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Die Toekoms van die Gereformeerde Konfessie

— PROF. DR. H. BERKHOF

Die gereformeerde konfessie het, wat betref die wyse waarop hy homself beskou het en deur ander beskou is, al 'n hele geskiedenis agter die rug. Volgens my mening kan ons daarin minstens agt stadia onderskei.

1. Die eerste stadium is dié van die **katolisiteit**. Die gereformeerde kerk wil eenvoudig die Kerk wees, die één Kerk van Christus, voortsetter van die één Kerk van die Middeleeue, maar nou her-vormd, ge-reform-eerd, „die nach Gottes Wort reformierte Kirche“, **ecclesia reformata**. Daarom wil hy hom ook nie na 'n mens laat vernoem nie. Daarom reken hy ook nie met ander kerke náas hom nie, maar alleen met dié valse kerk in verskillende gedaantes ténoor hom (die Roomse Kerk en die Dweepers). Daarom ken hy ook geen besondere „gereformeerde leerstelling“ nie, behalwe alleen die volstreekte gesag van die Skrif.

„En geen geskrifte van mense, hoe heilig hulle ook al gewees het, mag met die goddelike Skrifte gelygestel word nie, of ook die gewoonte met die waarheid van God nie — want die waarheid is bo alles — of ook die groot menigte of die opvolging van tye of persone, of die Konsilies, verordeninge of besluite nie.”

(Ned. Geloofsbelijdenis, art. 7.) Hierdie kerk wil wees en is: die *ecclesia catholica reformata*.

2. Die groeiende her-vorm-de kerk het ander gestaltes van kerkhervorming op sy weg gevind, veral dié van Zwingli en van Luther. Calvin het alles gedoen wat hy kon om met albei tot 'n vereniging te kom. Met die Zwingliane het dit hom geluk, maar nie met die Lutherane nie. Luther het Zwingli indertyd afgewys, en sy volgelinge het Calvin gesien as 'n geesverwant van Zwingli. Uit hierdie wantroue vandaan kon hulle sy sintetiese nagmaalsleer nie aanvaar nie. En om hulle afwysing te regverdig, het hulle allerlei verskilpunte gesoek wat hulle as redes kon aanvoer om aan die Geneefse hervorming die karakter van Kerk te kon ontse. So het die gereformeerde Kerk 'n kerk naas 'n ander kerk, en spoedig naas ander kerke, geword. So is hy, teen sy wil, gedring in die posisie van 'n **konfessie**.

3. Die volgende fase begin in die tweede helfte van die sestiende eeu. Die gereformeerde Kerk begin om hom by sy konfessie-posisie **neer te lê** en hom dienooreenkomstig te **gedra**. Die afwysing van die Lutherane word nou 'n vaste punt in die dogmatiek en polemiek. Besondere aandag word gewy aan dié leerstukke wat voortaan as spesifiek gereformeerde sou geld, en in besonder aan die predestinasieleer. Dit word, anders as wat Calvin dit bedoel het, deur die meeste dogmatici gemaak tot die grondslag van 'n sluitende sisteem. Die Dordtse Sinode stel sy Leerreëls op as 'n louter binne-gereformeer-

de, byna selfs intern-Hollandse saak, in weerwil van bedenkinge van die Engelse en Duitse afgevaardigdes. Die besef dat die belydenis 'n saak is van die één her-vormde, katolieke Kerk, spreek nie meer mee nie. Die gereformeerdes word 'n groep, 'n modaliteit, met 'n aantal spesialiteite wat hulle van ander Christene onderskei. (Met „spesialiteite“ bedoel die skrywer „sekere leerstukke waarvoor hulle 'n besondere voorliefde het en waarop hulle hulle spesiaal toespits“ — *vertaler*.)

4. Piëtisme en Aufklärung laat 'n nuwe fase aanbreek waarin die konfessionele verskille **verwater**. Daar word nou gesoek na die kenmerke van bekering en wedergeboorte, of na 'n redelike godsdiens wat bo geloofsverdeeldheid verheve is. Vir die tradisies van die verskillende konfessies het daar min belangstelling oorgebly.

5. Dit verander in die eerste helfte van die negentiende eeu, onder invloed van Restourasie en Romantiek, wat die

mense weer leer om eerbied te hê vir wat histories gegroei het. „Die Lutheranisme“ en „die Calvinisme“ word nou met bewondering beskrywe as verskillende konsekwente stelsels, elk met sy eie uitgangspunt en daaruit voortvloeiende „Sonderlehren“ (ciendomlike leerstellinge). Veral twee persone het op hierdie gebied bekendheid verwerf, t.w. die Duitser, Schneckenburger en die Switser, Alexander Schweizer. Op hierdie wyse is allerlei treffende samehange en verskille ontdek. Daar is egter vergeet dat nóg Luther nóg Calvin ooit die bedoeling gehad het om geslote stelsels te ontwikkel. Hulle wou geen „konsekwente denkers“ wees nie, maar slegs „leerlinge van Christus“ en „dienaars van die Woord“.

6. Wat vir manne soos Schneckenburger en Schweizer by uitstek 'n akademiese saak was op die gebied van die geskiedenis van die dogmatiek (Schweizer self was 'n volgelinge van Schleiermacher), het in die verdere verloop van die negentiende eeu 'n **kerklike aangeleentheid** geword, met dié spits gerig teen die modernisme van daardie tyd. Ons dink hier veral aan Abraham Kuyper, wat sy volgelinge aangewakker het tot geesdrif vir „die Calvinisme“ met sy besondere leerstuk-

ke van goddelike voorbeskikking, menslike onmag, die soewereiniteit van God, die eer van God, skerp-afgrensende etiese norme, ens. So word daar hele kerke op die „Sonderlehren“ gebou. Die Calvinisme ('n term wat in vroeëre eeue alleen deur teenstanders gebruik is) word nou 'n wêreld- en lewensbeskouing, 'n filosofie, 'n ideologie. En sy kerke word „Sonderkerken“, kry 'n sektariese afgrensing, is kenbaar aan heel bepaalde „spécialités de la maison“ (spesialiteite — sien by 3 onderaan — van die huis, d.w.s. besondere leerstellinge wat van hierdie spesifieke kerk kenmerkend is — *vertaler*.)

7. So lank as wat die oortuiging daar is dat die gereformeerde „Sonderlehren“ die enig-ware is, kan dit alles nog 'n sekere krag ontwikkel. Maar daardie besef sak meer en meer weg. Dié proses sien ons in 'n versnelde vorm in Amerika. Daar leef die verskillende konfessies in broederlike koëksistensie naas mekaar. Die teologiese verskille beteken daar dikwels minder as die sosiale verskille of as die verskil in historiese agtergrond. Die

(Vervolg op bladsy 2)

“Being Christ to our Neighbour”

— GEORGE McLEOD BRYAN

In 1959 I travelled from Cairo to Capetown contacting leaders of the countries en route, seeking to learn whether they would welcome small groups of American university students who would come to Africa at their own expense and during their long holiday (three months) work with an equal number of citizens of these countries in much-needed self-help projects. At the time we were already cooperating with a few West African nations.

The response was overwhelming. Beginning modestly but mounting each year, by June — August, 1964, we were placing over three hundred such volunteers in twenty-two countries in Africa. Known as Operation Crossroads Africa, we now charter one jetplane to West Africa, one to East. Each participant raises half of his own cost, while public foundations, service clubs, schools and churches volunteer the other half. The receiving nation provides the local committee guidance, the housing, the project, tools and materials, and a matching number of work-campers from their own people. The work of this organization has been widely hailed as “the pilot project for the Peace Corps.”

And “pilot project” it was, since not until October, 1960, did the then presidential candidate, John F. Ken-

edy, propose the American Peace Corps. Yet phenomenal was the speed with which the Peace Corps idea was implemented. Less than a year after the proposal, the first Peace Corps Volunteers set foot on foreign soil, significantly in Africa. On a hot and dusty day in August, 1961, fifty-one Peace Corpsmen stepped off a plane in Ghana, singing a song in Twi to a rousing welcome. It is not far-fetched to claim that part of their royal reception was due to the groundwork laid by the purely volunteer organization, Operation Crossroads Africa. For apart from being government-sponsored and for a two-year term, they are similar and originated from the same generous segment of American interest in overseas development.

“IDEOLOGICAL MISSIONARIES”

The first fifty-one volunteers who landed in Africa were not the usual

joy-riding, rabble-rousing, loud-mouth, chewing-gum and photo-taking Americans. Nor on the other hand were they the long-faced, sour-looking puritan missionary-type. They were the new breed of do-gooders, what I call “the ideological missionary.” (As distinguished from the nineteenth-century missionary who came primarily to convert and incidentally to assist in human welfare.) They were keenly intellectual, seriously dedicated, yet capable of fun-making, the cream of America's best trained youth. They possessed, as their Director, Sargent Shriver, has recently described, “good will, a sense of adventure, willingness to sacrifice for others, and a readiness to work hard under difficult conditions.” The terms of the programme allowed them no special privileges, no hardship pay for overseas work, no buying opportunities in American missionary posts overseas, and they were absolutely obliged to speak the local language, live on similar economic level as the people among whom they laboured, and subject to the same laws and same hard work.

When I call them “ideological” missionaries, I do not imply that there is a necessary cleavage between them and the old-line missionary. Fact is,

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Die Toekoms van die Gereformeerde Konfessie

(Oorgedra van bladsy 1)

konfessie het daar tot 'n **denominasie** geword.

8. Onder invloed van die **ekumeniese beweging** kom die denominasies nader aan mekaar. Daar word nou vriendelik en beskeie gepraat oor die „eie bydrae” wat gebring word om in die „groot geheel” „geïntegreer” te word. Die gereformeerde konfessie wil dan veral die leer van die soewereiniteit van God en van die Skrifgesag in die „ekumeniese gesprek” „inbring.”

Dit is duidelik dat die gereformeerde Kerk gevaar loop om via die begrip „konfessie” in die maalstroom van die **sektarisme** tereg te kom. Calvin sou niks begryp het van ons „gereformeerde” pretensies nie. Hy was beslis geen Calvinis nie! Dit het vir hom gegaan om die vernuwning van die hele Kerk volgens die norm van die Skrif. Van daar uit was hy tegelyk radikaal en toegewyd, bybels en ekumenies.

As die gereformeerde kerke aanhou om hulle as konfessies en denominasies met eie „Sonderleeren” te gedra, het hulle geen toekoms nie. Want die toekoms is gegee aan die sigbaarwording van die één liggaam van Christus, waarin die verskeidenhede alleen bestaan om mekaar aan te vul en so die eenheid tot openbaring te bring.

Die Kerk van Christus is nie op die spesialiteit gebou nie, maar op die komplementariteit. (D.w.s. nie op verbesonderinge wat daar in 'n deel van die kerk mag bestaan nie, maar daarop dat die lede van die één liggaam van Christus vir mekaar aanvullend sal wees — *vertaler*). „As die hele liggaam oog was, waar sou die gehoor wees? As dit geheel en al gehoor was, waar sou die reuk wees?” (I Kor. 12:17).

Die gereformeerde konfessie sal in die naaste toekoms alleen dan vrugbaar wees as hy terugkeer na sy oorsprong en niks anders wil doen nie as om die één *ecclesia apostolica catholica reformata* — die één apostoliese, algemene, gereformeerde Kerk — sigbaar te maak. Daartoe sal hy bereid moet wees om na alle kante van ander kerke te leer — nie alleen ou dinge wat hy dink dat hy reeds weet nie, maar ook nuwe dinge wat die Gees aan hom in die twintigste eeu wil skenk om met nuwe tale die Woord te verkondig. Die gereformeerde Kerk sal ook dan ekumenies vrugbaar kan word as hy nie langer „bydraes” wil „inbring” nie, maar as hy soek na die gestalte van die **Kerk** en dit sigbaar wil maak. As hy dan ander konfessies op sy weg vind wat dieselfde beoog (bv. die Lutherse), dan is daar 'n egte ekumeniese gesprek moontlik en sou dit vreemd wees as dit nie ook tot ekumeniese daade kom nie.

