

PEACE CONCEPTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA IN THE LIGHT OF THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF PEACE

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Abstract

Two conflicting conceptions of peace are prevalent in South Africa today, held by the government and its supporters on the one hand, and by all those organisations and individuals who reject the present political dispensation on the other hand. A fundamental resemblance between these two conceptions can, however, be noted in so far as armed force is seen, by both the South African government and its radical opponents, as the only way to attain peace in South Africa, in so far as they seek a peace that is more beneficial to their own group than to others, and in so far as they blame each other for the disruption of our society.

In stark contrast to that, peace is presented in the Bible as something that does not only benefit certain groups of people, but is to the benefit of all, and cannot be realised by armed force, but only by reconciliation. The biblical concept of peace challenges Christians to criticise the prevalent peace conceptions, to strive together to attain peace that is to the benefit of all the inhabitants of South Africa, and to persuade the fighting parties that the conquering of enmity is a far better way to attain peace than victory over the enemy.

1. Introduction

What significance does the 'gospel of peace' (Acts 10:36; Eph 2:17; 6:15) have for the present conflict in South Africa? This is undoubtedly one of the most vital questions that Christians in South Africa have to answer today.

It is not possible to address this question exhaustively in an article like this. I do, however, want to make some remarks with regard to the implications peace - according to the gospel of Christ - has for the way in which peace should be conceptualised and attained in South Africa. In order to do so it is necessary, first of all, to take account of the prevalent conceptions of peace in South Africa, and, secondly, to establish what the 'gospel of peace' contributes to our understanding of peace.

2. Prevalent conceptions of peace in South Africa

An analysis of the present conflict situation in South Africa suggests that two conflicting conceptions of peace are prevalent. On the one hand we have the view of the South African government and its supporters, and on the other hand the view of all those organisations and individuals who reject the present political dispensation in South Africa.

In the eyes of the South African government peace in Southern Africa will be attained when hostilities between the South African government and other governments of Southern Africa come to an end, the revolutionary onslaught on the government is terminated, and 'law and order' in South Africa is restored. The government realises that such a peace will never be attained if the old order of *apartheid* is kept intact. It is therefore willing to institute certain economic and political reforms to accommodate the demands of the blacks and critical African and Western governments. At the same time, it hopes that this peace can be attained without impairing the present privileges of the whites too seriously. In fact, the bottom line for the government in this regard is that the whites should retain control over their future, and that their present standard of living and education should be maintained. In the opinion of the government this can only happen if politics in South Africa is also in future conducted on an ethnic basis and the group rights of ethnic minorities are entrenched in the constitution.

The government has not, however, tried to attain the peace it envisages only by reform measures. It has also increasingly relied on strict security measures and the use of the military to curb the influence of black political organisations that reject the present political dispensation. As a result of the fact that black organisations like the ANC and the PAC operate from neighbouring states, the government has even found it necessary to undertake extensive military operations within the borders of these neighbouring states.

The South African government justifies these security measures and military operations by referring to the 'total onslaught' it would have to deal with. By propaganda against the South African government, military operations and terrorism under the guise of so-called 'freedom movements' like the ANC and PAC, infiltration of labour unions, community organisations and even churches, radicals would be trying to instigate and prepare the black population for a revolutionary take-over of the government in South Africa.

According to the National Security Policy of the government, this 'total onslaught' can only be resisted successfully by 'a total strategy' (Leonard 1983:198-221; SACBC 1985:37-8). This strategy implies that the Republic should be defended, not only by the defence force, but by all state departments and civilians, and not only by military, but also by ideological means.

In its propaganda against the perpetrators of the 'total onslaught', the South African government has singled out the ANC. The ANC is depicted as an exclusively

communist organisation that instigates violence (even 'necklacing') in an irresponsible way, and is only interested in the revolutionary take-over of political power and the grounding of a one-party socialist state in South Africa. The conclusion that the government seems to suggest, is that it is impossible to negotiate with such an evil organisation. The military annihilation of the ANC seems to be the only alternative.

