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Die Suid-Afrikaanse Verdedigingsbegroting vir 1975 is met R250 miljoen vermeerder tot die geweldige totaal van R948 miljoen terwyl duisende Swartmense in uiterste gebrek leef. / The South African Defence budget for 1975 increased by R250 million to a massive total of R948 million and this while thousands of Blacks live under starvation conditions.

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Die Swart man hoop vir ware lewensbevryding in Suid-Afrika. — N. Mokgosi. / The Black man hopes for genuine living freedom in South Africa. — N. Mokgosi.

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# DIE SENDING VAN DIE WERELD AAN DIE KERK

Die wêreld het 'n belangrike sending aan die kerk en die kerk moet tot die realiteit van die wêreld bekeer word. Die historiese gebeure, die politieke gebeurtenisse, die sosiale aktiwiteite, in een woord, die wêreld probeer om die aandag van die kerk op sy behoeftes, probleme en worsteling te fokus. Aan die ander kant is die kerk tradisioneel geneigd om die probleme van die samelewing te ignoreer of te vermy en gevolglik moet hy oortuig word, ja bekeer word om homself ten opsigte van die wêreld te reorienteer. Feit is dat Jesus Christus vlees geword het in die wêreld en dat God besig is om in die geskiedenis van die wêreld te arbeid. Dit was altyd 'n versoeking vir die kerk om die worsteling en lyding van die wêreld te ignoreer en om toevlug in die heiligdom van die 'bowe aardse' te soek. Maar die sending van die wêreld is om die kerk terug te roep na God se wêreld, na sy taak as liggaam van Christus in die sweet en bloed van die woelinge van die wêreld!

Daar kom talle stemme van die politieke, sosiale en arbeidswêreld na elke Christen in Suid-Afrika om sy aandag daaraan te gee, om daarmee te worstel en om te probeer om die desperate probleme van ons samelewing op te los.

Die Bruinmense het bv. duidelik deur middel van hulle verkiesing en die standpunte wat deur hulle leiers ingeneem is, gesê dat hulle ware mense is. Hulle stel nie daarin belang om hulle in onderdanigheid en in navolging van die blankes op te stel nie omdat hulle al meer daarvan oortuig is dat die status van die 'nie-blankes' die vrug van ongeregtigheid en dwingelandy is. Hulle het die punt in die geskiedenis bereik waar hulle die beheer van hulle eie bestemming in hulle gemeenskaplike vaderland wil uitoefen. Die gevolgtrekking waartoe geraak word op grond van die Suid-Afrikaanse politiek, ekonomie en ontwikkeling, is dat dit lei tot die skepping van groter rykdom vir die minderheid en groter armoede vir die meerderheid.

Mense wat hard werk vir die ontwikkeling en verandering en wat desperate pogings aanwend om 'n klimaat van détente tot stand te bring, sal misluk en hulle sal in plaas daarvan hewige frustrasie en verwarring veroorsaak omdat hulle nie die wortels van

die kwaad in ons samelewing aandurf nie. Dit is nou eers dat die sogenaamde nie-blanke begin om te besef dat sy onderontwikkeling, sy armoede en gebrek aan menseregte maar alleenlik die neweprodute van die ontwikkeling van die magtige ryk man se samelewing, welwese en weelde is. Bevryding sal alleenlik kom as die ontwikkelingsmite vernietig word, die ou verhouding van oorheersing en gediensdigheid verbreek word en die mens beheer van sy eie bestemming oorneem. Dit sal ons samelewing van vervreemding en gediensdigheid bevry. Geringe veranderinge sal nie slaag nie. Baie mense in die eerste gloed van hulle entoesiasme oor détente wil alles daarvoor gee en 'alles' verander. Inderwaarheid is hulle ywer egter oppervlakkig want hulle wil dit slegs doen so lank as wat niks fundamenteel verander nie.

Ons het een voorbeeld genoem waar die Bruinmense in hulle 'wêreldse' bestaan 'n kreet na die Christene en hulle kerk laat uitgaan om kennis te neem van, en betrokke te raak in hulle stryd as mense, as die skepping van God wat deur hom bemin word. Die kerk moet ook in sy kritiese besinning oor God en homself verander om met sy roeping in die wêreld besig te wees.

### **wat is ons beeld van God en die kerk?**

Die begrip God het feitlik van ons wetenskaplike en tegniese wêreld verdwyn en die 'moderne wetenskap' het geen plek meer vir God gelaat nie. Gevolglik het die moderne ontwikkeling as 'n soort negatiewe tipe 'teologie' opgetree om ons te toon wat God *nie* is nie. God is nie „die God van die leemtes” nie; (die God wat ons bybring om te verklaar wat ons andersins nie kan begryp nie). Dit het veroorsaak dat ons ons begrip van God ook op ander gebiede heroorweeg en daar het ons besef dat God nie gesien moet word as „die godsdienstige God” nie, (die God wat ons vir een deel van die lewe afsonder); of „die oorlogsgod” nie, (die God wat oorlog en geweld goedpraat); of „die paternalistiese God” nie, (die God wat die rassistiese, oorheersende en uitbuitende dwangstruktuur van outoriteit heilig).

Die positiewe vrug van hierdie ontwikkeling is dat ons tot die besef gekom het dat God hom in historiese situasies geopenbaar het. Die wese van die Christendom bestaan in die historiese verlossing en bevryding van Jesus Christus in hierdie wêreld. Die fokus moet gevolglik op die samelewing van die mens en sy worsteling wees.

Hierdie verandering van rigting van die metafisiese (bowaardse) na die historiese, van die wêreld waar die mens gesien word as 'n objek in die politiek en die samelewing, na een waar die mens as 'n persoon gewaardeer word, sal fundamentele gevolge vir die kerk tot gevolg hê. Die basiese vraag wat nie ontwyk kan word nie, sal wees: „Kan die kerk dieselfde bly terwyl die wêreld anders geword het?”

Die kerk was altyd as 'n *heiligdom* beskou. Dit was as 'n toevlugsoord in 'n vyandige omgewing beskou om die Christene te beskerm en te voed. Die kerk is as 'n heilige ark met reddingsfasiliteite beskou wat nie so maklik op 'n ander plek bekom kan word nie en sy taak was om sy unieke rykdom vir hulle, wat gewillig is om daarby aan te sluit, beskikbaar te stel.

Die nuwe beeld van die kerk is nie dié van 'n heiligdom nie, maar dié van 'n *teken*. Dit bied 'n radikale nuwe uitgangspunt vir die begrip van die kerk en sy sending. Die kerk as 'n teken dui iets anders as homself aan en hy het 'n impak buite homself in die wêreld. Anders as 'n heiligdom is die kerk as 'n teken nie 'n omheining nie, maar 'n blootlegging; hy verrig sy taak nie deur insluiting nie, maar deur kommunikasie, nie deur anneksasie nie, maar deur representasie.

Teken as 'n begrip vir die kerk skep 'n beeld van diens, terwyl heiligdom een van afsondering voorstel. Die eerste begrip projekteer die gedagte van koöperasie; die tweede dié van wedywering. Die kerk as 'n heiligdom beskou, probeer altyd die werklike belangrike taak en funksie vir homself te vind. Die kerk as 'n teken gaan by homself verby en toon God se werking in die wêreld aan. Die een beeld is geneig om oop teenoor die wêreld en sy historiese proses te wees, en die ander is geneig om die wêreld en sy geskiedenis te verloën.

Inbegrepe in die spesifieke idee van die kerk as 'n teken is dat die kerk gereed is om 'n doel te dien wat groter en belangriker as hyself is en om nie slegs vir sy eie instandhouding en finansiële wins te werk nie. Die sending van die kerk is nie gelyk te skakel met die sending van God in die wêreld nie; God se werk is eerder 'n alles-omvattende krag van verlossing en bevryding en die kerk het sy rol wat hy daarin moet speel.

Die beklemtoning van die kerk as 'n teken is nie om mense na sy gedagtegang en sy strukture te bekeer nie, maar eerder om vir God se reddende liefde in die wêreld te getuig en daarmee saam te

werk. Getuienis is gevolglik nie met die oog op bekerings vir die kerk nie, maar bekerings is vir die doel van getuienis, en die beklemtoning is nie op beslissings vir die kerk nie, maar op dissipels van Christus in sy werk.

### „'n kerk wat sy greep verloor het...”

Dit alles het ernstige gevolge nie alleenlik vir die kerk nie, maar ook vir die samelewing as 'n geheel. Ons moet van 'n besitlike, statusbewuste outoritiewe stand na 'n nederige en koöperatiewe diens, waarin ons onself weggee, verander. Die kerk moet nie op 'n hierargie gefundeer word nie, maar op 'n broederskap; deelgenootskap en nie paternalisme nie, is sy egtheidstempel. 'n Samelewing wat homself as 'n heiligdom beskou, sal die klem op sukses, getalle, inkomste, ens., plaas. Die kerk en samelewing wat by hulleself verby kyk, sal op dit wat relevant is, konsentreer. So lank as wat 'n teken kommunikasie bewerkstellig, hoef dit nie oor sy grootte, sukses, of wat dan ook al, bekommerd te wees nie.

Dit was gewoonlik die geneigdheid van die kerk om homself by die doelwitte en belange wat deur die samelewing nagejaag word, aan te pas en hy het gewoonlik slegs teen sekere euwels stelling ingeneem. Die kerk moet egter nie net dit wat in die samelewing verkeerd is, oorweeg nie, maar hy moet eerder probeer om deel van die proses te word waardeur die wêreld getransformeer word. In Suid-Afrika met sy probleme van vervreemding en verlies van identiteit is dit absoluut noodsaaklik vir die kerk om hom tot die realiteit van die wêreld te bekeer, aangesien verlossing, bevryding en eenheid in die Christelike boodskap ernstiger geneem word as sonde, die status quo en verskeurdheid.

Dit is miskien later in die dag as wat ons besef; dit is miskien al reeds te laat aangesien die kerk en die Christene alreeds juis nou ly as gevolg van 'n gebrek aan identiteit as lede wat 'n bydrae tot die samelewing lewer. „'n Kerk wat sy greep op die wêreld verloor het, moet nie verbaas wees as die wêreld baie goed sonder hom klaarkom nie, en 'n kerk wat geen poging aanwend om te luister na dit wat die wêreld te sê het nie, kom ooreen met 'n wêreld wat net so min in die kerk se boodskap geïnteresseerd is.” (Hans Schultz). \*

# THE MISSION OF THE WORLD TO THE CHURCH

The world has an important mission to the church and the church must be converted to the reality of the world. The historical events, the political happenings, the social occurrences, — in a word, the world is trying to focus the attention of the church on its needs, problems and struggles. The church on the other hand is traditionally inclined to ignore or by-pass the problems of society as a whole and therefore it must be convinced, and won over to a realization of the need for re-orientating itself to the world. Jesus Christ became flesh in the world. It has always been a temptation for the church to ignore or by-pass the struggles and suffering of the world and to seek refuge in the sanctuary of the 'other-worldly'. But the mission of the world is to call the church back to God's world, to its task as the body of Christ in the sweat and blood of the turmoil of the world.

Many voices from the political, social and labour worlds call to every Christian in South Africa to give attention to, to grapple with and try to solve the desperate problems of the society which is ours.

The 'Coloured' people e.g. have said clearly through their elections and the stand that their leaders have taken that they are real people. They are not interested in moulding themselves in subservience to the pattern of the 'white' people because they are increasingly more convinced that their status as 'non-whites' is the fruit of injustice and coercion. They have reached the point in history where they want to assume control of their own destiny in this their common fatherland. From the dynamics of South African politics, economics and development the conclusion is reached that the system leads to the creation of greater wealth for the minority and greater poverty for the majority.

People working hard for development and change, and trying desperately to bring about a climate of detente will fail and will instead cause intense frustration and confusion because they have not attacked the roots of the evil in our society. It is only now that the so-called 'non-white'

is beginning to realize that his under-development, his poverty and lack of human rights are only the by-products of the development of the rich man's society, well-being and luxury.

Liberation will only come if the mystique of development is smashed, the old relationship of domination and subservience is broken and man takes hold of the reins of his own destiny. This will free our society from alienation and servitude. Minor changes will not do. Many people in the first flush of enthusiasm over detente want to go all out and change 'everything'. In fact their fervour is superficial for they want this only as long as nothing is changed fundamentally.

We have mentioned one example where the 'Coloured' people in their 'worldly' existence cry out to the Christians and their church to take note of and become involved in their struggle as human beings, as the creation of God whom He loves. The church must change in its critical reflection on God and its task in the world.

### **what is our image of God and the church?**

God has virtually disappeared from our scientific and technical world; 'modern science' has left no place for God. Modern developments have introduced a negative type of 'theology' showing us what God is *not*. God is not 'the God of the gaps' (the God we call upon to explain what we cannot otherwise fathom). This has caused us to reconsider our concept of God in other spheres as well and in those spheres we also realize that God is not to be seen as 'the religious God' (the God we domesticate for one sector of our life); nor 'the war God' (the God that justifies war and violence); nor yet the 'paternalistic God' (the God that sanctifies the racial, dominating and exploitative power structure of authority).