Die vraag is net of die her-vormde Kerk bereid is om terug te keer van sy ingeslane rigting van 'n sektariserende ontwikkeling. Sedert die wêreldkonferensie van die hervormde kerke te Frankfurt in Augustus 1964, het ons m.i. rede om met stelligheid daarop te hoop. Ek noem enkele redes.

a. Deur die sendingwerk het die gereformeerde Kerk hom baie kragtig uitgebrei sowel na Suid-Amerika as na Asië en Afrika. Binne 'n kort tydverloop het die beeld van die konferensies van die **World Reformed Alliance** 'n diepgaande spesialiteite wat vanuit Europa as tipies-gereformeerde opgedien word nie. Waaroor hulle vir hulle wel sorg maak, is hoe hulle as belydende minderheid te midde van die onstuimige ontwikkeling van hul lande, die **Kerk** van Jesus Christus op die ware wyse teenoor hul volk kan verteenwoordig. Daarvoor staan hulle innerlik nader aan die fase van Calvin as die ouer kerke.

b. Die tema te Frankfurt was: „Kom, Skepper Gees!” Vir ekumeniese samekoms is 'n tema soos hierdie hoogs ongewoon. Ons werk gewoonlik eerder met 'n strydskree as met 'n gebed. Met hierdie tema het die gereformeerde konfessie nie voor die wêreldforum getree met die spesialiteite wat hy kan aanbied nie, maar juis met sy verleentheid, sy skuld en sy armoede. Op dié wyse het hy nie sy besit bely nie, maar sy gemis, en het die weg van selfkritiek

in plaas van selfaanprysing voor hom oop gegaan. Daar was kans vir bekering, groei en verryking. Ek sê nie dat dit in Frankfurt duidelik te voorskyn gekom het nie. Intendeel, ons het ons daar eintlik nog te min deur ons tema laat beheers. Maar die weg is duidelik aangetoon, en die sentrale tema van die vernuwning laat hom nie meer van die tafel skuif nie.

c. Die tradisionele gereformeerde spesialiteite het in Frankfurt nouliks 'n rol gespeel, en waar dit wel gebeur het, was dit veral in kritiese sin. So is daar nogal skerp kritiek gelewer op die armoede van die liturgie en op die Nagmaalspraktyk. Die naam van Calvin is selde genoem, maar dan elke keer met eerbied, soos dié van 'n groot voorbeeld. Toe iemand egter vra waarom die Alliansie dan die preke van Calvin wil uitgee — ons is tog nie na 'n mens verneem of aan 'n mens gebonde nie — het hy 'n dawerende applous gekry.

d. Die gereformeerde konfessie het in Frankfurt nie alleen die vereniging van gereformeerde kerke onderling aangemoedig nie, maar ook dié met kerke van ander konfessies. Sover ek weet, is so 'n geluid nog nie voorheen van 'n konfessionele wêreldorganisasie vernem nie. Maar ons kan hierdie geluid tog „goed gereformeerde” noem. Dink aan Calvin!

e. Besonder opvallend is die rojale verklaring ten aansien van die vernuwning by Rome. So iets gebeur in die *ecclesia reformata* nie maklik nie. Tereg is ook dié geluid gehoor van dié kerke wat van hierdie vernuwning nog niks bemerk nie. Maar die tendens in die verklaring is tog een van openheid, verwagting en selfkritiek — die enigste vrugbare verhouding in die ekumeniese verkeer, wat getuig van innerlike vryheid en volwassenheid.

Op die konferensie het ek gesprekke gevoer met nie-gereformeerdes wat so oorweldig was deur die verskeidenheid van gereformeerde kerke, dat hulle my gevra het wat nou eintlik nog „tipies gereformeerde” was. Ek kon uit hulle vraag aanvoel hoe hulle na die dae van Schneckeburger en Schweizer terugverlang!

Dit het vir my duidelik geword dat die *ecclesia reformata* hom altyd weer sal bly beweeg tussen twee pole: dié van die Skrif en dié van die vernuwning. Anders gestel: Hy is in die eerste plaas *ecclesia*, liggaam van Christus, wat nie oor homself beskik nie, maar gehoorsaam moet wees aan sy Heer, deur Wie hy in die woord van die Skrif ontmoet en vergesel word. En hy is in die tweede plaas *reformata*, maar — soos dit al sedert die sewentiende eeu in die kringe van Voetius gesê is — *reformanda quia reformata*. Die kerk moet steeds weer her-vorm word omdat hy hervormd is. Vgl. Rom. 12:2!

Die kerkhervorming van die sestende eeu word nie begryp as dit as 'n insident beskou word, as iets wat toentertyd noodsaaklik was maar waarop ons nou soos op 'n oorkussing kan gaan rus nie.

Nee, wat Luther en Calvin juis ontdek het, was die steeds weer hervorming nodig hê en deur die Gees hervorm word as 'n blywende „eksistensiële” ('n steeds aanwesige bestaansnoodsaaklikheid) van die één katolieke Kerk. Dit behoort tot die grootste dinge van ons tyd dat hierdie ontdekking tans ook met krag deurdring tot in die sentrum van die R.K. Kerk. Ons hoef nie te smaal dat ons dit al 400 jaar lank weet nie. Want so iets kan niemand „weet” nie, en sekerlik ook nie 400 jaar lank nie. Dit moet steeds opnuut in die krag van die Gees aan ons geskied, aan ons as enkelinge en as kerk.

Die hervorming lê altyd weer vóór ons. En om dit te weet, dit is gereformeerde! Dan het die gereformeerde Kerk 'n toekoms. Maar dan sal die toekoms waarna hy verlang, een moet wees waarin die vernuwning onder die gesag van die Skrif die kenmerk is van die één verenigde Kerk, en waarin iedereen vergeet het dat dit ooit as „tipies gereformeerde” geldet!

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“Being Christ to our Neighbour”

(Continued from page 1)

throughout Africa they work alongside missionaries and often in mission stations, at the same jobs. Only occasionally are they at cross-purposes, arising from a Corpsman with a bias against missionaries or an anti-Corpsman missionary. I would say that the majority are Christian, although they need not be as there is nothing in their terms of acceptance pertaining thereto. However, it can certainly be proven that most of their leaders are devoted Christians. Three Deputy Directors whom I know as personal friends are either former clergymen or missionaries: Bill Moyes, now President Johnson's assistant, Paul Geren, only recently Consul in Salisbury, and American Negro Samuel Proctor, present Deputy Director. Also, one of my former students, a clergyman, is head of the unit in Ceylon.

What is surprising is that so many Americans applied, in spite of the forbidding terms. So far over 110,000 have applied, with over 5,000 still offering their services each month. Already over 13,000 are busy in 46 countries. In less than two years from its inception over 2,000 were placed in twenty countries of Africa. (I should say, in passing, that it would have taken the ordinary recruiting of the American mission boards over forty years to place the same number.) Twenty-four countries are still on the waiting list, having “placed orders” for Corpsmen. To fill the requests from foreign governments calls for 50,000 more.

“KENNEDY'S KIDDIE KORPS”

Ridiculed at the outset as “the second Children's Crusade” and “Kennedy's Kiddie Korps”, the readiness with which Americans responded, the success of the training programme and the speed with which they were placed on the field, all contributed to a favourable reception both at home and overseas. Those who landed first in Africa were actually ahead of Congress' appropriation of funds, the first 30,000,000 dollars in Sept. 1961. What kind of people are they, and what are the aims of the programme?

We can answer the latter in the words of Kennedy upon signing the order establishing them, soon after he became President in March 1961:

“Our Peace Corps is not designed as an instrument of diplomacy or propaganda or ideological conflict . . . (but) to permit our people to exercise more fully their responsibilities in the great common cause of world development.”

As to the other question, the kind of persons who are Peace Corpsmen, we can answer in the words of Director Shriver: **“We send people. People of good will with whom they (the developing peoples) can talk about their hopes and suffering, with whom they can share the experiences of living, and with whom they can plan a better life.”**

These volunteers find more meaning in service than in easy, sheltered life. There is nothing miraculous about them; they merely serve as a catalyst for self-help projects which will still produce something of value long after they are gone. They are people with “character”, friendly but independent, flexible but determined.

VOLUNTEERS FOR AFRICA

Simultaneous with the Peace Corps are other American overseas programmes of a non-governmental nature. Foremost in Africa is the Columbia University — Ford Foundation — British East Africa co-operation which has produced teachers for the three countries becoming independent: Uganda, Kenya and Tanganyika. Americans possessing degrees are brought to Makerere College and trained for six months, and then immediately placed in East Africa secondary schools, where the teacher shortage is appalling. I have personally visited such teachers, and have found them of the same quality as Peace Corpsmen. One such teacher I knew in Tanga, the seacoast town which at the time provided the

second of Tanganyika's two government high schools, took such interest in his boys that he flew home to the States, raised enough money to purchase them a library (where none had been, and where the funds raised equalled the entire yearly budget of the school apart from teachers' salaries!)

Other programmes of similar nature are also in operation. A crash-programme of medical teams volunteering to come to the Congo at least for six months, helps fill the gap caused by the exodus of Belgium and missionary doctors. Another organization underwrites the Protestant Technical College for the Congo, which aims to meet the higher education needs for Congolese in an institution other than the Catholic supervised Lovanium University at Leopoldville. All told there are dozens of such spot-programmes operating all over Africa. I myself found hundreds of volunteers eager to come in a programme I conceived and directed for one year, called Volunteers for Africa. Designed especially to fit the needs of highly trained and experienced Americans who had retired early, whose health was still good and whose pension could sustain them while serving in Africa, I found more prepared to come than I could find positions. The terms were that the receiving African institution must provide modest housing (nothing special “for Europeans”) and a job, and the volunteer could begin work the day he arrived.

The idea struck me when visiting the Bai-hai Temple in Kampala, the centre of that religion in Africa. The caretakers were a retired American couple, formerly professor of agriculture at the Cornell University. They were having the time of their lives, projecting his faith and helping the local people, but also living a happy existence pursuing his hobbies — all on a pension that went so much further than in Florida or California! When one considers that there are over twenty million Americans between the ages of 55 and 75, one can see what a reservoir of potential volunteers is waiting to be tapped for aiding developing peoples of Africa. We tend to think of Peace Corpsmen as young (the average age is twenty-four), but one must remember that over eighty of them are over sixty years old!

GOD'S OPEN DOOR

Above all we must remember what an opportunity this is for Christian people, in so-called Christian nations, to exercise their Christian concern. When more and more nations, particularly in Africa, are erecting barricades against the professional missionary, on account of rabid nationalism and resurgent tribal religions, this is another, and feasible, means of entree. God closes one door, but opens another.

Always, as among all the volunteers I am acquainted with in these groups, we must keep in mind that the greatest benefit accrues to the giver. Ruth Dygert, returning home after two years in her first nursing job with the Peace Corps at Tanga Hospital, wrote that she was “taking home far more than I could ever hope to leave behind.”

Instead of *shauri la mungu* (Swahili for “leave it to God's will”), the mood of all these contributors to overseas betterment is “let's do it together”. The greatest reward is that which a Peace Corpsman is reported to have said in Gabon: “It is good to know we are part of the future.” Yes, in an outward reach like this we are truly “being Christ to our neighbour,” as Luther stated it theologically.

