

# **“The RDP of the Soul”, geweld, vergelding, toleransie en Paulus se appèl om moed te hou**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **“The RDP of the Soul”, violence, revenge, tolerance and Paul’s appeal for endurance**

*This article links up with both the Fourth Nelson Mandela Commemorative Lecture presented by the previous President of the Republic of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, in 2006, titled the “RDP of the Soul” and with the book of Dr Richard Burrige (King’s College, University of London), Imitating Jesus, in which he shows how biblical ethics has shaped South Africans’ lives since colonialism, apartheid and post- and neo-colonialism. The article argues that moral leadership by the Christian faith community in South Africa which combats violence by rising up in compassion against injustice can counter-balance the spiralling out of retaliation through revenge. The article describes tolerance in terms of the Pauline concept of endurance and the internalisation of hope for the future. Perseverance despite suffering is seen as the contents of tolerance in the midst of aggressive opposition against the essence of life experienced in terms of an individual’s thinking, willing and feeling. The article is a reworked version of a bilingual commemorative public lecture in English and Afrikaans presented on the occasion of the University of Pretoria’s centenary celebration and is dedicated to Professor Dr P J G Meiring, a member of the Commission of Peace and Reconciliation in South Africa.*

In die Bybel het die woord wat in Engels as “soul” vertaal word, in baie gevalle betrekking op die mens as geheel: *a living being; the essence of life in terms of thinking, willing and feeling; a person as*

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1 ’n Tweetalige openbare gedenklesing / A bilingual, commemorative public lecture, presented at *HTS Theological Studies* Jubilee, 9 June 2008, on the occasion of the University of Pretoria’s centenary celebration. Andries van Aarde is die redakteur van *HTS Teologiese Studies* en honorêre professor van die Fakulteit Teologie aan die Universiteit van Pretoria. Hierdie gedenklesing word opgedra aan prof dr P J G Meiring by geleentheid van sy emeritaats-aanvaarding as professor in die Departement Godsdiens- en Sendingwetenskap, Universiteit van Pretoria.

*individual; the physical life* (Koehler & Baumgartner 1958:627; Louw & Nida 1988:321, 106, 262). Wanneer mense die woord “soul” hoor, dink hulle waarskynlik aan morele kwessies. Leiers – ook akademiese leiers – se legitimiteit word sterk aan moraliteit gebind. Geweld en teengeweld kweek egter onverdraagsaamheid en is immoreel. ’n Appèl op toleransie is dus ’n gepaste oproep vir almal wat leiers is en aan ’n universiteit leiers vir die toekoms oplei. Geweld ontmenslik menswees in totaal: liggaam, psige, redelikheid en potensiaal. Geweld skep derhalwe ’n synskrisis.

The consequences of most types of violence are so incredibly dehumanising in nature and deprive people of both dignity and freedom that it is mind-boggling to reflect on the topic. Where does reflection start? Do we start with actual or implicit violence; or with violence that is harmful on a physical, psychological, emotional, mental or spiritual level? Not to mention violence with religious, political, ethnocentric, economic, sexual and gender connotations. The philosopher Fanie de Beer (2007:8-10), extraordinary honorary professor in the Department of Information Science, refers to “modalities of violence”. He describes the impact of violence in terms of five categories:

- a *crisis of being and existence* (“synskrisis”), which amounts to the destruction of a person’s being;
- a *crisis of meaning and value* (“sinskrisis”), which amounts to a person becoming a no-thing, a no-being, a worthless being, in other words it destroys his or her worth (“sinsverdeling”);
- a *crisis of language*, referring to “cursing” which leaves people “speechless”;
- an “*us*” *crisis*, which means the “loss of love” and a loss of the togetherness which binds people together in a social context;
- a *life crisis* (“lewenskrisis”), which amounts to people taking their own lives in “utter desperation”.

Violence manifests in so many forms and degrees that reflection on the problem could leave one with a feeling of desperation. Crime, rape, the mistreatment of children and xenophobia are threatening not only to quench the *soul* of people trying to be a living being in South Africa, but also to extinguish the rainbow nation’s light. Addressing the problem calls for a drive that transcends the interests

of political groups and requires multi and inter-disciplinary input from thinkers and doers from almost all scientific fields. One can therefore at least not only be appreciative of the Student Representative Council of the University of Pretoria to demonstrate its rejection against the “violence that has been perpetrated against foreign nationals all over the country”, but also for its action to collect donations to help those who suffer<sup>2</sup>.

Along with the recent xenophobic attacks and clear proofs of the current murdering of masses in Zimbabwe<sup>3</sup>, all of us are very much aware of the seemingly unending wave of violence that is engulfing South Africa. Its factuality is there to be seen in every day’s newspapers.

