

PRO

VERITATE

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CHRISTEN WEES IN HIERDIE LAND

PROF. DR. A. VAN SELMS

III. Heilige Gees, werk in ons harte

Aangesien geloof nie maar net teoretiese kennis is nie, maar ook en veral lewenspraktyk, is die geloof in die Heilige Gees, wat ons met die kerk van alle eeue bely, voor alles en bo alles die aanroeping van die Heilige Gees. Sonder gebed is die geloof dood. Die gebed by uitstek is die gebed om die Heilige Gees. Luk. 11:13: „ . . . hoeveel te meer sal die hemelse Vader die Heilige Gees gee aan die wat Hom bid?”

As ons wil bid om die gawe van die Heilige Gees, mag ons put uit die skat van die kerk. As ons dan tradisioneel wil wees, hier is 'n eerbiedwaardige tradisie. Duisend jaar gelede het die kerk die Luitynse himne **Veni Creator Spiritus** as die aanroeping van die Heilige Gees by uitstek aanvaar; meer as vier eeue gelede het Luther dit in die taal van sy volk oorgesit; Luther se bewerking is in die Nederlands vertaal, en uit die Nederlandse gesangeboek het dit in die Afrikaanse gekom: Gesang 147, wat die titel dra „**Pinksterbede van Luther**”. As ons wil weet en ervaar wat die geloof in die Heilige Gees beteken, kan ons dus niks beters doen nie as om daardie gesang met 'n biddende gemoed te volg.

Heil'ge Gees, werk in ons harte!

Dit veronderstel dat ons ons harte oopstel vir die werking van die Heilige Gees. Ons stel ons hart tot sy beskikking, soos 'n mens die deur van sy huis oopgooi vir 'n geëerde gas en daarmee sy hele huis tot sy beskikking stel. Dis maar 'n nederige woning, soos die stal van Bethlehem, maar dit staan in sy geheel ter beskikking van die goddelike Gas, wat tegelyk Vreemdeling en Vriend is. Daar is geen kamer in ons hart wat ons vir Hom wil sluit nie. Ons gee onself geheel oor aan Hom met die bede: „Here, wat wil U hê moet ek doen?”

Die gesag van die Heilige Gees is dus vir ons, wat om sy werk in ons harte bid, 'n volstreekte gesag. Geen binding aan eie begeertes, geen outoriteit van mense of menslike groeperings kan ooit bo die gesag van die Heilige

Gees uitgaan nie. Ons eie belange sowel as die belange van gesin, maaskappy, staat en kerk weeg nie op teen die gewig van die gesag van die Heilige Gees nie. Want die Heilige Gees is God, *(Vervolg op bladsy 2)*

SILENT WITNESSES — STONES CRYING OUT

Luke 19:40 — “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out”.

DR. C. J. LABUSCHAGNE

One thing is certain: Nothing whatsoever can forbid the proclamation of the Kingship of God in this world. No power will ever be able to silence the voices of those proclaiming “The Lord is King!” No force, no authority, no person whatsoever can prevent that there will always be messengers (sent by God Himself) telling this world “The Lord is King”. For God, the Creator and Redeemer has revealed Himself as the sole Ruler and King of this world.

If men were to keep silence, there would always be God's heavens which, as Psalm 19 states: „are telling the glory of God”. And, if men were silent — the Almighty God could even call upon the mute and dumb stones to proclaim this truth. This is what John the Baptist meant, when he told the arrogant Jews: “I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham”. This is what Jesus wanted to make absolutely clear when he said: “I tell you, if these (i.e. the disciples) were silent, the very stones would cry out”.

God does not depend on human

beings alone for the proclamation of his Kingship. Man has no monopoly, no exclusive control or exercise of the proclamation of this truth, to do as he sees fit, and to keep silent about it if that suits him better. “If these were silent, the very stones would cry out”. Yes, God can use the stones as his witnesses.

NO CHOICE

But, we learn from the Bible that from the beginning He called upon man to be the witness of his Revelation. It was to man that He *(Continued on page 4)*

Christen wees in hierdie land

(Vervolg van bladsy 1)

en God is eindeloos meer as die wêreld.

Bring deur u genadegoed . . . Alles, wat die Heilige Gees as die hoë Besoeker in ons onwaardige woning bring, is genadegoed. Dit is goed, want dit is God wat dit gee, en „elke goeie gif en elke volmaakte gawe daal van bo af neer, van die Vader van die ligte” (Jak. 1:17). En dit is genade: dit moet altyd weer gevra en altyd weer ontvang word. Ons het dit nie, ons kry dit. Die pinksterbede is dus nie maar net 'n bede op die pinksterfees nie, maar die hele lewe moet een pinksterfees word.

Lig in donker. Dit is donker in ons lewenswoning; dit is net die Vader van die ligte wat deur die werk van die Heilige Gees lig in ons harte bring. Uit onself het ons geen insig of deursig nie. Menslike kennis en menslike redenering is rond-tas in die donker. 'n Lewensleer kan nie op menslike wysheid of wetenskap gebou word nie — ook nie op die biologie nie — maar moet van God ontvang word: „Here, wat wil U hê moet ek doen?”

Troos in smarte. Vrees en teleurstelling beheers die menslike lewe, wanneer dit net 'n menslike lewe is. Ons is besorg oor die toekoms, ons laat ons op die loop jaag deur sombere voorspellings, ons vrees dat die chaos sal losbars — totdat ons ons oorgee aan die leiding van Gods Gees, en ervaar dat, hoewel „die hele skepping tesame sug en tesame in barensnood is tot nou toe”, „vir hulle wat God liefhet, alles ten goede meewerk” (Rom. 9:22, 28). Om ons toekoms te verseker, is maar net een ding nodig, naamlik die liefde tot God, wat die liefde tot die naaste insluit.

Laat ons hart ontvlam in gloed! Nou is dit klaar met die kille liefdeloosheid, wat altyd die keersy van die vrees is. Nou wyk die koudheid uit die verhoudings van mense onderling, nou kom daar 'n warm liefde vir almal wat God op ons pad bring. Nou is ons geen priester of Leviet meer, wat in kille vrees aan die magtelose gewonde verbygaan nie, nou kan ons niks

anders as die barmhartige Samaritaan wees en in weerwil van gevare 'n helpende hand bied nie.

By die ligglans van u strale. Die Heilige Gees bring lig, die insig dat die liefde die hoogste lewenswet is. Geen persoonlike, geen nasionale selfhandhawing kan die vervulling van hierdie hoogste lewenswet wees nie. „Want elkeen wat sy lewe wil red, sal dit verloor” (Matth. 16:25). As God liefde is, 'n liefde wat vlees en bloed geword het in Sy Seun wat selfs die kruisdood aanvaar het, dan is dit duidelik dat alles wat met daardie selfverloëning, met daardie selfopoffering in stryd is, geen stand in sy skepping kan hou nie.

. . . vind die mens sy Vader weer. As ons die vreugde ken, om agter ons lewe en hierdie wêreld die Vader te vind, dan verdwyn die vrees. „Daar is geen vrees in die liefde nie” (I Joh. 4:18). Ons sien in ons medemense, vir wie ons so bang is, die kinders van die Vader; hulle is ons broers. As ons hulle as 'n broer tegemoet tree, sal hulle dan van hul kant hulle ook as ons broers gedra? Al sou dit nie so wees nie, dit is nie die ergste nie. Die ergste vir ons is om geen kind van God te wees nie, geen broer van ons broers nie.

Klink die loflied vir die Heer oor die aarde in alle tale. Daar is geen beperkings in die gemeenskap met ons medemense, wat ons gegee word deur die werking van die Heilige Gees nie. Die liefde omspan die hele wêreld en alle volke. Die tale mag verskillend wees, maar die liefdedaad spreek vir almal 'n verstaanbare taal. Geen volk is uitgesluit van die wêreldomvattende liefde wat die Vader in Christus verwerklik het nie. „Wat God rein gemaak het, mag jy nie onheilig ag nie” (Hand. 10:15). In elke mens kan ons niks anders as die broeder, of toekomstige broeder, in Christus sien nie.

Halleluja, U sy eer, U sy eer. Halleluja! Hoe heerlijk is dit om selfvergete die lof van God te sing! En hoe armsalig is die bestaan van die mens, wat altyd weer sy persoonlike of groepsbelange tussen hom en hierdie verrukking laat kom!

Heil'ge Lig en Gids ten lewe. Hierdie Heilige Lig wat ook in die verborge skuilhoeke van ons hart skyn en die skadukante van ons

hart laat verdwyn, is ons enigste Gids ten lewe: anders is die lewe 'n dwaaltog na die dood, 'n Mens, 'n gemeenskap, 'n volk, 'n kerk, wat 'n ander gids volg as die Heilige Gees, is tot ondergang gedoem. Sonder die liefde sterf die lewe. Hoe kan dit ook anders, waar die lewe uit die hand van die Hoogste Liefde kom? Hy wat sonder die liefde wil lewe, saag die tak af waarop hy sit.

Bring ons deur die Woord tesaam! Die Woord, die Evangelie van Jesus Christus, is die saambindende krag tussen mense en volke. Die Evangelie is nie maar net 'n stuk geskiedenis wat aan 'n ander vertel kan word nie, dit is „'n krag van God tot redding vir elkeen wat glo, eerste vir die Jood en ook vir die Griek” (Rom. 1:16). Omdat dit 'n krag is, wil dit hom in dae openbaar; „die geloof sonder die werke is dood” (Jak. 2:26). Ons kan die Evangelie nie onder die heidene verkondig sonder om deur ons dae te bewys dat ons met hulle saamgebind wil word deur daardie Evangelie nie. 'n Kerk wat daardie gemeenskap met die bekeerlinge uit die heidendom weier omdat hy homself „blank” wil hou, is geen kerk nie. Dit is inderdaad, soos onlangs van hooggeplaaste kant uitgespreek is, „'n natuurlike blanke kerk” en die woord „natuurlik” staan in Jak. 3:15 tussen die woord „aards” en die woord „duiwels”!

Trooster, ons van God gegewe, leer ons ken die Vadersnaam! Weer sien ons dat die ontdekking van God as Vader, en in Hom van ons medemense as broers, die ware troos is, die bevryding van ang, die pad na die vreugde van gemeenskapsbeleving met almal wat saam met ons die Heilige Gees aanroep.

