

PRO VERITATE

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BABEL AND

What have Babel and Pentecost to do with each other? Much more than may at first meet the eye, though it be mainly by contrast. Both Babel and Pentecost have to do with LANGUAGE. Babel tells of the confusion and division arising out of men's inability to speak and understand each others' language; whereas the first striking result of Pentecost is the unity and fellowship of men of numerous nations arising out of their ability to declare and to hear "the wonderful works of God" in language that all could understand.

Babel tells of a punishment of God. It is about the curse of division that man brought upon himself by the sin of pride and disobedience. Pentecost tells of the rich blessing of God. It is about the precious unity and fellowship that man finds in humble faith and obedience to God.

Pentecost shows us God reversing the curse of Babel. Babel and Pentecost both first took place in the long long ago; but both have been taking place ever since and both are very real on the human scene today.

The meaning of Babel

Let us look at them a little more closely. The story of Babel tells how the children of men, still undivided into peoples, set about building a great city and a mighty tower with its top in the heavens. Without a thought of God, their proud purpose was "to make a name for themselves lest they be scattered abroad upon the face of the

earth," lest they lose their identity and security and superiority. But the irony of it is that, by the very action they took, they lost what they most desired and brought about what they most feared and most sought to prevent.

This a picture of what has happened again and again in the lives of men and nations. They have thought that by their own devices they could reach the pinnacle of coveted importance and sit triumphantly on top of the world; but they have always failed.

Egypt, Greece, Rome. . .

The Egyptian Pharaohs thought they could do that. Proud of their achievements and thirsting for everlasting fame, they carved gigantic statues of themselves, raised the obelisks which were chiselled with the record of their honours and harnessed innumerable slaves to the task of building the colossal pyramids. But statues, obelisks and pyramids all stand among

the empty sand of a civilization that slowly drifted to decay long ago.

Greece sought to achieve her eminence in the exaltation of art and philosophy and knowledge, believing that that could make life complete and great. But when one speaks of it now, one speaks of "the glory that WAS Greece." It is a thing of the past.

Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Rome all set themselves in the pride of power to build on earth a structure that ignored God and would match whatever authority there might be in the heavens. If there was a throne of God, they would climb up and occupy it.

Other peoples of the modern world have followed, and will yet be tempted to follow, their example. Immense material resources, marvels of scientific invention, unprecedented resources, unprecedented military might, the control of atomic energy and the exploration and conquest of space. . . are not these at last the "bricks" out of which the

fantastic Tower may be built that will reach far beyond the heavens and enable men and nations to supplant the sovereignty of God and do without God altogether?

Within living memory the aspirations of various builders of Babel have been put into cryptic slogan form that is still ringing in our ears:- "The third Reich will last for a thousand years." "There will always be an England." "America — God's own country!" Is there not in all of these an element of that same blind arrogance and pride of power which became obsessed with building the Tower that ultimately must be confounded?

Truly, the picture of the Tower of Babel is the picture of a recurring factor in the life of man. It is the picture of present-day reality in many lands, and it still confronts us with its prophecy and its warning.

God put an end to the building of the first Tower of Babel by means of a

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Ds. D. J. Malan*

META NOIA onder die bedeling van die Gees

Sinsverandering is die karakteristiek van die Bedeling van die Gees. Sinsverandering of wedergeboorte is die sin qua non vir die bestaan en voortbestaan van die christelike godsdiens. Hierdie „verandering” geskied in die diepte van die gemoed, in die onbewuste waaruit die uitgange van die lewe is. Jesus noem dit die wedergeboorte deur die Gees.

Hoe geskied dit? Alleen gees kan met gees in aanraking kom. Alleen die Gees van God kan die spige, die noia, van 'n mens verander. En dit is wat Jesus leer. Om aan die Koninkryk van die hemele te behoort moet iemand deur die Gees en water weergebore word en sonder hierdie wedergeboorte kan iemand nie in die Koninkryk van God ingaan nie. „Julle moet weer gebore word” Joh. 3 : 7. In die tyd waarin ons nou lewe het hierdie waarheid 'n verhoogde betekenis verkry soos ons wil aantoon.

TWEE KONINKRYKE

Daar is vandag twee Koninkryke. Daar is die Konink-

ryk wat ons Here Jesus gestig het en daar is die ander, die Koninkryk van die ongeloof in God en van geloof in die mens. Hieraan wil ons die aandag gee.

Die duiwel in die woestyn dui hierop toe hy aan ons Here al die Koninkryke van die wêreld en hulle heerlikheid wys en sê: „al hierdie dinge sal ek U gee as U neerval en my aanbid.” En Jesus stel hierteenoor: „Die Here jou God moet jy aanbid en Hom alleen dien”. En ons Here Jesus het geleef en sy lewe gegee aan die kruis om die Koninkryk van God te stig wat strek tot aan die uiterste van die aarde. In hierdie Koninkryk is daar een

Regeerder en Argitlepe, die Vader wat in die hemele is: „Wees julle volmaak” soos julle Vader „in die hemele volmaak is”. Dit is die Koninkryk teenoor die Koninkryk van die wêreld en hulle heerlikheid.

Om in die Koninkryk van God in te gaan, moet iemand herskep word „in die Gees van sy gemoed”. So ook ondergaan die mense 'n nuwe oriëntering en herskepping om aan die ander, die Koninkryk van die wêreld te behoort waarin die ou mens nie afgelê word nie maar op die troon geplaas word. Hierdie Koninkryk het sy eie kode van moraliteit vir die staat en die volk. 'n Nuwe orde en Wêreldgees word voorop gestel. Hierdie koninkryk skep die grootste moderne probleem en daag die godsdiens uit wat deur Gods Gees die mens wil inspireer en lei in die koninkryk van geloof in God.

Hierdie stryd het diep wortels in die ver verlede. Wat die verligte volke betref wortel die

een koninkryk in die Griekse filosofie van menslike wysheid; die ander in die openbaring van die Godsregering onder Israel. Paulus verwys hierna in 1 Kor. 1 : 19-31 „Die wysheid van die wêreld het God nie geken nie” vers 20. „Naar wat geroep is, die wysheid van God, Jode sowel as Grieke” vers 24.

DIE BOTSING VAN DIE RYKE

Vroeër was die stryd tussen die twee koninkryke alleen op teoretiese gebied onder alle verligte volke gevoer. Nou het die stryd die mensdom in twee kampe verdeel wat met wapengeweld mekaar bedreig, nie-teenstaande die verklarings dat die stryd deur die koue oorlog en nie deur 'n skiet-oorlog gevoer word. Is die mensdom op die pad van Armageddon?

Daar kan nie twee absolute gesagsowerhede wees sonder om in dodelike botsing met mekaar te kom nie. Maar so is dit.

Die een eis onberedeneerde gehoorsaamheid aan die gesag van die absolute of totalitariese staat; die ander eis gehoorsaamheid aan God met die erkenning van sy ewige wette en regering. Om mense te kry om in spontane toewyding aan die een of ander koninkryk te behoort moet daar tweeërlei meta noia gemerk word, die een om in die koninkryk van God in te gaan, die ander in die koninkryk van die godlose staat.

Die sinsverandering neem verskillende vorms aan: in die Ooste, in die Weste en in Afrika. In Afrika geskied die sinsverandering onder die vaandel van uhuru, 'n woordjie wat moeilik is om te vertaal weens sy komplekse inhoud. Dit kenmerk 'n magtige ontwaking uit 'n eeuelange slaap. Sal hierdie meta noia die volke omskep na die kant van die kommunisme en die gesag van die totalitariese staat of na die kant van

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BABEL AND PENTECOST

● From page 1

very simple device. He confused the language of the men who built it. The babble of tongues that broke out there is what gave the place its name... BABEL. Men being unable to understand each other, co-operation ceased, confusion and division reigned, the mighty enterprise of presumption came to an end, and the proud builders of that great city and its fantastic tower broke up into groups who separated themselves from one another and were scattered abroad upon the face of the earth.