The positive fruit of this development in our thought is that we have come to realize that God has revealed himself in historical situations. At the heart of Christianity lies the historical salvation and

liberation of Jesus Christ in this world. The focus must therefore be on the society of man and its struggles.

This change in direction from the metaphysical (other-worldly) to the historical, from the world where man is seen as an object in politics and society to one where man is appreciated as a person, will also have basic consequences for the church. The basic question which cannot be avoided will be: "Can the church remain the same if the world is different?"

Hitherto the Church has been seen as a *sanctuary*. It is regarded as a place of refuge in a hostile environment for protecting and nourishing the Christians. The Church was seen as a sacred vessel of salvationist resources not readily available elsewhere and its mission was to extend its unique riches to those who were willing to join it.

The new image of the church is not that of a sanctuary but a *sign*. This offers a radically new starting point for the concept of the church and its mission. The church as a sign points beyond itself and has an impact outside itself in the world. Unlike a sanctuary the church, as a sign, is not an enclosure but a disclosure; it performs its function not by containing but by communicating, not by annexation, but by representation.

The concept of the church as a sign is an image of service, while the sanctuary is one of separation. The former concept projects the image of co-operation; the latter that of competitiveness. The Church viewed as a sanctuary always tried to find for itself the really important task and function. The Church viewed as a sign points beyond itself to God acting in the world. The one image tends to be open to the world and its historical processes, and the other tends to deny the world and its history.

Implicit in the very idea of the Church as a sign is the readiness to serve an objective larger and more important than itself and not to work merely for its own preservation and financial gain. The mission of the Church is consequently not co-extensive with the mission of God in the world; rather is it all-embracing as a power of salvation and liberation at work everywhere and the Church has its role to play in it.

The emphasis of the Church as a sign is not to convert people to its own way of thinking and to its structures, but rather to testify and co-operate in God's saving love in the world. Witness is thus not for the sake of conversions but conversion is for the sake of witness and the emphasis is not on decisions in the Church but on disciples of Christ in his work.

#### **'a church which has lost its grip...'**

All this has severe consequences not only for the

church but for society as a whole. We must change from a possessive, status-conscious, authoritarian stance, to a giving of ourselves, a humble and co-operative service. The church must be based not on hierarchy but on brotherhood; partnership and not paternalism is its hallmark. A society which views itself as a sanctuary will have the emphasis on success, on numbers and income, etc. The church and society which look beyond themselves will concentrate on what is relevant. As long as a sign is communicating it does not have to be troubled as to its size, or success or whatever.

It used to be the tendency of the church to adapt to the cause and interests pursued by the society in which it existed and it took a stand only against certain vices within it. The church however must not only reflect on what is wrong in society; it must try rather to be part of the process through which the world is transformed. In South Africa with its problems of alienation and loss of identification, it is vital for the church to be converted to the reality of the world since salvation, liberation and unity form a more essential factor of the Christian message than do sin or the status quo and fragmentation.

It is perhaps later than we think; it is perhaps already too late as the Church and Christians at this very time suffer from a loss of identity as contributing members of society. "A church which has lost its grip on the world need not be surprised if the world gets on very well without it, and a church which makes no attempt to listen to what the world has to say corresponds to a world which is equally uninterested in the Church's message." (Hans Schultz). \*

#### **Advertisement:**

##### **PAN-AFRICAN TRAINING COURSE**

Applications are invited from suitable ladies for the possible attendance at the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation Women's Training Centre to participate in the Pan-African Women's Leadership Course to be held in July 1975.

The objectives of the course are as follows:

1. To provide advanced training in both the theory and practice of leadership training, especially in those areas in which women carry the main responsibility.
2. To equip them with skills to be able to promote women's advancement and to head women's programmes in their respective countries.

Interested applicants are invited to contact the General Secretary, SACC, P.O. Box 31190, Braamfontein, Tvl. 2017 for further information and application forms.

# CORPORATE GUILT — FACT OR FANTASY?

brian brown

Few people reacted with indifference to the Christian Institute's publication on "White Immigration"! One of the interesting side-issues which arose concerned the concept of Corporate Guilt presented in that document.

The preamble to White Immigration suggested that the immigrant to South Africa inherits, through the unjust and discriminatory laws of our land, a privileged position denied the majority of citizens. While he is not instrumental in formulating these laws he inevitably derives enhanced opportunity and material well-being through them at the expense of his neighbour. He shares in a corporate guilt, as does every White South African as part of an oppressing community. Much as he might challenge the oppressive forces, his hands are never clean.

The response of some to this aspect of the publication was to state that an awareness of corporate guilt had led to a heightened sense of redemptive penitence and social responsibility. Others responded by saying that the concept of corporate guilt was without scriptural warrant and legitimate precedent. One critic suggested it sounded like some sophistry dreamed up by shadowy observers at the All Africa Council of Churches Conference at Lusaka and brought back by White delegates as the gospel!

The sad lack of awareness of this critic shows how far Christianity has been impoverished by its obsessional concern with the individual's sin in solitariness, to the exclusion of the great biblical insights regarding corporateness — be it corporate guilt or sin, responsibility or personality.

## Sinful solidarity

Adam is a good starting point for considering our solidarity as sinners. Only the bold or foolish would claim to understand fully the significance of Adam's act whereby man became a fallen creature. But whether Adam be understood as either an historical or symbolic figure, Paul's statement holds good — in Adam all have sinned. The sin of Adam had widespread repercussions and contamination. Adam being understood as Everyman, every man and woman born is party to the fallen corporate condition which causes us to do the things we ought not to do.

Strangely, some who acknowledge this *sinful* solidarity would still seek to repudiate the concept of corporate *guilt*.

Our preachers are largely to blame for this. Congrega-

tions have been conditioned almost to glory in their "sinfulness". The greater the sin, the greater the grace! But if the preacher moves from vague generalities as to our sinful solidarity with Adam, to any specific pronouncement of guilt resultant from the worshipper's participation in sinful structures, then he "offends". As the preacher knows these congregational sensitivities he is usually compromised to be silent on corporate guilt.

Guilt, rightly understood as a sense of having failed in ones duty, is an inevitable outcome of our living in the sinful structures, norms and values of Adam's society. To acknowledge our corporate sinfulness as a theological proposition and not go on to confess our corporate guilt for having failed in our God-given duty to attack sinful structures is humbug.

## Some illustrations

i) Virtually all denominations in South Africa are agreed that the "cancer" in our society, migrant labour, is a sin; a transgression of God's revealed will that families should share in togetherness.

The guilt is corporate. The community has enacted legislation through its representatives and as a body ensures the maintenance of the sinful structure through enforcement or acquiescence. I might protest that I didn't make the legislation, or that I even opposed it. But am I guiltless for as long as my neighbour cannot share as I can in the intimacies of family life?

Let the man who can genuinely profess that he has done all that he can to remove this sin go on to declare his guiltlessness. I have yet to hear such a profession.

ii) Or take the example of the immigrant. He did not make the laws of job reservation. He did not ask to be the recipient of protective favours to the detriment of his third-generation South African Black work-mate. He probably did not know that the Government would use his services to defer the granting of training and job advancement to someone more deserving than he.

But by virtue of the corporate sin built into the very structures of society he has failed to love his neighbour as he loves himself, and he partakes in corporate guilt as assuredly as he shares in a community called immigrants.

iii) Or take the rich man in the biblical story who ended up in torment, having failed to consider

the needs of the impoverished beggar at his door. He had neither made the man poor nor sinned in the personalised sense of pushing him into the gutter. On the contrary, he fed him with scraps. At a pinch he might even have conceded the concept of corporate sin as valid religious dogma, but for Jesus to suggest that he shared in a corporate guilt to the degree of being hell-bound was preposterous!

Some might call it preposterous to suggest that Pilate shared in any corporate guilt when, "innocent" of the evil scheming of the religious leaders, he symbolically washed his hands to declare his innocence of the blood of Christ. But the judgment of scripture testifies to the corporate guilt of both "Dives" and Pilate.

No man is an island. Christian man is his brother's keeper. And when my neighbour is hurt through the structures of society in which I participate, no Pilate-like declaration of innocence will detract from my guilt before the Father.

### Some misconceptions

- i) Certain Old Testament understandings of corporate guilt, particularly when equated with corporate punishment, are decidedly sub-Christian. So let us see what corporate-guilt is not.

The Israelites believed that the sin of the one contaminated the entire family or clan or nation, necessitating God's punishment (through man's brutality!) by way of mass extermination. This corporate punishment, whereby the family is destroyed for the sin of the father, is well illustrated in the story of Achan — Joshua Chapter 7. Achan's sin of covetousness and theft so contaminated his family that even the oxen and asses shared in the guilt and were stoned to death.

With the coming of Christ this crude understanding, so typical of clan-warfare in many parts of the non-Christian world, is repudiated. Even before Christ the Books of Moses (Jewish Law) sought to modify the worst excesses of corporate punishment with the teaching of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth". Christ reveals the Divine will when he says, "you have heard it said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say — forget it!"

The progressive development of Old Testament thought towards rejecting corporate punishment finds its fulfilment in Christ. No longer would the many die for the one. In fact, the One was to die for the many.

This understanding helps us to affirm the oft misunderstood Old Testament passages, "the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge" and "the sins of the fathers are inflicted on the third and fourth generations". We have seen that the texts cannot mean that

God punishes my children corporately because of their father's many sins. God forbid! Rather, it means that the cumulative sins of my generation will ensure that my children and grandchildren suffer because of the effects of such corporate guilt.

The "innocent" children of Mocambique are suffering today because of the cumulative sins of centuries of oppression and racial arrogance. Our guilt as racist South Africans will cause our children's children to suffer — not because God is punishing the innocent but because sin has untold repercussions and is not confined in its hurtfulness to a moment or an individual. The effects of corporate guilt are ongoing, as even the stone stirs the pond long after sinking from sight.

We dare not reject the concept of corporate guilt just because of a confusion with corporate punishment as crudely understood in pre-Christian times. Rightly understood the concept helps us to see God's judgment of man within an historical process; man's inhumanity to man is properly attributed to man and not to God.

- ii) A critic attacks the concept from another angle as he writes, "the nearest I can come in my thinking to what might be termed 'corporate guilt' was a period two or three years ago when some Americans had a kind of spurious, nebulous uneasiness about Negroes and Indians, largely stimulated by Negro and Indian propaganda, which produced a soppy, subjective, sycophantish 'guilt complex' based on the inference that everything the Negroes and Indians said in criticism of Whites was right and everything the Whites had ever done was wrong". Does the corporate guilt concept only find its expression in this American situation?

For a start, our critic's reading has obviously not embraced the witness of part of the German Church to Hitler's Nazi regime during the 1930's and early 1940's, and its incredible confession of corporate guilt *despite* that opposition. E. H. Robertson in "Christians against Hitler" writes: "in this situation the Confessing (German) Church played its most heroic role. Never once did it regret the resistance to Hitler nor the prayers for his overthrow. The Confessing Church accepted the guilt of the German people and in brave statements, which were seldom understood abroad, its leaders claimed a share in the guilt".

Perhaps the most famous of these misunderstood statements was the post-war Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt and Confession, the four points being:

We accuse ourselves for not having  
confessed more courageously  
We accuse ourselves for not having  
believed more firmly



We accuse ourselves for not having  
prayed more earnestly  
We accuse ourselves for not having  
loved more ardently.

Pastor Niemoller and his colleagues of the Confessing Church could hardly be called sappy sycophants filled with unhealthy guilt complexes! They had opposed Hitler in 1934 in the Barmen Declaration and on countless occasions; many suffered martyrdom; yet the survivors did not exult in their "innocence" when the full horrors of the Hitler era became known. In a moment of spiritual greatness they saw their collective guilt and declared such to the world. Through so doing they continue to challenge Christians in all areas of social injustice to acknowledge that as participants in structures of oppression and injustice their personalities are inevitably soiled by a corporate guilt. And it is this era and the Confessing Church's understanding of its role that is crucial to our consideration of the concept.

#### **Theological and practical expression**

- i) The events of the early 1930's doubtless influenced Reinhold Niebuhr to consider the real problem of group sin. In his significantly entitled "Moral Man and Immoral Society" he described the problem of group self-interest as one of the most persisting realities of human sin. The inevitable struggle of self-interest with self-interest between sinful individuals is compounded when group loyalty enters the picture. Then, individuals are even less capable of transcending their own interests because of the pressure of group ideology. The result is that large human groups, bound by both ideology and the natural need for cohesion, seldom if ever can be expected to take account of other groups with whom they are in competition.

This understanding by Niebuhr of the power of group sin must make us all the more conscious of the need to acknowledge our corporate guilt as a pre-requisite for redemption from group self-interest.