The peace that the South African government tries to attain, is totally rejected by those who strive for a new political dispensation in South Africa. The peace promoted by the government is in their opinion only a continuation of the favouring of whites on the basis of the oppression of blacks. To them the reform measures of the government do not make any difference in this respect, because they leave white political and economic domination in South Africa intact.

The peace these advocates of a new political dispensation aspire to, is one which entails the liberation of blacks from political and economic oppression, and allows them to play their rightful role in the politics and economy of South Africa. To what extent whites should be allowed to retain their acquired privileges in the post-apartheid era is something they differ about. That politics in the new situation of peace should not be conducted on an ethnic basis is something, however, about which they have reached far greater consensus. Politics on an ethnic basis is something this is associated by most opponents of the government with the hated *apartheid* policy that over the past four decades has given legal status to white domination and paternalism.

To the opponents of the present political dispensation it is absolutely clear that the South African government would never voluntarily relinquish the ruling power of the whites. It also seems clear to them that there is no possibility that the present government can be replaced in the foreseeable future by a more agreeable government by way of the ballot-box. It leaves them, in their opinion, no other choice than to use other means by which to force the government to relinquish the ruling power of the whites. Some are of the opinion that only non-violent methods of resistance like sanctions, disinvestment, boycotts, non-co-operation and strikes should be used. To a growing number of opponents of the present political dispensation, however, the violent overthrow of the Nationalist government seems to be the only way in which the peace they yearn for can be attained.

The proponents of an armed struggle against the South African government mostly justify it by alleging that this government has become 'illegitimate'. What is usually meant by this allegation, is that the South African government has become so tyrannical and morally bankrupt, that it has lost the moral right to rule, and ought therefore to be resisted by all possible means (Kairos Document 1985:par 4.3; Lienemann-Perrin 1988:9-12).

The armed struggle against the South African government is also justified by applying the traditional criteria for a 'just war'. According to this argument the government, by means of the *apartheid* policy, has caused the blacks so much harm and by means of strict security measures has so effectively eliminated the only means

of self-defence left to blacks (Sebidi 1986:255-259; Thlagale 1986:136139; 143-144; Villa-Vicencio 1987:7).

The conclusion of this analysis seems to be inevitable: there are indeed two conflicting conceptions of peace prevalent in South Africa, two conflicting strategies for attaining peace and two conflicting justifications for these strategies.

In my opinion we should not be content with such a conclusion. Despite the differences between the two conceptions of peace we have described, a fundamental similarity can be noted. I want indeed to ask the question whether we do not have here two applications of the same general conception of peace. This conception of peace has been prevalent for probably the greatest part of the history of mankind.

In the history of mankind, 'peace' has been predominantly associated with the absence of war (Jüngel 1983:14). The word 'peace' usually denotes the condition between the termination of one war and the outbreak of another. To those who have conquered in war, peace in general brings about far more benefit than for those who have lost. Peace, understood as the absence of war, thus mostly refers to conditions in which certain groups are politically and economically more privileged than others.

This prevalent conception of peace also has other connotations. We learn from history that in most cases the periods of peace between wars can only be accurately described as periods of 'peace-by-arms'. In most cases it can only be maintained if the conqueror retains military superiority. Those who have lost the war are, in turn, in most cases not willing to be content with its *status quo*, because of the serious disadvantages peace entails for them (Eicher 1982:45). As the *status quo* is maintained by the superior military power of the conqueror, however, armament and eventually also war almost always seem to be the only ways by which the loser can attain a peace that is more beneficial to him.

The result of this is that, ironically, time and again war is seen as the only way by which peace (that is: peace that benefits one's own group) can be attained. This means that peace generally carries within itself the germ of its own destruction. Most periods of peace in history were seemingly doomed to be only temporary periods of peace that inevitably resulted in war.

The so-called *pax Romana* provides an excellent example of the influence of the described peace conception. The *pax Romana* was attained by the purposive submission of many nations and maintained by military superiority, the violent suppression of rebellions, and the provocation of preventive wars. The Romans gave expression to their trust in war in various symbolic ways. On one of their coins the goddess Pax could be seen with a spear in one hand and a foot on the neck of the conquered enemy. They even had a motto: *Si vis pacem, para bellum!*: If you want peace, prepare for war! Needless to say, the *pax Romana* came to an end in the same way it had come about: by armed force! (Huber 1988:5-6; Jüngel 1983:18-23; Schmidt 1968: 196-198).