Whilst this is an ancient explanation of the origin of the diversities of language and of race in the world, it is important to observe that it cannot be taken to mean that these diversities and resulting divisions and separations are desirable in themselves or that they are to be indefinitely maintained. Those who have occasionally thought so have overlooked the fact that the story of Babel in no way represents these divisions as part of God's original place for mankind, but rather as a punishment which He regrettably inflicted upon men for the sin of their arrogant disobedience.

Disobedience and Confusion

And the ever valid truth with which we are here confronted is that arrogant disobedience to God always results in moral and spiritual confusion of tongues which is veritable curse. It divides men, alienates and separates them from one another, confounds all their work and brings it to a standstill, to disaster or decay.

Was there ever a time when this curse afflicted the world of men more obviously and more devastatingly than now? Indeed, the forces that divide us are threatening to destroy us.

Nations are divided by clashing claims and warring interests, by rival systems of politics and economics. Groups within nations are divided by differences of race and class, of culture and outlook which sometimes take the form of deeprooted prejudices and jealousies and fears. "We do not speak the same language" is a saying that implies "something much more critical and profound than difference in syntax and vocabulary." It implies a sense of alienation in thought, a great gulf cut across the area of feelings and beliefs and aspirations where men and

nations need to stand on common ground.

The horror of divisions is to be found even between different religious groups. So deep are their differences of belief and interpretation and method sometimes, that in exasperation believers have been heard to say of their fellows: — "We just don't speak in the same language as they do."

Families too are increasingly divided by mutual incompatibilities, jealousies, resentments and quarrels ending up in broken homes and divorce.

And individuals themselves are often virtually split in two; not only schizophrenics, but even quite normal people often feel inwardly divided, at war with themselves, their own worst enemies... so that quite often you catch a man out saying: "...I just don't understand myself."

Such is the pitiful and dangerous plight of man. Confused and confounded, his steps are dogged by division and separation and disintegration. And it all stems from his disobedience of God, from the pride which makes him think he can do without God. As at Babel, so here and now, disobedience to God scatters and divides and alienates.

Pentecost as remedy and hope

But the same Bible which tells us of Babel also tells us of PENTECOST, and in the fact and message of Pentecost lie our God-given remedy and hope. Pentecost shows us God's power at work in men who received His message and His Son, men who humbly waited upon Him with prayer and patience, men who trusted Him and OBEYED Him. On the day of Pentecost God's own Holy Spirit came upon them and filled them. This was the fulfilment of Christ's promise to them... the Lord Himself coming again to them in the Spirit, the Living Lord coming to dwell in them and to be part of them. Naturally, it made new men of them.

And the first and immediate recorded result of it was a reversal of the curse of Babel. On that day of Pentecost the first disciples and their 3000 converts of many nations had a unifying experience which transcended all their divisions of race and language and which united them in a

most remarkable fellowship and mutual understanding.

The record tells us that when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, the first thing that happened was that they "began to speak in other tongues" and that they were understood by a vast cosmopolitan crowd who came from practically every nation under the sun; a long list of them is actually given. Now it is agreed by most scholars that the "speaking in tongues" referred to in this passage originally had nothing to do with speaking foreign languages. Rather had it to do with a kind of religious ecstasy often described in the New Testament and later deplored by Paul as of less value than the other fruits of the Spirit.

But, on the day of Pentecost, the tremendous fervour and excitement with which the disciples began to speak was of such a nature that it immediately drew the attention of all men and made them feel the Presence and Power of God. They understood that these disciples were speaking about the wondrous things of God, that God Himself was at work in them, that they were in fact filled with His Holy Spirit. And when Peter further explained it to them in plain but inspired words, proclaiming the Gospel-message that in the crucified and risen Christ God had come to men in saving love and renewing power, they were profoundly moved, they were cut to the heart, they made whole-hearted response. That day there were 3000 of them who repented and believed and were baptized and became members of the wonderful Christian fellowship of believers who "... were of one heart and of one mind... who were together with one accord and had all things in common," a fellowship where all divisions and alienations had ceased to count and to exist.

For the first time in history men and women of many lands and races, both Jew and Gentile, were united in a fellowship of love which knew no separations and no divisions. This was the first recorded result of Pentecost. It was a stupendous thing. It was a reversal of the curse of Babel.

And just as Babel is still real where men disobey God, so Pentecost is real too wherever men obey God, wherever they receive His Christ and follow His Gospel in humble faith. A new Spirit then comes into them, the Holy Spirit, and from that moment their different tongues and all their alienating diversities no longer separate them and

confound them. Instead they find themselves united in a new fellowship and mutual understanding. This is what happens again and again wherever there is obedience to the will of God, wherever the Holy Spirit is at work.

Cannibal tribes at deadly feud with one another in New Guinea were brought together simply by the courageous preaching of the Gospel. At the turn of this century, a pioneer missionary amongst them wrote thus of them: — "God blessed the effort more than we could ever have hoped, and to-day these tribes intermix and are on the best of terms. To put it in one of the bushmen's words to me: "We now go to Orokolo and the Orokolo people come to us, without bows and arrows in our hands or anger in our hearts."

God's answer through Pentecost

In the fact and message of Pentecost lies God's answer to the division and disintegration and dissension which our disobedience has wrought. Whether as individuals or as families, whether as groups or as races, whether in this nation or any other, we can only be saved by God, by the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, by our receiving Him and trusting Him and obeying Him.

That is our only hope... whether for our own divided selves or for our divided world, the only hope of salvation, the only hope of wholeness and unity and peace, is in the God of love and truth who has revealed Himself in Christ and who now comes to us in the Holy Spirit... the only hope lies in turning to Him and receiving Him and trusting Him and obeying Him.

And if that hope seems distant because so many people will not listen to God or turn to Him, because some nations are atheistic and because so many have set their hearts upon their own party policy and their own particular tower of Babel... then there is all the more need that those individuals and groups and nations which do claim to be Christian should lead the way. There is all the more need that they should wholeheartedly receive Christ and obey God and open their lives to the work of His Spirit... there is all the more need that they should reveal that unity and fellowship and peace which the Spirit of God produces.

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META NOIA

● Van bladsy 1

die koninkryk van God? Hierdie vraag stel, veral ons volk, voor die stryd van die toekoms. Sal ook ons ontwaak om die geweldige implikasies te besef en ons aanspoor om alles in te werp om die volke tot die koninkryk van God en sy geregtigheid te beweeg? Om te slaag sal ons as enkelinge en as 'n regering die weergebore gees, deur die Gees van God, moet besit en beoefen. Die gees sal moet bepaal en moet beheers beide ons persoonlike verhoudinge en ons regeringsbeleid teenoor die Bantoes. Dat ons deur die Gees van Christus geleidelik sal word, moet ons daelike gebed en werk wees. Aan ontvlugting is nie te denke nie. Ons mag ook nie deur onverskilligheid en slappe traagheid ons aan die stryd onttrek nie.

Ons sal van Hom geleer moet word en ons aan die leiding deur sy Gees onderwerp. "Wat wil u hê moet ek doen?" God is besig met Afrika en so ook die diuiwel. Laat ons met heelhartigheid medewerkers van God

wees. Ons Here Jesus het die diuiwel afgewys en Homself midde in die stryd gewerp tot aan die kruis en 'n ewig blywende oorwinning behaal. Laat ons Hom nie in die steek laat nie. "Jy dan, my seun, wees sterk soos 'n goeie krygskneg van Jesus Christus".

