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# DIE STEM VAN SWART CHRISTELIKE BESORGDHEID

Vanaf Meimaand verlede jaar is vier belangrike kerkvergaderings, een buite en drie binne Suid-Afrika, waar besluite geneem is wat 'n lewensbelangrike invloed op die toekoms van Suid-Afrika het, gehou. Ons verwys na die „All Africa Conference of Churches” wat verlede jaar in Mei in Lusaka gehou is, gevolg deur die Nasionale Konferensie van die Suid-Afrikaanse Raad van Kerke in Augustus, wat weer op sy beurt gevolg is deur die Algemene Sinode van die N.G. Sendingkerk te Worcester in September, en die Algemene Sinode van die NG Kerk in Afrika in Junie hierdie jaar.

'n Objektiewe analise van die hoofbesluite wat by hierdie kerkvergaderings geneem is, dra aan ons die uitdrukking van vier uiters belangrike sake van besorgdheid oor:

- Al hierdie vergaderings het duidelike verklarings oor politieke kwessies, wat direk met Suid-Afrika verband hou, gemaak.
- Almal het die huidige beleid van apartheid of afsonderlike ontwikkeling in ondubbelsinnige terme verwerp.
- Almal reflekteer die sterk onafhanklikheid van swart denke en leierskap, wat 'n algemene kenmerk van al die belangrike kerkkonferensies geword het, behalwe dié wat apartheid steeds hardnekkig voorstaan, of wat enige diskussie oor sogenaamde politieke sake vermy.
- Almal het ernstige waarskuwings oor die gevaar van die voortgang met die huidige rigting geuiter en het vir dringende stappe gevra wat geneem moet word om betekenisvolle verandering tot stand te bring.

Wat was die wit reaksie? Daar was in hoofsaak 'n tweeledige reaksie aan die kant van die meerderheid van die blanke gemeenskap in Suid-Afrika:

In die eerste plek was woede en verontwaardiging getoon oor die uitgesprokenheid van die swartmense en hulle totale verwerping van die rassebeleid van ons land, wat aan hulle vasberadenheid verbind is om dit te verander sodra hulle die mag sou bekom om dit te doen. Dit was in besonder die klem op bevryding soos wat dit duidelik in die verklarings van Lusaka en Hammanskraal weerspieël is, wat die regering en duisende blanke ondersteuners geknel het.

Tweedens was daar verwarring en ontsteltenis, veral in die geledere van die blanke lidmate van die drie NG Kerke toe dit deur die sinodes van die NG Sendingkerk en die NG Kerk in Afrika duidelik geword het dat hulle dieselfde oortuigings onderskryf, handhaaf en ondersteun en dieselfde gevoelens as hulle swart broeders in ander denominasies, openbaar.

Voordat ons die blanke reaksies evalueer, behoort ons 'n vraag van die uiterste belang te vra, naamlik: Wat probeer hierdie swart Christene aan Suid-Afrika sê? Terwyl 'n mens aandagtig luister, kom dit voor dat die vol-

gende hoofoortuigings en pleidooie deur hierdie verklarings bekendgemaak word:

- Geen gedwonge sisteem van apartheid of afsonderlike ontwikkeling sal ooit vir die swart gemeenskap aanvaarbaar wees nie, ten spyte van die aanhoudende ontkenning van die regeringspropaganda en die verklarings van een of twee tuislandleiers. Ongelukkig was die regeringspropaganda so effektief dat die oor-grote meerderheid van blankes glo (en hulle het dit ook op 'n naïewe wyse aanvaar) dat die grootste gedeelte van die swart gemeenskap van SA sterk ten gunste van hierdie beleid is.

- Geen politieke beleid of veranderinge wat nou beplan word of deur die blankes uitgevoer word waarin die swartmense geen betekenisvolle deelname gehad het nie, het enige hoop om ooit vrywillig deur die sewentien miljoen swartmense van SA aanvaar te word nie.

- Die gety van swart frustrasie en woede styg steeds en dit sal uiteindelik die goedbedeelde planne en pogings van verandering aan die kant van blankes oorspoel of wegvee indien die blankes voortgaan om die huidige beleid van rasse-ongeregtigheid te regverdig en uit te voer.

- Die Christelike gemeenskap wat deur die kerk werk, word nog steeds gesien om 'n krag van moontlike sinvolle verandering te wees en gevolglik probeer swart Christene hierdie platform, wat deur die kerk gebied word, te gebruik om aan die wit lidmate van elke kerkliggaam in SA die noodsaaklikheid vir radikale vreedsame verandering oor te dra, as ons sou begeer om geweld in ons land te voorkom.

- Die eise vir sulke radikale vreedsame verandering is duidelik opgesom in die tien punte wat as 'n deel van die besluit oor detenté aangeneem is en wat prakties feitlik eenparig aanvaar is by die onlangse Nasionale Konferensie van die Suid-Afrikaanse Raad van Kerke op 22 Julie. (Die volle besluit verskyn in hierdie uitgawe van Pro Veritate.)

### die situasie word moeiliker

Gaan blanke Suid-Afrikaners na hierdie stem luister? Dit is moeilik om hierdie vraag te beantwoord aangesien daar 'n aantal faktore van onbekende sterkte is wat aan albei kante invloed uitoefen. Aan die positiewe kant is die groter bewuswording daar, wat deur die blanke gemeenskap geopenbaar word oor die gevoelens en aspirasies van die swartmense in ons land; die gewilligheid aan die kant van die lede van die wit NG Kerk om na die uiting van besorgdheid wat van die swart NG Kerke uitgaan, te luister; die aankondigings wat deur adv. Pik Botha en ander regeringsleiers gemaak is dat daar 'n opregte voorneme is om die huidige vorme van rassediskriminasie te



verwyder; die sterker ondersteuning vir die nuutgestigde Progressiewe/Reformiste-party in sy oproep vir die daarstelling van 'n ope gemeenskap.

Aan die negatiewe sy is die voortgaande weiering van die meeste blankes daar om beide die ernstige ongeregtheid en die mislukking van die huidige beleid van rasse-skeiding te erken; daar is die reuse planne vir die voortgaande hervestiging van duisende swartmense ten spyte van die sterk kritiek wat deur die swart leiers van SA daarteen geuiter is; daar is die nuutaangekondigde planne vir die daarstelling van rehabilitasie-sentrums vir jong stedelike swartmense, wat gesien word om of misdadigers of rondlopers te wees en dit sonder enige skakeling met die swart gemeenskap wat vooraf geskied het.

Die situasie is selfs nog moeiliker as gevolg van die gebeure buite SA, waarvan ons die volgende noem:

- Die huidige burgerstryd en bloedvergieting van die strydende bevrydingsbewegings in Angola, wat vir mag wedywer, en wat daardeur die geloof van 'n groot aantal van blankes in SA versterk het dat 'n swart meerderheidsregering alleenlik tot chaos of wanorde kan lei.

- Die duidelike tekens van voorbereiding van 'n grootskaalse oorlog deur die Rhodesiese eerste minister en die regering teen invallende guerilla-magte wat gevolglik 'n ernstige politieke probleem vir SA skep.

- Die drastiese stappe van sosialisering wat deur die eerste minister van Mosambiek aangekondig is en wat hy in die laaste paar dae begin toepas het.

Die blankes in die algemeen beskou hierdie gebeure as 'n regverdiging vir hulle aandrang op die feit dat politieke mag stewig in die hande van die blankes moet bly, wat ookal gebeur, terwyl die swartmense, aan die ander kant,

die gebeure sien as die onvermydelike gevolg van 'n lang heerskappy van rasse-ongeregtheid en die ontkenning van basiese politieke regte — 'n heerskappy wat in die nabye toekoms tot 'n einde móét kom.

