

Truth
The True Peacemaker

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Published by

NEW CREATION PUBLICATIONS INC.
PO Box 403, Blackwood, South Australia, 5051
1983

First published by New Creation Publications Inc., Australia, 1983

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National Library of Australia card number and
ISBN 0 86408 006 9

Wholly set and printed at

New Creation Publications Inc.
Coromandel East, South Australia

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Foreword

The topic of peace is always interesting to consider, because it has to do with our sense of well-being and our freedom to engage in all the necessary things of ordinary life. But there have been particular reasons for recent interest in the subject. First among these has been the ongoing dilemma of conflict in those churches where it would appear that God's Spirit has refreshed the people of God in the meaning of their gospel. The second has been the opposite problem--a beguiling tranquillity in churches where the absence of friction may be largely attributable to the socio-economic homogeneity of the people concerned, rather than the dynamic of love for God. A third reason has been the distress, of many in our community, over personal, domestic, national or international matters, and the need of those involved to find a peace which is more than an escape from the problems, and better than an anxious reaction to them. These things make it imperative for the church to rediscover the peace of God in all of its dimensions, so as to truly represent the message of Christ to our generation in the context of its present experience.

Peace is not a concept to master, but the environment which the Father God creates for his family, and in which his children have fulness of life. It is the kingdom of God coming upon a group of people so that they recognise the benevolence of their God. It is the cessation of judgement, the end of all fear and condemnation, and in its place, the favour of God on those reckoned to have kept his law.

The material in this booklet is largely resource material for those who are prepared to think more on the subject. Numbers of the biblical references quoted have valuable detail in them which I have not been able to amplify. The material is also capable of

application to many areas of life which will become apparent as the subject opens up.

May you have grace and peace as you consider this theme and subject matter--and may your peace come to all your fellow believers. As you read on, you will see that such a prayer is not a mere wish, nor a presumption, nor a pious exercise for inactivity, but the normal blessing whereby Christians enrich the lives of others. If the truth is really the word of God, it does not explain peace but makes peace. Of course, it also destroys the peace of those who are trusting less than the truth.

1

Peace is not as Simple as it Sounds

The quest for peace, whether international, or domestic, or personal, has become a matter of pressing concern. The threat of war is obvious. The turbulence of social disorder led our Australian Prime Minister to choose 'national reconciliation' as one of his 1982 election themes. Personal disharmony, the cause of many stress-related sicknesses, is pushing some People into Eastern tranquillity religions and many into a variety of escapist life-styles.

In such circumstances it is appropriate to ask what Christians have to say about peace.

It is fashionable, in some circles, to say that peace will come if we leave all people to themselves, that there are no absolutes, and that it is those who have insisted on absolutes who have done much to cause disharmony. Those who do insist that there is such a thing as absolute truth, would clearly disagree with them.

So then, is truth the true peacemaker or the great divider?

THE CHURCH: PEACE OR TROUBLE MAKER?

The church, of course, has had great trouble in maintaining peace within its own ranks. One authority on church history is reported as saying that the only denomination which has never persecuted other Christians is the Baptist one, and that that is only because they have lacked the opportunity! This wry remark, together with the memories and experiences of numerous Australians, suggests that Christians must approach the subject of peace with some humility.

From one point of view, the church is a microcosm of society.

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That is, it is made up of the same kind of human beings as society at large; it is subject to the same pressures and must arrive at adequate solutions to the great universal questions of life. Its essential difference is that it is conscious of its relationship with God, and therefore should be able to display the truth of its God in the context of its life. For this reason, we cannot separate the questions of peace in society from questions of peace within the church. The reasons for lack of it are the same in both and both need the same solutions. (See, for example, James 4: 1-4.)

