

Towards a Just Peace

A Declaration to End Conscription

We live in an unjust society where basic human rights are denied to the majority of the people.

We live in an unequal society where the land and wealth are owned by the minority.

We live in a society in a state of civil war, where brother is called on to fight brother.

We call for an end to conscription.

Young men are conscripted to maintain the illegal occupation of Namibia, and to wage unjust war against foreign countries.

Young men are conscripted to assist in the implementation and defence of apartheid policies.

Young men who refuse to serve are faced with the choice of a life of exile or a possible six years in prison.

We call for an end to conscription.

We believe that the financial cost of the war increases the poverty of our country, and that money should rather be used in the interests of peace.

We believe that the extension of conscription to coloured and indian citizens will increase conflict and further divide our country.

WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS THE MORAL RIGHT OF SOUTH AFRICANS TO EXERCISE FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE AND TO CHOOSE NOT TO SERVE IN THE SADF.

WE CALL FOR AN END TO CONSCRIPTION

WE CALL FOR A JUST PEACE IN OUR LAND

The ECC Declaration has been endorsed by:

Cathsoc

Archbishop Hurley

Beyers Naude

Joyce Harris

Dave Webster

SACC

Race Relations

United Democratic Front

Detainees Parents Support Committee



End Conscription Campaign

PEACE THROUGH JUSTICE



Every possible opinion regarding the relationship of the Christian gospel to violence is found today.

At one extreme are the pacifists who refuse to take up arms. At the other end of the scale are those who regard violence as a perfectly justifiable means of bringing about a just society.

Between the two extremes are those (mainly of the Reformed tradition) who see a place for violence and revolution, but only as a last resort.

Calvin himself accepted only one condition for a just revolution: when a ruler forces the people to disobey God. Even so, it was not up to the common people to remove the rulers but this had to be done by the "lesser magistrates".

Calvin taught that evil rulers had to be obeyed because this was God's way of punishing the people. Obviously people holding this viewpoint have no difficulty in accepting the fact that the state has the right to use force in order to maintain order.

Since the sixties there has been an awakening of interest in the political message of the gospel. Indeed, the Bible has in some circles been interpreted as a political book.

Political theologians in both Europe and America have tried to make the gospel relevant to the world of today. Under Marxist influence the biblical message has been seen as "earthly", not "heavenly".

It is not a question of whether to use violence, but rather of what violence to use and to what extent.

Thus theology is being contextualised in many places and many ways. Theologians debating the violence issue reject the "structural violence" inherent in many societies but also sound a warning that violence itself must never be absolutized, as it can become an idol.

South American "liberation" theologians as well as the North American "black" theologians, in general, see violence as essential in the struggle for liberation.

Camillo Torres and Nestor Paz are but two of those who have formed their own guerilla bands to fight against the government of the day, and the "structural" violence to be found there. Bonino, a Methodist says that violence cannot be prescribed on a general scale, but each situation has to be looked at in context.

James Cone, the leading exponent of "black" theology in the USA, is another who advocates violence. For him, Christianity is about the new humanity which will arise out of a just society.

Before there can be any talk of reconciliation, there has to be a just society. On account of the "structural injustice" prevalent in North American society, Cone maintains that no-one can be non-violent.

The whole question of violence is a difficult one, and easy answers are hard to come by. Asking what Jesus would have done also elicits different responses. Some would say that God used violence, in killing the firstborn, to free the Israelites from Egyptian slavery, and again he used violence (death on the cross) to bring about the salvation of humankind.



What is important is that every situation be placed under the judgment of God and answers sought in the light of his rule alone. On no account must Christianity be manipulated to suit one's own standpoint.

CHALLENGE OF CONFLICT

Recent percentage polls in the Coloured and Indian constitutional elections averaged 30% and 20,2% respectively, although the real figures were far lower.

These elections bitterly divided both communities and further highlighted the conflicts inherent in our society. And the background? Townships burn, students boycott, operation "Thunder Chariot" blazes across the media. Meanwhile, the Christian wrings his hands and asks: "What should I do?"

Christians face a crisis of response in an increasingly polarized society. The temptation is to pretend either that what is going on around us does not concern our faith in Jesus or that we are powerless to act.

Are we pretending?

"He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit."
(Eph. 2:17,18)

But, if Christianity is to be relevant in the troubled context of our country, it is crucial that Christians live out a commitment to Christ. How is such dynamic commitment possible? What does it involve for the individual Christian?

