they use civilian people to help carry as well.

**INTERVIEWER:** I have spoken to refugees who complain (claim) that Renamo has kidnapped them from their villages, forced them to carry things, and even shot people who fell down because they couldn't carry any more. But you didn't see that?

**GREY:** I never saw anything like that.

**INTERVIEWER:** So where you were taken Renamo was behaving properly?

**GREY:** Well, I never saw any [abuses]. Every time I was there they used to Cokes and Fantas, and they gave me first class treatment, not because of what I was doing or anything else, but anyone that was there, I never witnessed abuse not saying that because I'm only there as a newcomer I'm not saying that these things didn't happen. I'm sure that these things do happen on either .....

**INTERVIEWER:** The messages that you were carrying, these were messages about military action?

**GREY:** Yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Were there ever messages of other types were there other messages that said we need this kind of supplies, this kind of weapons?

**GREY:** There was one thing there that they were asking the they were involved with trying to get some ground to air missiles.

**INTERVIEWER:** And you carried out the message from inside?

**GREY:** No, this is something that I heard about the ground to air missiles, that they wanted these things from the United States of America ... this has all come from Tom Schaaf and people coming through. I was sort of like in the middle of all this. The house we had there, we'd be entertaining missionaries people had come in from the States that would preach the gospel in Malawi, and for people that went into Mozambique, and then you'd get people from like Tom Schaaf and once one of their representatives from Kenya, Francisco Nota Moises stayed there... One guy, Jim Blanchard - all these guys they wanted to go I don't know what their connections are. These are things that I don't understand, but I was there because I had a vehicle, and Michael Howard was there, and I got to see a lot of things that I didn't know and fully understand properly I still don't understand now ... These guys wanted to go in there and visit. they had other guys. There was another guy that had been in Vietnam and ... he had some rank that went in there, and one of the guys from the Washington Times. ... He was an editor of the Washington Times, quite well up. ... He had a Russian surname. Big fellow, very foul mouth extremely foul mouth. There's another guy, Jack Wheeler, I never knew that he was involved until later. He was in the Soldier of Fortune. These guys were put under house arrest by the Malawi authorities.

**INTERVIEWER:** Why?

GREY: I don't know why. They were staying at the Ryall's Hotel in Blantyre, and they were put under house arrest in Blantyre, and a couple of days later they were deported. ...[Subsequently] Pastor Howard he said: We are stopping; we're not working any more in Mozambique; it's finished; it's too dangerous any more work it's finished if Rod Hein wants to continue, let him continue, but we're finished. This was in '87.

INTERVIEWER: And do you think this was because they were nervous were they worried about their security, or were they worried about the ethics of some of their activities?

GREY: I don't know, I think I'm not sure. but I was happy... and I just told them ... I came here to preach the gospel, to take the gospel in there ... but I'm tired to this, like i'm acting like a undercover agent.

INTERVIEWER: How many times do you think you went back and forth?

GREY: Quite numerous times...

INTERVIEWER: About a dozen?

GREY: Yes, more.

INTERVIEWER: And most of those times were you carrying messages?

GREY: No, only occasionally was I carrying messages. Afterward we just stopped because there was problems. I don't know whether it was military action happening in there or what, but they wouldn't even allow us in there, and even the Renamo people were acting very cagey towards us.

GREY: I was over there once and Pastor Howard had been in there talking with the president in Gorongosa ... and Pastor Howard told me then, he said: We've got to try and get out of here because I don't like what's happening here.

INTERVIEWER: When you would cross the river, did you ever have to worry that Malawian soldiers might stop you from crossing illegally?

GREY: There's a Malawian army base right in Nsanje, and I'm very positive these people knew of our actions. One thing I know about Africans, and when I see a white man, we stand out in a crowd, and I,m sure that the Malawian authorities knew of our actions. I remember once that Pastor Howard told me that he'd written a letter to President Kamuzu Banda. ... So I'm sure, because people are not foolish, they know this happened...

INTERVIEWER: Did you meet Peter Hammond?

GREY: The only time I met him they he came up once to meet with Shekinah Ministries because he well, Rod and Ellie Hein and Pastor Howard used to preach or minister down in South Africa quite often. Their children went to school there. They were backwards and forwards...

INTERVIEWER: Their children went to school there?

GREY: Yes, in South Africa. A lot of their children were schooled in South Africa, the folk that I met, so they backwards and forwards to pick their kids up. Peter Hammond came up and he was working with Frontline Fellowship. They wanted to go in with us because they knew we had a means of going into that area authorized by these people to go in there. They wanted us to help them to go in there themselves, which we refused.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you refuse?

GREY: Well, I don't know. ... but these people, one thing I did notice with them, there were other guys that were with him that were involved in military activities ... One guy was telling me that he'd served time in Vietnam. These guys have done training, military training. They'd been in war, they'd been in fighting, and they wanted to go in and meet with these guys. The intentions were to help them and to preach and everything else, but we noticed ... a lot of them even had liquor.

INTERVIEWER: These were people who claimed to be evangelical pastors in a context where nobody would drink liquor?

GREY: Yes well, these people they in our house I wasn't there, but Ellie found the liquor there and poured it down the toilet, and she just dumped them out, sent them off.

INTERVIEWER: Did Peter Hammond say that he had been into Mozambique before with Renamo?

GREY: Well, he's travelled in before because he had lots of literature that I saw, photographs he'd taken in here and literature that he sends out to people. It's hard sometimes to realize what is the truth. I wrote a letter home to my parents once and I said: Pontius Pilate was right when he said to Jesus what is truth because there's no real truth any more. Except for God's word there's very little truth in the world.

*Note that this is a preliminary, partial transcript - subject to verification against original tapes - of an interview conducted by Steve Askin on July 4, 1988 in Maputo, Mozambique.*

# **THE CASE OF THE RHEMA BIBLE CHURCH**

## **Is the Rhema Bible in South Africa an example of the international 'New Religious Political Right'?**

*Ove Gustafsson*

*(Not for citation)*

### **Introduction**

In this paper I will be submitting to criticism some preliminary results of my research that are to be further developed on later. Since 1987 I have worked on material deriving in particular from the Rhema Church in South Africa and Sweden (in Sweden known as the 'Word of Life, 'Livets Ord'). Other missiologists will naturally find parallels in Central America, the Middle East, South-East Asia and other regions.

I paid my first visit to South Africa to gather material in spring 1987, when I had the opportunity to interview several leaders of the Rhema Bible Church (RBC) and to collect cassette tapes and other source material. In 1988 some of the methods and concerns of my research were presented in *Svensk Missionstidskrift*.(1) In connection with Professor Johan Galtung's visit to Sweden, a working paper was ventilated in October 1988.(2) My theoretical frame of reference is a theory developed by Professor Galtung on the role of culture and religion in the power structures of a given society. Space does not permit me to present this theory here.

The material in the present paper is only a small fraction of the large corpus which forms the basis for my work and which will be presented in an article this autumn in the *Journal for Theology in Southern Africa* and in a forthcoming dissertation in missiology at Uppsala University. The material concerned is of various types, including interviews, cassette tapes, videos, and printed material published by various organisations. This material will no doubt be unknown to an international audience, and some of it will therefore be presented in extenso here.

This paper tackles two main problem areas. The first part of it uses certain analytical tools to examine the Rhema Bible Church's interest in modern communications technology. The second section deals with the RBC's positions in the sphere of politics. Certain patterns emerge from a study of this Church.



from the pioneer fore-fathers, through the generations, and today lies in the very fabric and foundation of its people.(7)

It is clear from quotation that South Africa is felt to have a prominent role to play by virtue of its values and its religious heritage. The brochure alludes to religious rhetoric as a foundation for the present-day population of South Africa. This way of describing South Africa is by no means unusual.

It is common for white South Africans, both Afrikaners and English-speaking, to present themselves to the world as the embattled custodians of civil order in a continent notorious for its instability.(8) The brochure emphasises their moral standards.

A characteristic feature of the video is its use of the term 'church'. The concept of church used refers to a group within South African church life who make very far-reaching claims. The brochure clarifies this, highlighting an interpretation of Christianity with a particularly strong element of prophetic messages:

Of particular interest are a series of remarkable prophecies and visions given in recent years, which have shown South Africa to be a dynamic key in God's programme of evangelism for Africa. Many have spoken of a wave of Holy Ghost revival flowing out of the nation into the regions beyond, and again others have spoken of a continent washed in the blood of the Lamb. As if in preparation for this glorious event, the Christian Church in South Africa is at this very moment experiencing a significant outpouring of God's Spirit accompanied by signs and wonders; a fresh renewal in praise and worship; and an explosion in growth as thousands are finding the risen Christ as the answer for their lives.

Indeed, here on the southern tip of this vast continent something vital is happening - a new nation is in the process of being born. Not just a new nation politically and socially, but even more than this, a new nation spiritually. A people called and raised up by God for a glorious Divine purpose, a people who reflect both the ethnic diversity and multi-cultured character of their land.(9)

It is clear that the reference is to Reinhard Bonnke and that he is held out by the brochure as an example of the Christianity's significance for social change. It makes great claims. A new nation is to be born.

Can a religious use of language be analysed as political propaganda? If so, it is in this way that I intend to analyse some of my material, including the video film.

Political propaganda often chooses to take a sort of short-cut, reducing objective argumentation to a minimum. A common short-cut of this kind is the use of positive watchwords or their opposite. It is claimed that the proposals advocated promote 'peace', 'freedom', 'equality', 'justice' and so on, and that the proposals that are opposed will lead to the reverse state of affairs.(10) Specialised, religiously loaded expressions have the same function in the video - expressions like 'what God is doing', 'a new nation', 'stand with us' and others.

The content of the video film can be summarised in three main categories: (1) tourism, (2) a religious content, and (3) a political/ideological content. At the political/ideological level, its

producers are against the general coverage of South Africa by the media. They are also opposed to the isolation of South Africa and the tourist boycott. In contrast, they encourage (a) tourism, (b) constructive engagement, and (c) visits to the churches in South Africa.

A similar video, *The Other South Africa*, has also been shown to church-goers in the United States, in private homes and in certain churches.(11) It was produced in 1986. It has been used by groups from South Africa visiting churches and political institutions in the US.

It is generally accepted that the term propaganda can be used to refer to activities which involve a deliberate, organised influencing of an audience on controversial social and political issues.

Theoretically, every type of communication can exert an influence, but for the term propaganda to be applicable, that influence must be intentional and organised. It is generally known that when a propagandist wishes to convince his audience of the merits or otherwise of a party, proposal or individual, he appeals to the basic values already held by them. He attempts to put across the thing he wishes to promote in such a way that his audience associate it with their positive values and associate the thing opposed by the propagandist with their negative values.

In simplified terms, the propagandist can be said to operate with three quantities:

- 1) the person or thing he is promoting or opposing,
- 2) certain factual circumstances,
- 3) an angle or perspective through which he links the factual circumstances in the desired manner with the subject of his propaganda.

The propagandist thus chooses the facts and perspectives that will serve his purpose.(12)

What relationship holds between the religious elements and the ideological and political component of the video's interpretation of Christianity? Most of the factual information in the film is presented by Christian individuals. It is their experience and knowledge of South Africa that is conveyed. They put across a sort of all-round Christian perspective, a holistic religious interpretation.

Using the instruments of propaganda analysis, we can in my view distinguish the following aspects:

- 1) The video favours the violation of boycotts of South Africa.
- 2) Certain facts are brought out in order to exert an influence. The choice is highly selective, and reference is made to Christian special knowledge and to what can be termed the tourist picture of South Africa.
- 3) The perspective through which the propagandist chooses to appeal to the audience's basic values is a sort of all-embracing Christian view of existence.

In my opinion, the overall interpretive framework is provided by the category of God and the things perceived as being done by God. There is a propagandistic purpose, to get people to apply this particular pattern as they view the situation, and this affects every detail. The perspective is

one that sees everything in life as a spiritual course of events. On the basis of this underlying position, a political message is issued: the boycott should be disregarded. The interpretation of Christianity thus includes both a basic religious view and an ideological/political message.

The IFCC's involvement in the video is not very great in quantitative terms, but it is quite clear that its representatives are openly taking part in something that must be classed as propaganda, with definite objectives, aimed at an international audience. One reservation must be made, however. The IFCC is not responsible for the content of this product as a whole or for the use that is made of it. In an interview, though, Ray McCauley said that he knew of these videos and, far from distancing himself from them, he described his collaboration with Eugene de Villiers and the purpose of the videos as follows: 'Yes, they have done a tape which was on what was happening in South Africa, that was all. We got one in America too. And what it was just to convey was what's going on spiritually here, to South Africa.(13)

The conclusions that can be drawn regarding South African media export products in religious packaging are:

1) There is an over-riding, holistic theological view, which is put across as the over-riding pattern for interpretation. Everything in existence forms part of and can be assigned a place in a dualistically divided world.

2) How does the theological content relate to the political/ideological content? Ideological elements can be discerned. The ideological profile emerges, in my view, when we look at the relationship between the spiritual language and the political reality. There are clear elements of legitimation. The overall spiritual view legitimates and supports certain actions and rejects others. The people behind the video advocate tourism and contacts with certain churches. They are against the general picture of South Africa conveyed by the media. They should thus be viewed primarily as an anti-movement.

But there is also some inconsistency in their reasoning. They say that they do not shun conflict, but that they do not believe in physical manifestations. They claim to advocate a spiritual solution and to distinguish between the spiritual and the worldly, e.g. regarding strikes and boycotts. But they are inconsistent. In practice, they advocate tourism, which favours the Pretoria regime, and they talk about standing with them, which is something physical and tangible, and not just prayer.

3) The experience of Christians is superior to the media picture of South Africa. There are elements of reference to a special knowledge, which is expressly said to be more important than the knowledge conveyed by the media. They take up a clear anti-media stance.

4) We can see the dissemination and use of the video in churches etc in the United States as consistent with the authorities' policy of destabilisation. The picture shown of South Africa is very one-sided and there is a clearly stated purpose - to invite people to visit the country as tourists, in violation of the tourist boycott.



News. This prophecy is recorded on a cassette tape from Celebration 1987.(19) A source critical analysis shows that sections have been deliberately omitted. Let us look at one instance of this.

Throughout the prophecy, there is an emphasis on the chosen people. 'I am going to establish and manifest the authority and power of My Kingdom in such a way that the nations of the earth will wonder'.(20) The following section, connected with this passage, is omitted from the version finally published: 'You understand me when I say to you are people that knew the power of laager and the defence of laager, but know I have caused nations to laager you and because they are laagering you and because you are ...'it's in my purpose, it's for the fulfillment of the ushering in of a manifestation of my kingdom because you will know a stronger economy because I laager you in and there the nations that are now holding you in, are thinking that they will bring my kingdom to nought in this particular nation, I want you to understand that it is in my plan, it's in purpose because by their very doing of this their economy break down that's coming among the western nations will not touch you.'(21) One possible interpretation is that when Biblical support for apartheid is no longer provided by the DRC, for example, the Rhema Bible Church and the IFCC take up the old, loaded terms about themselves as the chosen people and speak in terms of paramilitary structures - the 'laager'. This presumably means that these prophecies are assigned the role of legitimating inequality and hierarchy as a manifestation of God's will.

Why are such sections omitted? It is possible that some of the most sublime expressions of support for those in power must be reserved for the more internal media-consuming elite within the RBC and IFCC.

## From the Bible Training Centre

The third example of the dissemination of information about South Africa involves a Swedish journalist, Ingemar Myrin, who studied together with his wife at the RBC's Rhema Bible Training Centre in Randburg in the academic year 1985/86.

Myrin is a key link between the Rhema movement in South Africa and the Word of Life movement in Sweden. He published a series of articles about South Africa in the newspaper *Trons Värld* in autumn 1988. The first, with an anti-communist slant, deals with Ndabezinhle Musa.(22) Myrin makes use of material produced in South Africa by Women For South Africa. This organisation can be viewed as one of the most clearly right-wing organisations in South Africa. The same material is available in printed form, with drawings, with the title 'Ndabezinhle Musa, The True Story of a "Freedom Fighter"'.

Let us examine a lecture Myrin gave in Uppsala for Women ('s(?)) Aglow on 13 October 1987.(23) The title of the lecture was 'What God is doing in South Africa today'. It may be summarised here under four heads.

- 1) Media coverage of South Africa is selective and one-sidedly negative:
  - Journalists only try to report unfavourable events.
  - We must be aware that those working in the media today cannot hear what God is saying.



- We are fed with the bad news from South Africa.
- The work which the Holy Spirit is doing is doing is something you are unlikely to read about in the Swedish press.

#### 2) Church concept and church activities:

- Christians are urged to be active in South Africa.
- God is now raising up various gifts and ministries in his Church, with a strong prophetic mission at this time.
- There is a need for Christian schools in South Africa, to provide a new outlook and uphold human dignity.
- The boycotts now mean, for example, that Bibles cannot be distributed. Bible dissemination has been reduced by half.
- We must change political structures from within, through transformed people who transform their society.
- 80 - 90 per cent of blacks do not want a boycott.