Probably the church's major failing, with regard to truth being recognised as the true peacemaker, is that it has frequently forced its truth on others. This has happened in homes and Christian groups, as well as in countries with State churches, and by many more means than physical force (eg. superstition, fear, ridicule, manipulation, etc.). Jesus made it plain that his truth could not be established by the 'sword'. Those with authority have responsibility to suppress evil and promote justice, but they misjudge the nature of truth if they think it needs to be promoted or established by force or manipulation or anything which minimises the responsibility of each to choose his or her path of life. Where any such force has been applied for this purpose, the truth has been grossly misrepresented.

JESUS—ANNOUNCER OF PEACE

Can we dismiss truth as the peacemaker because its proponents have been at fault? Rather than simply doing that, let us carefully consider our understanding of peace itself, and Jesus, whom the Scriptures describe as one who would bring peace.

Statements made at the time of Christ's birth signalled that he would 'guide our feet in the way of peace', and be the agent of 'peace among men with whom he is pleased' (Luke 1:79, 2:14). Prophecies of his coming had hailed him as 'Prince of peace', claiming that 'Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end' (Isa. 9:6-7). Yet for all that, he himself said little about peace and recognised that his message would be divisive (Matt. 10:34). As he rode into Jerusalem, in what was seen as a

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very provocative action, he said, 'Would that you knew the things that make for peace!' (Luke 19:28-44). He recognised that Israel was lulled into a false sense of her present safety, that the nation was deceived in its ideas about peace.

The prophets before him had faced the same dilemma and had had to endure the ostracism of sensing danger when everyone else was at ease (Jer. 6:14, 8:11, Ezek. 3:1-9, 13:10, 16, Micah 3:5--the last prophesied peace when well-fed!). The disciples had to be warned of wanting everyone to speak well of them (Luke 6:26). Later they were given peace, but told they would have tribulation in the world (John 14:27, 16:33).

What is the nature of this 'peace' which polarised Israel in a few short years, and continued to attract hostility in both Jewish and pagan settings as it spread across the first century world? Is it the proclaimers of Christ's peace who stir up strife--or do they expose a hostility which has other origins?

PEACE BY COMPROMISE?

Before answering this question, we should consider the usefulness of finding peace through alternatives other than truth.

Supposedly, the easiest road to peace is compromise. In the practical matter of living in family and social groups, of course, giving way to allow for the tastes and choices of others is essential (for example, see Rom. 14: 14-23). But does avoidance of confrontation lead to genuine peace? If this is the only road used, new 'foes' will emerge, requiring the complacent to retreat further and further from more and more situations and people, until their lives have no meaning and their relationships no savour. Tolerance is not far away from apathy. If people sense that a relationship or an institution does not require their real selves, but only their compliance with certain external requirements, they are being taught that they are not important and that only a minimum giving of themselves is required. If God has commanded that we love him with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves, it must be that human life is a total involvement of our being in relationships and in service. Only this can maintain.

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interest in relationships or in institutions, and only this can adequately meet the range of needs of those we serve.

One could observe that there is comparatively little fighting between Christians in the West at present. But one writer has noted that ‘the rise of religious liberty was not the logical outworking of either Protestantism or Catholicism, but actually of the prolonged clash between them and the resulting rise of religious indifference’ (Herbert Butterfield, quoted in *Christianity Today* article, 5.8.83, p. 21).

The church may actually have made an idol of peace. It is not hard to see that the hostilities and insecurities rampant in the world create conditions where the religiously inclined may turn to the church’s structures and terminology for the purposes of retreat, or social acceptance, or self-realisation. This of itself would not be a problem, but if the church sees that there is a market for her kind of institution and liturgy (formal or informal), and bends her message and practice to accommodate the demand, the result may not be a family of God but a hide-out for people with unresolved hostilities towards God. Where this is the case, agreeableness becomes the measuring stick by which everything else is evaluated. The church then exudes a bland peace, the absence of war, the burying of important issues--because they are divisive. What remains is of such little significance as to be unworthy of any self-sacrifice. The apathy of the world becomes the apathy of the church which must content itself with a well-managed truce, a safe uniformity, an uncommitted plurality or academic reserve, a practised niceness or restrained hostility. The gospel of peace must produce better fruit than this.

