

MINISTERING TO THE CONSCRIPTED.

An impassioned plea for ministry to those who are "called up"

This paper is extracted from material prepared by a Chaplain who has experienced the despair of seeing so many people without full pastoral care. We hope that these suggestions will help us provide this care.

Don't criticise, condemn or reject - some 40 000 young men are called each year and not all embrace this call-up with joy. Its no fun lying in a trench being mortared or shot at. Some will choose not to go, or to become non - combatants. All these people need our Christian concern.

Do spend time with matrices and final year 'varsity students going to make their choice and then having to live and suffer with it.

Do remember that the man into the SADF may be full of noisy bravado but he's a grieving person. Remember the grief cycle:

Bargaining  
Anger  
Acceptance ?

All these things become part of ones life from the moment the AMPTELIK-OFFICIAL letter arrives and again as call - up time approaches.

Do try and prepare National Service Men with information available from the office of the Chaplain - General's office ( Booklet "Its not so bad...")

Do prepare those who choose conscientious objection by referring them to appropriate counsellors.

Do find people who are doing their national service - preferably a cross section from storeman to officer - and ask them to give a talk with ADVICE - no "frighten the 'roofies' stories."

Do ask your local military establishment to send somebody to give information and advice to incoming NSM (Try and be there yourself to avoid people getting overenthusiastic).

Do get the addresses (correct and including Force member) of NSM who are doing National Service and write to them, get your group to do the same, your W.A., ANYBODY.



Letters keep people sane (well, more or less) in the army.

Do visit the families and show an interest in their feelings - especially fear and pride.

Do write a letter to the Chaplain - he's the best contact person - introducing any of your members going to that camp. If you dont know how to contact him, phone the Chaplain General's office in Pretoria for information.

Do contact the Chaplain and welfare Officer if one of the families is having trouble. If neither can be reached ask for the Adjutant and explain the problem to him. You carry more authority in these circumstances than the family.

Do ask the officers' rank and address him by that rank.

Do dress neatly - preferably a clerical collar - when visiting military establishments. To military personnel impressions count. It also saves explanations and helps people identify you.

Do spend time with prospective NSM's discussing questions such as:

- Marriage
- sex (ethics and practise)
- relationships (male/female and parental)
- death
- ethics of war
- the meaning of authority
- the church's stance on issues (if it has one)

Do chat with families about the parting - especially for those who are married.

Do offer support in the case of girl - friend problems.  
Dont laugh this off as teenage phase. Men kill themselves over these sorts of things.

Do welcome them home at the end of National Service and send them off with a service before National Service.



Do find out who is going to the border and visit them at home before they go. They normally have leave just before they go "up top"

Do contact the family in times of injury/death of an NSM.

Do love that NSM.

How your congregation can minister to those conscripted.

They can participate in the preparation of these people (see above).  
They can write, sending local news, copies of church newspaper, photographs etc.

They can send light reading, particularly to those in the operation area.  
They can pray for conscripts. Maintain a prayer list of these people, including those who are conscientious objectors.



# What Methodists believe..

Methodists have been given clear guidelines about Conscientious Objection and about peace.

Read what the Laws and Discipline of the Methodist Church says about peace and then what Conference, over a number of years, has come to believe about Conscientious Objection.

For those reasons we pray for and support all Christians who take action like that of Charles Yeats.

## THE METHODIST RULE OF LIFE ( L & D paragraph 3/7)

The directions we accept as our rule of life from the early Methodists fall into three principal groups:-

- (1) That of "doing no harm, avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is more generally practised". Besides the open and publicly acknowledged sins of life, all doubtful and dissipating pleasures, softness, selfish indulgence, personal ostentation, love of money and covetousness, all gains made to the injury of others by trading upon their ignorance, weakness or necessity, all dishonest evasion of lawful dues or neglect of civic duties, all abuse of public office or influence for private ends, and all foolish, careless or malicious talk come under this condemnation.
- (2) That of "doing good by being merciful after one's power, doing good of every possible sort to the bodies of men as well as to their souls, and as far as possible to all men". Within this obligation are embraced personal testimony for Christ, missionary effort, the manifold forms of social and philanthropic service, and the pressing necessity for promoting lasting peace and goodwill among the nations. Every Methodist should be an evangelist and in spirit a missionary. The familiar line, "O let me commend my Saviour to you", expresses the true genius of Methodism.
- (3) That of "attending upon all the ordinances of God". These include the public worship of God, the observance of the Lord's Supper, the maintenance of Christian fellowship, private prayer, the reading of the Scriptures, the habits of self-discipline. The practice of family worship is earnestly commended. The New Testament contemplates families as Christian as well as individuals.