Maak ons vry van elke dwaling, vry van alle fabelleer. Ons is van nature onvry, gebind deur ons sondige vertrouwe op eie krag, deur ons sondige selfverheffing bo ander. Ons glo aan die fabeltjies van 'n besondere voortreffelijkheid wat ons van ander sou onderskei, aan die fabeltjies van 'n roeping tot selfhandhawing, terwyl Hy wat ons roep, die kruis op Hom geneem het en tot ons gesê het: „As iemand agter My aan wil kom, moet hy homself verloën en sy kruis opneem en My volg.” Vir die Christen geld

(Vervolg op bladsy 4)

Dr. H. F. Verwoerd †

Suid-Afrika is in al sy bevolkings- en politieke skakerings die diepste leed aangedoen deur die skokkende sluipmoord op dr. H. F. Verwoerd. In 'n droewige tyd soos hierdie, in die skaduwee van die ramp wat Suid-Afrika getref het, is die feit dat 'n staatsman van die formaat van dr. Verwoerd vanselfsprekend ook sy felle teenstanders gehad het, gans onbelangrik en is die hele volk in rou gedompel — 'n rou wat in die harte van almal des te smartliker is omdat dit gepaard gaan met 'n onuitspreeklike afsku oor die wyse waarop 'n groot staatsman en 'n eminente volksleier om die lewe gebring is. So totaal is die hele bevolking van Suid-Afrika se distansiëring van hierdie gruweldaad, dat dit slegs onvampas sou wees as wie ook al na aanleiding daarvan teenoor wie ook al 'n

woord oor „gesindhede” sou laat val. Een en almal is verslae, verbyster. Dit is ons almal se leed. Ook PRO VERITATE wil langs hierdie weg 'n beskeie kransie lê op die graf van wyle dr. Verwoerd, met die wete dat al ons lesers hulle vereenselwig met ons onvoorwaardelike huldeblyk aan 'n man wat sy hoë, Godgegewe roeping vervul het met 'n waardigheid wat die respek van Suid-Afrika en van die hele wêreld afgedwing het en met 'n oortuiging wat vir sy volgelinge sowel as vir sy teenstanders bewonderenswaardig en inspirerend was. Teenoor mev. Verwoerd, haar kinders en kleinkinders, spreek ons ons diepe meegevoel uit en ons vertrou hulle biddend toe aan die Vader van ontferminge en die God van alle vertroosting.

A Prayer for our Country

(Offered at one of the Reef Study Groups of the Christian Institute on the evening of Dr. Verwoerd's assassination, 6th September, 1966.)

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts:

Heaven and earth are full of thy glory:

Show us in even this day's deeds thy glory,

That we may bless thee and discern thy rule of justice, mercy and peace wherever it may be found in our land.

We pray for the family

that sorrows the death of its head: that widow and children may know the blessedness thy son promised those who mourn.

We pray for the party

that must choose a new leader not only for itself but for us all. Give them thy wisdom.

We pray for ourselves

Cleanse our memories from all that for whatever cause would distort the past; Empower us now to face again thy challenge to repent and believe thy word;

Stab our minds with the memory of how we have wronged and hurt our neighbours; Forgive us the hardness of heart and the lack of prayer that has made our land a place where one of us could think that such a deed would serve thy purpose;

Calm our fears: for in striking here through the guards of privilege and power, death has shown us each what he will do to us all;

Then free and gladden our hearts with the knowledge that by thy grace and for the sake of thy son thou dost make the death of even the least of his brethren the death of death.

Have mercy upon the dead: have mercy upon the killer:

have mercy upon us all, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Christen wees in hierdie land

(Vervolg van bladsy 2)

die voorskrif van die apostel: „In nederigheid moet die een die ander hoër ag as homself.“

Trou aan Christus, onse Heer. Die trou aan Christus is die trou aan Hom wat die gemeenskap van die heilige engele verlaat het om met die sondaars te wees, die trou aan Hom wat „'n vriend van tollenaars en sondaars“ genoem is. Die trou aan Christus kan dieselfde smaad, in moderne terme oorgebring, op ons bring. Maar dis nie so erg nie. Daar is iets wat veel erger, wat die allerergste is, en dit word aangedui in Jak. 4:4: „Wie dan 'n vriend van die wêreld wil wees, word 'n vyand van God.“

Tot ons laaste asemhaling: As ons so die leiding van die Heilige Gees volg, kan dit wees dat daardie laaste asemhaling nie so lank op hom sal laat wag nie. Maar, soos 'n digter gesê het: Hy wat bereid is om te sterf, is altyd vry. En die Here sê in Luk. 12:4: „Moenie vrees vir die wat die liggaam doodmaak en daarna niks meer kan doen nie.“ Watter kostelike humor! „Daarna niks meer nie“. So iets word „galgehumor“ genoem. Dit is die humor van die kruis.

Inderdaad humor: want as daardie magte hulle laste krag aan ons liggaam verspil het, sing ons opnuut en vir ewig:

**Halleluja. U sy eer!
U sy eer, Hallelujal**

Silent Witnesses — Stones Crying out

(Continued from page 1)

revealed his authority and Kingship in the world. It was man to whom God assigned the task of proclaiming: The Lord is King. It was man, and not the animals or the trees or the stones whom God called upon to proclaim this truth in the world. It was God's will, as it was his will that his Son should appear in the world in human form.

Man has no choice — he is compelled to speak, for God has

spoken. Man has no excuse when God sends him. Naturally men always tried to excuse themselves: e.g. when Moses was sent to Israel in Egypt, he complained that he could not speak fluently — then God told him: “Who has made man's mouth? Is it not I, the Lord?” When Jeremiah was called, he complained that he was too young — the Lord told him: “Do not say ‘I am only a youth’, for all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak”. God's call to man is inescapable — the prophet Amos understood this when he said: “The lion has roared, who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy?” John and Peter knew this when they told the authorities who charged them not to speak or talk in the name of Jesus: “We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard”. Paul knew this when he wrote to the Corinthians “I believed and so I spoke, we too believe, and so we speak”, and elsewhere: “For necessity is laid upon me; woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!” Luther knew this when he told his accusers: “Here I stand, there is no alternative, so help me God”.

ADVERSARIES

Fortunately there have always been and there will always be people, who realize the seriousness of God's command and who speak out fearlessly and openly and proclaim the Lordship and Kingship of God. On the other hand, throughout the history of the revelation and throughout the history of the Christian Church, time and again these witnesses were forbidden to speak by some authority or other (cf. Amos!) This is exactly what happened when Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a colt (which was the privilege of kings and princes) and when his disciples hailed Him as the King sent by God.

This occasion, of which St. Luke tells us all about, in the 19th chapter of his Gospel, marks the climax in the history of the revelation of God's Kingship. On the one hand the whole multitude of the disciples spontaneously proclaim the Kingship of Jesus. On the other hand the rulers of this world try to silence these witnesses. On the one hand: “Hosanna!

Blessed be the King who comes in the name of the Lord”, on the other hand: “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”

On the one hand, the voices of God's witnesses on earth join with the voices of the angels in heaven proclaiming his Kingship. The call of the disciples “peace in heaven and glory in the highest” is in perfect harmony with the song of the angels “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men” at the birth of Jesus. On the other hand the politically minded Pharisees join forces with antichristian powers on earth forbidding the proclamation of God's Kingship. And the cry of the Pharisees “Teacher, rebuke your disciples” is the forerunner of the shouting by the masses “Away with this man! Crucify him!”

For a few moments only did Jesus enjoy this homage to which He is rightly entitled, and which was a foretaste of his sitting on his heavenly throne. Then, like a curse from Hell, the words of the Pharisees struck his ears: “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!” He is still on earth, among the antichristian powers — Stop this immediately! This is not the time for demonstrations like this! Jesus ought to know if the Roman authorities should hear about this, there would be serious trouble. From a political point of view this demonstration is foolish — Rebuke your disciples!

Did Jesus listen to their logical arguments? Did He argue? Did He rebuke his disciples? No, thank God, He did not! In fact, He spoke these prophetic words: “**I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out!**”

SILENT WITNESSES

As I said, these words bring home to us that nothing can ever stop the proclamation of his Kingship. (Should man be silent, God could call upon the stones).

However, Jesus meant to say something more, something which is true at all times and for all generations to come. By referring to stones crying out, He reminds them of the words spoken by the prophet Habakkuk: “For the stone will cry out from the wall”. These stones are particular

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Editorial:

*The Christian Council:***MORE SUPPORT FROM MEMBER CHURCHES
IMPERATIVE.**

Together with a large number of churches and Christians in our country who gratefully and with approval recognise the positive ecumenical endeavour of the Christian Council, there are still, unfortunately, many ministers and members whose church enjoys membership of the Council, who are either completely ignorant as regards the nature and scope of this endeavour or do not realise its necessity and do not, therefore, offer the Council adequate support.

There should obviously, of course, be no doubt as to the necessity for the existence of a powerful Ecumenical Council of Churches in South Africa. The present regrettable spirit of divisiveness rife in numerous church bodies is tragic enough in itself not to be aggravated by indifference, unwillingness or even resistance against the establishment of closer co-operation. Apart from the ineluctable injunction of Scripture, we are, by the mere situation in which the Church of Christ in South Africa finds itself placed to-day, confronted by the need for a greater fusion of forces in order to bring about a more co-ordinated and unanimous action. Many reasons can be postulated for this plea from one side, but we mention only the following:

- There is the need for launching a far more unanimous and incisive action on the mission front by an elimination of all sinful competition between the churches.
- There is the possibility of lending far greater joint support to numerous African churches, as a witness also to the communal alliance with one another of all churches which profess belief in Jesus as Lord and Saviour.
- There is the need for the education and equipment of the members of all churches to help them realise what it means to be Christians in this country at this time.
- There is the vocation to serve the state, amidst all the problems with which we are struggling, through a common Christian and, where necessary, prophetic witness.

The large number of churches and missionary societies (twenty-eight) who are members of the Council, together with the fact that the previous consent of so many churches has to be obtained in all important matters of principle or policy, are hampering elements which gravely impair the effectiveness of joint action especially in situations of crisis. This will have to be changed. Another factor which has a detrimental influence is the inadequate support offered by ministers and members of churches which are affiliated to the Council. In this regard the Council and its supporting bodies are faced with a tremendous task in the nurturing of a powerful ecumenical consciousness both on local and national levels. This will only become possible if an increasing number of Christians, on the basis of a real inner conviction, agree to do everything jointly except that which God through his Word and Spirit enjoins us to undertake separately. When this

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Inleidingsartikel:

*Die Christenraad:***MEER STEUN VAN LIDKERKE ONONTBEERLIK.**

Naas 'n groot aantal kerke en Christene in ons land wat met dankbaarheid en instemming kennis neem van die positiewe ekumeniese arbeid van die Christenraad, is daar ongelukkig nog talle leraars en lidmate wie se kerk lid is van die Raad wat òf in totale onkunde verkeer oor die aard en omvang van dié werk òf die noodsaaklikheid daarvan nie insien en dus nie genoegsame steun aan die Raad verleen nie.

Oor die noodsaaklikheid dat daar 'n sterk Eku-
meniese Raad van Kerke in Suid-Afrika behoort te wees, behoort daar beslis geen verskil van mening te wees nie. Die huidige ongelukkige verdeeldheid in talle kerkformasies is in sigself tragies genoeg dat dit nie nog verder vererger moet word deur onverskilligheid, onwil of selfs teëkanting om nouer same-
werking te probeer bewerkstellig nie. Naas die onontwykbare opdrag van die Skrif spreek ook verder die noodsaak in die situasie waarin die Kerk van Jesus Christus hom in Suid-Afrika vandag bevind van groter samesnoering van kragte ten einde 'n meer gekoördineerde en eendragtige optrede te bewerkstellig. Baie redes kan aangevoer word in hierdie beroep van ons kant, maar ons noem net die volgende:

- Daar is die noodsaak om deur die uitskakeling van alle sondige kompetisie tussen kerke 'n baie kragtiger eenheidsaksie op die sendingfront te loods.
- Daar is die geleentheid om groter gesamentlike steun aan talle Bantokerke te verleen ook as getuienis van die gemeenskaplike verbondenheid aan mekaar van alle kerke wat Jesus as Here en Saligmaker bely.
- Daar is die behoefte aan skoling en toerusting van lidmate van alle kerke om hulle te help om te begryp wat dit beteken om Christen te wees in hierdie tyd in hierdie land.
- Daar is die roeping om met 'n gemeenskaplike Christelike en, waar nodig, 'n profetiese getuienis die staat te dien in al die vraagstukke waarmee ons worstel.

