

Redaksioneel

NAIROBI

Die langer wordende lys plekname moet vir die leierskap van die Afrikaans-Hollandse kerke in Suid-Afrika, en veral van die N.G. Kerk, soos die gelui van 'n doodsklok begin klink: Cottesloe, Frankfurt, Lunteren, weer eens Lunteren en nou Nairobi. Al hoe helderder spreek die stem van veroordeling oor die onregverdige rassepraktyk wat in Suid-Afrika landsbeleid geword het en oor die beskermende en verskonende rol wat veral die N.G. Kerk daarteenoor speel. Al hoe duideliker verskyn die skrif teen die muur.

By Cottesloe was dit nog maar 'n fluistering; by Frankfurt 'n broederlike murmurering. By Lunteren het dit reeds 'n vermaning geword, en nou, te Nairobi, 'n ondubbelsinnige teregwyding en 'n kwalik verborge veroordeling. Daar bly nog net een laaste stap oor en, hoewel dit vreemd is aan die gereformeerde tradisie, sien 'n mens nie hoe dit op die lang duur vermy kan word nie.

Tensy natuurlik veral die N.G. Kerk -- wat die vergadering van die Wêreldbond van Gereformeerde Kerke te Nairobi kennelik as van soveel belang beskou het dat hy 13 afgevaardigdes soontoe gestuur het -- in alle erns begin huis skoonmaak en aan Christene hier te lande en in die buiteland in die openbaar begin toon dat hy werklik bewus geword het van sy profetiese taak t.o.v. die owerheid en sy vir Christene onhoudbare en onregverdige rassebeleid.

Nairobi het nog duideliker gespreek as enige ekumeniese kerkevergadering tot dusver en het dit gedoen nie by wyse van 'n idealistiese oproep nie, dog by wyse van 'n kale en kille stelling van die feite. Diepe bekommernis is uitgespreek oor "die beoefening van rassese segregasie deur die Afrikaans-Hollandse Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika in hul eie kerklike lewe en oor die indruk wat dit laat dat hulle die regering ondersteun in sy beleid en praktyk van rassese segregasie en blanke oorheersing".

Verder is daar met die grootste stelligheid beweer „dat, aangesien daar volgens die Nuwe Testament nóg Griek nóg Jood in die Liggaam van Christus is (Gal. 3:11), 'n lering of praktyk wat aandring op rassese segregasie as 'n wet van die kerklike lewe, in teenspraak is met die wese van die Christelike Kerk. In sy herderlike bediening moet die kerk daarna

Editorial

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The steadily lengthening list of place names must start sounding like the tolling of a death-bell to the leadership of the Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa and especially of the N.G. Kerk: Cottesloe, Frankfurt, Lunteren, Lunteren once again and now Nairobi. Ever more clearly speaks the voice of condemnation with regard to the unjust racial practice which has become official policy in South Africa and the protective and placating role being played by especially the N.G. Kerk in this connection. The writing against the wall is becoming ever more sharply defined.

At Cottesloe it was still only a whisper; at Frankfurt a brotherly grumbling. At Lunteren it had already become an admonition, and now, at Nairobi it has become an unambiguous reprimand and a barely disguised condemnation. Only one last step remains and, although it is foreign to the Reformed tradition, one cannot see how it can be avoided in the long run

Unless, of course, especially the N.G. Kerk -- which obviously regarded the meeting of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches at Nairobi as of so much importance that it sent 13 delegates there -- were to start cleaning its own house in all seriousness and to start publicly proving to Christians in this country and overseas that it has become truly conscious of its prophetic task with regard to the authorities and their racial policy which is so untenable and unjustifiable for Christians.

Nairobi has spoken even more clearly than any ecumenical gathering of churches thus far and did so not by way of an idealistic appeal, but by way of a bald and blunt statement of the facts. Deep concern was expressed about "the practice of racial segregation by the Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa in their own church life, and the impression this gives, that they support the government in its policy and practice of racial segregation and white supremacy".