What greater calling is ours than to be “Christ to our neighbour” north of us in Africa, to people who have had so little of the past and present, but need a helping hand for the future?

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PRO VERITATE

Inleidingsartikel

AS U GESIN KERSDAG SAAM IS...

Twee belangrike Konferensies wat die gesinslewe raak is die afgetoete tyd in Johannesburg gehou.

Albei het gehandel oor die verstedeliking van die Bantoe en die geweldige invloed wat dit het op sy hele bestaan: godsdien, gesinslewe, kulturele aktiwiteite, ekonomiese vooruitsigte. Die eerste is georganiseer deur die Sinodale Sendingkommissie van die N.G. Kerk van Suid-Transvaal onder die wakker leiding van ds. C. W. H. Boshoff, die predikant in Sinodale diens vir die Sending. Die tweede is gehou onder beskerming van Idamasa en was 'n baie kleiner projek as die eerste. Albei egter, het ernstige aandag gegee en die soeklig laat val op die gesin en die jeug en albei het sterk onder die indruk gekom van die baie nadelige faktore wat besig is om die gesinslewe van die Bantoe te bedreig.

Die Kerk van Christus in Suid-Afrika moet met groot dankbaarheid kennis neem van hierdie onderneming, van die besluite wat geneem is, en moet hulle volle morele en geldelike steun aan die pogings toesê, nie eerstens omdat dit die gesinslewe van die Bantoe as nie-blanke raak nie, maar van 'n deel van ons bevolking wie se huweliks- en familiewelsyn elke inwoner van die land se medeverantwoordelikheid is — net soos ons met reg kan verwag dat die nie-blanke met ewe veel verantwoordelikheid die gesonde gesinsbestaan aan blanke kant moet help bevorder. Want ons hele bestaan in Suid-Afrika is in een gemeenskaplike samesyn onlosmaaklik saamgeweef en die sedelike wel en wee van die een bevolkingsgroep is ook die van die ander. Saam sal ons die seëninge van 'n gesonde gesinslewe by albei geniet en saam sal ons die smarte van bedreiging en verbroekeling moet dra.

Daarom is dit gepas dat ons juis in Kerstyd, dié tyd wanneer ons in die geluk van gesinne wat saam verkeer, die koms van die Kind van Bethlehem herdenk, ook sal onthou om in meegevoel ons harte te laat uitgaan na alle gesinne waar huweliksontrou, drankmisbruik, kinderverwaarlosing of gedwonge skeiding van gesinslede 'n donker skadu werp oor die heiligheid van die huwelik en die bande wat families moet bind. Bid dan vir al sulke gesinne en vir alle pogings wat aangewend word om uitvoering te gee aan die opdrag en uitspraak van die Meester: „Wat God dan saamgevoeg het, mag geen mens skei nie . . .”

Editorial:

FRIENDSHIP THROUGH SERVICE

It is imperative that white Christians should build more ties of friendship with non-white Christians all over Africa through genuine Christian service.

This building of friendship through service is not called for in the hope that this may create a more favourable acceptance of whites by non-whites. If this were to be our motive we will fail miserably as whites. No — our basic desire must be to do this because Christ, our Lord and Master, revealed Himself to us as the Servant of men. His image is that of the Servant-King, the least among men, the Washer of feet, the Bearer of the Cross. As such we are called upon and commanded through His love to us to commit ourselves in voluntary service to every man and every nation in need. Such service should always be initiated by Christians as the people of God who have discovered the secret of a sacrificial giving of themselves without ever asking for or expecting any reward. Even though such service may be misunderstood by friend and foe, we are still bound to offer it regardless of whether it may be accepted or rejected.

Usually we find, however, that non-Christian or secular bodies put Christians to shame by taking the lead in many such projects. An outstanding example of such service and the value it has for both the giver and recipient is given in the two articles in our current issue, one dealing with the Peace Corps Movement and the other with Voluntary Service Overseas. We strongly recommend the reading of these two articles to our readers as proof of the constructive possibilities of such undertakings. What an excellent opportunity such a Friendship-for-Africa scheme could provide to young South Africans to offer their services as students, clerks, typists, builders, lawyers, nurses, farmers, artisans, teachers or in any other vocation to communities in dire need of such talents! Starting with such projects in our own country this could eventually be expanded to the neighbouring protectorates and then further north.

Apart from the fact that such an army of volunteers will thereby prove the sincerity of our Christian discipleship, it could also provide new avenues of expressing the adventurous spirit of youth's idealism and its willingness to take up a great challenge. Who will head this call?

APARTHEID

The Trinity in realms of lofted space,
All-loving and All-powerful looked down
With pity on the fallen human race
And Jesus said, "I'll leave my heavenly crown
To live with them
And eat with them
And sleep with them
And die with them
On earth."

The angels worshipping in prostrate zeal
And ringing round the blazing golden throne
Looked up in startled horror, to reveal
Their disapproval that the Holy One
Should live with them
And eat with them
And sleep with them
And die with them
On earth.

"But Lord," a stricken cherubim declaimed
"The men on earth are different from us here;
You'll never get to know them, they're untamed;
Their souls dwell in a darker, lower sphere.
Don't live with them
And eat with them
And sleep with them
And die with them
On earth."

"Have you considered, Master," one implored,
"That those on earth were made to wait on Thee?
The servant is not greater than his lord;
You would not urge complete equality
And live with them
And eat with them
And sleep with them
And die with them
On earth?"

A Guardian Angel, fresh returned from Earth
With knowing pity said, "That's not the way;
From Heaven here, one cannot judge their worth
Nor estimate the price you'd have to pay
To live with them
And eat with them
And sleep with them
And die with them
On earth."

"To force yourself on them would scarcely be
The best of taste," the seraphim declare
With deep compassion for humanity,
"They'd be uncomfortable with Thee there
To live with them
And eat with them
And sleep with them
And die with them
On earth."

"Do nothing rash, Lord God," St. Michael cried.
"Such things must hasten slowly; bide your time
Till things improve; Thy loving hand can guide
Without that Thou shouldst grovel in their grime
To live with them
And eat with them
And sleep with them
And die with them
On earth."

The Son of God just quietly smiled on them:
That night a child was born at Bethlehem
To live with them
And eat with them
And sleep with them
And die with them
On earth.

— E. V. STONE, Lusaka, Zambia.

GEVAARLIKE WOORDE

VI „DO-GOODERS”

Stam hierdie term uit Amerika? En is dit afkomstig uit die sinistère kringe wat rondom die John Birch Society hulle tente opgeslaan het?

Ek durf dit nie sê nie; dit is dikwels moeilik om die oorsprong van 'n eietydse uitdrukking na te vors. Soveel is seker, dat dit teenwoordig veel in Afrika gebruik word. 'n Afrikaanse vertaling daarvan het ek nog nie teengekomen nie. Dit sou dus 'n taak vir die vakkantoor van die Akademie kon wees, om hiervoor 'n gelykwaardige weergawe in Afrikaans te soek. Ek hoop egter, dat dit nie sal gebeur nie; ek hoop dat hierdie uitdrukking vinnig uit die joernalistiek sal verdwyn. Wellig is dit egter 'n ydele hoop, want die gebruik van hierdie term wen veld. Tot my verdriet het ek hom nou ook al in *Pro Veritate* aangetref, in die nommer van 15 Oktober, bl. 6, in die weergawe van 'n referaat deur dr. Leslie Cook oor die Interkerklike Hulpvereniging onder auspisië van die Wêreldraad.

Ons lees daar: „Interkerklike Hulpvereniging vereis 'n suiwere verhouding tussen die praktiese en die teoretiese, tussen ekstroversie en introversie. As die klem te veel op die praktyk val, loop die afdeling gevaar om 'n groep onnadenkende „do-gooders” te wees.”

Hierdie laaste sin, in hierdie verband en in ons maandblad, het my pyn gedoen. Miskien is dit ongesond, om so gevoelig vir woorde te wees, soos ek nou eenmaal is; maar miskien is dit tog ook nuttig, dat daar mense met so 'n ongesonde gevoeligheid bestaan; hulle kan waarsku teen gevare, wat vir ander eers merkbaar is, as dit te laat kan wees. Want woorde — ons het dit meermale gesê — is uiters gevaarlike speelgoed.

JESUS CHRISTUS

As ek Leslie Cook so onvriendelik, en baie ander outeurs so smadelik, oor „do-gooders” hoor praat, dink ek aan die Bybelse agtergrond van daardie uitdrukking. En dan in die eerste plek aan Hand. 10: 38, waar Petrus van onse Here Jesus Christus sê: „Hy het die land deurgegaan, goed gedoen en almal genees wat onder die mag van die duivel was . . .” In hierdie geval wil ek die teks ook in die Authorised Version gee: . . . who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil . . .

Waarom hierdie keer die teks ook in Engels? Omdat dit die woord is, wat indertyd die gemoed van Robert Raikes (1735 — 1811) aangegryp het, en hom, die welgestelde eienaar van 'n drukkersbedryf, daartoe gebring het om sy lewe te wy aan die opheffing van die verwaarloosde en verwilderde kinders in die Londense arbeiderswyke. Uit daardie werk het die Sondagskool gegroei, en waar op hierdie wêreld

mense die seën van daardie arbeid ondervind het — en wie van ons het dit nie? — daar het hulle die seën ondervind van ons teks.

Robert Raikes het in sy dae op spot en teenwerking gestuit. Natuurlik was daar mense wat in sy werk 'n gevaar vir die ekonomie gesien het; ook kwasi-geleerdes wat betoog het dat kinders uit 'n dergelyke omgewing nie opgehef kan word nie; ook pseudo-teoloog wat die predestinasie teen Raikes se pogings in die bespreking betrek het. Dit is beweer dat hy die bestaande ordening van die samelewing deur sy Sondagskole wou aantast. Maar op al daardie aanvalle het Raikes een verweer gehad: dat hy gegryp was deur die woord van die Heilige Skrif, wat getuig het dat die Here Jesus Christus die land deurgegaan het, goed doende. Wat sy Meester gedoen het, wou hy met sy swakke kragte ook doen. So het hy dan 'n „do

HY WAT GOED DOEN

gopher” geword.

Die apostel Paulus, wat heelwat van die predestinasie geweet het, sou teen Robert Raikes se optrede geen beswaar gemaak het nie. Intendeel, Paulus het self aan Timotheüs geskrywe (I Tim. 6:7, 18): „Beveel die rykes in die teenwoordige wêreld . . . dat hulle goed moet doen en ryk wees in goeie werke.” In II Thes. 3:13 lees ons: „En julle, broeders, moet nie in goed doen verfloei nie.” Onmiddellik daarop volg die aanwysing, dat wie aan die woorde van die apostel in hierdie brief ongehoorsaam is, onder die kerklike tug geplaas moet word. Alleen „do-gooders” het 'n plek in die gemeente van die Here!

Dit behoort vanselfsprekend te wees, want, so skrywe Johannes (III Joh. 11): „Hy wat goed doen, is uit God; maar hy wat kwaad doen, het God nie gesien nie.” 'n Neutrale houding is hierby nie moontlik nie: „Wie dan weet om goed te doen en dit nie doen nie, vir hom is dit sonde” (Jak. 4:17).

Besondere nadruk op die plig en voorreg om goed te doen lê die eerste prief van Petrus, Kom, waarde leser, laat my nie al die werk doen nie, maar vat ook self u Bybel en lees I Petr. 2: 14, 15; 2: 20; 3: 17; 4: 19. Dan sal u ook merk, dat die apostel wel weet, dat iemand deur goed te doen in die moeilikhede kan kom; dit is nog maar net die minste, dat hy 'n „do-gopher” genoem word. Maar, so sê die laaste van die aangehaalde tekste, deur goed te doen vertrou die Christen sy siel aan die getroue Skepper toe. Aan wie vertrou ons ons siele toe deur geen „do-gopher” te wil wees nie?