WAAR DIE VERANDERING MOET BEGIN

Die meta noia moet allereers in onself geskied, die verandering van ons hele menssyn, beide in woorde en daade, beide in geloof en lewe. Die stryd tussen geloof en die ongelooft loop almeer uit op die gebied van die praktiese alledaagse lewe. Nie op die teoretiese maar op die morele gebied sal die stryd verloor of gewin word. Die kommunisme skep 'n karakter-eie wat elemente bevat wat in dodelike stryd met die christelike lewe en geloof is. Hartstogte word aangeprys en ontkenen wat Christus deur sy lewe en dood veroordeel het. Die tyd toe

teoloë weggeskram het van 'n etiese godsdienst is verby. Die stryd op teoretiese gebied is daar, maar die swaarste punt is verplaas op etiese gebied en die praktiese lewe. Die kommunisme is vir niks meer bang as vir die christelike etiek wat 'n hoëre, edeler en kragtiger karakter opbou as die van hulle. "Morele bewapening" is 'n teken van die tyd.

'n Geloof wat deur daade en gedrag 'n beleid weersprek is magteloos. Die oordeel gaan nie soseer oor enkelinge nie maar oor volke en hulle regerings. 'n Christenvolk kan Christus verheerlik of verloën. Wette sal by die hoëre wil en geregtigheid van God getoets moet word.

'n Volksregering moet toon wie sy burgers dien en wie hulle toebehoort. Ons sien in die lewe van Jesus die Seun van God en ons moet deur ons lewe bewys dat ons deur sy Gees geleidelik en kinders van God is. (Rom. 8 : 14 en 28, 29). Die huis word op die rots gevestig nie deur hulle wat sê Here, Here nie; maar deur hulle wat die wil van die Vader doen. (Mat. 7 : 21-24.)

ONTDEKKING DEUR BEPEINING

Hoe sal ons met die wil van God bekend word? Dit is maklik om na mense te luister en deur mense beïnvloed en geleidelik te word. Maar God is die onsigelike. Daarom kan iemand alleen na God luister en deur sy God geleidelik word deur meditasie. Nou is dit hierdie "stil wees voor God" wat die wêreld nie ken nie en verag en wat, helaas, deur baie belydende christene verwaarloos word. Die meta noia geskied deur sulke ontmoeting met God en as daar ooit 'n tyd was waarin die roeping van die christendom is om mense voor God te bring, dan is dit nou. Dan sal die meta noia, die wedergeboorte deur die God werklikheid word, en sal mense en volke "nie hulle lede stel tot beskikking van die sonde nie as werktuie van ongeregtigheid nie, maar tot beskikking van God en as werktuie van die geregtigheid in die diens van God." U kan verander, kan weer gebore word deur die Gees van God, sodat u in die gesindheid van Jesus sal dink en handel. (Fil. 2 : 5.)

* Ds. D. J. Malan is emeritusleeraar van die Ned. Geref. Kerk.

Aankondiging

Weens gebrek aan ruimte kan ons nie die artikel "n Leek in die prediking" van die hand van mnr. J. H. Kriel plaas nie.

Dit sal in ons volgende uitgawe verskyn.

Pro Veritate

Verskyn die 15de van elke maand.

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PRO VERITATE

Redaksioneel

DIE EINDREDAKTEUR BESLUIT

Op Dinsdag 9 April 1963 het die Ned. Geref. Sinode van Suid-Transvaal die volgende twee besluite oor ons blad geneem.

- 1 „Die Sinode neem kennis van die bestaan, doel en werkmethode van die onafhanklike blad Pro Veritate. Vanweë die spanning en groepering wat ook deur hierdie blad bevorder word en die gevolglike gevaar daarvan vir die eenheid van die kerk, raai die Sinode die lidmate en ampsdraers af om deel te neem aan die Pro Veritate-poging en versoek hulle om ons eie kerkblaaie te ondersteun.”
- 2 „Die Sinode bepaal dat die besluit wat geneem is ten opsigte van Aanspreeklikheid van Kerklike Dienaars (bl. 300 van Agenda) ook van toepassing is op predikante en lede van die Ned. Geref. Kerk van Suid-Transvaal wat in Pro Veritate skrywe”.

Laasgenoemde besluit verwys na 'n besluit rakende kritiek op Sinodale besluite wat die vorige dag geval het en wat soos volg lui:

„Die Sinode besluit dat alle ampsdraers en lede van die Kerk gebonde is en gehoorsaamheid verskuldig is aan Sinodale besluite, wat wettiglik geneem is, en sulke besluite steeds behoort te verdedig. Indien 'n ampsdraer of lidmaat in gemoede beswaard voel oor 'n Sinodale besluit wat in stryd met die Heilige Skrif sou wees of in stryd met die belange van Gods Koninkryk, staan dit hom vry om te bewys dat sodanige besluit in stryd met die Skrif of die belange van die Koninkryk is en aan te dring op sy herroeping of wysiging. Sodanige kritiek op Sinodale besluite egter moet altoos geskied met Christelike waardigheid en selfbeheersing en langs die koninklike weg van debat in kerklike vergaderings en kerklike organe. Dit mag nooit die karakter van openbare agitatie of skeurmaking aanneem nie en aanleiding gee dat die wêreld die liggaam van Christus laster nie.”

Uit die besluite moet dus afgelei word dat die meerderheid van die Sinode van oordeel was dat die blad spanning en groepering in die Kerk bevorder en dat sommige artikels bedoel is om kritiek op sekere Sinodale besluite uit te spreek.

Hierdie twee besluite het vanself die vraag laat ontstaan hoe die posisie van die eindredakteur daardeur ge-afekteer word en hoe dit artikels raak wat deur Evangeliedienaars of lidmate van die Ned. Geref. Kerk in Suid-Transvaal vir publikasie aan Pro Veritate gestuur word.

In antwoord op hierdie vrae wil ons nou graag die volgende stel:

1. Dit was nog nooit die bedoeling van die blad om die besluite van enige Sinode van enige bepaalde Kerk te kritiseer nie. Sodanige houding of optrede sou ernstige afbreuk doen aan die verhewe doelstelling van die blad en sou 'n gees openbaar wat nie die gesindheid van Christus weerspieël nie. As daar by 'n bespreking van vraagstukke wat die Kerk van Christus in sy breëre verband raak egter sekere punte verder toegelig word waarvoor kerke reeds besluite mag geneem het om sodoende tot groter helderheid oor die Skrifwaarhede te kom, is dit nog altyd aanvaar as 'n eerlike en opregte bydrae tot die só noodsaaklike teologiese gesprek, solank sodanige diskussie in 'n gees van Christelike waardigheid en verantwoordelijkheid gevoer word. Die inhoud van ons blad lewer vir elke objektiewe leser die bewys dat die redaksie hierdie voorwaarde nagekom het. Daarom het die tweede besluit oor ons blad, op sigself geneem, vir ons as blad en as eindredakteur geen probleem ingehou nie omdat dit nooit ons bedoeling was of wou word om spesifieke Sinodale besluite te kritiseer nie.

2. Die eerste besluit oor Pro Veritate laat aan leraars en lidmate van die Suid-Transvaalse Sinode 'n keuse om voort te gaan om steun aan die blad te verleen hoewel die begeerte soos in die versoek uitgedruk seker nie ligtelik verbygegaan mag word nie. As hierdie besluit die enigste was wat die Sinode oor die blad geneem het, sou die eindredakteur, ter wille van die wens van die Sinode, hom graag daaraan wou onderwerp sonder egter om saam te stem met die redes wat in die besluit aangevoer is. Die dubbele besluit egter, soos verder gekoppel aan die besluit insake kritiek op Sinodale besluite, wil duidelik te kenne gee dat die groot oogmerk van Pro Veritate kritiek op sodanige Sinodale besluite sou wees. Bedanking van die eindredakteur op hierdie stadium sou dus 'n erkenning

wees dat die blad nie kan voortgaan en die eindredakteur nie kan funksioneer sonder dat daar gereeld of gedurig kritiek op Sinodale besluite van die Sinode van Suid-Transvaal gelewer word nie. Daarom sou dit nie reg wees teenoor ons Kerk sowel as teenoor ons blad om op hierdie stadium te bedank nie, omdat daardeur sodanige verkeerde indruk bevestig sou word. Verder sou ook met reg beweer kan word dat hier 'n Evangeliedienaar is wat ter wille van 'n belangrike vertrouensposisie waarin sy Sinode hom geplaas het, sy diepste oortuiginge nou inboet of prysgee.