Die vergelykende misdaadstatistieke vir die tydperk April tot September 2007 in Gauteng, volgens mnr Firoz Cachalia, Gautengse LUR vir gemeenskapsveiligheid lyk dit soos volg<sup>4</sup>:

<b>Geweldmisdade</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
Moord	1 914	1 774
Poging tot moord	2 897	2 613
Verkragting	5 393	5 068
Motorkaping	3 989	3 892
Vragmotorkaping	217	357
Roofotgte by ondernemings	2 346	2 407
Huisroofotgte	3 865	3 568

In die tydperk April tot September 2007 het 7% meer huisroofotgte landwyd voorgekom as in die ooreenstemmende periode in 2006. In ’n tweede verslag waaroor op 4 Maart 2008 berig is,<sup>5</sup> het mnr Cachalia gerapporteer dat, hoewel misdaad oor die algemeen in Gauteng tussen Julie en Desember 2007 afgeneem het, het die polisie in dieselfde tydperk op sowat 134 000 oproepe deur die

2 Emmerentia Nel 2008. UP students protest against xenophobic attacks. <http://web.up.ac.za/default.asp?ipkCategoryID=45>. Posted on 26 May 2008.

3 Dr Allan Boesak, in *Rapport*, 25 Mei 2008, 16.

4 Carina van Wyk 2007. Gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid kan verskil maak: Dít laat misdaad daal. *Beeld*, 3 Desember 2007, 9.

5 Francois Oosthuizen 2008. Geweldmisdade in Gauteng daal. *Beeld*, 4 Maart 2008, 7.

publiek in Gauteng gereageer. Wat misdadneigings van April tot September 2007 betref, het Gauteng alleen ten opsigte van onsedelike aanranding 'n toename in 15,5% teenoor 'n landwye toename van 4,8% beleef. Gauteng is inderdaad 'n "rampgebied"<sup>6</sup>.

Die Verenigde Nasies se Hoëkommissariaat vir Vluchteling (UNHCR) het met die oog op Mei-maand 2008 se vreemdelinge haat reeds 2250 tente voorsien vir kampe landswyd vir die ongeveer 40 000 mense wat dakloos gelaat is. Gedurende die laaste week van Mei-maand het die daklooses in Gauteng alleen vanaf 25 000 na 19 000 verminder as gevolg van die onsekere getal van duisende vreemdelinge wat uit Suid-Afrika begin vlug het.

In die uitspiraal van die Mei-maand se vreemdelinge haat kan so duidelik gesien word hoe konflik weer konflik skep. Om geweld met geweld te beantwoord, is klaarblyklik so deel van ons diere- en mensewêreld dat die "spiraal van konflik" selfs deur sommige naturaliste, evolusioniste en Marxiste as positief gewaardeer word.<sup>7</sup>

Om konflik so as deel van menswees te sien, is egter om slagoffer van die noodlot te wees. Aanvaarding van om magtelose en depressiewe slagoffer te wees, durf egter nie ons keuse te wees nie. Ons het soortgelyke brûe in die verlede in hierdie land oorgesteek. Die depressiejare van die 1930's het maatskaplike ontwrigting meegebring en dit was vererger deur industrialisasie, verstedeliking en die ontvolking van die platteland. Onder Afrikaners was daar die "Helpmekaar-aksies"<sup>8</sup>. Die maatskaplike ontworteling as gevolg van

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6 Coetzee, C, Joubert, J-J & Essop, P 2008. Gauteng word rampgebied. *Beeld*, 30 Mei 2008, 1 en 2.

7 Gesien vanuit die perspektief van die Marxistiese fenomonologie word konflik wat tot konflik lei en wat Kriesberg (1973:274) die "spiraal van konflik" noem, as funksioneel gereken tot die skeppende vermoë om nie net kohesie in die samelewing te versterk nie, maar ook om die konteks te skep vir veranderings wat nodig mag wees en nuwe reëls, norme en waardes daar te stel. Vir die toepassing van konflikteorie op die Nuwe Testament, kyk die UP doktrale dissertasie van my Nederlandse student Evert Jan Vledder (1994), gepubliseer deur Sheffield Academic Press (1997).

8 Kyk Carnegie-Kommissie 1932. *Die armblanke-vraagstuk in Suid-Afrika: Verslag van die Carnegie-Kommissie*. Deel I – V. Stellenbosch: Carnegie Korporasie.

post-kolonialisme het Afrikane in die na-Apartheid era die innoverende RDP<sup>9</sup>- en GEAR<sup>10</sup>-programme laat ontwerp.