Die groot aantal (aght-en-twintig) kerke en sendinggenootskappe wat lede is van die Raad, gepaard met die feit dat in alle belangrike beginsel-
of beleidsake eers die voorafgaande goedkeuring van soveel kerke verkry moet word, is 'n stremmende faktor wat die effektiwiteit van gemeenskaplike optrede veral in krisissituasies, ernstig verswak. Hierin moet daar verandering kom. 'n Ander faktor wat nadelig inwerk is die ongenoegsame steun wat leraars sowel as lidmate gee wie se kerke met die Raad geaffilieer is. In dié opsig wag daar 'n groot trek vir die Raad en sy ondersteunende liggame om 'n kragtiger ekumeniese bewussyn op plaaslike sowel as op nasionale vlak te kweek. Dit is alleen moontlik as meer en meer Christene uit innerlike oortuiging aanvaar om alles saam te doen behalwe wat God deur sy Woord en Gees ons gebied om afsonderlik te onderneem. Wanneer dit gebeur, sal nie alleen die Christelike getuienis oneindig versterk word nie maar sal ook die leiding wat van die

(Vervolg op bladsy 12)

Silent Witnesses — Stones Crying out

(Continued from page 4)

stones, these are the stones with which Jerusalem was built. These very stones will cry out against you, will cry out from the ruins of the destroyed city.

This is exactly what happened! The whole multitude proclaiming his Kingship and calling "Hosanna" was silenced effectively, what is more, the whole multitude shortly afterwards shouted "Away with this man!" Within forty years the city and temple were laid waste by the Romans and the stones **did** cry out from the ruins.

Jesus knew if his witnesses were silent, there would inevitably follow a disaster, ruins, stones crying out. That is why, in the very next verse, we are told that Jesus wept over the city when He drew near and saw it. That is why He spoke the following words: "If only you had known, on this great day, the way that leads to peace! But no; it is hidden from your sight. For a time will come upon you, when your enemies will set up siege-works against you; they will encircle you and hem you in at every point; they will bring you to the ground, you and your children within your walls, and not leave you one stone standing on another, because you did not recognize God's moment when it came."

Yes, they did not recognize God's moment! Because of this

they silenced God's witnesses. And silent witnesses spell disaster, ruins.

GODS MOMENT

This is true at all times. This is true in our time as well! I am no pessimist, nor even a self-styled prophet of doom. These prophetic words are not my words, they are God's words. God tells us, inhabitants of this fair land of ours, generation of the 20th century: "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out!" There is no word more realistic and more relevant to our times than this word.

Let all authorities, state authorities and church authorities, who try to silence the witness of the true church, by intimidation or expulsion, by shouting down, by cries like "cobbler stick to your last" directed to ministers of the church, let them be warned — they will never be able to silence God's witnesses!

The time is long overdue for us, Christians to ask ourselves some searching questions. Far too long we have left things as they were, and to develop as they are. The Lord has given us his eternal Word — the Word of Truth and Life. What have we done with this Word? Did we cause this Word to go out into the world to bring truth and life to those who seek truth and life? Or did we hide this Word in our own hearts?

The Lord has revealed to us his Kingship through Jesus Christ — a Kingship which is founded on

righteousness and love and peace. Have we faithfully proclaimed this Kingship of Christ? Or have we been satisfied to know that this Kingship would bring to us "a pie in the sky by and by when we die" as Communism tells us?

Has the Kingdom of God a real meaning for us in this life, in this world, now and here?

For what have we been waiting all the time? For God's moment? Well, it is always God's moment! We only have to recognize it. When it comes to the proclaiming of the Kingship of Christ, there is no such thing as "in season" or "out of season". Our witness, the witness of the Church, your and my witness is always "in season".

Let us take these words of Christ very seriously: "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out". Surely, none of us wants the stones to cry out! Why are we so silent? There is one way only in which a disaster can be averted — the fearless witness of the true Church. Then we know, God will not leave his children in the lurch.

Let us, for God's sake and for our own sake, heed St. Paul's charge to Timothy: "Preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, exhort, be unailing in patience and in teaching". This charge comes to every single one of us!

Be mindful, I pray you, of Jesus' warning "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stone would cry out".

BANTU PROPHETS OR CHRIST'S EVANGELS

THE REV. DANIE VAN ZYL

In 1872 an African minister of the Wesleyan Church resigned from his pastoral charge and together with other dissatisfied men he formed a new church. The minister's name was Mangena M. Mokone and the Church was called the "Ethiopian Church". The African Independent Church Movement or as some call it, the Bantu Separatist Church Movement had found a leader and a programme.

In the two decades preceding Mokone's secession minor break-aways from mission churches had taken place, the more notable being that of the Hermon Congregation of the Paris Mission in Basutoland, Nehemiah Tile's secession from the Wesleyan Mission Church in 1882 and a secession from the London

Missionary Society in Bechuanaland in 1885. But these were all sporadic movements with no cohesion or corporate conscience.

THE ETHIOPIAN MOVEMENT

The establishment of the Ethiopian Church brought a new spirit onto the South African Christian

scene. Mokone had heard missionaries read Psalm 68:31: "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hand unto God". To Mokone this meant an African Church under African control.

The church had as programme "Africa for Africans", with a corresponding aversion to White domination. Biblical reference to "Ethiopia" in the Bible were thought to give antiquity to the claim of the African's church and to sanction this claim. The name "Ethiopian" also referred to the

particular country under an African Christian King, Abyssinia or Ethiopia, which symbolised their own hopes.

In 1886 another Wesleyan minister, Dwane broke with his church after a quarrel on how money which he had collected overseas should be used. Dwane was a very gifted speaker and a forceful personality. He took over the leadership of the Ethiopian Church.

THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Mokone and Dwane had both heard of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in America. This negro church was founded in 1816 by Richard Allen, a negro minister who had withdrawn from the White Methodist Church on account of the colour bar. In 1896 the Ethiopian Church decided at a conference in Pretoria to seek affiliation to the A.M.E. Church. Dwane was sent to America to attain this affiliation. When he returned to South Africa Dwane persuaded all the Ethiopian leaders to follow him into the A.M.E. fold.

Dwane requested the Transvaal Government to officially recognise the A.M.E. Church. This was granted. Dwane had even bigger plans. He asked Cecil Rhodes for the right to extend his church into Rhodesia and the Zambezi and he planned to collect funds to be sent to King Menelik of Abyssinia to extend mission work to the Sudan and Egypt. This programme of the A.M.E. Church caused a great upheaval in the mission churches.

As a result of a visit to South Africa of the American A.M.E. Bishop, the Rev. H. M. Turner, the membership of the church grew to over 10,000. Bishop Turner ordained 65 ministers and consecrated Dwane as Assistant Bishop.

Dwane later left the A.M.E. Church, joined the Church of the Province and later became Provincial of the Order of Ethiopia. The founding of this order by the Church of the Province was a serious attempt to meet the problem the Ethiopian movement created for the mission churches.

In 1904 one of the A.M.E. Church leaders, S. J. Brander, broke away from the A.M.E. Church on the grounds that it took all moneys collected for the church in Africa to America. Brander founded his

own church which was called the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion.

But the Ethiopian Movement did not retain its cohesion. Other break-aways and secessions took place from the mission churches and newly established Ethiopian churches splintered into smaller groups.

THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT

Parallel to the Ethiopian Movement with its programme "Africa for Africans" another movement of churches developed. The Rev. Bengt Sundkler calls this group of churches the "Zionist" type churches.

The initial force behind the movement was an apocalyptic church in the U.S.A., called the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, founded in 1896 by John Alexander Dowie. The church in its teaching emphasized divine healing, triune immersion in baptism and the nearness of the second coming of the Lord. A leader of this church, Daniel Bryant, baptized the first group of 27 Africans in Johannesburg on May 8, 1904. P. L. le Roux, a White man, also joined the church. In 1908 three missionaries arrived from the U.S.A. and taught the "Pentecost" or filling with the Holy Spirit. The Africans of the Zion Church soon all received their Pentecost. They decided to call the church in this new stage "The Zion Apostolic Church".

From this group a whole series of Zionist churches developed. Some of the first break-aways were the following:

(a) Paul Mabilitsa, a member of a prominent chief's clan and best educated of the leaders in the Zion Apostolic Church, founded his own church in 1920, which he called the Christian Apostolic Church in Zion.

(b) A Zulu, Daniel Nkonjane whom Bengt Sundkler described as "the most impressive of the leaders among those who started the Zionist Movement", (in Bantu Prophets in Southern Africa), founded the Christian Catholic Apostolic Holy Spirit Church in Zion. He founded his church between the years 1917-20.

As in the Ethiopian Movement, the Zionist Movement splintered into numerous small churches. The two groups together today number more than 2,200.

CLASSIFICATION OF CHURCHES

The African Independent Churches can thus be classified into the following groups (using Bengt Sundkler's categories):

(a) **The Ethiopian type church.** These churches are those which seceded from White Mission Churches, mainly on racial grounds, or those which seceded from African Churches who had earlier broken away from the Mission Churches. The latter secessions took place mainly on grounds of struggles for prestige and power, internal dissension and personal ambition. The Ethiopian Churches have to a large extent retained the organisational structure and teaching of the churches from whom they seceded. But during the long period of separation from the Mission Churches both the structure and the teaching have been modified by African emphasis on certain things.

Classification into one group should however not create the impression that the Ethiopian Churches act as a cohesive group. In fact there has been deep and far reaching enmity between many of these churches, evidence of which can be found in the number of drawn out cases of litigation.

(b) **The Zionist type church.** To this main type of Independent Church belong those churches who call themselves by the name "Zion", "Pentecostal", or "Faith". As we have seen, they have their historical roots in Zion City, Illinois, U.S.A., but ideologically they claim their link with Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

These churches have had very little contact with the mission churches and have attracted the heathen rather than Christians from the Mission Churches. This has led to many Zionists becoming nativistic and syncretistic in their theological outlook. Healing, speaking with tongues, purification rites and taboos are the main expressions of their faith. Their attitude to Whites differ from that of the Ethiopians. They dislike the Whites on grounds of their being "ritually unclean", but hold others, like John Alexander Dowie in high esteem.

Ethiopian mythology expresses the desire of the African for a Christian African Nation under a strong African leader, often thought to be the "Lion of Judah, King of Kings", referring to the King of

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Bantu Prophets or Christ's Evangels

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Abyssinia. The Zionist mythology on the other hand leads the thoughts of members directly to the Holy land. There is a desire to acquire the most truly Biblical name possible for their church. The name gives status to the church. The long and elaborate names are therefore of extreme importance to them. Sundkler points out that "referring to 'Apostles', 'Jerusalem' and 'Zion' all in one name (e.g. Apostolic Jerusalem Church in Zion of South Africa) they secure for their church a supernatural bond with these holy guarantees and they signify a charter showing the spiritual strength of the Church". The central figure in the New Testament to Zionists becomes John the Baptist, and the African prophets' apostolic succession comes from John the Baptist and the river Jordan, the River of Life.