Verstaan u nou waarom daardie

smadelike gebruik van die term „do-gopher” my pyn doen? As u iets anders met daardie uitdrukking bedoel, gebruik dan 'n ander uitdrukking. Want deur hierdie term smaad u die apostels, die Heilige Skrif, die Here Jesus Christus, ja God self, van wie geskryf is

(Hand. 14:17): „ . . . al het Hy Homself nie onbetuig gelaat nie, deur goed te doen, van die Hemel vir ons reën en vrugbare tye te gee en ons harte met voedsel en vrolikheid te vervul.”

(Lees nou „Christ to our neighbour” en „Voluntary Service Overseas” — Redakteur)

HELP!

Deur CORRIE VAN DEN BOS

In prakties alle lande van die wêreld hoor mens vandag die kreet (veral van die ouere geslag): „Die kinders! Hulle is onmoontlik. Hulle is lui, ongehoorsaam, geen maniere, slordig . . . nee, in MY tyd!”

Ek gee toe dat die meerderheid van die jeug, veral as hulle in 'n groep is, hulle skuldig maak aan die aantygings van die sestigers plus, maar ek verfoei die gesegde: „maar in my tyd.” Ek behoort ook tot daardie groep, maar my tyd is nie vandag nie. Wat het daar nie gebeur tussen die jare 1884 en 1964 nie? Ons het van naby of van 'n sekere afstand vier oorloë meegemaak: die Boere-oorlog, die Balkan-oorlog, die Eerste en Tweede Wêreldoorloë (om nog maar te swyg van die Japannese oorlog). En ons lewe nog steeds op die top van 'n vulkaan en as 'n mens goed luister (d.w.s. as u die wêreldgebeure met aandag volg) hoor mens voortdurend die gerommel, sien mens voortdurend die uitbarstings van haat, jaloesheid, dade van magsvertoon.

Dit maak nie saak of die meerderheid van die volwassenes horende doof en siende blind is nie, die hele atmosfeer is daar vol van. Sels as mens weier om die koerante, die tydskrifte, die boeke daaroor te lees, voel ons tog dat ons lewe in 'n tyd van spanning, van intense spanning.

DIE WÊRELD STAAN OP SY KOP

Die wetenskap het ons in die 70 jare dinge gebring wat die groot wêreld klein gemaak het. As daar moeilikhede is, duisende en duisende myle van ons af, neem dit 'n paar minute om daarvan te hoor. Die vliegtuie van vandag gons deur die lug met 'n snelheid wat die mens in 'n paar uur van een deel van die aarde na die ander verplaas.

Die tegnologie bring prakties elke dag nuwe dinge wat bedoel is om groter snelheid in alle takke van ons samelewing in te lei. Daar is 'n volgehoute eis van minder werkeure, hoër lone. In meer en meer lande word die industrie regeer deur outomatisasie. Maar hoe moet hulle nou maak om 'n te groot mate van werkloosheid te voorkom? Is dit wonder dat so baie mense hart- of maagsiektes kry?

En dink u nou regtig dat die kinders ontsnap aan daardie spanning? Die wêreld staan op sy kop, wat gaan daar môre gebeur . . .

Het ons, oueres, die reg om die kinders te veroordeel en hulle aan hul lot oor te laat?

Elke dag opnuut kry ek direkte of indirekte bewyse van die grondgedagte wat hulle besiel, die eintlike oorsaak van hulle dwase manier van doen. Dit is vrees, vrees vir die onbekende toekoms, vrees omdat hulle geen anker het nie. Hulle het die naam van aanbidders te wees van materiële dinge. Waarom? Ek het in Australië op 'n Sondagoggend 'n byeenkoms bygewoon van jong seuns tussen 16 en 20 jaar oud. Hulle het alles self gereël, die gebed, die gesange, alles. Die spreker was 'n matroos van 19 jaar. In eenvoudige woorde het hy gepraat oor die moeilikhede van die jong mense. „Wat ons meer as enig iets anders nodig het is geestelike leiding om ons die krag te gee die onbekende toekoms te benader met moed en op 'n waardige wyse.” Dit het my diep getref.

HELP HULLE

Ek weet dit is vir die jong ouers, veral vir hulle wat in die oorlog self was, moeilik om aan hulle kinders dit te gee wat hulle nodig het, omdat so

baie nog self onder die invloed van die oorlogsindrukke is. Maar . . . as hulle trou (en baie was eintlik veel te jonk) moet hulle hulself dwing om daardie indrukke opsy te skuive. Dit is die plig van elke ouer, jonk of oud, en dit bly die taak van elke ouer om sy kinders die begrippe van plig en dissipline by te bring. Mens het nie reg om kinders in die wêreld te bring as jy nie kan of nie die wil het nie om jou eie swakhede te oorkom nie. As ons voortgaan op die pad wat die meerderheid van die mensdom vandag volg (d.i. verwaarloos van die jeug, degenerasie van ons eie groep), dan verniel ons op die mees wrede manier dié deel van God se skepping wat vir ons so belangrik is. Dan word ons moordenaars van die gees en die siel van ons kinders. Ek kla aan nie alleen die mense wat niks doen om die wêreld van ondergang te red nie, maar ook hulle wat stilbly, wat nie hulle stemme verhef nie, wat nie klaar staan om op elke oomblik van die dag te luister nie, te analiseer, die helpende hand uit te steek om te red dié wat in nood is.

Dis nie alleen die ouers wat skuldig is nie, dis alle leiers wat met kinders of jongmense te doen het, sowel in die materiële as in die geestelike lyn.

Heeltemal waar, ons weet nie wat die dag van môre sal bring nie, maar laat ons dan die dag van vandag beskou as synde van soveel belang, dat ons die jeug moet leer om die gebeurtenisse van die dag te wik en te weeg en om in hulle vreugde te deel as dit 'n „goeie dag” was. Help hulle deur hulle die geleentheid te gee om bv. by die aandete hulle ervarings van die dag te bespreek. Vertel van u eie ervarings, sodat die familieband steeds sterker word. Dit sal glad nie kwaad doen om so nou en dan u eie swakhede te beken en met hulle te gesels oor die manier hoe om daardie swakhede te oorkom nie. Dit gee hulle die voorreg om te leer hoe om die wet „Doen aan andere” in praktyk te bring.

Koop nie altyd pragtige speelgoed nie, maar gee meer aandag aan die groot wens van die meeste kinders om self iets te skep. Die meeste stadsbiblioteke het ook 'n kinderafdeling. Gee hulle die kans om boeke te lees wat die moeite werd is.

Help om God se wêreld te red van vernieling deur die eise van ons geestelike lewe hoër te stel. Dis die mens wat die wêreld maak of breek. As ons hom breek begaan ons die grootste sonde wat die mensdom kan begaan: die vernieling van 'n deel van God se skepping wat Hy aan ons toevertrou het en daarmee die vernieling van die talente wat ons deur Hom gegee is om van daardie wêreld 'n paradys te maak.

N.S. — Wat is die regte en die pligte in verband met onderwys en opvoeding van die leerling, die ouers, die onderwysers, die verenigings van ouers en onderwysers, die provinsiale en die staatsdepartemente? Ek sal so bly wees as u u menings daaromtrent aan my wil stuur. Net my naam, p/a Pro Veritate, Posbus 487, Johannesburg.

(Die redaksie verwelkom bespreking en meningswisseling oor dié belangrike saak.)

1964/65

KERSFEES EN NUWE JAAR

Names die redaksie en administrasie van Pro Veritate wens ons al die lesers van ons blad 'n baie gesênde Kersfees toe. Mag temidde van baie spanninge die vrede van Christus u harte en huise vervul en mag u die Nuwe Jaar ingaan met vaste vertroue op God en op sy belofte, leiding en steun, vir almal wat Hom gehoorsaam.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

On behalf of the editorial board and the administration of Pro Veritate, we wish all our readers a very happy Christmas. May the peace of Christ fill your heart and homes in spite of many tensions and may you enter the New Year with steadfast trust in God and in his promise of guidance and support for all who obey Him.

Hier van en Daar van

The South African Observer

Die redakteur van bogenoemde blad moet beslis gelukkigewens word met die wêreldwye verspreiding en eenparige goedgesindheid van sy internasionale leserskring. **Briewe aan die Redakteur** is vir my altyd een van die interessantste kolomme in enige blad; maar die **S.A. Observer** stof in hierdie opsig alle ander blaie uit wat ek ken. Sy maters is almal dood! Die redakteur self noem dit "a small review that struggles on from month to month without any advertising or powerful backers" (Nov. 1964, p. 2), en tog sien ek dat hy sy lesers tel in vrywel elke land van die beskaafde wêreld. Dit sê heelwat vir die kwaliteit van die blad! Dit is ook opvallend dat die briewe almal afkomstig is uit die groot stede en hoofstede van die wêreld: uit Londen, New York, Washington, Melbourne, Christchurch, e.d.m. Voorwaar 'n leserskring wat **Pro Veritate** hom kan beny. Ons wens mnr. Brown geluk met die wonderlike weerklank wat sy woorde in so baie lande wek. Mag ek net 'n klein versoekie daaraan toevoeg? Dit is, dat mnr. Brown in die vervolg tog die volle name en adresse van die oorsese briefskrywers by die briewe wil afdruk. Natuurlik, vir my persoonlik maak dit nie saak nie, ek is heeltemal tevrede met die voorletters alleen; maar ag, dit is nou eenmaal joernalistieke gebruik om die volle naam te gee, en bowendien, daar sal altyd bese tonge wees wat maar al te graag sal wil beweer dat die redakteur daardie briewe self geskrywe het en die voorletters en adresse uit sy duim gesuig het. Dit is 'n skandelijke gedagte, en ek verfoei dit; maar mense is nou maar soos hulle is, en hulle sal dit sê. Daarom, mnr. Brown, asseblief: die volle name en adresse. Dan kan ons somar aan elkeen van daardie mense ook 'n eksemplaar van **Pro Veritate** pos.

Vaarwel, C.S.V.

Dit is 'n droewige saak wat ons tans voor ons oë sien afspeel. 'n Voortreflike wêreld-organisasie wat sewentig jaar lank miljoene studerende jongmense tot seën was, verloor sy kop, vergeet sy beste vriende, en verneder homself deur saam te gaan skree in die koor van 'n wêreld wat gek geword het. Dit kon nie anders nie, die C.S.V. van Suid-Afrika moes homself van so 'n organisasie distansieër. Dit was alleen uiters merkwaardig om op te merk dat hierdie besluit, wat tog 'n pynlike saak was, sonder 'n enkele traan geneem is. Is ek heeltemal verkeerd, of was daar 'n sekere **vreugde** en 'n sekere **gretigheid** te bespeur in die onbegryplike haas waarmee die Dagbestuur hierdie besluit aangekondig het? Asof hulle net daarop gewag het? 'n Mens sou dink dat die verbreking van bande wat sewentig jaar lank met liefde gekoester was, darem nie sonder 'n woord van opregte leedwese sou plaasvind nie. Hier was egter geen spoor van enige leedwese nie. **Die Kerkbode** het eers die gemoedere voorberei op „groot veranderinge” wat sou kom, en wat dan juis sou bewys dat die C.S.V. van Suid-Afrika nie so liberalisties en kommunisties is as wat deur sommige vuurvreters van die Hervormde Kerk beweer was nie. Dit was die eerste, onmiskenbare aanduiding van die rigting waarin dinge sou beweeg. Dit was ook nie lank nie, of daar kom die Dagbestuur (Stellenbosch) voor die dag met hul opsienbarende verklaring, waarin op byna triomfantelike toon 'n einde gemaak word aan die laaste internasionale bande waarop die Suid-Afrikaanse Christen-student tot dusver nog kon aanspraak maak.

