

# PRO VERITATE

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DR. W. BRUCKNER-DE VILLIERS\*

## South African isolation and the need for solidarity

It has also become a slogan, freely bandied about by certain groups for selfish and specifically political ends — which, like most political slogans, must be taken with a rather large pinch of salt. The isolation of South Africa has even in the economical field, become a threat with which the more vociferous Afro-Asiatic members of UNO are attempting to cow the political leaders of South Africa into abject submission to their designs. In actual fact South Africa is by no means as isolated from the rest of the world, i.e. the Western World, as we are usually given to understand and as is so often unquestioningly believed. Our geographic isolation, which used so gravely to impair our contact with the rest of the world, has been largely neutralized by modern means of transport and communication. And one cannot fail to notice the continuous interchange of ideas and opinions which is taking place from day to day in the spheres of science, technology, culture and industry.

South Africa's real isolation from the Western World, is as far as it does in fact obtain, is situated in something far deeper than in these external issues. It is an isolation of an essentially spiritual nature which is only very indirectly caused or affected by extrinsic or material factors. It is, in fact, the result of a certain complex state of mind, deeply inherent in the soul of the average South African. In order to determine the true nature of this isolation, let us go in upon its real and possible causes as well as upon the symptoms through which it manifests itself.

### Causes of our Isolation

Apart from geographic isolation, which no longer plays a very serious role, it was originally undoubtedly caused by the fact that it required almost 250 years of essentially physical effort and endeavour on the part of the pioneering white settlers in this country to tame and civilize it. This meant that it was only during the past 50 to 60 years that South Africans could afford themselves the luxury of rediscovering cultural and spiritual bonds with the old mother countries in Western Europe. And a brief half-century — although we have already come a long way and have not done so badly for ourselves at all — has simply not given us enough time completely to escape from the isolation which historic and geographic circumstances have imposed upon us and to establish a firm spiritual solidarity with the rest of the Western World.

### Lack of understanding

Historically we have to take cognizance of the fact that our pioneering forefathers in this country were surrounded on all sides by physical hazards and rank barbarism and that they were continuously bedevilled by well-intentioned though ill-informed criticism and by an almost unforgiva-

ble misunderstanding and lack of sympathy on the part of their brethren in the mother countries. This caused the civilized spirit of South Africa as it were to curl in upon itself, repeatedly to seek strength merely in the basic fundamentals of its own make-up, to refuse to entertain any ideas which were untried, novel, experimental or revolutionary and to fight its dour, practical battles only with what it considered to be the true and tried weapons contained in the armoury of its historical heritage. That is why events and ideologies which shook Western Europe to the core, hardly caused a ripple on the surface of the lonely lake of spiritual life in South Africa. The world-shaking French Revolution, for instance, and the socialist, humanist and evolutionist ideologies which followed in its train, are, even to many modern-day South Africans, merely incidents and facts of some slight historical interest.

That South Africans are isolated from the rest of the world has already become somewhat of a platitude — which, like all platitudes, is only partially correct.

### Resentment of everything "foreign"

Historically, too, the culmination of the battle for supremacy between the British and the Boers in the bitterly contested Anglo-Boer wars led especially on the part of the despoiled and defeated Afrikaners — to an intense distrust and resentment of everything "foreign" and to an obstinate withdrawal within themselves — to the exclusion of the good as well as the evil contained in all overseas influences. This isolationist state of mind was especially fostered by the rape of the Transvaal and the unscrupulous exploitation of its newly discovered gold fields by the British Conquerors and the get-rich-quick adventurers and gentlemen of fortune from all over the European continent who poured into the country after them. No wonder that it is in the Transvaal in particular where this spirit of world-defying and world-despising exophobia still noticeably survives to this day!

### Fear of Black Africa

Perhaps the most decisive single reason why South Africans have subconsciously as well as deliberately isolated themselves from the rest of the Western World was and still is a profound and barely concealed fear of Black Africa, coupled with an intense resentment of and sensitivity to overseas criticism inspired by this fear. Throughout three centuries White South Africans have continuously been conscious of the threat of being swamped by an overwhelming majority of Black Africans, either through violence or through political manoeuvring. In our day this threat is as real as ever and far more explicitly embodied in organizations such as the

A.N.C., the P.A.C. and the Congress of Democrats. And in the face of this very real threat, the White men in South Africa have had, in the course of 300 years, to contend additionally with a continuous spate of ill-informed and biased criticism from Overseas. The whole of the Western World indulged in this criticism on sentimentally humanistic grounds and steadfastly placed itself on the side of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's and the notorious Dr Phillips' "noble savage".

Thus it immeasurably added to the danger with which civilized South

Africans have to live from day to day. Humanistically well-intentioned though hopelessly misinformed support of Black nationalism in Africa as a whole and in South Africa specifically has contributed more to the estrangement of White South Africans from their brethren in Western Europe in the course of this country's history than a geographic separation of 6000 miles has ever been able to achieve.

### The Calvinist concept and its influence

A very large measure of the isolationist tendency which has been rife amongst South Africans for so many decades, must be ascribed to the peculiar brand of Calvinist religion to which

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PROF. B. B. KEET

## 'n Brief

## uit die gevangenis

NOG vars in ons geheue is die berigte aangaande rassebotsings in die Suide van Amerika, wat hulle toppunt in Birmingham, Alabama, bereik het, toe drie neger-meisies na Sondagskool deur die ontplofing van 'n bom in 'n Negerkerk om die lewe gebring is.

Tydens dié onluste het agt van Birmingham se blanke predikante 'n openbare verklaring uitgereik, waarin die demonstrasies as „onverstandig” en „ontydig” bestempel word, terwyl die medewerking van „buitestaanders” bevestig is. Hierop het Eerw. Martin Luther King, bekende voorstander van lydelike verset, wat as leier van die demonstrasies die vernaamste buitestaander was, en as gevolg daarvan 'n straffermyn in die gevangenis moes uitdien, 'n antwoord uit die gevangenis geskrywe wat van soveel belang is dat ons dit van genoegsame belang ag om aan ons lesers mee te deel. Die brief is lank, daarom kan hier nie meer as uittreksels gegee word nie. Ek hoop, egter, dat die inhoud daarvan nie geskaad sal word nie.

### Uittreksels uit brief

Hy spreek sy mede-evangeliedienaars aan en sê: „Onderwyl ek hier in die Birmingham se stadsgevangenis opgesluit is, het ek 'n verklaring onder oë gekry, waarin ons teenswoordige optrede as „onverstandig” en „ontydig” bestempel word. Selde of nooit staan ek stil om te antwoord op kritiek oor my arbeid en denkbeelde nie, maar omdat ek besef dat u manne van ware, goeie gesindheid is en dat u kritiek eerlik bedoel is, wil ek graag u verklaring beantwoord, op wat ek as redelike en geduldige wyse beskou.

Die rede waarom ek in Birmingham is: ek het die eer om president van

die Suidelike Leierskonferensie te wees, 'n organisasie met hoofkantoor in Atlanta, Georgia, wat in al die Suidelike State werkzaam is. Enige maande gelede het die plaaslike tak van ons organisasie in Birmingham my uitgenooi om deel te neem aan 'n program van geweldlose, direkte aksie wat hulle noodsaaklik geag het. Daarom is ek hier met lede van my staf om deel van ons verpligtinge te vervul. Bowendien het ek na Birmingham gekom omdat onreg hier gepleeg word.

Ek kan nie in Atlanta bly sit en onverskillig staan teenoor alles wat in Birmingham plaasvind nie; onreg in enige plek is 'n bedreiging van die reg in alle plekke. Dit is nie langer moontlik om die eng provinsiale idee van buitestaande „agitators” te koester nie; elkeen wat in die Verenigde State woon, kan nooit in enige deel van die land as buitestaander beskou word nie.

U betreur die demonstrasies wat tans in Birmingham plaasvind; dit spyt my dat u verklaring nie dieselfde besorgdheid openbaar oor die toestand wat tot hierdie demonstrasies aanleiding gegee het nie. Ek glo dat u nie die weg van oppervlakkige analise wil volg nie, wat slegs gevolge in aanmerking neem sonder om die onderliggende oorsake na te speur. Ek sou met u saamstem hoe ongelukkig dit is dat demonstrasie juis hierdie tyd in Birmingham plaasvind, maar ek sou met groter klem daarop nadruk lê, hoeveel on-

• Vervolg ip bladsy 2

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the majority of them adhere. The large majority of Afrikaans-speaking White (and Coloured) South Africans, who happen to form the majority of the non-Bantu population of this country, belong to one of the three Dutch Reformed Churches of South Africa, whose origins date back to the occupation of the Cape by the Dutch under Jan van Riebeeck. In the course of three centuries, therefore, these churches have undoubtedly exerted immeasurable influence on the formation of what may be called the unique South African outlook upon life and the world in general.

In practice this influence amounted to an intensification, on theological and ethical grounds, of their followers' already prevalent inclination towards self-isolation and insularism. For the spiritual influences which were engendered, were actually reciprocal. On the one hand, the embattled pioneering

his own particular and exclusive Canaan, and the whole history of South Africa has an unmistakable Old Testament tang about it.

Notice, for instance, how the Great Trek — probably the most decisive single event to leave its imprint on national history — was by no means a concerted effort, but a phenomenon to which a whole series of rugged individualists contributed more or less at the same time. There was the Retief trek, the Pretorius trek, the Van Rensburg trek etc., none of them making any effort to join forces, each of them intent upon an exclusive Promised Land of its own, fanning out across the country and dedicatedly taming unknown tracts of wilderness: all in order to reach their own Canaan, where they would be left in peace by their enemies — as well as by their friends! — and where they could establish their isolated little communities according to a strict Old Testamentic pat-

problems in the imperturbable and untroubled conformist mind.

We Afrikaners have, alas, already reached a stage of toeing-the-line for the sake of self-reassurance at which we expect of each other to send our children to the same schools, to belong to the same churches, to indulge in the same pastimes, to confine ourselves to the same accredited circle of friends, to observe the same social customs, to express the same stereotyped opinions and to follow with unquestioning acquiescence the same tried and trusted leaders. Thus do we, through conformism, give ample evidence of our indestructible unity and homogeneity. But thus, too, have we only attained to a dour, impersonal and faceless uniformity, which scrupulously avoids all dangerous contact with the pluriform world of men and ideas around us.