Daarom is die kreatiewe gedagtes van die voormalige President van Suid-Afrika, Thabo Mbeki, uitgespreek in die “Vierde Nelson Mandela Gedenklesing” op 29 Julie 2006, getitel “RDP of the soul”, te verwelkom<sup>11</sup>. Sy mondelinge strewende om by te dra tot die morele heropbou van Suid-Afrikaners is voorbeeldig. Wat nou nodig is, is dat daardeur by woorde gevoeg word. Ongelukkig het die buitengewone ernstige probleem rakende misdaad en wangedrag teen vroue en kinders, spesifiek in Suid-Afrika, nie *toe* genoegsaam in die President se rede aandag gekry nie, hoewel hy *nou* die “xenofobiese, ongevoelige geweldpleging” as ‘n “skande” beskryf “wat Suid-Afrika se naam bevuil”<sup>12</sup>.

An excerpt from the edited version of President’s lecture presented at the University of the Witwatersrand, on 29 July 2006, reads as follows<sup>13</sup>:

“... The construct of cohesive human society concerns much more than the attainment of high economic growth rates, important as this objective is. As we agonise over the unnecessary killings of innocent people and the destruction of much needed infrastructure in Iraq and Palestine, in Lebanon and Israel, we have to ensure that we do not slide into an era when the falcon cannot hear the falconer, when things fall apart and the centre cannot hold. As we South Africans grapple with our own challenges, billions of the poor and the marginalized across the globe see the world ever evolving into more sinister, cold and bitter place: this is the world that is gradually defined by increasing racism, xenophobia,

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9 See African National Congress 1994, *The Reconstruction and Development Programme: A policy framework*, Johannesburg: Umanyano.

10 See Michael Biggs (1997), *Getting into GEAR: Government and the economy: Your questions answered. The Budget Project*, School of Economics, University of Cape Town. Rondebosch: UCT Press.

11 Die subtitel van hierdie gedenklesing is: “Pursuit of personal wealth undermines social cohesion and human solidarity”.

12 *By*, in *Beeld*, 31 Mei 2008, 14.

13 See *Umrabulo Number 26*, August 2006.

ethnic animosity, religious conflicts, and the scourge of terrorism ... We should never allow ourselves the dangerous luxury of complacency, believing that we are immune to the conflicts that we see and have seen in so many parts of the world. In a world that still suffers from the blight of intolerance, wars, antagonistic conflicts, racism, tribalism and marginalization, national reconciliation and reconciliation among the nations, will remain a challenge that must occupy the entire human race continuously. In our case we should say that we are fortunate that we had a Nelson Mandela who made bold to give us the task to attend to the ‘RDP of the soul’, and lent his considerable weight to the achievement of the goal of a better life for all our people”.

In Thabo Mbeki se Nelson Mandela-gedenklesing is gekies vir ‘n opsie teenoor die groeiende “regse” religieuse fundamentalisme onder Suid-Afrikaners wat meebring dat die gevestigde institusionele kerkgemeenskappe in denke en in optrede verlam word om die “kultuur van geweld” op ewewigtige wyse aan te spreek.

Indeed present-day society seems to be embedded in modern-day postsecular, populist culture, stripped from “its critical function as it was absorbed into mass-consumer culture” (Melton 2001:4)<sup>14</sup>. Such a context provides the ideal flowerbed for the emergence of charismatic leaders<sup>15</sup>. Charismatic leaders, as the sociologist Max

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14 Thomas M Schmidt (2007:338) refers to our postsecular society’s “Kohärenz zwischen säkularen und religiösen Überzeugungen” as the dynamics within the secular society where conventions have to “adapt or die” – my version of his expression “Anpassungszwänge und Konventionen einer säkularen Merheitskultur”. In explicit reference to Habermas (1962), James Van Horn Melton (2001:4) describes this “public sphere” as “more open and accessible forms of urban public space and sociability” but it has become stripped from “its critical function as it was absorbed into mass-consumer culture” (cf Storrar 2008:6). Storrar and Melton concur with Habermas that a critical and rational discussion is still possible in this new “global public sphere” (Melton 2001).

15 Jesus himself – probably a woodworker forced from peasant farming (Van Aarde 2001:76-77) – was also such a figure. However, the difference between Jesus’ charisma and other would-be leaders is that influential followers of Jesus elaborated intellectually and with passion upon his core message – an

Weber (Kim 2007)<sup>16</sup> called such figures decades ago in the face of rising Hitlerism, bring “good news” to a desperate “unthinking mass following”, the civil gathering of a “‘sectlike society’ with its own parlance” (Weber’s terminology).