En alhoewel ons nie saamstem met die algemene besluit wat op Maandag 8 April geval het nie (en ons standpunt hieroor saam met 'n aantal persone in 'n brief aan Die Kerkbode gestel het) sal ons as eindredakteur toesien dat die besluit van die Sinode van Suid-Transvaal insake kritiek op Sinodale besluite uitgevoer word solank dit enigszins moontlik is, d.w.s. dat geen kritiek op sodanige besluite gepubliseer sal word komende van 'n lid van die Sinode van Suid-Transvaal van die Ned. Geref. Kerk. En as dit later mag blyk onmoontlik te wees sal ons dit langs die weg deur die Sinode aangedui onder aandag van die Kerk bring.

Hierdie besluit wil geen daad van eiewillige verset wees nie. Dit is — en wil niks meer wees as — 'n ootmoedige getuigenis vir die handhawing van die vrye verkondiging van die Woord deur gesprek en geskrif in ooreenstemming met die belydenis van die Kerk. Wie enigiets anders daarin wil lees, lees verkeerd.

Die besluit op sigself geneem is egter nie genoeg nie. Om die opregtheid van die bedoelinge van die blad te bewys, wil ons hier, met volle goedkeuring van die direksie, 'n dringende versoek en aanbod aan die Ned. Geref. Kerk doen sowel as aan al die Kerke van Protestantse familie in Suid-Afrika nl. om in die steeds toenemende behoefte van baie Christene van die verskillende kerke te voorsien deur die oprigting van 'n volwaardig ekumeniese blad met dieselfde breë doelstellings as Pro Veritate. Die oomblik wanneer dit geskied sal Pro Veritate bereid wees om in so 'n groter poging op te gaan met prysgewing, indien nodig, van naam, redaksie en administrasie. Ons verstaan dat die Sinode van Noord-Transvaal van die Ned. Geref. Kerk teen die einde van die sitting 'n besluit in dié rigting geneem het.

Watter vreugdevolle dag sal dit wees wanneer hierdie grootse ideaal verwesenlik kan word!

Editorial

THE CHURCH IN AFRICA MAKES HISTORY

The establishment of an All-African Conference of Churches at Kampala is an historic event of great significance for the Church of Christ in Africa. Drawn together from 40 countries, 350 delegates coming from 100 different churches from their respective countries unanimously decided to form such a conference as a fellowship of consultation and co-operation within the wider fellowship of the universal Church and having as basis the confession of Jesus Christ as God and only Saviour according to the Scriptures. The general press has reported fairly extensively on the main facts of the gathering. In our June issue we hope to publish personal impressions of the conference by Bishop B. Sundkler of Tanganyika, Dr W. A. Bijleveld of Nigeria and Rev. A. S. Labuschagne of the C.C.A.P. of Nyassaland. Those of us who had the privilege to attend the Conference were impressed by the measure of maturity in outlook of the African Christians, by their resolute attitude to move forward and by their willingness to accept all assistance from fellow Christians and churches of the Western world as long as it was offered in a spirit of genuine Christian love and on an equal footing.

The influence of the Conference and its decisions will not only be felt throughout Africa as a whole but also in the life of the Church in South Africa. Therefore all churches and churchmen are well advised to take serious note of the decisions of the A.A.C.C. and to take all possible steps to inform their church members and official bodies of the possible implications of these decisions. With the formation of the A.A.C.C. we enter a new era in the history of the Church of Christ in Africa the effect of which no one can foretell. But this is abundantly clear: the image is that of a church moving resolutely forward to a new God-given destiny.

RAS EN REALITEIT:

Artikels van prof. J. C. G. Kotzé

As gevolg van 'n operasie wat prof. J. C. G. Kotzé moes ondergaan en die opdrag van sy geneesheer om noodsaaklike rus tydens die tyd van sy herstel, sal die volgende artikel in sy reeks eers weer verskyn wanneer die skrywer geleentheid gehad het om dit te voltooi na hervatting van sy werksaamhede.

Meditation

Fire

“STIR INTO FLAME THE GIFT OF GOD WHICH IS WITHIN YOU THROUGH THE LAYING ON OF MY HANDS”

— 2 TIM. 1 : 6.

Something is wrong with the Church, and there are many critics and experts who are only too ready to offer all sorts of reasons and causes for our weakness. But Paul, it seems to me, had the right answer. In the shadow of death, about to die for the faith he confessed and preached, he urged one of his young colleagues to “stir into flame” the spark that was kindled when he was ordained as a Christian minister.

Let us be honest and confess that for many of us the fire has gone out and cold grey ashes are left. I join with my brethren when I confess that we have grown dull in the most exciting task ever given to men. The services we conduct are ragged, full of platitudes, and bore our people to tears. To listen to us preach, one might think we were railway announcers calling out train departure times. We seem to be defeated men condemned to serve our life sentences in bumbling, monolithic organisations. It is this dullness which undermines our best efforts.

Sometimes this is caused by shabby treatment given to a minister. Could we not all tell stories of young men on fire with great hopes and plans blocked at every point by snug laymen without vision? Sometimes we grow careless in our devotions and try to cover our own emptiness by a feverish rush of committees and activities. Then, in spite of all our busyness, nothing really happens in our ministry.

But for most of us the inner fire has died because we have allowed routine to kill it. How easy it is to adjust our faith so that it becomes nothing more than a minimum standard of behaviour! How often the dead weight of half-committed Christians prevents us seeing the witnesses to faith around us like a cloud! We become so pre-occupied with our feelings that our work suffers and we get tired and discouraged. Somebody said of John Wesley: “The most impressive thing about him is that no matter what he felt like, he went on with his job — living by faith-in-Christ, not by feeling-in-himself.”

How to avoid this? Paul advises Timothy to remember his ordination. We must return in our imaginations to the scenes of our ordination and renew our ministries by reliving that decisive moment. Let us remember the questions that were asked and the answers we gave: “Do you believe in your heart that you are truly called . . . ? Are you determined out of the Holy Scriptures so to instruct the people . . . ? Will you be diligent in prayer . . . ? We must stand again before God and his people to answer those questions with a flaming zeal in our hearts and a deep joy in our souls. And the miracle takes place, for the inner flame bursts into fire again to burn up my discouragement and frustration. The gift God gave us then he renews every time we stir up the inner fire.

GOD'S REALITY and the ideologies of men

IN CONNECTION WITH THE FIRST THESIS OF THE THEOLOGICAL DECLARATION OF BARMEN

The interpretation of the Barmen Declaration, and in particular of its first sentence, is to be preceded by the magnificent words with which Karl Barth, in summer 1933, concluded his treatise: *Theological Existence, to-day!*

"If God in Jesus Christ exists entirely for us men, the Church, too as the place in which His glory abides, has to exist entirely for the sake of men, and consequently the German Protestant Church for the sake of the German Protestant people. However, we have to be this people as those who we are, and with the mission that has been given to us. Our mission, however, is to serve the Word of God amongst this people. We do not only sin before God, but we also sin before this people if we take up other ideals and tasks which are not our mission. . . and this mission is to be carried out, regardless of whether our people wishes it or not. . . We must not be surprised, if all our efforts lead to the contrary. . . The German people will be in need of exhortation and of the consolation of the Word of God. . . Where did all those concepts go which even a year ago, and for hundred years before that, were called freedom, justice, and spirit? Now these are temporal and earthly possessions.