#### 3) Epistemology:

- Christians have a source of knowledge of their own concerning the situation in South Africa.
- We need a renewing of our minds in the Holy Spirit, so that we do not see the world with the eyes of the media. Some people believe more in what newspapers and television say than what God's Word and the Holy Spirit tell us about the things happening in the world.

#### 4) Demonisation:

- The struggle is not against people and views, but against demonic powers that control and lay waste.

This way of perceiving and presenting the situation in South Africa recurs in the Rhema Bible Church in South Africa, Sweden and the United States.

## The Rhema Media Strategy in South Africa

There is a discussion within missiology of new communications technology and the Church's relationship to it in historical perspective. New technology has emerged, especially in the media field, and an issue of interest to the missiologist is how the churches relate to it.

The SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation), the exclusive state media monopoly for almost all radio and all television, acts as an extension of the state. What is the relationship between the Rhema Bible Church and the SABC?

The South African Government has appropriated virtually absolute power regarding what it itself views as security questions. In 1982 the Internal Security Act was introduced, designed to protect national security and maintain law and order. This Act gives the Minister of Law and Order far-reaching powers to declare organisations illegal, to prohibit the publication of pamphlets etc, and to banish, arrest and detain individuals. Anything which, under the Act's very wide definition, could be considered a threat to the security of the state, including political, economic and industrial change, can result in intervention and prosecution for terrorism, sabotage and subversive activity. The Minister can order individuals to be detained indefinitely without

charge. Under the Protection of Information Act, newspaper publishers and journalists who publish confidential information or official documents can be sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment or heavy fines. The Government is empowered to prevent publication of any type of information which it deems sensitive.

The Publications Act contains most of the regulations affecting freedom of expression in South Africa. It covers a very wide range of objects: t-shirts, slogans, films, audiotapes, videotapes, song lyrics, plays, cabaret skits, even government broadcast material are all subject to banning, as well as the obvious political speeches, books, socially critical novels and works of scholarship.(24)

Hypothesis: the Rhema Bible Church's access to the television media is of mutual benefit to the two sides involved. Television time enables the RBC to put across its message. By allowing such access to the RBC, with its individualising and passivising view of Christianity, the authorities are ensuring loyal support for their reform programme.

In my interview with Ray McCauley, he made known his views concerning the overall situation in South Africa, and the media were mentioned in unfavourable terms:

I think it's the most serious that has ever been to our country. I think it is very serious, but I do know that the media sensationalise and take things totally out of context and if you take anything out of context you cannot get the truth behind the real matter. I think there is more of a balance to the situation, as you have been here yourselves, I think you get a different impression living in Sweden, than when you came here. Now I am not saying that the problems are not very real, I am not saying that apartheid is right, I am not saying that some of the policies and the things that are happening are right. What I am saying is that I think that they are not getting a true picture of the overall situation, but I do believe that it is going to do the church, the world good because when everybody get comfortable, you know in the book of Acts when the church was persecuted or they went through a rough time they came out strong and I believe that the church is going to grow out of this and come out strong and it's a very important time for the church because I believe that the church has the solution.(25)

McCauley judges media reporting to be one-sided. The natural implication is that he considers himself to have a better overview than the media in general and therefore to be able to make this judgment. It is also interesting to note how McCauley uses the term church. How exclusive is his church concept?

McCauley reveals that, in a conversation with State President P W Botha, he discussed the media and the possibility of access to South African television:

... he invited all Pentecostal churches and us and me representing the new churches and the day before they had the historical churches to put over the grievances and to put over what they felt should be done by the Government. (...) I haven't got a very close relationship with the President. I think he knows what we do, he knows what is happening, he knows what we believe.

But again you see, scripturally it says that you need to pray for your government and everybody in authority and that's about very difficult to do when you have all different people in the con-

gregation who have problems but we do that because we believe the Bible and we give the respect any president or prime minister but I don't necessarily agree with all that he says. I don't agree what any politicians totally does and say, but when I saw him what I asked for was, that I felt that Reinhard was still in the country (?) (with) (in) us, and I felt that they had neglected a lot to a degree the message of the new birth, and I would, you know, because of what we have is like a, I think you might have overseas, if you have the Lutheran church dominate the television and everything, it is difficult then to see people's hearts changed and so we spoke to him on that level. But he is a confessed Christian who believes and was going to be a missionary but coming from a Afrikaans background you need to realise the culture and the way of thinking was, you know, that apartheid was scriptural, now I think they are beginning to realise that it wasn't right. And I just hope that the reformers is quick and that a lot of that they promised to do, they will do. (...) he knows a lot of scriptures, spends at least half an hour to one hour a day reading the Bible and prayertime by himself and his reaction was very much that, that's what he believes that is one of the areas but politicians it's different to get very much into a dominant Christian aggressive stand, you know.(26)

The State President is given the status of being a Christian with a very active devotional life. McCauley is careful to give Botha this Christian legitimation. At the same time he stresses that the President knows about the Rhema Bible Church and what it does and believes in. In this way, the RBC receives a kind of legitimation from Botha. There thus emerges a mutual legitimation in connection with McCauley's appeal for television time.

The RBC and the IFCC want access to the media, and access to the media they have been given. Pastor Edmund Roebert from Hatfield Christian Church mentions this at the IFCC's convention in 1987:

We as churches across the nation are being playing once a month and I want to tell you that's a part of our becoming a people of destiny. If you miss any other services during the month don't miss that prayertime and I would like a couple of statements I always wish the tape wasn't on but within three hours of our churches across the nation prayed some month back a plane crashed and wicked men were exposed for what they are as a result of our people praying across the nation the media has open in a way which I been impossible for six months ago I don't even want to tell you all the details I am afraid to tell you all the details but I have never dreamed it will open that quickly you don't know the details, just watch your screens.(27)

Here Roebert mentions how God, in answer to prayer, allowed an aircraft to crash and how access to the media has been drastically opened up to the IFCC. God is felt to be behind violence directed against those who are defined as enemies, at the same time as prayer has opened up the South African media.

Access to the media was in fact one of the main reasons for the founding of the IFCC. Broadcasting time on the SABC was one of the IFCC's objectives.(28)

Ray McCauley was invited to minister on six of the 'Good Morning South Africa' opening prayer services on the SABC in 1988 and the SABC's Christmas Day service was broadcast by the Rhema Bible Church.(29) The RBC's youth pastors, Rob Harmon and Bruce Weyers, have been presenters on a television programme for young people, 'Built for Life'. In the RBC's in-



ternal monthly newsletter, they describe the content of the programme and their relationship to the SABC:

Pastor Rob and I would like to thank all the people that have been praying for the programme 'Built for Life' and ourselves. We have seen a great number of young people ministered through the programme with needs such as homosexuality, lesbianism, broken homes, loneliness, relationship problems and being unsaved. We have received a tremendous encouragement from the SABC Religious Department and are really looking forward to the coming months as we deal with topics such as suicide and forgiveness.(30)

The SABC's relationship to the churches is summed up by John Phelan:

Interestingly, as the churches at home and abroad condemn apartheid with rising intensity, the South African Broadcasting Corporation has turned more and more of its religious programming within. Christianity is projected as a private inner choice with no social consequences.(31)

In Rhema, the authorities have found a church that emphasises an extreme form of individualism. The Rhema Bible Church's access to and use of the media is to the advantage of both parties in this manoeuvring for the state-controlled media. No Christian group is better able than the RBC to legitimate the Government's continuing oppression and exploitation of the great majority of people in South Africa. The RBC has the advantage of being able to work at a spiritual level, and the Government thus receives support for its political action.

## **The nature of the political function of the Rhema Church**

3.1. The Rhema Bible Church is known for its multi-racial worship, but in terms of its membership it is a mainly white church. McCauley says that 80 per cent of its members are white and 20 per cent black.(32) We may probably assume that a very limited number of black people are involved in leadership and financial administration.

Regarding social change, McCauley argues in favour of an individualistic approach:

OK, I believe that if you can change the colour of a person's heart then their colour of their skin does not matter make any difference. And for instance we have seen a dramatic change in reconciliations through Christ with black and white in our own congregations in our Conventions in our whatever it is we have seen things now coming together through the Lord. And so it's very important for the church to stand up now and to make it stand, and to really become effective in evangelism, effective in moving into different areas of the community and begin to work in these areas in a way they have never worked before, harder and more effectively and it's bringing the church into a unity too, I think that is an important test.(33)



How are we to understand McCauley's statements about abolishing apartheid? How is the Rhema Church's advocacy and practising of multi-racial worship to be viewed? Is it politically progressive, or passivising?

Ray McCauley argues that Christians must be involved in politics:

I think that every Christian, if a Christian withdraws from politics, then we can't blame the devil for hearing him saying politics is not. It's our responsibility to be involved.

Now I don't think a preacher must get involved in politics or a pastor of a church. You see I have people here that are blacks and are really battling to walk in love against the police. I have people in the army here who really battling to reconcile to blacks in the townships. Then I have that comes from an Afrikaans back-ground with brought up their lives believing that the black man is inferior and then I have people that are on the English background that I came from which felt that apartheid is wrong and you got all this mixed together. And what we are trying to do. I do preach the gospel which obviously says apartheid is wrong, that I must say. Even the Dutch Reformed Church now that's come out, it's wrong. We don't practise any form of segregation in our congregation. We don't practise any form of discrimination in our lifestyle as Christians but now they must vote because God raises up and puts down so we must challenge these men that are in power to what their commitment is to Christ, what their commitment is to the Bible and as responsibility of the people that are in Christ right now they can't cast their vote as they feel if their Lord want them to do.

And so I think that the congregation must vote, that's been the trouble with the Christians we have had two extremes, a humanistic-social gospel on the one side which doesn't preach the new birth, doesn't preach that you need to be born again, doesn't preach sinful nature they don't preach that. They believe that the system is sin, not men. So they are into a humanistic ideology which is very close to a socialistic communistic philosophy and they try marrying the two. And then you get the extreme pentecostal whatever it is, and which we come out of and born-again, baptise holy 'ghostisase' (?) and just ignore the other side and I believe we got to many the two and say listen both is our responsibility. And once we get them saved it is not enough to say them now they are going to heaven we must feed them and help them.(34)

McCauley's view of politics includes activism and the threat of socialism. At the same time as he denies the existence of segregation within the RBC, he advocates members voting in the election, which only some of the congregation are able to do. This inconsistency is voiced openly.

3.2. McCauley advocates negotiations as a means of achieving a political solution, and he views Inkhatha's leader, Gathsa Buthelezi, as a valuable example of this approach:

... extremes on both sides ultimately, don't have the way with the country, and that we find a platform for black and whites to sit down and negotiate, that people like chief Buthelezi, who is a committed Christian and others, will sit down and find God's will and peacefully, when I say about peacefully I don't think it is peaceful right now, you know there is problems, but to the degree when it doesn't become a war, revolution that we work through the things, and that if the church praise and stands up strong and believes God that will come through this thing and find a

platform to negotiate and bring dignity to the blacks and bring about I believe what is best for the nation.(35)

Negotiations are a key word for McCauley. Change must be brought about through negotiations.

MaCauley has personally met Buthelezi and given him his support. Their meeting was reported in the press:

Chief Mongusuthu Buthelezi with Pastor Ray McCauley (...), of the Rhema Bible Church, who visited the Chief's Ulundi offices in Zululand earlier this month for a private prayer meeting. Presenting the Chief Minister with a Bible, as a gift from the International Fellowship of Christian Churches (IFCC), Pastor McCauley said he brought a message of love, concern and admiration for the Chief as a leader who 'values the Bible's way of peace and reconciliation.'(36)

McCauley takes up a clear position. By its contacts with Buthelezi, the IFCC marks its political stance. Pious pursuits like prayer and Bible reading become instruments in the political struggle.

3.3. The new source of support, once the DRC has rejected apartheid, is to be found in the Rhema Bible Church. The former theological support for the policy of segregation is now superseded by various prophetic messages, primarily from American guest speakers at conferences. The following is an extract from an article in Eagle News:

Earlier in the year we shared with you the prophecy given to Pastor Ray from the Lord, through the ministry of Pastor Benny Hinn which was as follows:

'... Yes, saith the Lord of Hosts, My Servant, I SHALL INCREASE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY IN A GREAT WAY and upon your shoulders shall rest great responsibility, ... I have sought for a man through whom I can move, affecting the very leadership of this nation. BE COURAGEOUS AND FEAR NOT. The enemy will rise against you as never before ... But know this, DO NOT MISS MY WILL FOR YOUR LIFE. I shall do it and you will see it done. I shall do it, but (the Lord says) if you will not pay the price, I will choose another ... Will you receive My eye-sight? Will you receive My heartbeat for this nation? I shall place it within thy bosom and your very wife shall see the burden of God on you. Your very church will not understand. The very congregation I have given you shall not understand, thus saith the Lord, but men and women shall ... Do not fear when men question you, even the very congregation I have given you. Do not fear. But many in this nation shall look upon you and shall see that God is with you. In time those that hear My voice and recognise My Spirit shall also know. Men never rise in support of Me; only My servants who know My name, who know My voice and the ways of my Spirit, rise in support of Me... I shall give these men to you and they shall know and you shall know, I am the Lord. O My servant do not refuse this calling. Do not refuse this great responsibility. For if you will, maybe millions shall see destruction. But, if you will receive ... Whosoever stands against you as you take this responsibility that I have given you, stands against Me. Whoever points a finger against you, points it against Me. Yea, saith the Lord, THIS GREATER RESPONSIBILITY SHALL BRING UPON YOU GREATER ANOINTING. With greater anointing shall

come greater judgment on these who will fight you. For when they fight you, they will be fighting Me, saith the Lord of Hosts'.

This word has been confirmed in such a mighty way that we can only stand back and see the glory of the Lord. We praise the Lord for your love prayers and support. As you have stood in agreement with the vision for this ministry you have played a big part in helping us accomplish His will. Thank you, precious friends.(37)

Prophecies like this one are often published in Eagle News and in this case McCauley and his wife put their names to the article and say that the message has been confirmed. In an environment in which there is talk of destruction and murder threats, McCauley is said to have the task of influencing the leadership of the nation. Who is behind the murder threats and destruction in South Africa today? Violence is perpetrated by the authorities, through structures, prisons and the military. When Biblical backing for apartheid has gone, these prophecies serve the function of providing support for those in power. It is power that is now receiving support.

3.4. In advance of the elections in South Africa in May 1987, Ray McCauley gave the following answer as regards voting and the possibility of taking part in the elections:

I am in a very sensitive situation and what I am going to tell the congregation I think maybe this Sunday I have been praying about it is what I, the people that have the vote, who can vote which is sensitive as it is must go and seek God, pray and ask God and then the second thing I am going to tell them to do, is to visit the men that are in the constituency and area and question them on spiritual levels basis, are they born-again, what are they believe about Jesus, what is their commitment... That's all I am going to do.(38)

3.5. McCauley declares openly that he is opposed to sanctions:

Yes, I am against sanctions. The reason being is that I think a lot of people look at the problems rather than trying to find the solution. If I sat down with you today I could spend two hours with you telling you the problems, that the blacks are treated bad here that the Afrikaners are wrong, etc, etc, but what I would like to see more of is what are the solutions to the problem. And I don't think sanctions is, because I think sanctions brings poverty, it bring hurt (?) it breeds (?) a lot (?) of disharmony. We have to feed the blacks, I know what I am talking about, we feed up to 80 people a day that come here because they haven't got jobs and they are suffering badly and I don't think it's the answer. I think the answer is to see constructive engagement. Some people say that it hasn't worked, that's why they are going to the second level with the sanctions, I disagree. I think that we could keep on working and sitting down and going through things and do positive things, you see.

I rather see people overseas send a lot of money to help the blacks then to help the education, to give them bursaries (?), to give them financial help, to feed them, OK leave the whites out of it but sanctions just cuts the blacks off too and I can't see hurting the person that you trying to helping the solution.(39)

The term constructive engagement, which has been so central to American foreign policy relating to South Africa, is emphasised in this US-oriented missionary movement.



3.6. In 1988 the Rhema Church was involved in the formation of a new church organisation, the Church Alliance of South Africa (Casa), which claims to be an alternative to the South African Council of Churches (SACC). Casa's leadership includes the Rev Ron Steel from the RBC, Pastor Marthinus Badenhorst from the Full Gospel Church of God, and former Soweto mayor and preacher, David Thebehali.(40)

The International Fellowship of Christian Churches is one of its member organisations. Casa defines its purpose as being:

To present a united Christian voice, which would be a voice of moderation on vital issues which face the nation of South Africa, whether spiritual, moral or social. To promote peace, justice and goodwill among all men by means of peaceful negotiations and dialogue.(41)

Regarding its immediate objective, the Alliance writes that it is seeking to 'counter the sanctions and disinvestment campaign against South Africa'.(42) Its strategy refers to particular target groups which the organisation wishes to reach:

To meet and talk with overseas political leaders to impress upon them the dangers of sanctions which could cripple the nation and have far-reaching political repercussions for the whole of the sub-continent of Southern Africa.

