

A 34.4.2

RESOLUTIONS

AND

REPORTS

OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE  
PROVINCIAL STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO THE  
STATE OF THE NATION

April 7 to 11, 1978

Church of the Province of Southern Africa  
JOHN HESBURG.

WAR AND PEACE.

- 1) That P.S.C. requests Dr. James Foulden, together with the Diocese of Natal's "Resolution 7" Group, to

prepare simple material as soon as possible, that can be put into the hands of persons who may be involved in military action, or parishes who wish to make a study of the issues involved, to enable them to see some of the ethical dimensions and to make a more considered and Christian decision as to their own response; this material to be made available to parishes through the Publishing Department.

- (2) That P.S.C. requests the Southern African Anglican Theological Commission to form a work group, not necessarily of its own members, to draw up a detailed and definitive document to guide the Church in its attitude to violence in the South African situation.

It should include considerations of Old and New Testament teaching, the past tradition and practice of the Church, and a consideration of whether the present situation in South Africa justifies Whites in taking up arms to defend the status quo, or blacks who feel the time has come for violent armed revolution.

The document should in the first instance be presented to the Synod of Bishops.

- (3) That P.S.C.
- (i) endorses the call by Episcopal Synod for a system, whereby conscientious objectors can do a non-military form of national service, e.g. in hospitals, housing, welfare, etc. to be permitted by the State as an alternative to military service in South Africa; and
- (ii) believes that the Government's attention needs to be re-drawn to the fact that the threat on our borders and the danger of Communist influence arise to a very large extent from the grave injustices within our land; that were those injustices to be redressed, Communism would have little attraction, and that until these injustices are redressed, an elaborate defence system cannot ultimately prevent infiltration;

(iii) respectfully requests the Metropolitan to appoint a small body who will make continuing personal representations to the Government and the Army on these issues.

(iv) That P.S.C.

(i) believes that the Church and its members are called to be "peacemakers" (Mt. 5.9); that peacemaking means making active efforts to reconcile estranged groups and to enable them to speak the truth in love to each other while still being in fellowship; and that in fulfilling this task the Church will discover blessedness;

(ii) respectfully requests each Diocesan Bishop to appoint a group in his Diocese who will explore ways of 'making peace' there between black and white, English and Afrikaans, other languages and tribal groups. Such ways might include regional 'seminars' for clergy, adults and young people; or youth events such as camps or hikes; or work camps. Each Bishop is encouraged to cause a report to be given to each meeting of P.S.C. on what has been attempted and achieved in his Diocese, in order that we may thank God together for his works.

(N.B. Archbishop Hurley's 'Mobilization for Peace' could be a useful document for groups.)

(v) That P.S.C. asks the Bishops to explore ways of strengthening bonds between the Church and military chaplains, with a view to helping them always to recognise that they are servants primarily of God and his Church; this would mean assisting and guiding them in their ministry and welcoming their ministry in the Church as a whole.

#### 9. OTHER COUNTRIES:

(1) That this P.S.C. encourages all Anglicans, for the avoidance of misunderstanding, to use as the title of their Church "The Church of the Province of Southern Africa", even before the necessary legal steps to effect this change have been completed.

(2) That this P.S.C. asks all Dioceses to consider the effects of the Parity of Stipends programme on the life and mission of the Church and to report to P.S.C. in November 1978.

(3) That this P.S.C. takes note of the difficulties and discourtesy experienced by certain of its members resident outside when entering the Republic of South Africa to attend bona fide Church meetings. It respectfully requests the Metropolitan to bring the matter to the attention of the South African authorities.

(4) Conscious of our calling to proclaim the Gospel in its wholeness, we acknowledge with shame and repentance the many ways in which the Church has failed in this responsibility. Present developments in Southern Africa have made us realise the need to re-examine our commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There are current ideologies which need serious examination in the light of the Gospel. We refer specifically to Marxism, capitalism, nationalism and racism (white and black). We believe that to see them objectively and critically would clarify their dangers and their strengths, and focus attention on the challenges which they make to the present witness of our faith.

Therefore this P.S.C. strongly recommends that the Department of Education examine the ideological studies being undertaken by the S.A.C.C. and subsequently produce appropriate materials for use at parish level.

(5) That this P.S.C. commends the Koinonia Declaration for further study and encourages the C.P.S.A. Division of Justice and Reconciliation to co-operate with such groups as produced this document.

6. NON-VIOLENCE:

Certain steps can be taken by Christians in order positively to resist or diminish the violence of our society. These could include:

- (a) The surrender to the authorities of privately-owned guns, having rendered them unusable.
- (b) Refraining from the purchase of Defence Bonds.
- (c) Support for the families of conscientious objectors.
- (d) The establishment of Parish Action Groups in order to examine our individual participation in a violent society and to take appropriate action. (The group wondered what had become of the Parish Action Groups called for by the P.S.C. in November 1977).

B. QUESTIONS OF CONSCIENCE OVER OBEDIENCE TO GOD AND/OR THE SECULAR POWER:

In its consideration of these questions the group referred to the diversity of political backgrounds of the Twelve Disciples, the Book of Revelation and the following texts:

St. Matthew 22. 15-22; Romans 12 - 13; II Thessalonians 2,5 ff; I Peter 2, 9-17.

There follow some of the suggestions which are made to the Church.

1. INFORMATION AND TRAINING:

- (a) Much could be done, both to alert people to the reality of the situation and to prepare them for a possible future. This could be done in parochial, diocesan and Provincial literature by publishing accounts of what happens to people in detention.
- (b) There is surely a need for Christians to be trained not only for costly discipleship, but also for the possibility and demands of detention, solitary confinement and physical duress.