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### Conscientious Objection

- (a) Conference recognises that Christian opinion has always been divided on the question of how Christians ought to respond to the call to bear arms in times of war or national crises, and that this division still exists.
- (b) Conference affirms that the position of the conscientious objector has a legitimate place within the Christian tradition and that the right to discuss, question or advocate this position must be regarded as an integral part of the religious liberty fundamental to the health of our society.



- (c) Conference acknowledges that the South African Government has made provision for certain categories of conscientious objection, either through (i) the option of "non-combatant" duties, or (ii) in the case of refusal to wear military uniform at all, a single prison sentence.
- (d) Conference seeks a reconsideration of the latter position (ii) suggesting that there are more creative and useful ways whereby such conscientious objectors might serve the country.
- (e) Conference points out that conscientious objection is not always based on purely pacifist convictions, but has sometimes arisen through the peculiar circumstances of a specific conflict, leading a person to refuse service because of his inability to share or accept the relative "rightness" of the cause for which he is called to fight, and that the present conflict on our borders provides no exception.
- (f) Conference declares that in terms of para. 4 (b), conscientious objection has a legitimate place within our Methodist tradition and that any Methodist who, for reasons of conscience, either cannot present himself for National Service with the S.A.D.F. (i.e. total conscientious objection) or seeks non-combatant status within the S.A.D.F. should be granted the same treatment as apply to members of the so-called "peace churches". Conference resolves that this declaration be clearly conveyed both to our Military Chaplains and the S.A. Defence Force authorities.

Further information on the subject of Conscientious Objection can be obtained from the Christian Education and Youth Department of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, P.O. Box 47135, Greyville, 4023.



WHAT THE ANGLICAN CHURCH TEACHES.

1. Resolution of Number 13 of the 24th Session of the Provincial Synod, 1982, of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa.

Service in the S.A.D.F.

That is Synod:-

(1) conscious

- (a) of the present state of war in Namibia, and the grave escalation in violence within South Africa and on its borders which shows ominous signs of developing into an open civil war.
- (b) that a large number of our members are being compelled by law to enter the service of the S.A.D.F., and that an even larger number will be liable for such 'call up';
- (c) that many are being faced with a crisis of conscience, having serious doubts about agreeing to serve in the S.A.D.F. for reasons of faith;
- (d) that those who conscientiously refuse to enter the S.A.D.F. must either leave their country or face imprisonment.

(2) believes

- (a) that we would be failing our people and the demands of the Christian faith if we avoided speaking of these matters, and endeavouring to spell out the implications;
- (b) that in South Africa fundamental democratic procedures which might allow for peaceful evolution towards a more human and just society are lacking, and that there is no adequate evidence of sufficient will to establish such procedures;
- (c) that the essential nature of the conflict stems from the determination to maintain by force a structure of society in which the majority of the people of this land suffer gross oppression and exploitation;
- (d) that as a result, a vital function of the S.A.D.F. has become the protection of these unjust structure;
- (e) that this is a reason why an increasing number of our members find themselves with a crisis of conscience over the possibility of being compelled by law to serve in the S.A.D.F.;
- (f) that where Church members are being forced, on threat of imprisonment to serve on a particular side, the Church has the added obligation to protect such individuals, and, as a Body, needs to face the State with a clear word relating the demands of Christ to the specific circumstances;

(3) therefore wishes to make clear that:-

- (a) allegiance to Christ demands of every Christian that before he takes up arms for any purpose, or enters the Military, he should face our Lord and ask him whether this is truly what he should do.



- (b) although in the last resort each person is expected to act according to his conscience, the Church has an important pastoral duty to give guidance and to help members in the formation of conscience;
- (c) given our understanding of the Christian faith and its implications for our life in South Africa ;  
we feel bound to express our serious doubts about the legitimacy of a military system whose role is increasingly seen as the protector of a profoundly immoral and unjust social order in which the majority of the people suffer gross oppression and exploitation.

The motion was declared controversial and was carried by 165 votes for to 6 against.

## 2. The Just War Theory.

Many Anglicans believe that some wars are just, and that war can sometimes achieve peace.

But ONLY IF the war fulfills each of the five conditions of a Just War.

- \* The war must have been declared by a legitimate authority.
- \* The war must be for just cause.
- \* The war must be undertaken as a last resort.
- \* The war must be waged by means which are just.
- \* The war must have a reasonable chance of being successful.

WHO MUST DECIDE whether or not a particular war is just?

Anglicans believe that every individual must make his own conscientious decision -

BUT before he decides;

- \* he must do his best to establish the facts about the war and its causes.
- \* he must do his best to understand what the Bible and the Church teach about conscientious objection and war.
- \* he must do his best to understand the law that governs conscientious objection in South Africa.