Dat vreemdelinge haat in dieselfde maand plaasgevind het toe Suid-Afrika ’n “geestelike renaissance” onder wit mans in die boerderygemeenskap op die platteland sien gebeur het, eis van my as teoloog intellektuele besinning en konstruktiewe kritiek. Hiermee word op geen wyse ’n verband gelê tussen Suid-Afrikaanse kommersiële boere as “groep” en die geweldenaars wat hulle aan vreemdelinge haat skuldig gemaak het nie. Die feit dat geestelike renaissance en vreemdelinge haat in dieselfde tyd binne dieselfde konteks afspeel, bevestig bloot die populistiese kultuur van die huidige samelewing waarna hierbo gewys is – ’n konteks waarin onverdraagsame fundamentalisme ’n ideale bedding vind om te ontdooi. Teenoor die wek van verwagtings vir goddelike wonders teen die natuurlike grein (in terme van gedateerde teïsme), wys ek op die goddelike wonder van begenadiging met geloof ten spyte van menslike onmag en desperaatheid. ’n Leef vanuit so ’n geloof is dié wonder – en myns insiens die antwoord wat die evangelie van gelowiges vra. So ’n eksistensie staan teenoor die skep en handhaaf van ’n konteks wat vir populisme, fundamentalisme en onverdraagsaamheid aanleiding kan gee.

As iets werklik groots is, sê studente graag op idiomatiese wyse “vir Afrika”, byvoorbeeld die eksamen was so moeilik, “ons het gedruip vir Afrika” of, “dit het gereën vir Afrika”; “die oes was so goed, ons het as ’t ware mielies vir Afrika”. Teen hierdie konteks

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elaboration which not only resulted into an wider emerging following but also into scriptures that became the early Christian documents (cf Gerd Theissen [1977] 1978. *Sociology of early Palestinian Christianity*; 1999. *A theory of primitive Christian religion*).

16 “If the genuine self-rule of the people is impossible, the only choice is between leaderless and leadership democracy (*Führerdemokratie*) ... Leadership democracy is, however, not solely reliant upon the quality of its leaders, let alone that of a caesaristic dictator. In addition to electoral competition, Weber saw localized, yet public associational life as a breeding ground for the formation of charismatic leaders” (cf Max Weber [1910] 2002. “Voluntary associational life (*Vereinswesen*)”, ed and tr by Sung Ho Kim, *Max Weber Studies* 2/2 (2002); Kim, S H 2007. *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/weber/>).

is die “nuwe” uitdrukking op grond van ’n wonderwerk, “faith like potatoes” nogal veelseggend. Is dit moontlik dat ons ook kan verwys na *faith for/like Africa* eerder as *faith like potatoes* (Angus Buchan [1998] 2006)?

Die “opmars” van wit boere na massabyeenkomste vertel die verhaal van ernstige nood en soeke deur boere na ’n wonderwerk in Afrika. Waarom vra Thabo Mbeki: “Hoekom is ons as Afrikane nie in staat om die vasteland se probleme op te los nie? Daar moet iets verkeerd wees!”<sup>17</sup> Waarom word boere begeester deur die metarasionele praatjie<sup>18</sup> van ’n self-erkende leke-prediker wat in Zambië en Zimbabwe ontwortel is en nou weier om in Suid-Afrika slagoffer te word van óf droogtes óf geweld?

As humanis, teoloog en kritikus durf ek nie vrede maak met ’n fundamentalisties-gedrewe “geestelike herlewing” nie, maar ek word wel geïnspireer deur *faith for/like Africa* wat armoede en geweld met die soeke na oplossings kan uitdaag – maar ’n geloof, *a continuation to remain trusting, tolerating despite suffering*, dit wil sê ’n *toleransie* wat nie arm is aan teologiese diepte en weldeurdagte en verantwoorde etiek nie.

Fundamentalisme het oor die grense van godsdiens die kenmerkende neiging om konflik met teenkonflik te wil bestry. So ’n apokaliptiese “oog-om-oog”-mentaliteit (*lex talionis*) skep egter die spiraal van konflik op konflik.

The apocalyptic urge for revenge is a characteristic of a typical tricontinental, tribal anthropology. It also features strongly in Middle Eastern agonistical culture – that cultural mentality to which Thabo Mbeki refers. An urge for retaliation instead of reconciliation also forms part of the environment of the authors of the sacred writings of Judaism, Islam and Christianity. Vengeance in order to survive is indeed common in both the animal and human world. The question is how this archetypal instinct of responding to violence with counter violence, can be mitigated to prevent the spiral of conflict from gaining momentum like a run-away truck, leaving more and more victims in its wake. Do theology and Christian ethics offer a perspective that could perhaps be considered?

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17 By, in *Beeld*, 31 Mei 2008, 14.