"There is only one thing I can do in times like these, when some people, and some of them very intelligent people, fear a total estrangement between black and white. Then I, whether I am black or white, must ask to be made an instrument of God's peace, so that one more healing stream may flow into the river of hate. It is hard for me to see God's power working in these dangerous times, unless it works through us."
(Alan Paton, Instrument of Thy Peace)

To be the instrument of the peace of Christ is to work through personal contact, as He does. As Christian students in SA, we have many opportunities to spread God's healing power through communication with individuals.

The opportunity may be at home, making the effort to understand a domestic worker as a whole person, at university, getting to know and care for other members of our classes. We

can participate in such activities as the Alexandra Tutoring Project, the Winter School and campus fellowship groups.

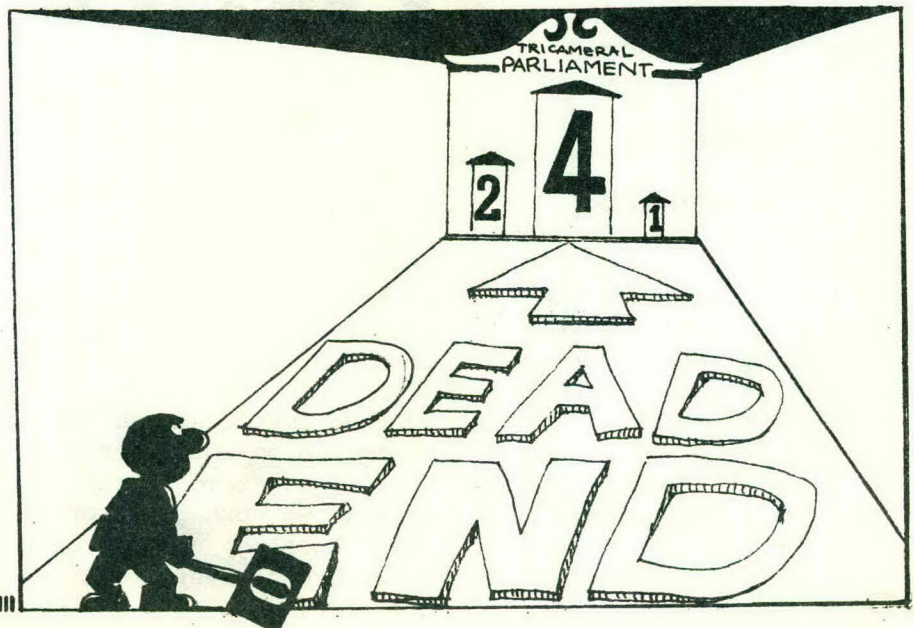
A commitment to Christ can be made alive and contextualised by sharing one's ability and wealth of education in a scheme like Education - helping adults work towards Junior Certificate and matric and teaching literacy. (Phone Leslie Novos of Education, 728-1485)

The Church also provides possibilities for being an active instrument for peace - there are centres of concern, working groups which visit resettlement areas and other similar projects.

A Christian in this country need not feel overawed or impotent. St. Paul wrote of Jesus:

"For He himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility." (Eph. 2:14)

Jesus calls us to act out this mission of peace, by the strength of His Spirit, as He did.



LIBERATION IN THEOLOGY

Recently, reports appeared in our local newspapers in which, it seemed, the Pope had approved a text which criticised the Marxist nature of liberation theology and condemned Christians who are politically inclined.

This is a rather narrow view of the complete document. What the document does do is to caution Christians not to mindlessly adopt Marxist values. Certain theologians have, however, said that they draw on Marxist social analysis to help them to understand the causes of poverty, but that Marxism does not influence their theological reflections.

militant Jesus

The document is also critical of those who attempt to look for characteristics of a contemporary militant in Jesus' life. This would be a misrepresentation of His life and witness. Jesus came to establish God's Kingdom on earth. He brought a message of total liberation where the Kingdom values of love, justice and sharing override the worldly values of wealth, greed and group selfishness.

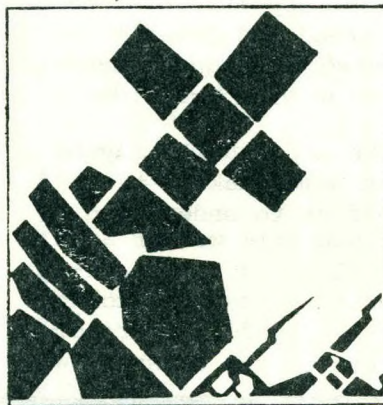
Liberation theology sprang up in Latin America in the 1960s as a theological reflection on the material poverty of people and the need to provide concrete aid to the poor.