To meet and talk with business leaders, to encourage them to invest and help build South Africa into a strong and prosperous nation, which would have a positive spin-off in South Africa.(43) Casa lends its support to the process of political reform:

That Casa can be an effective force to bring moderation to prevail in South Africa while the political reformation takes place. That by presenting a strong, united voice of moderation, overseas opinions will become more positive and overseas investors encouraged to become part of the solution to building what may be termed a 'new South Africa'.(44)

A characteristic feature of the organisation process which the Rhema Bible Church has undergone in a short interval of time is that, the stronger its organisation and the larger the bodies to which it has been linked, the stronger its political activities have become.

The RBC is pliant towards those in power and independent in relation to the enemies. The Nationalist Party's reform policies are legitimated by religious means. The religious symbols and expressions serve a political function. Yes, there is a new Religious Political Right in South Africa. If the DRC used to be the best supporter of the apartheid 'system', this is no longer true. Instead the Rhema Bible Church has emerged as a new and strong force legitimating the power apparatus of South Africa.

Conclusion: The Rhema Church does not need to develop a racist theory legitimating and supporting the apartheid 'system', but uncritically supports the existing economy and politic/military power of South Africa.



"Its own benefit is access to media, land, and visits by Mrs Botha and other prominent symbols of this regime.

## Footnotes

1. 'Ornen nar landat - Utkast till ett forskningsprojekt.' SMT 1987:3, pp. 45-59.
2. Working paper for a seminar with Prof. Johan Gaitung, 18 October 1988.
3. The Rhema Bible Church claims to have 10 500 members.
4. We See a New Africa. Video produced by Good News Travel Promotions.
5. Ray McCauley and Nicky van der Westhuizen are among the founders of the IFCC, which was officially launched at a meeting in Durban in August 1985. Steele R. A biography. Ray McCauley Destined to Win. Cape Town 1986, pp. 113ff. Meso Sono is a pastor in the Grace Bible Church in Soweto and a member of the IFCC.
6. Interview with Eugene de Villiers, 1 April 1987.
7. We see a New South Africa. Brochure produced by Good News Travel Promotions.
8. Phelan J.M. 'Cultivated Babel: South Africa's apartheid media'. In Media Development 3/1985, p. 6.
9. We see a New South Africa. Brochure produced by Good News Travel Promotions.
10. Birgersson B.O./Westerstahl J., Den svenska folkstyrelsen, Unddevalla 1982, p. 103.
11. Interview with Russell Eggert in Cape Town, 3 May 1989.
12. Birgersson B.O./Westerstahl J., p. 101.
13. Interview with Ray McCauley in Randburg, 2 April 1987.
14. Paul Gifford has carried out a content analysis of Reinhard Bonnke's sermons in Harare in 1986: "'Africa Shall Be Saved". An appraisal of Reinhard Bonnke's Pan-African Crusade'. In Journal of Religion in Africa, xvii 1, 1987.
15. interview with Ray McCauley in Randburg, 2 April 1987.
16. Ibid.
17. Video cassette: Rhema tent dedication. Rhema Video Ministry. The ceremony was held on 15 January 1984. Steele R., p. 58.
18. Gifford P, the Religious Right in Southern Africa. Harare 1988, p. 40.
19. Celebration 1987 Prophecy Tape. Tape 15 Cel 0415. This cassette tape is sold by the Randburg RBC.
20. Eagle News, May-July 1987, p. 6.
21. Celebration 1987 Prophecy Tape. Tape 15 Cel 0415.
22. Trons Varld 1988:9, pp. 12f.
23. The lecture was advertised as being on the subject of 'What God is doing in South Africa today'. It was held at Hotel Gillet on 13 October 1987. Tape recording in author's possession.
24. Phelan J.M. 'Cultivated Babel: South Africa's apartheid media.' In Media Development 3/1985 p. 7.
25. Interviews with Ray McCauley in Randburg, 2 April 1987.
26. Ibid.
27. Celebration 1987, Prophecy Tape, Tape 15 Cel 0415.
28. Steele R, A biography. Ray McCauley Destined To Win. Cape Town 1986 p. 115.
29. Eagle News, Fourth Quarter 1988 p. 11.
30. Rhema News, May 1988.

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31. Phelan J P, 'Cultivated Babel: South Africa's apartheid media.' In *Media Development* 3/1985 p. 9.
32. interview with Ray McCauley in Randburg, 2 April 1987.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Cross time, 3 July 1987.
37. *Eagle News*, Fourth Quarter 1988, p. 10.
38. Interview with Ray McCauley in Randburg, 2 April 1987.
39. Ibid.
40. *New Nation*, 8 January 1989, Vol. 5 No. 1.
41. Church Alliance of South Africa. Memorandum.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.

## *Questions and Comments*

In an informal introduction to his paper, Ove Gustafsson described the international network of the Rhema movement, in which mutual visitation of the pastors plays an important role. Furthermore, seminars, the literature of Kenneth Hagin, and training in Rhema Bible schools plays a role in holding the movement together. The school in Tulsa, Oklahoma fulfills a central function. However, recently the Rhema bible school in Randburg has become popular amongst people from Scandinavia. Important figures in the Rhema movement are Ray McCauley (SA), Reinhard Bonnke (Germany/SA), Ulf Ekman (Sweden), Age Aleskjer (Norway), Kenneth Hagin (US), Lester Sumrall (US). The Rhema movement is a dispensationalist and apocalyptic missionary movement. These people have a particular view of history and of mission history. They consider themselves to be a sign of the Last Revival. This is the time in which leaders from the North (Sweden) and South (SA), East (South Korea) and West (USA) are on the move towards a common centre, namely Israel. Some of the leaders believe that the Great Revival will start in South Africa. Reinhard Bonnke is believed to play a special role. He aims at taking the movement "from Cape to Cairo", and from there to Israel. When everyone has arrived in the centre, then Jesus will come again. Through his organisation, Christ for all Nations (CfAN), Bonnke spreads information about SA himself, and also gives a platform for Rhema ministers. He arranges tours to South Africa, in particular from England. Lester Sumrall arranges tours to Israel, where he organises big conferences in the Hilton Hotel.

The speaker explained the dualism in the message of the Rhema church:

God	Demons
epistemology	
special knowledge	sense knowledge
experience of Christians	media
conversion stories	
altar call: Come and stand with us	boycott
tourism	isolation

Question: Are the prophecies of Rhema church leaders used for mutual legitimation? The speaker replied that this is the case. Ray McCauley gave a prophecy which legitimated Reinhard Bonnke in Frankfurt, etc. There is a closed system of legitimation of each other through prophecy in the Rhema movement. Such prophetic legitimation is restricted to the leaders on the pulpit. Ray McCauley even spoke a prophecy about himself, speaking in language of "I, God, am speaking to you, Ray McCauley".

Question: Are ordinary members of Rhema aware of what is going on? The speaker said they were probably not aware of the political function of what went on. The Rhema movement is very leader-centered. Ordinary members are expected simply to obey.

Question: Are there any links between Rhema and the Dutch Reformed Church in SA, especially with regard to forming an ecumenical organisation as an alternative to the SACC. The speaker replied that he has no evidence of links with the DRC, except for a meeting between Rhema and Johan Heyns. Rhema has been involved in setting up the Church Alliance of South Africa (CASA), an organisation which claims to represent 17,000,000 Christians. On the executive of CASA are Ron Steel of Rhema, as well as Martin Badenhorst and David Thebehali. The key issues of CASA are anti-sanctions, anti-Tutu and anti-SACC agitation.

A question was raised about the role of religious freedom in the message and activities of the Rhema church. The speaker pointed out that in Scandinavia, Rhema attacks the democratic system in the name of religious freedom, describing it as demon-cratic. If Rhema is criticised, they consider themselves to be persecuted. In South Africa, Rhema supports the oppressive regime.

Question: Do we have the necessary structures in our churches to counter the RWCGs. A delegate suggested that we did not, since our structures (even the SACC) are inherited from the past. He also questioned why only church leadership had been invited, and not more grassroots church activists. In response, it was suggested that the information gathered at this conference should be spread to such groups as part of the Plan of Action to be discussed the following day.

It was asked whether it would not be advisable to invite Rhema to meetings such as this. In reply, the speaker pointed out that it would be very difficult to engage in dialogue with an organization like Rhema, who claim to have special knowledge from God. This makes it impossible to have an encounter on the same level. If one questions them, one is regarded as one who is possessed by a demonic spirit.

Question: Do Rhema people in South Africa take tourists to the townships, or only show them the beautiful side. The speaker replied that the Rhema people are highly selective in taking tourists around in South Africa. A participant said that he had gone to Rhema in Randburg as an American tourist. He had asked to go to Soweto, but was discouraged.

Question: Do Rhema people apply their conviction that poverty is a sign of sin to black South Africans too. Do they tell tourists that black people are poor because they are sinners? The speaker said that if Rhema took tourists to Soweto, they would most likely take them to the Grace Bible Church in Soweto, where Moso Sono is pastor. This church is linked to Rhema and also attracts mainly black middle class people. Their attraction is that they offer security to people who are afraid of SA's future, by saying that "God is with South Africa".

Comment: In Pietermaritzburg, the Christian Centre does not only attract middle class black people, but also people alienated by the violence who are looking for a place of refuge. The Centre has grown to 1,200 members.



# SURVEY OF RELIGIOUS MEDIA 1989

**LAWRENCE JONES**

The evangelical movement became politically important around the world during the Reagan years. Evangelicals have preached US foreign policy goals, hatred for the Soviet Union, and submission to right-wing regimes. Though the evangelical movement has Anglo-Irish and British roots, it grew strongest in the United States and spread from there during the 20th century throughout the world. Estimates of evangelicals in the United States vary from 30 to 85 million adults, the likely number being about 60 million. Barrett in his *World Christian Encyclopedia* estimated a global membership, including Anglican and Black evangelicals, of 210,717,100 for 1985.(1)

People from every class and sociological profile belong to the growing evangelical movement. Some churches in places as scattered as Dallas, Texas, South Africa, and Guatemala have wealthy congregations. Other evangelical churches in those same countries have poor congregations who aspire to a middle-class life. Some evangelical organisations have specifically targeted elites - Campus Crusade for Christ and the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International are examples. Other evangelical organisations and churches have found their converts among the poor and middle classes.

In South Africa, for example, wealthy whites are flocking into the new pentecostal churches in the suburbs. Blacks in the townships are also attending black pentecostal churches. The whites are well-off but anxious. They can find an emotional outlet in the expressive style of pentecostal worship and a justification for white dominated South Africa (religious anti-communism) as well as the fantasy that "apartheid is dead" because blacks are welcome to the church services. Blacks, on the other hand, are living in a revolutionary situation. Some are attracted to the evangelical religion because it is both socially conservative and, in the hands of young black preachers, critical of the apartheid government in South Africa. Evangelical religion imported from the United States spread among both groups but very differently and to different effects.

The evangelical movement is not a monolith. Evangelicals are divided into hundreds of different denominational groups, sects, and independent churches. The movement is more broadly divided between emotionally cool fundamentalists and excitable "Spirit-filled" charismatics/pentecostals. Fundamentalists are opposed to modern critical biblical scholarship, evolution, and religious liberalism.

Pentecostals speak in tongues, practice faith healing, and pray with up-raised hands. A Gallup poll in 1980 found that some 29 million in United States (19% of all adults) considered themselves charismatic.(2) Worldwide it is the charismatic/pentecostal wing of the movement that has grown most quickly in the past 20 years, growing in places like South Africa, the Philippines, and Central America. During the regime of "born again" general, Rios Montt, the population of Guatemala was already 30% evangelical (3) (most of them pentecostal). Chile also has a growing pentecostal movement. In countries locked in deadly conflict pentecostals churches have

grown quickly. These churches provide a safe and controlled "psycho-theatre" for anxious individuals to act out their overwhelming emotions.

Apocalyptic expectation promises believers a ready escape from the threatening political situation.

The two wings of the evangelical movement have a similar apocalyptic theology. Though they were at one time in bitter conflict. Fundamentalists attacked pentecostals for being possessed by demons. They believed that speaking in tongues and other "signs and wonders" were peculiar to the apostolic period and therefore assumed that what the pentecostals were doing was "not of God".

The evangelical movement is a complicated amalgam of individuals, organisations, churches, and denominational groups.

Evangelical organisations range from the small cottage industries printing and distributing tracts and newsletters, US regional radio and television "ministries", to the huge national and multi-national "ministries". There are thousands of different groups and organisations. Many of them are loosely aligned, some of them are competing with one another.

What these myriad groupings have in common is a burning desire to evangelise the world in fulfillment of the "great commission": Go ye therefore, and teach all nations..." (Matt. 28.19). Usually coupled with this desire is an apocalyptic urgency. Many believe that the end of the world is imminent. Jesus might come at any moment. Almost all believe Jesus is coming soon.

The religious coalition formed in 1979 to support Reagan's candidacy for president of the United States included both fundamentalists and pentecostals, despite their previous theological conflict with one another. The old feuds have been set aside now that right-wing fundamentalists and pentecostals have formed a successful political coalition.

## Evangelical Movement and its Theology.

There are different varieties of evangelical apocalyptic theology. One of the most popular is dispensationalism, a theory of biblical prophecy with its own variations. An Anglo-Irish sectarian, John Nelson Darby, was the first to propose this theology in the 1830s. Dispensationalism is both theory of biblical prophecy and an elaborate theory of the bible as a cosmic history of the past, present, and the future. But dispensationalism is so simple-minded that it can be portrayed visually as a time-line chart. It also claims to be a literalist reading of the bible.

Dispensationalists are orientated toward the future, expecting that Jesus might return at any moment. They expect to suddenly disappear in what they call the "rapture".

Dispensationalists believe that at any moment they will be caught up in the "rapture": they will disappear and be translated to heaven while the remaining population on earth is decimated by a terrible period of "great tribulation."

The major varieties of modern dispensationalism differ on the timing of the rapture. There are pre-, mid-, and post-tribulationists. The "great tribulation" is the dispensationalist term for a seven year period of catastrophe predicted to occur immediately after the rapture and before the triumphal return of Jesus and his raptured saints who will then judge and rule the world for a thousand years. Some believe they will be raptured before the tribulation, some in the midst of the tribulation, some only after the tribulation period.

During the 19th century, dispensationalists had predicted that Israel would soon be refounded as a state. Some of them were ardent Christian Zionists and worked together with Jewish Zionist organisations. They believed that Israel would play a key role in end-times prophecy. Naturally, after the establishment of the new state of Israel in 1948, believers in this theory of biblical

prophecy felt that current events had confirmed their interpretation of prophecies about the end of the world.

Dispensationalists also believe that the earth will be nearly destroyed in a great war during the tribulation period. Many believe the Soviet Union will soon attempt to invade Israel and that the invasion will set off a super-power military conflict: either between the United States and the Soviet Union (nuclear war) or between God and the Soviet Union (earthquakes, etc).

Russia has figured in Anglo-American theories of biblical prophecy since the Crimean War. In 1855 John Cumming, a preacher in the Scottish National Church, published an apocalyptic book, *The End*, in which he identified Russia with God and Magog, the prophesied invaders of Israel in the last days.(4) The Russian revolution in 1917, the official atheism of the Soviet state, and the cold war of the 1950s made this identification of Russia with God/Magog seem all the more plausible to American dispensationalists.

This sort of end-times theology is very popular in the United States. One can estimate that more than 20 million Americans believe in it. So many have purchased popular dispensationalist books like Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*. This theology, in one form or another, dominates religious broadcasting in the United States. But there are also other competing apocalyptic theologies in the evangelical movement.

"Dominion theology", or "Kingdom theology", or "Christian Reconstructionism" has recently become popular, especially among leaders of right-wing evangelical political groups. According to this theology, Christians have been given dominion over the earth by God. They have to fulfill their mandate, by dominating the planet, before Jesus returns. Dominionists would impose biblical (Old Testament) law (including sometimes the reinstatement of slavery - a biblical institution) as the basis for a harsh new legal system. They see themselves at war with "secular humanism" and are actively involved in right-wing politics.

Like dispensationalists, dominionists are dualists and religious anti-communists. Communism (like evolutionary biology) is one of the manifestations of "secular humanism" and "Satan." Dominionists tend to be survivalists (preparing to survive and prosper after a nuclear war), and pragmatists preparing for a long time-span (unlike people who believe in imminent rapture), and politically aggressive. Their ambition is nothing less than world dominion.