18 Kyk die bespreking van die bydraes van Weber, Habermas en Melton hierbo.



To me, René Girard's (2003:409-418; cf Girard 1989; Kirk-Duggan 2006:6-8; Hamerton-Kelly 1993:289-296; Girard 1993:269-274) "scapegoat" theory offers a useful lens through which the dynamics of violence can be observed and exposed and possibly be addressed. This theory has as its point of departure the notion of *mimesis*. The success of the "scapegoat ritual" lies therein that the "sacrificial offer" is projected onto something or somebody that is replaced by symbols and in this way is invisibly transposed into the role of the "other", detached from the "visible" conflicting subject and object. This process is also dramatically and theatrically presented in the form of novels, films, operas and other musical performances. In the process of partaking in these art forms participants are given the opportunity to identify those who do evil, have empathy with the victims, experience anger at the evil caused, thereby getting rid of their own anger – or it could leave them cold.

In antiquity Aristotle<sup>19</sup> began to utilise the role of *imitation* as a rhetorical technique and used the word *mimesis* in this context (see Castelli 1987; Kinneavy 1987; Mack 1990). In essence, imitation is part of socialising and also of how and what we know and how that is internalised. It is through imitation that we learn from others and idealise. Acceptable *mimesis* leads to the internalising of social behaviour which finds violence unacceptable and also rejects the notion that someone has to be sacrificed for the sake of someone else. The ideal of a conflict free life is identified by means of role models and is thus imitated.

Dr Richard Burrige, the Dean of King's College at the University of London – a good friend and research associate at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Pretoria – published an exciting book on New Testament theology and ethics in 2007, titled *Imitating Jesus: An inclusive approach to New Testament ethics*. Dr Burrige dedicated his book to Bishop Desmond Tutu and all of Richard's South African friends of the "rainbow nation". *Library World*, through Amazon Customer Reviews, says the following with regard to Dr Burrige's book: "The Bible still matters in many contexts. It certainly matters in South Africa, having shaped their history, both from the side of colonialism and apartheid and from the side of our liberation struggle ... [I]t is the South African site that

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19 Aristotle's, *Rhetorica*, edited by W D Ross ([1959] 1964).

provides the author with an answer to the ‘so what’ question? Vast amounts of biblical scholarship stop short of moving beyond a piling up of ancient detail. The author goes beyond the detail to risk saying something about how and why the detail matters. And while readers in South Africa will derive a special benefit from this study, those in other contexts will also find much that resonates with their own contexts”.

Met hierdie gedenklesing sluit ek aan by Dr Burridge se appèl om die “nabootsing van Jesus”, of te wel *imitatio Jesu – the imitating of Jesus* – ernstig te neem. Dié Bybelse skrywer wat as individu vir ons die meeste geskryfte nagelaat het, te wete die apostel Paulus, se etiese imperatief was ook op die “nabootsing van Jesus” gebaseer, hoewel Paulus self nooit die historiese Jesus persoonlik geken het nie. Paulus se *mimesis-retoriek* verdien daarom myns insiens sterk oorweging. Paulus het in sy ongeveer een dekade van briewe skryf in denke en pastorale vaardigheid ontwikkel. 1 Tessalonisense (geskryf vanuit Korinte) was hoogs waarskynlik sy eerste brief wat ons besit en Romeine (ook geskryf vanuit Korinte) sy laaste (vgl Van Aarde 1990:418-425; Den Heyer 1998:61). Die *mimesis-retoriek* is reeds in sy eerste brief aanwesig is (dit wil sê in 1 Tessalonisense) en ons vind ‘n besondere diepgang daarvan in sy laaste brief (dit wil sê in Romeine).

When Paul implores the Christian church in Rome not to make enemies – but to show love, also for the enemy (Rm 12:9-21) – he brings us in closeness with the Jesus tradition (cf inter alia Mt 5:44).

Wat die aard van die interafhanklikheid<sup>20</sup> tussen die etiek van die historiese Jesus en Paulus oor geweld en toleransie is, weet ek nie. Ek oordeel wel dat ons in Romeine 12:9-21 Paulus se “discourse on ‘genuine love’” (Robert Jewett) aantref. Ek verwys hierna as Paulus se versie op Jesus se “draai van die ander wang” en my kollega Robert Jewett beskryf dit as “the bravest statement in the world”.

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20 Vergelyk Peter Stuhlmacher (1983:240-250); Dale C Allison (1982:11-12); James D G Dunn (1990:193-207); Michael Thompson (1991:96-105); Frans Neiryneck (1986:265-321); Nikolaus Walter (1985:501-502); W T Wilson (1991:165-171); Gordon Zerbe (1992:207-208); Robert Jewett (2007:766 note 103); David Wenham (1995:251).

One of the most subversive pronouncements to be found in the Jesus tradition is the one about turning the *other* cheek when struck on the cheek (Q 6:29 // Mt 5:39 // Lk 6:29). It is within such a framework of social and religious thinking that Paul's version of "turning the other cheek" indeed has an air of subversion about it.