## 3. The South African Bishop's Statement on Conscientious Objection. April 1977.

".. In this matter of conscientious objection we defend the right of every individual to follow his own conscience, the right therefore to conscientious objection on the grounds of universal pacifism and on the grounds that he seriously believes the war to be unjust. In this, as in every other matter, the individual is obligated to make a moral judgement in terms of the facts at his disposal after trying to ascertain these facts to the best of his ability...."

## 4. The Lambeth Conference of 1968 Resolved.

- \* That war as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- \* That it is the concern of the Church: a). to uphold and extend the right of conscientious objection and b). to oppose persistently the claim that total war or the use of weapons however ruthless or indiscriminate can be justified by results.

For further information write to the Youth Department of the C.P.S.A for a set of "Pamphlets on Peace and War".



## **CHURCHES' ALTERNATIVE NATIONAL SERVICE PROGRAMME FACTSHEET: CHURCH RESOLUTIONS**

The following are extracts from recent church resolutions on conscription and alternative national service:

### **Church of the Province of Southern Africa (Anglican).**

In 1982, a resolution of the Provincial Synod of the CPSA stated that it: "...Recognises the right of all people, Christians and non-Christians alike to object conscientiously to service in national defence forces for moral, ethical or religious reasons; Calls on the Government to provide an alternative non-military form of National Service for all conscientious objectors, which is acceptable to conscientious objectors." In 1985, the Church resolved in a similar vein: "Believing that people should never be compelled against their consciences to participate in military structures.... Calls upon the government in South Africa to widen the grounds for conscientious objectors by basing these on ethical and not only religious criteria and to specifically include selective objection."

### **Methodist Church of Southern Africa.**

The 101st Methodist conference in 1983 acknowledged that the government had attempted to provide for conscientious objectors in the law with the Defence Amendment Act of 1983, but "finds the new provisions for conscientious objectors, taken as a whole, to be inadequate." (paragraph 29.9.19). In 1985, the conference confirmed the earlier statement: "Conference affirms that the position of the conscientious objector has a legitimate place within the Christian tradition and that the right to discuss, question, or advocate this position must be regarded as an integral part of the religious liberty fundamental to our society."

### **Baptist Union of South Africa.**

In 1979 the Assembly of the Baptist Union adopted the following resolution: "This Assembly of the Baptist Union: Reaffirms that the State has the right to call on its citizens to share in the defence of the country but also recognises the right of individuals to express their genuine and sincere objection to taking up arms on the grounds of conscience or religious convictions;... Earnestly requests the Government to end the present anomaly and to amend the Conscientious Objection clause to include those who, regardless of religious denomination, have a sincere objection to carrying arms and to allow them to fulfill the service required of them in a non-combatant capacity; Asks that, in addition to the above, the Government should recognise that there are those individuals who, on religious grounds, cannot conscientiously serve in any armed forces and that provision should be made for these persons to serve the community in some civilian capacity for at least an equivalent period of time and in circumstances as similar as possible to those under which service in the armed forces is performed."

### **Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa.**

In September 1979, the Presbyterian Church Assembly stated: "The Assembly assures any member of our Church who refuses to do military service and suffers a consequent penalty of the continuing solidarity of its fellowship with him. It calls on all ministers and members of our Church to give moral and pastoral support to sincere conscientious objectors, wherever they can.... The Assembly deplores the practice of sentencing conscientious objectors to a period or recurring periods in prison or detention barracks. It appeals to the Minister of Defence to amend the law so as to provide an alternative form of national service to military service." At its General Assembly in 1984, the Presbyterian Church stated in response to the 1983 legislation: "While accepting that the Board for Religious Objectors plays a vital role in according certain people non-combatant status and providing alternative community service for universal pacifists, feels that it is inadequate in that it fails to recognise ethically based pacifism and just war objection based on either religious or moral grounds.... For these reasons, the PCSA cannot support the Defence Amendment Act of 1983.... Until such time as present legislation is amended and conscription abolished, the PCSA sees its role as being one of offering support to all its conscripted members whether they decide to serve or refuse to serve."

### **United Congregational Church of Southern Africa.**

As early as October 1977, the Congregational Church declared at its General Assembly that: "Those who object to war on the grounds of Christian or moral principle should be entitled to fulfill their obligations to society in areas of national service outside the armed forces." In the 1979 General Assembly, the following resolution was passed: "The Assembly of the UCCSA expresses its concern about the legislation on conscientious objection.... Though we do not legislate to our members on such issues as military service, we strongly support those who object to military service on religious or moral grounds."