Te midde van al hierdie botsende aspirasies en doelstellings word van die Christelike leiers van die kerk in SA verwag om die nodige leiding te gee — leiding wat, bo alles, wettige eise vir bevryding, wat die swart gemeenskap van SA so duidelik oor so 'n lang tydperk gestel het, sal ondersteun, en aan die ander kant om as 'n krag vir versoening op te tree om 'n gewelddadige konfrontasie tussen swart en wit te vermy. As die Christelike kerk hierdie uitdrukking van diepe besorgdheid in ag neem en gewillig is om in geloof, met moed en vasberadenheid te reageer, is daar nog tyd om betekenisvolle, vreedsame verandering tot stand te bring, ten spyte van die onvermydelike teenkanting wat die kerk van 'n aansienlike deel van die wit gemeenskap sal teëkom. Is dit egter nie beter om hierdie teenkanting in die gees wat Christus van ons vereis, onder oë te sien en daarop te reageer nie, insluitende die kleiner opofferinge wat van ons almal verwag sal word, as die groot opoffering van 'n situasie wat andersins uiteindelik sal ontwikkel tot waar swart bevryding deur die swart gemeenskap in ons land sonder kerklike betrokkenheid bereik sal word nie? En dit moontlik deur weë en middele wat die Christelike kerk onaanvaarbaar sal vind, maar as gevolg van sy onwilligheid of vrees om leiding te gee toe daar nog tyd daarvoor was, te ontdek dat sy bydrae vir verandering nie langer aanvaarbaar is nie as gevolg van sy onwilligheid of vrees om op die oomblik, wat God dit vereis, betrokke te raak nie?

— Beyers Naudé

## EDITORIAL

### THE VOICE OF BLACK CHRISTIAN CONCERN

Since May last year four important church gatherings have been held, one outside and three inside South Africa, where resolutions were adopted which have a vital bearing on the future of South Africa. We refer to the All Africa Conference of Churches held in Lusaka in May last year, followed by the National Conference of the South African Council of Churches at Hammanskraal in August, this in turn being followed by the National Synod of the N.G. Sendingkerk in Worcester in September and the National Synod of the N.G. Kerk in Afrika in June this year.

An objective analysis of the main resolutions taken at these church gatherings conveys to us the expression of four major concerns:

- All these gatherings made clear pronouncements on political issues directly relating to South Africa.
- All rejected the present policy of apartheid or

separate development in unequivocal terms.

All reflected the strong independence of Black thinking and leadership which has become a regular feature of all major church conferences (except those still stubbornly upholding apartheid or avoiding any discussion on so-called political matters).

- All uttered grave warnings of the danger of continuing with the present course and called for urgent steps to be taken to bring about meaningful change.

What has White reaction been? In the main there was a two-fold reaction on the part of the majority of the White community in South Africa:

Firstly, anger and indignation was displayed about the outspokenness of Blacks and the total rejection of the racial policies of our country, linked to their determination to change these policies when they obtain the power to do so. It was especially the emphasis on



liberation as clearly reflected in the pronouncements of Lusaka and Hammanskraal that irked the Government and thousands of its White supporters.

And secondly, there was confusion and dismay, especially in the ranks of the White membership of the three Dutch Reformed Churches, when it became clear that even the Black Dutch Reformed Churches through their Synods of the N.G. Sendingkerk and the N.G. Kerk in Afrika had subscribed to and supported the same convictions and portrayed the same feelings as their Black brothers in other denominations.

Before we evaluate these White reactions we need to ask a question of prime importance namely: What are these Black Christians trying to tell South Africa? Listening carefully it seems that the following major convictions and pleas are being made known through these pronouncements:

- That no enforced system of apartheid or separate development will ever be acceptable to the Black community, despite the continued denials of Government propaganda and the utterances of one or two homeland leaders. Unfortunately Government propaganda has been so effective that the vast majority of Whites believe and have naively accepted that a major part of the Black community of South Africa is strongly in favour of these policies.

- No political policies or changes now being planned or enacted by Whites in which Blacks have no meaningful share have any hope of ever being voluntarily accepted by the seventeen million Blacks of South Africa.

- The tide of Black frustration and anger is rising and will eventually engulf or wash away the best intentioned plans or efforts towards change on the part of Whites if the Whites continue to justify and implement the existing policies of racial injustice.

The Christian community operating through the Church is still seen to be a force of possible meaningful change and therefore Black Christians are using this platform offered by the church to convey to the White membership of every church body in South Africa the need for radical peaceful change if we wish to avoid violence in our country.

- The demands for such radical peaceful change were clearly summed up in the ten points adopted as part of the resolution on detente which was adopted practically unanimously at the most recent National Conference of the South African Council of Churches on July 22.

(The full resolution appears in this issue of *Pro Veritate*).

Will White South Africans heed this voice? It is difficult to answer this question as there are a number of factors of unknown strength operating on both sides. On the positive side there is the greater awareness which is being displayed by the White community regarding the feelings and aspirations of the Blacks in our country; the willingness on the part of members of the White N.G. Kerk to listen to the expression of concern emanating from the Black D.R. Churches; the pronouncements made by Adv. Pik Botha and other Government leaders that there is a sincere intention to remove the present forms of racial discrimination; the strong support for the newly formed Progressive/Reformists Party in its call for

the establishment of an open society. On the negative side there is the continued refusal of the majority of Whites to admit both the serious injustice and the failure of the present policy of racial separation; there are the massive plans for the continued resettlement of thousands of Africans despite the strong criticism uttered against such actions by the Black leaders of South Africa; without any prior consultation with the Black community there are the newly announced plans for the establishment of a number of rehabilitation centres for young urban Blacks who are seen to be either delinquents or vagrants.

The position is made even more difficult by current events outside South Africa of which we mention the following:

- The current civil strife and bloodshed in Angola of opposing liberation movements vying for power, thereby strengthening the belief of a large number of Whites in South Africa that Black majority rule can only lead to chaos or disorder.

- The evident signs of preparation by the Rhodesian Prime Minister and Government for large-scale warfare against insurgent guerrilla forces, thereby creating a serious political problem for South Africa.

- The drastic steps of socialisation which have been announced by the Prime Minister of Mozambique and have started to be implemented during the past days.

The Whites in general regard these events as a justification for their insistence that, whatever might happen, political power should remain firmly in the hands of the Whites of South Africa, whereas the Blacks, on the other hand, see in these developments the inevitable outcome of a long reign of racial injustice and denial of basic political rights — a reign which has to come to an end in the near future.

Amidst all these conflicting aspirations and hopes the Christian leadership of the church in South Africa is called to give the necessary guidance — a guidance which above all demands the support of all the legitimate demands for liberation which the Black community of South Africa have uttered so clearly over such a long period, and on the other hand the need to act as a force of reconciliation in order to avoid a violent confrontation between Black and White. If the Christian church understands and heeds this expression of deep concern and is willing to respond in faith, with courage and determination, there is still time to bring about meaningful, peaceful change, despite the inevitable opposition which the church will encounter on the part of a substantial portion of its White membership. But is it not better to face and respond to this opposition in the spirit which Christ demands of us, including the smaller sacrifices which will be required of all of us, rather than the major sacrifice of a situation which would otherwise eventually develop in which liberation would be achieved by the Black community in our country without church involvement or by ways and means which the Christian church would find unacceptable but, because of its unwillingness or fear of taking the lead (while there was still the time to do so) will find that its contribution for change is no longer acceptable because of its unwillingness or fear of becoming involved at the moment when God demanded it?

—Beyers Naudé.