In the Mediterranean social context, according to convention, a person who considers himself to be someone else's superior, would not strike his opponent with a flat right hand, but with the back of the *left* hand. Having to hit with a flat hand (in other words with the palm of the hand), would mean that the opponent considers his adversary as someone of equal honour. By hitting with *the back of the left hand against the right cheek* – the side of the jaw considered to be the more honourable one – not only increases the offensive nature of the violence, but is also indicative of an even greater arrogance on the part of the aggressor.

By turning the left (the "other") cheek, it is assumed that if the arrogant aggressor ventured another blow, he would be forced to *hit with the flat hand, that is with the palm of the right hand, on the left cheek*. The implication is that in this way the aggressor has to acknowledge his opponent's honour (not the right cheek any more, but the left cheek) and that the opponent is of equal standing (having to hit with the palm of the right hand and not the back of the left hand) (Malina & Rohrbauch 1992:55; Davies & Allison [1988] 2005:543f). As one of the experts on the "sociology of the Bible", Professor Bruce Malina (1993:12) states "Only equals can play the honor game of challenge and response". An "equal" opponent does not "deserve" being hit with a flat hand, but should a fight be unavoidable, then his opponent should actually hit him with the back of the left hand on the right cheek! By implication, turning the other cheek would ring an end to the violence, because an "honourable" opponent does not deserve such an insult!

In Paul's case we are dealing with a process of "psychological development" – and his "success" can be explained in terms of how the scapegoat rite had a positive influence on him and changed him. Paul's version is that when your enemy strikes out at you with fire and you respond with love, that love becomes like a fire that burns the enemy with shame (Rm 12:20; cf Proverbs 25:21-22). Matthew is the one who specifically mentions that the attacker hits the victim on the *right cheek* (Mt 5:39). And it is because of this preciseness

that it can be assumed that the victim's counter act resulted in preventing the violence from spiralling out.

Paulus se versie van om die “ander wang te draai” hou verband met een van die belangrikste verskuiwings wat in Paulus se denke plaasgevind het. En dit raak Paulus se retoriek aangaande *vergelding*: aanvanklik word dit skerp in terme van ‘n apokaliptiese artikulasie in 1 Tessalonisense aangetref<sup>21</sup>, en dan neem hy daarvan afskeid deur in sy brief aan die Galasiërs self-krities te reflekteer oor “geloof wat in liefde werksaam moet word”, terwyl hy hom in hierdie brief – dit wil sê in sy brief aan die Galasiërs – nie kan losmaak van sy vroeëre “woede-herinneringe” nie<sup>22</sup>. In die plek van apokaliptiese vergeldingstaal volg nou ‘n retoriek van toleransie in sowel die Korintiër- en die Filippense-korrespondensie as in sy privaatbrief aan Filemon, totdat hy sy eie versie van Jesus se bekende uitdrukking van “draai die ander wang” in sy laaste brief (dit wil sê in Romeine) nie net artikuleer nie, maar ook geïnternaliseer het.

In die Jesus- en Paulus-tradisie kry ons etiese riglyne in ‘n *nie-apokaliptiese* vorm oor hoe Jesus-volgelingen in die antieke en in vandag se tyd op geweld behoort te reageer. Dit is nou maar eenmaal so dat geweld en teengeweld een van die kentekens van hoe *apokaliptiek* die oorgelewerde, soms ongeskrewe, gemene reg in die Midde-Ooste in die na-Babiloniese ballingskapperiode sedert die derde en tweede eeu voor en die paar eeue tot ongeveer die vierde en vyfde eeu na die geboorte van Jesus Christus, gevorm het. Volgens die apokaliptiek sal dit die wrekende, oordelende God self wees – en nie die lydende regverdige nie – wat ongeregtigheid op ‘n

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21 In 1 Tessalonisense etiketteer Paulus sy Judese volksgenote – dié wat buite sy eie groep val – op apokaliptiese wyse deur middel van welbekende en oud spreekwoorde as vyande van alle mense, moordenaars van die profete. Verskeie Bybelwetenskaplikes beskou die uitsprake hier as nie van Paulus self afkomstig nie (kyk Van Aarde 2008), maar as ‘n latere interpolasie, omdat dit as baie twyfelagtig beskou word dat Paulus so ‘n verdoemende uitspraak oor die Israeliete sou maak – iets wat hy nêrens in sy ander briewe in sulke sterk apokaliptiese terme doen nie.

22 Cees J den Heyer (1998:107) stel dit soos volg: “In zijn brief aan de gemeente der Galaten brengt Paulus een opmerkelijk voorval in herinnering ... Paulus’ verslag van het gebeuren draagt – ook al is het geruime tijd later geschreven – nog altijd de sporen van zijn emoties en en van zijn nauwelijks te onderdrukken verbijstering en woede ...”.

katastrofale wyse aan die einde van die tyd sal beëindig en die lydende regverdiges dan met die goeie sal beloon. In so 'n apokaliptiese raamwerk bly mense bloot slagoffers vasgevang binne 'n spiraal van konflik.