IS PEACE THE ABSENCE OF WAR?

The first century Stoic philosopher Epictetus, reflecting on the external form of peace maintained by Rome (the *pax Romana*), said: ‘while the emperor may give peace from war on land and sea, he is unable to give peace from passion, grief, and envy. He cannot give peace of heart for which man yearns more than even for outward peace’ (quoted in *The New International Commentary on*

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the New Testament, on 'Luke', p. 112). He could have gone on to say that not even external forms of peace can be maintained by force for ever unless there is some larger basis for it. The UNESCO) preamble states: 'If wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that peace must be constructed'. Something ails the human spirit at its depths and this tears at the fabric of all society. The truth, if it is to bring peace, must be that which reaches those depths, and it must also present a common point of reference for an enduring order of things.

It should be clear from these considerations that the uniquely Christian approach to world peace does not lie in the realms of arms limitation or political diplomacy, though Christians may well choose to become involved in these in the course of duty or sense. * National greatness which is based on strength of arms or economy is a false dream.

Closer to the truth are those who say there can be no peace without justice and who give themselves to alleviate the distress of others. This is clearly a Christian duty, attracting the blessing of God (see Psa. 72, Isa. 32:16-17, 59:8, 14-16, Hosea 4:1-6, Zech. 8:16-19, Prov. 11:11, 14:34), and we will give some attention to this whole matter, later. But even a peace achieved in this way, as all must know, is always fragile, New forms of manipulation rise to take the place of those which are overthrown. Constant vigilance is required. Visions of the meaning of justice expand, so that even those with considerable security feel threatened and fight for further privilege. What hope and incentive can inform and inspire those who long and work for peace in such directions?' Our politicians will have to be more than materialists, or militarists, if they want to give us a future and a hope (cf. Jer. 29:11).

The message of Christ has a different thrust and a different basis. It stops at nothing short of the destruction of hate and the establishment of a community of which God is truly the Father. Only such a truth can lead to true and lasting peace.

For the present, we have to be honest and say that unrest con-

* It is certainly necessary to question the present inordinate trust placed in arms and treaties. Israel was told not to trust in numbers or chariots or foreign nations for her safety (see Deut. 20:1-9, Isa. 31:1, Nahum 2:13)

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tinues on all sides. Jesus' own prediction was that wars and rumours of wars would continue to the end. He seemed to understand, too, that his own kingdom, though mustering not a single man of arms, would be the cause of controversy, domestic betrayal, civil unrest, and national calamity in which his own subjects particularly would suffer.

What, then, is the peace of God? Or, in history, is there any effective *Pax Christus* (peace of Christ)?

2

'The Things that Make for Peace'

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem as its Messiah, he was fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy: '... your king comes to you, triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth' (9:9-10).

But Jesus wept over the city because he understood its obstinacy towards him, and said: 'Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes'. He continued to say that Jerusalem would be razed to the ground by her enemies, because she did not know the time of her-'visitation', i.e. by her Messiah (Luke 19:28-44, and Isa. 48:18, 22).

What is this peace to which he referred, and what would have brought them into that peace?

THE FAVOUR OF GOD ON THE KEEPERS OF HIS LAW

The Jews had understood peace (Heb. *shalom*) in a number of ways. Basically for them, peace was a general state of material well-being (eg. Judges 19:20, I Sam. 16:5, Ezra 5:7), but more particularly, a harmonious relationship between persons or nations (eg. Psa. 35:20, I Sam. 7:14, Gen. 34:21). This was seen as God's gift, or his promise to them if they remembered his law (eg. Lev. 26:3-13, Num. 6:26, 1 Chron. 12:18, 2 Chron. 15:1-7, Psa. 29:1!, 37:11, Isa. 48:18-19, Mal. 2:1-7). Clearly, there could be no peace without safety and order, and neither of these without the keeping of the law (Rom. 3:9-17), which, of course, included justice.

