



WE ARE THE CHURCH



N. Gqiba

THERE is a tendency to regard the church as buildings of religious worship or church prominent figures, this interpretation denies the essence of the church as the movement of people, the worshipping assembly called forth by God, the ultimate authority in human life and the ultimate refuge amid all perils of historical existence. It is the prophetic faith of God's people which is a direct response to God's calling in Isaiah 6 verse 8 "whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?"

The ultimate mission of the church centres around the Kingdom of God. It is the ultimate boat from where the liberating Gospel shall be rightly proclaimed.

Revolutionary disciples are drawn together, united in, and, by the holy spirit, God — the Alpha and the Omega — commands them to challenge the evils of this world and turn it upside down. He commands them to stand up now in his majesty and Glory and crush the wicked where they stand. He strongly rebukes Job who in his passivity and pessimism accuses him of the wrongs of this world and of being an unjust God. (Job 40. 7-14).

Then if we (you and I) as the church God's chosen people; people set apart by God for God are to become a true witness to his Kingdom, then apartheid, like Nazism in the 1930's has become a challenge to our faith, an insult to the liberating words of the Gospel. Apartheid has become a threat to God's divine earthly instrument in their hundreds, are being depleted. That divine

march of all people of faith has become not so much a bed of roses — it means suffering, pains and death. This grim reality has put the church at the crossroads of truth and evil.

Kairos theologians, in their persistent work had also come to this crossroad — which side to choose? This moment of truth in the wavering of the church in its faith has even found varying interpretation like, which side to support? Which is a safe and comfortable way of claiming faith and shunning the hazards of its witness. The real questions facing us are: are we to spare ourselves, are we to shun away from that responsibility of riding our country of that evil system? No, our faith, our conscience demands of us more than that.

We are the church, the recipients of God's message to proclaim the good news of liberation. We are the light of the world which cannot be hidden, our prophetic witness must therefore shine before people, so that in our actions they may see the good things which the church does and praise our Father in heaven.

In the conflict in South Africa we cannot be indifferent, the church cannot be neutral. We are commissioned to go out into the world and sincerely challenge and destroy all that is not of God. There is no middle road. If it means to pay the highest price — death — so it should be. We are indebted to suffer in this hostile world in the name of our

Lord whom the prophet Isaiah announces "it was the will of the Lord that his servant should grow like a plant taking root in dry ground. He had no dignity or beauty . . . we despised him and rejected him; he endured suffering and pain . . ." (Isaiah 53: 1-6)

Therefore, proclaiming God's word, we are healed in His suffering. We endure the punishment that He suffered; we are made whole by the blows that He received. This is surely the ultimate price of salvation.

However from a christian point of view war is not of God's making. It distorts and destroys what "God saw as Good", Man, His supreme creation. Nevertheless christians are human beings who live within given societies. The church is not found in a vacuum or a desolate island, it is ministering within this hostile world, at a given time of human history. Therefore, the church cannot be immune, or above historical events.

The World Council of Churches' meeting about two decades ago, in 1968, made this call to the people of South Africa. "We believe that the word of God is not bound, and that it will move with power in these days, whether men hear or whether they refuse to hear. And so we wish to put to every christian person in this country what we ourselves are bound to face each day, to whom or what, are you truly giving your first loyalty, your primary commitment?"

Continued on page 24