### **Catholic Church.**

The Catholic Church has frequently criticised South Africa's conscription legislation, and the provision made for those who refuse to serve in the SADF. A 1977 statement by the Church reads as follows: "In this matter of conscientious objection we defend the right of every individual to follow their own conscience; the right to conscientious objection on the grounds of universal pacifism, and on the grounds that the person seriously believes the war to be unjust."



## What the Roman Catholic Church Teaches.

### Introduction:

The Catholic attempting to discover the Church's teaching on war may find himself confronted with historical and theological confusion. On the one hand we are clearly enjoined to love our enemies as ourselves; we are under orders to feed our enemy if he hungers, to provide drink if he thirsts. On the other hand, the vast majority of Catholics have for seventeen centuries taken an active part in their nation's wars.

From the first to the fourth century, most Christians would neither engage in Roman military campaigns nor justify killing as a means to achieve one's goals.

For early Christianity:

- war was a denial of their belief that God was the Father of all peoples and nations.
- the killing of enemies was incompatible with Christian love, which demanded total self-giving.

This consistent practice caused the non-Christian Celsus (178A.D.) to reproach them: "If all men were to do the same as you, there would be nothing to prevent the king from being left in utter solitude and desertion."

### Just War Theory.

It was not until the latter part of the Fourth Century that theologians began discussing the just war theory. St. Ambrose (d.397) and St. Augustine (d.430), both Church Fathers, continued to emphasize the primacy of love, even stating that Christians as individual had no right to self-defence. At the same time they found it permissible for Christians to participate in communal defence even to the point of bloodshed. The only limitation was that the war must be just.

The just war theory (whose later developers included St. Thomas Aquinas and Suarez) required that a war could be considered justifiable only if it met, without exception, certain basic conditions:

- it must be declared by just authority,
- for a just cause,
- using just means,
- with a reasonable chance of success,



- and only as a last resort.
- The lives of innocents and non-combatants were to be protected.
- The means were to be no more oppressive than the evil being remedied.

The just war theory remains as the standard Catholic teaching on war and participation in war today, although there is a growing pacifist sensibility in parts of the Church.

#### Catholics and Conscientious Objection.

The question continues to be asked - Can a Christian be a conscientious objector or evader?

The answer is an unqualified yes, given the constant teaching of the Church regarding the primacy of conscience and the Church's application of this teaching in defence of Catholic conscientious objectors.

In defining conscience the Second Vatican Council wrote (Constitution of the Church in the Modern World):

In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience...; to obey it is the very dignity of man, according to it he will be judged (Rom. 2:15-16)..... In fidelity to conscience Christians are joined with the rest of the world in the search for truth, and for the genuine solution to the numerous problems which arise in the life of individuals and from social relationships. Hence, the more the right of conscience holds away, the more persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and strive to be guided by the objective norms of morality." (Sec16).

After decrying as "criminal" those who, in the name of obedience, obey commands which conflict with the "all embracing principles" of natural law and conscience, the Council praised those who refuse such obedience:

"The courage of those who fearlessly and openly resist such commands merits supreme commendation." (Sec79)



War in South Africa.

It must be admitted that in times past Church leaders have given only sporadic emphasis to the Church's age-old teachings in regard to conscience. Even less have those leaders sought to apply its common-sense criteria (cited above) in ascertaining the justice - if any, and on which side - of a particular war.

Within the Catholic community, certainly in South Africa, the tide has been changing.

In 1974, Archbishop Denis Hurley, presently president of the South African Catholic Bishops Conference, said:

"My conclusion is that the people of South Africa should avoid at all costs getting involved in a border war, and that there should be conscientious objection to getting involved in such a war.... In the South African situation, conscientious objection should be adopted as a principle by the Churches. I believe the churches should adopt this view even at the risk of open confrontation with the government. Confrontation has to occur sometime.... It is our duty to discourage people from getting involved in this military conflict because of the realities of the South African situation - a situation of oppression."

In their 1977 Statement on Conscientious Objection the Bishops' Conference declared:

"in this matter of conscientious objection we defend the right of every individual to follow his own conscience, the right therefore to conscientious objection both on the grounds of universal pacifism and on the grounds that he seriously believes the war to be unjust. In this, as in every other matter, the individual is obliged to make a moral judgement in terms of the facts at his disposal after trying to ascertain these facts to the best of his ability. While we recognize that the conscientious objector will have to suffer the consequences of his own decision and the penalties imposed by the State, we uphold his right to do this and we urge the State to make provision for alternative forms of non-military national service as is done in other countries in the world."



In their 1982 Report on Namibia, the Bishops seriously questioned the justice of the war the S.A.D.F. is waging in Namibia, accusing it of atrocities and of being regarded as an army of occupation by most Namibians.



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