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# EDITORIAL

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## No Hope at a Time of Hope

During this month we will receive many messages wishing us a "Merry Christmas and a prosperous new year". After all, the Christ feast is a time of peace and goodwill toward all. Some people even stop killing one another on Christmas day!

As I write, Angola is still bleeding, people are dying on our roads and trains, and we continue to kill one another for personal gain and to consolidate political positions.

Last week a young man whom had been made redundant at work came to a doctor's consulting room. He looked very discouraged so the doctor asked, "Have you thought of suicide?" "I have it all organised," he said. "Do you want to tell me about it?" "No doctor, I am not worth saving".

This morning another young man walked in with a loaded pistol. He had had his furniture repossessed this weekend, in front of his children, who were pleading with him to stop the people taking their things. He was on a load of drugs from a psychiatrist colleague who had told him to be strong. He was just trying a family physician as a last resort.

Caleb was sent by Moses with eleven others.<sup>1</sup> They spent forty days having a look over the promised land and came back with two reports. A mass meeting was held in the presence of Moses. The people were given a factual but negative majority report followed by a minority report from Caleb. He also saw the giants in the promised land but remained optimistic. The people lost heart and voted for the pessimists. The story of the exodus had thus far been one of consistent miraculous protection and nurturing by Yahweh who had also

clearly promised them this new land. They still opted for the dark view of life. They were taken back into the desert to die there. Only Caleb and Joshua eventually got out.

At this time of good news, of peace among men, of hope, there is no way in which we can evade the bad news in South Africa. The bad news of violence, of war, of unemployment, of failed examinations, of no prospect of work even if you have passed your exams, of utter loneliness when others are feasting with family and no one looks you up any more; all this and more has to be said. We must write about it. We must face it in the consultation.

We can however choose how we will react to it. There are no tablets that can remove the problems. At best they can buy us time. At worst they incapacitate us. People in desperation need a refuge where other people will stand by them, care for them, allow them to be weak, and listen to the bad news with the ear of hope. If the faith we choose to live by, does not provide us with enough love and hope to see us through, let's trade it in! This most dangerous time in our lives and country's history is also our biggest opportunity for a future in which people can grow and live in harmony and joy.

I don't wish you just a merry Christmas, but rather some of the hope that comes with a new birth.

*Sam Johnson*

### Reference

1. Numbers, Chapters 13 and 14. The Bible.