Volgens Aristoteles (*Rhetorica*) is dae wat vergelding oproep, daardie optredes wat iemand anders as sonder “waarde” (dit wil sê, “waardigheid”) ag. Aristoteles, meen daar is drie tipes, naamlik veragting (*katafronēsis*), kwaadwilligheid (*perasmos*) en belediging (*hubris*). Om iemand te *verag*, beteken dat so 'n persoon se waardigheid weg geneem word, want hy of sy word as waardeloos gereken. Om *kwaadwillig* te handel beteken dat struikelblokke so in die weg van 'n ander persoon geplaas word, met die bedoeling dat die persoon gedwarsboom word. Om iemand te *beledig* is om iemand anders skade, seerkry en ongemak aan te doen, waardeur hy of sy onteer word deur 'n boosdoener wat hom-/haarself meerderwaardig ag.

Teenoor sulke geweldaksies en -gesindhede staan die enkelvoudige begrip “vriendskap” (*filofronēsis*). Paulus kwalifiseer egter wat hy met “vriendskap” bedoel. Dit is nie hyself en sy vriendskap wat as aansporing dien vir mense wat fisies en/of innerlik ly as gevolg van veragting, kwaadwilligheid en belediging nie, maar die teenwoordigheid van die Here in hulle lewe (vgl veral 1 Tess 4:13-18). Juis hierdie spreekwyse vorm die agtergrond waarteen Paulus sy etiek oor *geweld* in *toleransie* transformeer.

Met die begrip “toleransie” het ek nie mense- en burgerregte sedert die Franse Revolusie in gedagte nie, maar Paulus se gebruik van die woordgroep “lankmoedigheid”, oftewel “geduld”, as 'n Christelike waarde deur hoopvol “aan te hou te midde van en ten spyte van swaarkry”<sup>23</sup>. In Latyn word hierdie Bybelse begrip vertaal met naamwoorde soos *sustinentia*, *sufferentia* en die werkwoord *tolerare* – almal terme wat op sigself semanties veelseggend is en wat sprekend in Engels *endurance* en 'n *continuation to remain trusting despite opposition* tot uitdrukking bring. Wat in Paulus se briewe gebeur, is dat hy deur middel van retoriese tegnieke by die konsep “vriendskap” aansluit (kyk Funk 1967:249-268; Koester 2007:18). Vriendskap jeens sy eie “binne-groep” verander hy egter in toleransie ook jeens die “buite-groep” (1 Tess 3:12); en uiteindelik

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23 *Sub verbo hupomenē/hupoménō*, in Louw & Nida (1988:657, 308).

het hy by die punt uitgekom het dat sy etiek geen verskil vertoon ten opsigte van óf die “binne-groep” óf die “buite-groep” nie.

Dit kom daarom as geen verrassing nie wanneer Paulus in sy laaste brief, dié aan die Romeine, die etiese gedeelte daarvan inlui met ‘n beroep op die lesers om hulleself aan God te gee as lewende en heilige offers (Rom 12:1-2). In ‘n neutedop saamgevat, kan ons Paulus (Rom 12:9-21) se verstaan van wat die Christelike lewe behels, soos volg weergee: om te seën en nie te vervloek nie (vs 14); om eensgesind te wees (vs 16); om nie kwaad met kwaad te vergeld nie (vs 17); om nie wraak te neem nie (vs 19). Veral bekend in verband met die liefde is Paulus se woorde in Romeine 13:8-10 waarin (soos in Gal 5:14) die hele “Tien gebooie” (die dekaloo) – net soos wat ons dit in die Jesus-tradisie aantref – in die gebod van die liefde saamgevat word. En wat hier in die besonder tref, is die woorde waarmee die paragraaf begin, naamlik dat ‘n mens aan niemand iets verskuldig behoort te wees nie, behalwe om mekaar lief te hê (v 8). Volgens Paulus is gelowiges altyd aan mekaar en aan alle mense liefde verskuldig – in die hede en ook in die toekoms. Hulle liefde vir mekaar en vir almal spruit voort uit ‘n spontane dankbaarheid jeens God voordat en sonder dat hulle gebied hoef te word om lief te hê.

To summarise: It has to be borne in mind that when Paul thanked God in 1 Thessalonians for the faith, love and hope of his readers, he did so with only his own group in mind (1 Th 1:3). Here Paul linked the concept of “tolerance” to future hope – as he also did in his last letter to the Romans (Rm 5:3). But in his last letter, also writing from Corinth, but almost a decade later, his thoughts on the matter were radically different to when he had written his letter to the Thessalonians a decade earlier, also from Corinth. At that earlier stage his thinking had been that the love for one another within the inner group would earn the respect of the outside group, those outside the Christian faith community (1 Th 4:12). However, he found it impossible to show love to the outside group, those who were so murderous and who had shown so much violence and hostility towards his people, to himself, the earlier prophets and also towards Jesus (1 Th 2:14-16), but to deliver them unto the apocalyptic vengeance of God’s wrath!