- ii) A sense of corporate guilt within a sick and discriminatory society is usually a sign of spiritual growth, for the "guilt" is presumably being acknowledged by the ones most ardently attacking the sickness. Thus when the then leader of West Germany, Herr Willie Brandt, paid an official visit to Poland he amazed his hosts and incensed many of his countrymen by bowing in silence before the memorial to the 14 million human beings exterminated by the very Nazi regime which he had opposed from within the resistance movement. For those who understood his spirituality and sense of corporate guilt, it came as no surprise when Willie Brandt later

resigned from office immediately after hearing that a relatively junior aide had been found to be a spy for Communist East Germany. A Nixon could cling to his presidency, protesting innocence while personally implicated in a major scandal, but not Willie Brandt for whom corporate guilt and corporate responsibility were determining factors in his life-style. Having shared in the guilt of his aide, in an obviously corporate and not individual sense, he felt constrained to resign.

#### **Christianity is corporate but there is a blind spot**

While one can understand the non-Christian being perplexed by the concept of corporate guilt, it is inexcusable that a Christian, reared to believe in the Body of Christ, should have difficulties in accepting the corporate implications of discipleship.

The "Body of Christ" image of the Church reminds us that when one member of the body suffers, all the members suffer. So the Christian cannot say, what has the suffering of Black divinity students kicked out of the Federal Theological Seminary at Alice got to do with my suffering? "I'm all right (White?) Jack" may be trendy but it is not Christian. In the mystery of Christian identification I become aware that the assault on my brother is also an assault on me, for the whole body is affected. And in the same mysterious but real way, resultant upon our identification within the Body, the guilt of another member becomes my guilt as well.

E. H. Robertson asserts that the concepts of corporate guilt and responsibility never got through to the pietistic church groups of the Nazi era, and in consequence they had no real contribution to make in the struggle for faithfulness. Little has changed. In South Africa today we discover a type of individualistic piety which precludes any redemptive corporate awareness.

This belief in the primacy of the individual's private relationship to God, as over against any institutional obligation, has been built into much of Protestantism. Some have called it "theological individualism" for it tends to see moral questions almost entirely in terms of personal piety. The assumption is that if individuals are converted from immoral practices, social justice will follow as night follows day. Hence the emphasis is on personal piety. If this assumption were verifiable, in the sense of such believers becoming fervent crusaders for social justice, well and good. Studies like those undertaken by Prof. James Dittes of Yale University ("Bias and the Pious") show the very opposite however. It is an uncomfortable but well-established fact that there is more racial prejudice in the church than outside of it, and the more pietistic the Church, the more racialistic its peoples. And what is true of race holds good for most areas of social justice.

Joseph Hough ("Black Power and White Protestants") writes about this phenomenon: "under the pre-

suppositions of personal pietism it is utterly impossible to recognise the limitations which institutions place upon morality. The whole question of love's relationship to justice is seen more in terms of how one personally feels and acts towards one's brother than in terms of any need for reshaping the structures of society".

If these experience-centred observations are true, then theological individualism is severing the nerve of corporate social action. In the compartmentalised conscience of the pietist there is acute guilt if in a moment of anger he should assault his "neighbour" and little if any guilt that the structures of society in which he lives assault the same neighbour day after day. The former is a matter of Christian morals, the latter a question of dirty-politics!

It would be wishful thinking to claim that this heresy can be overcome simply by re-discovering the concept of corporate guilt. But in that pietists are hopefully more open to discuss the implications of guilt than those of justice, this could be a fruitful starting point.

### **Redemptive guilt and corporate repentance?**

The phrase "redemptive" guilt was deliberately used for guilt is one of those unfortunate words which we now view negatively. It is associated with guilt complexes and sack cloth and ashes! We need to overcome our unhealthy feeling that guilt is unhealthy.

Guilt in a biblical understanding leads not to self-pity, remorse or world-renunciation. Rather, it is that state of answerableness for something done or left undone, leading to a positive response of repentance without which there is no atonement. Guilt having revealed one's corporate unity with mankind in sin, grace leads one to corporate unity with Christ in redemption (2 Cor. 5:21) — a paradoxical interchange between Christ and sinners.

A sense of personal guilt is generally redemptive of character and a sense of corporate guilt is generally redemptive of social structures. I become increasingly suspicious of the motivations of those who will see guilt in terms either personal or corporate, and thus seek to halve the Gospel and its redemptive power.

A critic of the concept of corporate guilt asks, "how can a corporate conviction of sin be achieved?" It cannot, and I am not arguing for such. It must be the individual who expresses his repentance of guilt, personal and corporate.

Much as we might yearn for some of our mighty "corporations" to come to an awareness of corporate sin, only individuals can repent! The concept of corporate guilt enables one to realise the power of sin, its ramifications and implications; it further helps one to be less critical of individuals who are the products of oppressive structures and more compassionately concerned to attack those structures which are so subtly oppressive; and because it reveals that one is part of the structures it demands "physician, heal thyself!". Thus

the White immigration document believed that a sense of corporate guilt "would lead to a heightened sense of responsibility and a constructive participation with the forces seeking to eradicate discriminatory practices in our country".

Joseph Hough sums it up well. "From one point of view, of course, it is ridiculous to talk about the sin of groups. In every case the sinfulness of groups is the compounded product of a plethora of individual sins, and the sinful actions of any group require the participation of individual agents at least as catalysts. Still, when the compounding has taken place and the time comes for the individual to act in accordance with his official position for the group the pressure of the group sanctions and the history of the group decisions can force a man into a position where his decision is not really his own". Had Hough been writing of the South African and not the American situation, he would doubtless have included the pressure of legislation with the other group pressures mentioned.

### **Black exclusion?**

In the unique South African situation, where a White minority legislates to entrench its power and privilege and oppresses the Black majority, it is a temptation to think of White corporate guilt and Black innocence. To be Black is not necessarily to be born an "African", it can imply that one belongs to the oppressed community; to be White is to be the oppressor, by birth even if not by desire. Such are the definitions bred by our society.

This understanding can lead Blacks to the point where they too smugly and easily do the Pilate hand-washing trick of declared innocence. But this is to imply that the Black in no way contributes to corporate guilt, that he has in fact done "all that he can" to ensure social justice. We know that this is nonsense. Without in any way belittling the struggle for liberation of the many Black martyrs produced in South Africa over the decades, is it not true that the inertia of the Black masses (as one specific instance) contributes to our guilt as a nation?

The very silence of a Black who sees his neighbour being daily assaulted by institutionalised violence is an occasion for individual guilt and contributes to the guilt of our society. For does not the White then interpret the silence as approval of his ordering of society and the acceptance by the Black of his fortunate estate?

The prophetic role of the believer in this situation is clearly spelt out in scripture (Ezek. Chapter 33). The army of the oppressor is about to attack. If the prophet-watchman does not blow his trumpet to warn the people clearly of pending disaster, "then any man who is killed is caught with all his sins upon him; but I (God) will hold the watchman answerable for his death".

Significantly, the "answerableness" which we earlier defined as bound up with guilt is attributable to the one who did not sound the trumpet. *It is not the oppressor who alone is guilty, but the one who through silence contributed to the victory of the oppressor and the*

*suffering of his people!*

The implications of this biblical truth are obvious. Corporate guilt is no respecter of persons. If Black inertia leads to a silencing of God's trumpet call for justice and liberation then the Black shares in the corporate guilt of our South African society. And it is again seen how a proper understanding of corporate guilt can be redemptive and have devastating consequences in the pursuit of social justice.

We started our consideration of corporate guilt with

## A CRUCIAL TEST FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

**david thomas**

*Mr David Thomas is one of the two directors of Ecu-news press service of the South African Council of Churches.*

*The "Hammanskraal resolution", which urged members of the South African Council of Churches to look seriously at the possibilities of conscientious objection to military service, put the Council through its own trial of fire.*

"The Council ... calls on its member churches to challenge their members to consider whether Christ's call to take up the cross and follow Him in identifying with the oppressed does not ... involve becoming conscientious objectors".

When these words were published during the national conference of the South African Council of Churches in August, 1974, it catapulted that organisation into a crisis situation such as it had never before faced. This now famous resolution on conscientious objection—referred to as the "Hammanskraal resolution" from the name of the conference centre where it was taken—unleashed a torrent of emotion in the White sector of the population.

This was not surprising. South African Whites are increasingly fearful of their future. The fall of Mozambique earlier this year removed the protective buffer against Black Africa behind which they had prospered in comfort for so long and faced them with the prospect of savage liberation war within their borders.

To even suggest that anyone should opt out of that war seemed close to treason. Thus Whites turned in fury on the South African Council of Churches (SACC). Not only Government organs of propaganda, but even the English-language Press, generally friendly to the SACC, was largely hostile.

This was not unexpected; what was worrying for the

Adam. We conclude with the "Second Adam", Christ. Of Christ the Corinthians passage previously referred to says, "he who was sinless was made one with the sinfulness of men". I'll never fully understand this passage but in part it tells me that Jesus so fully identified himself with sinful man that he finally shared in the corporate guilt of our sinful humanity. The purpose was gloriously redemptive, and the servant is not greater than his Lord. ✱

organisation was the reaction from many in its member churches, who were as strongly negative as anyone else. The possibility of churches withdrawing from the SACC loomed large.

It is only within the last decade that the SACC, has become a really significant body within South Africa and, equally important, has become an important sounding-board of Black opinion.

The SACC traces its origins to the South African Missionary Council formed in 1912, which in 1934 became the Christian Council of South Africa. Its major members at that stage were the Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational and Baptist Churches (the "English-speaking churches") and the largest Afrikaans-language church, the N.G. Kerk.

During the Second World War the N.G. Kerk withdrew, accusing the Council of having become a 'political' body, but since then the SACC has had an increasing accession of Black member churches, including a fair number of "Independent" churches.

The Roman Catholic Church has for a long time been an observer member.

Even so, ten years ago the Council of Churches was not a body which anyone took very seriously. Its full-time officials could be counted on the fingers of one hand and its member churches were seldom forced to pay any attention to its doings. The SACC had a largely ceremonial function, acting as a not-very-demanding demonstration of ecumenism.

Today in contrast, the SACC stands at a peak of power and influence. It now has 20 churches in full membership, 7 churches in observer membership and 8 member organisations. It is estimated that the total membership of these bodies is between five and ten million people—almost half the total population of South Africa.

## **An alternative to apartheid**

The present staff of the SACC numbers over 40, distributed over 11 major departments, working in fields ranging from Mission and Evangelism to the granting of bursaries to needy children in rural areas. The annual budgets of the SACC have risen to the record level of 1.25 million Rand (nearly \$ 2 million U.S.)

More important, the SACC has established itself as a body to which South Africans feel they must listen, particularly since the publication of its "Message to the People of South Africa" in 1968 which was highly critical of apartheid. To the question: But what is your alternative? the SACC and the Christian Institute of South Africa responded with the Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society (SPRO-CAS).

The standing that the SACC has gained was forcefully demonstrated by the huge furore created by the Hammanskraal resolution. Certainly the SACC would not have been considered significant enough ten years ago to provoke this type of reaction.

The change in the status of the SACC is due in part to the greater emphasis on ecumenism evident in churches over recent years; but to an even greater extent, its rise must be attributed to the work of two men—Archbishop Bill Burnett of the Anglican Church, and a Methodist layman, Mr. John Rees.

Bishop Burnett, as he then was, effectively re-shaped the structure and machinery of the Council during his three years as General Secretary. John Rees, a former Johannesburg city council official, expanded the Council greatly on Bishop Burnett's foundations and became known as a spokesman on national as well as church affairs in southern Africa.

Today's SACC has Black directors at the head of its most important divisions; and Black voices are increasingly heard in its counsels. Black opinion for instance, played a major role in the passing of the Hammanskraal resolution in August.

The Hammanskraal resolution seemed to put all this achievement in jeopardy from two points of view.

Firstly, there was a danger that the Government would act against the SACC; secondly any withdrawal by its member churches would have constituted a major setback.

Thus anxious and interested eyes have been focussed on the church "conference season", during which churches hold their synods and assemblies, from September to the end of the year. Clearly the Hammanskraal resolution was going to be discussed as a high priority issue.

Right now, it can be reported that the SACC has withstood this trial of fire. Only one church—the Baptist Union—has dissociated itself from the Hammanskraal resolution. But the Baptist Union decided to retain its observer status in the SACC.

Moreover, the Baptist Union has aligned itself with all the other SACC denominations in demanding that the

Government recognise the right to conscientious objection, which according to South African law at present is conceded only to members of recognised pacifist denominations.

Churches have been solidly against the main Government reaction to the Hammanskraal resolution—the introduction of a Bill imposing a fine of about \$15 000 or ten years' imprisonment on anyone "inciting" another person to become a conscientious objector. Several Anglican dioceses, the Presbyterian Church, the United Congregational Church and the Roman Catholic Church have joined the Baptist Union in taking a strong stand against this law, and strongly asserting that conscientious objection is an acknowledged Christian principle which the State should recognise.

