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Dietrich Bonhoeffer and young Christians in

— PART I —

WE live in an age in which in all parts of the world Christians are becoming increasingly aware of the necessity to pray for each other by joining in the high priestly prayer of our Lord, ut omnes unum sint (John 17:21). We are determined not to be divided by political and ideological barriers of any kind. Thus the writer of these words and her friends are able to join our Christian brothers and sisters in South Africa in prayer — prayer which is informed and made concrete by reading the publications we receive from your country. I hope that this article will help you in South Africa to pray for us in East Germany.

Yes, it is from the heart of the Christian Church in Eastern Germany, the 'German Democratic Republic', that these words are written. But it must be noted that what I have to say is also applicable to the other part of our country, and that it is the same or similar trends of thoughts, which are occupying our minds on either side of the 'iron-curtain'.

Bonhoeffer — prophet and martyr

There is no shadow of doubt that no other theologian of the post-Barthian generation, both before and during World War II, has had the same kind of influence on the life and thought of the young Christians in the Evangelical Church of Germany as has Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

He was killed by the S.S. on the 9th April, 1945, in the concentration camp of Flossenbrück, but in both parts of our country he is very much alive in the discussions and thinking of young people. So to tell of Bonhoeffer's influence is to tell you something of our life and thought.

But Bonhoeffer does not merely belong to Germany and the German Evangelical Church. In the late twenties and thirties he had many official and personal relations with the Anglo-Saxon wing of the Ecumenical Movement. One thinks especially of his correspondence with the late Bishop of Chichester, Dr Bell, and their war time encounter in Sweden, which had a deep influence on the relations between the Church of England and the Ecumenical Movement, both for the 'Life and Work' section of that movement and the German Confessional Church. The German Confessional Church was the true Evangelical Church of Germany during the Nazi era, and resisted the introduction of the Nazi ideology of racism and totalitarian "Führerprinzip" into the Church of Christ. It was Bonhoeffer who, as a representative of the Confessional Church and a personal friend of Dr Bell, played an important part in the formulation and promotion of the 1934 "Message of Ascension-tide" which was concerned with the position of the German Evangelical Church and was addressed by the Bishop of Chichester to the representatives of the Churches on the Universal Council for Life and Work.

Our young people regard this period of Bonhoeffer's life (1931—1934) when he was the Youth secretary of the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, as a time of preparation for his later activities, including the writing of his books. It is the Bonhoeffer of the Nazi-

Resistance, the Bonhoeffer of the Gestapo-prison, who is mostly read by our young people. This must not be taken to mean that he is chiefly a political image; on the contrary, it is true to say that "Letters and Papers from Prison" has provided the young members of our Church with the equivalent of a Breviary. I personally know several of them who have read this book four or five times and know some of its more important sections by heart. The fragments of Bonhoeffer's "Ethics" are also widely read; he himself considered this his most important book and continued to work on it during the war and up to his arrest.

What is the reason for this passionate concern with Bonhoeffer's thought? Even a cursory knowledge of Bonhoeffer will substantiate the claim that his books, articles, lectures and sermons in every period of his life and theological thought were concerned with the task of preaching the Gospel in the modern world, with the unity of doctrine and action, both of the Church as a whole and of each of its members. As he saw it, only this unity could guarantee the validity of the Christian message in a secularised age.

'Cheap grace' and 'costly grace'

This is why Bonhoeffer fights against the concept of "cheap grace" in German Protestantism (see "The Cost of Discipleship" — the best known of his earlier books). By "cheap grace" Bonhoeffer means that Christians do not think it is necessary to obey the commandments of God given to them by Christ himself in the Sermon on the

This article comes from a Christian worker in Eastern Germany whose name cannot be disclosed for obvious reasons — Editor.

Mount and think that they can rely on the redemption and forgiveness of all their sins merely in virtue of their faith in Christ, and without the necessity of an absolute obedience to him. They are not aware of the fact that the grace of God 'cost' our Lord's death on the Cross, and that is, therefore, 'costly grace' and not 'cheap grace'. On the other hand, the Christian who has understood that God's grace is 'costly grace' cannot live his life in a "devil-may-care" kind of way as if nothing had happened; he is bound to follow his Lord on the narrow path which leads to righteousness (Matt. 7:

14), and this is a path of "faith expressed in action". Again many of the convictions expressed at the time when he was in frequent contact with representatives of the Anglo-Saxon world indicate that Bonhoeffer thought that the preaching and teaching of English and American Churchmen is not sufficiently grounded in Biblical Theology — thus they are not fully able to come to grips with social, national and international questions, in spite of their goodwill and readiness to help.

Bonhoeffer always tried to live by these insights himself, to discover the exact will of our Lord and to live a truly Christian life in the real world of the 20th century.