### Nonconformism the greatest sin

Strict conformism is increasingly coming to be regarded as the Afrikaner's sole task and ultimate responsibility. In fulfilling this responsibility, he succeeds in salving his conscience, rests secure and experience the false though comforting reassurance of belonging to a nation sufficient unto itself and of thus having satisfied the demands of civilized humanity. But, in so doing, he also develops a blind spot or deliberately closes his eyes to his responsibilities as a citizen of the world — if only of the Western World. His attitude, brutally summed up, is that as long as all South Africans, i.e. all White South Africans, and all Afrikaners in any case, stick together, all is well with the world — with his world, at any rate — and that this status quo should therefore be rigorously maintained.

**That is why nonconformism to the commonly accepted code has become the greatest sin, the ultimate treachery towards the people. And any Afrika-**

ner who flirts with what Afrikanerdom regards as "foreign" ideas and ideologies, which are therefore 'dangerous to the people', is summarily ostracized, pilloried as a renegade and avoided like a leper amongst those who really belong.

Stern measures are automatically taken against those who pay even the slightest attention to the Lorelei's luring song of love and Odysseus is tied to the mast when the Sirens start singing. For those who defect from the well-worn path of conformity must be protected against themselves and the monolithic unity of the people must be preserved against spiritual sabotage from within. Hence the many apparently inexplicable blind spots marring White South Africa's spiritual vision and outlook upon the world; hence its ostrichlike head-in-the-sand posture — the underlying motivation of our present-day national philosophy being that, perhaps, if we look the other way and just keep plodding along on the "old paths", our distressing multiracial problem will miraculously disappear and the world will leave us in peace (or at least make a hash of its interfering practices and be utterly confounded by employing the services of such incompetent meddlers as the ludicrous and lamentable Mr Carpio!)

In essence the mental attitude of many South Africans amounts to a substitution of group conformity for civilized conscience and of chauvinist rectitude for our human responsibility towards a dialectic relationship — a *Gespraechsgemeinschaft* — with our brethren in the Western World. In practice the effect of this spiritual attitude is the danger of an increasing isolation of South Africa from the rest of the civilized world.

(To be continued.)

*\* This paper was originally delivered at a seminar of the Christlike Akademie to explain the background of the Afrikaner-people to non-Afrikaners.*

**South African:** For the purpose of this paper I shall, in using the term South African, specifically and exclusively refer to White South Africans and to the Afrikaners who form the dominant group of White South Africans, in particular.

**Isolation:** Shall basically be taken to mean spiritual and cultural isolation.

**Solidarity:** This general concept shall be exclusively used to refer to the solidarity of South Africans with the people and nations of Western Europe.

people of this rugged country, beset on all sides by physical hazards and barbarism, standing alone and deserted by their critical coreligionists in the Mother Countries, became increasingly obsessed by a veritable "Laager complex" and looked to their churches for spiritual strength, moral bolstering and religious justification of their attitude. On the other hand, the Dutch Reformed churches, faced with this appeal, and historically and theologically founded on Calvinist dogma, understandably tended to become increasingly hyper-Calvinist and fundamentalist in their interpretation of Scripture. Consequently they preached ever more decisively a message of exclusive divine election and of ordained self-isolation of the Chosen Few to their followers. And thus it is by no means surprising that many Afrikaners still literally regard themselves as forming God's Chosen People in the Dark Continent, in an outspokenly nationalistic and therefore automatically racialistic sense: a people divinely called upon to bring the Gospel to the heathen and to spread its light in the heart of Darkest Africa (and in the hearts of Black Africans, the children of Ham and therefore an inferior race by divine ordinance); but a people also which — despite this missionary task — is called upon to preserve above all its racial purity and nationalist exclusiveness, just like Israel of old.

Hence the almost religious fervour with which the political doctrine of Apartheid is preached, and more or less openly sponsored by the Afrikaner's churches. Hence the honest conviction, the moral equanimity and unruffled sense of righteousness with which a policy of benign and paternalistic "guardianship" is practised towards all non-Whites. Hence, too, the resentment towards and the deliberate self-isolation from the markedly humanistic and liberalistic influences flowing from an ill-informed and unsympathetic Western Europe.

### Passion for independence

A contributory factor of which brief note must be taken in passing, is the South Africans' dedicated passion for independence — even from each other — and their traditional urge towards the establishment of isolated settlements or communes, safely removed from all outside interference, which is so deeply resented. By inherited temperament and tradition the South African is a lifelong seeker after

tern. Patriarchy towards children and paternalism towards servants and underlings formed the golden rule and the feudalistic *droit de seigneur* was taken for granted and rigorously applied throughout. Paradoxically, on the other hand, the Afrikaners in particular, despite their tendency towards selfisolating individualism, have always, through force of historical circumstance, been intensely conscious of the need for solidarity amongst themselves, for standing together and joining ranks in the face of the enemy. The motto *ex unitate vires* is engraved not only upon the national emblem, but in the heart of every Afrikaner, as opposed to the nasty motto *divide et impera* which is, even to this day, spasmodically ascribed to the British Conqueror as the perfidious motive underlying all his words and deeds. Although belief in the moral "eendrag maak mag" has, in the course of time, undoubtedly led to a genuine closing of the ranks between Afrikaners and the ultimate achievement of national solidarity respite all individualist dissension, it has unfortunately also produced a nationally self-isolating side-effect. For the Afrikaner, beguiled by the palpable successes attendant upon national and political unification, has unfortunately fallen under the spell of the comforting security apparently contained in conformity.

The closing of the ranks has brought in its train a closing of minds — to the good as well as the evil from outside. Increasingly the Afrikaner seeks strength and discovers a completely false sense of security merely in conforming to the progressively more clearly defined mores of Afrikanerdom, whilst quite deliberately turning a blind eye to all conflicting credos in the world around him.

### Danger of conformity

Fixed patterns of thought and of action have been laid down and to conform to them has become the ultimate du sollst of the average Afrikaner. Unwritten rules have become established, in strict observance of which the ritual of being a "true Afrikaner" is properly performed. And if the ritual is religiously observed, the concomitant blessings are automatically reaped: freedom from fear, the qualms of national conscience and national responsibility towards the rest of mankind; relief from the political cares of multi-racial citizenship and the dissolution of all vexing internal and international

### \* Vervolg van bladsy 1

gelukkiger dit is dat die blanke magstruktuur van hierdie stad geen alternatief vir die Neger-bevolking gelaat het nie.

### Vereistes vir Geweldlose Verset

Vir elke geweldlose veldtog is daar vier stappe wat gedoen moet word: 1) Feitemateriaal moet versamel word om vas te stel of onreg gepleeg word; 2) onderhandeling moet aangeknoop word; 3) self-onderzoek en self-reiniging moet ingestel word; 4) Direkte aksie moet begin word.

Al hierdie stappe het ons in Birmingham gedoen. Ons bevinding is dat hierdie gemeenskap oorstrom word deur onreg op rasselyne. Birmingham is miskien die mees gesegregeerde stad in Amerika. Die brutaliteit van sy polisie is bekend in alle dele van die land. Sy onregverdige behandeling van Neger in die geregshowe het berug geword. Daar het meer bomaanvalle op Negerhuise en -kerke voorgekom as in enige ander stad van Amerika. Dit is die harde, ongelooflike feite, en op grond hiervan het die Neger-leiers probeer om met die stadsvaders same-sprekinge te hou, wat konstant deur die politieke leiers geweier is. Toe kom die geleentheid om met sommige voormanne uit die sakewêreld te konfereer. Sekere beloftes is aan ons gedoen, o.a. dat die vernederende kennisgewings uit die winkels verwyder sou word. Daarop is 'n moratorium op alle demonstrasies afgekondig, maar toe weke en maande verbygaan en ons tot die besef kom dat ons die slagoffers van gebroke beloftes was, wat so dikwels in die verlede die geval was, het die donker skaduwee van bittere teleurstelling op ons toegesak en het ons geen ander alternatief gehad as om op direkte aksie ons voor te berei nie, waardeur ons ons eie liggame aanbied om ons saak voor die gewete van die plaaslike en nasionale gemeenskap te lê.

### Spanning as voorloper van onderhandeling

Ons het die moeilikhede nie onder-

skat nie. Daarom het ons leerskole vir die toepassing van geweldloosheid begin en ons vrae soos die volgende gestel: Is jy bekwaam om slaie te ontvang sonder om terug te slaan? Kan jy die ontberinge van 'n gevangenis verduur? Ons program van direkte aksie was vir die Paastyd gestel omdat ons besef dat, met uitsondering van Kerstyd, dit die drukste koop-periode van die jaar is, en dat onttrekking van klandisie wat die gevolg van die demonstrasies sou wees, op die winkeliers die nodige druk sou uitoeven. Toe besef ons dat 'n elekse op hande was en ons het die datum tot na die elekse verskuif om nie die resultaat te vertroebel nie.

U kan my vra: waarom direkte aksie? Is onderhandeling nie 'n beter weg nie? U het gelyk — die doel van direkte aksie is juis om krisis en spanning teweeg te bring, sodat die gemeenskap wat konstant weer om te onderhandel, tot aksie gedwing word. Dit kan u miskien skok om my te hoor praat van spanning, maar ek vrees nie die woord spanning nie. Teen alle gewelddadige spanning het ek altyd ernstig gewerk, maar daar is 'n geweldlose spanning wat vir alle ontwikkeling noodsaaklik is. Ons moet mense help om uit die donker dieptes van vooroordeel en rassegevoel op te styg tot die hoogtes van begrip en broederskap. So word die doel van direkte aksie om 'n situasie te skep, wat so spannend is dat die deur vir onderhandeling oopgemaak sal word.

Te lank het ons geliefde Suide vasgeval in die tragiese poging om deur monoloog i.p.v. dialoog te lewe: My vriende, ek wil u verseker dat ons nog geen enkele vordering in die verkryging van burgerregte behalwe deur wettige en geweldlose druk verkry het nie. Die geskiedenis is 'n lang en tragiese verhaal van die feit dat bevoorregte groepe selde hul voorregte vrywillig opoffer. Individue kan die lig sien en vrywillig hul onregverdige houding laat vaar; maar, soos Reinhold Niebuhr ons herinner, groepe is meer immoreel as individue.