The most recent, and perhaps most significant, addition to those taking this stand is the 1,2 million-strong Methodist Church of South Africa. Soon after Hammanskraal, what looked like a powerful movement to take this church out of the SACC developed. One of its eleven regional synods took a resolution urging the annual conference of the church to withdraw from the SACC.

In addition, a Methodist minister, the Rev. Fred Shaw, became a leading member of a new organisation, the Christian League of South Africa, which set itself up as a rival to the SACC. It launched a widespread campaign to persuade individual members to state their dissociation from the SACC, and a form was circulated to local Methodist circuits on which, with a minimum of effort, they could signify their support for a break with the Council.

The Annual Conference of the Methodist Church showed that these efforts had failed dismally. Membership of the SACC was accepted practically without discussion, and was agreed to with no votes being recorded against it. Moreover, the stand on conscientious objection was also approved without opposition.

The churches mentioned above deserve particular attention, because they have strong White minorities (and a White majority in the case of the Presbyterian Church). That they have aligned themselves with the SACC indicates that the danger of its White constituency being alienated has passed. There never was any danger of the Black constituency being alienated; those Black churches which have pronounced on Hammanskraal so far have all come out strongly in favour of the resolution.

The SACC, then, has survived a trial of fire. As the situation in South Africa becomes increasingly urgent it has perhaps taught the lesson that boldness is the best policy.

## **A FOOTNOTE ON THE HAMMANSKRAAL RESOLUTION**

After being passed in Parliament, the Defence Further

Amendment Act, which was aimed at the Hammanskraal resolution, does not now seem so likely to spark a bad Church-State confrontation in South Africa.

"The Bill in its original form, introduced shortly after the Hammanskraal meeting of the South African Council of Churches, imposed savage penalties of R10 000 or ten years' imprisonment, or both, on people found guilty of inciting others to refuse military service.

"However, in the hands of a Parliamentary select committee, the Bill was altered so as to impose those penalties only on people who, in counselling others about conscientious objection, actually recommended this course of action. The Archbishop of Cape Town addressing the Synod of his diocese, saw this as a "significant alteration."

"And in the committee stage of the Bill the Minister of Defence not only accepted an Opposition amendment that penalties be reduced to R6 000 or five years'

imprisonment (the Government very rarely accepts Opposition amendments) but gave an assurance that "genuine" conscientious objectors would be allowed to serve in non-combatant positions in the armed forces.

"This recognition of the right to conscientious objection meets one of the major demands churches have been making of the Government since Hammanskraal ...

"... It is possible that having made a show of strength the Government will quietly allow the issue to lie dormant in order to avoid a direct confrontation with churches and to avoid making martyrs of its opponents."

*Commentary by Ecunews press service  
of the South African Council of  
Churches.*

*—Africa Acts*

## DIALOGUE OVER 'HAMMANSKRAAL' AND CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

### Preface

A few weeks after the SACC National Conference passed the resolution on conscientious objection Mr Douglas Bax who proposed this resolution at the Conference received the following letter. It was written to him by a friend, a highly qualified minister of the Church, who had discussed the resolution with some Whites in a discussion group and wished to convey their reactions to him. He has agreed that his letter appear in print but without his name, as he would have expressed his points

differently had he been writing for open publication. He also feels that his letter could give the impression that he opposes what the resolution essentially stands for, which he does not. Douglas Bax replied and the unnamed person again replied to his letter. Eventually Mr Bax replied a second time. The first two letters appear in this issue and the last two will appear next month. The Hammanskraal SACC resolution was published in 1974 in the August issue of Pro Veritate.

## 'CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IS VALID' BUT NOT THE SACC RESOLUTION

Dear Douglas,

You must be tired of receiving letters about the now famous SACC resolution. But it so happens that I have had to study it and to lead a fairly intelligent and sympathetic group in discussion of it. I think you ought to know how many such people feel.

The appearance of your draft in the press before it came before the SACC was no doubt an accident, but it was a disastrous one. It put the SACC in a very difficult position. We all find it difficult to understand why the SACC did not appoint a drafting committee of carefully chosen people to prepare a considered version before it was put to the vote. This is common practice in important matters, especially where emotions are involved. Such a committee can take into account the fact that anything published has, effectively, the meaning its

readers give to it, which is not necessarily the meaning its drafters had in mind.

There were blatant faults in the wording, which have seriously damaged the reputation of the SACC. I will mention only a few of them.

1. To use the word "justice" in a controversy demands that some indication of its meaning be given. It is a very difficult concept to define and even more difficult to apply in any given situation, as every teacher of ethics knows.
2. The phrase "just war" does *not* exclude war in defence of an unjust society. It is a translation from Latin, and means "lawful war" — war waged in accordance with the rules. The nature of the society defended is not included in those rules.

3. If a Christian may not fight in defence of an "unjust and discriminatory society", then he must never fight, for historically there have been no other kinds of society.
4. The word "violence" has been worked to death. It has many meanings. In any society in which there are violent men, order must be maintained by force, and to those who do not like it, force seems to be violence. There is a radical ethical difference between force used to maintain an orderly society and force used to disrupt it. The "Catholic and Reformation theology" which you mention has always recognised this. You have mis-quoted that theology to suit yourself, and have ignored it where it does not suit you.
5. The real question when deciding whether a society is to be defended is not a perfectionist one. It is simply, "Will those attacking the society create a better one if they succeed?" Obviously there will be differences of opinion about this, but you have simply ignored it.
6. Your preamble, and especially paras. 5 and 8, are worded in such an inflammatory way that they are calculated to stimulate maximum opposition. When I read the preamble I seriously wondered whether it had been drafted by an "agent provocateur" bent on destroying the SACC and the credibility of the Churches as Christian.
7. Para. 2 uses the words, "to consider ... whether Christ's call ... does not involve..." In English, that phraseology clearly implies that the speaker's mind is made up and that the hearers ought to agree with him. If I say to a young man, "Consider whether what you have done to that girl does not involve you in marrying her," he will have no doubt of my opinion!
8. Resolution para. 3 uses the word "reconsider", and this also carries the implication that what I must reconsider was wrong. It is this kind of provocative and tendentious wording which has stimulated such opposition in the Churches and has dismayed the friends of the SACC.

In all, I think this was the worst resolution that has ever come from the SACC, and that it has done immensely more harm than good. It was an absolute gift for the SABC and the National Party, and they quickly saw that and made maximum use of it. It has also gravely weakened the support for the SACC in the Churches. And this was all so unnecessary. The same message could have been got across in a constructive and truly challenging way. As someone in discussion said, "If you throw down gauntlets you are inviting the other fellow to pick them up, and to become your enemy."

Someone else said, "As soon as you try to arouse a feeling of guilt in the other man you build a barrier between yourself and him." If a man is guilty (as we white South Africans certainly are) he must be confronted with the light of Christ and his Gospel, and with the Scriptures, in the hope that in that light he will himself become aware of his guilt.

Of course conscientious objection to all war is a valid option for a Christian. Even selective conscientious objection is valid — some Germans exercised it during the last Great War; Afrikaners exercised it too, in the other direction. It is not what you advocated that has done the harm; it is the way in which you worded it. Maybe you wanted violent polarization within the Christian community. Polarization may have to come — to some extent it exists already. But it should come from our study of Scripture and the Gospel, not from fallacious and tendentious public statements made in the name of reputedly responsible Christian bodies. You have made it vastly more difficult for your friends, and vastly easier for your enemies, to defend their respective positions.

One final point: the whole resolution was publicized as 'unanimous'. It was not. 'Unanimous' means that everyone present and entitled to vote was in favour.

Yours in Christ,

*Anon.*

## **HAMMANSKRAAL ... A VITAL CHRISTIAN WITNESS TO FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE**

Dear Friend,

Thank you for your rather fierce letter! I am very sorry that you were so distressed by the terms of the SACC resolution and am therefore hastening to reply. However, I shall have to answer each point fairly briefly. A fully adequate reply would need to be a long treatise!

You maintain that the appearance of the draft in the press before it came before the SACC was disastrous

and "put the SACC in a very difficult position". I am not sure who your informant was but I do not think you have received an accurate impression.

It is true that after the Conference had been informed that the notice of motion would be presented I let a persistent reporter see a preliminary draft of it. I stressed that it was only a preliminary draft and only elements of it, *not* the full draft as you suggest, appeared in the

paper. It was not this so much that caused some people to be upset but the fact that another newspaper, *Hoofstad*, then picked it up, distorted its contents and reported in an extremely sensationalist way that Beyers Naudé had already seconded the motion in this distorted version, before the notice of motion had even been formally presented. I accept that I made a mistake in showing the draft to the reporter and did apologise to the Conference for this. However, I do *not* think it is true, as you suggest, that the SACC felt itself placed in a difficult position by this in the sense that its discussion and voting was affected in any way whatsoever. Your letter conveys some anger about this as though you suspect this motives of the "leak". Let me therefore assure you that there was no intention whatsoever of trying to manipulate the Conference!

Now as to what you call "blatant faults in the wording" and have numbered:-

1. We used the word "justice" in the common dictionary sense of the term. To expect that we should have included a (long?) technical definition of the word (and of every other key word?) in a document already too long, or to insist that the omission of such a definition was a grave error, is in my opinion being a little pedantic.

2. *Justum bellum* ('just war') does not mean "lawful war" in the legal sense you attach to it, or war waged in accordance with legal rules, in theology. The word *justus* in itself means *either* 'in accordance with the law', or 'in accordance with what is right'. It is in this *latter* sense that theologians have always intended it in the term, *justum bellum* or 'just war'. (It is true that Augustine does include some rough rules for the conduct of war, but only as one aspect of his description of a just war, also in this latter sense.) 'Just war' is a theological, not a legal concept, and theology is concerned with motives more than rules. Thus *justus* here means 'having justice on its side' or 'justifiable' rather than 'lawful'.

You go on to argue that "the nature of the society is not included in those rules." I concede that there is involved here a syllogism of which one premise was not made explicit, but that was because it was presumed that people were capable of making it for themselves. A just war has justice on its side. A war which in the last resort is a war in defence of a fundamentally unjust status quo does not have justice on its side. Therefore such a war cannot be called a just war.

If you want me to argue this in terms of the traditional theological definition of a just war I would point out that central to that tradition from Ambrose through Augustine and Aquinas to the 16th century were the two conditions which Aquinas called a *justa causa* (just cause) and a *recta intentio* (a right intention). What a *justa causa* or 'just cause' is has been variously defined. However, if one accepts that the basic issue which threatens to provoke violence and war in our country is our discriminatory and oppressive racial policy, that if we agreed immediately to take radical and rapid strides

to change this policy, the threat of war would be alleviated and therefore that the basic issue of the war revolves around whether such change will take place then one can hardly say that those who are being used to fight in order to preserve the status quo against those who wish to change it are fighting in a 'just cause'.

A *recta intentio* or 'right intention' was defined by Aquinas as follows: "It is necessary that the belligerents should have a rightful intention, so that they intend the advancement of the good, or the avoidance of evil" (*Summa Theologica* Pt.II.ii, q.40, art.1). The same argument applies under this condition as what I have outlined under the condition of *justa causa, mutatis mutandis*.

When one turns to the Reformers, or rather to Calvin who is a better theologian on this than Luther, one finds that central to him as conditions of a justifiable war are the following:

- a) It should be a defensive war. The Hammanskraal resolution argues to the contrary that it is the Whites who have initiated the cause of the war and the violence.
- b) "Everything else ought to be tried before recourse is had to arms." (*Inst.* IV.xx.12). White South Africa refuses to try everything else if "everything" includes radical and rapid change in our racial policy. The Government has also consistently rejected calls on it to call a conference of the parties involved in order to work out a peaceful, negotiated settlement.
- c) The rulers ought to be led by concern for the people alone. However, what is provoking the war in South Africa, is precisely the fact that the Government and the white oligarchy are concerned to maintain exclusive privileges for themselves at the expense of the people as a whole.

The first two of these three conditions in Calvin are also what Karl Barth stresses in his *Dogmatics*.

3. The Hammanskraal resolution did not say that a Christian may not fight in defence of an "unjust and discriminatory society" as you maintain but in defence of "a *fundamentally* unjust and discriminatory society". (Paragraph 6 of the resolution refers back to paragraph 5.) You thus left out the key word.

Your objection here also confuses two kinds of wars: those which are caused by foreign aggressors attacking and those which are revolutionary wars aimed at changing the structure of a society. In the first kind the unjust and discriminatory structure of the society attacked may be irrelevant. It is, however, basically the second kind with which we are threatened. Those who wish to attack us, both from outside and from within our borders, are citizens of South Africa who have been oppressed in it.

4. You seem to object to words that have often been used or that have more than one meaning. But if one were to exclude all such words there would be precious few left in the English dictionary to use at all!