# THE CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA — TOMORROW

david bosch

*The following paper was read at the National Conference of the South African Council of Churches, Hammanskraal, 23rd July 1975. It was very much appreciated by the delegates. Prof. David Bosch who is the head of the Faculty of Theology at the University of South Africa, tackles the problem of the task of the Church in the modern world in such a way that both the 'evangelicals' and the 'ecumenicals' will appreciate his analysis. If both however, were also to appreciate and apply his attempt to find a way out of the deadlock, renewal in both sections would be imminent.*

*Because of the length of the article, we shall publish the second half "Seeking a way out of the dilemma" in the September issue of Pro Veritate.*

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## PART I

The task allotted to me was to lead this Conference "in talks on the church of tomorrow", specifically in the South African context. I am immediately up against a difficulty: what does the word "church" mean in this assignment? The various denominations represented at this National Conference? And perhaps even those not represented here?

Our basic problem here is that we all tend to confuse the Church in which we believe with the denominations to which we belong. This is wrong. But it is equally wrong to see no connection whatever between the empirical church and the Church of the Creed. Some people become so frustrated and disgusted with the former that they turn their backs upon it, deceiving themselves into believing that they can belong to the Church of Christ without belonging to any specific empirical body. Others try to solve the problem by neatly dividing the Church into a "visible" and an "invisible" part.

These attempts are futile, because they all try to overcome the ambivalence which the Church cannot escape. She is *in* this world though not *of* it. She is a sociological entity like any other human organisation, and as such susceptible to all human frailties; yet at the same time she is an eschatological entity and as such the incorruptible Body of Christ. Through the eyes of the world the Church recognises that she is doubtful, disreputable, shabby; in the eyes of the faithful, that she is a mystery. Christ breathed his Holy Spirit into a very earthy, dusty group of disciples. And so his Church is an inseparable union of the divine and the dusty, of the spiritual and the physical. Sometimes one part seems more apparent than the other. We can be utterly disgusted, at times, with the earthiness of the Church; yet we can be transformed, at times, with awareness of the divine in the Church. The Church moves, as tiny Israel did, dependent on the guiding finger and daily solicitude of her God — good men, weak men, hesitant men, but essentially men on the move, seeking, questing, experimenting, dust-stained but somehow still rejoicing. Of the Church it is pre-eminently true that beauty lies in the eye of the

beholder.

Her weaknesses may, however, never be rationalised away. Let us remember that the Church is not only the recipient of God's merciful grace; she is also the object of his judgment and his wrath. Where we walk faithfully, He is known to us in mercy; where we rebel, in wrath. Not that we can always neatly separate the one from the other; in wrath He remembers mercy.

There is thus precious little about which we can be proud. In each one of us there is something of Peter who denied the Lord, of Judas who betrayed Him, of John who loved Him, and of all of them together who so often "understood not the saying for it was hid from them". At one of the sessions of the Second Vatican Council a discussion took place on the apostles of Jesus as a "collegium" and the possible consequences of this for the Church today. One of the Protestant observers at the Council then asked a Roman Catholic cardinal when the disciples of Jesus really acted as a "collegium", as "colleagues", as a fraternity, of one mind; from the gospel narratives one gets the impression that they were more at cross-purposes than anything else. After a few moments of thought the cardinal replied: "They acted as a collegium in Gethsemane, when they all deserted Jesus and ran away".

The first mission of the Church is therefore not to change the world, but to repent. A call to repentance is, however, not a call to drop our responsibilities, but to tackle them in a new way. In fact, the penitent man alone can trust God. It is in repentance that we receive the courage not to flee from ourselves but to identify with our guilty past and move forward as men justified through faith.

Here theological reflection can render the Church some service. But then it is necessary to understand what the scope as well as the limits of theology are in this respect. Theology can never address the Church from the vantage point of objectivity, from the side-lines, as a kind of disinterested and objective spectator. Theology is practised in solidarity with the Church. Its primary task is to question the Church about the correctness of her activities. Theology is the function of the Church which critically tests her witness in word and deed. It does not pass judgment, but puts probing questions. It reflects on what the Church ought to be, rather than on what she is probably empirically going to be. It knows that the past history of the Church was often the history of the defeats of the Spirit rather than of his victories, and that it is unlikely to be very different in future. Theology nevertheless continues to challenge the Church to become what in Christ she already is, and to cease being what empirically she actually is.

Of course, theology itself is in no way elevated above the ambiguity which characterises the life and reality of the Church. Like the Church, theology is a defenceless and unsafe undertaking, without any guarantees of the correctness of its premises, prone to almost every conceivable misunderstanding. The element of risk is never absent from any form of theologising.



I said that theology concerns itself with what the Church ought to be rather than with what she is. But, of course, in order to let the former stand out in bold relief it is necessary to take a look at the latter as well. I therefore intend to indicate, briefly, where the most likely deficiencies of the Church of the future are going to be found, and then try to show what the Church of the future is challenged to be.

I think that the real tensions in the future are not going to be between different denominations. The days when the boundaries of one's own denomination were practically identical with the boundaries of the Kingdom of God are irrevocably past. This applies to "evangelical" denominations as much as to "ecumenical" ones. The real tensions of the future in the ecclesiastical field will be between two different ways of understanding of what the Church is. Both these ideas of the Church are fraught with deficiencies in more ways than one.

#### **'the aggressive church must conquer the world'**

The first misunderstanding of the Church is based on the assumption that "world" and "Church" can be neatly distinguished from one another. This interpretation manifests itself in two ways. First, the Church may be characterised by a ghetto mentality. She feels safe only when she is on "home ground", and she is forever issuing cautions, like a benevolent grandmother addressing boisterous children. She gives the impression of being old and wise, but also weary. Her emphasis lies on the past rather than the present or the future. She is caretaker rather than husbandman. Remembering miracles of the past is more important than performing miracles in the present. She occupies herself chiefly, as Fr. Yves Congar puts it, with the saving of souls "by certain practices of which priests are the managers, something like bank directors, who own and may administer the rites". As though salvation is a treasure of which the Church can dispose at will, and the gospel self-evidently a possession of the Church! Controversy is avoided as if it were the plague, and renewal is sought for the sake of the Church, for the prestige, security and benefit of her own members.

It is, however, also possible that this first understanding of the Church manifests itself, not in isolationism, but in aggression. Here the world is not seen as something to flee from, but as something to conquer. The classic example of this thinking is to be found in the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh, 1910. The metaphors of the conferences were to a large extent military, and included words and phrases such as soldiers, forces, advance, world-wide plan, strategy, army, company, crusade, marching orders, campaign, battle, etc. John Mott, the chairman, was hailed as general and strategist and his concluding words were: "The end of the conference is the beginning of the conquest; the end of the deliberations is the beginning of the dead". Behind this military aggressiveness stands the idea of success. The Church has to be demonstrably successful, in that her domain becomes ever greater, and that of the "world" ever smaller. By means of success stories the activities of the Holy Spirit are proved beyond all doubt. From here it is only one small step to smugness, Pharisaism and pomposity, where people flee into success in order to bury their doubts under an imposing superstructure of organisation, activities and popularity. Thus even in its evangelistic outreach the Church becomes institutionalised, reflecting the myopia of the secular establishment. In her evangelism she studiously avoids the actual problems of the political and economic structures which occupy the minds of the people. Men and women are called to Christ in order that they, as individuals, isolated from their world, can be saved. They are called to Christ through

appeals to find escape from their own lonesomeness, their sense of guilt, their purposelessness. Last year at the International Congress for World Evangelization in Lausanne, on the Sunday evening following the Billy Graham rally, some 400 of us met to discuss the implications of "radical evangelism". During the discussion an Indian took issue with Billy Graham's approach and his emphasis on questions like: "Are you satisfied? Do you want peace of mind? Are you fed up with yourself? Do you need love, joy, peace in your heart? Then come to Jesus; he will meet your every need". This approach, the Indian said, may be alright for the affluent and comfortable people of Europe but out there in India such a message would be completely irrelevant because it neatly by-passed all the real issues.