DELIVERANCE FROM JUDGEMENT

When judgements came to Israel, as they frequently did, the prophets saw peace in terms of God's salvation of deliverance from that judgement, (Isa. 48:18, 54:9-10, 57:19, 66:12, Ezek. 34:25, 37:26-28), though it is not always clear how they conceived of this peace. Some saw the need for judgement on their society or their enemies, but knew that they themselves did not stand under judgement. This provided the basis for personal equanimity in the midst of a stressful situation (Psa. 4, 112:7-8, 119:161-168, Isa. 26:1-12), even though suffering was involved (Lam. 3:16-33). It also gave confidence to those who were concerned that God should restore the fortunes of the whole land and that he reigned over all (eg. Psa. 85, Isa. 52:7).

MESSIAH

Finally, Israel's prophets saw that an external peace would be given to his people (Isa. 2:2-4), particularly through the coming of the Messiah (Isa. 9:5-6, Zech. 9:9-10).

It is particularly necessary for us Westerners to realise that *shalom* did not primarily indicate a personal and inward tranquillity (though it led to this of course); more commonly it spoke of a social dimension. In a society which saw its whole life coming from God, this meant the cessation of all judgement against them and the restoration of ordered life which flowed from a God who took pleasure in them. All of this is well demonstrated in the building of Solomon's temple. This meeting place with God was located on the ground where David saw the halting of a judgement against Israel; it could be permanent because Israel had rest from all her enemies, and was to be built by a man of peace (1 Chron. 21-23).

JESUS BRINGING PEACE TO THE UNWILLING

Returning to Christ's longing for Jerusalem, it is clear that he thought of her peace as a freedom from judgement, or the continuance of her blessing under God. The political leadership of

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Israel, dominated by the Sadducees, thought that her peace depended on a negotiated settlement with Rome (under the *Pax Romana*). What the high priest meant, when he said it was expedient for one man to die for the people, was that if they would eliminate Jesus, the peace they had made for themselves could be maintained.

(One could say that the Pharisees and Essenes, the other major parties within Judaism, also had a peace of their own making. The former were pietistic materialists, lovers of money and of public adulation, and would have seen Jesus as a threat to their status quo. The latter had largely retreated from the mainstream of Jewish life in the interests of personal purity and in the belief that nothing could be done until the dawning of the new age. This, too, was an irresponsibility which Jesus challenged.)

Israel needed to see that she was ripe for judgement because she had broken the law. She desperately needed to recognise her Messiah, a Messiah in fact who was about to bear their judgement himself so that they could know peace (Isa. 53:4, NIV: ‘...the punishment that brought us peace was upon him’). The comfort of knowing that her warfare was over, and that a new day of building under the favour of God, was at hand (Isa. 40: 1-5).

THE KINGDOM

Jesus had come announcing that the kingdom of God was ‘at hand’ or ‘among you’, or that it had ‘come upon’ the observers of his miracles. As part of the action of that kingdom, his disciples were to let their peace come to the households of towns where they stayed. If a ‘son of peace’ was there, that peace would remain with the household. If not, the peace would return to the disciples--and it would be ‘more tolerable on that day for Sodom than for that town’ (Luke 10:1-12, Matt. 10:13). One may suppose that peace coming to a son of peace meant that the household was under the particular protection and blessing of God. It was certainly tangible and external to those who received it, Jesus also gave his peace to a woman whom he had healed and to another whom he had forgiven (Mark 5:34, Luke 7:50).