War and peace

During the time of his frequent ecumenical contacts no international question excited Bonhoeffer more than the question of war and peace. Between 1928 and 1939 his papers and addresses repeatedly return to this theme. For instance 1932 at the Youth Conference of the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches held at Gland on Lake Geneva, he said: "The Church of Christ stands for peace between people, between nations, between classes and races. But the Church knows also that there is no peace where justice and

Germany.

truth are absent. A peace which oppresses justice and truth is no peace, and against such a pseudo-peace the Church of Christ must protest. There exists a sort of peace which is worse than fight and struggle. But the fight and struggle here must be in the spirit of love to the adversant, a fight of the Holy Ghost, not of the flesh . . ."

Bonhoeffer energetically denied that this struggle for truth and justice would involve war. He used an example from the sphere of worldly justice: you have to try criminals in court to secure justices but this does not imply the lawfulness of torture; the practices of the court must rest on the Law of God. In the same way, war is not allowed as a means of promoting justice and truth.

In August 1934, at a Youth Conference in Fanø (Denmark), Bonhoeffer read the introductory paper. The following is a summary of his thoughts on this subject:

"In one word, 'war', we have the enemy of our work for peace.

1. We must understand what war is: a. War is a conscious action, which has as its source the conscious decisions of the human will which is fully responsible for it;

● Continued on page 2

Die beoefening van geestelike gemeenskap tussen lidmate van die Moederkerk en die lidmate van die N.G. Sendingkerk

DS. W. J. VAN DER VYVER*

HIERDIE onderwerp het vir die Kerk vandag aktueel geword. Dat die Kerk dit dan ook erns meen met die saak, blyk ook uit verskillende besluite en uitsprake gedurende die laaste dekade. Graag lewer ek hiermee dan 'n bydrae om die beoefening van geestelike gemeenskap tussen lidmate van die Moederkerk en die N.G. Sendingkerk te bepleit vanuit die Sendingkerk.

Ek lewer my pleidooi dan:

1. Op grond van ons geskiedenis tot ongeveer 1881;
2. Op grond van resente besluite en uitsprake van die kerk;
3. Op grond van die praktiese uitvoerbaarheid daarvan;
4. Op grond van die Heilige Skrif

Ek plaas die prinsipiële grond laaste, nie omdat dit van minder belang is nie, maar omdat ek met opset eers die geskiedkundige materiaal na vore wil bring, en verder ook omdat ek nie hier beoog om breedvoerig aandag te gee aan die prinsipiële aspekte nie.

1.) Op grond van ons geskiedenis tot ongeveer 1881

Sedert die volksplanting aan die Kaap is die bekeerlinge uit die slawe en Hottentotte by die Gereformeerde gemeente alhier ingeskokkel. Eredienste is gesamentlik bygewoon; doopsbedieninge het gelyktydig plaasgevind; katekisasieklasse is gesamentlik gehou; be-

vestiging van lidmate het by dieselfde geleentheid geskied en Nagmaalsvieringe het rondom dieselfde tafel plaasgevind.

Die gekleurde Christene was dus op gelyke voet met die blanke Christene behandel, hoewel daar vroeg reeds spesiale sitplekke vir die nie-blankes was. Hoewel afsonderlike bearbeiding ook reeds teen die einde van die 18de eeu plaasvind, bly hulle nog lidmate van dieselfde moederkerk. Die bedoeling was klaarblyklik nie om deur afsonderlike bearbeiding hulle uit die kerklike gemeenskap van die blankes uit te sluit nie. Die volgende besluit van die eerste vergadering van die Ring van Kaapstad is insiggewend:

„Dat men volgens den leer des Bijbels en den geest des Christendoms verpligt is zoodanige personen (van de kleur) tegelyk met geboren Christenen tot het Avondmaal toe te laten."

● Vervolg op bladsy 2

PROF. A. VAN SELMS

'N BELYDENIS GESING

IN die Afrikaanse kerke van hierdie land word dikwels verwondering uitgespreek oor die feit dat getroue lede van die ooreenkomstige kerke in Nederland soveel moeite het om met hart en siel deel te neem aan die kerklike lewe soos dit hom in die Nederduits Gereformeerde en die Hervormde Kerk hier te lande openbaar. In die besonder word opgemerk, dat die standpunt wat hierdie kerke in sake die kleurskeidslyn inneem, en wat uitloop op die vorming van afsonderlike kerke vir die verskillende groepe van nie-blankes, so min begrip by die Nederlanders vind, en dikwels met verontwaardiging verwerp word.

Vir die argument dat 'n mens eintlik in hierdie land gebore en opgevoed moet wees, om die rassevraagstuk reg te verstaan, is die Nederlanders nie baie vatbaar nie. Hulle sal daarop antwoord dat juis die feit dat 'n mens hier gebore en opgevoed is, dikwels 'n beletsel sal wees om 'n juiste blik op die verhouding van kerk en kleurskeidslyn te verwerf. Want dit vereis 'n groot mate van selfstandigheid en stoutmoedigheid om 'n objektiewe oordeel te vorm oor wat vir ons van die begin af vanselfsprekend gelyk het.