The gospel is, after all, "good news", and wherever it comes it must be good news in answer to the bad news of that specific society. If this is side-stepped we do not get revival but apostasy. The Church becomes completely worldly in her very attempt to be other-worldly.

#### **'the church must identify completely with the world'**

If the first misunderstanding was based on the assumption that "Church" and "world" can be neatly distinguished from one another, the second misunderstanding implies the absence of any tension between Church and world. The Church becomes identified with the world and its desires to the extent that she is assimilated and conformed to the world. It then becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish in any way whatsoever between Church and world. The Church becomes completely secularised. She does not want to be a stranger in the world any more.

Some of the fallacies of this approach are the following:

1. The Church becomes redundant because she only offers what any other organisation can also offer. If we read in a Church magazine: "India needs help, not mission", or "Africa needs tractors, not tracts", it can be justifiably asked why it is necessary to have a *Church* to supply tractors and help. Cannot any other international organisation do this? And — we must add — cannot such an organisation do it much more efficiently and effectively than the Church? Stephen Neill, in a discussion of the Church in China before the Communist takeover, mentions the following as the first defect of the Chinese Churches: "Christianity (was) presented much more as a programme of social and political reform than as a religion of redemption. But the concepts of liberal Christianity proved in the end less dynamic than those of Marxist Communism." The point here is that if the Church tries to compete with other movements *on their terms*, she cannot but fail. She can only survive if what she offers is unique.

2. A second fallacy in this approach is that man's real need may so easily be by-passed. Man is often not aware of what his greatest need really is. To quote Fr. Yves Congar: "Should the Church try to bring to realization only what men seek to obtain? Will Christian salvation be achieved only on the terms according to which men wish to be saved, or the world wishes to be saved? The world wants to be saved from ignorance, sickness, war, racism — all very well. But does the Church hold out only that as salvation? ... The world is unaware that it needs to be saved from certain types of alienation that are deeper, more intimate than sociological and political alienations. ... what St. Paul calls the Powers". Another Roman Catholic, Fr. John Power, SMA, puts it this way: "There is a lesson to be learned from the present wave of protest in the more prosperous parts of the world. A generation that has grown up in a comfortable and affluent world turns, often



cynically and savagely, and rejects it, not because it has given them too much (although this is also true), but because it has given them a world without a soul. Even though they fail to express it clearly, their basic complaint seems to be that man does not live on bread alone. ... Men need more". By denying them this, we rob the salt of its taste and snuff out the smouldering wick.

3. It is extremely important that the Church should speak to the structures of society — we come back to this — but it is equally important not to forget the individual and his needs. Because of our preoccupation with macro-structures and world-wide problems, in the course of our fight for justice in society and politics, it can easily happen that our neighbour and his need disappear from our field of vision. Men are then seen, solely in a deterministic sense, as products of their circumstances, and we tend to argue that nothing can be done for individual people until the circumstances have changed. In contrast to this we have to reaffirm that the gospel is good news over against the bad news of a particular setting. This "bad news" will undoubtedly be in the socio-political set-up, but it may also be in the more individual area of broken homes, alcoholism, drugs, or chronic illness. We fail man and God when we neglect these needs and minister only to the macro-structures.

4. Another danger in this second misunderstanding of the Church is that all the guilt for the wrongs of society can so easily be located solely *outside* the Church. Let me illustrate what I mean: The clearest expression of religious dissent in Russia comes from *Samizdat*, a clandestine Christian publication. More than half a million Russians work for this organisation in their free time. An important message, recurring in *Samizdat*, is that every man, and particularly every Christian, is responsible for the socio-political shortcomings of his society. Thus, instead of attacking the "system" and blaming it for all maladies, *Samizdat* addresses itself to the conscience of individual Christians with the message: "We declare that the most guilty man, responsible for the wrongs of society, is everyone of us".

5. Earlier on we criticised the first misunderstanding of the Church for its military aggressiveness in attempting to "conquer" the whole world and conform it to the Church. That was triumphalism old style, born of the idea of the complete identification of the Church with the world and the assumption that we Christians know exactly what to prescribe to society. It is the same old exceeding of the competence of the Church, but now in a new form. The presumptuousness is however the same: we know how to do it: we have the solution to the ills of the world!

6. Perhaps the gravest danger in the second misunderstanding of the Church is that the ambiguities of our words and deeds may be so easily forgotten. The Church has no revealed social or cultural or political programme. Such programmes belong to the relative area of historical human life. We can never say for sure that our programmes and solutions

are in full accordance with the will of God. It is popular today to say that our mission is simply to participate in God's mission in the world, and to define "God's active mission" as all those areas where societal change is taking place. But this is too facile an equation and also too presumptuous. History once again becomes a source of revelation, as was the case with German theology in the Nazi era. That which is by its very nature relative — the social order, the state, culture — becomes absolute. Over against this we have to maintain that, through the accomplished work of Christ and the coming of the Spirit two orders of life, two "ages", have come to co-exist in the world. The New Age has begun, the Old has not ended. The New dates from the Resurrection, the Old will last until the final manifestation of Jesus Christ in glory. In the meantime we can only know by faith whether what we do belongs to the New Age or to the Old. Most of what we do will probably belong to both ages. But because people are striving for utopia they hope to attain a position where this ambiguity is overcome. Utopia, however, never takes account of the reality of evil. It is sheer fanaticism to fool ourselves into believing that what we plan and do is free from the contamination of the Evil One. Whatever we do as Christians, remains a mixture of human endeavours, divine guidance and demonic distortions. Indeed, we have to search for the will of God in the present social and political changes in the world: however, we should not do it in order to deduce from them a demonstrable verification of God's involvement in history, but in order to get clarity on our Christian calling in a given situation. We can never say about the Kingdom of God: "Look, here it is!" or "ther it is", for the Kingdom of God is in our midst and only discernible through the eyes of faith (cf. Luke 17:21). We therefore do what we do with trembling hearts.

In summary we can therefore say that similarities between the two misunderstandings of the Church are in fact more in evidence than dissimilarities. In both cases the Church becomes a kind of spiritual petrol pump from which people draw fuel for their mutually exclusive understandings of their tasks in the world. In both cases they are trying to give religious sanction to their self-assertiveness. Both are forms of accommodation to the terms of the world. The second form is, in terms of the traditional understanding of the role of the Church, regarded as public treason and therefore more evident. By completely secularising its message it invalidates that message completely. The first form is much more veiled and can appear quite pious and respectable, but precisely because of this its seduction is perhaps much more dangerous. By attempting either to establish for itself an invulnerable sacral domain or to sacralize the world, it forfeits its essence as Church, for this is simply the most obvious way of institutional self-assertion.

— To be continued next month

## STATEMENT ON DÉTENTE

By the National Conference of the SACC at Hammanskraal.

1. We, the delegates of the member Churches of the SACC, welcome all true détente, external and internal, and all dismantling of racial discrimination.

2. At the same time we point out that most of the steps

taken by the Government so far to reverse racial discrimination have been superficial, moreover, the Government seems still intent on proceeding with such drastic apartheid measures as the plan to move up to 200 000 people to yet another vast dumping ground at Commitees Drift. Unless, therefore, there



is a far more radical and rapid reversal of our whole racial policy we will not achieve peace. Instead, the violence of White oppression will continue to lead inevitably to its violent rejection.

3. We also deplore that while the Government seeks détente with countries outside South Africa it is seeking to terrorize many of its internal critics and opponents into silence. We think, for instance, of the long imprisonment before release or trial of members of the Black People's Convention and SASO, the detention without trial of two lecturers and a student at Natal University, the continued banning without trial of about 180 people and the continued threats against the freedom of the press. We think also of the Government's continued persecution of the Church, especially its expropriation of the Federal Theological Seminary at Alice, its attempt to smear and cripple the Christian Institute and its expulsion from South West Africa of churchmen such as Bishop Wood and of Mrs Wood and Rolf Friede.