In recent years a third classification has been added to the two above, namely:

(c) **Messianic churches.** These churches are closer to the Zionist type than the Ethiopian type, but at the same time differ from both in important points.

Dr. M. L. Martin in her book "The Biblical concept of Messianism and Messianism in Southern Africa" defines Messianic groups as those:

- (i) in which the prophet and new Moses becomes a saviour, a black Christ and takes more and more the place of Jesus Christ, so that Christ appears in the background;
- (ii) in which an inspired prophet or political leader promises liberation from suffering and slavery; political freedom, material prosperity and health become so important and central, that salvation is expected from the prophet's or leader's activity; and
- (iii) in which eschatological ideas of the coming bliss have been secularized and a blazing hope of an imminent and complete transformation of all things fill the faithful.

Dr. Martin points out that the upsurge of Zionism in South Africa is a "vast prophetic movement,

which so easily turns messianic". The more important and best known Messianic Churches in South Africa are Isaiah Shembe's Nazarite Church and Edward Lekganyane's Zion Christian Church.

By the above definition it can be seen that the Messianic groups have retained the structure of the Christian Church but have replaced Jesus Christ by another Messiah or Saviour. It is therefore not possible to recognise them as Christian Churches while they retain this character.

GROWTH

The growth of the African Independent Churches has been phenomenal. In 1913 there were some 30 churches and in 1918 about 76. In 1932 the number had grown to 320 and in 1948 to about 8800. In 1955 1,286 churches had applied for State recognition and in 1960 Sundkler records the number as 2,200. This number is still higher in 1966, but there is no way in which we can make an accurate estimate.

Membership grew from 761,000 or 9.6% of the total African population in 1946 to 2,188,303 or 20.1% of the total African population in 1960. When we compare the growth of the African Independent Churches with that of the Methodist Church of South Africa, the largest Mission Church in South Africa, the true significance of the African Independent Churches strikes us. The Independent Churches grew from 9.6% of the total African population in 1946 to 20.1% in 1960. The Methodist Church's African membership was 12.9% of the total African population in 1946 and 12.0% in 1960.

ATTEMPTS AT CO-OPERATION

Overagainst the continuing fissure of the African Independent Churches there have been attempts to bring these churches closer together. As far back as 1919 the Rev. E. L. Mkize, an Anglican minister of the Diocese of Pretoria convened a conference for Church Union. The conference agreed "that the doctrine of one United Native Church is essential". This matter was taken over by the African National Congress. In 1931 an appeal was made to the effect that a United National Church of Africa should be formed, to which any

Independent Church with a minimum of 250 members could affiliate. The appeal was dated December 16, 1931. But the response was poor and nothing came of it.

In 1939 an influential group of African intellectuals launched a Church Union programme. One of these leaders was Dr. J. Nhlapo of the A.M.E. Church. A United African Church was said to be "an urgent practical necessity". In more recent times the Rev. Dimba started an association of Independent Churches. Neither came to anything.

Numerous smaller attempts were also made. But where national appeals and programmes failed, smaller local attempts had even less success. But at present there is again a general desire that churches should seek closer co-operation.

THE INDEPENDENT CHURCHES AND THE CHRISTIAN INSTITUTE

In December 1964 a small group of ministers from the African Independent Churches approached the Director of the Christian Institute requesting the Christian Institute to assist the Independent Churches with theological education. A meeting of African Independent Church leaders was arranged for the 17th to 21st January 1965. The purpose of this conference was to gauge the general feeling of the leaders on what they felt the Christian Institute could do to help them. Approximately 75 leaders attended.

Among others, the following resolutions were taken:

"that we _____ this day give full trust in God and His people, that we must love each other as brothers in Christ irrespective of colour, race or creed and to share together those sufferings which He shed on the Cross, with the other nations."

"We give our fullest confidence to the Christian Institute of Southern Africa and invite its Director, the Rev. C. F. B. Naudé to guide us through every difficulty in the Christian field . . ."

"We sincerely appeal to the bigger churches, i.e. integrated churches which we left as early as 1888 that we are their work and we are still looking to their help by all means and kinds".

This conference made it possible for the Christian Institute to plan

possible means of assistance. On the 25th March, 1965, the Board of Management of the Christian Institute decided to accept the challenge and to assist the African Independent Churches wherever possible. By taking this decision the Christian Institute expressed its conviction that the African Independent Church Movement should be evaluated in positive terms and that the Christian Institute should regard the Movement as a whole, though not each and every particular manifestation of it, as something inspired by God, and therefore in need of both God's mercy and God's judgement.

The immediate need of the Independent Churches appeared to be that of theological education for ministers and prospective ministers. The need can be sub-divided into three fields:

- (a) There are the ministers who already have Congregations under them but who have never received any training for the ministry. Such ministers wish to receive training by means of a correspondence course.
- (b) Ministers further feel that Ministers' Refresher Courses, run along similar lines to those courses offered by the Christian Council of South Africa, could do much to assist ministers in their task of shepherding their flocks.
- (c) Ministers who are able and prospective ministers should be afforded the opportunity to attend a theological seminary for full theological training.

NEED FOR AN ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT CHURCHES

It became clear that if the work was to proceed with the support of the leaders of the Independent Churches some association of Independent Churches would have had to be formed to form a channel through which the Christian Institute could offer assistance. The formation of such an association was also important in that this would give the Independent Churches the opportunity of involving themselves in the work and of directing it.

(Next month we will discuss the founding of such an association, its growth and its positive programme for assisting the Independent Churches).

IN DEFENCE OF A POP THEOLOGIAN

THE REV. JAMES E. MOULDER

A few months ago Beatle John Lennon told a London reporter:

"Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. I needn't argue about that: I'm right and I will be proved right. We're more popular than Jesus Christ now; I don't know which will go first — rock 'n' roll or Christianity. Jesus was all right, but his disciples were thick and ordinary. It's them twisting it that ruins it for me". (*Time*, 12 August, 1966).

These words seem to have got under some peoples' skin. The reason is not hard to find — these words are all too true. In fact most of this is simply the Gospel truth. Let me try to explain.

Beatle John is making three claims: **first**, Christianity will shrink and vanish; **second**, the Beatles are more popular than Jesus Christ now; and **third**, Jesus' disciples were thick and ordinary and have twisted his image. Considering these three claims, I accept the first two as irrefutable; the third is rather vague but nevertheless makes an important point.

THE END OF CHRISTIAN AUTHORITY

The observation that we live in what has come to be called a 'post Christian era' is not a new one. In fact it has become so obvious that even theologians acknowledge that we are "proceeding towards a time of no religion at all: men as they are now simply cannot be religious any more." (D. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Fontana, p. 91). Explaining why this change has come about and why a contemporary person cannot be "religious" any more will take too long, but that it has come about is hardly a debating point. Thus Dr. Wm. Nicol describes this change as follows:

"Stated in the plainest non-theological terms it is a question of our consciousness of God. People are asking quite seriously whether religion makes sense these days. Is prayer efficacious? Do we require God? Are we not getting on quite nicely without Him? . . . True, personal religion is being considered unnecessary and irrelevant by the children and grand-children of a generation that looked upon God as their greatest riches". (*Christian Res-*

ponsibility towards Areas of Rapid Social Change, Johannesburg, 1959, pp. 16-17).

In South Africa the full impact of this change has not yet been noticed because we are still a "church-going" nation. But those who have eyes and use them will have noticed that this will soon not be true and that the numerical increases in church membership is a decrease when compared with the rate at which the population of the country is growing. Also growing is the conviction that the notion of a "something I know not what" **up, out or down there, beyond or behind** what happens in the world is intellectually superfluous, emotionally dispensible and morally intolerable. (J. A. T. Robinson's *The New Reformation?* SCM, 1965, pp. 106-122 analyses each of these three convictions).

Perhaps most significant of all is that by and large contemporary persons are a-religious rather than anti-religious — that is, they are indifferent rather than hostile both to the so-called 'New' and the 'Old' theologies. This however is not to say that contemporary persons are free of ideological and irrational commitments, nor that Utopia is round the corner. The position is far more complex than that and is a trend or process rather than a static state of affairs. Thus especially in Africa, there are still many — perhaps a majority — who have a "religious" commitment — to Animism, Christianity, Communism, Islam, Nationalism of some kind or other, and so on. But the **trend** in Africa as elsewhere is away from these commitments — in the long run, even away from the hot-house nationalisms and racialisms which produces so many of the steamed-up antics going on everywhere on our continent and not least of all south of the Limpopo.

This, far too roughly, is the background to Beatle John's claim that Christianity will shrink and vanish. And the crucial point in this background — is **not** that Christianity, as has often happened in the past, is being confronted by competing religions such as Islam and ideologies such as Communism and Nationalism; it is simply that an increasing number of people are in-

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different to the abovementioned confrontation and competition because they are increasingly suspicious of the claims of **any** and **every** religion and ideological "ism".

Nevertheless, although I am sure that Christianity will shrink, I do not agree with Beatle John that it will vanish; rather it will continue to become fossilized in the way it has been doing for a long time. Also — and this is, for me at any rate, a sign of hope — there is just a chance that the gospel of Jesus, stripped of the religious and metaphysical rubbish it has accumulated over the centuries may survive the shrinking and fossilizing of Christianity.

NOT TOP OF THE POPS

But if the gospel of Jesus is to survive the coming "death" or fossilization of Christianity into a religion one of the things his followers will have to do is recognise the truth of Beatle John's claim that his group is "more popular than Jesus Christ now". Unless Jesus' followers understand that this is simply the Gospel truth there is no chance of them understanding the rest of his life and teaching because the simple truth is that Jesus has never been at the top of the hit-parade; he has never been popular except when he has been turned into a religious figure and worshipped instead of being obeyed.

The Old Testament passage which he himself used as a paradigm for his life and work does not say anything about popularity. On the contrary it stresses that

"He had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;

and as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not." (Isaiah 52: 13 — 53, 12).

And the Gospels confirm this "image" of Jesus. At Nazareth he "fell foul" of his home congregation and observed that "a prophet will always be held in honour except in his home town, and among his kinsmen and family" (Mark 6:1-6). People also said that he was "out of his mind" (Mark 3:21) and the religious leaders of his day thought that he was either a Beelzebubite,

a fellow-traveller or a tool in the hands of Beelzebub (Mark 3:22-30). John's Gospel presents the same picture: some regarded him as "possessed" and "raving" (10:19-21); they tried to stone him (10:31); he had to go into hiding (12:36). And then there is his crucifixion — hardly a sign of his popularity!

Beatle John has understated his case: it is not simply that Jesus is no longer popular — he never has been!

OUR IMAGE OF JESUS MUST CHANGE

I come now to the last and vaguest of the three claims — namely, that Jesus' disciples were thick and ordinary and have "twisted" and "ruined" his image.