All flesh is like grass. No doubt, many people in ancient and in recent times had to renounce these possessions, and was able to renounce them when the daring enterprise of a totalitarian state required this. But the Word of our God stays for ever. Every day — for every day passes into eternity — it is true and indispensable. Therefore, even in a totalitarian state, Church and theology are not allowed to fall into a hibernating sleep, nor must they allow themselves to be given a moratorium^{*} or to be identified with a principle. They are the natural limit of every state, even of the totalitarian state. Even in the totalitarian state, the people live by the Word of God. . . Church and theology have to serve this Word for the sake of the people. For this reason they are the limit of the state. . . In the special concern which has been entrusted to him, the theologian must stay awake, a lonely bird on a roof — that is on the earth — but beneath the wide open sky. Let the German theologians and Christians stay awake, or, should they have been sleeping, let them awake to-day!"

"NO" to the ideology of the nation

It is the characteristic of the good news which we are given by Jesus Christ, that the joyful acceptance of Him is constantly pushing us into a painful contradiction. The acceptance of the good tidings does not simply affirm the situation in which we find ourselves, but very often implies the contrary: a passionate negation of the most holy possessions which are venerated everywhere, a "no" to all customs which were accepted without questioning, a "no" to things which were accepted as good and right. This is the contradiction of the Gospel of which Barth thinks here, as he was faced with the then generally accepted sentence, that the Church has to serve the people.

This claim that the Church has to serve the people was not only raised outside the Church, in "secularized" and political circles, but was indeed preached inside the Church; it ap-

peared as a statement which was not to be doubted. And it does indeed sound very convincing: a word of Jesus says that the Sabbath day exists for the sake of man, not man for the sake of the Sabbath. Consequently it was thought that the Church existed for the sake of man, and not man for the sake of the Church, and that therefore the Church had to serve the people. But if — instead of speaking of man as an individual capable of love — we speak of "the people," it is possible (possible, not necessary) that, imperceptibly, an understanding of man creeps in, which sees him merely as a member of his nation, as the *Volks-genosse*^o, and thus man is finally looked upon only as the material which constitutes the greatness and the glory of a people.

THIS ARTICLE OF PROF. H. GOLLWITZER OF THE FREE UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN IS REPRINTED FROM "MINISTRY" BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE EDITOR.

In saying that the service of the Church is due, not directly to man, but to the Word of God, Karl Barth protected the truth of the sentence that the Church has to serve man from distortion. This interpretation sees to it that man is not neglected and destroyed, and that he receives his due; for the Word of God which is mentioned here, is, as we shall see, the Word of that God who has decided to be present for men and who Himself, by His Word, serves His creatures, i.e. men. By not serving man directly, therefore, but serving the Word of God, the Church does indeed serve man in an indirect way. This indirect way protects the Church from the claims which men think justified; it safeguards the Church against the power and command of men who represent secular and political authorities and it protects the Church against the demands of a well-meaning (but misguided) piety within the Church. The Church lives under the command of a Word which precedes it, surpasses it and over which it cannot dispose. Thus the service is not rendered within the Church's own authority, but it is rendered in a way which has already been determined.

The fact constitutes a protection to man himself. As the Church does not serve man directly but the Word of God, man — who indeed needs the service of the Church — is removed from the field of human intentions. The principal and ultimate needs of man are not determined by man's own arbitrary will, but they have already been decided upon by God. If human arbitrariness were the decisive factor, men would, as actually happens constantly, and with the best intentions, be converted into the mere material of human intentions and plans. By serving the Word of God, the Church teaches us to allow ourselves to be guided by the superior voice of this Word in any service we may perform,

^o *Volks-genosse*, term used by the National Socialists to describe the "member of the people"; literal translation: "Comrade of the people". (Ed.)

and, in doing so, it builds a wall of protection against the otherwise unavoidable transformation of man from the object of our goodwill to the material of our arbitrariness. This transformation can be illustrated by so many examples from the history of mankind as well as from the history of the Church. It is this very transformation we are referring to, when we talk about the "ideologization" of human action.

At the same time a wall of protection is built against the "ideologization" of man himself. Each person is a member of a people, — that is true. But the significance of this membership for our life, as well as the interpretation of the word "people" for nation, imply questions which must never be answered once and for all. Those concepts must never be imprisoned in and identified with certain theories of the nation and its members. — That was, however, exactly what happened when, in 1933, it was proclaimed that the Church had to serve the people. Man was identified with the *Volks-genosse* (comrade of the people), and the nation was identified with the political National Socialist movement that had triumphed within the nation, and this movement was identified with a new political theory which was taken to be the promise of salvation for the people. It was this identification of a certain group of persons — of the political movement and its "leader" — with the nation on the one hand and with the corresponding political theory on the other, which made the development fatal. As such fatal and dangerous identifications are constantly being made, in a great variety of different forms, I want to emphasize here how the Church serving only the Word of God brings such identifications to an end. These identifications constitute a method, which, by the use of an act of moral or theological juggling, deprive man of freedom in his own decisions and of his responsibility, and subjugate him totally to the rule of man. They tell him: "As you are committed to this community, you have to accept such and such a theory (ideology,) or you must also submit unconditionally to certain persons, a certain type of leadership, a certain type of government."

The necessary capacity of distinguishing

It is, however, precisely one of the tasks of the Church in the world to develop a capacity for distinguishing, to demand distinction for the sake of a man's relationship to God, and for the sake of our obedience to God. The Church has to teach the distinction between the Kingdom of God and the Church, as well as between the Lord of the Church and the Church as the community of His servants, between the Gospel and Church organizations and institutions which are to serve the Gospel, between the Church itself and its empirical organs and forms of organizations, — and, correspondingly, between the nation and its representatives. Wherever men want to dominate and subjugate other men by means of deceptive identifications, the Church must be the place where distinctions are upheld. Now the Church was asked to become disloyal to this task, a task so important for all earthly freedom, when the principle was proclaimed that the Church had to serve the people — and this in turn was supposed to mean that it had to serve the *Völkische Bewegung*, i.e. the

National Socialist movement, which pretended to serve the peoples' best interest. — The Church was supposed to bestow its blessings upon it in the name of God, and to supply it with legitimate Christian sanctions from the Christian tradition, from the Bible and from Christian Confessions. The Church was expected to incorporate the theories of this "Movement" into its preaching, and thus, to proclaim them as the will of God, compulsory for all Christians. Thus the Gospel was treated as means to justify ideological ends (the Nationalist movement), and God was supposed to give strength and to bless undertakings which had arisen from human initiative, reason, and imagination, entirely apart from obedience to His will.

For the Church itself, for its mission and its message, it was, therefore, of utmost importance to see how it reached to this challenge. Apart from that, it also was of great political importance; for its decision would work either for a stronger establishment or for the dissolution of this identification which denied freedom and introduced slavery. The fact that at least a considerable part of the Christian Church refused to accept the claims of this identification, and, among the Protestants, formed the "Confessional Church", was, therefore, an important political factor in the history of the Third Reich. In the course of the war the "Confessional Church" was reduced by force to a remnant which was hardly any longer able to live, but even this remnant used its last resources to refuse obstinately what was demanded from it.

In such a situation the concept of the "limits of the state" will become clear in the sense in which it was used by Karl Barth (see the above quotation). The Confessional Church did not resist the identifications (*Gleichhaltung*) we spoke about, in the way in which an administration may draw a dividing line between two different fields of work, so that they do not overlap; nor was it the intention of the Confessional Church to withdraw into the ivory tower of a religious existence. When Barth speaks about the Church with its special mission, he does not refer to a retirement into an "inward life," but to a limitation of the field of political influence, which is of vital importance for the life of man as well as for the life of a state. We might even speak of a "demotion" if this word is not used to describe "loss of honour", but the shifting of all demands which can be made on earth to a more modest position.

Certainly it is possible to make demands on behalf of the State, on behalf of a political group or of a certain philosophy, and certainly the Christian, who was assigned a place in this world by God, must be allowed to participate in such demands. But these demands will only be "right" and avoid tyranny if there is a limit where they end and if they are subject to the name which appears above the Barmen Declaration, the name of the triune, living God. — In those years, an old Advent song "Nun jauchzet all ihr Frommen" ("Now rejoice all ye faithful") appeared to us in a new light. It says in its third verse (free translation): "All ye high potentates, accept this king; accept His advice and walk the right path which leads to heaven. For if you despise him and only seek your own power the wrath of the highest will find you. . ."