We warn that such actions and all further attempts to impose totalitarian control over the people of our land will in the end only help to hasten violent confrontation in our country.

4. We therefore call on the Government and the White people of South Africa (not excepting our own Churches and ourselves) to humble themselves, to pray and seek God's will and to turn away from the evil of all racial injustice towards a

radically new social order in which there will be:

- a fair sharing of power, responsibility and land
- adequate housing for all Black people
- an end to the present migratory labour system and the consequent disruption of many Black families
- the right of Blacks to own land and homes, and to open shops, businesses and industries, wherever they wish
- proportionately equal money spent by the State for the free equal education of children of every race
- adequate centres to train people of all races for commerce and industry
- an end to job reservation and the colour bar in industry and commerce
- the same rate for the job for every colour
- the right of Blacks to form registered trade unions and to use responsibly collective power
- an end to bannings, house arrests and detentions without trial.

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14).

## ANOTHER "UNDESIRABLE" BISHOP FORCED OUT OF NAMIBIA

**ivor shapiro**

For the third time, the South African authorities have removed an Anglican Bishop of Damaraland from his diocese in the mandated territory of South West Africa (now known to most of its inhabitants as Namibia).

In June, the Rt. Rev. Richard Wood, Bishop-Suffragan, received an order in the name of the Administrator-in-Executive-Committee of the territory, expelling him from Namibia and giving him one week to leave. The order was in terms of the Undesirables Removal Act, which empowers the government (strictly speaking, the SWA Administration, although of course their orders come from Pretoria) to remove "undesirables". On the same day, the Lutheran layman who is in charge of Windhoek's Christian Centre, Mr Rolf Friede, was served with a similar order.

Within 24 hours, another order arrived at Bishop's House. This time, the "undesirable" was Mrs Cathy Wood, the Bishop's American wife. She, too, had to leave the territory by the following Monday. This meant that the couple's daughter, Rachel Ndimuwa, who was born and bred in Windhoek, had to leave the country of her birth — or be separated from her parents at the age of two-and-a-half.

Cathy Wood was going to contest the order on her on the grounds that it would be facilitating a separation of mother and child. Then legal opinion revealed that it would be quite in order for Rachel to be expelled as well — in fact, *any person, whether he or she is a born Namibian or not, may be exiled under the Act.*

In 1968, the popular bishop Bob Mize, an American citizen, applied to have his residence permit renewed, and was refused. He resigned as bishop, and in his place the then rector of Windhoek's St. George's Cathedral, Colin Winter, was appointed. He did not last quite four years.

When Bishop Winter was found to be "undesirable" and expelled in early 1972, he did not resign his See but became "Bishop of Damaraland-in-Exile", making his home near Oxford, England. Richard Wood was then appointed Suffragan in Windhoek. He did not last long either, and his future as bishop will now be decided by the Diocesan Synod later this year. In the meantime, the Rev. Ed Morrow, who was ordained as a priest by Bishop Winter last month, is in charge of the day-to-day running of the diocese as Vicar-General. Bishop Wood hopes to establish a ministry among Ovambos in southern Angola.

### **difference on his stand of radical and peaceful change**

Although churchmen abroad, including the Archbishop of Canterbury and representatives of the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches, voiced strong protest at the Wood and Friede expulsions, shock waves within white Southern Africa were not pronounced. The Archbishop of Cape Town, the Most Rev. Bill Burnett, said in a statement that he deeply regretted the expulsion of Bishop Wood, and that it should be seen in the context of "our failure as a society to respond adequately or soon enough to the demand for justice".

The Archbishop went on: "Inasmuch as Bishop Wood's actions have been motivated by a desire to foster social justice and to do his duty as a Christian and as a citizen, I assure him of my support and fraternal love, without, as he is aware, my endorsing in every respect the course he believed himself in duty bound to pursue." (According to press reports.)

It is clear that the Archbishop was not alone in disagreeing with some of what Bishop Wood was doing in his diocese. Others in the Church of the Province of South Africa, as well



as most whites in the Diocese of Damaraland, are known to resent what is seen as Bishop Wood's "involvement" with black nationalist Namibians.

Bishop Wood acknowledges that he has been involved among blacks who hoped and worked as Christians for radical and peaceful change. He had to be. More than nine out of ten members of his flock are blacks living in Ovamboland. They see their future in an independent Namibia, and justice is clearly on their side. In a final diocesan newsletter, the bishop was careful neither to over-emphasise nor under-emphasise this aspect of his responsibility:

"I do not expect the Kingdom of God on earth will be achieved through men's efforts. I do, however, believe that it would please God to see a rule of injustice broken and an effort made to build a better social system ... It is in this sense that I believe politics and religion to be inseparable. After all, if accepting legalised injustice weakens our standing with God, then to renounce injustice and to replace it with something good should strengthen our standing with God. At least we shall know he will be blessing our best endeavours."

His efforts to renounce injustice and work for a better system were strictly within the bounds of peaceful activity. In fact, probably the work that made him most unpopular with the authorities was conducted within the legal processes of courts of law.

With the head of the Ovambo-Kavango Lutheran Church, Bishop Leonard Auala, he made legal submissions which ultimately, in the appeal court in Bloemfontein, resulted in government-appointed tribal authorities in Ovamboland being forbidden to ritually flog dissenters from their rule.

He made sure that when black leaders of SWAPO (SWA People's Organisation) and other groups were arrested and brought to court, they were legally represented.

Perhaps more than any of his concrete actions, the line adopted by his pastoral and public statements, caused the inevitable divisions within his church and reaction from the authorities. His identification and concern for Namibian blacks was always clear. He made no secret of his view that the future of the territory "depends on the necessity for South Africa to withdraw from the country at an early date". His very use of the word, "Namibia", was enough to raise the ire of Pretoria.

As with most executive action in this part of the world, no reasons were given for the expulsions, nor are any expected. Nor is anyone legally entitled to be given reasons. Thus, one has to guess. This "line" of Richard Wood probably gives as good an answer as any, especially when one considers the natural overflow reaction to the recent somewhat provocative statements made abroad by Colin Winter, who remains the Bishop of Damaraland.

A strong rift in the diocese between white Anglicans, on the one hand, and blacks and the bishops, on the other, completes the scene providing the background. The rift is visible and well-known. The government could take action against Bishop Wood without losing the support of any significant number of whites at all.

Nor, as it turned out, did anything like a confrontation develop between the Anglican Church and the state over its actions. The whole affair simply goes into the record as another serious attack on the Church by the secular authorities, which will be soon forgotten. Just like the removal of the last bishop. And the one before him. And the expropriation of the Federal Theological Seminary. And the proclamation of the Christian Institute as an Affected Organisation. And ...

*Before leaving Windhoek, Bishop Wood wrote a final letter to Anglicans in his diocese. The following is the text of his letter.*

## DAMARALAND DIGEST

Diocese of Damaraland  
WINDHOEK  
19th June 1975.

### FROM THE BISHOP-SUFFRAGAN:

I do not expect to set foot in Namibia or South Africa again unless I live long enough to share in the happier days that lie ahead when human principles of justice, opportunity and equal freedom for all prevail. I sense my future has been joined to Namibia. I see no purpose in returning to the Republic, where my ministry to the people of the Diocese of Damaraland would be further restricted.

I have therefore decided to renounce my South African citizenship, which I assumed just ten years ago. This will be a relief to the authorities who have been considering what further action might have to be taken against me — legal action, banning, removal of citizenship by the stroke of ministerial pen, or what? I willingly grant them this little relief. It is of a temporary nature anyhow.