The first part of the claim is not very important. Although Jesus has had and still has some disciples who are intelligent and extraordinary (whatever that means!) the majority of us have been and are what Beatle John calls "thick and ordinary". This was certainly the case in first century Corinth:

"My brothers, think what sort of people you are, whom God has called. Few of you are men of wisdom, by any human standard; few are powerful or highly born". (1 Corinthians 1:26).

The second part of the claim — namely, that Jesus' image has been "twisted" and/or "ruined" — is however a very serious charge. Unfortunately Beatle John is extremely vague at this point: Who, I would like to know, twisted and ruined what? In fact the contrast he draws between Jesus and his disciples suggests that Beatle John has himself a somewhat distorted image of him in seeming to regard him as "extraordinary" and whatever is the opposite of "thick". But — and with all due respect to both trad and pop theologians — whether or not Jesus was "extraordinary" or "unique" is one of those futile discussions in which he himself did not engage but which has come down the centuries to twist and ruin his image.

Thus while hoping that the Beatles' image — and bank-balance! — will be able to stand the shock of another excursion into theology so that Beatle John can give us his reasons for regarding the image of Jesus as twisted and ruined, I will in the meantime try to explain why some of us who are trying to be followers of his agree that there are important differences between what

may be called the "Jesus of the Gospels" and the trad and pop pictures of him.

One such difference has already been mentioned: Jesus, far from being popular amongst his contemporaries, was misunderstood, despised, humiliated and rejected by them. Some argue however that this is still so and that both Jesus and his Church are misunderstood, despised, rejected and sometimes even humiliated in this "time of no religion at all". And on the face of it such an argument seems to be supported by the evidence presented in favour of Beatle John's claim that Christianity is shrinking and will vanish. But — and this is important — do contemporary persons reject Christianity for the same reasons as Jesus' contemporaries rejected him? Do contemporary persons find the Church's life and teaching offensive for the same reasons as Jesus' contemporaries found him offensive? I do not think so; and the crucial difference is that whereas Jesus' contemporaries were shocked and scandalized by the **pertinence** of his teaching and behaviour regarding such institutions as the Sabbath, such political problems as the Roman occupation of the Near East and such persons as the Samaritans, contemporary persons are shocked and scandalized by the subtle and sophisticated **irrelevance** of his Church's teaching and behaviour regarding present institutions, persons and socio-economic and political problems.

Allow me to illustrate this point: **firstly**, with the help of a letter which recently appeared in **The Times** following a series of articles on the present state of the Church of England entitled "Christians Asleep"; and **secondly**, with a quotation from D. Bonhoeffer.

Here is the letter:

"I am untrained in the subtleties of theology. The confusions arising from endless dialectical disputations seem to me to be responsible for the growing feeling of frustration with organized religion. The more complex the issue become, the greater the disenchantment.

Ordinary, unsophisticated people recognize the essential simplicity of the Christian faith; to make it a complicated exercise in moral philosophy encourages dissimulation".

But, it may be asked, what exactly does the writer mean when he

contrasts the "subtleties of theology", the "endless dialectical disputations" and the "complicated exercise(s) in moral philosophy" of the Church of England (amongst others!) with the "essential simplicity of the Christian faith"? I am not altogether sure; but I do not think that he means that it is easy to follow Jesus — only simple. Perhaps some words from the outline for a book which Bonhoeffer never wrote because of his death at the hands of a hangman in a Gestapo prison can help us. Although he is probably the most quoted of contemporary theologians — especially in pop circles — the following is seldom quoted or commented on:

"The Church is her true self only when she exists for humanity. As a fresh start she should give away all endowments to the poor and needy. The clergy should live solely on the free-will offerings of their congregations, or possibly engage in some secular calling . . . It is not abstract argument, but concrete example which gives her word emphasis and power . . . This is something we have well-nigh forgotten". — (*Letters and Papers from Prison*, pp. 163-166).

A CHURCH FOR OTHERS?

Let me however be more specific and come nearer home: a growing number of South Africans both "inside" and "outside" the Church are becoming disenchanted with the seemingly endless statements which both denominations and conferences of churches make on what is usually called "the problem of Christianity and race relations". The reasons for this disenchantment are at least twofold:

Firstly, it is a baffling and embarrassing sight to see the followers of him who commanded them to "love your neighbour as yourself" regarding their so-called "black" or "white" neighbours as a "problem"; as the subject of endless dialectical disputations and a complicated exercise in moral philosophy; and

secondly, when one has read one of these statements — whether it comes from the consultation at Cottesloe and Mindolo or from, for example, the Conference of the Methodist Church and the Cape Synod of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk on migratory labour — the only thing that is clear is that there are vast socio-economic and political problems to be resolv-

ed south of the Limpopo. And one also has the suspicion that the people who prepared the statement are trying to pass the buck to the Government rather than doing something themselves.

Now please do not misunderstand me: the majority, if not all, of these problems are the government's responsibility — after all, that is what governments are for; the resolving of socio-economic and political problems. Furthermore these problems are also either perpetuated or created by government policies. I also agree that it would be downright impertinent for the Church to think that she can govern more efficiently than the State and it is the Church's duty both to those who govern and to those who are governed to draw attention to socio-economic and political problems and injustices. But when all this has been said the feeling of embarrassment and the sense of suspicion remains because all that the Church has done is that it has drawn attention to a problem and asked or demanded(!) that something be done about it. Even the governing and the opposition parties do as much — compare, for instance, the reports of the Cottesloe Consultation and the Tomlinson Commission!

In this and in other ways the image of Jesus is being twisted and ruined in South Africa and elsewhere in the world by those of us who are his disciples, charged to "keep safe that which has been entrusted to (us)" (1 Timothy 6:20). In this and in other ways the impression is created that Christianity is an "endless dialectical disputation", a "complicated exercise in moral philosophy", a playing with words in stead of a doing of the Word.

And the only way out of this impasse, as far as I can see, is contained in Bonhoeffer's suggestion. The Church in South Africa must make a fresh start and by the concrete example of giving away all her endowments to the poor and needy demonstrate that she exists for humanity. To take a specific example of what could be done: at Cottesloe the representatives of the seven participating denominations — the Bantu Presbyterian Church, the Church of the Province, the Congregational Union, the Methodist Church, the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, the Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk and the Presbyterian Church — expressed

both appreciation and dissatisfaction with African educational facilities (*Conference Report*, pp. 66-69), agreed that these facilities should be increased (p. 14), and in their final statement requested "any body which may be formed for co-operation in the future" to give its attention, amongst other things, to "the education of the Bantu; the training of non-White leaders for positions of responsibility in all spheres of life; and African literacy and the provision of Christian literature" (p. 77).

Prof. Ben Marais' *The Two Faces of Africa* (Pietermaritzburg, 1964, pp. 22-26) also expresses appreciation and dissatisfaction — although "in higher education the Bantu in the Republic has achieved more than has been achieved anywhere else in Africa", this will not always be so and further advances have been retarded if not made impossible by the decision of the 1954 Act that "the charge on general revenue for African schools (be) frozen at R13 million (per annum) and all future expansion . . . be borne entirely by the African people themselves". He also points out the basic injustice reflected by the 1960-61 figures when R144.57 per "white" pupil was spent in the Cape Province and only R12.46 per African pupil in the Republic generally. Then he draws attention **both** to the cost which will be involved if African educational facilities are increased and education made compulsory **and** the opportunity which exists for the Church to demonstrate her concern for humanity:

"For three million to educate and raise twelve million is a great burden, but in terms of emerging Africa, of human relations and of Christian service a tremendous opportunity". (p. 23).

And so I could continue, quoting the appreciative and the critical views of Christian individuals, denominations and conferences on this very real and highly ambiguous problem of African — and also Asian and Coloured — education. But nowhere do I find any suggestion that the Church should insist that at least the vast majority of her clergy support themselves via a *secular occupation* so that she can give away her endowments and considerable annual income — about R1,420,000 (almost £¼ million) for the Methodist Church alone during the financial year 1964-65

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— for the education and advance to literacy of the so-called “non-white” people of South Africa. Income from the suitable investment of their endowments apart and on the assumption that the Methodist Church is not the richest of the denominations which participated in the Cottesloe Consultation, these seven denominations alone could contribute at least R9 million (£½ million) per annum to the improvement of African educational facilities.

Some such act by the Church will correct the twisted and ruined image of Jesus she so successfully projects and will clearly demonstrate what Christianity is all about — namely, expressing one’s love for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit one has not seen by a practical concern for one’s neighbour whom one sees every day (1 John 4:7-12; 16-21; 3:13-24 and Luke 10:25-37 — amongst other passages).

Again I must ask not to be misunderstood: some such act will **not**

increase the numerical strength of the Church or make Jesus **less** offensive to contemporary South Africans. In fact, it will almost certainly **decrease** the numerical strength of the Church and make **more** South Africans reject Jesus. But at least they will do so for the right reasons — briefly, because they find him and his message offensive and a disturbing challenge to their traditional cultural, political, moral and religious standards. Furthermore it seems as though he would rather be rejected because he is understood to be what he is than worshipped for the wrong reasons — “Why do you keep calling me ‘Lord, Lord’, and never do what I tell you” (Luke 6:46). Also — and we who are trying to follow him must never forget this — he has no time for those who offend others in his name but for the wrong reasons: “If a man is a cause of stumbling to one of these little ones who have faith in me, it would be better for him to have a millstone hung round his neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea”. (Matthew 19:1-9).

There it is then: Beate John has a point when he regards us as “thick and ordinary”. We **are** ordinary and there is no need to be ashamed about that. But we are also so “thick” that we cannot understand the very simple and ordinary things Jesus wants us to do to help people obtain some education, food or a normal family life, and so on. And because of this we have twisted and ruined his image by suggesting that he is really interested in our theological subtleties, our dialectical disputations, our complicated exercises in moral philosophy, our vast endowments and annual incomes. All these things may, in our opinion at any rate, enhance our status and make us more comfortable in our religion but they contribute sweet blow all to what he is doing in the world today.

Thus while their music is banned in South Africa and we have some silence in which to collect our senses let us do so by reflecting on the great deal of truth contained in Beate John’s remarks and — more important — let us read one of the Gospels.

(Continued from page 5)

happens, not only will Christian witness be immeasurably strengthened, but also the guidance issuing from the Christian Council will grow a meaning and power.

A further task awaits the Christian Council — a task which dare never be lost sight of despite all its other ecumenical activities: to continue leaving its doors open to all churches who should really belong to the Council in view of its basis and aims, but who have not taken this step. In this connection we specifically have in mind the three Afrikaans Churches together with the younger churches which grew from them. That they should join as members is imperative, not for the sake of the Council itself and its interests, but because of the need for a more powerful communal witness of the Church of Jesus Christ in South Africa. This we pray with all our heart: that that day may soon dawn.

OUR NEW EDITOR

It is with pleasure that we announce on behalf of the Board of Directors and the Editorial Board that Dr. B. Engelbrecht, assistant editor of our paper, has been appointed editor of *Pro Veritate* as from 1st September. Our previous editor has requested that he be released from his duties on account of the increasing responsibilities entailed by his work in connection with the Christian Institute, which are making it impossible for him to do proper justice to the task of editorship.