A dominionist has criticised the rapture idea as a fading "bugout theology" that is gradually being replaced by the dominionist alternative. (5) Time will tell. What seems certain is that apocalyptic speculation will flourish as we approach the year 2000. Pat Robertson's type of post-tribulationism may become more popular simply because Robertson's CBN is a large network. Robertson can also embrace aspects of both dispensationalism and dominion theology, believing as he does that the church will go through the tribulation period (though under divine protection).(6)

Robertson outlined his own version of dominion theology in his book *"The Secret Kingdom"*. In this apocalyptic book Robertson discussed communing with God by the Spirit ("It's a bit like tuning into a radio or television station. You get on the right frequency and you pick up a programme"). By communing with God in this way Robertson believes one can "return to the authority God gave us at the Creation".(7)

Robertson also teaches that the gospels promise prosperity, especially in return for tithing: "If you are in financial trouble, the smartest thing you can do is to start giving money away. Give tithes and offerings to the Lord".(8)

Such beliefs about prosperity have helped fill the coffers of television ministries like CBN.



Robertson imagines the invisible Kingdom of God gradually becoming visible and manifest through the work of Christians like himself as they exercise their God-given dominion over the earth: "Almighty God wants us to recapture the dominion man held in the beginning". (9) Christians can, therefore, master the principles of the divine Kingdom and increasingly dominate their world, their nation, their company, etc. as the earth rushes toward a dispensationalist-style nuclear Armageddon. Like most other dispensationalists Robertson believes the Soviet Union may be the prophesied invaders of Israel in Ezekial.(10)

Evangelical belief that Jesus is coming soon is the chief motivation and rationale for their ambitious and frenetic attempts to evangelise the world in this generation. Many evangelicals believe that time is running out, that the generation that saw 1948 (or, alternatively, that saw the 1967 Israeli capture of old Jerusalem) is the last generation. The end is ever imminent in the dispensationalist view.

In the United States there was considerable anticipation among evangelicals for the rapture to take place in September 1988. A former NASA engineer, Edgar Whisenant, had written a book titled "88 Reasons Why the Rapture Could Take Place in the Three Day Period From September 11 - 13 1988, Rosh Hashana (The Feast of Trumpets) at the Last Trump". His book, along with a companion tome "On Borrowed Time," sold 4.5 million copies. After the failure of this September predictions Whisenant claimed that his calculations were off by one year and that the rapture should take place during Rosh Hashanah 1989 or, if not then, by the end of the Tabernacles feast 1989. By February 1989 Whisenant had a new book ready for the press for the new year.(11)

## Evangelicals in Broadcasting

Evangelicals in the United States were early pioneers of religious broadcasting and aggressively exploited both radio and television technology in their efforts to evangelise the entire world. They have ambitiously attempted to fulfill the conditions of Matthew 24: 14, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come"(12).

Evangelical telecasts may reach as many as many of 40% of the viewing public in the United States. (13) Because they were among the first in broadcasting, over the years evangelicals accumulated a vast media empire that now covers the entire globe with their broadcasting signals. With their media empires, evangelicals from the United States have legitimised many ideas previously considered outside the mainstream and have begun to change popular culture in many third-world countries.

American evangelical broadcasting is dominated by conservatives and political reactionaries. Around the world, American controlled evangelical media have backed "anti-communist" policies and regimes, no matter how undemocratic and repressive. They have been the chief opponents of "liberation theology" and have used their pulpits and radio and television broadcasts to brand Catholic and Protestant groups working with the poor in third world countries as "communists". Many evangelical organisations have concentrated much of their missionary activity in regions of the world where United States foreign policy interests are at stake.

The first radio programme broadcast in 1906 was an informal Christian religious programme(14) ( By November 1920 the first radio station in the United States with regular programming, KDKA in Pittsburgh, began broadcasting. A few months later, in January 1921, Calvary Episcopal Church in Pittsburgh broadcast the first religious service heard over the then new media of radio. Fundamentalists quickly took to the new technology. Paul Rader of the Chicago Gospel Tabernacle, formerly of the Moody Memorial church, began his own broadcast-



ing venture in 1922. Rader initiated the first nation-wide religious broadcasting in the early 1930s with his "Breakfast Brigade" on CBS. By 1927 about 50 stations were licensed and operated by religious groups. In the late 1920s and 1930s many fundamentalist churches and bible colleges began to use Sunday morning radio as an outreach tool. During the 1930s a number of conservative evangelical programmes appeared on national radio networks, among them were the "Old Fashioned Revival Hour," "Back to the Bible", "Radio Bible Class," "Haven of Rest".

The Fundamentalist Liberal controversy of the 1920s affected broadcasting in the 1930s and 1940s. Conflict over access to airtime pitted the liberal Federal Council of Churches (later the National Council of Churches, USA) against conservative fundamentalist groups. Such conflict was the catalyst for the formation of new and important evangelical organisations like the National Association of Evangelicals (founded in 1942) and the National Religious Broadcasters (founded in 1944)

Following world war two were years of phenomenal growth for religious broadcasting in the United States:

Between 1945 and 1960 approximately ten radio stations a year started broadcasting at least two hours of religious programmes per day. Today [1979] there are more than a thousand stations in this category. Of these, six hundred broadcast religious content virtually fulltime and are owned by evangelical believers.(15)

Parallel to the growth of evangelical broadcasting was the post-war expansion of some of the evangelical denominations. The pentecostal Assemblies of God, for example, became one of the fastest growing denominations not only in the United States but around the world. In the 1940s the Assemblies of God initiated a national radio programme. During the 1970s and 1980s Assemblies of God television preachers like Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart (before their well-publicised sex scandals) reached millions of viewers both in the United States and abroad. The Assemblies of God, founded in 1914, numbers over 2 millions.

After the war American evangelical broadcasters took advantage of war surplus equipment and new United States outposts in the Pacific and North Africa to expand their international outreach. Already in the 1930s American evangelicals had established a radio station, HCJB, in Ecuador. HCJB now broadcasts world-wide over AM, FM, and shortwave in 15 languages.

Far East Broadcasting Company, founded in 1945, began broadcasting in 1948 out of Manila in the Philippines. Now Far East Broadcasting Company broadcasts throughout the Philippines, Korea, Saipan, and beams its signals into mainland China from a station it owns in Hong Kong. Using old Voice of America equipment Far East Broadcasting Company also began broadcasting into Central and South America. (One of the founders of the Far East Broadcasting Company, John Broger, supervised communication operations and development in the Pentagon until 1977). The Far East Broadcasting Company with its headquarters in LaMirada, California, raises some of its funds by means of aggressive direct mail campaigns and presently broadcasts over 28 stations in more than 72 languages and dialects.

Another large international broadcasting organisation founded by American evangelicals is Trans World Radio (originally based in Tangier, Morocco and now headquartered in Monaco). Trans World Radio has a German branch, Evangeliums Rundfunk, in Wetzlar, West Germany. Trans World Radio beams broadcasts into the Soviet Union and into South America and the Caribbean from a facility in the Antilles.

Trans World Radio also broadcasts from high-powered stations in Cyprus, Swaziland, Sri Lanka, and Guam.(16)

Another worldwide radio ministry, High Adventure, is closely associated with Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN). High Adventure donated its television station in Israeli-

occupied Lebanon to CBN in 1982. High Adventure, founded by former Lear Jet executive George Ous, covers almost the entire world's population with broadcasts from its high-powered short-wave transmitters in Lebanon, Los Angeles, and Guam. The Guam station will begin broadcasting late in 1989. Its signal will effectively cover China, Indonesia, Japan, India, and southeast Asia. The station located near Los Angeles, the 1.5 million watt KVOH, targets South and Central America and South America. In Lebanon High Adventure operates twin 12,500 watt AM stations and a shortwave station broadcast from an omni-directional antenna system at 6.280 and 6.215 MHz.(17) High Adventure has maintained close ties with Phalangist leaders and their armies in southern Lebanon (providing them with airtime) as well as with the Israeli Defense Force (IDF). (18) Ous's stations were consequently frequent targets for bombing attacks. Recently the IDF agreed to transport the stations and transmitters into Israel.

Among the many international evangelical broadcasting organisations are ELWA (founded in 1954), operating out of Monrovia, Liberia, Radio Lumiere and Radio 4VEH in Haiti, and WIVV in Puerto Rico. In 1987 there were 282 organisations listed by the National Religious Broadcasters producing religious radio and television programmes for broadcast outside the United States.(19)

In the 1950s television revolutionised religious broadcasting. The combination of television and direct mail fund-raising techniques provided "televangelists" with enormous financial power. Billy Graham began broadcasting a television version of his radio programme "Hour of Decision" in 1951.(20) In 1952 Rex Humbard, one of the first evangelists to regularly use the new medium of television, began his own television broadcasts of his Sunday services. In 1954 Humbard encouraged the young faith healer, Oral Roberts, to film his tent services for television.(21)

With reductions in the costs of video production in the early 1970s came a steady growth in the number of syndicated religious programming. Evangelicals began to offer to pay for airtime which had previously been donated to "main-line" church programming. Jerry Falwell, Rex Humbard, and Oral Roberts became the leading television syndicators of the 1970s. (22) The National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) expanded from 104 members in 1968 to 900 in 1980. The combined audience for religious broadcasting in the United States grew from under 10 million in 1970 to 21 million in 1975. (23) Members of the NRB produce 70 percent or more of all the religious broadcasting in the United States and make up about three-fourths of US television ministries.

Two religious television networks in the United States have major international operations - the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) and Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN). Jimmy Swaggart, Oral Roberts, Kenneth Copeland, and other televangelists have also expanded into international broadcasting.

Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) established the first independent religious station in Africa and is planning a South African network. The station, channel 24, was built in the South African black "homeland" state the Ciskei. TBN also has stations in Belize, El Salvador, San Salvador, Italy (9 stations), Switzerland, and a ten million watt station in Nevis St Christopher in the eastern Caribbean, the most powerful television signal in the Western Hemisphere. TBN owns 55 stations in the United States and has 26 US affiliates and is worth altogether about \$75 million.(24)

The TBN Ciskei station has been operating for two years and in early 1989 was broadcasting 50 hours per week. TBN has also been allowed airtime by the South African government to broadcast more programming until TBN's South African network can be built. Most of the TBN programming in the Ciskei (90% of transmission time) comes from the United States. TBN has also begun to produce some local programming. The station broadcasts TBN programmes made in southern California as well as programmes from other American televangelists like Robert



Schuller, James Kennedy, Kenneth Copeland, and Jimmy Swaggart. The one million watt signal of the Ciskei station reaches into the Republic of South Africa, sometimes as far as Port Elizabeth 80 miles away. The station manager estimates that there are over one million blacks and some 10 000 TV receivers within range of the station's transmitter. In the rural area, groups of as many as 25 gather around to watch one television set. The actual audience is approximately 50% black. TBN also provides the national Swazi television network with over 100 hours of programming which run three hours a week on Sunday afternoons. TBN is planning a second station to broadcast on a new second channel scheduled to open soon on the Bophuthatswana commercial network.

The homeland government of the Ciskei and the South African government work in partnership with TBN. The South African ambassador presented the head of TBN, Paul Crouch, to the entire cabinet of the Ciskei and helped TBN with negotiations with the homeland government.(25) The network later flew a delegation representing the Ciskei government to southern California.(26) The South African government presented the TBN station in the Ciskei a special award for their programming during periods of civil unrest.

In 1988 TBN hosted a series of three evangelistic rallies, sometimes with crowds of more than 10 000. The entire cabinet, except for the president of the Ciskei who was out of the country, attended the TBN rally in the homeland capital and government departments and schools were closed. The government also provided transportation for some 85 bus loads of people to attend the evangelistic rally. TBN recorded 6 000 "decisions for Christ".(27)

The Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) is the largest and most ambitious international television network. It is also the fourth largest cable network in the United States. In 1984 the CBN cable network, a separate profit-making company, reached a total of 27 million households in the United States, was carried on 5, 400 cable systems, and began turning a profit in 1984.(28) CBN cable had advertising revenues of \$46,5 million in 1986 and some \$53 million in 1987. The estimated profit was \$6.7 million in 1986 and \$15 million in 1987. (29) CBN owns only one television station outside the United States, in Israeli occupied Lebanon. CBN produces a variety of programming for international distribution: the international "700 Club" (60 shows a year), a syndicated drama series ("Another Life", a soap opera about a Christian family - 875 episodes, running now in Denmark, the Middle East, and South Africa), 102 episodes of animated bible stories ("Super Book" and "Flying House", broadcast throughout Asia, Latin America, Africa, and in Europe). CBN programmes go on the air in about 25 countries: in the Philippines, Taiwan, Japan, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama, Colombia, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Barbados and Trinidad, South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Bophuthatswana, Lebanon (a signal received in Israel, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt), Denmark, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and on cable systems in England and Canada. Except for Middle East Television in occupied Lebanon which CBN owns and operates, CBN either sells, buys, or barter programmes to affiliate stations in other countries.

CBN's annual budget for international broadcasting is eight to ten million dollars, about one sixth of CBN's total operating budget. The money goes into production of programs, dubbing, distribution, and an aggressive follow-up program. CBN maintains "ministry centers" in many of those countries where viewers can telephone or write in. CBN also conducts relief and development activities through the ministry centers, but the budget for this ("Operation Blessing") is separate from the eight to ten million for CBN international broadcasting. According to a CBN press release, since 1978 Operation Blessing "has spent about \$40 million to feed, clothe and warm more than 30 million people".(30)

Operation Blessing imports supplies and distributes food and clothing, often using local evangelical churches as distribution points. In Manila alone, Operation Blessing and the CBN ministry centers have over 400 pastors involved in their programs. CBN works closely with what they term "participating pastors." These pastors are given the names and addresses of people who call into CBN ministry centers. CBN also cooperates with other international evangelical organizations like Youth With a Mission (YWAM). CBN supplied \$72,000 for a YWAM feeding program in Manila. Operation Blessing also provided supplies to the government of Guatemala and to refugees in southern Honduras.

Since 1982, Operation Blessing has cooperated with the US Navy in Project Handclasp. The US Navy delivers supplies, food, and clothing provided by Operation Blessing. In 1988 Project Handclasp involved 75 Navy ships. Since 1983 this joint venture delivered 300 shipments of supplies to ports in South America, Central America, West Africa, and the Far east. (31)

CBN began to pursue international broadcasting aggressively in 1977. Increasing means for distribution of CBN's products-- satellites, home video, more broadcast channels-- have opened new markets. The international broadcasting department of CBN has a staff of between one and two hundred scattered around the globe. CBN has decentralized some of its international production. The animated series was produced in Japan. Arabic language programs are produced in the Middle East. CBN does its Spanish dubbing in Miami, Florida. (32)

## Televangelism after the Sex Scandals

Despite financial and sex scandals, bankruptcy, and fraud, (33) tainted TV ministries continue to operate, though their income and number of viewers has fallen off. (34). Even television ministries not involved in well-publicized sex scandals lost viewers and income: Oral Roberts lost 39% of his audience; Jerry Falwell lost 38% of his. (35) Contributions to Pat Robertson's CBN fell by 30 percent over a two year period.

Jim Baker's PTL network still broadcasts despite bankruptcy and continues to raise money by appealing to their "partners" and viewers despite its founder's disgrace in a sex scandal and indictment for fraud and misuse of funds. The network lost 51% of its audience from February 1986 to February 1988. PTL never devoted much attention to international broadcasting. PTL, renamed Heritage Ministries, suffered a loss of income from \$52.9 million in 1984 to \$24.2 in 1988.

Jimmy Swaggart's sex scandal cost him more than 50 percent of his viewership, which fell from 2,298,000 television households in 1986 to 836,000 in July 1988. Swaggart also lost about 40% of his contributions and many of his United States broadcasting outlets. In early 1989 he was removed from membership in the National Religious Broadcasters.

Before the scandal Swaggart's programming appeared on more than 750 stations in the United States but he lost many of his North American outlets after July 1988, having fallen behind some \$7 million in long overdue bills. But even still, in July 1988, Swaggart still appeared on the air in 23 countries around the world (36) and by November 1988 in almost 30 countries. 37 Swaggart must pay for airtime in the United States but often air time in Africa and Central and South



America and other parts of the world is free or even purchased from US television ministries like Swaggart's or CBN's.

## **The Future of Religious Broadcasting**

The downturn in viewership and contributions to televangelists may be long term because of changing demography in the United States, unless the television preachers develop new audiences. According to fund-raising specialist Gaylord Briley, more than 70% of religious donors are over 50 years old. The religious television market in the United States may also be glutted, especially the pentecostal/charismatic market catered to by ministries like Baker's, Swaggart's, Oral Roberts', and that of CBN. Recent changes in US tax law limiting deductions taxpayers may claim for contributions to charitable organizations may also have contributed to the recent decline of evangelical broadcasting.