For centuries the Catholic Church played a very conservative role in Latin America society, but significant and often

very dramatic changes have occurred. Bishops as well as priests, religious, and lay people have engaged in the struggle against injustice.

Many of the changing attitudes within the Church grew out of commitments on the part of many priests and religious to become more actively involved with the poor and to help them to become more conscious of their rights and dignity as human beings.

This commitment induces them to take on a political responsibility, which is required if they are effectively to display the love that is demanded by the gospel.



conscientization

A process of conscientisation occurred. The poor came to a new awareness of themselves, began to look at their situation, and recognised the possibilities of changing it.

Gustavo Gutiérrez published A Theology of Liberation in 1971. It remains the best-known work in liberation theology and the best overall statement of its position.

Many Christians, Gutiérrez observes, take for granted that Jesus was not interested in political life, that his mission was purely religious.

Jesus vs Herod

Jesus rejected the narrow nationalism of the Zealots and their belief that they could realise the Kingdom through their own efforts alone. He opposed all political-religious Messianism which did not respect the depth of the religious realm and the autonomy of political action.

He attacked instead the very foundation of injustice and exploitation: the disintegration of community. In doing so his actions took on a very definite political significance.

He confronted the major power groups of his society. He called Herod a "fox"; he denounced the hypocrisy and legalism of the Pharisees; his teachings threatened the privileged position of the Sadducees; and he died at the hands of political authorities.

As Gutiérrez put it:

"I discovered three things. I discovered that poverty was a destructive thing, something to be fought against and destroyed, not merely something which was the object of our charity. Secondly, I discovered that poverty was not accidental. The fact that these people are poor and not rich is not just a matter of chance, but the result of structure. It was a structural question. Thirdly, I discovered that poor people were a social class. When I discovered that poverty was something to be fought against.... it became crystal clear that in order to serve the poor, one had to move into political action.

Mr. God, this is Anna

"At five years Anna knew absolutely the purpose of being, knew the meaning of love and was a personal friend and helper of Mister God" (p 13)

Through the character of Anna we are introduced to the reality, the down-to-earth orientation towards human beings as they really are and towards God as he really is. We are presented with a method of philosophising about life, not through thinking of it, but by doing it.

Anna teaches us about Mister God and not the aged metaphysical figure who is measured in labels of human perfection. For



Anna, "Them's just peoples' words" (p 96) Rather we are introduced to a God who can be loved "from the inside out", who can be known personally, like anyone else. Mister God doesn't belong to churches or preachers or Christians - Mister God belongs to the whole world, because it all belongs to him.

"Mister God had made everything, there was

nothing that God hadn't made. When you began to see what it was all about, how things worked, how things were put together, then you were beginning to understand what Mister God was" (p 97)

Mister God, this is Anna presents us with a child's view, an unacademic description of what Bonhoeffer terms 'religionless Christianity'. Suddenly our world changes. It is undiscovered, extra-ordinary and supernatural, because God made it so.

For an instruction manual on how to see things God's way -

Mister God, This is Anna is a life-challenging experience.



Cheit's Lament:
1. If you like it, they don't have it in your size.
2. If you like it and it's in your size, it doesn't fit anyway.
3. If you like it and it fits, you can't afford it.
4. If you like it, it fits and you can afford it, it falls apart the first time you wear it



Though her husband often went on business trips, she hated to be left alone.
"I've solved our problem," he said. "I've bought you a St. Bernard. It's name is Great Reluctance."

To err is human, but to really foul things up requires a computer.



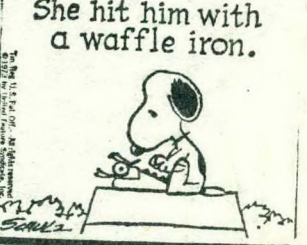
Those who are most moral are farthest from the problem.



"Now, when I go away, you shall know that I am leaving you with Great Reluctance!"

He who laughs last - probably didn't get the joke.

The one day you'd sell your soul for something, souls are a glut.



She hit him with a waffle iron.
If the shoe fits its ugly



SALT

WISHES YOU

JOY AT THE

BIRTH OF

THE PRINCE

OF PEACE

Do not be afraid. I have good news for you;
there is great joy coming to the whole people.
Today in the city of David, a deliverer has been
born to you, the Messiah, the Lord Luke 2:10

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END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

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