The Editorial Committee, apart from a few replacements, will be expanded to include representatives of more denominations and an announcement in this connection will be made in the near future.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the Editorial Board we bid Dr. Engelbrecht a hearty welcome. As ex-editor I thank him for his unselfish and valuable assistance rendered during the last year and invoke upon him God’s richest blessings in the performance of this, for the time being, exacting but also deeply rewarding work. — C. F. B. NAUDÉ, Ex-Editor.

(Vervolg van bladsy 5)

Christenraad uitgaan in krag en betekenis toeneem.

’n Verdere taak wag op die Christenraad — ’n taak wat by al sy ander ekumeniese arbeid nooit uit die oog verloor mag word nie — naamlik om voort te gaan om sy deure oop te hou vir alle kerke wat kragtens sy basis en doelstellinge by die Raad behoort maar nog nie dié stap geneem het nie. Ons dink hier by name aan die drie Afrikaanse Kerke met die jonger kerke wat uit hulle ontstaan het. Hulle toetreding is noodsaaklik, nie ter wille van die Raad en sy belange nie, maar omrede van die noodsaaklikheid van ’n kragtiger eenheidsgetuie van die Kerk van Jesus Christus in Suid-Afrika. Dis die gebed van ons hart dat daardie dag spoedig sal aanbreek.

* * *

ONS NUWE REDAKTEUR

Met groot genoë kondig ons namens die direksie en redaksie van die blad aan dat dr. B. Engelbrecht, die assistent-redakteur van ons blad, as redakteur van *Pro Veritate* aangestel is vanaf 1 September. Die versoek om van sy pligte onthef te word, het gekom van die vorige redakteur wat weens die toenemende verantwoordelikhede wat die arbeid in die Christelike Instituut meebring, sy taak as redakteur nie langer na behore sou kon nakom nie. Die redaksionele komitee sal, benewens ’n paar vervangings, ook uitgebrei word om verteenwoordigers van meer kerklike agtergronde in te sluit en ’n aankondiging in dié verband sal eersdaags geskied.

Namens ons direksie en redaksie roep ons dr. Engelbrecht toe: Hartlik welkom! As oud-redakteur dank ek hom vir sy onselfsugtige en waardevolle hulp in die afgelope jaar verleen en wens hom toe Gods rykste seën in sy, vir hierdie tyd, moeilike maar bevoorregte taak.

— C. F. B. NOUDÉ, Oud-redakteur.

DIE KERK BUITE SUID-AFRIKA

PROF. B. B. KEET

KARL BARTH TAGTIG JAAR OUD

Onder die talryke gelukwensing en waarderinge wat Karl Barth ten deel geval het op sy tagtigste verjaarsdag, was daar ook een van die moderamen van die Hervormde Sinode (Nederland). Daar is met dankbaarheid melding gemaak van die besondere invloed wat Barth in Nederland gehad het op die vorming en ontwikkeling van die teologiese denke aldaar. „Die wyse waarop Barth aan ons telkens opnuut verrassende perspektiewe geopen het vir die verkondiging van Gods Woord en die getuigenis van die Kerk van Christus in die wêreld” so skryf die moderamen, „het ook ons opgeroep om aan ons verantwoordelikheid nuwe gestalte te gee in die arbeid van die Hervormde Sinode en van die sinodale organe”. Daar word verder op gewys dat, hoewel daar in die Hervormde Kerk oor belangrike teologiese vrae verskille van insig met Barth bestaan, dit 'n behoefte van die Hervormde Kerk is om op hierdie dag diepe dankbaarheid aan die tagtigjarige tot uitdrukking te bring vir alles wat hy vir die besinning oor die opdrag van die Kerk van Christus, besonders ook in ekumeniese opsig, gedoen het.

Om by die laaste 'n oomblik stil te staan, haal ons aan wat prof. Bronkhorst in sy inaugurele rede as hoogleraar in die teologiese fakulteit aan die Rykuniversiteit van Utrecht gesê het. Hy het gewys op die direkte beïnvloeding deur Barth van die ekumeniese beweging en die Wêreldraad van Kerke wat daaruit ontstaan het, en hom aangesluit by 'n uitspraak van Visser 't Hooft: „Dank sy Barth het die ekumeniese beweging geleer om die waarheidsvraag ernstig op te neem”.

Volgens prof. Bronkhorst was Barth ook ekumenies deur sy lewenslange, volgehoue strewe om in kontak te bly met alle, ook die vreemdste, stemme in Kerk en Wêreld. Hy was van mening dat die hele teologiese program van Barth van blywende ekumeniese betekenis geag kan word.

EGSKEIDINGSGRONDE

Van belang is 'n rapport van die Kommissie vir Hersiening van die Egskeidingsreg wat deur die Moderamen van die Generale Sinode aanvaar is. Die rapport gaan uit van die standpunt dat die Bybel die huwelik in strekking as onontbindbaar beskou. Maar die wetgewer moet rekening hou met die „hardigheid van hart”. Egskeiding moet dus moontlik wees. Die bestaande gronde vir egskeiding is egter te beperk. Maar ook die praktyk om by onderlinge ooreenstemming egskeiding moontlik te maak, moet nie geduld word nie. Aan die bestaande gronde vir egskeiding moet toegevoeg word: „ander hoogs ernstige feite en/of omstandighede, waarby, egter, gevoeg moet word: „in al hierdie gevalle alleen wanneer grondige ontwrigting van die huwelik aanwesig is.”

Ongeneeslike kranksinnigheid of ongeneeslike liggaamlike siekte moet nie apart as egskeidingsgronde vermeld word nie — hulle kan onder ontwrigting val.

Die Kommissie wys daarop dat sy oorweging nie gerig is op 'n huwelikswetgewing wat alleen vir gelowiges bestem is nie, maar wat moet geld vir almal wat deel uitmaak van die Nederlandse Volk. Dit is die bydrae van die Hervormde Kerk by die hersiening van die wettelike bepalinge wat tans oorweeg word.

DIE POUS WAARSKU SY TEOLOË

In 'n toespraak tot 'n groep teoloë in Rome het die Pous gewaarsku teen bepaalde moderne denkrigtinge in die teologie. Teoloë het wel die volle vryheid van ondersoek en oordeel, maar die grense is deur die leergesag van die kerke getrek. Hy het die uitleg van enkele hedendaagse skrywers oor die leer van die erfsonde onverenigbaar met die katoelike geloofsleer geag. Veral dié skrywers wat uitgaan van die poligenisme nl. die leer dat die menslike geslag van meer as een ouerpaar afstam, het hy veroordeel. Die Pous

sê: „hulle ontken min of meer openlik dat die erfsonde in die eerste plek en in wese die ongehoorsaamheid van een mens, Adam, was. Hierdie opvattinge klop nie met die leer van die Heilige Skrif, die tradisie en die kerklike leergesag nie.”

PROF. HROMADKA EN DIE EVANGELIESE KERK VAN DUITSLAND

Met die Duitse vraag het die kerk in Tsjeggo-Slowakye hom altyd besig gehou, sê die bekende teoloog van die Teologiese Fakulteit in Praag. Hy meen dat dit moeilik sal wees om aan die eenheid van die Evangeliese Kerk van Duitsland vas te hou. „Deur omstandighede waarvoor ons nie beskik nie kon ons nog nie tot 'n gesprek met die Evangeliese Kerke kom nie, hoewel ons uitstekende verbindings met die broeders in die Ooste sowel as in die Weste”. „Op watter gronde uitnodiging wat aan albei dele gestuur is om in Tsjeggo-Slowakye te preek van die hand gewys is, kan ek nie persoonlik oordeel nie”, sê hy. „ons wil graag met hulle spreek, ook as dit nie geskied onder die vlag van die Evangeliese Kerk nie. Ek kan my goed voorstel dat biskop Scharf (hoof van die Evangeliese Kerk) verlang om na Oos-Duitsland terug te kom, maar ons kan nie sonder nader ondersoeking agter hierdie wens staan nie. Die broeders in die Weste moet die probleem van albei kante bekyk”. As aantekening by hierdie berig kan verwys word na die uitspraak van Pastoor Niemöller in 'n geslote kring op Stellenbosch dat die Evangeliese Kerk in Duitsland nie weer verenig sal word voordat Europa self tot eenheid gekom het nie.

LET WEL

Die Redaksie van Pro Veritate verklaar dat hy nie verantwoordelik is vir menings en standpunte wat in enige ander artikel van hierdie blad verskyn as die inleidingsartikels en redaksionele verklarings nie.

HIERVAN EN DAARVAN TWEEMANSKAP NA NEDERLAND

Volgens 'n onlangse berig in **Die Burger** het prof. J. van der Meulen, hoogleraar in die Ekonomie aan die Universiteit van Stellenbosch, die goeie plan opgevat om teen die einde van September in geselskap van ds. J. E. Ntoane, moderator van die N.G. Bantoekekerk in Kaapland, 'n klein propagandaveldtog vir Suid-Afrika in Nederland te gaan voer. Hul voorneme is om in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Leeuwarden en enkele ander plekke vergaderings toe te spreek, en ds. Ntoane sal ook enkele kerkdienste lei, waarvan daar een miskien uitgesaai sal word.

Erasmus kan nie anders as bly voel oor so 'n onderneming nie. Hy het self ook 'n klein bietjie ondervinding van wat dit beteken om vandag voor 'n Europese gehoor 'n goeie woordjie vir Suid-Afrika te doen. Hy voorsien dat die moedige Tweemanskap nie oral 'n aange-name ontvangs te wagte staan nie. Daarom is hy veral ook bly dat ds. Ntoane saamgaan, 'n Swart gesig werk deesdae wonders in Europa — en seer seker in Nederland, waar al wat „neger” is vandag op die hande gedra word.

Is daar iemand wat Suid-Afrika liefhet en wat nie hierdie twee manne alle moontlike sukses met hul sending sal toewens nie? Daar is soveel blinde vooroordeel, daar is soveel onbegryplike onkunde aangaande ons land, dat elke poging van hierdie aard met dankbaarheid verwelkom moet word — en sekerlik wanneer dit onderneem word deur twee manne van hierdie kaliber.

GEMENGDE GEVOELEN

En tog — tog kon Erasmus ook nie help om die berig met gemengde gevoelens te lees nie. Die dankbaarheid wat hy gevoel het, was nie onvermeng nie, en kon nie onvermeng wees nie. Want só eenvoudig is die situasie nou eenmaal nie.

In die eerste plek is ek bevrees (en nou slaan ek maar oor na die eerste persoon) dat die oorgrote meerderheid van ons blanke bevolking hierdie lofwaardige onderneming van prof. Van der Meulen sal interpreteer, nie as 'n pleidooi vir hierdie land en die mense wat daarin woon nie, maar as 'n pleidooi — en 'n gratis pleidooi bowendien — vir die apartheidspolitiek van die

witman in Suid-Afrika. Dit was immers by baie die reaksie na die uitspraak van die Wêreldhof, en dit sal ongetwyfeld ook nou weer die reaksie wees. „Hulle sal vir die Hollanders gaan bewys dat ons reg is: dat ons beleid die enigste moontlike is, dat dit menslik is, en dat dit ook nog christelik is.” So sal daar geredeneer word, en so word dan — sonder dat dit ooit die bedoeling was — die sedelike en maatskaplike gewete van die blanke bevolking nog verder in slaap gesus.