PEACE FOR BELIEVERS

Before his crucifixion, Jesus left his peace with the disciples; he gave it to them. It was different from the peace given by the world, and it meant that the disciples were not to be cowardly or timid. What Jesus meant by his peace is hinted at in his observation that the ruler of the world was coming--but had no power over him (John 14:27-30). His meaning may have been clearer to the disciples when he explained that they would all forsake him, but he would not be alone. He told them this so that they would have peace--the peace he had given them. Thus, what they experienced would not be the result of their own faithfulness, or of the world's tranquillity, but of his own victory over the world (John 16:32-33). He was also recognising the presence and necessity of judgement, and so his peace had the dimension of persons being saved from judgement. (This would have been particularly significant in view of Israel's and the disciples' failures.) With the cross behind him, the resurrected Lord greeted his disciples again with: 'Peace be with you' (John 20:19, 21, 26). In kingly style (cf. King David, Jesus' forbear) he had exposed himself to the enemies of his people and defeated them. The power of sin and sting of death were no match for him.

In speaking to the disciples, Jesus had used a typical Hebrew greeting, which called to mind the social and temporal significance of peace. Further, his reference to his overcoming of the world indicates that his peace was applied to more than the disciples alone, and even more widely than to Israel; it had, and still has, cosmic proportions.

He, therefore, was the messenger beyond all others who announced good news of peace, telling Israel: 'Your God reigns' (Isa. 52:7).

We should guard against too quickly internalising the fact of Christ's peace. The Greek word *eirene* had typically been used to indicate inner peace or tranquillity, but Jesus and the apostles used the word against the background of Old Testament anticipations of peace, amongst which peace of mind was one of the least pronounced. Christ has established peace in the context of Satan's

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power, human failure, and divine judgement, and it is precisely because this peace is external to believers that it is so powerful in affecting them.

The apostles preached ‘good news of peace by Jesus Christ’ (Acts’ 10:36. See also Eph. 6:15, 2 Thess. 3:16). The greetings at the beginning of their correspondence, ‘Grace and peace to you...’ were more than mere greetings. They were giving their peace to the sons of peace. (Almost all of the New Testament epistles begin with or include such a greeting.)

PEACE WITH GOD THROUGH RIGHTEOUSNESS

Peace with God is not the major implication of the word ‘peace’ in the New Testament (only used in Rom. 5:1-5, and Eph. 2:14-17), but it is clearly the essential ingredient to the establishment of peace on earth. This peace with God is the result of justification by faith. As in Isaiah (48:22), peace could not come without righteousness. In the real world of human interaction, sin attracts to itself the anger of God expressed in the distortion of human behaviour and values (eg. Rom. 1:18-32), and of course, the loss of peace (Rom. 2:9-11, 3: 17). It is this appalling judgement which Jesus bore in his death and by which he justified the sinner. So now, the believer has peace with God, access to grace, but again, with immediate social implications. Being righteous before God (through faith), the believer receives the favours of God promised to the righteous--and this is peace. In addition the children of God know there will be a final sharing in the glory of God, and already have such a tangible sense of well-being that the reversals of this life can be seen as indispensable assets.

PEACE AMONGST MEN THROUGH JUSTIFICATION

Paul was given particular insight into the matter of Gentile acceptance, with Jews, as equal members of the household of God, and this immediately threw him into the centre of a controversy because the Jew/Gentile conflict ran very deep, and anything tend-

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ing to close the gap was very threatening. Actually, Paul had been on both sides of the dispute, first as an antagonist of the messenger of peace, but then as an ally, and in both of these roles he had been energetic. It is all the more interesting, therefore, that he is the one to tell us how peace was made between Jew and Gentile. The truth that made peace, as revealed to him, is applicable. to any other deep-seated alienation between persons or societies (see Eph. 2:11-22, 3:1-6, 4:1-3).

