

ALTERNATIVE?

May God punish all of us who forget that love and understanding does not come when each of us goes our own sweet way, but when each of us strives and struggles to learn from one another in the fellowship of Christ's Church!

And Jesus Said: 'I am myself your peace. Black and white, I have made the two one, and in my own body of flesh and blood have broken down the enmity which stood like a dividing wall between you . . . so as to create out of the two of you a single new humanity in myself, thereby making peace.'

I: 'But what of the language barrier? I do not understand your language, and most of your people do not understand mine. *How can we worship together?*'

Him: 'Language is a barrier. But there are two things I must point out to you: Firstly, many black men are proficient in English—especially those who have been to University, and who are doctors, lawyers, and teachers. They no longer feel at home in the church of their people. The sermons are too simple. They have little in common with people who are not educated in the things that are their daily life. They long for the fellowship of people who have the same education and interests as they have. Why are they not welcome to preach from white pulpits, teach in white Sunday Schools, and sing in white choirs? Secondly, in the providence of God the Methodist Church is organised in such a way that this barrier can be overcome without changing the traditional structure of our church. Methodist people belong to individual churches, but these churches are grouped into circuits, and the ministers are circuit ministers with pastoral responsibilities to local congregations in the circuit. But if we believe what we said in 1958 why do we have black and white circuits in the same geographical area? For example, in the Durban central area why do we have a white, a black, a coloured and an Indian circuit—each functioning separately—instead of one circuit? Language would not be a problem. Each man would still worship in the church of his choice. Each minister would still have pastoral care of a local congregation, and would still preach in all the churches in the circuit. And at the Circuit Meetings English will do as the language, because in our black churches most of the leading laymen speak English.'

This would demonstrate clearly that we are 'one and undivided', and would give God the opportunity 'to bring this ideal to ultimate fruition.' *As things are at present God hasn't got a chance!*

And Jesus said: 'Your faith is too weak. I tell you this: if you have faith no bigger even than a

mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there!", and it will move; nothing will prove impossible for you.'

I: 'But what of Government legislation? You know that "the Minister of Bantu Affairs may, provided that the urban local authority concurs, by notice in the Gazette, prohibit the attendance of Bantu persons at a Church service in a town, if it is, in his opinion, undesirable that natives should be present in the numbers in which they ordinarily attend that service".'

Him: 'Why do you keep talking about what is expedient and easy? Jesus Christ *commands*—we must choose who we are going to obey. That is easy to say, but hard to do. We may be persecuted. *But Jesus promised that this would happen if we obeyed Him!*'

And Jesus said: 'Anyone who wishes to be a follower of mine must leave self behind; he must take up his cross, and come with me. Whoever cares for his own safety is lost; but if a man will let himself be lost for my sake and for the Gospel, that man is safe. What does a man gain by winning the whole world at the cost of his true self? *What can he give to buy that self back?*'

I: 'The Methodist Church cannot defy the Government! Our task is to preach the Gospel, not to conduct a passive-resistance campaign! We are not agitators! Have you never read Romans 13:1-4?'

Him: 'Yes, I have read Romans 13: 1-4. I sometimes wonder if you white people have! Notice carefully that Paul does not say that Jesus Christ expects His followers to give an absolute and uncritical obedience to the government. Christians are commanded to obey the government when it is true, that the government, 'a terror to crime, *has no terrors for good behaviour.*' I am not asking the Methodist Church to defy the Government—I am only asking her to obey Jesus Christ first, and then to obey the Government *without disobeying Jesus Christ.*'

And Jesus said: 'Pay Caesar what is due to Caesar, and pay God what is due to God.'

I: 'Politics! That's what it is—politics! Why do we always end up by arguing about politics? Remember what Jesus said: "All who take the sword die by the sword."! Don't say I didn't warn you! The words of Jesus Christ are true! *Bloodshed, violence, sabotage can never solve South Africa's problems!*

Him: 'Are you sure the words of Jesus are so important? Why do you warn me that His words are true? I will believe this saying of His and act accordingly, if you in the Methodist Church believed His other words—and acted accordingly!