But still the number of evangelical radio and television stations and the number of evangelical organizations producing radio and television programming continues to grow steadily, increasing more than 6% from 1988 to 1989. (38). And members of the National Religious Broadcasters are still producing and broadcasting more than 80% of the world's religious radio and television. (39). Some televangelists have begun cultivating younger audiences. CBN has a more demographically favourable audience mix than average (40) and seems to have already recovered its former level of viewer donations during on-the-air fundraising in January 1989.

Satellites and new technology are opening up new markets for radio and television evangelism around the world. Michael Little, the head of CBN's international broadcasting, introduced an ambitious scheme to evangelize the unreached by air-dropping thousands of small folding styrofoam television sets on unevangelized populations. Evangelical radio networks like Trans World Radio have been distributing free radios for years that are permanently tuned to their signal. This scheme for airdropping television receivers is similar.

The styrofoam device, as large as a folded newspaper, runs on solar energy. Mr Little predicted that the device could be fitted with a small satellite receiver and mass-produced in, say, 10 years time for a cost of only \$1 or \$2 a unit. Little asked his audience to imagine a military cargo airplane dropping a crate over Asia, China, Vietnam or Cambodia in 1999. The crate would burst at about 1200 feet

and several thousand light-weight styrofoam television sets would scatter, distributed by the wind over an unreached population. It floats. The instructions for using the device are two simple pictograms. Folded one way it collects solar energy during the day. Folded another way it becomes a receiver for a satellite television broadcast. Changing channels on the device tunes in the program in a different language. (41)

## **Evangelicals and United States Foreign Policy**

Many evangelicals, because of their anti-Soviet apocalyptic theology, tend to uncritically support United States foreign policy goals. Actual day to day collaboration with the Central Intelligence Agency or with other United States government agencies is difficult to document and

prove. In 1976 because of Congressional investigations into illegal CIA activities and the resulting public uproar the CIA adopted a new policy of welcoming information and collaboration with missionaries and churches while not attempting (as in the past) to actively solicit it:

"CIA recognizes that members of these groups may wish to provide information to the CIA on matters of foreign intelligence of interest to the US government. The CIA will continue to welcome information volunteered by such individuals.

It is agency policy not to divulge the names of cooperating Americans. In this regard CIA will not make public, now or in the future, the names of any cooperating journalists or churchmen." (42)

But while the CIA under the Carter administration had to limit its involvement with US missionaries abroad, the number of American missionaries grew by 26% between 1975 and 1985. (43) But by the late 1960s, so-called mainline churches accounted for less than half of the total North American missionary personnel.(44) Increasingly, the protestant mission field has been dominated by conservative evangelical organizations.

Because of the secrecy which veils such operations, it is impossible to make easy generalizations about the nature of the cooperation between missionaries from the United States and the CIA. All that can be known for sure is anecdotal information which sometimes becomes available through interviews and other sources.

It is known, for example, that Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) promised "more than a billion dollars" and missionary personnel to help General Rios Montt's Guatemala set up "model villages" and defeat the rebels. (45) Robertson could not deliver on the billion dollar promise but did send a convoy of trucks into Guatemala with supplies. Later, Robertson's Operation Blessing delivered almost \$2 million of supplies to Guatemala chief-of-state General Oscar Humberto Mejia Victores.(46) CBN, working in concert with the right-wing Catholic organization, the Sovereign Military Order of the Knights of Malta, reportedly supplied millions of dollars of aid to Contra forces during the period when the United States Congress cut off official US aid to the Contra armies.(47) CBN spokesmen deny the charge and insist that all their relief efforts went to aid refugees from Sandinista oppression in southern Honduras. But Robertson, a personal friend of Oliver North's, admitted to having supplied bibles and chaplains to the Contra forces in Honduras(48) and was filmed by a CBN film crew reviewing Contra troops. Even though it violated United States law, the Reagan administration permitted military airlifts for supplies coming from CBN and other private contributors to the Contra forces.(49)

Oliver North, the coordinator of the illegal White House Contra Supply network, is himself a member of the charismatic/pentecostal movement. He attends a charismatic Episcopal church, the Church of the Apostles in Fairfax, Virginia, where between 1,000 and 1,200 people attend Sunday services. North also attends a monthly men's fellowship and bible study at the church and was a member of the Officers Christian Fellowship, a charismatic/pentecostal organization of some 7,000 officers in the United States military. (50) North's network for providing aid to the Contra armies included other charismatic pentecostal organizations like CBN.

One evangelical heavily involved with the Contra troops, Phil Derstine of Gospel Outreach of Bradenton, Florida, admitted to frequent debriefings by the CIA and to close contacts with Oliver

North when Lt. Colonel North was coordinating the secret "private" funding of the Contras. According to Derstine, Oliver North "set up" his logistics for supplying the Contras and that North had worked with other right-wing Christian groups on similar arrangements.( 51) But, because of the information was compartmentalized for the sake of secrecy, Derstine could not identify other cooperating evangelical groups.

Gospel Outreach and a related organization, Christian Retreat, were founded by Phil's father, Gerald Derstine, a charismatic Mennonite pastor opposed to traditional Mennonite pacifism. The Derstine organization has produced pro-Contra propaganda films (a 30 minute television special called "The Truth About Nicaragua") and books ("God, Government, Guns... A Christian Perspective"). Gerald Derstine said in an interview that North, working in the White House, had at one point had even supplied them with helicopters and that the Derstines and their co-workers had slept in Contra command bunkers and had met often with the Contra leadership in Honduras.(52) Derstine also stated that his organization had helped the Contra armies with motivational training and had produced special video-tapes for training the troops. According to the Derstine ministry magazine, by 1986:

With the help of our friends and partners, Gerald Derstine has shipped some 60 tons of food, clothing, bedding, teaching materials and other basic necessities to those caught in this terrible crisis (the Nicaraguan war).

Most importantly, we're intensifying our efforts to spread the Gospel--our most powerful tool against the godless force of communism and our true enemy, Satan. (53)

Most of the right-wing Christian groups that have been (or may be) active partners in American foreign policy operations hold to a similarly strident religious anti-communism.

There is evidence that other right-wing evangelical groups actively work with American government agencies. The following, about an evangelical group in Central America, appeared in a NACLA report:

Early each month, the Executive Director of IINDEF (Evangelism in Depth) in Costa Rica receives a \$5 000 personal cheque from a North American citizen on behalf of a US agency which has never revealed its identity. He (Jean Kessler, ec. director until July 1983) told NACLA that at the request of "a north American Christian" in 1982, he launder the money through his Costa Rican bank account and smuggles it into Nicaragua. He is unconcerned about the source of the money; his only worry is that needy Nicaraguan pastors can continue the work of evangelism in readiness for Christ's return.

IINDEF director, Jean Kessler, claims the support is available for any pastor in need, but one Nicaragua program administrator said it is only "for those pastors who are loyal to the Word, loyal to God," unlike "those who have gotten involved in Nicaraguan politics." Six hundred pastors--about 40% of all the 1 500 active in Nicaragua--participate in this "salary support program." They receive a monthly stipend of 500 cordobas, a 50% boost to their salaries. Some also become part of a network designed to "assist" their theological orientation through pamphlets and seminars.

According to one participant, the themes dealt with in the seminars include Satan's work through the Nicaraguan government and liberation theology, and models of church persecution.



Such pastoral education and orientation programs are a particularly strategic vehicle for political manipulation, given the pastor's pivotal role in the local community. (54)

Some other pastors involved in right-wing American evangelical networks minister to death squads. One example is the Reverend Antonio Sandoval. Sandoval is a participant in Carl McIntyre's far-right New Jersey-based International Council of Christian Churches. Sandoval served as the chaplain for the Treasury Police in Guatemala City, notorious for their death squad activity.

Sandoval said in an interview in 1983 that he preached often from the Book of Proverbs and that "morale" was his greatest concern in his ministry to the Treasury Police.

Morale must be a serious problem in death squads, especially if the members want to continue to live otherwise "normal" lives. A religion that justifies killing suspected "communists" and "subversives" can effectively function to maintain the morale of a government sponsored death squad.

Carl McIntyre's International Council of Christian Churches began as a right-wing fundamentalist alternative to the World Council of Churches (WCC). McIntyre believes the WCC is "promoting communism"(.55) The organization started off in 1941 as a fundamentalist pressure group to demand a share of the free radio time apportioned to the Federal Council of Churches (later National Council) and a quota of chaplains in the armed forces(.56) In McIntyre's eyes the International Council of Christian Churches "was raised up by God to challenge, reject, repudiate, and call God's people out of the WCC."(57)

Now the Council is almost entirely international and quite insignificant in the United States. McIntyre's far-right and separatist ICCC became increasingly isolated.

McIntyre was more successful abroad. The International Council of Christian Churches has regional councils around the world: in the West Indies, British Guyana, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Jamaica, Australia, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Japan, Singapore and Malaysia, Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Burma, and Thailand. The International Council of Christian Churches also has affiliated groups in Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

All of these affiliated churches and councils are right-wing fundamentalists groups obsessed with communism. Some of them are involved in death squad activities. Groups in Latin America and the Philippines are suspect. Other groups in the International Council of Christian Churches, like the old Christian League of Southern Africa, have made right-wing propaganda and attacked progressive church leaders while being secretly funded by state intelligence agencies.(58)

## **On the Year 2000**

While the amount of money raised by U.S. televangelists has declined, the income of several international parachurch organizations has steadily grown. One of these, Campus Crusade for Christ, had an income of \$88.5 million in 1987 and an estimated \$95 million in 1988. World Vision's income increased from \$145.9 million in 1987 to \$156.4 million in 1988.(59) The



religious movement behind the televangelists has continued to grow. And now many evangelical ministries are cooperating in special efforts to reach the entire world by the year 2000.

Evangelical radio stations are working together to provide an opportunity for everyone on the earth to tune in to their version of the gospel by 2000. In 1985 the World Radio Missionary Fellowship, Trans World Radio, and the Far East Broadcasting Corporation (FEBC) began to cooperate in an all-out effort to reach the world by the year 2000. FEBC alone already reaches a potential audience of two thirds of the world's population with 300 program hours a day in some 106 major languages. Other radio stations joined the joint effort. FEBC, HCJB in Ecuador, Trans World Radio (TWR), and ELWA in Nigeria are pooling their efforts for missions research, centralized now in southern California, and for developing programming in every one of the 276 languages spoken by one million or more. "Reaching them means reaching 97% of the world's population," said one to the speakers at the International Plenary session of the National Religious Broadcasters convention in early 1989. This consortium of evangelical radio stations and networks has targeted 30 of the unreached languages for immediate action and has a "hit list" of 63 languages. Already evangelicals are broadcasting in 167 of those 276 languages.

In preparation for the millennium, Campus Crusade for Christ, which is much more than a campus ministry, launched a project called "New Life 2000" designed to reach and "disciple" one billion people by 2000. Campus Crusade, founded in 1952 by Bill Bright in southern California, has devoted much of its efforts to winning over established elites or potential young leaders in colleges and universities. In South Africa Campus Crusade targets the Afrikaans-speaking elite of Pretoria: business leaders, government officials, military leaders, and their families. Campus Crusade is active around the world in some 95 countries.(60) In the United States it runs a military ministry for officers and has prayer groups in the Pentagon and in Congress. A "Christian Embassy" run by Campus Crusade in Washington and New York evangelizes members of the United States government and personnel at the United Nations.(61)

New Life 2000 is an integrated strategy involving training people in the use of Campus Crusade techniques, then the showing the Jesus film, a careful follow-up, and finally discipling new converts in cooperating churches and in small supervised groups. Campus Crusade's "Four Spiritual Laws" explained in simple pamphlets, and the film, together with the planned follow-up make for a well-packaged evangelical pitch. Campus Crusade cooperates with local churches and pastors whom they train to use their materials. In the United States the film is also available as a home video and local churches use it to evangelize from "home churches" and home-based cell groups organized within the often huge (10-20 thousand members) evangelical churches. At one large pentecostal church, the Church On the Way in Van Nuys, California, more than 1,000 couples have been trained to show the video in their homes to friends and neighbours. In 1988 after 350 showings some 429 people were converted and disciplined.(62)

Driven by apocalyptic expectations, and convinced that this is the last generation, North American evangelicals are going to continue to grow and are going to evangelize ever more aggressively. For many evangelicals, especially right-wing fundamentalists and pentecostals, Catholics are not considered Christians. Neither are "liberal" protestants for that matter. Everyone who is not an evangelical in this Anglo-American tradition is fair game for evangelical missions. There is also considerable movement within the evangelical community itself between one church and another. The evangelical movement will remain a growing presence in the world and may

grow quickly in the next 15 years if the goals of the various evangelical groups are even partially reached.

It also seems likely that evangelicals from the United States will continue to involve themselves in United States foreign policy interests and in U.S. intelligence operations. States under siege by popular insurgents will more and more rely on the religious anti-communism preached by American evangelicals. A version of this has been adopted by the white South African government. The C.I.A. and other intelligence agencies will continue to use some forms of evangelical religion in psychological warfare campaigns. Religion may prove to be a crucial weapon in "low intensity warfare."

## Conclusion and a Modest Counter Proposal

There is evidence to suggest that some right-wing evangelical groups are actively participating in psychological warfare operations directed by the United States, or by a right-wing client military regime, or by South Africa. Evangelicals have proved the efficacy of radio and television evangelism. Much of their growth is spared by the vast media apparatus evangelicals have built to evangelize the world. The evangelical movement is by no means monolithic. But the domination of electronic media and money has made it seem like a conservative monolith. In Central America and in South Africa progressive evangelicals are often more popular than right-wing evangelicals who support oppressive regimes. But cut off from American money and media, and often from denominational support as well, progressive evangelicals are less well known and hard pressed to survive.

Often the evangelical movement grows because it offers the only accessible variety of Christianity, available to anyone with a radio. It is also easy to become a pastor. Short term Bible schools provide training. But evangelical domination of radio and television has been, perhaps, the crucial factor. Other protestant churches and the Catholic church have not competed with the evangelicals in broadcasting.

What follows is a modest proposal for a "catholic" alternative to the evangelical domination of the electronic media: To build several high-powered short-wave stations to effectively cover the globe with broadcasting would not be that difficult for a large church or group of "main-line" churches. George Otis, with his High Adventure network, did as much. The main problem is what to offer as programming. The most "catholic" solution would be 24 hours of readings from the bible interrupted, perhaps, with singing of the psalms. Twelve hours of New Testament during the day and 12 hours of Old Testament at night would emphasize the New Testament (because it is shorter and will be read through more frequently) and spread knowledge of the bible and the gospel far more effectively than the programming on most evangelical stations. The mere fact of the existence of a "Radio Bible" would undercut evangelical claims of emphasizing scripture and of being biblically based and would provide an effective alternative to programming from North American evangelicals who for all their talk about the bible often model their programming more on Los Vegas and American television formula than on biblical paradigm.

Such a "Radio Bible" operation would provide the means for anyone with a receiver to hear the words of the bible without interpretation or unnecessary interruption. That would be a very different experience from that of an Asian peasant in 1999 watching Pat Robertson on a styrofoam television set which fell from an airplane. Such a "Radio Bible" might broadcast in tandem with a local station devoted to teachings from scripture, music, and drama. Starting later and with fewer resources, competing Christian voices on the airwaves will need to offer more effective and truer alternatives. The cheapest and possibly most effective way to counter the evangelicals in broadcasting is to offer the simple reading of the texts. Readings could easily and quickly be done in a number of languages, recorded, and broadcast from radio stations with high-power transmitters and tiny staffs and reach a large portion of the potential audience of existing evangelical broadcasting.

Besides offering alternative broadcasting, other churches will need to know what the evangelicals are doing since they are now their most effective competitors. Research is necessary. One can fairly confidently predict that during the next ten to twenty years there will be ever more aggressive evangelical activity inspired by apocalyptic expectations focused on the year 2000.

Because there are thousands of evangelical groups, organizations, and churches there is a need for some sort of institute which would systematically collect a library of ephemeral literature to document the activities of the various evangelical groups operating internationally and make that material available for scholarly research. The material can easily be collected by getting on the mailing list of the organizations to be studied. It would need to be sorted, read for information to be added to a computer data base, and filed. It would then be made available to be read or photocopied by anyone doing research. The Institute could also help coordinate local research into an international network.

Such an institute would ideally be located at a university and might spawn a number of useful publications. The institute would eventually collect an archives of popular apocalyptic literature, ephemeral mailings from religious organizations etc., thereby creating an important collection for anyone who wants to understand the religious turmoil of the late 20th century.

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## *Questions and Comments*

The speaker supplemented his lecture by comments on questions which one should raise in trying to understand the RWCGs and their impact on the media. 1) Why are the programmes popular? 2) What is the message of the programmes?. Most of the programmes claim to be biblical. 3) Is there a disguised political message in a religious programme? 4) What is the underlying world-view? 5) What attitude towards money is reflected in the programme? 6) How does the media activity of the movement function as a business? 7) Whose interests are being served?