In Namibia I am delighted to see a growing unity amongst the blacks. It will be strongly opposed. The authorities will begin to understand, as slowly as their minds will allow, that the so-called white "agitators" have never written the speeches or planned the black agenda. We have been privileged to stand with them as far as we have been able, and to offer some support. All this will carry on in the capable hands of others. I am delighted that blacks participate as Christians and that many still hope and work for radical and peaceful change. The gospel is being re-interpreted and re-enacted as so many blacks believe that God rules in the world as in heaven.

I do not expect the Kingdom of God on earth will be achieved through human efforts. I do, however, believe that it would please God to see a rule of injustice broken and an effort made to build a better social system. I believe it would also be good for the rug of complacent hypocrisy to be pulled from under many white feet. It is in this sense that I believe politics and religion to be inseparable. After all, if accepting legalised injustice weakens our standing with God, then to renounce injustice and to replace it with something good should strengthen our standing with God. At least we shall know He will be blessing our best endeavours.

I protest strongly against the order expelling Mr Rolf Friede. His actions have been openly aimed at giving opportunities of education and a Christian interpretation of life. He was, further, responsible to the ELK, ELCK, AME, Methodist, Anglican and to a lesser extent the Roman Catholic Churches in Namibia. A very high majority of leaders and church members in all these groups will be joining me in my strong protest. Very many blacks will mourn the loss of his wife's medical ministry.

I protest strongly against the order expelling my wife, Cathy, to the extent that I declare that if the Administrator-in-Executive-Committee could be forced to give their reasons for her expulsion they would be the laughing stock of the world.

About my expulsion I can only say that given what the word, "undesirable" seems to mean to the authorities, I would not wish to be considered desirable. I happily accept their judgment. I would be quite ashamed if I had not been a "troublesome priest" to them. I do not know what standing my actions



have had in God's eyes. Whether they have been done in my blindness or God's power, only He knows for sure. Let Him be the judge. I only know that I could do no other, and what I have done I have done openly.

I cannot claim to have acted in the name of the whole of the Church of the Province of South Africa, but I believe that our expulsions constitute an action against the body of Christ and defy the Christian gospel. Perhaps this is the truly fundamental betrayal.

## letter to the editor:

# CHRISTIANITY MORE PERSONAL THAN POLITICAL

Dear Sir

Cedrick Mayson's article, "Christianity is a Political Business" (Pro Veritate, May 1975) seems to reflect a view of Christ and Christianity which, although it may be politically compelling, is untenable in terms of the New Testament and what Jesus stated about himself and his mission in the world.

Mr Mayson claims that Jesus was executed as a political offender. So he may have been viewed by the Roman and Jewish authorities in Palestine at the time, but such a view of his person was and is mistaken. To consider him as a political messiah fails to account for his primary mission in the world — the reconciliation of men to God through belief in him as the Son of God. Those who conceived him as a political figure only, failed to understand the nature of his mission. Jesus was more concerned with individual men, women and children than with the social conditions under which they lived and the political ideology which originated and shaped those conditions. He spoke in parables about the Kingdom of God — not so much a social situation as a situation involving a relationship between man and God. He healed the sick and raised the dead — an indication of his concern for individual men. He challenged the religious traditions of the period in which he lived, because they effectively separated men from God rather than because they sanctioned the status quo. His death on the cross was not the culmination of a radical political career, but a divine necessity whereby men may be reconciled to God and have access to His grace and forgiveness. Christianity is more a personal business than it is political.

Mr Mayson states that Jesus' teaching demands vast social reforms. Social reforms are a consequence of an individual's faith in the person of Christ. Jesus did not so much attempt to reform society as the individual who, amongst others, comprises society. Jesus' priorities are basic — an attempt to change society without transforming the individual is doomed to failure. No sooner is a "more just society" created than it degenerates into another "unjust society". The revolution in Portugal is moving towards a communist dictatorship, perhaps as repressive as the regime which it is replacing. African states north of Rhodesia are dictatorships no more free than the colonial possessions were — in spite of the promise of freedom from exploitation, oppression, discrimination and poverty once the colonial overlords had been removed from power. If man is not changed through his faith in Christ, if he is not encouraged to abandon his self-interest, his will to dominate other groups of men and women who may be distinguished from him by virtue of his race, culture, creed or nationality, if he is unwilling to relinquish his vested interests,

Thank you, our friends, black and white, who have shared so much with us. As even Pik Botha says, Namibia is not a bad name. We like the phrase: "Namibia, One Land, One People", best of all.

God love

— Richard Wood.

privileges and wealth, then no new, better, more just and more open society can ever be created. Outside of Christ, such a renewal is impossible for man's sinfulness, which is the source of his racial pride and greed, is inveterate. Structural changes in society, idealism, or a political ideology can never effect the vital change in man which is a prior necessity for a more just society. Christianity is so much more than a political business.

### an 'earthly God'?

Mr Mayson states that, "Jesus ... is an Earth-God". This statement ignores Jesus' divine status and equality with God. Jesus, I agree, during his life on earth, was concerned with people and their material needs, as he is now, but Jesus was, and is, also concerned with their spiritual needs, which to him, finally are more important than their worldly privation and political persecution. Man is utterly separated from God, disfigured by his sin and hostile towards his fellow men, in spite of his altruism and philanthropy. The prime cause is spiritual and personal. Jesus' life did not end with his crucifixion. His resurrection is a testimony to this. Raised from the dead, he is, in religious language, "seated at the right hand of God". Jesus is a transcendent God, sovereign Lord of his creation. He is not only an Earth-God, but is other-worldly.

I feel that the view of Christianity as presented by Mr Mayson is only half true. It views Christ as he was perceived by the Roman authorities and Jewish leaders — as a political insurgent — when indeed his mission was far more inclusive and vitally important than Cedric Mayson defines. Christ is concerned with man's temporal and eternal destiny, whereas Mr Mayson confines Jesus' activity and influence to a political sphere. Jesus' "original message" and that of his apostles, is concerned with the salvation of men from their sins through their faith in Christ. The letters reveal the apostles proclaiming the gospel to communities in Asia Minor. Its theme is repeatedly consistent: repentance from sin and an acceptance of Christ as Saviour. Never did the apostles urge social change or commit themselves to a more just political ideology consonant with New Testament standards. Slaves were encouraged to be obedient to their masters and masters to be more human to their slaves.

I feel that Mr Mayson's emphasis is misplaced. I agree that Jesus' teaching demands vast social reforms, that "Apartheid is theologically untenable", that "the highest objectives of separate development ... are unacceptable in terms of the New Testament", that Christians cannot be politically neutral and indifferent to the plight of the black majority in Southern Africa. Christian faith should accentuate an individual's politi-



cal awareness and determine the content of the ideology which he should embrace. Indeed, one's Christian faith demands a political response and the desire for a more just humane and open society in which discrimination and oppression are reduced to an absolute minimum — but this is not what Christianity is. Christianity is a prior spiritual commitment involving

man and God. Political decisions are a consequence. Cedric Mayson confuses the Christian's response to the requirements of the New Testament and the imperatives of Christ with the substance of Christianity.

—C.J. May

## LIBERATION OF SOCIETY INTRINSIC IN GOSPEL

cedric mayson

*(Pro Veritate has offered the opportunity to Cedric Mayson to reply and he writes as follows:)*

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My article was written about the political aspects of Christianity, not the personal, which accounts for the imbalance of which Mr May complains: you cannot get everything in one bite. We agree that the gospel demands social, political and economic change so what is the argument?

It is this.

Are the social demands of the Gospel the result of enlightened Christian believers seeking to work out a personal faith? Or is the liberation of human society on Earth an intrinsic part of the Gospel?

Does the Holy Spirit only work through converted Christians, or also in the processes of history and the dynamics of social life independently of committed Christians?

Is He God of all men, the God of history, Saviour of Mankind, Lord of Earth and Heaven — or just the spiritual leader of believers in Jesus?