In order to justify the maintenance or attainment of peace by armament, oppression, war or revolution, it has been the tendency throughout history to depict the enemy as the aggressor. In this regard the so-called scapegoat mechanism has done good

service to those who opted for the military solution. The French anthropologist René Girard has shown that in every society the aggression of the people tends to become directed against certain individuals and groups inside or outside the society (Girard 1972; Lohfink 1983:41-48,245). These individuals or groups are held responsible for disruption and conflict in the society and accordingly become the object, not only of collective hate, but also of collective punitive measures. By propaganda and the manipulation of information, those who want to oppress a certain group or want to conduct war against a certain group or nation, can ensure that this group or nation is held responsible for the disruption in the society and appear to the people to be the aggressor.

Do you not agree that there is a definite resemblance between the conception of peace, with its correlate peace strategy and justification, that we have just described and the seemingly conflicting peace conceptions prevalent in South Africa, with their correlate peace strategies and justifications? In so far as armed force is seen, by both the South African government and its radical opponents, as the only way to attain peace in South Africa, in so far as they seek a peace that is more beneficial to their own group than to others, and in so far as they blame each other for the disruption of our society, this resemblance cannot be denied.

3. Peace according to the 'gospel of peace'

We can summarise in three points what the 'gospel of peace' teaches us about peace (Dietrich 1987:134-161; Eicher 1982:42-102; Jüngel 1983:45-56; Klappert 1983:267-314; Luz 1981:195-214; Schillebeeckx 1983:96-105; Simmons 1982:597-605; Strecker 1984:131-144; Stuhlmacher 1981:224-245; Tate 1982:587-596; USCBC 1983:9-18; Vögtle 1983):

3.1 Peace refers to more than just the absence of war. It refers to the right order in the universe in which God, man and nature are related to one another in complete harmony.

To understand peace according to the 'gospel of peace' we should take our starting point in the Old Testament message of peace as *shalom*. The peace that Jesus Christ brought, is none other than the *shalom* that the old Testament prophets longed for so intensely.

Peace as *shalom* is more than only the absence of war. Formulated negatively, it also includes the absence of alienation, material need and oppression in society. Formulated positively, it indicates a state of comprehensive social harmony and material well-being in society. The Old Testament emphasises that peace and justice are indissolubly linked to each other (e.g. Is 32:1; Ps 72:3). It is also not possible to talk of peace in the absence of the true worship of and obedience to God (Ez 13:10,16). *Shalom*, finally, includes also harmony between man and nature, as well as harmony in nature itself (Is 11:6-9). The Old Testament thus teaches us that peace is multi-dimensional and comprehensive. One can only speak of complete peace if there is harmony in nature and man has the right relationship with God, himself, his

fellowman (in his personal relationships as well as in the different institutions of society) and with nature.

The prophets of the Old Testament were looking forward to a Messianic kingdom in which perfect peace would be the part of mankind (Is 9:5-6). It is the peace message of the New Testament that the prophecy of this Messianic kingdom has been fulfilled in the life and work of Jesus Christ (Luk 2:14; Mat 4:17; Eph 2:14,17). On the cross Jesus Christ reconciled us, who were the enemies of God, with God (Rom 5:10). As a result, we now have peace with God (Rom 5:1). The breach between us and God as a result of our sin, however, is the fundamental cause of the lack of harmony in the whole world. By eradicating the enmity with God, Jesus Christ initiated a comprehensive renewal of man's existence (2 Cor 5:17) which includes, among others, the liberation from fear (Jo 14:17) and the conversion from self-destructing, sinful behaviour (Luk 15:11-32). His work of reconciliation also led to the foundation of a completely new community, the church, in which people who differed greatly in social status and cultural background and previously had been estranged from each other, formed a close unity which was not impaired by these differences (Eph 2:14,16; Gal 3:28). This peace that God has given in Christ even has cosmic implications: 'For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross' (Col 1:19-20). We can therefore rightfully say that the reconciliation has the restoration of the comprehensive peace in paradise, that was disturbed by the fall of man, as its goal. This peace will only be completely realised at the second coming of Christ, but is already taking shape as a result of the reconciliation.