The speaker was asked to make some comments on the motivation underlying the media activities of the RWCGs. Is the public aware of the underlying motives? Referring to US right wing groups, the speaker pointed out that programmes reflect an apocalyptic world-view. The intention is to make the Second Coming happen more quickly. Many become mixed up with religious ideas. Some of the key people involved in the programmes have strong financial motivations. The programmes are financed to a considerable extent by public donations. In many cases, the greater part of the donations comes from women above the age of 55 years. The programmes have been successful in attracting the attention of young people. The women who give great donations to religious programmes mostly do not know to whom they are giving the money. The audience that gives money is fairly innocent.



The additional question was asked whether the religious programmes of RWCGs are also supported by contributions of the state, if donations from the public are insufficient. The speaker said that in the case of the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) most of the money comes from corporations. It is possible that money for programmes on Latin America are supported secretly, in an indirect way by the US government.

Comment: It is necessary to pay particular attention to the involvement of the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) in the Ciskei. In the Ciskei, the government is involved in persecuting the Anglican church. Bishop Russell was not allowed to visit his congregations. On the other hand, the Ciskei offers great space to religious programmes of TBN in broadcasting and television. There is also tension between the established churches in the Ciskei and the Ciskei government, in connection with a special Easter service which the government arranges as an alternative to that of the established churches. This service is to give religious sanction to the self-understanding of the Ciskei as a nation. In response to these remarks, the speaker said that the TBN in its programme often attacks the established churches. It is difficult for the churches to respond merely by making use of the same type of media. Christianity, he said, is a religion of the spoken word. The churches have to find a cheaper way of responding to the abuse of religion in the media.

Question: Are the progressive churches really able to compete with the media work of the religious movements? To what extent are the programmes translated into indigenous languages? Is the media work of RWCGs really effective? In reply, the speaker pointed out that the RWCGs dominate the media in the USA. They also control information that is spread through the media, and influence many evangelicals. In this way, they are in a position to curtail the financial support of concerned evangelical groups.

Question: How do the RWCGs organise so as to reach out to the church constituency? The speaker pointed out that in the case of organisations from the USA, an evangelist is usually sent out in advance to establish contacts with local churches, particularly pentecostals.

The question about the effectiveness of the religious broadcasting programmes was raised. In West Africa, some of the programmes are very boring. One does not know how many people listen. The speaker pointed out that the programmes seemed to be effective, and the terminology which they use appeals to the people.

Comment: At the end of the discussion it was noted that the churches should not only react to the media initiatives of RWCGs by trying to compete with them, but develop ways of communication which corresponded with its own understanding of the gospel, and the resources available.



# THE GOSPEL DEFENCE LEAGUE :

## A Critical Analysis of a Right Wing Christian Group in South Africa.

**R A ARENDSE**

### INTRODUCTION

Christian theology functions in two significant ways in society in relation to prevailing ideologies and authority structures. It can either legitimate the dominant ideological order, or it can criticise the latter and call for its radical restructuring and transformation.<sup>1</sup> The focus of this paper is on a *theology of domination* which entrenches the ideological assumptions of the existing apartheid order in South Africa, namely that of Right-Wing Christian Groups (RWCGs)

Trying to define the ideology of RWCGs, especially in a context like South Africa, is like looking for the proverbial "ghost in the machine". You know it is there because you hear the agitated rumblings. Often the ghost makes bizarre appearances which frighten one. At other times its antics appear quite ridiculous and even laughable. You reach out to grasp the ghost for more serious laboratory analysis, but it slips away and may take on other forms. Yet you know, often by sheer instinct, but more often by persistent observation and study that this ghost has a mission which is decidedly not that of 'Casper the friendly ghost'. This mission is hostile and defensive, always eager to control, overpower and dominate.

I cannot pretend to be an expert on the ideology of RWCGs in South Africa. In many cases their ideology defies simplistic definition. But while broader or finer doctrinal distinctions, methods of organization and modes of operation separate some groups, they appear to be essentially united in their theology and ideology of domination. In South Africa this means a justification and legitimation of *racial capitalism* which has proved oppressive and dehumanising to the majority of the people.<sup>2</sup> RWCGs do this in the name and in the defence of 'western' and 'Christian' civilisation. All these groups misuse Christian symbols to further the interests of the state, the interests of reactionary western allies, and of course, their own particular interests.

The phenomenon of RWCGs is not unique to South Africa. Its organisational scope, its strategy and its impact is global. The history of right-wing Christianity is a long one, traceable to the days of (mainly) European colonisation of the 'Third World'. This story has been succinctly outlined

in the recent *Road to Damascus*, an international version of the South African Kairos Document.<sup>3</sup> In Zimbabwe the persistent activity of the religious right has been documented in Paul Gifford's *the Religious Right in Southern Africa*.<sup>4</sup>

My perspective operates from within South Africa. Therefore much of what I say you need to adapt to your own experience and context. I have been invited to address myself to one RWCG in particular, namely the *Gospel Defence League*. Four reasons may be given for this focus. Firstly, from a practical point of view, the readily available publications of the Gospel Defence League facilitate an analysis of its thought. Secondly, the militant activism of the Gospel Defence League demonstrates clearly the ideological orientation of all RWCGs in South Africa. It is necessary to add that the emphases of the Gospel Defence League are not always *equally* characteristic of all the RWCGs, although the League is *typical* of most of these groups. Thirdly, the Gospel Defence League claims to defend Christianity as 'conservative evangelicals'. This claim is made by the majority of RWCGs in South Africa at present. It therefore must be critically evaluated from the perspective of those evangelicals who totally reject both the dominant apartheid order in South Africa and the 'evangelicalism' of RWCGs. Prominent among those who present such a critical evangelical perspective is the group of mainly Black 'Concerned Evangelicals'. In 1986 they formulated their theological position in a document entitled *Evangelical Witness in South Africa: A Critique of Evangelical Theology and Practice by Evangelicals Themselves*.<sup>5</sup> Fourthly, the social history of the Gospel Defence League points directly to it and other such RWCGs being in the service of oppressive state ideology.

The discussion on the Gospel Defence League which follows must be seen as far more than an academic debate. It is rooted in a context where state hegemony has been further entrenched by using the more sophisticated mechanisms within its 'total security strategy'. All effective resistance has been made legally impossible under the current State of Emergency regulations. The movement for liberation by the oppressed continues unabated despite being trampled upon and crushed in every way possible by the state and its supportive allies both within and without South Africa. Time does not permit a more thorough description of this context. Yet it is absolutely vital for really understanding the *abuse* of theology by a group like the Gospel Defence League in South Africa right now. The constituency to which the Gospel Defence League is accountable to or representative of is far fewer than claimed. One needs to ask who does the Gospel Defence League *really* represent? Its character as an essentially reactionary force in South Africa must be recognised especially in view of its potential for enticing members of an embattled white community over to its side.

This paper begins by sketching the socio-historical backdrop of the Gospel Defence League. Next, it gives a description of the Gospel Defence League today which points to its ongoing alliance with state strategy. Then it identifies and analyses some dominant ideological trends of the Gospel Defence League and shows how it uses Christian theology to support its ideology. It further identifies two root sources of the ideology of the Gospel Defence League. Finally the paper concludes with a few challenges which confront us in the light of right-wing Christianity. Throughout, critical comment from a more radical evangelical perspective is provided.

# MULDERGATE

The single event which focused the spotlight on right-wing Christianity in South Africa was the Muldergate Scandal of the 1970s. Muldergate is historically relevant for understanding the Gospel Defence League. Derrick Knight captures the pertinence of Muldergate:

Muldergate was a conspiracy that involved the unauthorised spending of R64 million of public funds, agreed secretly between the Prime Minister, John Vorster, the head of the Bureau of State Security (BOSS), General Van der Berg and the Information minister Connie Mulder. It involved a list of secret projects and operations to be financed. It was drawn up by Mulder's Director of Information, Eschel Rhodie, and included buying into or buying up publishers, newspapers, magazines, and TV news outlets overseas. The list also included lobbying groups, officials, newspaper staff, politicians, business people, academics and church leaders or theologians. The objective was to influence public opinion by presenting a softer image of apartheid while in reality it became more repressive. The conspiracy also involved attempts to undermine opposition groups and especially the churches within South Africa and abroad by denigrating their leadership, their policies and their integrity.<sup>6</sup>

One example of the notorious alliance between the state and right-wing Christianity in South Africa was the secret funding of the Christian League of Southern Africa. This organisation was founded in 1974 by a Methodist minister, Fred Shaw. The Christian League of Southern Africa was paid out R340 000 after a secret contract was signed in June 1979 between Shaw on behalf of the league, and by the then defunct Department of Information.<sup>7</sup> Based on disclosures by Eschel Rhodie, state funding for the Christian League of Southern Africa from tax-payers' money was estimated at over R1 million.<sup>8</sup>

Here was indisputable evidence that the English-speaking churches (such as the Methodists, Anglicans, Presbyterians and Congregationalists) had been targeted for state propaganda. The Christian League of Southern Africa's agenda was primarily to campaign against the SACC which was influential in these churches. It would seek to undermine and even destroy the credibility and work of the SACC both in South Africa and overseas. One item on the Christian League of Southern Africa's 17-project agenda is of particular significance in the Zimbabwean context. The Christian League of Southern Africa merged with the Rhodesian Christian Group, an organisation founded in 1972 by Anglican priest and former missionary in Rhodesia, Father Arthur Lewis. Lewis also became a senator in the Smith parliament in 1976 as a strong supporter of the Smith regime. The South African Department of Information funded the Rhodesian Christian Group through the Christian League of Southern Africa. Another objective was to sustain the white supremacist structures and undermine the integrity of the liberation movements.<sup>9</sup> In 1987 Steve Atkins documented evidence of continuing South African support for RWCGs in Zimbabwe with a view to destabilising the present government.<sup>10</sup>

Although the Christian League of Southern Africa has been discredited, its ghost still lives on. Some of the ardent campaigners of the Christian League of Southern Africa in the 1970s are now prominent leaders of RWCGs in South Africa.<sup>11</sup>



## THE GOSPEL DEFENCE LEAGUE - new name, same old ideology

Dorothy Scarborough was the Cape Town organiser of the Christian League of Southern Africa in the mid-1970s. She now leads its militant successor, the *Gospel Defence League* from a small office in a secluded area in Cape Town. A German migrant resident in South Africa for at least the last 20 years, Scarborough is the wife of a former missionary and dissident Congregationalist minister. In addition to her activities for the Gospel Defence League she also edits *Vox Africana*, a journal aimed at West German Christians. In January last year this journal appeared in English for the first time. It was directed at the English-speaking churches and was designed to discredit liberation theology.<sup>12</sup> Despite the change in name from the Christian League of Southern Africa to the Gospel Defence League, the persisting involvement of people like Scarborough points directly to its ongoing alliance with the state on the one hand, and business and church people locally and abroad on the other. Like many other RWCGs, the Gospel Defence League appears to have become part of the sophisticatedly orchestrated state security strategy 'to win the hearts and minds' of the people over to the state's reformist policy and to eliminate all meaningful opposition.<sup>13</sup> In the words of the State President, P.W. Botha: "South Africa first!". Little else matters.<sup>14</sup> However, in a time of socio-political crisis and instability, the Gospel Defence League is also securing its own political stake in South Africa by deliberately exploiting the fears of white Christians, particularly in the English-speaking churches. Gospel Defence League ideology traces the root-causes of this fear and insecurity to the crippling impact of liberalism, secular, humanism and Marxism which have infiltrated the churches.

The Gospel Defence League articulates its mission as conservative-evangelical and solely Bible-based. Its two stated objectives are to proclaim the Gospel and to oppose those who secularise its message.<sup>15</sup> Yet its covert political and ideological agenda is obvious and will be detailed later.

In addition to editing *Vox Africana*, Scarborough writes a regular newsletter for the Gospel Defence League. Its main content is given to presenting opposing views to any anti-government statements and critiquing comments by more progressive church groups. These newsletters are distributed locally among sympathetic groups. They also come as uninvited mail to many a pastor and church leader! Overseas distribution of the newsletter is mainly in West Germany and the UK. Knight has described the shady connection between the former Christian League of Southern Africa, the Department of Information and conservative West German Christian and political forces, an alliance which remains as relevant for the Gospel Defence League today.<sup>16</sup> The present relationship between the Gospel Defence League and certain West German Christians cannot be detailed here. Much of it still awaits more thorough investigation. However, one example can suffice. The Gospel Defence League has constantly collaborated with conservative Evangelical-Lutheran Dr Peter Beyerhaus who has written denunciations of the Kairos Document and 'Peoples' Theology. He characterises these as presenting a false gospel and their proponents as false prophets.<sup>17</sup> Despite the pretension of being 'Christian' and 'scholarly', the ideological agenda of Beyerhaus is clear. He is an arch-opponent of the WCC and a torch-bearer of *dominant* Christianity which he interprets as "the traditional Christian faith".<sup>18</sup> Knight's exposé on Beyerhaus explicates the latter's ideological commitments which seem to favour the programme of the South African state locally and abroad *against* the struggles of the poor and the oppressed.<sup>19</sup> Beyerhaus



has also become a leading spokesperson for the Gospel Defence League, both in South Africa and West Germany.

Scarborough is known to work with young American missionaries as well. A case in point is her former research and communications manager, Mark Kreitzer.<sup>20</sup> Kreitzer obtained a Master in Divinity in the USA in the field of ethnic missiology before coming to South Africa, "to save the blacks", as he puts it. He has married an Afrikaner and readily admits that he feels more at home in Afrikaner ideology than the liberal English tradition. This is understandable. Kreitzer's Puritan-Calvinist leanings connect easily with the neo-Calvinism undergirding Afrikaner nationalism. He also has strong sympathies with a movement for *Christian reconstruction*. This is a fundamentalist Christian movement which originated in USA. It claims to have found "biblical blueprints" with which to reconstruct a new order in the USA which will become a model for the whole world.<sup>21</sup> Kreitzer's writings for the Gospel Defence League have been pamphlets entitled *What does the Bible say about...?* covering themes such as reconciliation, justice, peace, capitalism, and human rights. In these studies, the author virtually equates the biblical view with that of 'Christian reconstruction'. In step with the agenda of this movement, Kreitzer is more willing to admit that Christians ought to be actively involved in politics.<sup>22</sup> However, this political involvement should not concern itself with the liberation of the oppressed from economic exploitation. On the contrary, such involvement supports western privatisation and effectively rejects any practice which would entail the equitable distribution of wealth. In South Africa as for many parts of the 'Third World', this means not a new order for the oppressed poor but one of further domination by the West.

## THE IDEOLOGICAL CAPTIVITY OF THE DEFENCE LEAGUE

I turn now to an identification and a critical evaluation of some dominant ideological trends in the Gospel Defence League for which it provides theological legitimation. It is here that we begin to glimpse something of 'the ghost in the machine', that is, its ideological character. As indicated earlier, the critical perspective of more radical evangelicals in South Africa will be briefly described where appropriate.

### 1. Antagonistic dualisms

This is how *The Road to Damascus* captures the character of right wing religion throughout the world: "it takes some of the valid distinctions made by Christianity, e.g., between body and soul, material and spiritual, this world and the next, politics and religion, the profane and the sacred, society and the individual and turns them into *antagonistic dualisms*".<sup>23</sup> The Gospel Defence League manifests this feature everywhere in its literature. For example, it argues that the only answer to conflict in South Africa is personal and spiritual salvation. "Only where Jesus Christ rules the hearts and minds of men (sic), can there be peace on earth, goodwill between men (sic), and freedom without fear."<sup>24</sup> It is assumed that salvation from personal sin will automatically change society. There is no need for direct political and social action. Elsewhere it claims: "The fight's not yours. It is God's."<sup>25</sup> What the Gospel Defence League does *not* state here is that submission and passivity are to characterise the oppressed, but never the oppressor who is encouraged

to be politically active to secure his/her domination, and to fight to defend his/her rights.<sup>26</sup> Concerned Evangelicals in South Africa state their rejection of this bi-polar thinking and expose the ideological captivity of the Gospel Defence League which contradicts that of the Bible. In their *Evangelical Witness In South Africa* document they rightly object that dualism "is more a Greek philosophical concept than a biblical concept. The Judeo-Christian faith as found in the Bible is different from Greek dualism. It does not differentiate between the spiritual and the social because Jews live their spiritual life in their social life".<sup>27</sup> In Africa this is not difficult to understand at all. But for those with a dominant Greek and Western understanding of the world and of Christianity, it is a problem.