His message was that in Christ the gap between Jew and Gentile was totally closed because they were united in a common reconciliation with God, 'the dividing wall of hostility' broken down. It was the law which had effectively separated them. Jewish attempts to keep the law could not have brought them any real peace of conscience. The Pharisees and those they taught imagined that it did, but Jesus showed them that they 'were still bound by their sin (John 8:31-47). With no real peace with God, they had to establish a righteousness of their own, and this would have to be established in the eyes of their peers (see Rom. 10:3 and Matt. 6:5). These restless attempts to be justified could not make them a peace-making people, and had actually made them aloof from the Gentiles whom they were intended to 'enlighten. The Gentiles had responded in like manner and so there was hostility. But now, Jesus had borne, in his own flesh, the condemnation of the law, and abolished the need for division over it. The Jew need no longer attempt to be justified by the law, and the Gentile need not feel excluded for the lack of it. Both could be justified by the death and rising of Jesus Christ.

It is not only Jews, of course, who seek to justify themselves. The habit is universal, and whatever it is that people use to justify themselves, it must be pursued with a vigour which makes it impossible for them to make peace at the same time. Everyone has what the law requires inscribed on his heart. (Rom. 2:14-16), and the failure to 'measure up' keeps the attempts at self-justification going strongly. Part of self-justification is to despise or criticise those who don't measure up to one's own criteria for acceptance. If Jesus Christ has himself fulfilled God's requirements for justification, then attempts at self-justification are no longer

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necessary, and the prime source of human antagonism has been destroyed. The believer truly experiences a clear conscience and is able to truly serve God and his fellow man, and this makes peace (Col. 2:13-14, Heb. 9:13-14, 10:21-22). It is imperative for the peace of the world that all receive this gracious provision, because the alternative is bitterness and defilement of massive proportions (Heb. 2:12-15). It is also imperative, of course, that the church know and maintain this peace, so as to bear witness to the truth in our society.

If Christ has made peace, but the people who profess to know him are at war, it must be that one or both of the parties has not fully applied the message of the gospel to the restless self-accusation which goes on in all of us. It follows, too, that if Christ gave up his life to make peace, then the omission is serious and must be amended.

THE FATHER BREAKING DOWN HOSTILITY.

Paul also said in Ephesians 2 ‘that all who are in Christ have equal access by the one Spirit to the Father (Eph. 2:11-19, 3:4-6). If hostility is the anxiety which One has when deprived of privileges available to others, then God has ‘abolished the reason for it, by giving to everyone equal access to his favours; no one need feel deprived. The social implications of this in the church were intended to demonstrate the wisdom of God to heavenly ‘powers (Eph. 3:7-10). The fact that Ephesians 2:13 and 17 reflect the wording and context of Isaiah 57:14-21, highlights the fact that biblical peace is the cessation of judgement; thus it is possible for normal life to have its proper richness under God’s blessing.

This peace of God, or *Pax Deo*, dwarfs the social implications of the *pax Romana*. It keeps the hearts and minds of believers in Christ, and rules them (Phil. 4:7, Col. 3:15). The God of peace (Rom. 15:33, 2 Cor. 13:11, Phil. 4:9) will destroy Satan (Rom. 16:20), bring believers to wholeness of spirit, soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23), give them peace (2 Thess. 3:16, Rom. 15:13, Gal. 5:22), and equip them with everything good to do his will (Heb. 13:20-21). ‘Peace’ is linked with ‘life’ as the opposite of ‘death’ in

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Romans 8:6. The time has not yet come for ‘establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old’ (Acts 3:21), but the Messiah has established his kingdom, ‘and of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end’.

THE RULE OF PEACE

Christians may never be able to explain the peace of Christ to an unbeliever. The peace of Rome was seen as more tangible to many Jews, just as the peace of any modern-day status quo may seem more tangible to many today. But the peace of God is known by those within his kingdom. By faith, they see that God’s true order and peace are already here because the king has established his reign. The dynamics of his rule are already operative and, by faith, are effective in the life of the church.