In opdrag van die Hervormde Kerk in Nederland het ek hierdie week 'n werk verrig, wat my daartoe gedwing het om voortdurend te blaai in die gesangeboek van daardie kerk. Dit is die bundel „Psalmen en Gesangen voor de eredienst der Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, in opdracht van de Algemene Synode der Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk op nieuw verzameld en bewerkt". Die psalms in daardie uitgawe is dieselfde as wat van 1773 tot 1936 in Afrika gesing is; die nuwe Nederlandse psalmberyming is nog nie amptelik in die Hollandse kerke ingevoer nie. Maar die gesange is nie die bundel wat as model vir die Afrikaanse gesange van 1943 gedien het nie; dit is 'n heeltemal ander bundel, waarin baie van die ou gesange weggelaat of gewysig, en meer as honderd nuwe toegevoeg is. Dit is hierdie bundel wat orals in die Hervormde gemeentes van Nederland gebruik word, en waarby sinds 1938 'n hele nuwe geslag opgegroeï het.

Boodskap van die Gesangebundel

Die hernude bestudering van hierdie bundel het vir my 'n nuwe lig laat opgaan oor die halstarrige we-

ring van baie Hollanders om hulle by 'n bepaling soos art. III van die Kerkwet van die Hervormde Kerk van Afrika neer te lê. In daardie artikel kom die berugte woorde „tot die Nederduits Hervormde Kerk van Afrika behoort slegs blanke persone" voor, en in daardie artikel word ook gesê dat die Hervormde Kerk „die stigting van eie volkskerke onder die verskillende volks-groepe" beoog. Oor die historiese agtergrond van hierdie bepaling praat ons nou nie; in die vraag na die organisasie van die kerk behoort historiese gegewens nie die laaste woord te hê nie, want volgens die Nederlandse Geelofsbelijdenis is daarby prinsipiële, Bybelse, gronde gemoeid. Dit gaan ons vandag net oor die vraag, waarom mense uit die Nederlandse kerk so 'n moeite het om daardie artikel met sy konsekwensies te aanvaar.

Dit word heeltemal begryplik as ons die Gesangebundel van die Nederlandse kerk soos vanaf 1938 in gebruik, aandagtig lees. Dan kom ons bv. by Gesang 103 : 1:

„Behoed uw Kerk, zet uit, o God, haar palen, zij kenn' eerlang geen grenzen meer!"

en effens verder in vers 2:

„Ontgloeï heel d'aard' in broedermin!
Moog' elke muur, die nog haar duizendtallen
vaneen scheidt, vallen!"

Wie dit gesing het, kan vervolgens moeilik tog grense trek en mure gaan bou. En as die predikante en ander sielsorgers in hierdie land „die verbreking van die dogter van my volk op die maklikste manier genees" (Jer. 6 : 14; S : 11) deur te sê dat hierdie gesang van die onsigbare kerk spreek

en die eenheid in Christus wat die onsigbare kerk ken, geen ekwivalent in die sigbare kerke vereis nie, dan onthou ons Nederlandse immigrant dat in Gesang 105 van dieselfde bundel staan:

„Wij bidden en wij danken saam tot God met d'enen Vadersnaam".

En hy vra: waar is daardie gesamentlike aanbidding, waarvan hierdie gesangvers praat? Dit is 'n sendingslied, dit spreek van wat verwag word van die evangelieprediking onder die heidene in al die lande van die wêreld. Hier word van geen stigting van rasiaal geskeie volkskerke gepraat nie; hier word gesing van 'n aanbidding wat mense van die mees verskillende herkoms in een kerk verenig.

As die immigrant nog bietjie verder blaai in sy ou gesangeboek, wat hy op reis saamgeneem het en vir hom dierbaar is, kom hy by Gesang 121 met sy vlotte, geesdriftige wysie:

„ . . . dat Hij ons over grenzen heen
laat zien het groot gezicht
van aller mensen broederschap
in 't ene, godd'lijk licht."

Skeldnaam word erenaam

„Aller mensen broederschap" — sou dit nou liberalisme of kommunisme wees? Hy laat hom nie daardeur oortuig nie, en as hy deur hierdie gesang te sing en in praktyk te bring 'n kafferboetie sou wees, dan aanvaar hy, soos sy voorouers, daardie skeldnaam as 'n erenaam, waarmee hy graag voor die troon van die ewige Regter sal verskyn.

Die gesang gaan trouens nog verder:

„God roept, en wat de mensen scheidt,
dat zij geen scheiding meer;
zijn liefde houd' ons allen saam
en samen met de Heer."