The comprehensive peace that God gives in Christ, correlates with the comprehensive peace task of the Christians. They are called to be peacemakers in the comprehensive sense of the word (Mat 5:9). They must seek peace with God, with themselves and with fellow members of the church: 'Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since, as members of one body you were called to peace' (Col 3:15). They should, however, also strive to have peace with nature and with people in all walks of life: 'Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone' (Rom 12:17-18).

3.2 True peace does not only benefit certain groups of people, but is to the benefit of all people.

The indissoluble relationship between peace and justice, according to the Old Testament, indicates that peace is something indivisible. There is no true peace in society if there are people who are in need, exploited or oppressed. The Lord for that reason condemns the prophets who, in a situation in which people commit fraud and enrich themselves at the expense of others, dare to say: "'Peace, peace"... when there is no peace' (Jer 8:11; 6:14; 23:17; Ez 13:10,16).

These prophets are false prophets, while the peace that they proclaim, is a false peace. True peace includes the true worship of God, and the true worship of God, in turn, includes special care for the poor, the weak and the oppressed: 'Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of

the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter - when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?(Is 58:6-7)

In the grand vision of Isaiah (2:2-4, also Mic 3:1-4) the prophet is looking forward to a time when not only Israel, but all nations will advance to Jerusalem to accept the rule of God and to participate in the peace that God gives. This prophecy has been fulfilled in Christ's death: '... God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them' (2 Cor 5:19). The peace that God gives, is meant not only for a certain group of people, but for all people. It is not the exclusive possession of a privileged few, but a gift to be shared by all. Likewise, the peace endeavour of the Christian that correlates with this gift of peace from God, should not be exclusive - that is, to the benefit of only a selected few - but inclusive - that is, to the benefit of all the people concerned (Huber 1988:6).

3.3 Peace is not realised by armed force, but by love.

Israel had to learn in the school of defeat and exile that armed force does not bring the peace (in the sense of *shalom*) they had hoped for (Dietrich 1987:135-141). The Old Testament teaches consistently that only God can liberate from oppression. In the beginning it was assumed that God also used the war efforts of the Israelites and their military victories over their enemies, to liberate them (Ps 60:12-14). Eventually however, the prophets sharply criticised the trust in arms as a way to realise peace, and called upon Israel to put their trust in God and his Spirit alone (Is 30:15-16; Zec 4:6). In a post-exilic Psalm this criticism is formulated as follows: 'His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of a man; the Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love' (Ps 147:10-11; Ps 33:16-19).

If not by armed force, how does God then realise peace? According to Isaiah 53 the suffering servant of God would play a decisive role. Instead of returning evil with evil and violence with violence, he would be willing to bear his suffering patiently and without protest. Instead of making others scapegoats for his guilt, he himself would be willing to be a scapegoat and carry the guilt of others. In that way he would break the rising spiral of sin and violence, and bring salvation and peace.

On the cross Jesus Christ took on the role of the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 and carried the punishment for the sin of the world. By this act He prepared the way for the peace that the prophets of the Old Testament so intensely longed for. He also, however, gave an example on which His followers could model the execution of their peace task.

In the sermon on the mount (Mat 5; Luk 6) a striking picture is given of the way in which Christians, following Christ, should execute their peace endeavour. I summarise only the following guidelines given to the peacemaker:

- * Christians may not be resigned to enmity between themselves and other people, but should at all times strive to bring about reconciliation with their enemies. This entails, among other things, the willingness to reach out to the enemy, to try to see the situation from his point of view, to lay down hatred in

one's own heart, to forgive evil that has been done to oneself, to ask forgiveness for injustices committed against others, and to put right the injustice done.

* Christians should resist the temptation to repay injustice done to them. They should rather approach the enemy with a loving, accommodating disposition and so break the evil spiral of retribution that leads to more evil and violence. As Walter Wink has recently convincingly pointed out in his exposition of the three examples Jesus gave of this behaviour in the sermon on the mount, Jesus does not expect cowering submission. By their unexpected, accommodating behaviour Christians should rather appeal to the enemy to see and to treat them as fellow and equal human beings (Wink 1987:12-23).