The coming of peace had to destroy our distrust of God, our restlessness with ourselves, and tardiness towards others. It had to establish love, contentment, and generosity (which is more than justice, for tolerance) as real options for sinners. It needed to give all persons the assurance of a benevolent Fatherhood. Truth is the true peacemaker, because those who know the truth live in the peace of an established kingdom whose sure, ultimate, triumph extends its aura back into the present (2 Peter 3:14). Those who know that Christ’ has taken them out of reach of judgement, and into the Father’s family, need have no anxiety for themselves, and so are the world’s true peacemakers. Because they are beyond the pale of threats, their truth is their peace, which they bring to any with whom they associate. It is by such means that the peace of Christ is revealed amidst the judgements that come to all who trust a false peace.

This gospel is no pipe-dream, nor any bed of roses. Christians know that peace is--because Christ is. They are secure because they are in an environment of peace in the midst of war. Their own warfare consists in being unable to join the sides already at war with one another, and in giving witness to the peace they know when their testimony is clearly in competition with humanly devised systems of peace. This peace is at once future yet present,

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inwardly perceived yet as wide as the whole earth, indignant yet contented, intolerant yet generous, doing justly yet loving mercy.

The question before the church is whether she knows the things that make for peace, and whether, sensing the powers of the age to come, she will discard her trust in humanly devised systems and believe in the good news of God's peace.

3

Peacemakers—The Children of God

Those whom God owns as his children are the peacemakers: the God of peace has made peace, and his children must be actively involved in his affairs (Matt. 5:9). Because peace is essentially a social dimension, we may not pietistically claim to have peace with God and be disagreeable with everyone else (2 Cor. 13:11). Every effort needs to be made to live at peace with everybody--at the same time as pursuing holiness and grace (Heb. 12:12-17). This involves numerous actions like blessing persecutors, rejoicing or weeping with others, associating with the lowly, and refusing to take vengeance (Romans 12:14-21). It will also involve refusing to become divisive over minor issues which are really irrelevant to the kingdom of God. What matters here is 'righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rom. 14:13-23). It will involve authority and order in the church's meetings 'so that all may learn and be encouraged' (1 Cor. 14:26-33). It will involve caring for the needy in practical ways (James 2:16).

MAINTAINING THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

Jesus had recognised, amongst his disciples, a restless turmoil, which led them to compete with one another and to be jealous of others who were used by God. He told them to 'be at peace with one another' (Mark 9:33-50). Such warnings continue to be necessary within the church because true spirituality is not yet perfected in us. The seeds of peace do not reside in any human being other than our Lord. It is he who makes-peace, and it is his Spirit who conveys the reality of that peace to the church. The church

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can only have peace, therefore, to the extent that its members derive their life from that one Spirit.

In practical terms, this means a common recognition of all those men whom the Spirit of God has engifted to lead the church in the truth (Eph. 4:1-16, 1 Thess. 5:12-13). It is the Spirit himself who authenticates, to those who have the Spirit, the ministry of his apostles, prophets, and pastor-teachers. Once that has been done, the church cannot be selective about the ministries which have been given to it.. It cannot just accept the one which it finds least disruptive to its status quo, and hide from pan of the truth behind the safety of a human teacher. Paul believed in the authority given to him, yet wanted people to hear what was said by Apollos (1 Cor. 2:12--3:23). The same was true of Peter concerning Paul (cf. Gal. 2:11-14, 2 Peter 3:15-16).

It is the Spirit alone who effects unity, but all should be eager to flow with that Spirit in doing the things that encourage peaceableness. This is a noble occupation and not readily accomplished by those more concerned with youthful passions (2 Tim. 2:20-26). Peter reminded his readers that peace ('life, and good days') was still the blessing of God on those who kept his law, and that in the normal course of events a peacemaker would live in safety (1 Peter 3:8-16).

DANGERS FOR LEADERS

Leaders of the church are especially vulnerable to a number of dangers. They may establish a peace of their own by their charisma of dominance, or alliances of one kind or another. They may sense the division and antagonism about them and be tempted to join the politicking, reacting, competing, and destroying. King David and many others in Old Testament history encountered these things, but determined to walk by faith in the peace which only God could establish. Their experience can provide a wealth of example to those encountering similar difficulties.