Is his main objective amongst men to save their souls for Heaven, or to establish his order on planet Earth in history? Must I try to decide which is the 'most Christian' of the political ideologies, or can I look to Jesus for Lordship in the whole of life? Can I keep God in a box called Religion?

This is the underlying conflict raised by this correspondence, and I have no doubt that the full-orbed picture of the Living God as a total complete all-in-all Divine Being in everything that is life to human beings is reality. Christians have been so indoctrinated by the religious-churchy-Jesus-image that they find it difficult to really believe in God.

The object of salvation in the Old Testament is the Children of Israel, and in the New it is the whole of mankind. Within these collective concepts He reaches out in loving care for each individual, but His purpose is to save mankind. The whole Earth *tutti*.

\* \* \* \* \*

When this faith that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is actually a God bursts like a newly risen sun into the gloom of our religious prognostications, it strips the shadows from many spectres that have loomed with inhibiting threat over our Christian life.

Gone is the carefully nurtured heresy that the purpose of Christianity on Earth is to save souls for Heaven. Sure it happens (thank God) but the apostles were sent out to make disciples for his kingdom on Earth.

Away goes the unscriptural *obsession* with 'accepting Christ as your personal Saviour'. Like the fact that the Earth is round,

or that slavery is wrong, we learnt these things long ago. Do we have to fight again the battles waged by Paul, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, and the rest? Top of the agenda in our age is the great battle being fought for faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour of the World.

Farewell to the fallacy that if everyone will give their hearts to Jesus then the Kingdom of God will come overnight, for there is more to changing Society than changing hearts. (You don't get rid of crucifixions by converting centurions.) Healing the sick, educating the ignorant, giving new life to the oppressed, liberating the indoctrinated, housing the homeless, clothing the naked, feeding the hungry ... these good things of God demand structural changes in society, a radical re-organisation of wealth and power: not just warmed hearts. God's justice demands new laws and new law makers: not just new birth.

Personal new birth within the system may give personal life after death; it may also bring about marginal changes but it does not change the system per se and this is the concern of Christians.

Christian belief is not an individual contract with God, and political decisions as a consequence, but faith in One who is enacting his Kingdom on Earth, and individual obedience as a consequence.

It is no longer possible to keep politics and religion apart because they belong together in the heart of Christ, and those who fight this concept because of the changes it invokes, fight Him.

### evil systems through God-fearing people?

Away goes the supposition that God has led men mainly through the Church, for in the affairs of the Spirit on Earth the ecclesiastical bodies have frequently stifled the growth of God's people, bolstering their wealth and authority by that very exploitation which Christ seeks to overthrow. Invariably, we catch the glimpse of Christ, not in the self-conscious righteousness of the religious authorities, but in the agony of the social struggles and in the ordinariness of unbelievers.

Exit the exclusive emphasis on personal sin. Enter the awareness of evil built into our system by righteous god-fearing people, designed to perpetuate the enslavement of most blacks to fear and poverty, social injustice and economic oppression, hunger, illness, ignorance, and illiteracy; and the indoctrination of most whites in the evils of greed and affluence, sloth and false superiority, corruption, and pietistic "poppycock".

God's priorities demand the clear and unequivocal exposure of good and evil in society and a total commitment to change. There is no room in scripture for the idea of a society gradually evolving towards a better future for all men: this is the invention of politicians and churchmen who will brook no interfe-



rence in their little schemes. God's judgment on sinners is that He loves them. His judgment on evil systems is that He eventually destroys them: and our task is to see, acknowledge and obey.

And lastly, out goes the Communistic theory that if you change society you will automatically set right the problems of man. Society certainly needs a new structure if it is to enjoy the Kingdom, but it needs new men too — and not the pharisaic irrelevancies devoted to saving their own souls, polishing their own haloes, or building their own religious institutions.

It needs men and women who are so convinced that Christ is the Lord that they give themselves to him in the service of his Kingdom amongst their fellowmen. Loving your neighbour means more than a tear, a sigh and a prayer: it means being involved in his struggle for life and liberation, and that means personal holiness.

The New Testament is concerned for the total overthrow of the principalities and powers which are opposed to the work of

Christ on Earth, and a vast work of social reconstruction and personal wholeness.

But — people say — this is quite fantastic and unrealistic. The Church denominations are all in conflict or rivalry, the nations are fired by self-interest, the world is a battle ground of haves and havenots, of warring ideologies and social inequalities. God's order on Earth is a silly dream of a nonsense that cannot be.

\* \* \* \*

No wonder Jesus said you had to be born all over again if you were even to see what he was talking about. Plenty of 'Christians' have not seen it yet.

\* \* \* \*

## letter to editor:

### POOR PEOPLE APPRECIATE TINY THINGS

My husband and I have been in Ghana, West Africa for quite a few months and I should like to share some of our experiences with the readers of *Pro Veritate*.

I thought you might be interested to know that, as a South African, I found my experiences in West Africa some of the most enriching in my whole life. We were based in Accra where my husband was working for the Ghana Government doing some economic research with a view to the World bank giving Ghana a loan for road rehabilitation. In the time we spent there, naturally we were a part of the expatriate community, but we managed to meet and have a great deal of contact with West Africans from all sorts of places and walks of life. I became more aware than I have ever been before of the plight of the developing world — there are so many, many things in life that we Westerners take completely for granted, like an efficient infrastructure, schools and most of all, FOOD! During our stay there, my husband and I took our leave and we travelled to Togo, Ivory Coast and Upper Volta (which is listed as one of the world's poorest countries). We used public transport to get around because in West Africa, there is a fantastic system of taxis, minibuses and the very colourful and humorous "Mammy Wagons". It is not a comfortable way to

travel but we met so many great people doing so that I wouldn't have had it any other way — though at times I thought I was going to collapse from exhaustion and discomfort, not having the stamina and patience that Africans have to put up with the uncomfortable conditions. To sum up, I would say to all South African Whites who are in any way afraid of racial integration — "Don't be afraid of it" people *ARE* all *human beings* differing *only* in cultures and languages. Of course I came across friction between Africans and Europeans, but so little, that it could be taken for what it was — just everyday frictions between *people*, NOT skin colours. There is such a relaxing atmosphere in Accra and all over West Africa: people are easy going, and West Africans laugh a great deal and I am really glad to say that some of their joy in little things has rubbed off on my husband and me. We met some of the poorest people I have seen anywhere in Ouagadougou, Upper Volta, and they taught me to appreciate the tiniest things in life — they have *so* little (Ouagadougou is on the edge of the drought-stricken Sahel) but they enthusiastically get the most out of everything.

— (Mrs.) Paddy O'Dea

## book review: social dynamics

peter randall

### UNDERSTANDING OUR SOCIETY

It is a truism, used as a convenient excuse by those who wish to preserve the status quo at all costs, that South Africa is a very complex society. The human and social problems are daunting indeed. And the quest for a new social order from which injustice, racial domination and discrimination are removed, is a difficult and challenging one.

That quest is not served by either a blind adherence to past patterns of attitude and behaviour nor by a facile over-simplification of the complex issues involved.

Put simply, the future health of the society, and the degree of harmony that can be achieved and maintained in the transition

through which we are starting to go, depends to a considerable extent on the degree to which the participants — i.e. those now living in this crucible — are able to understand the truth about their society (and not swallow unthinkingly the glib versions offered up by propagandists); are able to understand and assess the current forces working for and against desirable change (and not merely react with hostility and/or fear); are able to understand and sympathize with the aspirations of the other members of their society (and not simply put them down to "agitation"); and are able to formulate their own visions for the future (and not indulge in mere wishful thinking).