Moreover, the distinction is not merely twofold as

you describe it, between force used to maintain an orderly society and force used to disrupt it. The distinction is fourfold: between force used to maintain an orderly society, force used to impose and maintain an unjust and oppressive order, force used to disrupt an orderly and basically just society and force used to change an unjust and oppressive society. Catholic and Reformation theology have always recognized all of these distinctions (though they have not always judged them in the same way). I refer you, for instance, to Calvin's *Institutes* IV.xx.31f. or Karl Barth's *Table Talk* p.73ff. It is not therefore I who have ignored something in Catholic and Reformation theology but you in the *over-simplification you have made*.

The Hammanskraal resolution nowhere denies that the Government has the right to use force when this is done to preserve a just order. On the other hand if you mean, as you seem to, that the oppression and discrimination experienced by Blacks in South Africa only "seems to be violence" I think you are being cynical. I cannot give you a long list of examples here but let me quote one. One of your Black friends once asked the question: "Are the children who have died in Dimbaza any less dead, because they are Black, than people who may be killed on the border?"

#### **we must avoid a total disaster**

5. Again, your objection is too simplistic in its alternatives. The aim of the Hammanskraal resolution was not simplistically that the revolution might succeed but that pressure might be brought on "the Government and people of our land ... to make rapid strides towards radical and peaceful change in our society so that the violence and war to which our social, economic and political policies are leading us may be *avoided*" (as it states in its final paragraph).

It is precisely by rallying to join in the defence to which the Government is calling us, without asking any questions or making any protests about the system which we are being called to defend, that we make the Government think that really radical and rapid change is not necessary and so make a final, violent conflict inevitable. In other words it is precisely this that will *make the revolution finally inevitable*. Moreover, it is precisely this sort of attitude amongst us that will encourage those who lead the revolution, in and when they succeed, to be tempted to impose an unjust and discriminatory order in reverse.

It might be objected that it is naive to suppose that enough people would conscientiously object to bring any pressure to bear on the society and the Government. But in that case your objection also falls away because their action will make no difference to the question you ask. In any case a Christian must do what he can, as a witness. He is called to be faithful, not necessarily successful. And it may well be that even a little pressure will help in the context of the other pressures that are being exerted already.

There is a further, more fundamental point here. The Hammanskraal resolution does not proceed from a perfectionist, pacifist point of view but from the point of view that seems to take seriously the ethical approach which is called selective pacifism. If this approach is taken seriously then the Christian must not ask: "Can we be sure that those attacking the order will create a better one?" That would be to justify his joining in the fight in nearly every case. Rather he must ask: "Can we be confident that they will *not* create a better order — or at least as good a one? Remember that "a better order" here means a more just one for all South Africans as a whole, Black and White. It is such confidence that the *Christian must have before he will agree to such a drastic and terrible step as that of killing other people in order to preserve the status quo*.

6. I do not regard para.5 of the resolution as particularly inflammatory at all: it is the simple truth straightforwardly stated. How else can one express the point? Or is it the truth as such that you think is inflammatory?

What one must notice in par.8 is the condition, the "... if...". This is crucial in the sentence. If one notices this it becomes clear that there are two ways in which one may respond to this paragraph: *either* to continue justifying the violence of the past on the part of the Whites and thus be confronted with one's hypocrisy in one's attitude to the broad "struggle" of the Blacks today (we particularly chose "struggle" because it is a broad word which does not necessarily mean violence or fighting with arms) *or* to become critical of all violence, both in the past and the present and both on the part of the Blacks today in seeking to change the status quo and on the part of the Whites in imposing and seeking to maintain it. Unfortunately so many people are so ideologically captive to justifying the violence of the past that they draw the conclusion that the violence of the Blacks is necessarily being justified here. However, it is clear that the resolution itself does not choose this side of the *either/or* because it goes on to state quite clearly that "The Conference therefore *deplores violence* as a means to solve problems."

Whether this was "the worst resolution that has ever come from the SACC"(!) is, I suppose, very much a matter of opinion. Likewise whether "it has done immensely more harm than good". But that it has gravely weakened the support for the SACC in the Churches I dispute. The SACC was flooded with expressions of support from Black Christians and, very significantly, ministers from the three "daughter" Churches of the NGK made known their intention to join the SACC as full members. (Since writing this the N.G. Sendingkerk has backtracked a little. This was however, under pressure from its White dominees.) I am afraid therefore that you made this criticism from an extremely 'White' point of view!

The resolution was explicitly a call upon the Churches, directed specifically to them and their Christian



members, to consider their ethical duty in this terribly difficult and increasingly urgent and critical issue ... instead of continuing to ignore the profound questions involved. It was emphatically not an evangelistic statement directed to outsiders with the intention of arousing guilt in them so that we might then confront them with "the light of Christ and his Gospel" in the sense that you state it!

Your next paragraph seems to be inconsistent. You acknowledge that it was not what we advocated that was wrong but the way in which we worded it — and then you attack what we advocated as not based on Scripture. Moreover, you advance no Scriptural evidence whatsoever in support of your attack. I can therefore only repudiate this allegation and ask you: Would your

criticisms at this point not have to apply at least equally to, say, Jeremiah's sermons calling to conscientious objection? Certainly his wording was far more provocative anyway!

The press publicized that the six recommendations of the Hammanskraal resolution (the last six paragraphs) were adopted unanimously. They were voted on one by one first. Not all received unanimous approval at that stage. They were then voted on as a whole and did receive unanimous approval.

May God be with you,

*Douglas Bax*

## REAL-LIFE COMMUNITY — BIBLE STUDIES 4

W.C.C. Bible Studies for fifth assembly—July 1975.

### Introduction

#### I Real religion

*John 2.13-22*

#### II. Free for reality

*John 8.30-59*

#### III Reality fruitful

*John 15*

### Introduction

'Jesus Christ frees *and* unites.' With all the emphasis on freedom in the titles of previous studies, the matter of unity and community has never been far away. God's strategies point forward to new possibilities of a common life. Which brings us to the Fourth Gospel. John says that the 'signs' of Jesus have been recorded in his book:

*'in order that you may hold the faith that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this faith you may possess eternal life by his name' (20.31).*

His purpose is to present Jesus both as the Messiah, the fulfilment of the hope of a liberator arising in the history of Israel, and as Son of God, a pointer to God's call to become a community of 'sons' through the one who is Son in the very highest degree.

The bridge most strongly linking freedom and unity in this gospel is the word 'truth'. Jesus himself is the 'true vine' (15.1), and for those who are 'true' disciples, the truth makes free (8.31-32). The Greek word which John

uses is the one which in the Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures stands for the Hebrew word meaning 'reliable', 'trustworthy'. In this sense, God is frequently acknowledged as true—and the true worshipper is the one who speaks the truth in his heart (Psalm 15.2). The world and its history is the work of a reliable, a faithful God.

But the writer and readers of this gospel would also be used to the word in its ordinary Greek meaning—to refer to what is *real* as opposed to what is unreal, the 'upper' world of truth rather than the 'lower' world of appearances. This idea is also there when John writes of true freedom, true vine, and worship in truth. But 'truth' for John is more than a bringing together of the ideas of reliability and reality; he has met both of these in Christ, and the word is re-coined in the fire of that experience. Jesus himself is 'the truth' (14.6).

So this gospel has its own particular way of selecting and presenting the material that can bring people to faith. Instead of the teachings about the kingdom, scattered throughout the first three gospels, John reports words of Jesus about his own person, and its significance for the life of mankind.

Everything centres in Jesus Christ, who reveals the Father and offers the chance of a new birth. We find a whole series of personal affirmations: 'I am the light of the world', 'I am that I am'. The Hebrew shows that this is not so much a statement about what God is as about what he is about to do. So: 'I will be to you what I will be to you.' The whole history of liberation is there, and the people of God. Yet only Jesus, with the authority of truth, can take upon his lips the 'I am ...' Because of him, there can be a new worship, a freedom that is freedom indeed, and a real-life community of friends who are learning what life is like in the 'liberated zone'. What conclusions would you draw for the work of Section 3 at

Jakarta on seeking community?

I. John 2.13-22  
*Real religion*

The word 'religion' appears in this title, because it is a word we use. Someone may say she is 'religious', when she means 'devout'. And the question of religion is asked on forms to be filled in, expecting an answer like 'Methodist' or 'Buddhist'. Yet the word only occurs about half a dozen times in the whole of the New Testament, and almost always in reference to Judaism.

Jesus, in all the gospels, has some harsh things to say about what we might call religious observances (see, for instance, Mark 12.40), and about the temple itself—centre of celebration for every Jew. But notice first that John 2.13 shows us Jesus in Jerusalem for the Passover—the commemoration of God's initiative to turn an immigrant work-force into a free and united nation.

While in the other three gospels the story comes during Jesus' last visit to Jerusalem (another Passover occasion), John put it at the beginning of his gospel. For him it is an event which indicated the direction of Jesus' entire life, death and resurrection. Notice another difference from the other gospels. The most important thing, as John tells it, is not the protest against the misuse of the temple, but the announcement of another temple.

Look first at the protest. Vital background to this passage is Zechariah 14.20-21, which expects a time when the most familiar and ordinary things will share in the holiness of the temple itself. John, like Mark and the others, shows us a man whose presence in the world is proclaiming that the new age (called by Zechariah 'that day') has dawned. Much has been said about the whip of cords (v. 15). What do we make of it, both as a pointer to the character of Jesus and the methods he used? In what sense, for us, is Jesus 'gentle Jesus'? In what sense do we interpret him as an angry militant, alienated from his society and its religion? Some churches and cathedrals are now picking up the tradition of the Middle Ages of using the worship-space for a variety of everyday things. Surely Zechariah would approve. What would be a modern equivalent of the 'cleansing of the temple'?

They are destroying the temple by their practices (v. 19) but Jesus speaks of another temple. What is said is that the new age releases people from the bondage of the old type of piety. See the conversation in 4.19-26. But what right has Jesus to substitute something startlingly new? The question is asked in v. 18. In answer, Jesus does not point to some mighty climax at the end of history that will vindicate him. He points directly to his own body which is to be destroyed and raised again. A totally unexpected reply. But this story is full of the unexpected, the astonishing, the elusive. Jesus is to die. The word 'body' seems to make no direct reference to the 'body' and 'blood' of the central act of Christian worship—when John speaks of that, he uses 'flesh' as in 6.51, and in a way quite different from Paul's use in

Rom. 8. But there is a reference to his suffering and death. It is difficult to grasp the challenge Jesus was making to the deepest religious feelings of his people. To say that something greater than the temple was present (Matt. 12.6) was a terrible thing; and worst of all was that awful pronouncement during his last days in Jerusalem (Matt. 23.38):

'Look. Look. There is your temple. Forsaken by God.'  
'Rare is the people which can accept the calling in question of their worship without inflicting a terrible price.'

Jesus, then, is himself the new spiritual temple (the location of true worship), reflecting the worship of heaven (Heb. 9.11-12). The church is his body, within which aliens and outcasts become fellow-citizens and fellow-workers with God's people (Eph. 2.17-22). Each member becomes the abode of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6.19). It is this new community 'raised' by God that opens up the possibility of new unity overcoming human divisions and a new freedom for justice and worship. What conclusions can we draw about 'real' religion? In what ways do our religious observances need cleansing? What would Jesus have added, if anything, to James 1.27?

II. John 8.30-59  
*Free for reality*

A controversy that raises questions! Perhaps the best help these notes can give is to provide a question-and-answer session:

*The Jews come out very badly in these verses. Aren't they very antisemitic in tone?*

We have inherited many centuries of Christian-Jewish controversy—often hate. Some churches have blamed the Jews for the crucifixion. The Roman Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council went a long way to correct previous attitudes. John's strong criticism of the Jews, like that of Jesus, is made from within the Jewish community. What is at stake is their choice of priorities. These Jews (v. 31) are said to believe Jesus (i.e., they accept intellectually what he says, however much they fail to understand it), but they put their loyalty to Abraham (i.e. their own tradition) first.

*But are not Jesus' words exceptionally fierce?*

Yes. This is true in other parts of the four gospels, when Jesus is talking with religious leaders. The Pharisees, for instance (Matt. 23.1-36). Again and again Jesus met a religion that opposed life. Think of examples. He was on the side of life! The early church had a hard time with Christians who were raised in a legalistic Judaism and wanted to impose their ideas on the whole church. The letter to the Galatians is the charter of Christian freedom.

What in practice might it mean today to be on the side of life?

*Why did the Jews react so strongly, even wanting to kill Jesus? (vv. 37-40, 59)*

It isn't really surprising—see the last study. Verse 35, for instance, referring to the story of Hagar, is saying that the privileges and promises given to the 'chosen people' are forfeited by the rejection of Jesus, who is in the line of Abraham (v. 56).

What 'privileges' are we inclined to lean hard on?

*What is meant here by 'sin'—this slavery from which Jesus sets free?*

Sin is opposed to truth (see the Introduction), and means living in a world of fantasy which is neither reliable, real, nor within Christ's revelation. The fantasy is supposing that you have a basis for hope, but not living by that basis. This is described as blindness throughout ch. 9, and leads to all sorts of contradictions—trace some of these in vv. 37, 39-41, 42.