* A moratorium is a legal authorization to defer payment. (Ed.)

GOD SE VRYE KINDERS

Ds. C. J. Vermaak*

Nou wil ons hier handel oor die vryheid van die kinders van God. Hulle weet vrees: Jesus is Here! en: Hy is vry! Wie dit werklik verstaan en glo as die enige inhoud van die geloof, ken geen juk van diensbaarheid meer nie, nie wat homself betref nie en ook nie wat andere aangaan nie. Vandag is hy vry want vandag is vir hom die dag van die Here, en môre het vir hom geen angs wat gestalte neem in gestrengheid en krampagtigheid nie want die toekoms is die Here se koms na hom. Jesus is Here. Dit beteken dat gister, vandag en môre Syne is en die wêreld Syne geword het deur God se alleentoe doen. Alles is Syne en alle mag in hemel en op aarde behoort aan Hom. Alles! Alle mag! Daarom het niks en niemand naas Hom nog werklik aanspraak nie, nog tyd wat tyd genoem kan word en mag wat nog werklik mag is nie. Hy

het Sy naam oor die wêreld van mense uitgespreek. Die tyd is vol. Al die „magte” is ontklee, tentoongestel, in die stof gesleep en is net ON-mag. Daarom sê die Here: Vrees vir niks. Ja, God spreek sy bevrydende woord: Suid-Afrika, vrees nie... omdat Jesus Here is. Hy IS dit eenvoudig. Sonder teenspraak. Of dit erken word of nie. Dit juis is ons bevryding. Hy het sy kruelstroon bestyg en sy kruisregering aanvaar. Daar het Hy die plek geneem van alles wat in die hemel en alles wat op die aarde is wat tesame aan die nietigheid en chaos onderworpe was en ook van ons wat sy vyande was. Dit is die versoening. So het die koninkryke van die wêreld dié van onse Here geword en van sy Christus.

Die Groot Leuenaar het Hom dit aangebied langs 'n ander weg, maar dit het Syne geword omdat God dit in Abraham aan Christus belofte het. Die wêreld-van-mense is God Syne omdat God aan sy belofte getrou is. Volgens Daniel wie se profesie van Jesus vervul is (Luk. 18 vs. 31) is al die teenstandige ryke (wat ook idereen se eie klein sonderlyk is) in een oomblik tegelyk oorwin en vermaal tot stof. Wat ons nou nog sien van die magte is die stof van hulle tot poeier vermaalde gestaltes. Slegs in die verleiding van die leuen kyk mense nog teen hierdie magte vas as 'n laaste werklikheid. Alleen vanweë kleingelooft by ons, kan, wat ons oë na die vlees sien, ons verskrik. En alleen in eie geregtigheid is ons daarvoor wenkbrou-omhoogtrekkend geskok asof dit nie die puin van ons eie sonde is nie.

Jesus is Here!

Al wat kan gebeur is dat ons wil gaan verstik in die stof wat die oorwonne vyand maak wat agter die Here se oorwinningswa aangesleep word. (Ontleding van Kol. 2 : 15). Of daardie stof nou 'n bylmoord is op twee weerlose ou mense, of geweld in die Paarl as teken van die rassekonflik, of die atoomuitbarsting in die groot wêreld of ook die dinge waarteen die leraar gereeld moet preek, dit kan egter nie die kruisheerskappy van Christus oor mense relatief of afhanklik maak of dit ongedaan maak om ons so werklik en finaal te bedreig nie. In die aangesig van alles weet ons en getuig ons: Jesus is Here. Hy het die wêreld-van-mense oorwin. Ja, ons kén die sonde (mens teen mens en mens teen God) in sy klein en sy groot dan ook slegs vanuit hierdie oorwinning soos wat ons ook die duivel en die magte van chaostussen-mense vanuit die triomf van die Here ken.

Jesus is Here! Daarom is sy ryk soos 'n mosterdsaad en 'n suurdeeg wat onweerstaanbaar werk, so onweerstaanbaar dat daar waar die weerstand, wat sekerlik weerstand is, op sy felste was toe dit die Here van die heerlikheid gekruisig het, God daarmee die genaderyk laat kom het. So het God geantwoord op die dinge waarvoor kerk en staat hulle hoofde breekment

Laat ons dit versigtig, as mede-skuldiges, maar tog duidelik sê dat die christene en kerke van vandag, anders as ons vadere van byvoorbeeld die 17de eeu, onder die skaduwee van die wet kom leef het en so hulle van hulle Evangeliese vryheid laat beroof het. Ook die Staat wat die dienskneg van God is, verstaan nie meer presies wat die wet van God is nie en gaan nie volledig vanuit die Belofte en die Kruis-evangelie met die wet van God om nie en het boonop met die bietjie lig wat aan die heidene gegee is (Romeinse reg) sy swaard beweeg. So is hulle wat die swaard hanteer saam met die onderdane onvry.

terwyl hulle vergeet dat God gesê het: Die Here sal vir julle stry en julle moet stil wees. Dit is die nuus van hierdie heer-skap van God en van sy koninkryk wat die reddingskrag is vir mense-saam-met-mense. Maar dit het ons vergeet of nie werklik gewet nie.

Vandaar ons angs en krampagtigheid in kerk en maatskappy, in godsdiens en politiek. Godsdiens en politiek op hierdie konkrete aarde is tog gemoed met mense-in-hulle-verhoudings. En juis hier is dit dat die „magte” seggenskap kom eis en waar die prins van die donker wou heers. Maar Christus het sy werke verbreek. Daartoe het God Mens geword.

Hy het die plek kom neem van die mens-teen-God en die mens wat teen sy naaste is. Christus is tot sonde gemaak en daarmee is die sonde eens vir altyd in die voleinding van die eeue weggenem, (Heb. 9 : 26 en Nagn. Form.) Hy wat die Heer van genade is alleen het nog tyd plek en reg in hierdie wêreld. Wat Hy gedoen het, beslís ook hierdie wêreld en bepaal die einde van alle dinge.

So kan ons ons volkome op Hom verlaat. Dit is vryheid.

Die aksie van ongeloof

Dog ongeloof laat mense gryp na die „evangelie” en die reddingsmetodes van die ou Fariseërs en na die wapens van Judas en Petrus wat die Evangelie van God nog nie verstaan het nie. Daarby is ons moontlik nog dronk van „mag” wat egter „niks” is nie sodat ons ons onvryheid nie as sodanig herken nie, ook nie ons angs, krampagtigheid en ongeloof nie.

Met die „mag” wat ons het, hang ons nou oral swaar slotte aan deure wat God ooggemaak het en sit daar wagte met vlamme swaarde voor. Omdat ons vrees vir ander „magte”. Omdat ons nie glo in die oorwinning van die Here en in die vryheid van God nie. Die moeilikheid is: Ons glo nie dat liefde wat sy gestalte het in vergiffenis die ALMAG van God is waarmee Hy Almagtig is om die Vader van mense (goddeloses wat Hy geregverdig het) te wees nie. Ons glo nie dat dit sy sleutel tot die lees van die Bybel is en ook die sleutel waarmee alleen mense bevry word om aan God te behoort en aan mekaar nie.

Ons vryheid is om daarby te wees, by dié God wat vry is vir ons, en daar waar Hy sy kragtige daade doen met betrekking tot die HELE mens in sy HELE konkrete situasie teenoor homself en elke ander wese wat die naam mens dra. Vryheid is om te glo dat God die wêreld-van-mense in sy Hand gekry het. Sterke, Reddende Regterhand, Jesus-hand, deurboorde hand, waarin God vry was om Homself onder ons aan ons te laat bind tussen 'n mens en sy naaste.