But why must I be afraid of Jesus Christ? Why must I obey His words? He has failed us. He is no God. He does not have the power to take hatred and prejudice from the hearts of His followers. This is why it is not possible for an African to be a Christian. We have waited long enough. The Church cannot be taken seriously! I hate violence as much as you do—but *I am oppressed*—and the church has given me no tangible alternative. *I must take the sword!* May God be merciful to me—and to you!'

And Jesus said: 'The man who leads astray one of these little ones who has faith, it would be better

for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone round his neck!

AND THEN I had a dream.

It was the Last Judgement—Christ was there in all His power and glory. *He* was there—His blood-stained hand still held the sword. And I was there—*my hands were clean.*

His crimes were read out first. It was a gruesome tale—murder, sabotage, rape, torture, bloodshed. He nodded his head as each deed of violence condemned him to hell; and the sadness of the lecture room was in his eyes . . . God, the sadness in his eyes was something terrible!

When the charges had been laid against him, Christ spoke:

'Are you guilty?'

'Yes.'

'What have you to say in your defence?'

'Only this. I followed the example of your church. I heard your words, but I did not take them seriously. *If only one of them had shown me that he believed you had to be obeyed!*'

'I understand. Go in peace, and sin no more.'

I was amazed and annoyed. How could Christ say He understood? He understood nothing! I began to protest . . .

But the case against me had begun. I was glad to hear that I had done only one thing wrong.

Christ spoke to me:

'*Nothing!* Are you guilty?'

'But Lord! I don't understand . . . ! What have I done?'

'Nothing. Are you guilty?'

I was stunned! My mind reeled from one excuse to another in an orgy of self-pity.

'Nothing! This must be a bad dream! How can I be guilty of *nothing?*'

And Jesus said: 'Yes, you did *nothing*—therefore you are guilty of *everything!*' Take him away! ●

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PAPER

WORK

A Story

OBED 'MUSI

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL Barend Petrus Jacobus Blaarveldt took another look at the pile of papers on his desk, and snorted with contempt. He did not like paper-work: he detested writing letters, reports, and cutting orders. His views on the new type of Police 'rookie' whom he described as "gum-chewing-buzz-biking-types" were already an established institution.

Colonel Blaarveldt could look with complacency at the fading Police Rugby Team 1929 framed photograph on the wall: at 42 he had already collared the command of the 30-man Struilburg Police Station. He had come to the top the hard way: he had listened with ill-concealed disgust as young whipper-snappers described how many examinations they had passed to get their stripes. "Wragtig, kerels, in my day you could only get promotion by stepping into another man's boots. Prayed for riots like hell in those days hoping your senior officer'd be shot dead so's you could get his post, man," he would say.

THAT AFTERNOON he walked into the charge office and saw the Day Officer, Warrant-Officer Piet Coetzee writing furiously behind his desk: saw young Constable van Tonder watering flowers (the Brigadier-General had promised a lightning inspection on Police Stations recently).

But when he saw African Policemen standing in the yard and obviously loafing he could no longer stomach it. Purposefully he strode to his office, flicked a button on his left and made a few short grunts. In a few moments the Day Officer, and the African Patrol Sergeant, Ndzimande walked into his office.

"How many arrests did you make today? and how many the day before? and what do you think the government employs you for? rock-and-roll? you, Ndzimande, when last did you check on all the Tsotsis, hey?" he bellowed in a torrent of short sharp sentences. The two men shuffled about uneasily but very quietly.

Then the Colonel screwed his eyes till they were mere suggestions of two dotted lines on his broad face. "What I want is arrests," he said, "plenty arrests. Until I see a satisfactory amount of work being done I am not allowing any day-offs nor is there any leave-taking.

OBED 'MUSI *contributes regularly to Drum and Contact.*