It was furthermore asserted with the greatest positiveness "that, since according to the New Testament there is in the Body of Christ neither Greek nor Jew (Gal. 3:11), a doctrine or practice which asserts racial segregation as a law of the Church's life is in contradiction to the nature of the Christian Church. In her pastoral ministry the Church should

strewe om houdinge van rassemeerderwaardigheid en -vooroordeel uit te roei deur sy lidmate op te lei tot volle rypheid in rasseverhoudings. Dit moet dringend, aanhoudend en geduldig gedoen word".

Hierdie bevindinge is vir geen misverstand vatbaar nie, en vreemd genoeg het die bewoording van die laaste twee volsinne van een van die vernaamste afgevaardigdes van die N.G. Kerk gekom. 'n Mens kan maar net hoop dat die gees wat hom geïnspireer het by die indiening van sy voorstel, ook vaardig sal word onder die afgevaardigdes van die Algemene Sinode van die N.G. Kerk wat gedurende Oktober in Pretoria gehou sal word en waarna daar met soveel spanning uitgesien word.

'n Mens sou dit ook kon waag om te hoop dat die Sinode wat, tydens sy vorige vergadering in 1966, die Christelike Instituut van Suider-Afrika tot „dwaalrigting“ verklaar het juis vanweë sy opvattinge oor rasseverhoudings, ernstige oorweging sal verleen aan die heel laaste besluit van die Wêreldbond in Nairobi waarkragtens o.a. juis die Christelike Instituut uitgekies is „vir heelhartige en biddende ondersteuning“ as „'n hoopvolle teken van versoening in Suid-Afrika“.

strive to eradicate attitudes of racial superiority and prejudice by leading her members into full maturity in race relations. This should be done urgently, persistently and patiently".

These findings are simply not open to misunderstanding and, strangely enough, the wording of the last two sentences came from one of the most influential delegates of the N.G. Kerk. One can only hope that the spirit which inspired him when he tabled this proposal will also move the delegates to the General Synod of the N.G. Kerk which is to be held in Pretoria during October and which is awaited with so much interest.

One might also dare to hope that the Synod which, during its previous meeting in 1966, declared the Christian Institute of Southern Africa to be an "heretical movement" precisely because of its views on race relations, will give serious consideration to the very last decision of the World Alliance in Nairobi according to which this very Christian Institute was singled out "for wholehearted and prayerful support" as "a hopeful sign of reconciliation in South Africa".

THE W.C.C. DECISION

The World Council of Churches has decided to give financial support to liberation movements in Southern Africa. Our own opposition to all forms of violence has been made abundantly clear in the past for us not to have to repeat it again. Yet we do wish to make a few observations.

S.A. churchmen, politicians and secular journalists have reacted. To a man the reactions have been ones of 'shock'; to a man, bar one, they have all been made by whites.

- Our first observation: are we so isolated from world thinking not to know how incorrigible most of the world regards us and our race policies? And are we so isolated from the thinking within the W.C.C. not to have realised that this decision was inevitable? Their views since 1948 have been clearly and publicly stated. So were their resolutions following up on the Notting Hill consultation on race last year.
- Our second observation: one wonders what the 'silent majority' is thinking. Perhaps if we held a consultation of the calibre of the recent Nairobi one - with the same openness and frankness, we may find that our black Christian brothers view the W.C.C. decision differently.

It is interesting to observe that at recent W.C.C. consultations e.g. Notting Hill and Montreux, more and more delegates came from the Third World. Their voices are now helping to mould W.C.C. attitudes. Black Christians in this country are part of that growing Third World.

- Hasty reactions will not make the problem go away. Even withdrawing from the W.C.C. won't help. The problem is too deep. We already alluded to this in our July editorial. Nairobi and this decision makes the need for clarification all the more urgent. We need a careful analysis of the problem areas e.g. power, revolution, the rich and the poor, war and peace, love and hate, violence and non-violence, law and order.
- We need clarity because there are too many inherent ambiguities relating to these issues within Christian history. These are reflected in some of the recent reactions. For example, Jehovah Witnesses have been recently detained by military authorities for opposing war per se and hence refusing to do military training. There have been no public statements by churchmen to defend them. Hence we are clearly not opposed to war. Now the Bishop of Johannesburg is reported to have said that one cannot support