## 2. Fanatical anti-communism

The Gospel Defence League is fanatical in its opposition to communism, Marxism and socialism which it links together uncritically. 'Communism' is understood in a number of different ways. It is not always clear what is really meant. Most often it is a blanket term for all that is evil. "Communism.... is not so much a political philosophy as an anti-religion. Its basic premise is 'You shall hate the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind, and hate your neighbour as you hate your God'.<sup>28</sup> In South Africa this means that anyone critical of the state is also hostile to God and Christianity. Such criticism is symptomatic of the East-West conflict and not the result of apartheid ideology. This echoes exactly the perspective of the state which sees itself as the last civilised white bastion against communism in Africa. Frank Chikane, currently the General Secretary of the SACC, and who has strong evangelical roots in the Apostolic Faith Mission Church, presents the alternative view:

For me, it is not communists who are the problem, but these Christians who oppress us, exploit us, detain us and torture us even unto death. And here I am speaking for countless blacks in South Africa.<sup>29</sup>

Now it does not follow that the failures of communism or socialism are simply excused. But these must be seen in their proper perspective. For the Gospel Defence League *communism* is little more than a 'red herring' and "a scapegoat" to direct attention away from the evils of western capitalism and to reinforce Western and white domination in South Africa.<sup>30</sup> *Anti-communism* becomes the ideological weapon which the Gospel Defence League uses to discredit liberation theology and liberation theologians. It is the platform from which to attack liberation theology as "anti-Church, anti-Bible and pro-violence".<sup>31</sup> Leaders like Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Dr Alan Boesak, Rev Frank Chikane, Dr Beyers Naude and Archbishop Denis Hurley are dismissed with such scurrilous terms as "treasonable dog-collared men,"<sup>32</sup> "wolves" and "killer priests".<sup>33</sup> The incisive challenges of liberation theology and those sympathetic to liberation theology are entirely ignored.

## 3. Sanctified Capitalism

The Gospel Defence League blesses capitalism unconditionally. This is the flip-side of its categorical rejection of communism and also socialism which is described as "anti-Christian" and incompatible with the Bible.<sup>34</sup> Even a mixed capitalist-socialist system is repudiated. The only right way is "private property oriented, free-market capitalism. There is no other basis for economic growth and political freedom".<sup>35</sup> The Gospel Defence League claims to reject "laissez-

faire capitalism" in favour of "biblical capitalism".<sup>36</sup> In practice, however, this distinction is quite arbitrary. The appropriation of biblical texts to support the practice of capitalism more often reflects the ideological commitments of the Gospel Defence League than that of sound exegesis. For example, its favourite use of Matt. 20:15 to justify free enterprise and the rights of private property can be exegetically refuted.<sup>37</sup> In fact, this text can be argued to provide stronger support for the practice of socialism.

The Gospel Defence League further misinterprets the *root* causes of poverty which the Bible identifies. This misinterpretation follows from its insistence that "property is God's granted privilege and that profits are a reward for obedience" and for "doing what is right".<sup>38</sup> Poverty is subsequently seen as *primarily* caused by "idolatry, ancestor 'reverence', slothfulness, covetousness and general disobedience to God's law".<sup>39</sup> They ignore that the Bible attaches a greater priority to *structural* and *oppressive* causes of poverty. Many evangelicals throughout the world and within South Africa have rediscovered this important biblical emphasis.<sup>40</sup> This false understanding of the major root causes of poverty leads the Gospel Defence League to comfortably reject a 'preferential option for the poor'.<sup>41</sup> In South Africa this inevitably results in the further domination of the rich and powerful over the poor and the powerless.

#### 4. Legitimised militarism

The Gospel Defence League claims to defend scriptural values by 'conservative-evangelical' and 'spiritual' means. This is a lie. There is a concealed ideological agenda at work. The league justifies and even encourages the state military machine. Under the banner of the divine right of the State to use "armed force", the Gospel Defence League provides uncritical sanction for ongoing state brutality and violence against those inside and outside South Africa who remain firmly opposed to its apartheid ideology.<sup>42</sup> The South African Defence Force (SADF) must destroy all those inside and outside the country perceived as "revolutionary organisations which unjustly war against the Republic of South Africa."<sup>43</sup> This is a vote of confidence not only for the SADF, but also for its compatriots in destabilisation, Unita(Angola) and Renamo(Mozambique).<sup>44</sup> The militarist view of the Gospel Defence League and other RWCGs is identical with that of the SADF.<sup>45</sup> *The Road to Damascus* exposes the un-Christian character of this legitimised militarism:

The war against communism is treated as a holy war or crusade. Christian values like loving your enemy, forgiving seventy-times seven times, compassion, solidarity and calling the sinner to conversion are conveniently forgotten once a person or group is labelled 'communist' or 'subversive'.<sup>46</sup>

In its interpretation of Romans 13:1-7, the Gospel Defence League recognises that "all earthly authority is strictly limited" and that "God blesses men (sic) who disobey authority only when they *must* choose between obeying the clear command of God or the self-made law of sinful man (sic)."<sup>47</sup> Yet the South African state's legitimate authority and right to demand unconditional obedience is also argued for because this state is accepted as implementing the moral and civil law of God.<sup>48</sup> It follows, therefore, that to disobey the South African state's authority is unbiblical and wrong.<sup>49</sup> Clearly the Gospel Defence League wishes to justify a particular *kind* of resistance and civil disobedience and to completely nullify others. For example, it was legitimate for the



American colonists, the Boers, the Huguenots and the Dutch to defend themselves against tyranny.<sup>50</sup> However, it is unthinkable to the Gospel Defence League that even *non-violent* resistance to the tyranny of the South African state by the oppressed may be legitimate and God-blessed.<sup>51</sup> The Gospel Defence League reserves the right to interpret what constitutes a legitimate state and when any resistance is legitimate or not. The practical effect of all this is that Rom. 13:1-7 becomes the unconditional sanctifier of the South African state authority and the repudiator of all resistance to it. This has always been the dominant interpretation of the text by the state itself. The abuse of this interpretation has been recognised by many Christians in South Africa, including many evangelicals.<sup>52</sup> Concerned Evangelicals go further by questioning the very legitimacy of the state and accept the right of the oppressed to resist it:

We have experienced the South African regime as a terror to the black majority in South Africa. It has silenced those who peacefully voiced their resentment of the brutality of the apartheid system... To us it is a government that legalises wrongdoing and punishes right doers.<sup>53</sup>

### 5. Limited morality

The Gospel Defence League claims that it is the defender of "biblical" and "Christian" morality which is "the absolute moral law of God" and normative for any society.<sup>54</sup> While initially accepting a *privatised morality* which many evangelicals would insist on, the Gospel Defence League moves beyond this to demand a "legislated morality."<sup>55</sup> This is to counter what it believes are the absolute evils of communism, liberalism and secular humanism in Western societies. On closer inspection, however, the legislated, social morality of the Gospel Defence League is selective and prescriptive in favour of its own dominant moral values rather than the morality of the Bible. Its morality excludes an unequivocal condemnation of the economic exploitation, social and political injustice and institutionalised violence by the state in which many Christians are directly or indirectly implicated. At a significant point the call for a legislated morality rejects even the South African Law Commission Recommendations of a *Bill of Rights* in South Africa.<sup>56</sup> One reason given is that this Bill of Rights is based on the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*,<sup>57</sup> which the Gospel Defence League rejects as "idolatrous" and "humanistic."<sup>58</sup> Divine rights described as God's law are to completely displace any form of "group" and "individual rights."<sup>59</sup>

Without meaning to skirt the complexities within the human rights debate within South Africa, the following critical reflections are necessary. Firstly, the insistence of the Gospel Defence League on exclusive divine rights against "human rights" actually reinforces white domination in the South African context at present. Secondly, there is substance to the criticism that a blanket and an ahistorical application of "human rights" can believe in the possibility of a human utopia, yet ignore the reality of human sinfulness. However, the Gospel Defence League is even more utopian by suggesting that 'divine rights' as it defines them can be imposed on all societies. Thirdly, the Gospel Defence League deliberately ignores the possibility that the application of a Bill of Rights in South Africa might prevent the very abuses of power and control by a dominant minority which human sinfulness and present state structures make inevitable. Fourthly, the exclusivist emphasis of the Gospel Defence League on "the ethic of the right" ignores "the ethic of the good."<sup>60</sup> The "ethic of the good" is the contextualisation of a biblical morality which takes critical account of the human situation, especially that of the weak and dominated in society. And so the notion that what is *good* may have some bearing on what is *right*, a standard mainline position, never oc-



curs to such a mentality".<sup>61</sup> Fifthly this view downplays the free and gracious activity of God in history. It fails to appreciate that in the humanity of Jesus Christ, God affirms the dignity of humanity. In 'the poor man from Nazareth' God demonstrates God's love and primary commitment to those for whom both "the right" and "the good" are often remote realities, namely the poor and oppressed in the world.

Therefore it appears that the Gospel Defence League fears *far less* the humanism of the human rights declaration and *far more* the possibility that it would lose its own rights should the Declaration be taken seriously and implemented in our society. Among the rights demanded are access to military, political and economic power.<sup>62</sup> In South Africa this means the domination of the capitalist ruling classes (mainly white) and the subservience of the working class, (mainly Black). The inevitable vote of this kind of morality is a 'Yes' for western Christian imperialism and a 'No' for the true liberation of all South Africans, especially the black majority.

The above are just some of the dominant manifestations of 'the ghost' of right-wing Christianity in South Africa as they reveal themselves within the Gospel Defence League. Others can and must be identified and critically evaluated.<sup>63</sup>

## THE DEEP-ROOTED SOURCES

We must now ask, "What seems to be the deep-rooted sources of 'the bizarre manifestations' which characterise the Gospel Defence League and groups like it?" Restated, what is the essential nature of the Gospel Defence League which its ideology and theology reveals? Two related sources are proposed here.

### 1. It is anti-God

When it is stated that the Gospel Defence League is *anti-God*, it does not mean that the league does not believe in God. It examines critically the *kind* of God to which it gives its allegiance. The Gospel Defence League maintains that the God it worships and serves is the God of the Bible. It also insists that this God is the God of 'evangelicals', quite literally the God of good news. However, it has been sufficiently demonstrated that this is a *war god* and a *tyrannical god* who favours human destruction and partisan rights more strongly than divine forgiveness, and complete human salvation and liberation. In reality this 'God' becomes more godless than the atheism which the Gospel Defence League criticises communism of. For this is a god who *willingly* dehumanises, dominates and destroys in the very name of the Christian God. Ultimately this god is easily manipulated to act according to prescribed rules and dominant ideological agendas.

This god is not the free Lord of history which the Bible witnesses to and who is concerned to bring true justice, true peace and true liberation for all people. This is not the god of 'good news for the poor', but the god who has good news only for the rich and powerful. This anti-God bodes ill for the people of South Africa.

### 2. It is anti-people

The Gospel Defence League believes that it fights secular humanism. However, its theology and ideology has degenerated into a 'secularisation of the gospel' which shows a 'preferential option for the rich' and tramples on the suffering of those who are sociologically and politically defined as "the people" in South Africa.<sup>64</sup> *The Road to Damascus* pertinently interprets the biased character of right-wing Christianity which exemplifies itself in the Gospel Defence League:

In our countries, the worship of money, power, privilege and pleasure has certainly replaced the worship of God. This form of idolatry has been organised into a system in which consumerist materialism has been enthroned as a god. Idolatry makes things especially money and property, more important than people. It is *anti-people*.<sup>65</sup>

And being anti-people, the Gospel Defence League must be authoritarian, dogmatic and aggressively militaristic. It must demand absolute submission and blind obedience to its own natural and selfish interests.

## CONCLUSION: SOME CHALLENGES

The description and critical analysis of the ideology of the Gospel Defence League has given some shape and form to 'the ghost in the machine'. This ghost has in fact assumed a very concrete body characterised by a variety of related ideological manifestations. Yet it is not these ideological manifestations which are its source of life, but deeper-rooted sources which are completely antagonistic to the God of the Bible, the God of Jesus Christ, and the God of humanity.

The Gospel Defence League exemplifies a fundamental failure 'to love the Lord our God' and 'to love our neighbour'. The meaning of this love within the socio-political and spiritual crisis of South Africa seems clear:

Love means working towards God's plan for the world. It means commitment to eliminating all injustice, oppression and deprivation. Love in this sense is very practical ... (and) cannot be expressed only in 'spiritual' concerns.<sup>66</sup>

In particular relation to right-wing Christianity those of us who seek a more liberative tradition do not revel in feelings of euphoria that we are without fault. Rather we are confronted with some definite challenges. Three of these can be mentioned. Firstly, we must continue thorough research and critical analysis of RWCGs. Its abuse of theology (especially 'evangelical' theology) to serve the state and its own interests must be fully exposed. Secondly, careful and prayerful reflection on the Bible and a critical analysis of our own situation of oppression and domination must take place. Theological responses should be formulated to inform our own Christian action as well as to address RWCGs themselves. Thirdly, in the power of the Spirit of God at work in our moment of history, we must actively engage ourselves in the struggles of the poor and the oppressed, both for their and our own complete liberation from all forms of sin.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Cf Gunther Wittenberg, "King Solomon and the Theologians", *Journal of Theology For Southern Africa* (hereafter *JTSA*), No.63, p.16; Gregory Baum, *Religion and Alienation - A Theological Reading of Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), pp 102-103.

2. Especially since 1948, race and capitalism have always been inseparable partners which has resulted in ongoing domination and oppression; cf. James R. Cochrane, *Servants of Power - The*

Role of English-speaking Churches in South Africa: 1903-1930, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987), pp. 39. 150-163; Lebamang Sebidi, "The Dynamics of the Black Struggle and its implications for Black Theology", in I.J. Mosala and B.Tlhagale (eds.), The Unquestionable Right to be Free, (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1986), pp. 1-35, esp. pp. 31-32.

3. The Road to Damascus - Kairos and Conversion, A document signed by Third World Christians from seven nations: South Africa, Namibia, South Korea, Philippines, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala, (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1989), pp. 1-6.

4. Paul Gifford, The Religious Right in Southern Africa, (Harare: Baobab Books and the University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1988), esp. pp. 44-82.

5. Evangelical Witness in South Africa, pp. 9-10.

6. Derrick Knight, Wolves in Sheeps' Clothing, Part One. Within South Africa, A Briefing Paper, Feb. 1989, p. 2; Also his Beyond the Pale - The Christian Political Fringe, (Lancashire: Caraf Publications Ltd, 1982).

7. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

8. Sunday Express, 5 April 1981.

9. Knight, pp. 70-71, 85-89.

10. Steve Atkins, "Zimbabwe leaders fear religious right", in National Catholic Reporter, 31 July 1987, and "Is religious freedom misused in Zimbabwe?", Moto, No. 59, p. 9.

11. For example, Edward Cain, former head of publications of the CLSA and editor of its newspaper, Encounter, is now director of two RWCGs: the United Christian Action and Signposts Publication and Research Centre, cf. Knight (1098), pp. 9-11, 18.

12. Vox Africana, Vol. 1. No. 1.

13. See Crisis News, No. 24, pp. 8-10 for a helpful synopsis of the goals, scope, and structure of the National Security Management System (NSMS).

14. Quoted in the Cape Argus, 3 July 1989.

15. Vox Africana, p. 7.

16. Knight (1982), pp. 127-133.

17. Peter Beyerhaus, The Kairos Document - Challenge or Danger to the Church?, (Cape Town: Gospel Defence League, 1987); and Theology as an Instrument of Liberation, (Cape Town: Pro Fide Defendenda, 1988).

18. Beyerhaus (1988), p. 34.

19. Knight (1982), pp. 23, 72, 94-95, 130-132, 140.

20. Kreitzer has since left the Gospel Defence League and joined up with the right wing Centre for Reformed and Contemporary Studies (CERCOS). The reasons for this change are worth investigating.

21. For example, Gary North, Inherit the Earth! Biblical Principles for Economics, (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987), esp. pp.181-194; cf. Paul Gifford, Theology and Right Wing Christianity, EDICESA paper, pp. 6 - 7.

22. "What Does the Bible say about the Legitimate State?", p.4.

23. Road to Damascus, p.14.

24. Gospel Defence League Newsletter, May 1988.

25. *Ibid.*, July 1988.

26. cf. "Legitimised militarism" above.