(Word vervolg).

# PRO VERITATE

EDITORIAL

## POPULATION GROWTH AND MISSIONARY RESPONSIBILITY

The results of the census of 1960 which have just been published have come as a shock or as a surprise to many South Africans. While the politicians are still debating hotly whether these figures are proof or not of the eventual breakdown, the Church should give serious attention to the challenge involved in the large increase in population amongst Coloureds, Africans as well as Asians. We know full well that the existing numbers of ministers and spiritual lay workers are hopelessly inadequate to keep up with any increase in missionary work. We also know (for reasons which we cannot expand upon here) that although many doors are still open the task of evangelization is becoming more arduous and difficult.

Therefore it is a matter of great urgency that the churches should do everything in their power to increase the number and quality of training of their future ministers. More Bible schools for full-and part-time spiritual workers must be established especially in urban areas. More short-term Bible courses must be offered and elementary Bible study booklets (also in African languages) be made available — But above all the need to awaken all Christians of all churches to the immensely important task and responsibility of personal witness and work by every Christian layman and — woman in leading people to Christ: Without a new realization of the urgency of the task and a new endowment by the Spirit of God this task is impossible. But if we believe that all power will be given to us to go forward in faith and strength we will be surprised to see how this problem becomes a challenge and the mountain a highway for our Lord.

INLEIDINGSARTIKEL

## KONGRES OOR KOMMUNISME

Oor die noodsaaklikheid dat die Kommunisme teëgestaan en bestry word, val daar nie te redeneer nie. Elke Christen vir wie sy geloofsbelydenis enigsins iets beteken sal alle moontlike steun verleen aan elke opregte poging om die kommunistiese gevaar die hoof te bied. Daarom ook is dit so noodsaaklik dat die kommunisme deeglik bestudeer sal word in al sy aspekte en dat elke inwoner van die land op hoogte gestel word van alle inligting wat die saak in sy volledige perspektief stel. Daarom kan 'n Kongres wat die saak in die lig benader ook 'n waardevolle bydrae lewer.

Wat egter van wesenlike belang is in die bekamping van hierdie godlose ideologie is dat daar groot helderheid sal wees beide in die bepaling van wat die wese en krag van die kommunisme is, wie as kommuniste aangedui word en watter metodes in die bestryding gevolg word. Daar is niks wat die kommuniste so begeer as dat aan hulle bv. 'n invloed en trefkrag toegeken word wat hulle in werklikheid nie besit, of om mense en groepe as kommuniste of kommunistiese medereisigers aan te dui wat uitgesproke vyande van hierdie ideologie is nie.

Nog 'n baie ernstige fout wat baie keer gemaak word is om die aanval teen die kommunisme hoofsaaklik op sy politieke of ekonomiese of sosiale struktuur te rig. Vir die Christen gaan dit veel dieper en is dit van wesenlike belang dat die aanval gerig is op die anti-godsdiensige grondslae van sy leer. Daarom is dit vir ons 'n baie ernstige vraag of 'n volks-kongres die regte begin is. Die enigste afdoende antwoord teen die kommunisme is tog immers die evangelie van Jesus Christus in al sy volle wydte en diepte — en die getuenis van sodanige antwoord kan en mag net die Kerk van Jesus Christus gee. Daarom is ons oortuig dat die hele bespreking oor en bestryding van die Kommunisme onder leiding van die Kerke in Suid-Afrika onderneem moet word. Van daaruit kan dit dan wyer uitkring na gemeenskap en volk.

Nog twee gedagtes verdien ernstige oorweging: (1) Dit is geheel en al sinloos om so 'n belangrike bespreking te hou sonder om die nie-blanke Christene ook direk daarby te betrek. Want die gevaar van Kommunistiese infiltrasie is veral wesenlik onder ons Bantoe-bevolking en daarom moet ook die aksie daarteen deur die Bantoe vir die Bantoe onderneem word. Maar dan moet hulle van die begin ten volle geken en in alles betrek word. (2) Sonder baie deeglike voorafgaande studie deur alle afgevaardigdes van die teologiese, ideologiese, politieke en ander aspekte van die kommunisme loop enige kongres wat die saak wil behandel, gevaar om te verval of in vervlakking of in emosionele beslissinge wat die saak meer skade gaan doen as goed. Moet daar nie eers baie meer diepgaande voorbereidende navorsing- en studiewerk gedoen word nie. Hierdie is aspekte wat die ernstige aandag verdien van alle persone wat bid en werk vir die oorwinning van die Godryk.

## Prayer for Unity



*O Lord Jesus Christ, Who on the eve of Thy Passion didst pray that all Thy disciples might be one, as Thou art in the Father, and the Father in Thee, grant that we may suffer keenly on account of the infidelity of our disunion.*

*Grant us the loyalty to recognize and the courage to reject all our hidden indifference and mistrust, and our mutual hostility.*

*Grant that we may find each other in Thee, so that from our hearts and from our lips may ceaselessly arise Thy prayer for the Unity of Christians, such as Thou willest and by the means that Thou willest.*

*Grant that we may find each other in Thee, so that we may find the way that leads to Unity, in obedience to Thy Love and to Thy Truth.*

*(From the Pamphlet: "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity" issued by "Unité Chrétienne", France.)*

## DIE KERK OP WEG NA CHRISTELIKE EENHEID

'n Vergadering van 300 vooraanstaande Protestantse en Ortodokse teoloë van oor die hele wêreld wat twee weke lank geduur het, is beëindig met 'n verklaring dat „ons op die weg na Christelike eenheid is.”

Die vergadering sê in 'n spesiale boodskap dat onlangse gebeure „'n opening wat gister slegs deur die geloof ontwaar kon word,” duidelik aan die lig gebring het.

'n Verklaring wat die konferensie opsom, bestempel dit as sowel 'n mistukking as 'n klinkende sukses.

Dr. Paul S. Minear, professor in godsdiens aan die universiteit Yale, sê in 'n verklaring dat die vierde konferensie oor geloof en kerke „misluk het omdat ons, nadat ons al die belangrikste tradisies in die Christendom saamgetrek het, daarop aangedring het om die diepste verdelings tussen ons te behandel.

„Ons was nie tevrede met slimpraatjies, gedwonge argumente, met maklike maar kunstmatige kompromie nie.” Maar, het hy gesê, op die gebied van die ekumeniese dialoog — die teologiese uitdrukking vir samesprekings oor Christelike eenheid — het die konferensie merkwaardige welslae behaal.

Die vergadering, wat onder beskerming van die Wêreldraad van Kerke gehou is, was die eerste in sy soort die afgelope 11 jaar en dit is bygewoon deur 500 afgevaardigdes en waarnemers van 138 kerke in 50 lande.

Afgevaardigdes het verskeie aspekte van die probleme van Christelike eenheid bespreek, en vyf spesiale verslae voorberei. In een daarvan is 'n sterk aanval op rassediskriminasie gedoen.

*Die Transvaler, 29 Julie 1963.*

## The church in the world

Pro Ecclesia

### PROFESSOR OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS SLATES RACIALISM: AMERICA'S FALSE RELIGION

It is now a commonplace to say that communism, like materialism and secularism, is a religion rather than merely a social theory and that this religion engages in a life and death struggle against Christianity. What is not so generally acknowledged is that racism, which is a much more serious internal threat to the United States than communism, is also a religion and a natural foe of Christianity. In the National Council of Churches' annual race relations message George D. Kelsey, professor of Christian ethics at Drew University, makes this point and undergirds it with convincing theological insight:

Racism must be understood for what it is — a religion competing with the Christian faith. The racist affirmation of superiority and inferiority is not, as is commonly supposed, merely a social theory. Rather, it is an affirmation of faith, a declaration concerning the nature of human being. The racist consciousness affirms the condemnation of one race and the creative destiny of another by Nature. This is a conviction concerning the nature of human being, concerning the givenness of human nature. As such it is an ultimate claim.

The tragedy for American Christianity is that whereas communism is recognized as a foe of Christian faith, racism

is not. On the contrary, racism has its most virulent forms within the Christian church and among Christian people. In some quarters racism even receives blessings derived from distorted biblical study and twisted theology. This enemy, unrecognized or else dignified by corrupt codes of genteel morality, destroys the Christian faith from within. There is no way to escape, no way to conquer this enemy unless we see that racism is, as Kelsey puts it, „diametrically opposed to the insights of Christian faith.”

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REV. CLIFFORD R. WELCH\*

# THE GREAT EJECTMENT

## (PART 2)

It is fascinating to see that our pattern of government as a result of the government of our Churches, allowing them freedom to govern their own affairs under Christ, and to associate in a brotherly fellowship with all other Congregational Churches, without strictly binding them to conform in things about which there may be difference of approach, has been adopted as we shall see again later, by the British Commonwealth of Nations. The Commonwealth of Nations is the Congregational Church government writ large. They are free to move in a loose organisation which demands only their subscription to the basic freedoms which must obtain of men and women, and nations are to live together in harmony. What then was it our forefathers desired so much that they braved persecution, imprisonment and death itself to grasp it for themselves and their descendants?

### A Pure Church

The answer in threefold: -

1. They wanted a pure Church, founded in the Word of God as presented to them by the New Testament. The technical title given to such a communion is "a gathered Church". This is to differentiate it from a group of people meeting together merely because of a geographical situation. The implication was that because a man was born as an Englishman he was a Christian. (I have always thought foreigners might find this assumption somewhat impertinent).

The description, a gathered Church is recognised throughout the ecclesiastical world to-day and acknowledged to have something of the essence of everlasting life on this earth for two reasons. The first is the scriptural authority, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" but the second reason is that of practical necessity. It is painfully revealed that wherever the Church is persecuted, in whatever century or country it must of inevitability become Congregational in its pattern. Where the Church is disallowed, be it in Nazi Germany or Communist China, and has to go underground, at that point of suffering, where there can be no ecclesiastical authority or organisation, there they continue to discover, "that where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst".

A pure Church has meant a disciplined Church, and we rightly exercise to-day Godly discipline within our Church. There are the dangers of which we are acutely aware — hypocrisy on the one hand and laxity on the other, but it is not our purpose to spend time on an exposition of that which is common knowledge to all of us here.