Nou hoor ons meer. Dit word al so te sê as 'n voldonge feit aanvaar dat op die komende vergadering in Bloemfontein (Januarie 1965) die C.S.V. van Suid-Afrika soos ons dit ken, ontbind sal word, en dat ons voortaan alleen nog 'n aantal **aparte verenigings** sal hê

ooreenkomstig die nooit volprese ideaal van **differensiasie**, soos uitgedruk in die wapenspreuk van die Vereniging: **Ut Omnes Unum Sint**: 'n Afrikaanse C.S.V., 'n Engelse C.S.V., 'n Kleurling-C.S.V., 'n Bantoe-C.S.V., en enige ander C.S.Vees wat verder nog nodig mag blyk. Sodoende kan die moontlikhede van wrywing (soos bv. waar blank en bruin saam op 'n konferensie is) tot 'n absolute minimum beperk word. Die geestelike eenheid in Christus word nie geraak nie. Dit is 'n louter praktiese reëling, en sal op die lange duur alleen maar beter buurskap tussen die groepe in die hand werk. Die allergrootste nut en voordeel van die nuwe reëling sal egter hierin geleë wees, dat dit die Afrikaanse volk, en met name ons Regering, weer nuwe vertroue sal gee in die volkswaste loyaliteit van die C.S.V. — die **Afrikaanse C.S.V.**, natuurlik, wel te verstaan. Niemand sal **hulle** ooit die verwyrt kan maak dat hulle nie lojaal was nie.

Intussen is daar 'n ou versie van wyle Pres. Reitz wat voortdurend by my opkom. „Vaarwel aan de Vierkleur” was die titel van sy gedig, en die datum, Junie 1902. Wat hy daar sê van die

Dis vir ons aangenaam om aan te kondig dat 'n gereelde rubriek **HIERVAN EN DAARVAN** vanuit die pen van 'n medewerker, **ERASMIUS**, voortaan in ons blad sal verskyn. Ons medewerker het onderneem om minstens elke twee maande sy bydrae te lewer maar ons hoop dat ons hom kan oorreed om dit maandeliks te doen. U sal self verstaan waarom as u sy rubriek lees! — Red.)

Transvaalse Vierkleur, wil ek nou toevas op die C.S.V. en op die wapen wat hy voer:

*Gelukkiger zijn zij die vielen
Toen zij nog hoog werd opgebeurd,
Dan wij, die met bedroefde zielen,
Haar zagen in het stof geseurd.*

Vaarwel, C.S.V.!

Antikom

Vir menige lidmaat van die N.G. Kerk sal dit 'n vreugde en 'n oplugting gewees het toe die Kaapse Moderatuur in versigtige, maar ondubbelsinnige woorde stelling ingeneem het teen die verregaande antisemitiese propaganda wat in die blad **Antikom** verskyn het. Dit pleit vir ons Kerk; te meer, waar een van die lede van hierdie Modera-

tuur self ten nouste by die hele saak betrokke was. Strikte reg en billikheid het hier geseëvier, met gevolge wat alleen maar heilsaam kan wees vir ons Kerk.

Adolf Hitler is dood, maar sy spook dwaal nog rond op die wêreld. Daar word vandag so 'n geweldige kampanje gevoer teen die Kommunisme, dat ons maklik sou kon vergeet dat daar ook ander ideologieë bestaan wat minstens ewe gevaarlik is, en wat nog altyd hier en daar voortleef, ook onder ons eie Volk. Ek dink nou met name aan die Nasionaal-Sosialisme. Dit is nog lank nie dood nie, en die artikels in **Antikom** het bewys dat ons nog voortdurend op ons hoede moet wees teen die nawerking van die gif wat in die oorlogsjare in ons ingespuut is.

Voluntary Service Overseas

— ROBERT BIRLEY

A High School in Uganda

I found two boys employed as teachers in a High School with about 150 boys in Uganda, one with a considerable reputation which produced candidates every year for Makerere University College. The Headmaster of the school, an African, did not himself do any teaching. The two boys arrived in September last year and before long the school began to experience difficulties which are by no means uncommon in Uganda. One after another masters began to leave to take up posts in the administration of the country. The two found one morning that they were the only teachers left in the school, and it was only after two months that replacements began to arrive. They decided to concentrate entirely on the teaching of English and Mathematics. They divided the school into six classes in six different rooms and they went from one to another trying to ensure that each class had at least two teaching periods a day. Those who were not being taught were encouraged to work at the remaining subjects and given written work to do. It is typical of the enthusiasm for education in Uganda that they had little trouble over discipline, though they told me that towards the end of the two months some were beginning to become a little restive. Every evening they staggered home with piles of work to correct and they soon realised that it was essential that they should finish each day's work before they went to bed or, as one of them put it to me, they would have been 'flooded'. After two months some replacements began to arrive. The Uganda education authorities told me that they had undoubtedly prevented the closing of the school. I suggested to the two boys that everyone, when a last he reached the age to retire from work, looked back on one period of his life when he had had to work hardest and that they could at least feel that this period was now behind them. They were both aged eighteen.

A Watutsi Refugee Camp

On the borders of Uganda and Ruanda I found a boy of nineteen in charge of a camp for Watutsi refugees from Ruanda. He told me that until late in December he had had a fairly easy time. He then had about 5,000 refugees to look after, and there was no other

Few organizations can have had such an inconsequential start as Voluntary Service Overseas.

Soon after compulsory National Service for two years was abandoned in Britain, a Bishop of the Church of England wrote to a Sunday newspaper. Most young men served these two years immediately after leaving school, postponing their time at the University, if they were going to one. He suggested that one who, as a result of this, found himself with nothing to do for a year or two, might consider helping his brother who was a Regional Commissioner in Sarawak. This letter was read by a retired Civil Servant from Nigeria, who decided to follow up the possibilities which he saw were implicit in it. He wrote to a few schools for volunteers. In 1958 eighteen boys who had just left school went to four countries, Nigeria, Kenya, Sarawak and Jamaica, to work for a year before going to the University. Next year there were added some young apprentices from industry and in the following year some girls, also straight from school. Three years ago the scheme was extended to include young men and women who had just graduated from a University. This year there are 685 volunteers in 57 countries. Of these 216 boys and 99 girls are 'school leavers', 329 young men and young women are graduates and 41 boys are apprentices on leave for a year.

A Voluntary Service

The essential idea behind the scheme is a very simple one. Boys and girls, or young men and women graduates, are asked to give up a year of their lives to work in some foreign country which needs help. The organization pays for and arranges their journeys to and from the country where they will serve and meets incidental expenses in England. The institution which they will help — it may be a Ministry of Education, a mission, a hospital and so on — is responsible for their board and lodging and pays the boys and girls pocket-money of R10 or R12 a week (and the graduates rather more).

The organization is a completely voluntary one. The British Government gives it most useful financial support, but it exercises no control over it. The British Council, where possible, keeps an eye on the volunteers when they are in the field. But most of the money is raised by voluntary subscriptions and all the arrangements are made by a small staff in London. I may say that the Headquarters of the Organization

is the best office I have ever known. Everyone in it, down to the youngest typist, is expected to keep in touch by personal letters with some volunteers allotted to them. The **esprit de corps** of the organization is one of the best things about it.

Of the volunteers, very nearly all the graduates and about three-quarters of the boys and girls work as teachers in schools and technical colleges. The rest undertake a remarkable variety of duties. They work in refugee camps, on the Uganda-Ruanda frontier, perhaps, or in Algeria or Jordan or with Tibetan refugees in India; they help in a leper hospital in Ethiopia, or the Columbia-Plan Medical Team in Laos, in building a school for the blind at Beihan in the Aden Protectorate, in hospitals in many countries, in community development, in villagisation schemes in Tanganyika. The countries where they now work nearly circle the globe. They are to be found in Labrador, Peru, Columbia, British Guinea and British Honduras on the American Continent; in the West Indies and Saint Helena; in Jordan, Israel and Iran; in many African Countries, which I shall deal with later; in India, Pakistan, Siam, Malaysia and Hong Kong; in the Philippine Islands, New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, New Hebrides, Fiji and the Gilbert and Ellice Islands in the Pacific.

From its earliest days Voluntary Service Overseas has felt keenly the special needs of Africa. This year over half the volunteers, 380 in all, are in this continent. Nigeria has considerably the most with 105. Then came Kenya (46), Uganda (39), Ghana (38), Sierra Leone (32), Malawi (26), Zambia (21) and Bechuanaland and Southern Rhodesia (13 each). There are between four and eight each in Algeria, Tanganyika, Basutoland, Sudan, Cameroun, Ethiopia and Gambia. Mali and South Africa have two each and there is one volunteer in Burundi, Morocco and Swaziland.

At the beginning of this year I was able to spend a month visiting the Volunteers at their places of work in East Africa. The following short account of the work done by four volunteers is not exactly typical. Circumstances caused their tasks to become very dramatic. But one soon came to realise that any volunteer might find himself faced by exceptional difficulties. It will be understood why the Organization insists on a very high standard. Only about a third of those applying are elected.

(Continued on page 8)

THE ANGUISH OF THOMAS DIDYMUS

— JAMES E. MOULDER

15th December, 3964 A.D.

Documents recently acquired by the Museum of Archaic Religions throw some light on the problems surrounding the extinction of Christianity.

The Importance of the Discovery:

Historians and archaeologists have long been baffled by the fact that Christianity, after exercising a creative and decisive influence on the old "Western" civilizations of Europe and America over a period of two thousand years, suddenly became extinct before the beginning of the 22nd century. Because of the suddenness of the disappearance of this old religion of the "West" very little documentary evidence has survived. Apart from elaborately ornate liturgical remains and fragments of a book which exercised a decisive influence on the life and thought of the Christians, very little else has remained. This gap in our knowledge has been partially filled by the discovery last month of three fragments of a private note-book in the cellar of a church (building used by Christians for worship). The cellar was discovered when excavations were being carried out in what used to be a township for "Black" people. This township (circa 1964) was situated on the outskirts of Johannesburg and was called Soweto or Dube.

There seems to be some evidence in support of the suggestion that the township was called Soweto, Dube being a suburb.

Problems of Interpretation:

The paucity of the material unearthed makes it impossible to give any kind of dogmatic interpretation to the evidence. Furthermore, there are a number of factors which have to be taken into account in any attempt to evaluate the fragments, especially the following:

1. The period 1964 — 2164 was one of the most decisive in the history of man. It was during this period that the present world civilization was born. In the process two phenomenal intellectual and psychological changes took place in the Weltanschauung of mankind. Firstly, the political conceptions and organisations connected with the notion of "internationalism" replaced those connected with "nationalism". Secondly, the criteria of race (pigmentation) became irrelevant in every aspect of human thinking, striving and organisation. It was during this period that the foundations were laid for the eventual extinction of "White" people (that is, people with a "white" or fair-skinned pigmentation).

2. Evidence from other sources, although not conclusive, suggests that Christianity was a "White" religion. As far as we are able to ascertain Christianity had its origins in the Eastern-Mediterranean basin and became firmly established in Western Europe and later in North America. One of the fragments of the book referred to above (the Museum has managed to establish that it was called the New Testament) suggests that Christianity regarded itself as a world religion — "go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name . . . all things whatsoever I commanded you . . . world". Furthermore, what we know of the industrial and economic expansion of the old "Western" civilization into Africa, Asia and South America lends support to the view that Christianity was introduced to the "non-White" people of these continents.