27. Evangelical Witness in South Africa, pp. 9-10.

28. Gospel Defence League Newsletter, July 1988.

29. Frank Chikane, No Life of My Own - (Braamfontein: Skotaville Publishers, 1988), p.120.

30. Road to Damascus, p.15.



31. Gospel Defence League Newsletter, February 1988.
32. *Ibid.*, Sept. 1987.
33. *Ibid.*, June 1988.
34. "What does the Bible say about Socialism?", pp.1,4.
35. "What Does the Bible say about Capitalism?", p.3.
36. *Ibid.*, p.4.
37. *Ibid.*, p.1.
38. *Ibid.*, p.2.
39. "What Does the Bible say about the oppressed poor?", pp.1-2.
40. For example, M. Paget-Wilkes, Poverty, Revolution and the church, (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1981); W. Scott, Bring Forth Justice (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980); R.J. Sider, Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger, (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1977); Evangelical Witness in South Africa, op. cit.
41. "An affirmation of biblical truths in the South African situation", distributed at the conference of Christian Action, August 1988.
42. "What Does the Bible say about the Legitimate State?", p.1.
43. "What does the Bible say about peace?" p.2.
44. cf. Frontline Fellowship News, Vol.3, 1987, Frontline Fellowship is a notorious partner of the Gospel Defence League and intensely militaristic.
45. "The State's origin, responsibilities and rights", SADE publication.
46. The Road to Damascus, p.15.
47. "What does the Bible say about Civil Disobedience?" pp.3-4.
48. "What does the Bible say about the Legitimate State?" p.
49. "...Civil disobedience?" pp. 2,4.
50. "...the Legitimate State?" p.
51. "...Non-Violence?", pp.3-4.
52. cf. J.A. Draper, "Humble Submission to Almighty God and its Biblical Foundation", Contextual Exegesis of Romans 13:1-7, in JTSA, No.63, pp.30-38; D. Walker, "Evangelicals and Apartheid: An Inquiry into some Predispositions", in JTSA, No.67, p.54; Evangelical Witness in South Africa, pp.15-18.
53. Evangelical Witness, p.17; cf. C. Villa Vicencio, "Theology, Law and State Illegitimacy - An Agenda for Theologians and Lawyers", in JTSA, No.63, pp.3-15.
54. A Manifesto for Christians in Southern Africa, published by The Conference for Christian Action (1989) and supported by the Gospel Defence League.
55. "What does the Bible say about Human Rights?", p.4.
56. South African Law Commission, Working Paper 25, Project 58: Group and Human Rights (1989); cf. Gospel Defence League Newsletter, June 1989.
57. "...Human Rights?", p.1.
58. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations.
59. "...Human Rights?", p.1.
60. Samuel S. Hill and Dennis E. Owen, The New Religious Political Right in America, (Nashville, Tennessee: Abington, 1982), pp.39-40.
61. *Ibid.*, p.39.
62. cf. Signposts Vol.7, No.2, p.2; *Ibid.* Vol.7, No.2, p.2.
63. These include its authoritarianism; dogmatism; biblical fundamentalism; anti-ecumenicalism, and its strong patriarchy.



64. The Road to Damascus, p.35.

65. *Ibid.*, p.11.

66. Paget-Wilkes, p.75.

## *Questions and Comments*

**Comment:** A delegate commented that the Gospel Defence League (GDL) consists only of 5 to 6 people, and that it is a 'cottage industry' run from a suburban home. The funding pattern of the GDL is similar to other RWCGs. A small group of businessmen sends unsolicited monthly cheques to Scarborough. He had heard from Ed Cain of United Christian Action that behind these businessmen is the SAn state, the Bureau of Information.

**Question:** Is fear not the root of the RWCGs? The speaker answered that the fear of losing power or wealth was always there. An example was Ed Cain, who lost a bookshop in Mozambique. But the RWCGs in turn exploit the fears of others.

**Comment:** One has to take account of the strong racist element in the activities of the movements. Dorothea Scarborough has a German background; allegedly her parents were closely to the National Socialist ideology. In the Aida Parker Newsletter, one finds a strong support for Israel, white South Africa and white America.

**Comment:** A delegate affirmed that there is a link between evangelism and nationalism. The major rise of American evangelism came in the wake of the Vietnam debacle. Another delegate concurred, but pointed out that nationalism was only one of the factors used by RWCGs.

**Comment:** A spirit of racism operates in the RWCGs. A programme of TBN in the Ciskei was cited in evidence, where it was said that Simon of Cyrene had carried the cross of Jesus. Africans were thus asked to carry the cross and submit to God's will in this way, while white people are dominant because they are the chosen people. The question was whether the GDL operated within church structures or outside. The speaker replied that the GDL has no congregations. The members within different churches act as carriers of the message of the GDL. Dorothea Scarborough belongs to a dissident congregation, which has broken away from the United Congregational Church. Right wing leaders call on members of 'left' churches to leave and join more conservative churches.

**Comment:** More time should be spent on considering how RWCGs make use of existing church structures. A delegate referred to an experience in Angola, where he had taken a young person into his car, who spoke of the Underground Church. This person gave him literature from Europe, which described the Underground Church in the Soviet Union as a model for church activities in other countries. He also commented on the exploitation of the economic needs of the churches by RWCGs. World Vision penetrated into Angola one month after the invasion by the SADF, which had uprooted 200,000 people. World Vision then offered help, on condition that they brought a TV team of 50 people. They promised that they would be able to collect \$10 million in one day for refugees. At that time, the Angolan government refused World Vision permission. However, in 1988, the same government received a top representative of World Vision who promises financial aid. Government representatives argue that the economic situation is so difficult that they have to accept aid even from such organizations. He raised the need for further study of RWCGs in Angola.

A participant spoke about the vicious onslaught of RWCGs on different communities. He insisted that part of the Plan of Action would have to be a programme of education for the simple people about the RWCGs.

**Comment:** A delegate commented on a remark in the lecture that RWCGs worship a God who is a war-god. It was pointed out that this concept of God is found in the Bible, in the Old Testament particularly. One therefore could not say that RWCGs distort the Bible, and use it for their own purposes. It is true that they select from the Bible what fits their purposes. However, progressive Christians do the same in a different way. It is necessary to look at the methodological issues in interpreting the Bible.

**Comment:** The practice religious freedom in independent African countries is not without problems. RWCGs exploit the openness of these countries. Some of these movements come into these countries as churches, others use existing churches. They exploit the financial needs of the churches, and use funds to exert influence, e.g. by training ministers of AICs.. They attract young people by giving them a role to play.

**Comment:** Attention has to be paid to the link between the RWCGs and the security apparatus in SA. The RWCGs have access to good intelligence. For example, Dorothea Scarborough knew about the launch of an Association of Committed Theologians early enough to publish a smear pamphlet before the launch.

# WHERE HAVE WE FAILED AS CHURCHES

## A PASTORAL APPROACH PANEL

### *Dr. Mazunda*

Dr. Mazunda spoke about the weaknesses in the churches in Malawi. 1) The economic situation of the church is that the churches are financially dependent on their Western partner churches. These churches in many ways support the status quo. As a result, the churches often remain silent, and do not expose injustices. 2) The churches have not made enough effort to educate their church constituency, in order to counter RWCGs. 3) In the Church Councils, there are members who insist on a spiritual focus only. There is an urgent need for a more holistic interpretation of the Gospel. Furthermore, there is a need to give leadership roles to young people.

### *Dr. Isaak (Namibia)*

Dr. Isaak said that the Namibian churches are outspoken in their witness against oppression. They represent the movement of the people. They are the voice of the voiceless. However, there are three areas of need. 1) Educational ministry: RWCGs offer bible study courses which are open to lay people. Theological training in the churches needs to be aimed at the laity. 2) Pastoral counselling ministry: The mainline churches have to focus more on person-to-person encounters, especially in cases of death and sickness. 3) Life-sustaining ministry: African pastors are mostly highly trained, and work very hard, but receive low salaries. In many cases they cannot sustain their families. This creates dissatisfaction which opens them up to RWCGs.

### *Rev. Lumbama (Zambia)*

Rev. Lumbama raised the following five points. 1) The church is very often failed to allow their members to announce their faith publicly. 2) Churches do not allow for enthusiasm in their services. 3) There is a lack of opportunity for self-expression and participation. People do not get enough chances to share their insights. Young people do not make their own contributions. 4) Churches do not use modern communications well. 5) Churches depend too much on finances from abroad. He also noted that if we hear that churches are silent, this must be considered in the light of the context they are living in. There can be situations in which a church finds it very difficult to speak out openly.



## **Rev. Mugweru (Kenya)**

1) Churches have not studied RWCGs in Kenya. Churches have not analysed the root causes of problems affecting people sufficiently, and offer only relief. RWCGs came to Kenya in 1974 and 1980, in times of drought and crisis. 2) The Christian Council of Kenya have a legal right to be consulted by the government when RWCGs want to register. They do not make sufficient use of their ability to stop RWCGs. 3) Churches have not produced enough information and have not researched enough about RWCGs. EDICESA should assist the churches in East Africa to launch research projects. This need is particularly strong in view of the influence of Reinhard Bonnke in East Africa. He is given the longest air-time on radio ever given to an organisation.

## **Questions and Comments**

**Comment:** Pastors should not consider themselves to be the voice of the people. They should rather empower the people to speak for themselves.

**Question:** A delegate wanted more information about the churches' stand in Kenya, when some of the bishops were prosecuted. In reply, Rev. Mugweru referred to changes that had been made in the Kenyan constitution with regard to the electoral process. Secret ballot was replaced by a system where people vote by queuing behind political leaders. 1,200 pastors meeting in 1986 protested against these changes. As a result, some churches pulled out of the Council, since they did not want to criticise the ruling party. Some church leaders were harassed after this incident. In the long run, however, the support the churches obtained got stronger, with 13 churches joining the Council -- more than had left.

**Comment and Question:** In SA, the African Independent Churches have more members than the mainline churches. Do AICs in other African countries play any role in the consideration of the churches. In response, Rev. Lumbama pointed out that in Zambia, a number of AICs are members of the Christian Council.

A delegate spoke about the burdens of the local pastors in the mainline churches. In the case of emergencies such as drought, they are expected to provide help and relief. While they are doing this, other churches penetrate their flocks, and try to win over members. He also said that the mainline churches have provided education for many members. When these people have completed their education, they get jobs in high places. Many of them become corrupt. Unless church structures and communication are improved, this problem will persist.

**Question:** Are the mainline churches not helping RWCGs to spread their theology. For example, ministers are serving in the police and army in South Africa. The youth are challenging the church not to allow people to be members who are engaged in oppressive activities.

**Comment:** The churches are silent because of fear, of self-interest and lack of unity. This can be illustrated by the divisions in the churches in Swaziland -- three ecumenical organisations existing in parallel, a League, a Conference and a Council of Churches.

**Comment:** The RWCGs have tried to fill the gap left by the mainline churches. In Angola, the churches are not silent, but do not always use the media. They are rather concerned to speak first to the people involved, before challenging them in the media. He also pointed out that the churches are in a weak position in relation to the prosperity cult. They need to teach the youth a Christian position on wealth, prosperity and work.

**Comment:** A delegate spoke of his experience of RWCGs acting on African Independent Churches in Liberia. Here, Kenneth Hagin has set up a Bible school, which an average of 400 students attend each Saturday. Most of them come from AICs. Thus the RWCGs gradually change the

theology of the AICs, so that they lose their African heritage, and become replicas of US organisations. The mainline churches should offer alternative theological education to the AICs.

Comment: There is a crisis in the mainline churches, caused by the transition from an old to a new theology. The churches have not yet found a new theology, while already abandoning the old. This creates a feeling of insecurity.

Comment: It is not satisfactory to speak about the restructuring in the churches, without reference to the role of women in the churches needs to be examined. The restructuring of churches should start through discussion at the local level.

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#### Focus On The New Right

and the bibliography to Paul Gifford's *The Religious Right In Southern Africa*. Others interested in the subject are encouraged to adapt and expand it further, and to send a copy of any such expansion to EDICESA.

# THE TIME HAS COME TO TAKE A STAND

## Christians Condemn the sins of those who oppress, exploit, persecute and kill

### The Road to Damascus

A document signed by Third World Christians from seven nations  
Institute for Contextual Theology, Johannesburg 1989

"Christian faith has now been introduced into the political conflict. Both oppressor and oppressed seek religious legitimisation. Both sides invoke the name of God and of Jesus Christ and Christians are found on both sides of the political conflict in most of our seven countries." This statement is to found in a theological document entitled *The Road to Damascus*. It describes the situation of the churches and the challenges to the christian faith in the following seven Third World countries :

South Africa, Namibia, South Korea, Philippines, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala. Hundreds of Christians have been involved in the consultation and research of which the findings have been summarised in the document. Thousands of Christians have signed the document and committed themselves to the struggle for liberation by virtue of their understanding of the Christian faith. The Churches in the seven countries have a number of experiences in common:

1. In all seven countries the majority of the people experience extreme repression and exploitation.
2. Christians in these countries are to be found on the side of those power groups who are responsible for the system of oppression, as well as on the side of those who resist repression.
3. With the exception of South Korea the gospel has reached these countries through missionaries in the process of their subjection to colonial powers which have a Christian tradition. The gospel has been interpreted and proclaimed primarily from the perspective of people who share the position of the privileged and the powerful.
4. A theology from the perspective of the victims of oppression has developed in these countries. It emphasises that God is on the side of the poor, the oppressed and the persecuted.
5. The forces of oppression feel threatened by the theology of liberation and are promoting right wing religious groups which give theological legitimisation to their abuse of power.
6. A considerable part of the constituency of most of the churches in these countries tries to maintain a neutral position in the struggle for justice and liberation. It argues that injustice occurs on all sides. The church in their view has to fulfil a mediating role in the conflict and therefore should not get involved in politics.

Against the background of this situation the *Road to Damascus* addresses the following issues:

Is the God involved by both sides the same God?  
Is God on both sides? If not on whose side is God?  
What has been revealed to us by God in Jesus?

The title *Road to Damascus* indicates the objective of the document. When Saul set out from Jerusalem to Damascus to persecute the followers of Christ, he needed his eyes to be opened through a conversion in order to realise that he was persecuting the very God whose cause he meant to defend. Similarly the Christians who support of oppressive regimes and accuse those who stand for justice and freedom, are called to conversion in order to realise that they are the heretics. It is not the Christians who are involved in the struggle for national liberation who are heretics, but those who support the right wing oppression.

The *Road to Damascus* outlines the historical and political roots of the conflict. It affirms the faith of the poor and oppressed Christians, it condemns the sins of the oppressors who persecute, kill and exploit people. It calls for conversion and invites Christians to take a clear stand for truth and justice even if this implies persecution on the part of the oppressors.

The structure and style of the *Road to Damascus* is largely determined by the conflict situation in which it has its origin. It aims at refuting the accusations that are raised against Christians who are involved in national liberation struggles. These accusations comprise heresy and blasphemy. The document spells out what heresy, apostasy, blasphemy and idolatry mean in terms of the gospel.

The need to address the common features of the experiences gained by committed Christians in the struggle in the different countries, makes it necessary to find simple definitions. Underlying the document is the concern to show that the people attacking the theology of liberation are guilty of the very offences of which they accuse their enemies. This concern entails the danger that the authors of the *Road to Damascus* are seen as self-righteous people. They are aware of this danger. Therefore they state:

"All of us who profess to be followers of Jesus of Nazareth are in continuous need of conversion. While we clearly see the idolatry, the heresy, and the blasphemy of others, we ourselves need to search our own hearts for remnants of the same sins and for signs of triumphalism, self righteousness, dogmatism, rigidity, intolerance and sectarianism. There should be no place in our hearts for any kind of complacency."

The *Road to Damascus* emphasises that the reign of God announced by Jesus pertains not merely to the next world, but begins in this world and comprises all aspects of life.

The reign of God begins in this life but stretches out beyond this life. It is transcendent and eschatological without being unconcerned about the problems and the suffering of the poor in this life.

The authors of the document consider the crisis which has arisen in the churches through the conflict between the rich and the poor to be a *Kairos*, "the moment of truth", a time for decision, a time of grace, a God-given opportunity for conversion and hope."

The term *Kairos* has also found a place in the sub-title: *Kairos and Conversion*. The key role as signed to the concept of the *Kairos* reflects the infants of the South African *Kairos Document on the Road to Damascus*. The South African *Kairos Document* has its origin in the South African conflict situation and in the challenge which the apartheid system presents to the Christian faith in that country. In the *Road to Damascus* the horizon is widened. It becomes clear that the oppressive forces that operate in the South African situation are at work also in other Third World countries and are equally subversive to the life of the churches and to the life of society by trying to make use of a distorted theology in order to legitimate structures and practices of oppression.

In the South African context it is significant to note that the *Road to Damascus* was released to the public and to the churches and their members in particular under circumstances which could not be foreseen when the research and consultation process started. At present a need for negotiations between the apartheid regime and the organisations which resist and combat the apartheid system is being emphasised in Western countries as well as Southern Africa. The *Road to Damascus* throws light on the enemy with whom the forces and the people engage in the struggle for the liberation of South Africa are expected to negotiate. Its enemy is not merely the present South African regime. It is the South African regime in its alliance with a network of oppressive forces in a variety of Third World countries that operate according to one and the same pattern, that destroy human life on a massive scale and that enjoy the support of the Western countries and try to use the churches and a distorted interpretation of the Christian faith for their oppressive purposes.

The *Road to Damascus* calls for the commitment and the solidarity of the Christians in the different countries in the struggle for the truth of the gospel and for national liberation: "Solidarity is not optional if we are to promote the cause of God in the world. We call on fellow Christians in the Third World, in industrialised capitalist countries and in socialist countries to build a network of exchange and cooperation."