Die Wet as bevel en belofte

Hiervan alleen het die wet getuig, die wet wat vanouds soos vandag onmoontlik die mens red of verbeter of sy noodsituasie verhelp. Hoe gryp ons dan na die wet en sy metgesel, die swaard, juis daar waar ons sonde aan die lig tree, dit is my verhouding tot 'n ander mens, ras of nasie? ... om daarmee dinge te wil regmaak? Hier kan ons nie die wenkbrou optrek om moontlike passivisme te bevrage teken nie. Dit gaan hier om die geloof. Ons moet verstaan wat die aktiwiteit van die geloof is. Ook die roede, strafvoorskrifte en wette van die „Ou Testamente” bring ons tot geloof. Die roede

was die staf van die Hoëpriester, onder die versoendeksel en vol amandelbloeisels as teken van God se haastige genade wat die Plaasvervanger slaan. Ook die Wet in die Bybel het ná die Belofte gekom en het die volk bewaar tot op die tyd dat Hy gekom het wat daaraan voldoen het, Jesus na wie die wet ons gelei het. Hierdie wet, met sy gestrengheid en die straf wat dit inhou, se deug is dat dit ons doodmaak. Dit hou nie ons moontlikhede aan ons voor nie maar wat vir ons onmoontlik is. Dit bring ons by ons absolute grens maar by daardie grens is Jesus gekruisig.

Vanuit die Evangelie wat slegs maar evangelie is, sal die Kerk oor die wet moet profeteer, en sal die Staat immer verplig wees om te vra watter wet hy moet handhaaf en hoe hy met daardie wet God se dienskneg is en moet wees om nie 'n afgodsdienaar te wees nie. So ook sal hy moet vra wat die swaard is wat hy moet hanteer en hoe.

Verskerping van wette

Paulus sê dat die wat onder die wet is onder die vloek is en dat diegene wat met verskerping van wette die mens-teenoormens wil verbeter, van die genade verval het. Dit is ernstig. So een het 'n vyand geword van Christus, tenspyte van of juis met sy ernstigheid en opregte voornemens, godsdienstigheid en hervormingspogings. Jesus het gesê dat wie die swaard opneem deur die swaard sal val. Laan ons die swaard maar so letterlik of so geestelik neem as ons wil. Hoe kan ons dit voor die kruis regverdig? Of herken ons die swaard nie omdat dit so subtiel geword het of kunstig toegedraai is in godsdienstigheid, tradisie en „gebede”? Dit is alleen wanneer ons die Heer-mag van die Here in ons hele konkrete situasie nie vir onomstootlik waar hou nie, dat mense God se werk uit sy hand neem soos wat Abraham gedoen het met die verwekking van Ismael.

Die moeilikheid is ons glo nie ek-sistensieel dat kruis en lyding die wêreld oorwin nie en dat Jesus se lyding in die gemeente wat sy liggaam is, voltooi word nie. Daarom is ons bang om te ly. Ons verstaan die roeping tot en die sin van lyding nie en so ook nie die aard van die oorwinning nie. Daarom verwerp ons lyding en laat ander in die proses ly. Ons mag egter ophou vrees en ons begin troos daarmee dat lyding van die gemeente lyding saam met Jesus is. Pas voor sy kruis het Hy gesê: Nou is dit die oordeel van hierdie wêreld... Nou sal die owerste van hierdie wêreld buitentoe gedryf word. Dit is volbring. So kan die Here van die opstanding sê: Vrees vir niks wat julle sal ly nie. Die vyand is immers sodanig oorwin dat hy nou, hoe teen sy sin ook, die koninkryk van God wat 'n koninkryk vir mense is, moet dien.

So kan ons ons roeping vervul om saam met Christus buitekant die laer Sy smaat te dra. So sal ons die sin van kerk-wees begryp en sien dat God se einddoel nie die Afrikanervolk of ook enige ander volk ter wêreld is nie, maar sy koninkryk van nasies wat gedra word deur hulle wortel, die Jood. So veg ons dan nie vir selfbehoud nie omdat ons vrye kinders van God is, ja omdat Jesus gewaarsku het dat hy wat sy lewe wil behou dit sal verloor. Ons weet dat hy wat in vryheid sy lewe „aflê” om Jesus wil, dit sal wen. Selfs in die finale vorm van lyding en verlies kan ons niks verloor nie omdat ons reeds alles by die kruisiging ver-

Na bladsy 8

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GOD'S REALITY

A positive declaration

The 6 theses of the Barmen Declaration are formulated in the following way: they are headed by a number of particularly significant Bible passages which are followed by a positive thesis or affirmation, upon which follows the antithesis of repudiation: "We repudiate the false teaching..." This means that the polemic element has received the last place. In formulating them in this way, the authors confess four things:

1. We are allied, not primarily by opposition, but by a positive element, which then results in a negation of certain things.
2. We confess that everything that is good on earth arises from the positive element, and that the negative element can only be good in so far as it constitutes the "other side" of something positive.
3. What we call positive, has not been proclaimed by us in our own authority, but is something which we were told and which we repeat now.
4. However, in our own responsibility and with our own present-day words we formulate this positive sentence ourselves. We are not "gramophone records" of the Bible.

The Barmen Declaration does not simply quote the Bible, nor does it take its sentences out of old dogmas and confessional statements of the Church; on the contrary, it wants to confess that in this encounter with Jesus Christ man is awakened to be a living subject. ● To be continued.

* With acknowledgement to the Ch. Kaiser Verlag, Munich, that kindly put Prof. Gollwitzer's manuscript at our disposal, and to Miss Elizabeth Lindenbergh of the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey who translated this article from German into English. (Ed.)

DIE GEYSER - SAAK

'n Spesiale
korrespondent

Teneinde hierdie saak op 'n sinvolle wyse te kan volg is dit miskien nodig om net kortliks die kern waarom dit gegaan het tydens die kerklike verhoor, soos weergegee deur die kommissie van die Algemene Kerkvergadering, te skets. Uit die amptelike skrywe van die Kommissie van die Algemene Kerkvergadering van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk in „Die Hervormer” van Junie 1962, verneem ons as volg:

DIE KLAG

„Die klag hou in dat die aangeklaagde, hoofsaaklik in sy eksegeese van Fil. 2 : 6-11 maar ook in sy uitleg van ander Skrifuurplekke sowel as deur middel van uitlatings tydens die onderrig van ander vakke, sy studente onderrig het op 'n wyse wat eksklusief ruimte laat vir die opvatting dat -

(a) Christus in status vóór Sy menswording, sowel as daarna, ondergeskik was aan God.

(b) Die post-eksistente Christus 'n hoër status beklee as die preëksistente Christus.

Die klaers voer aan dat die aangeklaagde sodoende -

(a) Afgedoen het aan die waaragtigste, ewige godheid van Christus... en sodoende.

(b) Die belydenis van die Kerk in die Athanasium in artikel 6... sowel as in artikel 24... bestry het. Genoemde artikels lui: „Maar die Vader, die Seun en die Heilige Gees het één Godheid, gelyke eer, en mede-ewige majesteit” (6) en „... in hierdie Drie-eenheid is niks eerste of laaste nie, niks meeste of minste nie; maar al drie Persone is onderling mede-ewig en volkome aan mekaar gelyk.

Die Algemene Kommissie het prof. Geysers skuldig bevind aan dwaalleer.

OPSOMMEND

„Die kommissie is bewus van die feit dat die verkondiging van 'n dwaalleer deur die Skrif en deur die kerk van alle eeue as 'n sware sonde veroordeel is. Daarom het die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk in die verlede geen leervryheid geduld nie en kan die Kerk dit nou ook nie doen nie.”

„Gevolgtrek het die kommissie nadat hy bevind het dat prof. Geysers skuldig is aan dwaalleer, ernstige oorweging aan die volgende vrae geskenk:

(a) Watter betekenis geheg moet word aan die dwaling van die betrokke professor.