3. Historians and archaeologists have also unearthed evidence in support of the view that the "White" colonisers and, therefore, the Christians in these areas had difficulties in accepting the "non-White" people as fellow human beings. The reason for this prejudice on

the part of the "Whites" are difficult to unravel, partly because of the psychological differences in the thinking of modern man who finds it difficult to imagine sympathetically why pigmentation should have been regarded as so important, and partly because of the complex differences of language, cultural diversity and educational and economic standards between the "Whites" and the "non-Whites". For example, archaeologists have discovered numerous signs which read "EUROPEANS ONLY", "European" being the technical term for "Whites". Christians seem to have had the same difficulty as the non-Christian "Whites" with this problem of pigmentation. The following fragments of a resolution, or resolutions, passed by Christians has this prejudice as its background:

- (a) "The Church, aware of the dangers inherent in integration for Whites and non-Whites, intends to permit no integration within itself . . . only White persons . . . Kerk."
- (b) "It is the will of God . . . Church that it should be one and undivided, trusting to the leading of God to bring this ideal to ultimate fruition . . . racial contact should be promoted as freely as possible."

These fragments are taken from a documentation of the subject by Lesley Cawood, "The Churches and Race Relations in South Africa" pp. 34 — 35, 50.

4. Finally, the fragments discovered at Soweto are difficult to interpret because of the disagreement amongst scholars as to how the term "Church" must be understood. In some of the fragments collected by Miss Cawood the word "church" is preceded by designations such as "Nederduitse Gereformeerde", "Methodist", "Roman Catholic", etc. The word "denomination" is also used as a synonym for "church". The document referred to as the New Testament, however, seems to use the word as designating a single entity and, knowing that many of the fragments appeal to this book as authoritative (the technical term used was "God's Word" or "the Word of God"), some scholars argue that only one "church" existed and that the "denominational" designations need not be interpreted as dividing Christians from each other. Until this question has been satisfactorily dealt with it is impossible to gauge the full significance of the Soweto documents.

The Three Fragments:

Turning to a consideration of the documents the following observations may be made with a fair amount of certainty:

- (a) Thomas Didymus seems to have been a Christian who found himself in conflict with the church (or denominations).
- (b) This conflict seems to have arisen because he attached more importance to certain statements in the New Testament than to the resolutions passed by the church and the sociological and political arguments advanced by the "Whites".
- (c) As a result of this conflict he appears to have renounced Christianity.

The evidence for this last observation is not decisive as is the question whether he was of "White" or "non-White" pigmentation. Another possible interpretation is that Thomas Didymus attempted to warn his fellow Christians that there is no connection between Christianity and pigmentation but that they rejected his warning and in turn accused him of being motivated by non-Christian ideologies and myths called "liberalism" and "communism".

(The word "ecumenical" also appears and seems to be regarded as equivalent to the abovementioned terms.)

Remembering that at the present stage of the enquiry no interpretation of the Soweto-documents can be conclusive and that there are fragments which have not yet been decoded successfully, the following fragments seem to lend support to the three observations recorded above, especially when interpreted against the background of the complex series of factors outlined in the second section.

The fragments consist of entries in a note-book:

Fragment 1

"Is the will of God an ideal which may be 'steadily pursued' and which is brought to 'ultimate fruition'? No! No! No! Jesus says: 'I give you a new commandment' (Jn. 13: 34); 'Why do you keep calling me "Lord, Lord" — and never do what I tell you?' (Lk. 6: 46)"

This fragment illustrates:

(a) the conflict between Thomas and the Church (or denomination(s)); the phrase "ultimate fruition" appears in one of the fragments issued by the Church and collected by Miss Cawood, cf. p. 50 of her book.

(b) the importance attached to the words of Jesus. It seems as though Christianity originated with Jesus (also called "Christ", "Lord", "Son of God"). The references "Jn. 13:34" and "Lk. 6:46" are probably references to lost fragments of the book called the New Testament.

It seems as though Thomas argued that what Jesus had said must be obeyed. If this interpretation is correct then some Christians must have argued that he can be obeyed in a less radical way or perhaps that he need not be obeyed at all in certain situations.

This particular aspect of the conflict is reflected in the fragments which follow.

Fragment 2

"We call Jesus God, Lord, Saviour, Redeemer, Prince of Peace, All Sufficient . . . but "it is sensible to avoid (and not court) friction between groups who are utterly different in ways, culture and background. When one tries to mix oil and water by shaking them up together in a bottle an unholy mixture results." (RDM., 19.3.64). With God all things are possible — he can create a universe ex nihilo, become incarnate, heal the sick, be crucified and rise again on the third day, ascend into heaven and come again to judge the quick and the dead but he can't take "white" people and "black" people and "create out of the two a single new humanity in himself, thereby making peace." (Eph. 2:15) without 'an unholy mixture' resulting! Or else they argue that he can but he can't do it now — "ultimate fruition" and all that jazz. This is the crux of the so-called "problem of Christianity and race — can Jesus Christ remove prejudice and misunderstanding, or can't he? Is he the prisoner of sociological factors such as culture, language and economics or is he the Lord?"

This fragment illustrates:

(a) the conflict between Thomas and the Church and the importance he attaches to the New Testament.

(b) the suggestion that Thomas has not rejected Christianity but is attempting to warn his fellow Christians of the need to lose the "prejudice of pigmentation". This warning is formulated rhetorically; that is, he attempts to highlight the contradiction between the claims Christians make on behalf of Jesus Christ and their hesitancy and difficulty when faced with a person who is "non-White".

In the final fragment this warning has either been expressed more stringently or Thomas has emancipated himself from the Christian myth.

Fragment 3

"atheists accept . . . but "Africans don't go to European churches to worship . . . idea in attending . . . where they know very well they are resented . . . break down apartheid . . . steal . . ." (RDM. 19.3.64). Who is Christ using? T. said — "Jesus Christ has failed us. He is no God. He can't even convince his disciples to love one another. We in Africa have all the evidence we need to see that he needn't be taken seriously." Lord! — dare I call him "Lord"? Who has sinned? Is it sin or the discovery of the truth? Blasphemy or revelation?"

This fragment raises the question of Thomas' rejection of Christianity. Unfortunately the beginning of the fragment is somewhat mutilated. It seems as though he is brooding over the fact that some atheists do not suffer from the "prejudice of pigmentation" while many Christians do.

It would help if we knew who "T." was. Is it Thomas himself? Or an atheist friend? Is he "white" or "non-white"?

The questions at the end are difficult to interpret. Are they rhetorical warnings? It seems unlikely from the question "dare I call him 'Lord'?" The questions that follow are not so much challenging as searching, almost wistful.

If Thomas did not finally reject Christianity then after he wrote this fragment something must have happened to give his thinking a new direction. As he stands revealed here he is on the point of no longer believing in Jesus Christ although this causes him anguish and regret.

Concluding Remarks:

These three fragments are all that have so far appeared to throw some light on the extinction of Christianity. Excavations are being conducted at the site in Soweto in the hope that further remains will be unearthed. In the meantime not too much importance must be attached to the "anguish of Thomas Didymus", and that for two reasons.

Firstly, he may simply have been a "crank" who connected the ideas of brotherhood and racial equality with Christianity in a misleading way or someone who took Christ's words too literally and seriously. The fragments have survived from a personal note-book and may have to be understood differently if the context were known. Thomas may, in fact, be defending what he appears to attack.

Secondly, as previously mentioned, our knowledge of this period of history and especially of the history of Christianity is extremely scanty. The question of "pigmentation" may have presented no real problem to the church and the extinction of Christianity may be due to completely different and as yet undiscovered factors. But with these qualifications it must also be said that there is no conflict between the problems which obsessed Thomas and what little we do know about this period of history.

Thus there is no reason why the explanation apparently given by Thomas should not be confirmed, namely, that Jesus Christ was rejected because his followers were unable to overcome the "prejudice of pigmentation". And if some argue that it is unfair on Thomas' part to judge Jesus Christ by his disciples the point may be granted. But it is human so to judge, and Christianity is not the only religion that has been rejected and disappeared because of this all too human judgement.

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Kersfees Afskaf . . . of nie

—Ds. A. G. C. YSSEL

In elke jaar is kersfees die hoogtepunt!

Vir baie kerke is kersfees die hoogtepunt van hulle inisiatief en aktiwiteit. Gedurende die jaar gaan dit maar floutjie-floutjies maar as kersfees aanbreek is daar lewe. Duisende lidmate van sekere kerke wat nooit of min die jaar kerk-toekom, maar met kersfees se middernagdiens en gevoelsopsweping dan kom hulle.

Deur die jaar word dikwels die armes nie na reg versorg nie, maar as kersfees aanbreek dan word daar skielik besef dat daar armes, oues van dae, kindertjies en siekes is om bly te maak. Dan word fondse in die lewe geroep en veldtogte gehou.

Die vraag bly of ons barmhartigheidswerk net om „krismiss” moet groepeer.

Vir die pers is dit ook ’n belangrike tyd. Dan kom die spesiale kersuitgawes en oproepe om aan minderbevoorregtes ook kersfees te gee. Maar wat gebeur gedurende die jaar? Is daar dan Kersfeesfondse, en bekommernis oor die minderbevoorregtes.

Dit lyk dikwels of ons net wanneer dit ons pas ’n vroom baadjie aantrek, omdat „dit nie elke dag krismiss is nie.”

Die ekonomiese lewe in ons land groepeer in ’n groot mate om die kersgebeure. Selfs ander dae wat Christelik gevier word, is verantwoordelik of word gebruik vir ekonomiese opbloei.

Paastyd is ’n goeie voorbeeld. Daarmee gaan gepaard die modegrille en vermaaklikheidsjiere.

Selfs vir die mense van hierdie eeu is die belangrikste tyd in die jaar Kersfees. As kersfees nie daar sou wees nie sou hulle lewe suf en oninteressant wees. Sou die jaar geen klimaks hê nie. Baie kinders se lewe kring net om Kersfees.

Alles werk op na Kersfees en as dit verby is dan verlang jy weer na kersfees. Alles gebeur met so ’n opwaartse klim na kerstyd dat as dit verby is . . . jy moeg terugsak.

Die uitsien na kersfees is nie altyd omdat dit die herdenking is van Christus se geboorte nie . . . nie alles gaan om die dinge met en rondom Kersfees.

Die ergste is dat die christene nie meer uitsien na die wederkoms van Christus nie . . . maar na die 25ste Desember wat ’n heidense inhoud gehad het en vandag nog op heidense manier gevier word deur baie lande, volke en mense . . . en snaaks van alles . . . dis nie werklik die geboortedag van Christus nie.

Wel is dit nie altyd verkeerd om fees te vier in die algemeen nie, as alles maar net volgens Gods Woord gaan. Maar nou is dit ook so dat die Kerstyd en kersfees gekenmerk word van veel skande en skokkende dinge.

Let op die sedelike vervlakking in hierdie kerstyd.

Let op die geweldige ontplooiing van die vermaaklikheidswêreld.

Drankpartytjies, van huis tot huis dronkenskap, kleredrag wat onsedelike uitlok en so ontwerp word vir die tyd . . . Danspartye waar mans en vrouens teen mekaar rondloop op die maat van die musiek . . . en ’n uitbroei-plek van gebrekklike kuikens is.

Georganiseerde en ongeorganiseerde vermaaklikheidsmetodes word aangewend om die mense te trek en te stimuleer tot sedeloosheid.

Lees maar die koerante en luister na die radio met kerstyd . . . en merk op hoe hulle besig gehou word met dodesyfers. In plaas van ’n blye fees is daar net begrafnisse.

Dit is amper ’n soort van ’n kompetisie tussen die verskillende lande van die wêreld om te kyk wie het die meeste noodlottige ongelukke.