* Non-violent methods in furthering peace should have priority for Christians over violent methods. It is possible to argue with one another whether Jesus would allow the use of violence in extreme situations of injustice and oppression. It is, however, not possible to deny that Jesus in His teaching gives preference to non-violent methods.

4. The challenge of the biblical concept of peace to Christians in South Africa

It is apparent that the biblical concept of peace and the prevalent conceptions of peace in South Africa differ fundamentally. We ought to know as Christians that peace, in the biblical sense of the word, can and will only be fully realised by God at the second coming of Christ. This does not imply, however, that the way in which peace is being conceptualised and attained in South Africa need not matter to us. The biblical concept of peace ought to be the norm on which all the peace endeavours of Christians are based. Although it will not always be possible to avoid compromises, Christians should see to it that a peace is being sought in South Africa that can stand the test of the biblical norm of peace as far as possible.

To find and to tread a path in South Africa that will bring us nearer to peace, in this sense of the word, is the challenge with which Christians are being confronted. How should Christians answer the challenge? Allow me to suggest a few guidelines:

4.1 Christians should scrutinise prevalent peace conceptions in South Africa and criticise them when they contradict the biblical concept of peace.

The prevalent peace conceptions guide the conduct of the government, political organisations and millions of people in South Africa. Special attention should therefore be given to them.

We have already analysed the peace conceptions of the South African government and its radical opponents. There is no doubt that at least certain aspects of these peace conceptions should be criticised.

The peace that the government strives at is clearly one that benefits certain groups in society, especially the whites, far more than others. The National Party came to power in 1948 primarily as a result of the Afrikaner people's aspiration to secure their own future. It was the strategy of the National Party to secure the Afrikaner people's right of self-determination by assuming the reins of government in South Africa and by introducing the *apartheid* policy.

No one can deny the fact that the *apartheid* policy had grossly benefited the whites and has seriously discriminated against other population groups (Groenewald 1986: 18-48). Even today, on account of, among others, the Group Areas Act and the Separate Amenities Act, the government discriminates against them solely on account of the colour of their skin. Most serious of all, however, is the fact that the government, until now, has been unwilling to make provision for blacks to take part in general elections on an equal basis with the whites. And there is no sign yet that the government would agree to a new constitution that could result in government by the majority in South Africa.

Until the present government dismantles the remaining discriminatory legislature of the *apartheid* system and agree to general elections in which all citizens of South Africa can take part on an equal basis, the peace that the government strives at should be criticised by Christians, on account of the fact that it contradicts the biblical guideline that peace should be a just peace.

Although some of the measures taken by the government to further peace, for example the dismantling of certain *apartheid* legislation and the upgrading of black townships, should be appreciated, others should be criticised. I restrict myself to the actions taken by the government against the ANC. According to the official report of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group on their peace initiative in South Africa in 1986, negotiations between the government and the ANC were imminent when the government revealed a change of mind, and made negotiations impossible by attacking quarters of the ANC in neighbouring states (Commonwealth report 1986:115-120). It seems as if the government has, in the case of the ANC, opted for a military solution and is unwilling to enter into negotiations.

This impression is strengthened by the fact that the government has laid down the condition that it will only negotiate with organisations that have renounced violence. The government must know, however, that this is an impossible condition for the ANC to accept. In the words of the report of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group: 'It (is) neither possible nor reasonable to have people forswear the only power available to them should the Government walk away from the negotiating table' (Commonwealth report 1986:119). The demand that violent action by both the ANC and the government should be suspended for at least the duration of the negotiations, is on the other hand quite a reasonable demand.

I would like to ask whether this policy of the government does not contradict the biblical guidelines that reconciliation with the enemy should be sought, and non-violent methods to further peace should be preferred to violent methods, whenever the possibility is given. It is of course true that God has given the power of the sword to the state to act against those who threaten the safety of its citizens. This does not,

however, exempt the rulers of the state - especially when they call themselves Christians - from the responsibility to seek reconciliation with those who are enemies of the government, and to give priority to non-violent methods to further peace. A government may only apply violence when there is no alternative way to restore order, or to prevent an invasion by enemies. Even when it is involved in an armed struggle against invaders or internal agitators, the government should try to use the minimum of violence, reduce hostilities and enter into negotiations. Thus, even for a government the guideline is valid that it is better to gain a victory over hatred and enmity than over the enemy.