WAAR ONS SKULDIG STAAN

Maar kán 'n mens dan hoegenaamd vandag die pleit voer vir Suid-Afrika sonder om ook outomaties 'n pleidooi vir die apartheidspolitiek te lewer? — So sou meer as een seker wil vra. My antwoord is: Welseker kan dit; maar dan moet die pleiter bereid wees om die moeilike plekke nie te probeer omseil nie. Dan moet hy honderd persent eerlik wees met sy gehoor — veral wanneer dit 'n simpatieke gehoor is — en saam met hulle volmondig erken dat daar vrac is waarop ons as blanke nasie in hierdie land die antwoorde skuldig moet bly; meer nog, dat daar talle dinge op te noem is wat as aanklagte van ernstige aard teen ons ingebring kan word, en waarvoor ons skuldig staan. Ek dink veral aan sekere vorms van maatskaplike onreg wat nie 'n erfenis uit die verlede is nie, maar wat direk voortvloei uit wette wat gedurende die afgelope twintig jaar of wat deur ons parlemente gepasseer is: wette dus, waarvoor ons as blanke Suid-Afrikaners vir die volle honderd persent verantwoordelik is.

Die „denkende deel der natie” in Nederland is bewus van hierdie dinge. Hulle weet meer as wat ons dink. As daar in Holland nog baie onkunde is, dan is daar seer seker ook baie kennis aangaande Suid-Afrika. Daarom staan dit by voorbaat vas dat prof. Van der Meulen en ds. Ntoane by meer as een geleentheid gekonfronteer gaan word met lastige vrae oor lastige onderwerpe. Die Hollanders sal hulle waaragtig geen knolle vir citroene laat verkoop nie. En dit is goed en reg so. Maar dit noop my om te sê dat ek opregte simpatie voel met ons Tweemanskap. En ek kan hulle slegs die openhartigheid, die eerlikheid, en die wysheid van omhoog

toebid wat 'n mens in sulke oomblikke nodig het.

DIE KANSEL

Ten slotte nog net een puntjie, en dit betref die dienste wat deur ds. Ntoane gelei sal word. Ek vra dit met huiwering, maar ek moet dit tog vra: Is dit die bedoeling dat hierdie dienste óók deel vorm van die kampanje vir Suid-Afrika? Uit eerbied teenoor ds. Ntoane en teenoor die amp waarmee hy bekleed is, wil ek volstaan met te sê: ek het die volste vertrouwe dat hy as geordende predikant van die N.G. Kerk sal weet wat hy van die christelike kansel mag verkondig, en wat nie. En ek glo dat hy ook in hierdie opsig eer sal doen aan die kerk wat hy daar in die vreemde gaan verteenwoordig.

As hierdie Tweemanskap na Nederland gaan om die apartheidspolitiek aan die man te probeer bring, dan is hul arbeid by voorbaat nutteloos en uitsigloos. Dan sou hulle bowendien (na die oordeel van Erasmus) verraad pleeg teenoor die groot nie-blanke bevolking van Suid-Afrika. Maar as hulle gaan om die Nederlandse publiek 'n diepere insig te gee in die omvang en aard van ons probleme, dan kan hulle gaan met die versekering dat elke vaderlandliewende Suid-Afrikaner hulle die allerbeste toewens.

'N NUWE TAAK VIR DIE WERKGEMEENSKAP

In bostaande oorwegings vind ek aanleiding om te vra of die Nederlands-Zuid-Afrikaanse Werkgemeenskap (onder wie se auspicië hierdie onderneming sal plaasvind) nie daartoe moet oorgaan om ook 'n taak **na binne** te aanvaar nie. Is dit genoeg dat hierdie organisasie slegs Suid-Afrika se saak **na buite** wil verdedig? Is dit nie net so noodsaaklik dat hierdie Werkgemeenskap met al die krag en invloed waarvoor hy beskik 'n dringende beroep op die volk en regering van Suid-Afrika sal doen om reg te maak wat reggemaak **kan** word en wat reggemaak **moet** word nie? Die aksie na binne lyk my 'n wesenlike en noodsaaklike komplement op die aksie na buite. Ek weet nie hoeveel lede van die Werkgemeenskap ooit 'n oog in **Pro Veritate** slaan nie, maar as sommige van hulle hierdie reëls onder oë mag kry, dan sou ek hulle hierdie gedagte met die meeste klem op die hart wil bind.

Miskien sluit ek dan ook nog by die Werkgemeenskap aan. Maar nie eerder nie! — ERASMIUS.

Stemme uit Nederland oor Reaksie teen Prof. Van Selms

In Nederland is daar nie alleen kennis geneem van die aanval wat daar vanuit 'n sekere politieke kring op die persoon van prof. Van Selms gedoen is ná die verskyning van sy artikel, „Kan ons met vuur speel?” in die Julie-uitgawe van Pro Veritate nie, maar 'n aantal teoloë van die Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam het ook hulle mening daarvoor uitgespreek en vir publikasie aan Pro Veritate gestuur. Die redaksie het dit met groot dankbaarheid ontvang, en om verskeie redes ag ons dit nodig om dit onder die aandag van ons lesers te bring.

Dit is vir ons nodig om te weet hoe Christene met wie die Afrikaanssprekende deel van die Christendom in Suid-Afrika ten nouste verbonde is en wat ons tog ook van 'n afstand af beskou, dink oor die wyse waarop die Christelike getuïenis in ons land gegee en ontvang word.

Die wyse waarop hierdie teoloë hul menings gelug het, is verder vir ons waardevol vanweë die gees van liefde, begryping en simpatie waardeur dit gekenmerk word. Hulle staan nie klaar om of na die een kant of na die ander kant te veroordeel nie. Ons het van hulle veel te leer oor die gesindheid waarin 'n gedagtewisseling oor brandende vraagstukke tussen Christene in 'n Christelike gemeenskap gevoer behoort te word. Hulle besef dit blykbaar beter as ons — nie omdat hulle dit vanself het nie, maar omdat hulle duur „skoolgeld” moes betaal aan die gees van onverdraagsaamheid wat hom soms tussen Christene laat geld.

Voorts lyk dit vir ons na 'n vanselfsprekende plig wat op die redaksie van Pro Veritate rus om wanneer een van sy medewerkers, wat tegelyk wêreldbekendheid geniet as behoudende Skrifverklaarder en wat hom as sodanig in die geselskap van betroubare voorgangers van die Kerk in wyer sin bevind, so neergehaal en in twyfelagtige lig gestel word soos dit met prof. Van Selms gebeur het, ten minste in die kring van ons lesers te sorg dat dinge wat deur gesaghebbendes tot sy verweer gesê word, nie verswyg word nie. Ons kan slegs maar hoop dat dit op een of ander wyse óók sal deurdring tot die kring en persone wat met soveel venyn gereageer het. 'n Apologie van daardie kant sou 'n verheugende teken van opregtheid gewees het. Maar selfs al sou dit uitbly . . . as daar dan maar in stilte 'n verandering van hart plaasvind! Want die kringe en mense in ons land wat die politieke religie bedryf, skakel ander graag uit. Predikante, teoloë, ander gelowiges wat nie „konformeër” nie, kom of op die spoor tereg of in die kamp van die „vyande van die volk”. En tog is daardie mense en kringe wat so ywerig hulle uitkakelingsproses voltrek, besig om hulleself uit te skakel uit die gemeenskap wat Christus deur Sy Woord en Gees om Hom heen stig.

As hulle dit maar besef! Met die ver-

oordelinge wat daar vanuit die dogmas van die politieke religie na draers van die Christelike getuïenis geslinger word, kom hulle wat hulle daarmee besig hou, buite die Christendom self te staan. Hulle behoort dit met skrik te besef (en hulle te besin!) as 'n teoloog van wie hulle 'n skryf gemaak het vanweë sy getuïenis, met sy getuïenis in die gemeenskap van die Kerk blyk te staan.

* * *

Prof. dr. H. W. Gispen, Ou-Testamentikus aan die Vrije Universiteit en dus kollega van prof. Van Selms in enger sin, skryf soos volg:

„M.i. is die stuk van prof. Van Selms nie bedoel as 'n eksegetiese studie nie. Die stuk maak op my die indruk van 'n meditasie of 'n beskouende artikel. Daar sou m.i. eksegeties nog wel oor die een of ander gediskusseer kon word. Bv.: die sprong van die sondaars in Sion na 'n bepaalde kategorie van sondaars in die kerk van teenswoordig. Bowendien volg daar in Jesaja 33 op die vraag van vers 14 'n antwoord in verse 15 en 16, vgl. Ps. 15. (In sy tweede artikel is dit deur prof. Van Selms verwerk. — Red.). Maar dit het, ook volgens die opskrif, vir die skrywer aangekom op die vraag: „Kan ons met vuur speel?” Ook sou daar gediskusseer kon word oor die vraag of 'n uitspraak soos „God is die hel” wel juis is. Maar die vreemde verskynsel doen hom voor dat dit in die kritiek wat blykens die artikels in ander Suid-Afrikaanse blaaië op die stuk van Van Selms (wat bowendien nog deur 'n ander artikel gevolg sou word) uitgespreek is, nie gaan oor die eksegetiese punte, wat m.i. aanvegbaar is nie, maar oor die vrae wat m.i. Bybels verantwoord is en wat Van Selms tereg steun met 'n verwysing na Amos 9:7. As bv. ds. Griesel skryf: „Die Filistyne en die Arameërs na wie prof. Van Selms verwys, was tog heidense volke. Probeer hy nou beweer dat die Suid-Afrikaanse volk heidens is?” — dan vergeet hy m.i. dat die Here in Amos 9:7 die vraag aan die Israëliete stel: „Is julle nje vir My soos die kinders van Kus nie, o kinders van Israel?” spreek die Here. Het Ek Israel nie laat optrek uit Egipteland en die Filistyne uit Kaster en die Arameërs uit Kir nie?” En die Israëliete was geen heidense volk nie, maar 'n deel van die kerk van daardie tyd. Die vrae wat Van Selms stel, kan deur hom Bybels gefundeerd word, en hy doen dit ook.

Natuurlik geld hierdie vrae vir alle kerke en alle volke, ook vir dié in Europa. Van Gelderen skryf in sy kommentaar op Amos by Amos 9:7: „Maar als het aan deze waarachtige Godskenis ontbreekt, laat ze dan vooral niet praten over prerogatieven!” Dieselfde vrae wat Van Selms stel, sou ook gestel kon word aan die Nederlandse volk. Wat dan die reaksie sou gewees het? Ek glo nie dat dit opsienbarend sou wees

nie, behalwe miskien in 'n tyd van besetting deur 'n vyand. Dat die kommentare op die artikel van Van Selms in Suid-Afrika so heftig is, is deur 'n buitestaander nie te begryp nie. Dit het my getref dat Van Selms, al is dit ook in 'n ander sin, gesien word as 'n buitestaander, 'n nie Suid-Afrikaner en dat dit hom verwyt word dat hy nie genaturaliseer is nie. Dit het tog niks te doen met die vrae wat hy stel nie. Hoogstens kan 'n mens die vraag stel: „Is dit takties om só te skryf?” Maar dit lyk vir my nie reg om op vrae, wat tog Bybels is, so te reageer nie. 'n Prediker in die kerk moet ook aan die boodskap wat hy bring en aan die vrae wat hy stel beoordeel word en nie aan sy persoon nie.