Al hierdie dinge gebeur omdat die heidene die 25ste Desember as hulle heidense feesdag gevier het en ons daarby wou aansluit as Christene en ’n hopelose mislukking daarvan gemaak het.

Hierdie heidense fees wat die Romeine gevier het ter viering van die laer wordende dag nadat die korste winterdag in die noordelike halfrond verby is, en die Germane se sg. Jool-

fees ter ere van die deurbrekende lig . . . spoel nou nog sy reste uit op die kuste van ons samelewing.

Al hierdie dinge hol ons jaar so uit, en rysmier ons samelewing so . . . dat daar net hol klanke oorbly. Terwyl die jaar gevlug moes wees met (elke Sondag) verwagting van die wederkoms van Christus . . . Hy wat gebore is, gesterf het en opgestaan het uit die dode, opgevaar het na die hemel, en sit aan die regterhand van God, die almagtige Vader, vanwaar hy sal kom om te oordeel die lewende en die dode.

Moet ons hierdie tyd vul met valse vreugde?

Valse vreugde van krismissvader en kersboom, ens.?

Daarentoe sien die Christelike kerk hul weg oop om ’n christelike stempel op die tyd te druk. Om die heidense kultusse te vernuut of te verander.

Hulle het ’n stempel van christelike heid daar op ge-„tjap” met ’n heidense stempel as agtergrond.

Baie kerke is voorstanders daarvan . . . om die dag christelik te vier.

In die Gereformeerde kerke word dit aan die vryheid van die plaaslike kerke oorgelaat om dit te vier of nie.

Maar is dit geslaag?

Pas die 25ste Desember se viering by die Nuwe testamentiese Kerk? Wat het dit te doen met die geboorte van Christus?

Baie dink selfs dat dit werklik die geboortedag van Christus was, wat natuurlik verkeerd is omdat niemand weet op watter dag Christus werklik gebore is nie.

Kan ons verder van die mense verwag om dit christelik te vier?

Kan ons van ons lidmate eis dat die dag geheilig moet word soos ’n sabbat?

Dit is seker vrage waarop duidelikeheid gekry moet word.

Dien ons die Here in Gees en Waarheid as ons godsdienst gereël word deur die heidene en hulle feesdae . . . en nie deur die Woord van die Here nie?

Moet ons nie liewers by die feesdae van die Skrif bly nie?

Moet ons nie liewers die feesdae van die heidene teenstaan nie inplaas daarvan om dit oor te neem en te vernuut nie?

Wat sou gebeur as die Woordverkondiging aansluit by die heidene en die heidene nie by die Woord nie?

Dikwels word Handeling 17:15-34 (Paulus in Athene. Sy rede op die Areopagus) gebruik om die standpunt te regverdig as sou ons rede hê om in ons prediking aan te sluit by die heidene of hulle praktyke. Maar die verklaring is nie geregverdig nie.

Waar kom kersfees vandaan?
Die woord „kersfees” kom blykbaar van die gedagte van „fees by Kerslig”. Die Engelse woord „Christmas” kom van die latynse uitdrukking „Christes Masse” wat in Engels beteken . . . „Christ’s Mass.”

Die New Consolidated Encyclopedie (2) sê die volgende van Kersfees se oorsprong en ontwikkeling:

“In the first few centuries of Christianity, there was no uniform celebration of the birth of Christ, because the exact date was unknown. Churches variously celebrated the event on January 2, March 25 or 28, April 18 or 19, and May 20. The adoption of December 25 was decreed by Bishop Liberius of Rome in 354. This date was probably chosen because it coincided with the pagan festival of the winter solstice. The Romans observed Saturnalia the feast of their god Saturn, between December 17 and December 24. The Germans, Gauls, and Britons celebrated Brumalia on December 25. The Norsemen held Yule feast between December 25 and January 6. Many of the customs of these festivals became a part of Christmas. In the eastern part

of the Christian world, festivities similar to these of Christmas were observed on January 6, or Epiphany, which commemorates the baptisms of Christ.

In the middle Ages, the Church opposed the traces of paganism surviving in the popular Christmas customs, and created special Christmas Masses to be performed at midnight, daybreak, and morning. The Church also introduced nativity plays, Christmas carols, and manger songs. During the Restoration period in England, the Puritans were so opposed to merrymaking that they passed a law in 1659 forbidding the observance of Christmas, under penalty of a fiveshilling fine. The Puritans of New England also forbade the celebration of Christmas. Both these repressive measures did not last long. The spirit of Christmas as now celebrated in English-speaking countries may partly be ascribed to Charles Dickens. Several of his writings, particularly “A Christmas Carol”, popularized the festival and gave it an increased jollity.

Die Christelike Encyclopedie (4) sê van kersfees die volgende:—

„KERSTMIS: „Christusfeest” (thans in steeds breder kringen Kerst genoemd) dit wil zegen feest ter herdenking van Christus’ geboorte op 25 dec. Terwijl de kerk van het O. en Gallië en Spanje in het W. dit feest oorspronklik op 6 Jan. vierden, heeft Rome, naar het schijnt met opzet, n.l. ter vervanging van de heidense Natalis Invicti (nl. solis, dit is het geboortefeest van die Onverwonne Zon) de datum op 25 dec. geplaats. Van Rome uit verbreidde het feest zich snel over geheel Italië (reeds ten tijde van Ambrosius was het te Milaan bekend) en de verdere beschaafde wereld. In het O. hield de invoering nauw verband met de strijd tegen de ketterij, inzonderheid het Arianisme. In Klein-Asië zien wij het uitstralen van Cappadocië Gregorius van Nazianze heeft het feest waarschijnlijk in 379 in Constantinopel en Chrysostomus in 386 (of 388) in Antiochië ingevoerd. Egypte volgde ca. 430 Palestina pas in de 7e eeuw. Armenië heeft er nooit iets van willen weten.

„In het W. ontstond in navolging van de pauselijke liturgie het gebruik om op deze dag drie missen op te dragen (de nacht-, dageraad en dagmis). De religieus-kerkelijke viering wordt in het W. gekenmerkt door de accentueering van de historische geboorte in Bethlehemstal, in tegenstelling tot het O., waar de nadruk ligt op de Generatio Filii (de eeuwige geboorte van de Logos, het „Woord” die nog die R.-K. dagmis beheerst.

„Voor het Ger. Protestantisme vormde het kerstfeest gedurende de 16e en 17e eeuw een probleem. Fel afkerig van de verwereldlijking (het eten, drinken en spelen, waartoe de viering in brede kringen was ontaard) besloot de synode van Dordrecht in 1574 alleen de Zondag te vieren en het volk tot afschaffing van het kerstfeest te vermanen. Over Christus’ geboorte zou dan op de zondag voor 25 dec. worden gepreekd. Later is dit besluit weer ingetrokken. Alleen in Utrecht werd onder invloed der Voetianen en in de geest van de synode van 1618, die zich tegen de kerstviering had uitgesproken, het verbod weer tijdelijk van kracht. Ook in Geneve is het een tijdlang verboden geweest. In England verwierp de puritein Calderwood in 1623 alle feesten, maar vooral het kerstfeest (zijn werk werd nog in 1700 herdrukt). Na hevige strijd tussen Puriteinen en Episcopalen werd het kerstfeest in 1644 bij Parlementsbesluit geannuleerd. Karel II heeft het in 1660 weer in ere hersteld.

„Christelike kerstviering blijft ook in het heden een probleem. Een compromis voldoet niet en volstaat niet. Alleen in verwerping van de mens en het menselijk kunnen en onvoorwaardelijke erkenning van Christus als Kyrios, de Heer, is feestviering in Chr. stijl mogelijk, dit wil zé, zonder openlik of clandestien aan de wereld cijns te betalen.”

Die Christendom vier die geboorte van Christus in die nag van 24 tot 25 Desember. Astronome en geskiedenisnavorsers, ook diegene wat hulle met die kerkgeskiedenis besig hou, is dit ewenwel eens dat die 25ste Desember van die jaar Nul nie die juiste datum van Christus se geboorte is nie — nog die jaar nog die dag. Die bepaling van die datum is toe te skrywe aan misgissings en rekenfoute wat die Skithiese monnik Dionysius Exiguus begaan het. Hy het in Rome gewoon en is in die jaar 533 gelas om die begin van die nuwe jaartelling te bepaal. Daarby het hy die jaar Nul vergeet, wat tussen die jaar 1 v.Chr. en die jaar 1 n.Chr. ingeskuif moes geword het. Voorts het hy ook nie rekening gehou met die vier jaar waarin die Romeinse Keiser Augustus onder sy eintlike naam Octavianus geregeer het nie.

Die christen moet as hy die dinge weet, kom tot heroriëntering van sy houding teenoor kersfees.

Dit bly ’n ope vraag of ons heidense gebruike of praktyke moet vernuut.

Die Woord moet in elk geval kom . . . radikaal en soos ’n vuur.

Dit mag nie sonder appél kom nie.

Die diens aan God bring skeiding.

Sou dit vergesogd wees om te dink daaraan dat kersfees afskaf moet word? Dat die herdenking van die geboortedag van Christus liewers elke Sondag moet geskied en nie op die 25ste Desember nie?

Die Sinode van Dordrecht het in 1574 besluit om die „Gereformeerdes” te vra om net Sondag as christelike feesdag te gedenk en nie mee te doen aan kersfees nie. Die besluit is na ’n tyd weer opgehef.

Ek glo tog dat elke Sondag daar geleentheid is vir die verkondiging van Christus se geboorte, sterwe, opstanding, hemelvaart, die uitstorting van die Gees en Sy wederkoms.

As **A. Kuijper** beweer dat sonder die kerklike feesdae die dankbare herinnering aan die wondere van ons behoudenis sal afneem, dan het die suiwer verkondiging van die Woord elke Sondag nie meer sy krag en plek nie.

Deur die verkondiging van die Woord en werking van die Gees word ons geloof versterk en ons behoudenis in Christus bevestig.

Daarom sal dit goed wees as ons ons besin in die Christelike kerk en van owerheidsweë (wat kersfees in vele lande as openbare vakansiedag uitgeroep het) of ons nog die 25ste Desember moet vier en of ons dit nie moet afskaf nie.

Die heilshistorie het sy voortgang en die heilsweldade bly sonder dat dit nodig is om heidense feeste te vernuut.

Laat ons die Here in Gees en Waarheid dien.

Ds. A. G. C. Yssel is predikant van die Gereformeerde Kerk, Louis Trichardt.

PRO VERITATE

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"PRO-EXISTENCE — CHRISTIAN VOICES IN EAST GERMANY"

PAPERS EDITED BY ELISABETH ADLER

(London, SCM, 1964, pp. 136.
75 cents in England)

As the preface of this book suggests, a Christian living in a country whose government is openly opposed to Christianity, seemingly can present only one of two faces to the rest of the world: either that of the hero or martyr to the faith who feels it incumbent on himself to resist atheistic Marxism in all its manifestations or that of the person who by acceptance of conditions and life in East Germany is accused of having compromised his faith. The collected articles, studies and sermons that follow in the book constitute a repudiation of this over simplified and basically untrue alternative. The writers are trying not to measure their condition by the old norms and values, but are endeavouring to meet life as they find it and still believe that Christ is Lord even of the new distasteful situation. The above alternatives are in fact outlined only on the basis of the Western view point. Are the East German Christians to continue to judge their situation on the basis of a 'Western outlook' or are they to seek to understand it on new terms from within? They are grappling again with Jesus' answer to the Pharisees: "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's."