It is not so easy to ascertain to what extent the radical opponents of the government envisage a peace that will benefit all the people in South Africa. The ANC, for one, claims that there will also be a rightful place for whites in South Africa. In the case of the PAC, which subscribes to the motto: 'Africa for the Africans!' it is less clear that such a rightful place for whites is envisaged.

There are certain actions and policies of these organisations that rightfully raise the concern of whites for a so-called 'liberated' future South Africa. The nationalisation of mines and banks that is envisaged in the 'Freedom Charter', for example, has been criticised for the foreseeable detrimental effect it will have, not only for whites, but for the South African economy as a whole. The present violent struggle between the UDF, Azapo and Inkatha indicates that we are not only encountering a black liberation struggle, but also a nasty power struggle between black political organisations. And it does strengthen the fear of many whites that the present government will, in a 'liberated' South Africa, only be succeeded by a dictatorial, black government that will benefit only a section of the population and oppress all its opponents.

Urgent questions can also be asked about the radical black organisations' use of violence. We have seen that the use of violence is sometimes justified by the argument - applying a principle of the 'just war' theory - that blacks have no other means left to defend themselves against the onslaught of the government. This assumption has lately been challenged by Walter Wink. In his opinion the only really effective methods of resistance used by blacks during the last few years, have been non-violent methods (Wink 1987:4). Another example of the 'just war' theory is that violence should not be used if it is not clear that the good will outweigh the evil it will bring about. Richard Neuhaus has, however, reported that both the ANC and the South African security police estimated that the outcome of a violent revolution will only be decided after approximately 4 million people have died (Neuhaus 1986:286). Can one, if one takes that into account, really say that the good of a violent revolutionary struggle in South Africa will outweigh the evil? The 'just war' theory also prescribes that violence should never be directed against non-combatants. The ANC has, however, repeatedly planted bombs in public places that have indiscriminately killed and injured many innocent citizens.

Christians should, finally, also be critical of the peace conceptions that guide the decisions of the churches to which they belong. It is a real danger that some churches will fall prey to the propaganda and, as a result, also the peace conceptions

of either the government or its radical opponents. Dr Willem Nicol has recently rightly warned against the emergence of a 'state theology' in the Dutch Reformed Church that uncritically supports and theologically justifies the security measures of the government (*Die Kerkbode* 20.4.88:16). Now that even the UDF and Azapo have been curbed by security measures, it will become an even stronger temptation to representatives of churches with a majority of black members to act as mouthpieces for banned political organisations, and to uncritically justify their violent actions by 'liberation theology'.

4.2 Christians should strive together to attain peace in South Africa that is to the benefit of all its inhabitants.

At this moment conceptions of peace prevail in South Africa that are determined by the interests of one's own group. This can partly be contributed to the influence of the *apartheid* paradigm. According to Peter Berger and Bobby Godsell two assumptions lie at the heart of this paradigm: firstly, that political interests in South Africa are defined by skin colour, and, secondly, that these racially defined interests are inherently in conflict. These assumptions hold sway far beyond the ranks of *apartheid's* supporters. They have become built into the way in which almost everybody experiences South Africa (Berger & Godsell 1988:289-290).

If Christians want to contribute to the attainment of peace that is more in line with the biblical norm of peace, they will have to think of peace in South Africa from the viewpoint of the interests of all the inhabitants of our country, as seen and formulated by themselves. They will have to answer the question: 'What should a condition of peace in South Africa look like, in which the interests of all the inhabitants in South Africa (or even Southern Africa) are optimally served?'

In the formulation of such an ideal of peace in South Africa, the biblical norm of justice should be an important point of departure. Christians will have to ask themselves honestly what the concrete implications of this norm are for the future structuring of the South African society. Biblical justice demands, among others, special care for the poor and oppressed in society. Privileged Christians in South Africa may therefore not avoid the question: what shall we have to part with, what shall we have to share, in what shall we have to accept lower standards if we want to contribute to the comprehensive liberation of those in South Africa who are poor and oppressed?