During Paul’s “spiritual” life journey a change in attitude set in as far as the initial undisputed distance between an inner group and an outer group was concerned. What has happened here? It appears

as if *tolerance* was given a new definition, because *hope for the future* had been internalised.

Is daar 'n moontlikheid dat 'n Christelike lewenswyse die skynbaar onbreekbare spiraal van geweld in Suid-Afrika kan breek? In Suid-Afrika het Apartheid mense se bestaansmiddele teen hulle sin ontsê en rassisme het mense se waardigheid diep aangetas, sodat die fisiese en emosionele pyn wat berokken is, denke in der waarheid oorstyg. In so 'n konteks is 'n spiraal van konflik natuurlik. Nou is die opbou en handhawing van sosiale kohesie van groot belang. Hierin vervul moraliteit 'n belangrike rol. In vandag se neokoloniale en post-koloniale Suid-Afrika behoort Apartheid egter nie meer as “die sondebok” vir *alle* sosiale destruksie verklaar te word nie. Hiervan is die afgelope voorvalle van vreemdelingehaat 'n voorbeeld. Om Apartheid steeds as die “sondebok” te beskou, sal die spiraal van konflik nie breek nie. Inteendeel, die resente Suid-Afrikaanse ervaring is dat, juis deur dít te doen, die opgeboude sosiale kohesie vanweë die suksesvolle program van versoening en rekonsiliasie in post-Apartheid Suid-Afrika skade kry en dat opponerende fronte van vyandigheid weer opgerig word.

Paulus kan ons help om die “sondebok”-teorie anders aan te wend en dit kan moontlik tot versoening bydra. Christene in Suid-Afrika wat erns met die Jesus-tradisie maak, kan in hulle eie lewe iets realiseer van dit wat iemand soos Paulus gedoen het. Hy het die “ander wang begin draai”, nie omdat voorwaardelike resiprositeit hom weer ten goede sou kom nie; nie omdat hy gemotiveer was deur gewoontes van tradisie of goeie maniere nie; dit wil sê nie as gevolg van *konformasie* met die samelewing nie, maar as gevolg van *transformasie* van die self – omdat 'n transformasie van rolmodel plaasgevind het.

Within the Pauline paradigm faith, love and hope are gifts from God – and when you have internalised those in such a manner, you would unlimitedly grant life to others, and as God, the Spirit and Jesus did, you will begin “to turn the other cheek” rather than to take revenge through violence and murder. What is the appeal? Perhaps love can conquer hubris! Strong moral leadership – by the President and the people of South Africa – can make a difference when Christians truly internalise tolerance and hope for the future. No argument acquits leaders to comply with the commitment to combat extant or

potential violence. “The RDP of the soul” asks that we should take the following remarks of Dr Allan Boesak (2008) in his “Open Pastoral Letter to the Zimbabwean Churches” to heart:

“I was part of a South African Council of Churches delegation which ... had a two-hour meeting with President’s Mbeki and his mediation team on Zimbabwe ... In short, I do not think we as a church should have a romantic view about these matters and of the players involved ... As mediator, Thabo Mbeki has to take into account both sides, even though it might be clear to the rest of us that one side is lying ... The situation of the churches, however, is different. Our mandate ... comes from God ... We must speak for those who have been deprived of the right to speak, even if it goes against ‘protocol’. Whether Mr. Mbeki wants to or not, we *must* indict those who perpetrate injustice, who cause suffering ... whoever they might be. Our respect for protocol can never stand in the way of truth ... The promises of politicians are always subject to, and suspect because of, the promises of God. We can never argue that the suffering of people is the price to pay ‘for the sake of the greater goal’. Which goal, whose goal? We ask. We are always aware that behind every ‘goal’ are powerful interests that are served, and those interests do not often take justice for the powerless as the main criterion ... Politics can allow the lie to live, with a view that the lie is necessary in order to make politics possible. The church knows that the lie covers the truth that people are dying ... Therefore the church will continue to speak up, to stand with those who are wronged, to rise up in outrage and compassion against injustice and suffering, even if it causes embarrassment to those in power ... And as we had to say to ourselves the words with which the Confession of Belhar ends, we say also to you: ‘We believe that, in obedience to Jesus Christ, its only Head, the church is called to confess and do all these things, even though the authorities and human laws might forbid them and punishment and suffering be the consequence’”.



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