### A Free Church

2. They wanted a free Church. This has not been so well understood. We are very wrong to imagine they stood for anarchy in Church belief. It has been said that, "The Puritan did not spend his days imprisoned in the dungeon of his own private fancies, and criticising Holy Scripture with a pair of scissors." They made it their boast that they had no independent theology. As Owen put it in a Letter Concerning Excommunication, "There is nothing determined by the ancient councils to belong unto Christian Faith which Dis-

senters disbelieve . . . They own the doctrine of the Church of England as established by law, in nothing receding from it; nor have they any novel or uncatholic opinion of their own."

We cannot emphasise too strongly that a "free" church has never meant an heretical church. It meant freedom of Christ's Holy Church from all alien control, notably that of the State. Totalitarian statecraft which would regard the Church as a State department has always been to us an abomination. The claims made by the Bishop of Rome are a usurpation equally blasphemous.

Our fathers met the high Erastian and the high Clerical doctrines of their time with a high Church doctrine. In the name of the New Testament High Churchmanship they denied that Kings or Bishops, Magistrates or Parliaments have any divine right to control the Israel of God, which holds its authoritative commissions from heaven.

Here again we can see fresh light on the publication of the Book of Common Prayer. It is mistaken to imagine that such a free Church represented lack of dignity in worship or the absence of ritual. You can find examples to the contrary in our churches in every country where we are represented. But it does stand for sincerity, imagination, and, if one may put it thus, room in which the Holy Spirit may freely move. It is anathema not merely for us to see even to-day Parliamentary sanction having to be given to a revised Book of Common Prayer, but also that same the wording of the prayers, the same expression of worship in identical inflexible phrases have been re-iterated in every parish, in every city, in every country where it is used in worship. To a Congregationalist this is to use ritual as a chain rather than wings, as an anchor to the past rather than sail to voyage out into uncharted seas. This seems to him, rather than being an aid to the Spirit of God to move amongst, to be a brake, and curtailing in depressing monotony and conformity the working of the Spirit of the Galilean in contemporary society.

But of this we are all of us most familiar. The ground we have trodden is well-worn, the tracks are known to us all. Following our steps, after we had blazed the trail, came the evangelical revival and our pathway became a great highway of the faith for others to express their devotion to Almighty God with a freedom and spontaneity of worship that was unhampered by the formal forms approved by parliamentary sanctions. As has been said, the purity of the Church for which we have always stood, and the freedom of the Church is familiar, if none the less holy ground for us.

There is however a third answer to the question for what did our forefathers suffer, and for what primarily do we stand, to differentiate our witness from those around us?

### A Tolerant Church

3. The fathers whom we commemorate to-day wanted, and we want, a tolerant church. Perhaps more than anything else in the early days this is what kept us apart from our natural allies, the Presbyterians. They abused this principle of toleration as a "Devil's mas-

terpiece", and as "The great Diana of the Independents". Their zeal was so indistinguishable from bigotry that John Milton hit the nail precisely on the head when he described the "new Presbyterian as but an old priest, writ large."

The Congregationalists, to their lasting credit, insisted that there must be respect for the consciences of men whom Christ has set free. When you consider the temper of the age or perhaps we might say of any age) one of the attractive novelties of all history is that such a principle should have been acted upon when it was so alien to the times in which they lived. There must be given more than one answer to the riddle of tolerance dwelling in a house divided against itself — as was England in the seventeenth century. Much honour for this attitude must be given to Oliver Cromwell himself who must be the most tolerant winner of a civil war that this world has ever seen.

Even unfriendly witnesses testify to Cromwell's magnanimity. It has been said of him, "The springs of this greatness of soul lay far deeper than his attachment to the Independent Way (Congregationalists). Yet it was an Independent among Independents — and especially in the fellowship of the gathered Church — that Cromwell's highminded tolerant spirit was matured and perfected". And of this company of fighting men with a Bible in one hand and a sword in the other it was said by Joshua Sprigge, chaplain to the Lord General, Sir Thomas Fairfax, "Many of the officers, with their men, were very much engaged in prayer and reading of the scriptures, an exercise that soldiers, till of late, have used but little; and thus they went on and prospered. . . There were many of them differing in opinion, yet not in action or business: they all agreed to preserve the kingdom; they prospered more in their unity, than in their uniformity. Whatever their opinions were, they plundered none with them, they betrayed none with them; and they were more visibly pious and peaceable in their opinions than those we call more orthodox". The fact is that Cromwell's Model Army was virtually a gathered Church. They would spend sometimes a day in prayer, and their discussions were the great questions of liberty of conscience being granted to those of a different persuasion.

What they were fighting for themselves they were determined to offer to others. Tolerance is a remarkable virtue in any man, but to these passionately fervent soldiers of Christ it seems to be nothing short of a gift from the hands of God. This is a gift which is seldom found among the religious, or the religions, of the world. We more often than not ignore Our Lord's teaching on tolerance as especially found in Luke 9 : 49-56. Meeting opposition the disciples cried, "Lord, may we call down fire from heaven to burn them up?" But he turned and rebuked them. (Most Christians would have a cigarette lighter handy to offer for the conflagration).

### Tolerance as a virtue

Tolerance is one of the hardest virtues to exercise for the religious, for it means the control and direction of passionate enthusiasm, and unfortunately where tolerance does exist it all

too often exists for the wrong purpose. We tolerate evil just because we are lazy. Edmund Burke reminded England over 150 years ago, and his words are still true, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing."

This was not the tolerance of the men of 1662. They never abused the virtue, which is what constantly, to our cost, we find in our churches. Cranks seize on this spirit of our Church life, enter our fellowships, and understanding nothing of tolerance and respect for the other person's opinion, force through like steamrollers their own impertinent schemes, while the saints, with mistaken courtesy, sit back and watch their virtue torn to shreds. Or, writ argle, I challenge any missionary of the London Missionary Society to find any other Church than the Congregational which will give such liberty of movement on the field of service. I mean by that, that governments are slowly and ponderously learning that they must persuade the electorate to a certain course, and the nation must agree together. This springs into civil life from the principle in ecclesiastical life of the gathered Church. It is hardly necessary to emphasise the belief of the new world in the freedoms for which we have stood for 300 years. This is part of the stuff of living together. But, the world to-day is now hungry as it has never been before, for this third contribution which Congregationalism makes to orderliness, i.e. toleration. Modern communications have meant that unless we learn this lesson on a world horizon we are suite literally going to commit suicide.

Possibly Congregationalism's bravest contribution to the survival of the world at all is to tell and tell, and tell again the peoples of the earth that they must learn to love together with respect for each other. We must hammer this truth home, and live it out in our own lives. As we stand in this deep valley of the twentieth century, with towering giants on either side, the East and the West, glowering at each other across an ever widening abyss, is there any more relevant and special message than that we must learn to live together in tolerance and respect?

This does not mean lessening our endeavours to persuade others to surrender their lives to the mastery of Jesus Christ — but it does mean preparing to throw off prejudice against another's ritual in Christian worship, or dislike of their form of Church government, in order to join with them in a desperately urgent march under the banner of the Lord Jesus Christ, to bring all things under subjection to His commands.

We must go forward in faith and prayer that this contribution on a world scale will be achieved. And go forward, not in the feeble faith of a company of people gathering to pray for rain, and leaving their umbrellas at home, but as an people expectant of great things for God, but knowing that the road is long, it is indeed a pilgrimage; that there is no victory without sacrifice, and no glory without a cross.

(End.)

\* Rev. Clifford R. Welch is the Moderator of the Congregational Church for the Northern Cape, O.F.S., Transvaal and Rhodesia and this article was written in 1962 with a view to give members of other churches an insight into the history of the Congregational Church.

PROF. A. VAN SELMS

# GEVAARLIKE WOORDE

## III. „BONT” IN DIE OU TESTAMENT

Daar is omtrent 30 tekste in die Ou Testament waar die Hebreeus een van sy vyf woorde vir „bontgekleur” gebruik. Moenie bang wees nie; ek sal die Hebreeuse woorde nie almal opnoem nie, en u ook 'n bespreking van die dertig tekste bespaar. Ons neem maar net die vernaamste. En die een, waaraan u miskien gedink het, as u in u jong jare nog die Statevertaling gelees het, naamlik die veelkleurige rok van Josef, val uit. Tereg het ons Afrikaanse vertaling daardie uitdrukking met „lang rok met moue” weergegee (Gen. 37 : 3). Ons moet dus ook eintlik 'n nuwe naam vind vir daardie plantjie, wat ons gewoonlik Josefrok noem, want moue het dit nie, maar bont is dit wel. Miskien mag ons netnou 'n voorstel maak.

Ons gaan vinnig verby aan tekste soos Eseg. 26 : 16 en 27 : 16 en 24, waaruit blyk dat die veelkleurige kleren 'n voorstellende kleding was, waarmee Tirus se koopliede handel gedryf het. Daardie voorstellende van 'n bont drag speel ook 'n rol in Eseg. 17 : 3, waar die koning van Babel, die grootste wêreldheerser van sy tyd, met 'n veelkleurige voël vergelyk word. Verder blyk uit Rigters 5 : 30 dat bont kleren een van die mees begeerde stukke buit was, wat iemand van 'n verslaë teenstander kon ontnem en aan sy beminde by sy triomfantlike terugkoms present gee. Dit is alles uit 'n oogpunt van kultuurgeskiedenis interessant, maar het vir ons vandag geen betekenis meer nie.

### „Bont” en die heiligdom

Meer as bloot historiese betekenis het wat ons in Ex. 26 : 36 lees. Dit is midde in die beskrywing van die tent, wat Moses op die bevel van God as 'n godsdienslike middelpunt vir sy volk moes oprig. Daar staan die volgende: „Jy moet ook vir die ingang van die tent 'n bedekking maak van pers en purperrooi en bloedrooi stowwe en fyn dubbeldraadlinne, veelkleurige werk.” Dit is uiters merkwaardig: die gordyn wat die toegang tot die heilige afsluit, is bont, uitermate bont gekleur. Die verskillende kleure word genoem — waarby die fyn dubbeldraadlinne natuurlik die wit verteenwoordig, en om seker te maak dat ons goed sal beseft dat daardie gordyn inderdaad 'n bontgordyn moet wees, staan daar uitdruklik by dat dit „veelkleurige werk” moet wees. Sou daardie bonthed van die ingang van die sentrale heiligdom 'n simboliese betekenis hê? Is daar iets in die beskrywing van die tent wat nie simbolies is nie?