Met ander woorde: daar is natuurlik dinge wat die mense van mekaar skei, maar die kerk en sy lewende lidmate erken daardie skeiding nie en werk om dit op sy terrein te deurbreek en weg te vaag.

Wat 'n mens in sy jeug leer sing het, onthou hy sy lewe lank. Dit word 'n stuk van sy lewe, dit word die uitdrukking van sy innerlike oortuiging en die rigsmoer van sy handeling. Dit is 'n belydenis deur hom gesing.

NEW GENERAL SECRETARY

OF AACC TAKES UP

APPOINTMENT

Mr Samuel Amissah, Principal of Wesley Teachers' Training College, Ghana, has arrived in Kitwe to take up the post of General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches. Mr Amissah was appointed by General Committee of the AACC in April 1963 but was unable to relinquish his post until January 1964. In the mean time the Secretariat was managed by Dr Donald M'Timkulu who had been Secretary of the Provisional Committee which arranged the Kampala Assembly. Dr M'Timkulu has since become Principal of the Mindolo Ecumenical Centre. He is also Chairman of the General Committee of AACC and Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Africa Literature Centre.

Die beoefening van geestelike gemeenskap. (Vervolg van bl. 2.)

tus (Lukas 8 : 21). Hierdie nuwe verhouding waarin verlore sondears tot mekaar te staan kom, moet sigbaar tot uitdrukking kom. Vergelyk o.a. ook die volgende verse in die hoë-priesterlike gebed van die Here Jesus: Joh. 17 : 11, 21, 22, 23. In Openbaring 7 : 9 beskryf Johannes 'n hemelse gesing van 'n groot menigte uit alle nasies en stamme en volke en tale. Indien ons dan eenmaal in die hemel geestelike gemeenskap met mekaar sal geniet, is dit tog onverklaarbaar dat hiervan niks op aarde tot uitdrukking kom nie. Die beoefening van geestelike gemeenskap mag nie maar gereserveer word vir die hemel nie, dit mag nie slegs as eskatologiese leerstuk benader word nie. Dit moet hier reeds beoefen word.

Wanneer daar weer met hierdie saak erns gemaak word, wag daar gesoënde ondervindinge vir beide kante. Deur ons isolasie is albei geestelik verarm. Beoefening van onderlinge geestelike gemeenskap sal geestelike verryking meebring.

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REV. S. P. FREELAND*

HOWEVER much Christians generally might disagree with some of the things said by Archbishop Whelan in his recent statement on South Africa and her race policies, that statement must be welcomed at least as another contribution to a reasoned, careful and highly-motivated examination, from the religious angle, of present national policies.

Those who have studied the whole statement will find that a good deal of what it says is difficult to refute from the point of view of Christian teaching.

Where we agree

For instance, most Christians will agree with the contention that there is no teaching of the Church in opposition to the idea of a state composed of a number of national or racial groups maintained in their separate and distinct identity by the state of which they form a part.

To the best of my knowledge no religious leaders have ever denied this. It must also be agreed that "in no

society can every man have the full exercise of those rights which belong to himself theoretically as a human person."

Therefore, as Dr Whelan rightly says, living in society must of necessity impose some restrictions on the freedom of the individual.

We agree, too, that democracy is not necessarily the only form of government compatible with Christianity; that the "one man one vote" system may not always be desirable; that the great majority of non-Europeans have not yet reached the stage of development which would justify their integration into a homogeneous society with (the great majority of) Euro-

peans; and that there will always be inequalities in society that necessarily affect human relations.

With all this many of us have no quarrel.

Neither have we any quarrel with the answer given to the question, Is apartheid not an injustice which must go? to which the Archbishop replied, It all depends on what you mean by apartheid.

Where we are in doubt

In fact this is really the crux of the whole statement. What do we mean by apartheid? It is because so many people in South Africa have never really faced up to this question, and have differing ideas as to what is meant by this term, that so often we find ourselves talking at cross purposes.

The Archbishop goes on, in endeavouring to answer the question, to point out — rightly — that we must distinguish between the idea of apartheid or separate development on the one hand, and the actual laws and regulations

which are made to implement the theory.

So far so good. But it is precisely at this point, which is the kernel of the whole discussion, that the good Archbishop fails to make the distinction which he so truly says is crucial.

He seems to suggest that the idea of apartheid is simply the idea of separate national or racial groups existing as part of one state. Nothing could be further from the truth.

There are at least three distinct characteristics of the South African policy of apartheid or separate development, as currently pursued (the words are Dr Whelan's) which go far beyond the mere theory of separate grouping.

Dressed-up dictatorship

First and foremost, it is of the essence of our present racial ideology that the white group alone decides what is the best policy for the country as a whole. In other words the concept of racial grouping is used to de-

Great Need for