Someone has said, 'Man can only stand a little reality'. Is it so? What realities do we tend to close our eyes to?

*Why did they call him a Samaritan?*

The Samaritans did not follow the strict legal line, and were therefore said to be possessed by demons—as is Jesus here (v. 52). Demons and the devil (the father of lies) are active powers of darkness. The Jews here show the extent of their fall. There is no worse condition than calling light dark and dark light. Or calling slavery freedom, or freedom slavery (v. 39). This is the blasphemy against the Spirit (Matt. 12.31).

How do we, in our deepest convictions, distinguish dark from light?

*Then what does it mean to be made free? (v. 36)*

It means being freed by the truth for the truth. It means knowing God as Father, and becoming part of his household. It means to recognize Jesus as the one who comes from God and knows and obeys him—the 'I am' of the living word (v. 58).

Think of ways we use the word 'freed', and compare them with its use here. What can we mean when we speak of 'education for liberation and community' (Jakarta, Section 4)?

### III. John 15

#### *Really fruitful*

Have these Bible studies been really fruitful? That will depend on several considerations—a small one being the usefulness or otherwise of these notes, and a large one being the way the group has worked together. How do you judge? Not so much by how you feel about it, but by results. You might give a little thought to results in this last meeting of the whole four series. What now? Think back over the topics of the six Sections planned for Jakarta. What results would you want them to show,

from your Bible studies? What results can you now set about showing in your own action?

Two immediate comments. To take in and not to give out is not the way any organism lives. Israel's career as a nation is a chequered one, because it failed to live out the pattern of liberation—justice; worship—a mission to the nations. Second, to give out and not to take in leads to total exhaustion. The world cries for people who act to 'make history'. but by wheer activism the action itself suffers.

John 15 speaks directly to these comments:

1. Not to live fruitfully is to be under judgment.
2. The way to bear fruit is to stay part of the tree.

To take 1: Jesus' description of himself as the *real* vine leads us straight to the vineyard in Isa. 5. Read vv. 1-7, with its terrible climax. The message is judgment. So in John 15.2, 6, there is a pruning operation needed. The disciples stand in relation to Christ as Israel did to the Lord of hosts—see v. 16. Where in our day should we recognize God's practical judgment on us his church?

Then 2: We are told to remain (or abide, dwell) in Christ. We have heard of people with mystical experience—that sense of oneness with God or with 'all things' to which a few members of the human race have borne witness. To 'remain in Christ' has often been taken to refer to this kind of experience, but we should take our clue from the way it is used in the First Epistle of John—of the concrete sense of believing in the incarnate Son of God, and keeping his commandments (1 John 3.24), above all, the commandment of love. This is also expressed as 'remaining in his words'.

The group may now find it useful to go through the whole passage, and pick out the reference to fruit and what is said about it. Being really fruitful is the result of a deep relationship. Read and ponder v. 15. The church's thinking about God took place in days when the whole of society was dominated by the obvious fact that some were masters and some were servants or slaves. When the disciples called Jesus Master, they expected it to be that way. And Jesus took them up on it (13.12-17). But he also turned the relationship on its head, and said his vocation (and theirs) was to be slave of all. But now he takes the whole thing into a different realm—friends, for the servant does not know his master's mind. We do! Well, what *is* Jesus doing in the world? And what difference does it make to us, our freedom, our oneness, our worship, and our thinking about God and the world, that Jesus invited us to be his friends?

The reference to 'asking' (v. 17) shows that to abide in Jesus and to be really fruitful is the prior condition of all the new possibilities opened to humankind by the new man, Jesus Christ, who frees and unites. Think of some of them! Are they, in any sense, 'there for the asking'? And remember (v. 8), it is all to the glory of God. \*

# THE BLACK RENAISSANCE CONVENTION IN PERSPECTIVE

*Issued by the Steering Committee of the Black Renaissance Convention*

Now that the mass newsmedia have commented on the Convention; now that some hitherto unknown facts as well as vital information have come to light, we owe it to the people that an unbiased account of the Conference should be made available, particularly to those of our brothers and sisters who could not witness this historic event for themselves. Millions of our people got second-hand reports, either from the White-man's Press or from the delegates who attended the Convention. The weakness of such accounts needs no mention. In general, the White-man's Press highlighted and dramatised the seemingly negative aspects of the Black Renaissance Convention. In the interests of truth, though, one must admit, with deep praise, that the "STAR" and "PRETORIA NEWS" were the most positive and objective of the English medium newspapers. In its leader the STAR wrote (December 1974):

## **"BLACK VOICES MUST BE HEARD:**

The Day of the Covenant weekend is traditionally one of White rhetoric, but this time there were some coincidental new voices which also deserve the closest attention.

They came from the Black Renaissance Convention, organised by Black theologians and broadly devoted to themes of "Black Consciousness".

At the close of their discussions the 300-odd delegates condemned separate development and racial discrimination; called for an equal distribution of South Africa's wealth and a nonracial society with one man, one vote.

Predictable stuff? Perhaps—but it is important to note whence it comes. By and large these were neither angry young students (they tried to disrupt the meeting) nor Bantustan leaders (one of whom was prevented from speaking).

They were, if you like, a middle stratum of Black urban intellectuals. And yet they came out with a set of demands which might sound, in the eyes of most Whites, impossibly extreme.

These are the demands born of frustration and the sheer inadequacy of existing political institutions for Blacks. If the current fine phrases about equal citizenship mean anything at all, White South Africa must take note of this rising mood among moderate Blacks—and start doing something, now, towards meeting it".

The PRETORIA NEWS leader (17 December 1974)

## **"TIME TO TALK AT HOME:**

Day of Covenant messages and speeches, from that of the State President downwards, reflected White South Africa's growing acceptance of the need to solve Southern Africa's racial problems by co-operation, not confrontation. Nothing could underline the wisdom of this more than the revealing glimpses of the mood of Black South Africa today that were provided by the Black Renaissance Convention at the weekend.

Between White and Black South Africa there is clearly a gap to be bridged by consultation round the conference table comparable with that between White and Black Rhodesia. The difference is that in Rhodesia, both sides, having experienced the ghastliness of confrontation, are prepared to give consultation another try. South Africa still has time to avoid a clash, but dare not ignore the danger signals.

Ironically our contribution to the latest endeavour to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Rhodesian dispute has shortened the time we have at our disposal for putting our own house in order. We have helped persuade Rhodesia to release political detainees and negotiate with banned organisations. Should we not practise what we have preached? Should not the Government, preparing in any case to talk to homeland leaders about urban Black problems, examine the need of going further? Should it not accept the irresistible logic of the argument that it will have to talk to people such as Sobukwe and Mandela, expatriate Black nationalists and Black organisations that are at present banned?

For separate development to be given a real chance of showing it can work such a step seems unavoidable."

Every Black man knows that the Whites have vested interest in the status quo and in the apparently irreparable disunity among the Black people. So, it was only to be expected that a hostile Press would stress the "divisions" at the Convention. According to the White-man's Press, the outcome of the Black Renaissance Convention resulted from the SASO-BPC's bull-doing tactics. In South Africa, everybody knows that anything supported and promoted by the "SASO-BPC axis" is tantamount to "immaturity", "hot-headedness", "suicide-mania", "anti-Whitism", "irresponsible radicalism", "violence or bloodshed" ... In other words, there has

obviously been a futile yet sustained attempt at driving a wedge between the SASO/BPC axis and the rest of the Black community. The reasoning goes as follows: Since SASO/BPC is constituted by a bunch of school drop-outs, hysterical girls, immature self-styled militants, surely no self-respecting or sane citizen of Azania can take seriously whatever emanates from such an unfortunate crowd! We shall return to some of these points later, because we cannot tolerate, let alone encourage, this destructive character assassination against our compatriots. At the same time, we shall obviously not condone vandalistic and iconoclastic behaviour by some members of these organisations, because by so doing they render a disservice to their own community.

#### was it a success?

We said that another source of information about the Black Renaissance Convention was those delegates who were physically present. Not a few among them were exposed to such a meeting for the first time. The puerile behaviour of the so-called SASO/BPC clique did annoy and bewilder some of the delegates, most of whom were connected with the Church and thus unaccustomed to stormy and heated debates. Fortunately, many of the delegates were able to discern the real significance of the Convention, in spite of the ill-mannered behaviour of one or two delegates, whose saboteur role was only brought to light afterwards.

The natural question Black people are asking is: Was the Black Renaissance Convention a success? If the primary objective of the Conference is properly understood, then we shall have no hesitation in replying in the affirmative. In fact, its success went far beyond our own expectations.

Thanks to all the active participation of the delegates, whatever the outcome was, should be taken as the untrammelled voice of a wide-section of the Black community. Due to communications problems it was inevitable that there should be a preponderance of intellectuals as well as an adequate representation of the proletariat. There was an obvious absence of the peasants, who for various reasons could not attend. It is regrettable that so far none of the existing socio-political or students' organisations have ever involved peasants in their conferences. ANC and PAC were the only movements which made any organised inroads into the peasants' world. This is something for every true Black organisation to think about.

In a nutshell, the most significant and important achievements of the Black Renaissance Convention were as follows:

1. The Black Renaissance Convention was the first nation-wide (black) Conference consisting of so many disparate ideologies, organizations and managed to keep the 300-odd delegates under one roof until the end of the Convention. That happened in spite of the vociferous and disturbing efforts of one or two determined "iconoclastic sabo-

teurs" who have been discovered to be working" against black solidarity.

2. The highlight of the Convention was the passing of the Declaration and Resolutions.
3. Although Black organizations may differ about strategy and method, the Convention demonstrated beyond doubt that Black people are unanimous with regard to ultimate objectives. Blacks demand their FREEDOM NOW! They want their land, political, economic powers and to be masters of their own destiny. Admittedly, there will always be a debate about the *type* of society which will follow the "Revolution". Some will settle for reformism whilst others will stop at nothing short of a revolution—i.e. a complete and radical change of the system.
4. Finally, the Convention provided a long-needed public platform whereon Black people could ventilate their grievances in an atmosphere of freedom. Even disagreements which lead to no over-night solidarity, are very useful. They clarify positions and focus attention on fundamental issues.

Mrs Fatima Meer sums it up graphically: (S. TRIBUNE)

"The importance of the Black Renaissance Convention (SUNDAY TRIBUNE, December 22) does not lie in the disagreements that were aired, but in the declaration that emerged from it.

It can never be over-emphasised that this was the first time in years that Blacks from throughout the country, all of whom held widely divergent views, came together to talk.

A week-end to iron out differences was much too short. White South Africans are, after all, in continuous session in Parliament.

Important differences in strategy remain, but the convention made it clear that all the delegates from church, homeland, student, academic, or sport bodies were unanimous in their abhorrence for apartheid, separate development, homelands, South African Indian Council, and Coloured Representative Council.

The final resolution to expel the homeland representatives at the convention was for most delegates a symbolic ritual, emphasising that abhorrence rather than an act against persons."

When interviewed by the STAR, Ds. S. Buti, one of the organizers of the Black Renaissance Convention, had this to say: "It was encouraging to see the people determined to tackle their problems jointly. It also showed that there was tension building up which had no outlet ..." Dr. M. Buthelezi commented to the STAR as follows: "The Convention reflected a true struggle in which the Black Community was brought face to face with realities, some of which may be unpleasant. It also gave an impression of self-awareness and solidarity

among us ...”

We could also add the list of congratulatory telephone calls and letters from many Black brothers and sisters, and from men of goodwill around the world. Our struggle has become international. It is no longer a backyard family squabble.

#### criticism

On the negative side, some precious time was wasted on trifles and on matters which are peripheral to our struggle for liberation. In trying to be fair to every delegate, the chairman's gentleness was misused. The only chairlady we had was suspected of having been biased in favour of one clique in the assembly. The discussions showed clearly that many delegates used words too glibly and with little grasp of their real meaning. e.g. Ideology, principles, revolution, detente, strategy, imperialism, apartheid institutions etc. A good number of statements were emotional outbursts with hardly any intellectual content. A little firmness from the chairman could have assisted the Conference to move faster.

A delegate who was at the Convention wrote to say: "It is a joy to write to you to express my profound thanks and appreciation for having had the vision and courage to call together this Convention. The fact that it did not run as smoothly as we envisaged, does not change my opinion one bit that we ought to bring Black people together, even after what, for myself, proved to be an occasion where some people played games how to "out talk" one another on trivialities, totally ignoring the crunch issues of our day ..."