Moenie dink dat dit maar toevallig so was nie. Dat daar wel deeglik 'n bedoeling agter skul, blyk stellig uit die feit, dat ook die toegang tot die voorhof, in die midde waarvan die tent gestaan het, netso bont moes wees. Dit lees ons in Ex. 27 : 16: „en vir die poort van die voorhof 'n bedekking van twintig el, van pers, purperrooi en bloedrooi stowwe en fyn dubbeldraadlinne, veelkleurige werk.” Elke Israeliet wat sy godsdienspligte op die voorhof verrig, moes deur daardie bont deurgang deurgaan, en die priester wat die daelike diens moes waarneem, moes deur twee bont voorhange heen.

### Die kleren van die hoëpriester

En dit is nie al nie. In Ex. 28 : 4 word die kleren van die hoëpriester, die voorafskaduwing van onse Here Jesus Christus, beskrywe, en daarby word „'n kunstig bewerkte rok” genoem. As u die nuutste en betroubaarste Hebreeuse woordeboek sou raadpleeg; sou u sien dat daardie rok eintlik 'n bont rok was. Maar as u dit veveel moeite vind om in woordeboeke te gaan gra-

Ja mevrou, ons is nog altyd met die bont besig. Dis nou nie omdat u hierdie Kersfees tevergeefs op u mink of karakoelpels gewag het nie; ons sou dit nie waag om met teleurstellings te spot nie. Maar ons moet wel aangaan met ons bespreking van die woord „bont”, omdat daardie woord, wat op so 'n merkwaardige manier in die Nuwe Testament gebruik word, ook op heelwat plekke in die Ou Testament voorkom.

HIERDIE IS DIE DERDE IN 'N REEKSE VAN KORT, INDRINGENDE ARTIKELS OOR „GEVAARLIKE WOORDE” IN DIE HEILIGE SKRYF GESKRYF OP SO 'N MANIER DAT ELKE LESER EN ELKE LIDMAAT DIT KAN VOLG EN VERSTAAN.

we, kyk dan 'n slag in Ex. 39 : 29, waar ons die beskrywing van Aäron se gordel vind; dit is weer, soos die twee gordyne, „van fyn dubbeldraadlinne en van pers en purperrooi en bloedrooi stowwe, veelkleurige werk”. Weer vra ons: sou dit nie sy betekenis hê nie? Waarom moes die hoëpriester 'n bont gordel dra?

Dit laat ons aan u eie gedagtes oor. Dit is geen kompliment vir die leser as alles aan hom voorgesê word nie. U mag self ook iets uitvind. Maar in die

verbygaan: ons het hierbo belowe dat ons daardie plantjie wat Josefsrok genoem is, van 'n nuwe naam sou voorsien, noudat die rok van Josef volgens die Afrikaanse vertaling nie meer 'n bont een is nie, maar 'n lange met moue. Sou dit nou nie gepas wees nie as ons daardie plantjie met sy bontgestrepte blare „Aäron se gordel” sou gaan noem nie?

### Die bont skape

U het ondertussen welig ook aan Jakob se skape gedink. Die stamvader van Israel het volgens Gen. 30 : 32-39 as die loon op sy werk net daardie skape begeer wat, nadat eers al die swart skape en „die bontes en gespikkelde onder die bokke” verwyder is, gebore is uit daardie wit skape en bokke wat „apart” gehou is. Jakob het die bont skape as sy eiendom begeer, en God het daarvoor gesorg dat daar nie teenstaande die apartheidsmatreëls volop bontes was. „Welgeluksalig”, so sê ons geliefde Ps. 146, „is hy wat die God van Jakob het as sy hulp”. Gee dit ook al weer nie baie stof tot gedagtes, dat die aartsvader, ook ons aartsvader in

die geloof, 'n bont kudde wou hê nie?

Maar ondertussen dink u welig tog by uself: Ek erken dit alles en ek sien ook wel waarheen die Bybelse getuigenis wys; maar as ek eerlik moet wees, is ek persoonlik tog maar dankbaar dat ek 'n wit skaap uit 'n blanke kudde is! Sê dit nie te stellig nie. Ek het nog 'n teks in reserwe gehou. Psalm 139, in die wonderlike psalmboek een van die wonderlikste, getuig van die misterie van die mens se geboorte en sê: „My gebeente was vir U nie verborge toe ek in die geheim gemaak is nie, kunstig geweeft in die onderste dele van die aarde”. Daardie „onderste dele van die aarde” is 'n beeldspraak vir die moederskoot; daarvoor sou 'n mens heelwat kon vertel, maar vandag gaan ons dit net om wat daaraan voorafgaan: „kunstig geweeft” is in die Hebreeus van dieselfde stam waarvan die woorde afgelei is, wat elders as „veelkleurig” of „bont” vertaal is. Aan die begin van die menslike bestaan, so sê ons psalmdigter dus, staan 'n veelkleurige misterie:

„toe ek, van mense ongemerk, soos kunstborduur sel fyn bewerk, gemaak is in die aarde onder — 'n toonbeeld van u skeppingswonder.”

God skep behae in die veelkleurigheid. Laat my 'n skaap wees van die bont kudde onder die een Herder, die barmhartige Hoëpriester met sy veelkleurige gordel, wat my deur God se bont toegangspoorte inlei tot die ewige Tent.

### DIE KERK EN DIE WERELD

## DIE GEREF. EKUMENIESE SINODE EN RASSEVERHOUDINGE

Omdat die verklaring van die Geref. Ekumeniese Sinode wat 7 Augustus e.v. dae op Grand Rapids, V.S.A. vergader het so 'n wye belangstelling geniet gee ons voorlopig eers net hierdie besluite (deur ons in Afrikaans vertaal) weer om dan in die volgende uitgawes meer uitvoerig verslag te doen oor die belangrikste sake wat op hierdie sinode behandel is. Hier volg dan nou hierdie uiteensetting:

„Die Sinode stel as sy oortuiging dat die Woord van God nog rasse-integrasie, nog aparte rasse-ontwikkeling leer as universeel reëlende beginsels as uitdrukking van die wil van God vir ons Christelike optrede in sake rasseverhouding nie.

Die Sinode dring aan op die grootste versigtigheid in die gebruik van Skriftekste om besondere rasse-beleide daardeur te regverdig.

Die Sinode verklaar dat waar lede van een etniese groep of volk permanent in die land van 'n ander groep of volk leef, alle groepe en volke gelyke God-gegewe menslike regte onder God en die wet gegee moet word. Elke groep of volk mag nie in die uitoefening van sy God-gegewe regte die God-gegewe regte van 'n ander groep of nasie skend nie.

As twee of meer volke in dieselfde land hulle onderskeie identiteite wil handhaaf, kan skeiding tussen die volke nie op grond van beginsels afgedwing word nie.

Waar die burgerlike owerheid die leer van die Woord van God verkrag, is dit die plig van Christene om gesamentlik en individueel die nodige vermaning te rig aan diegene wat die owerheidsbesag beklee. Waar jong kerke wat deur die sendingarbeid ontstaan het, tot verskillende volke behoort en verskillende tale spreek en ander kulture het as die ouer kerk wat die sen-

dingarbeid in die lewe geroep het, is dit raadsaam dat hierdie kerke aparte vergaderings tot op die vlak van hulle eie nasionale sinodes in stand hou. Maar die eenheid van die kerk van Christus, in sy verskeidenheid, moet verder uitgedruk en geopenbaar word of deur die hou van gesamentlike sinodale vergaderings, so gou omstandighede dit toelaat, of in sodanige organisatoriese ontwikkeling as wat die eenheid weerspieël, so ver as wat dit moontlik is om dit te doen. Op hierdie

wyse sal die een kerk van Christus in sy universaliteit, sy eenheid en sy pluriformiteit progressieflik onder die volke van die wêreld geopenbaar word.”

Vir verdere studie van die sake in hierdie verklaring genoem en van enkele ander punte in sake rasseverhouding is 'n studiekommissie benoem wat op die volgende Sinode verslag moet doen.

(Prof. H. du Plessis in Die Kerkblad, 11 Des. 1963)

## Please explain the word Ecumenical?

Answer: The Greek word oikoumene is a passive participle of the verb oikeo, which means “dwell,” “inhabited,” and it was used to mean the “inhabited earth,” the “world.” Our English word ecumenical comes from this Greek word, and is used to refer to something as “worldwide.” When used of the Church, it describes the Church as worldwide and including all Christian groups found anywhere in the world.

One reason Protestants use the word so much is that they consider it a good substitute for the word catholic. This word catholic means “universal” and describes the Church as extending through the entire world, but it has come to be widely used to refer to the Roman Catholic Church, so that many Protestants prefer to use the word ecumenical to refer to the “worldwide” Church.

Actually, our United Presbyterian Church is as “catholic” or “universal” in its outlook as any other denomination, for we hold that every person in every place who sincerely believes in

Jesus Christ and lives in the fellowship of Christian believers is a member of the worldwide Church. This is what we mean when we make our Christian confession by saying together the Apostles' Creed, and say: “I believe . . . in the holy catholic Church,” that is, in the one holy worldwide Church. This is the basic and original meaning of the word catholic, and we can continue to use the word with that meaning.

Another idea intended in the wide use of the word ecumenical is that the Church includes all denominations that confess Jesus Christ as divine Lord and Saviour, since it has no national or racial limitations but includes all Christians of every country and race. Christ prayed that his disciples might be one (John 17 : 21), and his followers cannot be satisfied to see the Church split into as many denominations as now exist. We should pray and think in terms of the worldwide Church and cultivate friendship, understanding, and unity between Christians of every land, race and denomination.

Presbyterian Life,  
May 15, 1963.

# News from the Christian Institute

## [Extracts from the Second News Letter]

### ATTACKS ON INSTITUTE

Since its inception, numerous attacks have been launched from several quarters against the Institute. The Executive Committee has felt all along that our aims and objects are so clear and above reproach that in fact no defence is necessary for attacks launched against the Institute. Therefore, we will certainly not reply to individual attacks or accusations by irresponsible people. As a result, however, of unfounded criticism from various bodies the Executive Committee issued the following statement on the 9th November, 1963.

### STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Christian Institute considers it necessary to issue a statement in the light of the unfounded attacks which have been made against it from various quarters and the malicious rumours which have been spread. On the instructions of its Executive Committee, it makes the following declaration:

### ACCUSATIONS OF LIBERALISM AND COMMUNISM

The Christian Institute wishes to point out that the deliberately false equation of Liberalism with Communism is a subtle method, which will ultimately prove unsuccessful, of creating confusion in the minds of those ordinary members of the public who have not yet learnt to distinguish very clearly between these two concepts. The Christian Institute has not yet received from those who have attacked it a clear definition of what precisely they mean by Liberalism. If by Liberalism is meant the liberty to be free to depart from the Word of God and the binding nature of that Word, then the Institute wishes clearly to dissociate itself from that interpretation of Liberalism. Likewise, if Liberalism means collaboration with any organisation or ideology which may seek to misuse the Church of Christ in order to propagate its own political self-interest, then the Institute again dissociates itself completely from any such attempt.

As for Communism, the subtle references to the Christian Institute as a conscious or unconscious instrument of Communism are patently false to anyone who has honestly and sincerely taken note of the basis, composition and aims of the Institute, and have an obvious parallel in the "McCarthyism" at one time so common in the U.S.A. when people furthered their own ends by sowing suspicions and doubts concerning convinced Christians and respected Christian organisations by the technique of equating them with Communism. For all those whose minds are sincerely open to conviction, we therefore reaffirm that the Christian Institute is based on the Bible as the Word of God, on the belief in God the Father, in Jesus Christ the Son, Redeemer and Lord, and in the Holy Spirit; that the Institute wishes to serve the Church of Christ in all possible ways; and that it therefore rejects the aims and methods of the Communist ideology of which it is not, nor will be, an instrument. Indeed, one of the first study projects which the Institute will undertake, will in fact concern communism.

### CHRISTIANITY AND MULTI-RACIALISM

Since the establishment of the Insti-

tute, it has clearly been in the interests of certain bodies to cite the so-called multi-racialism of the organisation as a convenient method of sowing suspicion and arousing hostility against it. The fact has been overlooked that the Christian Church in its inception did not distinguish between Christians of different groups or races and that Paul condemned any discrimination based on this sort of distinction.

Because the Christian Institute is based on the acceptance of the Word of God, its racial composition is merely incidental; what is decisive is the fact that it is Christian and wishes to be Christian.

### UNITY AND DIVERSITY

The Christian Institute recognises and respects with gratitude the God-given diversity of the world, and is compelled to withstand the cries and demands for a unity which cannot stand against the test of the Scriptures. Precisely for this reason, the Institute wishes to aid its members to understand and to put into practice the true unity of all believers according to the Will of Christ within and for his Church. If this is to be condemned as a "false striving to unity", („valse eenheidstrew") then the Word of God is also false.

### POLITICS AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Certain people and circles have alleged that the Christian Institute was born as the result of political motivation, and that it wishes to be (or could unwittingly become) the instrument of political interests. We categorically declare that these allegations are completely without foundation and that the Institute is not planning to align or associate itself with any political party or interests. At the same time it must be clearly understood that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is for the whole society throughout the whole world. Therefore, where the Scriptures have a word to say on man living in community, that is on political questions, the Institute will not evade its responsibility in enunciating the principles which are involved in legislation.

### FINANCE AND SUPPORT

Malicious rumours have been spread concerning a number of allegedly dubious sources from which the Institute is supposed to have received support. For this reason the Institute declares:

1. Numbers of members of the various churches in South Africa (including the Afrikaans churches) have already made contributions and donations which have enabled work to be started.
2. The Executive Committee of the Institute decided some time ago that every donation would be considered on its merits and that no donation could be accepted which could in any way compromise or damage the carrying out of its aims. It is therefore self-evident that the Institute cannot possibly consider accepting money from leftist or other dubious sources. The conditions referred to above apply equally to donations offered by Christians or Christian organisations in other countries.
3. The income of the Institute has been augmented by membership subscriptions and by numerous small donations received daily which have enabled it to meet ordinary day-to-day administration and running costs.
4. For the information of those per-

sons who are implying that the World Council of Churches is giving financial support to the Institute, we wish to make it clear that in terms of the constitution of the World Council it is permitted to give support only to churches and to councils affiliated on behalf of churches. The Christian Institute is neither a church nor is it competent or qualified to act as a church, and for these reasons it would be quite impossible for the World Council of Churches to lend it financial support.

### ORIGIN AND METHOD OF ATTACK ON INSTITUTE

There is an obvious pattern of similarity in the methods that have been used by the various bodies which have attacked the Institute and in the content of the arguments and imputations which have been employed to substantiate these allegations. One is therefore faced with the irresistible conclusion that a centrally-directed campaign must have been organised somewhere behind the scenes.

The influence of the Christian Institute is feared, wholly unnecessarily, because no person ever needs to be afraid of an organisation which is seeking, quite openly and in the light of the Word of God, to try to bring about the greatest good for the welfare of all the inhabitants of South Africa.

Furthermore, the Institute considers that there is absolutely no justification for presenting the public with a row of spectres depicting the very worst that might possibly happen as a result of the creation of the Christian Institute — and then arguing as if these remote fears had actually materialised.

Every honest and sincere Christian will at least give the Christian Institute a reasonable opportunity to prove the validity of its aims before he makes up his mind.

The most extravagant methods which have been used to damage the integrity of the Christian Institute are those which employ cheap propaganda and false logic. The so-called logic employed in this technique "reasons" generally as follows: "Both the Christian Institute and Communism concern themselves with unity." "Therefore the Christian Institute is Communist."

Those who reason in this way show a total and reckless disregard for the principles and claims of truth and justice.

In conclusion, the fear has been expressed that the Christian Institute could be misused for various purposes. Whilst not denying this possibility, the Christian Institute considers that it applies equally to the Church of Christ or to any other Christian organisation. It is precisely for this reason that the Institute will watch and pray to test the spirits to see if they be of God.

On behalf of the Executive Committee.

C. F. B. Naudé  
Director

Since this statement was made the whole position was further complicated by reports about the disclosure (in which Mr. Naudé was indirectly involved) of certain documents of the Broederbond. It is therefore necessary to point out that this whole episode about the Broederbond has nothing to do with the Christian Institute and that the Institute is in no way invol-

ved in this whole matter, nor does it wish to be associated in any way with these events: the Institute as a Christian organisation does not wish to be identified with any secret or semi-secret society or brotherhood and we sincerely hope that all these unfortunate happenings will in no way affect the great task of the Institute.

### THE NEXT STEP

Numbers of people (including newspapermen!) have asked us what our next step is going to be. Before we answer this question we should like to reiterate our aims:

1. To create opportunities for discussion and study of the problems facing Christianity and the Church of Christ in South Africa in the light of Scripture through the establishment of discussion and study groups wherever possible.
2. To provide individual members as well as group with a Bible Study programme of Bible books or portions of Scripture which have a special bearing on our problems.
3. To provide members and groups with lists of books and pamphlets dealing with specific subjects which are under discussion as well as with study and reading material pertaining to subjects chosen for discussion.
4. To call upon members to join in personal and communal prayer for the needs of the church of Christ, our community, persons and groups in need as well as for our Institute. Wherever possible we will assist in the organising and promotion of such circles and announce all such regular prayer group meetings in our newsletter.

As soon as the initial organisation of our office work and correspondence is completed we will start with regional meetings to which members will be invited in order to explain the operation of our study and discussion groups. At such meetings all the arrangements for the establishment of such groups will be made, subjects for discussion and study will be suggested as well as the names and addresses of possible speakers. We hope to start organising these meetings just after the opening of the schools in January, 1964, first on the Rand and Pretoria and then further afield. All members will be notified in time of meetings to be held in specific areas.

### CALL TO JOIN PRAYER GROUP

Members and other interested persons working in the central part of Johannesburg are kindly requested to get in touch with Mr Cross (33-1631) if they are willing to join a regular prayer group which we hope to organise in the Prayer Room of the S. G. Mission, Belfast House (7th Floor) with entrance in Joubert Street. We would especially welcome participation by a representative group of Christians of all languages and races.

### A CANDLE IN YOUR WINDOW ON CHRISTMAS EVE

One of the members of our Board of Management has suggested that we request all Christians with whom we come in contact to place a candle or small lantern or electric light resembling a candle, in one of the windows of their home or flat (if possible a window facing the street) on the Christmas Eve as a witness to Christ through whose birth He came to us as the Light of the World. We pass this on you for your favourable consideration and execution where possible.

# THE CHURCH AND POLITICS

Dear Mrs Smith,

Thank you very much for the way in which you responded to my last letter about the relationships between white and black Christians in the Church. I am grateful that you were not offended at the frankness of my words, and I pray that what follows in this letter will reveal that it has been written in love, and with a strong desire to appreciate and understand both your problem and your point of view.

If I remember rightly, the big problem that you raised in the conversation which followed my last letter was this whole matter of the "Church being involved in politics", the matter of "political parsons" and "political preaching". Perhaps we should look at this more carefully than we were able to when we met.

## Church and Party Politics

In one sense, I really must agree with you. The Church can not and must not take any part at all in party politics. I am quite sure that this means disaster for the Church. The main task of the Church is to preach the Word of God, not to be a publicity agent for any particular party or its policies. Again, the Word of God is eternal, while political parties and their policies last a short while, and then fade away. If the Church linked itself to any one party, it would run the danger of fading when that party faded.

Yet again, one has to remember that in any congregation, there are representatives of all parties. In St. Andrew's, for example, I am sure we have supporters of the United Party, the Progressives, the Liberals and the Nationalists. I rejoice at this — this is how it should be — for the Church of Christ must be so strongly rooted in the faith of Christ that members feel and know their basic unity in spite of the sharpest human differences.

On that point, I cannot help thinking that it is rather tragic that in this country our churches are divided on language and political lines. Broadly speaking, members of Dutch Reformed Churches support the present governing party, while members of the other Churches support the opposition. This is not true of every member, of course, but it is generally true. One of the things that makes it tragic is that we are prevented from seeing how our unity in Christ can overcome our sharp human differences. Just imagine the position we would be in if we knew for a fact that half of St. Andrew's members supported the governing party and the other half the opposition! Just imagine how hard we would have to think and pray and "wrestle" together to find the true will of God for our land. As things are, it is too easy for a minister to take a fairly simple line, knowing that most of his congregation will agree with him anyway. Disagreement between convinced Christians would, I am sure, compel us to search more earnestly and more deeply for God's will than we have done before. This, I am sure, would be of tremendous benefit to our country and all its people.