Leaders may be threatened by diversity and suppose that uniformity is the path to peace; But gifts of the Spirit do differ, and the differences lead people to do different things, and even to see

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things in differing ways. If the unity which a church has is genuinely of the Spirit, it will be able to accommodate this true spiritual diversity, because each believer will be able to recognise the authenticity of what the other possesses.

Leaders must live with the fact that even where the truth is presented with love, 'it will sometimes evoke jealousy, suspicion, polarisation and hostility (Psa. 35:19-21, 120:6-7). Cain was angry, not because his brother's actions were objectionable, but because they were good. Abel knew he had been accepted by God, and Cain, who hadn't, found it impossible to live with that testimony. It is important, therefore, that those who know the freedom of acceptance, present only the truth in love, and thereby avoid giving to others more to reject than the gospel. 'The' harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace' (James 3:13-18). This involves the use of wisdom 'from above', i.e. from God; again, it is clear that the ability to be a peacemaker amongst restless humans is God-given.

For peacemakers, smugness is out of the question, and taking of sides (sectarianism) impossible. Tears may be more appropriate if we know that the absence of peace is humanity's awareness of judgement. It is as important to know this within the church as it is outside it, because many within church structures are still living with guilt and condemnation.

Where a person, or church, or nation, claim to be at peace, but show no evidence of love for the Father or thirst for righteousness, their peace is precarious and certainly temporary, and waning is appropriate. The risks involved in being out of tune with majority opinion, or seeming not to have clear evidence that all is not well, must not deter the messenger (Gal. 4:12-20, 5:11'12, 6:12-16).

PEACEMAKERS IN THE WORLD

When the church is truly the church, i.e. living in the truth, she is the salt of the earth and the light of the world. I don't think this means that Christians can always work out what the world ought to do and then tell them. Christians have not got a monopoly on sense and certainly not on knowledge. Some issues may be clear

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enough to indicate the line of duty, and if this is so, the church or individual aware of that situation should do or say what they know is right. Christians must remember that God's design for peace includes keeping his law, deliverance from judgement, and the sovereignty of his Messiah.

Therefore, in any human scene, a Christian' contribution to peace will reflect these things:

1. There will be a witness to the truth of God's commands in some practical way-- and as an appropriate extension of that, a care of those who are being abused by human denials of them.
2. There will be an awareness of the role that judgement is playing in everyone's thinking, In a world of guilty men and women, the making of peace must be tenuous indeed while people feel under threat. The peacemaker must be one who has found a security. larger than self-justification, and certainly larger than force. (I don't think this principle requires a pacifist stance, but a nation which wants to make peace must be able to show that it is depending on more than the power of capital or armaments!)
3. There will be a recognition of the proper role of benevolent authority and a level of trust in (not blind loyalty to) that authority.

The Christian is uniquely qualified in these areas. The law has been written on his heart, or in social terms, the experience of true living and longing for justice have been etched into his being. He has discovered the power of grace, which not only overcomes the fear of death, but also removes the threat of all lesser 'deaths' which would otherwise pose as threats. He knows the richness of Father-love and Sonly obedience, and knows that lesser authorities can go no further than they are allowed. This provides a balance for relating to human authorities--knowing that there must be such and calling on them to be what they should be.

BECOMING ESTABLISHED IN PEACE

This recalls us to the need for us, who are the church, to live in the truth we know--to know it more richly, to practise it more faithfully, and to suffer its implications more patiently. We must confess our failures more humbly, and pray to the God of peace with joy. Let the evidence of the past suffice to reveal the illusion

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of trusting in a false security. The Peace of God is established, his Messiah is the Prince of peace, and of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end. We will need to develop roots far deeper into the truth we profess, so that the winds of human agitation don't cause us to lean or fall. It may well be that the systems, which men have trusted, are failing us at this time, for God's own purpose of establishing us firmly in his peace.