This rather tedious introduction is intended really to welcome the appearance of another tool which is likely to assist in the process described here. This is *Social Dynamics*, a twice-yearly journal put out by the Faculty of Social Science at the University of Cape Town. The first issue has recently appeared with, amongst others, articles by Prof. Pierre van den Bergh of Washington University ("Integration and Conflict in Multinational States"); Prof. David Welsh of Cape Town University ("Social Research in a Divided Society") and Prof. S.P. Cilliers of Stellenbosch, who writes on the implications of industrial progress with particular reference to the Coloured community.

While the articles are scholarly and academic in tone, and addressed in the first place to other social scientists, the insights and the ideas they contain are relevant for all of us, and it is to be hoped that the journal will circulate widely, and that the thinking contained in it will percolate through to the South African Churches as well.

As long ago as 1970 Spro-cas had reached a fairly advanced stage of planning for a journal on social change in South Africa, to fill what appeared to us to be an important gap in the exchange and communication of ideas on the subject. Those plans did not come to fruition. All the more reason to welcome the new journal *Social Dynamics*, because it is only by attempting to understand the dynamics of our society that we can begin realistically to think about social change.

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**Note:** Subscription to *Social Dynamics* is R5,00 p.a. for individuals and R7,50 p.a. for institutions and libraries. Single copies cost R3,00. Enquiries and subscriptions can be sent to the Faculty of Social Science, University of Cape Town, or to Ravan Press, P.O. Box 31134, Braamfontein 2017. \*

## IS JUSTICE THE PROPERTY OF THE PRIVILEGED?

**barend van niekerk**

*This article was adapted from points made in an address by Prof. Van Niekerk to law students at the University of the Western Cape near Cape Town, South Africa. This university was set up under apartheid law for "coloured" students. Prof. Van Niekerk's speech deals with the role of the radical lawyer in South Africa — a rare type — but this article takes a broad look at the South African legal system and says bluntly: it is class justice.*

*BAREND VAN NIEKERK is professor of law at the University of Natal in Durban, South Africa. He is a persistent critic of his country's legal and political system, and has recently led a campaign to abolish the death penalty in South Africa.*

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Twelve years after the American Supreme Court stated the obvious truth that a man who is unrepresented cannot expect justice, it is still a fact that in over 99 per cent of criminal cases in South Africa the accused is unrepresented.

Recently the employer of a black man who had been arrested, as literally millions have been over the last quarter century, for an ordinary pass offence, took the matter on appeal to the Supreme Court and his appeal was upheld. The circumstances of the case were so similar to those in which hundreds of thousands of Africans over the last twenty-five years were arrested, convicted and sentenced, that it appears that they could all have appealed successfully.

Law and justice in South Africa are the peculiar "stamping ground" for the privileged classes in this country. Put differently, law and justice in this land are wedded to class, establishment or privilege, call it what you like, but the overall effect clearly is that those most in need of law and justice have the least likelihood of experiencing their benefits or protection. Put even more simply: we have class justice in South Africa, running at times of course on racial lines but not invariably so, with the result that those, whether they are black or white, who

do not command access lines to the class in whose hands lies the lever of power, can hardly hope to achieve justice.

I do not think that anyone here or anywhere else would deny the description "class justice" as being appropriate to a legal system which contained a rule laying down that only people above a certain income level could receive a fair trial or make use of the courts. Now of course there is no such rule in South Africa, but there might as well be one since in reality, this is the actual situation. "Justice in South Africa", — the words are often used as a gibe — is as open to all as is Cape Town's luxurious Heerengracht Hotel — open that is to say to all classes, colours, tribes and clans, provided only they can pay.

The problem is an involved one, and let it be said immediately that our legal system is not unique in this regard in the Western world. Indeed, perhaps the American legal system which, more than any other in the world, has become most responsive to the ordinary needs of ordinary folk of all classes, has often been accused (and no doubt often quite correctly) of being the preserve of the establishment classes.

But in South Africa the truth is clearer, if it is expressed more seldom. One looks in vain in the media of the printed word, including the four or five law journals, for articles analysing and portraying the essential issues of South African law, articles for instance about the reality that our criminal legal system can only function by dint of the fact that the vast majority of the accused are unrepresented.

### **laws are seen to oppress**

Nor is there much discussion of the inescapable truth that as far as the vast majority of blacks are concerned there is no equality before the law, and that the law, impregnated as it is by inequality and dehumanisation of black people, is regarded by them as the chief instrument of their suppression. In this context one merely has to consider the fact that to the ordinary black man the average optional fine that may be imposed upon him — say R20 or R50 or R100 — constitutes as much a barrier for escaping imprisonment as would a thousand rand



fine to the average white man.

In vain also will you search for any emphasis of the fact that only the rich on the one hand and on the other a mere handful of the very poor who have been fortunate enough to obtain legal aid, can today afford to enter the precincts of a civil court. These are just a few examples of such issues which merit discussion and analysis but which are seldom even broached in academic writings.

That is the true picture of our legal system in this country today. And the problem starts in the places such as the one where we were assembled that night — the universities and their law schools. What are the needs that are basically and essentially being cared for in these law schools? The promotion of concepts which will attain equal justice for all? Or the training of people who will go out into the world to break down the obstacles which stand in the way of allowing all people to share the good things of life? Or perhaps the advancement of ideas and of knowledge which will be calculated

to shatter the myths that surround the law, the legal profession and the administration of justice? Of course not.

Although there have been improvements at some law schools in the last few years where modest, not to say gentle, attempts have been made to make courses more specially relevant and more geared to the service of the community at large, the law school in South Africa remains to this day basically promotive of the values of an unbridled capitalistic society with a heavy emphasis consequently on those subjects and those values which would stand the practising lawyer in good stead; the lawyer who, in crude terms, makes it his predominant business to allow big business to make more business. At what law school in South Africa is "poverty law" being taught, either directly as is now being done in various American law schools, or indirectly in the sense of adapting existing law courses to cater for the needs of the ignorant and poor masses? \*



**An appeal to White Christians in South Africa from the General Meeting of the Australian Council of Churches in Canberra, February, 1975.**

We greet you in Christian love. We recognise that many of you who support your country's policy of "Separate Development" do so sincerely believing that you can find justification for this, but we plead with you from full hearts to dare to believe that you could be wrong.

We acknowledge that we cannot come to you with clean hands. The position of Australian Aborigines calls urgently for improvement. We acknowledge this. Together we are trying to do something about it. Except in one State, discriminatory legislation no longer exists.

From our present understanding of your position, we have to conclude that the whole way of life of the white people in South Africa, and the country's prosperity, is built on the degradation of the majority of the country's people.

We are deeply concerned that too many black South Africans are deprived of normal family life. Too many are paid a small fraction of what white workers receive, often less than the amount needed to keep above the poverty datum line. They are denied such human rights as effective trade union organisations which could work for the betterment of their conditions; they have no political rights of redress for these injustices.

We recognise thankfully that many of you share our deep concern. Our appeal is to those who do not. We earnestly pray that all hearts and minds may be opened to these injustices so that Christians can be united in their determination to change this situation, not because of pressure of any sort, but because it is right that it should be changed.

May God's blessing be on us all.

— Neil Gilmore  
President



**HOW MANY?**

How many breasts are aching for lack of sympathy!

Ah day by day!

How many cheerless lonely hearts are breaking,

How many noble spirits pass away,  
not understood ... not understood.

Oh God! that man should see a little clearer,

Or judge less harshly where they cannot see,

Oh God! that men would draw a little nearer  
to one another,

They'd be nearer Thee,

And understood.

*Richard A. Harman—*

**A PRAYER**

O Modimo! Wena Who knows

all just

let me be

a man again just a man—

not an important or rich man.

—*Mothobi Muloatse*



## Soldiers of Fortune

Farsighted as falcons,  
they looked down another future;  
For the seed in their loins was hostile

W.H. Auden