To take up our main point again: if it is unthinkable that the Church should lend its public and open support to any party, it is even more unthinkable that the Church should itself set up a political party, and give

it a name like the "Christian Democratic Party", for example. I realise that this kind of thing has happened in some of the countries of Europe, but to my mind it suffers from one great drawback: the formation of such a party with such a name implies that if you do not belong to the party, then you are not a Christian. This, of course, is absolute nonsense, as I am sure you will agree.

Now that I think of it, this idea of the formation of a "Christian" political party has another — and perhaps even more serious — drawback. I believe — as you will see from the following paragraphs — that the Church must keep the policies of all parties under the microscope of the Gospel, to see and expose where these policies fall short of the will of God. Now if you have a "Christian" party, it becomes very difficult, if not impossible, to be critical of the policy of that party — or at least to be as critical as one should be.

## Christians and participation in politics

When I say that the Church should not take any part in party politics, I do not mean that individual Christians should steer clear of party politics. On the contrary. The more Christians we have in the parties, the better. I might even go so far as to say that our parties suffer from the fact that there are not enough Christians in them as it is. I mean that Christians should be active in politics at every level: in municipal, provincial and national politics, busy thinking out and applying their Christian faith to the political problems they have to face. Especially, I believe, Christians should be active in the party when it comes to making policy, so that they can bring that policy up against the love and justice that God demands of us, and bring it more into line with the will of God.

That is one of the reasons why the 1962 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church passed a resolution reminding church members "that they are called to serve the communities in which they live, and most strongly urge them to offer their services to community organisations and political parties of their choice". Just think what would happen if all Christians said what some Christians now say — that "politics is a dirty game" — and, for that reason stayed away from political work. Political parties would then be made up of men who were out only to serve their own ends; politics would then be left to non-Christians like fascists, communists and others.

But it is time we came back to our main point. And here I think you may disagree with me. Naturally, you are quite at liberty to do so, but if I attempt to convince you from Scripture that my belief is true, I trust you will understand my challenge to you to prove me wrong also from Scripture. I believe most firmly that while the Church may not concern itself with party politics, it must concern itself with politics. For politics is the science and art of government: government

## (LETTERS OF A MINISTER TO A MEMBER OF HIS FLOCK)

### I

(laws, policies, the administration of justice) affects human beings: whatever affects human beings affects the Church.

Even more than that: besides being concerned with the welfare of human beings, the Church is also and above all, concerned with the will of God. It is the first principle of our belief that God is Lord of all things. "I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth". Now if God is Lord of all things, then he is Lord, not only of the life of individual, nor only of the life of the Church, but he is Lord of all life, in every aspect. In other words he is Lord, and his will must be done, in every sphere of life: economics, industry, education, agriculture, the home, sport — and politics.

Again, is it not true that the Church is God's appointed guardian and agent of his Word, in other words, his will for men? If that is so, then it is part of the Church's task to see where the will of God is being disobeyed — in politics, or anywhere else — to call men to repent of their disobedience and to recall them to closer and deeper obedience to God.

## Politics and marriage

Let us take one or two examples. In the marriage service, we quote the words of Jesus Christ: "Whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder". Man may not separate the husband and wife who have been joined together in God's name. Now what is the Church to do if she sees that things like migrant labour and influx control have a powerful tendency to separate man and wife? Must she not point out that a community that allows that kind of thing is digging its own grave? More important, must she not point out that a society that enforces such separation is, in fact, putting as under what God has joined together, and is, therefore, defying the will of God?

## Politics and our profession

Again, one of the meanings of the parable of the talents (Luke 19 : 11-26) is that if God has given us gifts, then he expects us to put those gifts to work. If we are preachers, then he expects us to preach just as well as we possibly can. If we are teachers, we must put all our energy into our teaching. If we are carpenters, watchmakers, hairdressers, or anything else, God expects us to make the utmost use of the talents he has given us. But now what is the Church to say if she finds that a Job Reservation Act prevents a man from using his talents? What if she finds that a man here, a woman there, has all the makings of a fine philosopher, a first-class dressmaker, and that a law like that prevents the man from becoming a philosopher, the woman from becoming a dressmaker? Must we not say here also that God's will is being disobeyed?

## Politics and sharing of burdens

Take another example. Scripture commands us to bear one another's

burdens (Galatians 6 : 2). This means that if any sacrifice has to be made by the citizens of a country, all should bear their fair share, for the good of the whole. The income tax, for example, bears down more heavily on those who can afford it, and gives a smaller share to those who earn less. But now, what is the Church to say if, under a law like the Group Areas Act, she finds that one section of the community has to bear nearly all the burden of sacrifice, while another section of the community gets practically all the benefit? Is it surprising that when the Church hears of businessmen being deprived of their livelihood under the provisions of this act, she begins to think of the commandment "Thou shalt not steal"?

## The message of the prophets

In all this, the Church can learn a great deal from the careers and message of the prophets. We must not make a mistake about the prophets: the main theme of all their preaching was that Israel (not just individual Israelites) had turned its back on God. As Dr Bernard Anderson says in his book "Rediscovering the Bible": "Resolutely, firmly, stubbornly, Israel had said No to God. She was the faithless wife whose harlotry had led her to pursue other lovers; she was the child who had rebelled against the parent; she was the subject who had committed an act of treason against her King. This was Israel's sickness unto death."

## Israel's sickness:

### I. Rich and poor

This was the root of Israel's trouble. But the fruit — as the prophets saw — was three symptoms of sickness. One of these was man's relationship with his neighbour in the community of Israel. The rich were selling the poor who could not pay their debts for the price of a pair of sandals (Amos 8 : 4, Micah 2 : 2); legal administrators were taking bribes and refusing justice to the poor (Micah 3 : 1-3 and 3 : 11). The prophets thundered against the corruption of a society where the rich were lapped in luxury while the poor had hardly enough to eat (Amos 6 : 4-7, 4 : 1-2). Again, we must be quite clear about the demands of the prophets: they were not asking for a "justice" based on a "liberalistic" idea — the justice they wanted came from obedience to the God who himself was and is) justice and love.

### II. Power politics

The second symptom of sickness was in the realm of power politics. Israel had yielded to the temptation to increase her national prestige in the eyes of the world. So her national policy aimed at enlarging the boundaries of the country by military conquest, and by alliances with one great power after another. The prophets saw all this as one more indication that Israel had turned her back on God. Through the prophets, God warned Israel that his ideal of greatness was not their idea of greatness. Through the prophets also, God rebuked the dreary succession of fools, weaklings and knaves who sat on the thrones of Israel and Judah for their "shrewd" political negotiations with other nations. It is worth noticing, by the way, that the prophets were never afraid of rebuking kings and princes where they felt it to be necessary.

DR. A. J. VENTER\*

# Ons Godsdiens in ons lewensverhoudinge

## Godsdiens skep vrae

As ons sê dat godsdiens in die lewe van die volk vrae skep, dan bedoel ons nie slegs in die geval van die volke waar daar nie godsdiensvryheid is nie, maar veral daar waar daar vryheid hierin bestaan. In laasgenoemde geval is die vrae in hierdie verband dikwels meer in die brandpunt. Selfs die volke wat vir godsdiensdig deurgaang is nie hiervan uitgesluit nie. Ons kan dit aan die hand van ons eie volk baie duidelik sien. So is daar onlangs vanuit baie hoë vlak verklaar: „Ons moet waak daarteen dat die mooi dinge van ons volk — soos ons godsdiens — nie misbruik word om ons op verkeerde bane te lei nie.” Wie na pers en radioberigte luister, sal weet dat die vrae na die plek en die funksie van die godsdiens in ons volkslewe, in die brandpunt van belangstelling gekom het. Vrae soos: mag godsdiens inmeng met ons verhoudingsvraagstukke, het die godsdiens iets positiefs te sê, hoort dit nie tuis net in die Kerk of Sondag nie — sulke vrae kan nog net deur die spreekwoordelike volstruis ontwyk word.

As ons na 'n antwoord hiervoor soek, is dit van meet af aan duidelik dat ons nie kan en ook nie mag vra hoe dié of daardie persoon daarvoor voel nie, of wat die volk daarvan dink nie. Hier kan net die Woord van God die enigste, maar ook afdoende antwoord op gee. Daarvoor hoef ons nie maar afleidings uit die Woord te maak nie, want in Romeine 12 : 1 en 2 word dit op klinkklare wyse gegee.

## I. Dit omvat die hele lewe

Ongetwyfeld spring die woorde „geestelike erediens” in hierdie twee verse die eerste in die oog. Nou kan ons ons dit goed voorstel dat daar 'n koor van stemme meteen opgaan: Daar het jy dit. Ek het mos altyd gesê dat godsdiens sy plek het. Hier bevestig Paulus dit. „Erediens” — dit kan tog net een plek hê — in die kerk. Ek het mos altyd gesê dat godsdiens nie die antwoorde vir my en in my konkrete lewe kan gee nie. Hier sê Paulus nou self dit is „geestelik”, m.a.w. dit het te doen met die siel, saligheid en die hemel. Dit kan dus nie in my alledaagse lewe as 'n maatstaf dien nie, of in my besigheid, my omgang met mense, my politiek, my siening en waardering van dinge, 'n leidinggewende rol vervul nie.

As dit al is wat Paulus gesê het, dan sou u dalk reg wees. Maar nou kom Paulus en sê baie uitdruklik wat die geestelike erediens is en waaruit dit bestaan n.l.: „dat julle jul liggame stel as 'n lewende, heilige en aan God welgevallige offer.”