As a result of the prevalence of the described peace conceptions in South Africa, the black liberation struggle is seen by many whites as a serious threat to their own interests, and as something that should be vigorously opposed. One can, however, ask whether this opposition is justified. It is, of course, true that the black liberation struggle is at present closely associated with the violent power struggle of certain black political organisations. As far as solidarity with the black liberation struggle means support for a particular black political organisation and its use of violence, such solidarity cannot be expected of whites. The black liberation struggle can, however, also be seen as the struggle to free blacks from poverty, lack of education, racial discrimination, economic exploitation and political subordination. In my

opinion the biblical norm of justice requires of white Christians in South Africa to be in solidarity with the black liberation struggle, in this sense of the word.

Whites should realise that the enhancement of black liberation does not necessarily mean the impairment of their own interests. The interests of blacks and whites are not *per se* mutually exclusive, as the *apartheid* paradigm would like us to believe. Less restrictions on black businessmen and better education for blacks, for example, will contribute to a more healthy economy in South Africa. It is even true: without black liberation, whites will never be really free (Du Plessis 1988:31). Only when the blacks are truly liberated, will whites be free from paternalism, free from the threat of terrorism and war, free from the threat of economic disaster as a result of sanctions and disinvestment, free from the enmity and contempt of the world, and free to make their own full contribution to the solution of the tremendous problems of Africa.

The chances for the attainment of peace that is to the benefit of all the people in South Africa will, of course, be enhanced immensely if the government and leaders of black political organisations such as the ANC, PAC, UDF, Azapo and Inkatha can be persuaded to try to reach consensus through negotiations about the future structuring of the South African society. Until such negotiations are initiated, individual Christians from the different population groups in South Africa can play a preparatory role by trying, through consultation, to reach agreement on the desirable features of a future South Africa.

4.3 Christians should persuade the fighting parties in South Africa that the conquering of enmity is a far better way to attain peace that is to the benefit of all the people of South Africa, than victory over the enemy.

Seen from the viewpoint of peace that benefits one's own group, the 'realistic' method of military victory over the enemy is indeed the proper way to attain peace in South Africa. The only way in which the government, on the one hand, can ensure that peace that benefits the whites can be maintained, is to eliminate black guerrilla organisations such as the ANC and the PAC so effectively that they do not pose a threat to this peace anymore. The only way in which these black organisations, on the other hand, can enforce a unilateral take-over of the government, without having to deal afterwards with remnants of the present defence force that threaten the peace, is to destroy the defence force.. The problem is that such a total victory over the enemy could only be achieved - as we have seen - at the unrealistically high price of millions of human lives and probably the total destruction of the economic infrastructure.

Taking this into account, one can emphatically state that the elimination of the enemy is not the proper way to attain peace in South Africa, in any case not peace that benefits all its people. The attention should be directed at finding effective methods to overcome the enmity between fighting parties, or at least, to reduce the enmity to such an extent that a process of negotiations can be initiated.

Such negotiation between the government and, among others, the ANC, are not viable at this point of time. Both parties are, seemingly, sure that they will eventually

gain a military victory and are therefore not eager to enter into negotiations (Landman 1988:35). The government is not willing to accept preconditions for negotiations, laid down by the ANC, such as the lifting of the present state of emergency and the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners. The ANC in turn, is not willing to renounce the use of violence; a precondition laid down by the government. One can even ask whether there is any point in negotiating as long as the government refuses to negotiate over the group principle, while the ANC just as resolutely rejects it, and as long as the government refuses to accept majority rule, while the ANC endorses it.

There are various ways in which Christians can pave the way for eventual negotiations.