- (c) More needs to be done in providing information about legal rights and also the legal consequences of our actions in opposing injustice.

2. SUPPORT:

- (a) The group suggested that Christians and the Church should publicly give moral and pastoral support to those who for conscience sake disobey the law.
- (b) Support should be given as far as possible to the recent Koinonia Declaration and to dissidents within Afrikanerdom.

3. DISOBEDIENCE:

There are various areas in which may be demanded the conscientious disobedience of Christians and the Church. Among them are:

- (a) The requirement of permits for racially mixed Church gatherings and occupation of rectories.
- (b) Pass laws and citizenship regulations.
- (c) The new Fund Raising and Welfare Bills.
- (d) Racial requirements for Boards of Trustees.
- (e) The Parliamentary Internal Security Commission.
- (f) The racial integration of Church Schools (and support for their heads).

Some of the suggestions made in parts of A and B above are incorporated in Resolutions which were presented to, and passed by, P.S.C.

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1. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS:

- (a) In addressing ourselves to the problem of War and Peace we noted the present South African situation:
- (i) The Whites rule by right of historical conquest.
  - (ii) Blacks have never been allowed to share in deciding who shall form a legitimate government. Coloureds in the Cape have had that right withdrawn.
  - (iii) Blacks and Coloureds therefore feel that they owe no loyalty to the status quo.
  - (iv) The fragmented nature of South African society means that there is no central unit of loyalty.
- (b) The criteria traditionally used to determine whether or not a particular war is justified are:
- (i) The decision to wage war must be made by the legitimate authorities.
  - (ii) The war must be waged for a just cause.
  - (iii) All other methods must have been tried to resolve the situation.
  - (iv) There must be reasonable assurance that the end result of the war will be better than the present situation.
  - (v) The war must be waged in a restrained manner so that violence and weaponry are used to a degree to ensure victory but no more.

2. THE SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION:

In applying these criteria to South Africa today there are more than the usual difficulties of relating guidelines to an actual situation:

- (a) The legitimacy of the present white Government may reasonably be questioned by both Blacks and Whites, as having acquired its authority by conquest. It could be argued that "liberation movement" leaders are to be regarded as equally legitimate.
- (b) The injustices in the Republic and the fact that the central Government does not command the loyalty of communities to whom it gives almost no say in government make it hard for many to agree that the Defence Force wages war for a just cause.
- (c) Blacks have few methods open to them to resolve the injustices which they experience.
- (d) There is so little commitment by Blacks to the status quo that to many people any other dispensation seems preferable to the present situation.
- (e) The use of words like "war" and "revolution" is problematical when Blacks see their cause as being one of throwing off the oppression of a white victor who rules in their land by right of conquest.

3. TWO QUESTIONS:

- (a) Are Christians entitled to use warlike violence? Some of us felt that violence which involves killing or serious injury is always inappropriate for Christians. Others felt that situations like extreme injustice which cannot be changed in any other way, or self-defence against unjust oppression or invasion, require violence, however regrettable. Social injustice on its own does not validate violence which is appropriate only when the injustice is extreme and unchangeable by any other means.
- (b) In reply to the question "If violence is ever justified is the present situation in South Africa just enough to defend, or unjust enough to warrant violent revolution" none of us was opposed to the State's use of coercion when needed. All societies have to use coercion but the issue is whether it is exercised to defend people's rights or to repress them.

We also discussed the position of military chaplains and the problems of compulsory military training.

## THE CHURCH'S TASK:

One of the most important tasks the Church can undertake is to create in her own life a meeting place between Black and White and to create a single society rather than a plural one. By enabling young men of all races to meet together and to form real relationships we will create in them an awareness of the ethical problem of involvement in both the guerilla forces and the Defence Force, in a way which transcends any theoretical discussion of the problem.

We therefore recommend that the Church seriously explore ways of helping these real relationships to develop in order that we may become peacemakers (St. Matthew 5,9) and not just peacelovers. Our task is actively to work for justice and reconciliation.

## 5. A MORAL PROBLEM:

We also recommend that the Church prepare study material which can be put into the hands of young men who face compulsory military training. At present there are various possibilities for them:

- (a) They may see it as their duty to become combatants.
- (b) They may feel that they should serve in the Forces, but as non-combatants. For automatic assignment to a non-combatant role the law requires that they belong to a religious denomination which has pacifism as one of its tenets. However, in practice any man who states his religious scruples against playing a combatant role will usually be assigned to work in the Medical Corps or in an office. Nevertheless, for many Blacks this is not acceptable and even to serve as a Chaplain is seen as tantamount to identifying oneself with an oppressive "establishment", as being part of the whole military machine.
- (c) They may serve in the S.A. Police Force, which excuses them from military duty but in effect hardly changes or solves the problem because of the role which the police are called upon to play in the Republic.

- (d) They may refuse to serve at all, in which case they will be sentenced to a period within Detention Barracks. At present Jehovah's Witnesses are treated in this way but are not treated severely; they discipline themselves; do light duties and are allowed out on weekend passes. However it is unlikely that Anglicans would be treated thus sympathetically because pacifism is not one of the official tenets of the C.P.S.A.

The Church should do all she can to help men who face military service to make a responsible and informed decision. In the same way, we recommend that guidelines also be drawn up for Blacks who may wish to join liberation movements, to enable them to face their responsibility in this matter as Christians.

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