FALSE ALTERNATIVES

These false alternative judgements on Christians are not only used of those in Communist countries, they are common everywhere though with different criteria of judgement attached. Most of us have known of groups of Christians who practise an exclusivism in order not to compromise with the evils of a materialist secular civilisation. Are they heroes of the faith or 'head in the sand' unrealists? Does the Christian who is fully involved in materialist pursuits or in politics in a secular environment, compromise his faith? Are we not all of us involved in a process of rediscovery of what our Christian faith is all about in terms of our real meeting with life?

In this collection of writings, we do not read about East Germans; but we as it were, listen to them as they grapple with the meaning of their faith. We are moved to listen humbly and not in judgement on their apparent acquiescence in their form of government, as they search more deeply after the meaning of Christ's injunction to 'love our enemies', 'to do good to those that hate us' and to learn to forgive unlimitedly. They explore what it means that Jesus was neighbour to us.

In a feeling description of the present Christian's antipathies towards the state in his article on 'The Church's duty towards the State', the writer outlines the possibility of a new attitude and asks why in all their fighting, they never seem 'to fight for the crucified Lord, and for the permission to love.' When this happens and when the people feel grief and not spite and arrogance towards their State and yet still endure suffering, then it will at last be a suffering that makes sense — a suffering for the right reason and not simply because they were a sort of 5th column for Dr. Adenauer!

In a mission address to students, the writer of 'Jesus Christ, God of the Godless,' tries to arrive at a positive understanding of atheism. Jesus went amongst the godless people of his own time and he continues to come amongst godless people today. It is the Christian's duty to proclaim that he is there, but not to lay down how these 'godless' must react to Christ's presence? Expectation of pious conformity is perhaps one of the Christian's greatest weakness!

HONEST SELF-EXAMINATION

Each article is imbued with its own note of realism emanating from a humble acknowledgement of what the church really is, and not what for centuries it has fallen into the habit of imagining itself to be. This is why I found reading this book so refreshing

and such an inspiration. One wonders humbly whether the Church does not have to be forced into a humiliating position before it will subject itself to honest self-examination? Could our churches for instance share in the following indictments that come from the pen of an East German Christian? ... "The world may be angry with us; but perhaps this is not because we preach the Cross or the Imitation of Christ, but because of our schoolmasterly Pharisaism. We preach love when we ourselves are loveless. We preach the need for repentance when we ourselves are unrepentant. We preach the humility of the Cross when, for our own part, we are full of self-assertion. We may one day have cause to regret that we did not love the world more fervently." What would such questions mean for us in terms of our statements on the 'race problem' or on our white fear of being swamped by 'heathenism' or 'paganism' as we call it. Is God Lord of the pagans too, as he is Lord over the communists?

THEIR HOPE IN CHRIST

Over and over again one can either sense the influence of Bonhoeffer on their thinking or there is explicit reference to what he wrote of 'the world come of age.' His was a relevant teaching for a Christian world that had lost its way and was trying to find itself again. As one reads, one is continually confronted with those East Germans awareness of the Gospel's relevance to their situation in their daring to take Christ's words at face value. They question their supposedly Christian values and attitudes and dare to pose disturbing questions to themselves. Is their only hope in a change of Government or reunion with West Germany? What is their hope in Christ? Is a church which 'complains about the present and agonises about the future' not failing to sing the praises of its Lord to the world? Instead of constantly reproving the world, they ask, "And might not the present condition of the world be evidence enough to suggest that there must be very few redeemed Christians in it?" After an exposition of — "therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow" comes this statement — "This is a liberating message. And the only people who understand what salvation through God means are those who live by it. Why then do we not try it for once?" In their concern for their world they say, "Intercession wipes away the barriers between us and the world. We approach God in solidarity with the world, guilty and sinful like everyone else.

"Again, intercession preserves us from the danger of setting ourselves up as judges over the world. You cannot be judge and defending counsel at one and the same time."

One feels in all this the bastions of traditionalism being shaken and one is excited by the possibility of what can really happen in the power of the spirit when Christians commit themselves to living by faith!

This collection of papers and articles deserves to be read by all who would learn what faith is in existential encounter.

E.M.

BOEKAANKONDIGING

- (1) „Wie Beset Hierdie Bedreigde Huis" — J. C. G. Kotzé. Kosmo Uitgewery (Edms.) Bpk., Pleinstraat, Stellenbosch. — R2.70.
- (2) „As Opsieners Aangestel" — Prof. Dr. J. C. G. Kotzé. Kosmo Uitgewery (Edms.) Bpk., Pleinstraat, Stellenbosch — Hardeband 70c, Slapband 50c.
- (3) "The Biblical Concept of Messianism and Messianism in Southern Africa" — Dr. Marie-Louise Martin, Morija Sesuto Book Dept., P.O. Box 12, Morija, Basutoland. — R1.50.

Menings van Lesers

KERSFEES-KERMIS

Geagte Redaksie,

As ons die woord Kersfees hoor, dan dink ons aan hierdie fees, met sy mooi boodskap uit die Woord van God, waarvan ons lees in Lukas 2 waarin die blye boodskap van die oorweldigende vreugdevolle tyding van die geboorte van JESUS CHRISTUS aan ons bekend gemaak word. Ons lees daar in die verse van daardie hoofstuk, dat die engel vir die herders sê: „Moenie vrees nie, want kyk, ek bring julle 'n goeie tyding van groot blydschap wat vir die hele volk sal wees, dat vir julle vandag in die stad van Dawid gebore is die Saligmaker wat CHRISTUS die HERE is. En skielik was daar saam met die engel 'n menigte van die hemelse leërske wat GOD prys en sê: „Eer aan GOD in die hoogste hemele en vrede op aarde in die mense 'n welbehag'."

Kersfees, fees van vreugde, blydschap en vreugde? Die engele het gesing tot lof van GOD, HOM geprys met dankbare vreugde. Ja GOD self is ook 'n GOD van vreugde want HY het aan ons gegee die groot LIG van alle ligte, en die duisternis van ons weggeeneem. Watter groot vreugde as ons hierdie Kersfees die geboorte van GOD SY SEUN mag herdenk, ja nie alleen ons nie, maar die hele wêreld, blydschap vir alle volke.

KERMIS

Kersfees van 1964, staan voor die deur. In die groot stede en dorpe staan op die winkelveters oral te lees, die geskrewe letters van „Happy Christmas" of „Geseënde Kersfees". Hierdie God-onterende handelsleuse word met graagte gebruik deur die groot fabrikant, of die kleinhandelsman om sy wins op te stoot. Musiek van slegte gehalte, vuurwerke, feeshoedjies, drank, kortom alles moet bydra om die kersfees-stemming te verhoog. Drankwinkels versier hul bottels met die mooi papier om dit te verkoop met die geseënde kersfeesleuse daarop geplak. Ja, Kersfees nader, kersfeespartytjies word gereël vir kantore, werkwinkels, bouerye, bedrywe, ja vir alle werkers. Nie een sal wil agterbly nie, want Kersfees moet gevier word. Kersfees met vreugde... ja maar nie ter ere van God nie. Kersfees van die wêreld wat ontaard in kermis, die offer aan die drankgod. Hierdie kermis wat aan die wêreld vreugde gee, maar in wese die prooi is van die satan wat met sy onheilige kloue sy haatlike greep werp en die mens tot misdaad aanvoer, onsedelikeit, ontug, geweldpleging, moord en owerspel, verbrokelede gesinne en die volksmoraal vernietig.

KERSFEES IN DIE MAATSKAPPY

Hoe sal ons kersfees vier, wat maak ons, as ons uitgenooi word na die drank-kersfees? Sal ons Kermis vier of Kersfees? Watter antwoord gee u? Sal u antwoord wees: „Ek het nie verskoning nie, want wat sal my werkgewers sê as hy my nie daar sien nie, of wat sal my vriende sê as hulle my mis op daardie partytjie, of..." Ja ons kan nog baie vrae stel, en so deurgaang. Laat ons egter net een diep ernstige vraag stel, net hierdie vraag: „Hoe sal u Kersfees vier, in u gesin, in u omgewing, en in die maatskappy waar u as werker staan. U, wat lid is van Christus se kerk, u na wie daar oënsien word, as 'n gelowige, u wat miskien ouderling of diaken is in u kerk, u wat miskien 'n gewone werker is, wat moontlik baas, voorman of leidinggewend, ja ook direkteur van u bedryf of fabriek is?" Ook u wat 'n hoë posisie in die staatsdiens, of die sosiale lewe beklee? Sal u antwoord positief wees? Sal u 'n heilige „nee" kan sê, as die wêreld „ja" van u vra? Dan, ja dan sal u Kersfees kan vier, dan sal die blydschap en dankbaarheid ook in u hart jubel, van eer aan God in die hoogste hemele want my Saligmaker Christus die Here het ook vir my gekom, en ek het vrede in my siel gevind. Dan mag ons as Christenwerkers wat in die maatskaplike lewe

staan iets positiefs kan laat sien aan ons medewerkers van die vreugdevolle tyding, van vrede op aarde, maar bo al ook in ons siel blydschap en vrede. Dankbaarheid tot God, omdat Hy Sy Seun aan ons geskenk het, dankbaarheid omdat die Lig van alle ligte opgegaan het, in 'n wêreld waarin ons lewe, ook in hierdie jaar 1964, dankbaarheid, blydschap vir ons almal, ja vir alle volke, en daarom mag ons hart meejubel met die Psalmidiger van,

„Ons sal U Naam met dank-erkenntnis prys
te midden van die feestlike skare
Jerusalem ek loof om jou altare
die tofgeluid wat tot Gods eer verrys."
J.J.S.

VOLUNTARY SERVICE OVERSEAS

(Continued from page 5)

Englishman within forty miles. He had spent his time organizing the digging of an immense anti-hippo ditch to keep the hippopotamuses from the Kagera River jetty at the plots where the refugees were growing vegetables and teaching the Watutsi boys English, using French as the medium of instruction. Then came the appalling massacres in Ruanda and in four days and nights, when he never went to bed, he had another five thousand refugees to look after. By the time I saw him his flock had increased to about 20,000. He had to help him five African clerks, for whom he had a great admiration, and thirty porters. I have rarely seen anyone look so over-worked, but he absolutely refused to take a holiday. He seemed to have to do everything, (incidentally I might mention that he had already delivered ten children, being called in only when things were going badly!) I could well understand him when he said to me, "I love these people; I really love them."

Every week he sent two hundred refugees off by lorry to another camp, 120 miles off, also in the sole charge of a volunteer of nineteen, where they were settled on the land. He was a very different person, and by some extraordinary stroke of good fortune Voluntary Service Overseas had put the right boy in the right place. He was exactly of the type of the old-fashioned Colonial Civil Servant. The astonishing thing was that somehow he had, at his age, become the "father" of thousands. Wherever I went with him, the people ran out of their huts and greeted him. He found himself having to settle the most intricate disputes between husbands and wives. Every week he had a session with the Works Department to decide where the next batch should be settled and where new huts should be built. Not long before I saw him he had given himself a few days very well deserved leave in the neighbouring town of Fort Portal, but it was reported that pigmies from the Ruwenzori Mountains were intending to raid his camp, and the police asked him to return to it. In the event, no raid materialised and he spent a quiet Christmas in the middle of his enormous family.

A New Understanding

I have no doubt that many of these boys and girls and young men and women are doing extremely useful work. They learn an immense amount themselves. And I can say from my own experience that the effect on the schools from which they come is quite remarkable. The horizon of the school is suddenly widened.

If, as seems inevitable, the relations between the richer and more stable countries and those just entering on independence is going to be one of the most difficult of world problems, the part to be played by these volunteers in giving Britain a better understanding of the nature of the problem may prove to be the most valuable contribution of their generation.

Prof. R. Birley, ex-headmaster of Eton, is visiting professor of education at the University of the Witwatersrand and has been intimately involved in Voluntary Service Overseas since its inception.