Firstly, they can influence public opinion. At this moment the viewpoint of the 'hawks' dominates public opinion in South Africa. Christians should vigorously counteract the propaganda for a military solution in all public *fora*, by exposing the questionable morality of such a solution and by developing and propagating a peaceful strategy that could lead to negotiations. Part of this strategy should, in my opinion, be to propagate in public the following:

- a) the dismantling of remaining discriminatory *apartheid* legislation;
- b) the acceptance by at least the majority of whites of a reunited, single South African state, the principle that the rights of citizens should not be determined on the grounds of race or ethnic descent, universal adult suffrage, as well as government by leaders chosen by the majority of citizens;
- c) the acceptance by black leaders of a democratic multi-party political system in which general elections are held on a regular basis, a Bill of Rights, a mixed economy, as well as some sort of federal system on a geographical basis.

Secondly, Christians in South Africa have an important mediating role to play. At this moment, we are encountering a process of growing polarisation in South Africa as a result of efforts by both the government and its radical opponents to draw as many South Africans as possible into their own spheres of influence. People are influenced, among other things, by the projection of warped enemy images through propaganda and by the exertion of pressure to sever all links of co-operation and communication with what is regarded as the enemy camp.

The more people are encapsulated within one of the two opposing power blocks and believe the propaganda about the so-called enemy, the less the chances that hostilities will end and an agreement will be reached. Christians should therefore try to counteract the growing polarisation by reaching out to individuals, groups and organisations considered to be in the opposition camp and by building bridges of communication, thrust and co-operation between them. Knowledge gained about these individuals, groups and organisations, about their needs and their aspirations, should be shared with those within one's own group or organisation, to help correct the one-sided information and warped enemy images we are subjected to in South Africa.

It undoubtedly involves some risk to play such a mediating role in the present South African society. There is the risk that your own people will regard you as a collaborator with the enemy and reject you. There is also the risk that the people to whom you reach out will mistrust your motives and regard you as an agent of the enemy. This risk will only lessen to the extent that it becomes clear that one does not have the ideological motive to further the interests of either the government or one of the radical black organisations, but is motivated solely by the desire for a just South African society.

Thirdly, the church in South Africa should be a living model of a true community of peace in which division and conflict are being conquered and people accept one another in love. At the moment, however, it is the tragic reality that the ideological conflict is being carried into the church, and that conflict between and within the different church denominations is rife. This contributes to the general despondency in South Africa, because people tend to argue: 'If reconciliation within the church cannot even be attained, what hope is there that reconciliation in South African politics can be achieved?'

This calls for serious soul-searching by the various churches in South Africa. The crippling effect such factors as group egotism, racial prejudice, loyalty to a particular political party or policy, pride, fear and hatred have on the promotion of reconciliation within or between particular churches, should be exposed and vigorously counteracted.

These factors even influence the way in which reconciliation is conceptualised within the various South African churches. White Christians are usually quick to point out to black Christians that the Bible asks unconditional forgiveness, while black Christians are just as quick to point out to white Christians that repentance and the correction of injustices done are preconditions for reconciliation. Is it not true, however, that reconciliation, in the biblical sense of the word, includes unconditional forgiveness for wrongs done to you, as well as the repentance and correction of wrongs done by yourself? And, above all, is it not true that the Bible demands of us to concentrate solely on our own responsibility with regard to reconciliation with our fellowmen? If Christians, congregations and church denominations in South Africa will only start to fulfil their own responsibility with regard to reconciliation, instead of always pointing to the responsibility of others, there is still hope that the church will set an example of a reconciliatory community and will contribute to peace in the South African society.

5. Conclusion

During the last year we could witness the progress made in the Angolan-Namibian peace negotiations. For once it seems as if the tide of violence has been stemmed in at least certain parts of our sub-continent. At the same time the negotiations also underline the inevitability of certain developments in Southern Africa. The eventual transfer of ruling power to the majority, and the eventual legitimisation of black political organisations that have the support of a substantial number of blacks, now -

more than ever - seem to be inevitable, not only in Namibia, but also in South Africa.

What are we going to do in South Africa? Shall we keep on trying to evade the inevitable by military means and run the risk of a full-scale civil war? Or shall we accept what has to be and try, to the best of our abilities, to bring hostilities to an end as quickly as possible and initiate a process of peaceful negotiations between all the parties concerned? In my opinion there is no doubt that the second option is the morally right one in the present situation in South Africa.

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