As Paulus hier praat dan het hy steeds in sy gedagte die Ou Testamentiese erediens, waarvan die offer feitlik die belangrikste element was. In teenstelling daarmee sien hy die diens van die gelowige christen as 'n erediens waarby daar nie meer 'n stoflike offer gebring word nie, maar 'n diens waarby die „liggaam”, d.w.s. die hele lewensopenbaring, as 'n offer aan God toegewy word. In die godsdiens — letterlik diens aan God — gaan dit nie maar net om 'n deel van my lewe nie, nie maar net 'n sekere tyd of geleentheid nie. Hierdie woord „liggaam” sê dat ek in al die verhoudinge waarin ek staan, al die lewensverbande waarin ek my bevind, d.w.s. gesin, werk, ontspanning, sosiaal, volk, politiek, daarin is ek as gelowige aan God toegewy.

Om dit nog duideliker in te skerp, omskryf Paulus hierdie offer van die Nuwe Testamentiese godsdiens as 'n „lewende, heilige en aan God welgevallige offer”. Dit gaan nie maar om iets van 'n sekere oomblik, of by 'n bepaalde geleentheid nie, maar „lewend” d.w.s. dat ek my persoonlik en voort-

Die Christelike godsdiens het nog altyd sowel in die lewe van die individu as dié van die volk, aanleiding gegee tot allerlei vrae. Baie keer het dit baie verder gegaan as bloot net vrae. Soms het dit gekom tot 'n innerlike botsing en wrywing.

In die lewe van die individu lei dit in die meeste gevalle daartoe dat daar verklaar word: elke ding het sy tyd en plek — ook die godsdiens. Besigheid is besigheid, of ontspanning is ontspanning en ek laat net nie my godsdiens met my besigheid of my ontspanning of my politiek inmeng nie. Hoewel nie altyd nie, word in die meeste gevalle hiermee bedoel: godsdiens het sy plek en moet op sy plek gehou word.

durend aan God toewy. Hierdie toewyding moet ook eksklusief wees, dit gaan uitsluitend om God. In my godsdiens kan en mag dit nie gaan om persoonlike of groepsvoordeel nie, ook nie een of ander saak wat in die sentrum te staan kom of 'n tweede sentrum wil vorm nie. Immers die verdere vereiste diens aan God moet „heilig” wees, d.w.s. geheel en al afgesonderd vir Hom, totaal ingestem op diens aan Hom.

## My hele lewe een erediens

Samevattend kom dit dus hierop neer: Godsdiens beteken niks minder as dat my hele lewe een erediens sal wees nie. Dat ek geheel en al en altyd in diens aan God staan. Dat ek in elke verhouding waarin ek staan, elke situasie waarin ek myself bevind, elke verband waarin ek beweeg, in die eerste en in die laaste plek tot beskikking van God staan en van Hom alleen.

Om nou in die lig hiervan te sê dat besigheid is besigheid en politiek is politiek, beteken nie net dat ons op 'n ontoelaatbare wyse godsdiens terugdring in 'n kompartement van sy eie nie, maar baie erger, n.l. dat ons ons aan veelsoortige godsdiens skuldig maak. Om in my gesin, my besigheid of my volk God nie sentraal te stel nie en nie uitsluitend tot beskikking van Hom te staan nie, kom daarop neer dat ons in iets anders of iemand anders se diens staan. En om in iets anders se diens te staan naas en teenoor God, beteken om jou skuldig te maak aan afgodediens. Dit is die naam wat God daarvoor gee, al sou u en ek dit met watter edel naam oorklabet.

## II. Dit is 'n duidelike teenstelling tot die wêreld

Die vraag is: hoe laat hierdie kyk op die godsdiens die Christen in sy optrede onderskei van die nie-christen? Moet sy besigheid, gesin en ander verhoudings nou net 'n bietjie Skriflesing, gebed en sang bykry?

Word daardie geestelike erediens werklik nagekom as ek net sorg vir huisgodsdiens in my gesin, vir 'n biduurtjie saam met my kantoorpersoneel, vir Skriflesing en gebed by 'n party — of volksbyeenkoms en verder is dit presies dieselfde as 'n heidense gesin of volk? Nee, as dit al is waaraan die godsdiensdigtheid uitgeken kan word, dan het ons nog steeds met 'n godsdiensdigtheid te doen wat vreemd is aan die Woord. Dit laat Paulus ons juis verder sien dat ons geestelike erediens 'n allesomvattende en duidelike onderskeid van die wêreld vertoon.

## Die lewensstyl van die Christen

Negatief bestaan dit daarin dat die gelowige se manier van lewe, sy hele lewensstyl nie die van die wêreld is nie: „word nie aan hierdie wêreld gelykvormig nie.” Die wese, gesindheid, handel en wandel van die gelowige mag nie die stempel van hierdie wêreld dra nie. Die gelowige se sterkste dryfkrag in alles mag nie soos dié van die wêreld

wees, n.l. selfsug, eie eer en eie voordeel nie. Die gelowige mag nie soos hierdie wêreld selfgenoegsaam wees nie. Die gelowige se sterkste drang kan nie selfbehoud wees nie, omdat vir hom die Woord van sy Here en Meester geld: „Want elkeen wat sy lewe om My ontwil wil verloor, sal dit vind” Matth. 16 : 25).

Positief, hou die geestelike erediens in die onvoorwaardelike aanvaarding van en gehoorsaamheid aan die wil van God. Paulus sê ons moet „beproof wat die goeie en welgevallige en volmaakte wil van God is.” Nou beteken beproef seker nie wat ons daarvan in die gewone omgangstaal by tye maak nie, n.l. op die proef stel. Hier word bedoel met beproef die beredwilligheid om die wil van God te leer ken asook om dit uit te voer. Dit is godsdiens in die praktyk, nie maar net 'n geestelike seremonie, 'n rite wat uitgevoer moet word nie, maar 'n soeke na die wil van God en die gehoorsame uitvoering daarvan.

Dit is veral op hierdie punt waar daar dan ook die wrywing ontstaan. Die gelowige se optrede in alles word bo alles en voor alles deur hierdie een vraag bepaal: wat wil God van my? Dit is nou juis die kenmerk van ware godsdiens dat dit nie maar net die wil van God met die verstand aanvaar of met die mond toestem nie en dit dan verder daarby laat nie. Dit kan nie, want Paulus sê dit is 'n volmaakte wil van God, d.w.s. 'n wil waaraan tot in sy uiterste konsekwensie en in sy radikale eis uitvoering gegee moet word.

In die lig hiervan word dit duidelik waarom godsdiens in die persoonlike lewe spanning meebring en in die volkslewe dikwels as 'n bedreiging gesien word. In my lewe as gelowige moet die oorwegings van gemak en gerief, van eie voordeel en eer, van

handhawing en behoud vervang word deur die soeke na die wil van God.

Dit wil ons nie. Daarom spanning. By die volk — veral waar dit as godsdiensdig deurgaang — mag die vraag dan ook nie wees na die wil van die volk, die begeerte van die volk, of sentiment of tradisie van die volk nie, ook nie die na die behoud nie, maar na die wil van God. So kan godsdiens in die vraagstuk van ons rasseverhoudinge dan alleen as bedreiging gesien word en wrywing veroorsaak as ons naas die vraag na die wil van God ook 'n ander vraag ewe hard laat meetel: wat wil die volk of wat wil 'n bepaalde bevolkingsgroep.

## Geen vrees vir gevolge

Beoefen ons so godsdiens, kan ons dit onmoontlik as bedreiging gaan sien nie, kan dit onmoontlik die volk op verkeerde bane lei, want dan eers word die volk in die weg van die Here gelei. As ons godsdiens so gaan funksioneer in ons lewensverhoudinge, m.a.w. as ons so streef na die uitvoering van die wil van God, kan ons seker weet dat die goeie sal volg. Dan hoef die benouende en beangstigende vrae oor waarheen sal dit lei, waar sal dit eindig, ons nie te kwel nie omdat ons dan byvoorbaat onwrikbaar seker kan weet dat dit goed sal eindig. Dit sê Paulus tog hier: „goeie wil van God”, d.w.s. dit was goed, wat heilsaam is vir die mens. God weet en wil wat goed is vir die mens en die mens word daardie goeie alleen deel deur die wil van God te doen.

Maar om dit te kan doen — godsdiens so te beoefen — gebeur nie maar net om dit as 'n teorie of ideologie te probeer beoefen nie. Daarvoor moet iets baie groter plaasvind — 'n verandering deur die vernuwing van ons gemoed. Om die wil van God so te ken en so te doen, moet in ons 'n radikale ommekeer plaasvind. Ons moet radikaal vernuwe word. En dit nie maar net eenmaal nie, maar voortdurend. Ons gemoed, ons verstand, ons insig, ons instelling, ons gesindheid, dit moet vernut word. Daarvoor moet die Gees van die Here ten volle beslag lê op ons sodat Hy die gesindheid van Christus in ons kan kweek. Dit was Sy gesindheid: Om die wil van sy Hemelse Vader te doen.

\* Die inhoud van die artikel is oorspronklik as preek gelewer met teksteers Rom. 12 vs. 1 en 2. Die skrywer is leraar van die N.G. Kerk, Johannesburg.

## THE CHURCH AND POLITICS

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### III. Popular religion

The third symptom of Israel's sickness was in the area of "popular religion". In the days of the prophets, religion seemed to be flourishing. The temple was crowded with worshippers, the altars were smoking with sacrifices. But the prophets saw that crowded churches, and a prosperous church budget were no guarantee at all of true godliness. They saw — and we need to see too — that religion so easily degenerates into magic, into the attempt to "get God on our side", into the attempt to convince ourselves that, because we are pious and regular in our attendance at church, God will look after us. They saw that with his religion, man attempts to "win friends and influence people" to gain "peace of mind" and security, to guard against danger. There are so many references to this in the prophets that one could say "Turn to the prophets and open any page" — and you would find a condemnation of this kind of popular

religion. We can learn from this that full churches, eloquent preachers, and a great fuss about Sunday swimming, is no indication that the people are truly pious, truly Christian, no proof that politics are truly according to God's will.

This letter is already far too long, but I sincerely hope that it will help you to think through this whole matter, a matter in which serious Christians have disagreed in times past, and in which I suppose they will disagree in the future. The one thing that bears repeating is: let us think and argue together in the light of the Scriptures, and, if we believe a man's convictions are wrong, let us prove it from the Scriptures. I shall be more than interested to discuss these questions with you when we have a further opportunity for getting together.

Yours very sincerely,

R. Orr.

(N.B.—The name chosen has no relation to any person in my congregation. — R.O.)