Die vrae wat in dié bepaalde artikel gestel word, moet elkeen lei tot selfondersoek, of hy in opregtheid op die plek waar God hom gestel het, dié God dien. Want wat sou dit iemand baat as hy die wêreld gewen het en aan sy siel skade gely het? Ons weet inderdaad nie wat die raad van God is met die volk waaraan ons behoort nie. Dit is jammer dat die deur Van Selms gestelde vrae gelei het tot 'n aanval op sy persoon, te meer daar hy as geleerde van groot waarde is vir die universiteit wat hy dien”.

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Prof. dr. J. van den Berg, hoogleraar in die Etiek aan die Vrije Universiteit, het sy kommentaar soos volg geformuleer:

„Toe ek die artikel van prof. Van Selms gelees het, het ek gedink aan 'n ervaring van 'n aantal jare gelede. Die vader van 'n gesin, wat elke dag aan tafel 'n stuk uit Jesaja gelees het, het teenoor my opgemerk: „Ek voel soms of ek nie verder kan lees nie, want dit brand soos 'n vuur wat hom teen ons kan keer”. Dit het my geskok. Ek het besef dat ek die profesieë veels te veel op 'n afstand gelees het, agter 'n vuurskerm”, soos prof. Van Selms dit uitdruk. 'n Soortgelyke skok het ek ontvang deur die betreffende artikel in Pro Veritate: die skok wat dan plaasvind wanneer die vanselfsprekendheid deurbreek word. Die gevaar van die vanselfsprekende aanvaarding van die situasie waarin ons leef, bedreig ons almal. Hier in Wes-Europa leef ons in vrede, vryheid, welvaart en ons maak of dit so hoort. En intussen verskuil ons ons agter die skild van die mees gruwelike vernietigingswapens wat die wêreld ooit voortgebring het. Ons het aan die situasie so gewoond geraak dat ons ternouernood meer daarvoor nadink. Maar — wat is God se bedoeling met ons? Wat is sy plan met ons „Christelike” deel van die wêreld wat so dikwels doof

(Vervolg op bladsy 16)

STEMME UIT NEDERLAND OOR REAKSIE TEEN PROF. VAN SELMS

(Vervolg van bladsy 15)

is vir sy stem? Wat is sy plan met die kerk in Wes-Europa wat so dikwels, in soveel kritieke situasies die heldere lig van Sy Woord onder die maattemmer geplaas het? Dit is seker, ons moet maar vurig bid dat God ons ook in hierdie lande nog 'n toekoms mag gee. Ons moet al biddend ook daarvoor werk met alle legitieme middele wat aan ons gegee is. Maar as God ons nog 'n kans wil gee, dan moet ons dit met vrees en bewing uit sy hand aanvaar, wetende dat ons daardeur verplig word om ons verantwoordelikheid in 'n „nuwe gehoorsaamheid” te beleef.

En nou: Suid-Afrika. Dit is nie sonder aarseling dat ek hieroor skryf nie. Buitestaanders kan maklik praat, en ek is daarvan oortuig dat daar inderdaad ook dikwels deur buitestaanders veels te maklik oor al hierdie dinge gepraat word. In Suid-Afrika woon daar 'n volk met wie ons ons nou verbonde voel, met wie baie van ons in die persoonlike sfeer goeie, verrykende kontakte het; 'n volk wat 'n boeiende kultuur opgebou het; 'n volk, ten slotte, in wie se midde die Bybel oop lê en waar die Naam van Jesus Christus nie slegs geken word nie, maar ook deur middel van allerlei arbeid uitgedra word. Moet ons nie hoop dat dit in stand mag bly nie, nie bid dat God aan die volk van Suid-Afrika nog 'n mooi toekoms mag gee nie? Maar — ons kan daar nie van wegkom nie; die diep-ernstige woord van prof. Van Selms, wat in feite niks anders is as 'n „vertaling” van wat die profete in hulle dae gesê het nie, herinner ons opnuut daaraan: ook vir Suid-Afrika is dit alles nie 'n vanselfsprekende saak nie. Slegs één ding staan vas: dat God in hierdie wêreld die werk van sy genade nie te gronde laat gaan nie. Maar watter wêreld Hy daartoe kies — dit is sy geheim. Ons moet ons plig doen in oorgawe aan Hom, bereid nie slegs tot persoonlike nie, maar ook tot gemeenskaplike self-onderzoek, wat iets anders is as défaitisme, omdat dit ons terugwerp op die enigste bron van ons vertroue. En as, wat ons almal so vurig hoop, God aan die volk van Suid-Afrika nog 'n toekoms gee — nouja, dan verplig Hy Suid-Afrika juis daardeur tot 'n „nuwe gehoorsaamheid”, om opnuut te luister na die enigste stem wat waarlik vrede tussen die volke en die rasse skep; die stem van Hom wat aan enkeling en volk, aan kerk en nasie die nuwe weg van Sy Koninkryk wys.

'n Artikel soos dié van prof. Van Selms is eintlik nie geskik om oor te djskussieer nie. Ons moet daar liever by stil word en in dié stilte terugval op die Woord. Maar dan sal daar tog weer gepraat moet word — oor allerlei vrae op politieke en kerklike terrein, vrae van 'n ontsaglike aktuele belang vir blankes en Bantoes, vir Suid-Afrika en die hele Afrika, ten slotte vir ons almal. Ons sal nie op 'n onbeskeie wyse in hierdie gesprekke mag inmeng nie. Maar ek mag tog wel uitdrukking gee aan die hoop dat die gesprek in Suid-Afrika op 'n oop en broederlike wyse gevoer sal word, só dat mense mekaar nie ver-

letter of verdag maak nie, maar dat hulle bereid is om na mekaar te luister, in besonder ook na hulle wat teen die publieke opinie ingaan en alleen al daarom in 'n nogal moeilike parket verkeer. Die waarheid bevind hom nou eenmaal nie vanselfsprekend aan die kant van die meerderheid nie. Dit kan wees dat mense, deur ag te gee op mekaar se argumente, die stem van die Heer beter leer verstaan en so tesaam 'n weg ontdek wat ook vir die toekoms begaanbaar is: 'n weg van gehoorsaamheid waarvoor die lig van Gods belofte val.

Miskien het ons in Nederland nouliks die reg om dit te sê. Ons het self op die gebied van verkettering en verdagmaking wel die een en ander agter die rug. Laat ek dit so stel: Ons het hier „skoolgeld” moes betaal, swaar en baie. Ek dink hier aan die tyd na die oorlog, dié van die konflik met Indonesië, toe in besonder ons sendingmense aan baie swaar aanvalle onderhewig was, terwyl die standpunt waarop hulle hulle toe gestel het, tans deur vrywel almal gedeel word. Miskien gee dit ons tog die vrymoedigheid om aan ons broeders in Suid-Afrika te vra: Doen dit anders as wat ons dit toe gedoen het. Maar hoe dit ook sy: met bewoë aandag luister ons na die gesprek wat tans in Suid-Afrika gevoer word.”

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Prof. dr. J. Verkuyl, Algemene Sekretaris van die Nederlandse Sendingraad en hoogleraar in die Missiologie aan die Vrije Universiteit, het soos volg ge-reageer:

„Ek wil nie ingaan op die eksegetiese en hermeneutiese aspekte van hierdie uiteensetting nie. As ek die stuk van prof. Van Selms goed begryp, dan wil hy ook nie eksegetiese of hermeneutiese beoefen nie, maar hy wil die Woord van God aan ons almal bedien. En dan wil ek graag verklaar dat ek stil geword het van daardie Woord en van wat die Heilige Gees deur dié Woord aan die gemeentes wil sê, nie alleen in Suid-Afrika nie, maar ook in die hele wêreld. Hierdie bediening van die woord van apostels en profete gryp so diep in die hart en is so kiemkrachtig, dat dit my herinner aan die aangrypende teologiese verklaring van die Barmer Sinode in Duitsland op 31 Mei 1934; en ook die redaksionele stuk in die Julie/Augustus-uitgawe van *Pro Veritate* herinner my onwillekeurig aan daardie stuk. Soos die gemeente toe in 'n bepaalde kultuursituasie te midde van bepaalde maatskaplike en politieke bewegings en strukture teruggedroep is tot die volstrekte enige outoriteit van Jesus Christus en van sy belofte en eise, so word in hierdie artikels van prof. Van Selms en in die verklaring van die redaksie die gemeentes teruggedroep uit die kultuursituasie, uit die posisie waarin ons ons bevind, uit die strukture na die outoriteit van Christus alleen. Geen enkele leser van hierdie artikels het die reg om hierop farisees te reageer en te dink dat hierdie stuk alleen iets te sê het aan bepaalde groepe in Suid-Afrika, en nie aan ons almal, waar ons ook mag wees en in watter situasie ons ons ook mag bevind nie. Daar is tye in die geskiedenis waarin die Kerk van Jesus Christus nie alleen moet aandrang op individuele bekering nie, maar ook op

sosiale en politieke transformasie. Sulke tye is daar in Duitsland beleef na 1933. Sulke tye word daar opnuut in hierdie jare beleef. Sulke tye het die koloniale owerhede en die kerke wat binne dié verbande gefunksioneer het, beleef in allerlei dele van Asië en Afrika. Sulke tye word alom beleef in Latyns-Amerika. Wanneer iemand in sulke tye die woord van die profete en apostels konkretiseer op die wyse soos Van Selms dit nou gedoen het, dan is die reaksie oral dat Christene mekaar begin aanval, beskuldig, verdag maak, dat mense so teenoor mekaar te staan kom dat hulle mekaar byna hartaanvalle besorg en dat die kruitdamp oor die slagveld hang. Maar wat in sulke tye nodig is, is nie om teen mekaar die stryd aan te knoop en mekaar te beskuldig nie, maar om saam te luister na wat die Gees deur die woord van die profete en apostels vir ons wil sê. En dan kom dit heftig nie daarop aan wie die man is wat daardie woord vertolk nie, maar dan kom dit alles daarop aan om te luister met die hore van gehoorsaamheid en van bekering. En in sulke situasies is dit nodig om saam met Christene, ook van ander lande, oop en eerlik te soek na die wil van God by die vernuwings van die politieke en sosiale strukture van die samelewing.

Daarom hoop ek dat, wanneer die kruitdamp rondom hierdie artikels van prof. Van Selms opgetrek het, die bereidheid mag groei om sowel in Suid-Afrika self as in gemeenskap met Christene uit ander lande te soek en te tas na die antwoord op die vraag wat Van Selms so aangrypend formuleer in die woorde: „Ek vergeet al wat ek tevore wou doen, ek vergeet wat die maghebbers van my verwag, ek vergeet my hele verlede, my loopbaan, my posisie, my ideale. My hele bestaan word een vraag: Here, wat wil U hê moet ek doen? Want Hy is die Here, en Hy kan beveel. Hy het die laaste woord.”

(Uit Nederlands in Afrikaans vertaal).

PRO VERITATE

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