Before we conclude this section of the report, it is imperative that we should correct some distortions, especially those published in certain newspapers:

1. The allegation that Mrs. Fatima Meer (University of Natal, sociologist and guest-speaker at Convention) "resigned" from the Convention with "tears streaming down her face" is completely untrue. She has since personally denied the report. Mrs. Meer walked out of the hall to "cool down" after she had been rudely spoken to and the chairman failed to protect her. She returned soon afterwards.
2. It is an unhappy lie to insinuate that SASO and BPC were represented by 20 delegates! To be accurate, SASO had three official delegates and BPC had no delegates except three observers. It happened that among those attending in their personal capacity, some turned out to be either SASO/BPC members or plain sympathizers. The latter category included many adults.

Clergy and church representation was out of all proportion.

3. The Honourable Collins Ramusi and the other "protagonists of apartheid" were not physically evicted from the Conference, as suggested by the offending white newsmedia. As a matter of fact,

these gentlemen sat through that session until it ended. The Honourable Collins Ramusi even participated in the whole debate and resolution

#### the contribution of SASO and BPC

Why single out these organisations? Our reason for doing so is to rectify some deliberately negative misinterpretations about the "vandalistic tendencies" of SASO and BPC. To be honest, the most constructive contributions came from the 300-odd delegates, irrespective of their group affiliation. For example, many people are unaware that the "Declaration" and "Resolutions" were primarily based on the reports of the eight discussion-groups. The SASO/BPC (group 9) failed to report back. But in all fairness, it must be admitted that they participated very energetically in the actual debates which eventually led to the adoption of the "Declaration" and "Resolutions". Practically *all* the Resolutions and the Declaration were adopted by an overwhelming majority or unanimously. Even the "expulsion" of homelander was the decision of a majority vote. It is, therefore absolutely irresponsible to suggest as "Ecu-News" and the white press do, that the SASO/BPC axis bulldozed the Conference into voting for things it did not know. We must not delude ourselves. What the SASO/BPC axis clamour for is precisely what Black people want, except that due to political naïveté, some members of these organizations alienate Black people rather than win more allies.

The Convention was certainly not composed of *illiterates!* There were many university graduates among them. We reluctantly refer to that group as SASO/BPC axis merely for purposes of identification, following the example of the newspapers. The largely student group refused to be singled out as a clique. Those concerned were unfortunately largely to blame for their being labelled a "clique". The manner in which they huddled together in one corner; the obvious way they darted in and out to caucus together, their repeated reference to SASO and BPC, especially on the first two days, left people with no option but to identify them as a distinct pressure group. Strategically, their performance was a disaster. They alienated the more mature delegates too early in the Conference. The unfortunate result was that they antagonized many would-be supporters. They arrogantly created the false impression that they are the "sole custodians" of the "Black". Some created the impression that they were experts in the clandestine operations of the C.I.A. and that they were the self-appointed spokesmen of the Black Community. What has just been said are the observations of most of the delegates who witnessed the performance of the group in question, but these are but minor annoyances which, in no way detract from the laudable contribution of SASO/BPC.

As a group of Black people, we excluded all other non-Black persons, so that we might come together and talk as brothers and sisters.

We wanted to re-examine our situation as openly and candidly as possible. We did not wish to pretend we had already achieved the much-sought-after Black solidarity, but to intensify the machinery for its realization. We were reminded of the first Bandung Conference of 1954. For the first time, in the history of the colonized Black nations, men from Asia, Latin America, the West Indies and Africa came together. Brother Malcolm X points out that these Black people met together notwithstanding their religious, ideological, ethnic, political and philosophical differences. Their common experience of colonial and imperialist oppression was a uniting factor. They shut the doors and thrashed out their problems as a Black family. If we were to solve our number-one problem, the Convention had to allow absolute free speech. We had to listen to one another's points of view without prejudice. The Convention provided a public platform for people to say the things which needed to be said. The people do need and will always require a non-ideological or neutral platform where they can voice their grievances freely and share views with other Blacks. Political movements like BPC will always be necessary. Black politics do need leftist elements whose revolutionary fervour leave no room for compromise. However, political compromise may be a sign of political astuteness in given circumstances, not weakness.

As a block, SASO/BPC axis was the most hard working- daytime, night-time and meal times. This is an indication that they took the Convention very seriously. They made it clear they were not attending a vacation or a "gumba-gumba session". Clouding the real issue by lampooning these organizations won't quench the thirst of the Blacks for their manhood and freedom.

In politics, as in other forms of human relationships, strength as a leader lies with the people. In Black society, youth can be a liability. As a young man you need to convince the grown-ups that you really deserve their respect and that you are mature in your judgment and actions. Most of our people will agree that thanks to SASO efforts, Black Consciousness has come to stay in South Africa. Because of the nature of its membership and composition, SASO only reached the educated and sophisticated segment of the population. Had SASO's original leadership remained intact, its contribution to the Black people would be tremendous today. One must understand, therefore, that in the absence of the stalwart sons of SASO and BPC at the Convention, it is not surprising that some blunders were made by some members. This observation should not minimise or ignore the extraordinary work, dedication and courage of those brothers who are presently keeping the SASO/BPC machinery running smoothly. Leading during crisis situations is never easy for anybody. In spite of these handicaps, the SASO/BPC axis deserve our praise and admiration for the splendid work and dogged determination they brought to the Convention. However, these organizations might be well advised to conduct a little search into their constituencies. Some people are doing the movements no good.

Someone once observed, "Black people in South Africa love to indulge in intellectual and verbal masturbation... one thing sure, they are hopeless organisers and still worse, they never implement what they plan". Nobody in his sound mind would advocate "solidarity at all costs". God forbid!

The SASO/BPC axis injected a lot of vitality into the discussions. Without their vigorous participation, the Convention would have been poorer. In a situation which stifles free political organization and expression, our young people must be given credit for their political contribution in the struggle.

#### **what next?**

The Black Renaissance Convention indicated very loud and clear that:

- There is urgent need for more Conventions of this nature. Their exact nature and scope will be determined by an organizing committee.
- Grass-root organizers as well as the existing Black organizations should be revitalized and reinforced. They should immediately implement some of the Resolutions taken at the Convention.
- Programmes of action should be put into operation, e.g. projects of a cultural, political, social and academic nature. Of the existing political organizations, none has a properly worked out programme, except vague slogans.

#### **warnings**

Some serious matters of common concern which black people were warned to guard against:

- U.S. neo-imperialism, spread through the C.I.A. operations around the globe. cf. "TAR BABY" of Dr H. Kissinger.
- Local White liberals who might want to back up movements that dilute the revolutionary fervour of the freedom-lovers.
- The élite and the bourgeoisie who have usurped the right of leading the "masses".
- "Out-of-touchism" with the masses of Black people.
- Sole dependence on foreign financial support in the Black struggle.
- Doctrinaire, blacker-than-thouism which merely delay the day of the people's solidarity.
- The danger of allowing ourselves to be compartmentalised into leftists and rightists. To be honest, there is hardly any leftist group worth the name among the Blacks. If there is any evidence of it at all, it is only in its embryonic form. An amorphous bunch of bellicose "howlers", are not necessarily leftists. A leftist's qualification is not only a good pair of lungs, but a fine analytic mind and a total ideo-political commitment.

## frustrations

Finally, the Black Renaissance Convention revealed contradictions, some painful facts which should galvanize us into more concerted action rather than polarize us. We refer here particularly to the political leadership vacuum which was left by the demise of the ANC and the PAC. None of the existing ethnically-based organizations have bridged the gap. Instead, they have absolutely thrown the Black people into political confusion. BPC the only non-tribal political organization needs to treble its efforts before it can even begin to give a semblance of being a people's mass movement. So far, it looks as though the choice lies between Bantustanian politics and BPC. SASO is supposed to be a students' organisation, even though it is far from being a-political. We find ourselves in a terrible dilemma. Only a very small number of Blacks will join BPC because they are either terrified of its, "radicalism" or because its organizational viability leaves much to be desired. In general, your urban population wants to have nothing to do with tribal dummy political movements. There are undoubtedly millions of Black people whose political frustrations have no organized outlet. Political apathy in the Black community makes one shudder, especially when you think of the inevitable change. Is posterity going to accuse us of "sleeping through the Revolution"?

Since the politics of separatism were so utterly and unconditionally rejected at the Convention, the implications of that rejection are self-evident. Although the Prime Minister, J.B. Vorster, has repeatedly recognized the right of every South African to "legitimate political activity", most Blacks believe they dare not organize politically. The ubiquitous State Security Agents sooner or later will serve on them a crippling banning order. People made it clear that they have enough church, cultural, social and other innocuous associations. But politically, they are very, very starved. The politics of the Homelands are odious as well as fraudulent. Surely, when "detente" does eventually come to Azania proper, the Black people cannot be expected to be represented by the "protagonists of Apartheid" because these men were disowned by the people (Black) in no uncertain terms.

Must the Blacks wait for the release of the Mandelas, Sobukwes and Sisulus? If so, how long must the voiceless millions wait before some form of realistic political activity is allowed? These are but a few insights which were gleaned at the never-to-be-forgotten Black Renaissance Convention.

The Convention ended on an optimistic note with the delegates complaining that such a crucial event should have taken the whole week instead of three days! The mood of the departing delegates was one of "THE STRUGGLE GOES ON ... ONWARDS CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS! ..." The campaign for Black solidarity may suffer some temporary setbacks, but in the long run, nobody will stand in its way. The struggle *will* and *must* succeed, because the Black people are morally

justified in fighting for their humanity. The enemies of Black unity, even those who masquerade as "uncompromising militants", will be discovered by the people and be exposed for what they really are. Black people must eliminate fratricidal quarrels. They should rather seek to find a common rallying point. Denigrating one another can only militate against the solidarity that we all crave for.

## plans

Among other forms of follow-up, this committee would like to see some very serious work being done in highlighting the crux of the Convention. Just to enumerate a few proposals:

- A scientific political analysis of the implications of the Convention, especially the Declaration.
- Co-ordination of the endeavours of the different Black organizations.
- A historical survey of all political Black organizations, dating back to the nineteenth century.
- The political vacuum among Black people in South Africa.
- A study of "Political alternatives".
- North American and European designs on South Africa.
- Work situation of the Proletariat in industrialized South Africa.
- Suitable means of communication e.g. a newspaper, journal, quarterly or solidarity rallies etc.

At the Convention, the Black people stated categorically what they wanted. As we all know, there is nothing easier or more self-gratifying than to spit hell and thunder, fire and brimstone and to sound impressively scholarly. But what is more difficult, because more effective, is to study, think, plan, toil, research and communicate. Together we stand, divided we shall sink deeper into the quagmire of oppression and slavery.



## VERKRAMPTHEID THAT WEARS A REVOLUTIONARY CLOAK

*A reaction by Father Mkhathwa to the article "Black liberals" by the Rev. Michael Maasdorp — Pro Veritate, February '75*

Black people in South Africa have made it clear that their struggle for liberation is their own responsibility. Only they will decide its pace and nature. It would be absolutely ridiculous and self-defeating to expect an outsider to direct it. The 'foreigner' has too much to lose. The success of the struggle threatens his security, comfort, power and his domination. No matter how intelligent his arguments may sound, the truth remains that culturally, emotionally, politically or historically, he cannot honestly share the aspirations and experience of the oppressed class. The Black people will choose their own advisers or allies.

In the light of these observations, Michael Maasdorp's ill-conceived broadside on the organizers of the Black Renaissance Convention (v. February issue of Pro Veritate) was repugnant. The likes of Michael Maasdorp are well-known in the Black community. Although his attitudes towards Blacks are known to those who have met him, yet it is important that his article should be corrected, lest other readers be misled. For purposes of clarity, we shall ignore his incoherent rantings about how the organizers of the Convention should have conducted their business. We shall forgive the arrogance which tarnished his whole article. We won't bother ourselves about the anonymous "secret sources of information" which furnished him with his "facts" concerning the Convention. Before we comment further, Michael Maasdorp must know that he is perfectly free to criticize organizations or persons. Nobody takes exception to that. However, one would have expected a man of his intelligence to have checked his facts carefully before hurling such cock-eyed accusations, insults and recriminations.

1. In his first and second paragraphs, he accuses SASO and BPC of "having all Government collaborators expelled". Why did Michael Maasdorp refuse to check with the Secretary of the Black Renaissance Convention? One can be forgiven for suspecting bad faith on his part. The minutes and the report on the Convention indicated very clearly how the vote on the "government collaborators" was done. The first count was overwhelmingly in favour of excluding the home-

land leaders from the meeting. To make certain that all delegates had properly understood the issue at stake, the chairman Rev. Stan Mogoba, again explained the point as well as its implications. A recount was then taken. And once again an overwhelming majority voted in favour of the motion. Why didn't my friend Michael Maasdorp ascertain the true facts, before publishing his views?

2. The second error concerns the composition of the Steering Committee of the Black Renaissance Convention. The organizing committee had among its members: V. Gillinge, V. Smith, S. Kweyama, M.V. Magodiello, J. Chabaku and L. Myeza. These were all lay people. To lampoon "naive Black churchmen" for their "chronic incapability of evolving strong yet flexible policies and modes of action", is to insult the intelligence of the non-clerical members of the committee. I do not quite understand what Michael Maasdorp means by "strong yet flexible policies and modes of action". If by that he means the morally dubious stratagems and artful manipulation which are a common feature of some "civilized meetings", our committee does not wish to be party to them. The Convention wanted to hear and assess the honest opinions of Black people.

3. In the second half of paragraph three, Michael Maasdorp states that the homeland leaders might be forgiven for suspecting that they were invited in order to be expelled. Frankly, this is such irresponsible nonsense that I do not think it deserves any explanation. If he could substantiate these allegations, Michael Maasdorp would have done the readers a great favour. Is he subtly trying to persuade his homeland "friends" to feel that way? My rhetorical question is reinforced by the last sentence of paragraph 3: "And will it not be understandable if these men, having been publicly humiliated, will never again attend such a church-sponsored circus?" Couldn't he have phrased his intentions a little more cleverly than that!

4. Although Michael Maasdorp does not make it clear what he in fact expected the Convention to achieve, there are a few things which emerged from his letter:

4.1 The Black Renaissance Convention should have endorsed or at least accommodated the Bantustan policy.

- 4.2 The Convention ought to have gagged the militants and activists, because "they do not have half the support of the Bantustan leaders".
- 4.3 In three days the Convention should have effected Black solidarity and formed what he glibly terms a united front; failing which the Black church leaders must opt out of the struggle of their people and let the white man lead. This is the outcome of a narrow-minded theology! It is all so distressing.

It is difficult to follow Maasdorp's reasoning. On the one hand, he claims to be a 'revolutionary' fighting for a united Black front in order to win the struggle for liberation. But on the other, and almost in the same breath, he condemns radical militants among Black people. He overtly supports the conservative Bantustan leaders who do not represent the free voice of the Black people in this country.

On the face of it, Michael Maasdorp sounds quite militant in his confused way. But when the article is taken as a whole, his "verkramptheid" leaves no one in doubt. We have no quarrel with his political views, however amateurish they may sound.

How anybody can dub the organizers of the Black Renaissance Convention "black liberals" really defies all imagination. Here again, how Michael Maasdorp can draw such a conclusion is hard to surmise. Since Michael Maasdorp did not take the trouble to find out our views on the Black Renaissance Convention and on basic political issues, we have no choice but to suspect that he was not interested in giving an unbiased assessment of the Convention and the personalities involved in it. His thinking at best is a disastrous muddle.

In conclusion, therefore, it is now evident that Michael Maasdorp based his whole attack on the Black Renaissance Convention on false premises and on spurious information. If only he had read the leaders of the "STAR" and "PRETORIA NEWS" (17th, 18th December, 1974) perhaps he might have saved himself this embarrassment. It is clear from his letter that Michael Maasdorp had wanted the Black Renaissance Convention to follow a certain line of thought and action, as illustrated above. Because his hopes apparently failed to materialize, he decided to lambaste the organizers. The

Steering Committee saw itself primarily responsible to the Black people and to the country as a whole. As we see them, the positive results of that never-to-be-forgotten Convention, are as follows:

1. The Black Renaissance Convention was the first nation-wide (black) Conference consisting of so many disparate ideologies and organizations, and managed to keep the 300-odd delegates together until the end of the Convention. That happened in spite of the vociferous and disturbing efforts of one or two determined "iconoclastic saboteurs" who have been discovered to be working against black solidarity.

2. The highlight of the Convention was the passing of the Declaration and Resolutions.

3. Although Black organizations may differ about strategy and method, the Convention demonstrated beyond doubt that Black people are unanimous with regard to ultimate objectives. For instance, Blacks demand their freedom NOW! They want their land and political and economic powers, they want to be masters of their own destiny. Admittedly, there will always be a debate about the *type* of society which will follow the "Revolution". Some will settle for reformism, whilst others will stop at nothing short of a revolution — i.e. a complete and radical change of the system.

4. Finally, the Convention provided a long-needed public platform whereon Black people could ventilate their grievances in an atmosphere of uninhibited freedom. Even disagreements which lead to no over-night solidarity are very useful. They clarify positions and focus attention on fundamental issues.

The importance of the views of Michael Maasdorp and others like him lies in the fact that they keep the debate alive. They help to expose the thinking of a certain type of white man. Provided they are not blurred by arrogance, readers' criticisms are warmly welcomed because there is no such thing as an infallible organization.

*Smangaliso Mkhatswa*  
—Secretary, Organizing Committee  
*Black Renaissance Convention*

## RECONCILIATION IS UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE

*Pro Veritate* has given the opportunity to Michael Maasdorp to reply to Smangaliso Mkhatswa's letter and he writes as follows:

I am glad to be free to criticise events such as the Black Renaissance Convention — and I will continue to criticise such happenings as long as I am free to do so. I regret only that my article was not longer so that I could have mentioned the Convention's few positive achieve-

ments. I can hardly be blamed, however, for restricting myself to a single aspect. As for my alleged lack of information, I will leave readers of *Pro Veritate* to judge. I need mention only that the colour of my skin is white. Some of Smangaliso Mkhatswa's objections I will pass over, on the grounds that they are based upon an imperfect appreciation of a compressed and idiomatic use of the English language. Other objections need to

be dealt with.

1. Father Mkhathshwa makes it clear that the Black homeland leaders *were* expelled from the Convention, and tries to excuse that fact by pointing out that an overwhelming majority agreed to the expulsion. How then, in the light of this admission, can he later claim that the Convention “managed to keep the 300-odd delegates together until the end of the meeting”? Were the “iconoclastic saboteurs” expelled? If not, why not? Why was not *anyone* who voiced disagreement expelled?

2. I do not hesitate to call lay people “churchmen/women”. I am myself a cleric — but that fact alone does not make me a churchman. If the lay people on the Organising Committee thought I was insulting them as lay people, then I apologise. But if the Organising Committee does not want to be party to “dubious stratagems and artful manipulation” then they will find many who will not be party to exclusion on the grounds of either political strategy (homeland leaders) or colour of skin (Whites).

3. In his fourth point, Smangalisio Mkhathshwa does me the dubious service of drawing conclusions on my behalf. These conclusions I am bound to refute.

3.1 This is an understandable but wrong conclusion. The Convention was duty-bound to condemn Apartheid. But it does *not* follow that it was duty-bound to expel the homeland leaders; to have kept them there would have made the condemnation more powerful. As it was, the expulsion was an empty and wounding gesture. Smangalisio Mkhathshwa’s reasoning is twisted because from it follows the conclusion that Whites are indeed as he insinuates foreigners in South Africa.

3.2 He got this out of the air. Nobody should be gagged, not even homeland leaders, and certainly not by expulsion.

3.3 Not even I in my optimism could have expected the conclusion Smangalisio Mkhathshwa draws here. My question remains, and has been studiously avoided: can a united Black front be achieved without the homeland leaders? It does not help to cry out that all Blacks have the same ultimate aim. One assumes, for example, that the various Christian denominations share the aim to convert all men to Christianity. What matters is not the common aim, in this case, but that they fail so dismally in the *way* they go about it! Finally, I do not claim to be a revolutionary and deny that I gave that impression in my article.

4. Two important matters remain to be dealt with.

4.1 Smangalisio Mkhathshwa claims that the Convention’s “Declaration and Resolutions” amount to a highlight. Shades of the White Liberal! Church archives are littered with similar resolutions. All is not gold that glisters, and I prefer to weigh resolutions up against deeds. Am I seriously expected to believe that the Convention meant what it said

when it resolved to strive for “a totally united and democratic South Africa”? How can that be in the light of (a) the exclusion of Whites, and (b) the expulsions?

4.2 I am accused of a “narrow-minded theology”. This is not the occasion for a long theological debate, so I leave readers of *Pro Veritate* to decide. The theology upon which I have based my approach includes the following premises:

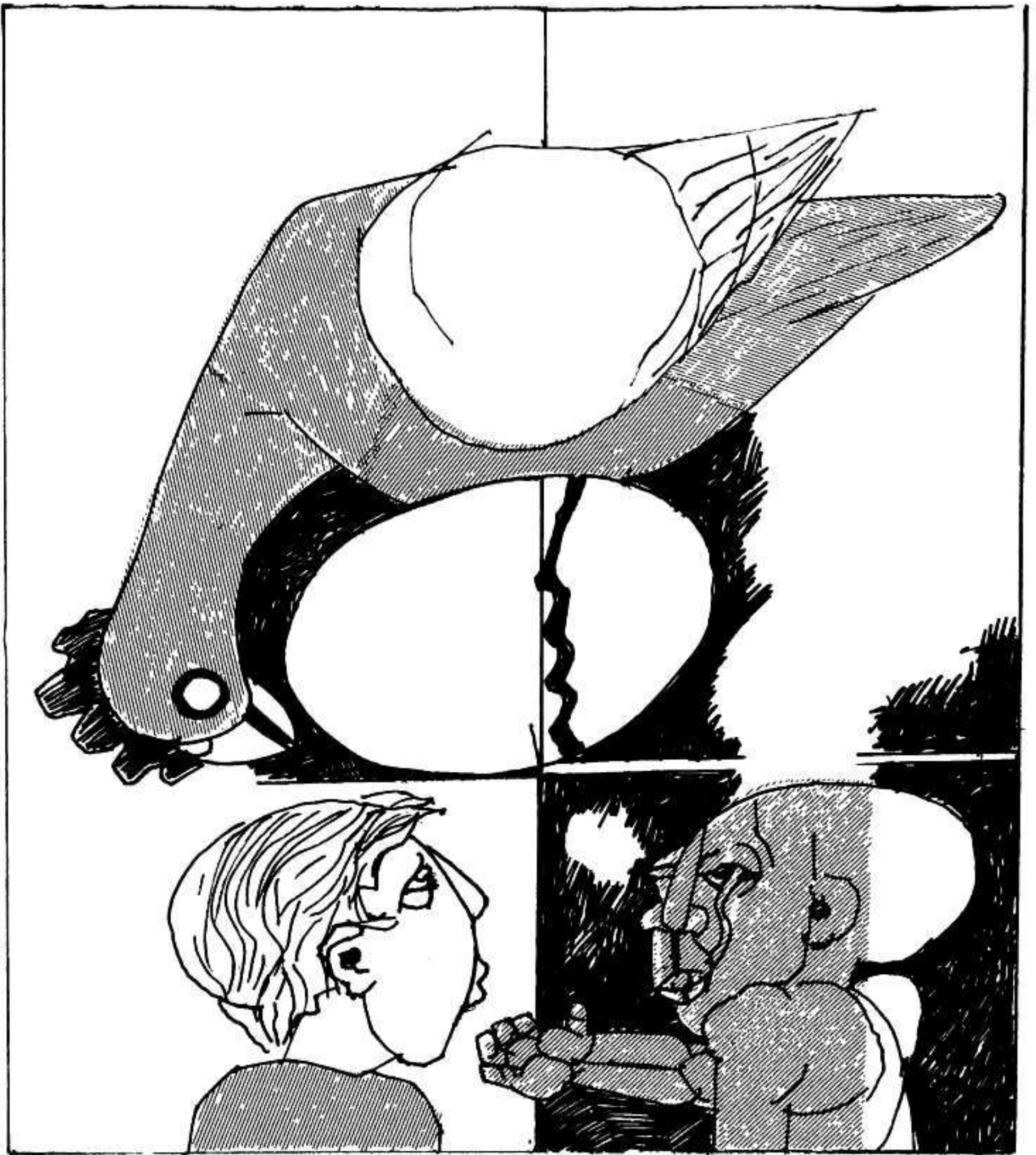
4.2.1 That the New Testament and the tradition of the Christian Church do not, except in heresy, attempt to justify exclusive communities of any kind — not even of the temporary sort which came together at Hammanskraal for the Black Renaissance Convention;

4.2.2 That an indispensable element of reconciliation — whether of God with Man, or Man with Man — is unconditional acceptance. It is false to claim that communication comes *before* reconciliation. The bridge of acceptance must first be built before opposing parties can hear each other. Reconciliation is not a *state* to be plunged into like a pool on a hot day, but a *process* which must be carefully nurtured and engineered. It is for this reason that I sincerely believe that another Convention should take place. By all means exclude the Whites if that is the only way Blacks can stand on their own feet. But if a future convention is to be built upon the sands of rejection instead of the rock of reconciliation, then it can hope only to increase, rather than diminish, the rifts between White and Black and Black and Black.

— Michael Maasdorp

#### **Statement on the expropriation of the Federal Theological Seminary at Alice**

The Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference meeting in Plenary Session at Pretoria has expressed grave concern at the expropriation of the Federal Theological Seminary at Alice in the Cape Province. The Seminary supplied an essential service to the African people in preparing ministers and priests to care for their spiritual welfare. This act of expropriation will be definitely looked upon as an act of provocation and is deeply deplored by the Conference, in view of the assurance given by the government when permission was originally granted for the erection of the Seminary. While we express our sympathy with the various churches connected with the Seminary we also express our readiness to assist them in any way possible to us. \*



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