(b) Watter versagende of verswarende oorwegings aandag verdien.”

„Wat (a) betref het die kommissie gevind dat dit gaan om die persoon van Jesus Christus en sy plek in die Goddelike Drie-eenheid. Deur te leer dat Christus voor sy menswording 'n mindere en ondergeskikte rang, posisie of status teenoor God die Vader beklee het en dan van God die Vader te spreek as „God supreme”, kom na die oordeel van die Kommissie onvermydelik daarop neer dat afgedoen word aan die betekenis van die plek van Christus in die Goddelike Drie-eenheid. As in gedagte gehou word watter sentrale en geheel enige plek Christus beklee in die verlossing, en die betekenis wat dit vir die geloof van die gemeente van die Here het dat Christus waaragtige God was, van ewigheid ongeskape en gelykwaardige persoon in die Goddelike Drie-eenheid, is dit duidelik dat wat die aangeklaagde aangaande Christus preëksistent geleer het, in 'n baie ernstige lig ge-

sien moet word. Dit tas die fondament en hoeksteen aan waarop Verlossing rus.”

„Ten opsigte van (b) bevind die Kommissie dat as daar verder gelet word op die houding en optrede van die professor in die klas, waar een van die klaers sy belydenis uitgespreek het, dan blyk dit dat die studente in sy eksegeeseklas aanvoel het dat die professor Fil. 2 so vertaal en uitleg dat dit volgens hulle oortuiging 'n vermindering en verlaging van die persoon van Christus beteken. Toe hulle probeer het om hom hiervan te laat afsien kon hulle nie daarin slaag nie. Hulle het verskillende Skrifgedeeltes as bewyse vir hulle beswaar aangehaal, maar hy het hulle pogings teengestaan en ten einde raad het een van die klaers opgespring en gesê: „Ek bely...” en toe 'n belydenis uitgespreek waarmee hy die Ewige Godheid en volkome gelykheid van Christus in die Drie-eenheid wou beklemtoon. Toe moes die professor gesien en begryp het dat sy vertaling en eksegeese die betrokke studente ernstig geskok het omdat hulle oortuig was dat hy die persoon van Christus verkleiner. Die professor moes ook hier daaraan gedink het dat hy deur die Kerk vertrou is en dat die Kerk aan hom die vorming van sy toekomstige Evangeliedienaars medetoevertrou het. Hy moes toe genoeg verantwoordelikheid aan die dag gelê het om te besef dat hy besig is om die geloof van jongmense wat aan die vooraand van hulle toelating tot die diens van die Evangelie staan, so ernstig te skok dat een van hulle so 'n ongewone gedrag volg om op te spring en staande sy geloof in die klas teenoor sy professor te bely.”

„Toe die professor egter hierop geantwoord het: „Dit staan jou vry om so te bely — ek kan nie op grond van my Nuwe Testament nie” het hy hom skuldig gemaak aan 'n onverantwoordelikheid wat baie ernstige gevolge vir sy studente kan hê. Die Kommissie kan nie anders as om hierdie optrede met die grootste nadruk af te keur nie.

As daar verder gelet word op die aanmatigende en verkleinerende uitlatings wat deur die aangeklaagde tydens sy verhoor gemaak is teen die Kerk, die Kommissie en hulle wie se getuienis nie in sy guns was nie, en die uitdagende houding wat hy tot die einde van die gehoor volgehou het, kan die Kommissie alleen verklaar dat daar ernstige verswarende omstandighede is.”

Ander stellings van belang gemaak deur die Algemene Kommissie is die volgende:

TAAK VAN ALGEMENE KOMMISSIE T.O.V. EKSEGESE

„Die Kommissie kan geen uitspraak gee oor die vraag of 'n eksegeese reg of verkeerd is nie, want dan sou die Kommissie 'n standaard eksegeese van 'n bepaalde Skrifgedeelte moet gee, wat dan vervolgens bindende gesag vir die Kerk sou moes hê. Die Kommissie kan

alleen oordeel oor die vraag of 'n eksegeet in die Bybel of in 'n Skrifgedeelte 'n boodskap verneem het wat verenigbaar is met die boodskap wat die Kerk in die Bybel verneem het of nie. Hoe die Kerk die boodskap van die Bybel verneem het, het die Kerk neergelê in sy Belydenisskrifte, en om die waarheidsgehalte hiervan te beoordeel, lê buite die bevoegdheid van die Kommissie...”

„Wat nie verenigbaar is met die inhoud van die Belydenis van die Kerk nie, staan vir die Kerk, solank daardie belydenis nie langs die aangewese ordelike weg (Kerkwet, hoofstuk VI, artikel 14) hersien en gewysig is nie, aangemerkt as dwaalleer. En wie, met die ontkenning van die reg van ander opvattinge, ander mense daartoe lei om uit die Bybel 'n ander boodskap te verneem as die Kerk, is solank die Belydenis van die Kerk nie hersien en gewysig is nie, besig om ander „tot dwaling te bring” (Ef. 4 : 14).

DIE BELYDENIS

„Die Kommissie wil daarom met die meeste nadruk verklaar dat ten opsigte van die verhouding van Skrif en Belydenis, die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk nog altyd met beslistheid verklaar het en nou ook wil verklaar dat die Heilige Skrif, as die Woord van God, bokant die Belydenis, hoe voortreflike die ook mag wees, staan.” (Herderlike Brief, Hervormer Junie '62).

Die Belydenis moet steeds aan die Skrif getoets word.

DIE VRYHEID VAN DIE EKSEGEET

„Die Kommissie wil dit dan as sy mening uitspreek dat die ondersoeker en verklaarder van die Heilige Skrif, die eksegeet, vry en onbevangen sy taak moet verrig. Hy moet die reg besit om vir sy doel gebruik te maak van alle hulpmiddels wat die teologiese wetenskap en aanverwante wetenskappe hom bied... By sy ondersoek mag die eksegeet nie leerstellig gebing word nie. Die enigste vraag vir hom moet wees, wat sê die Woord van God.”

„Maar wanneer die eksegeet eenmaal sy resultaat bereik het, rus die verantwoordelikheid op hom om te handel in ooreenstemming met die plegtige belofte wat hy by sy toelating as evangeliedienaar met sy handtekening onderneem het.” (Daar bestaan 'n voorgeskrewe prosedure in die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk waar volgens Bybelse besware teen aanhangig gemaak en behandel kan word).

Tot sover dan die uitspraak van die Kommissie van die Algemene Kerkvergadering i.v.m. en n.a.l.v. die Kerklike verhoor van prof. Geysers.

DIE HOOGGEREGSHOFSAAK

Op 1 Mei 1963 begin die Hooggeregshofsaak waarin prof. Geysers vra dat die bevindinge van die Kommissie van die Algemene Kerkvergadering (voortaan Kommissie genoem in hierdie verslag) ter

syde gestel word.

In sy openingstoespraak Adv. G. P. C. Kotzé, S.A., namens prof. Geysers gesê dat die basis waarop die aansoek om hersiening van die proses berus, bestaan uit drie breë afsonderlike gronde:

1. Die Kommissie of lede van die Kommissie was onbevoeg of het die skyn verwek dat hulle onbevoeg was om op te tree as onpartydige verhoorders van die klag en dat die teen die natuurlike reg en bilbevinging gevolglik indruis teen die natuurlike reg en billikheid.

2. Die klag is onreëlmatiglik behandel.

3. Die uitspraak was malefide, arbitrêr, slegs versoenbaar met bybedoelinge en sodanig dat geen redelike persoon of liggaam dit kon gevel het nie.

Adv. Kotzé het verder gesê dat getuienis gelewer sal word hoe prof. Geysers se oortuiging dat artikel III van die Kerkwet nie versoenbaar met die Bybel is nie, sterk teenkanting en kritiek by sy latere kerklike regters gewek het. (Artikel III bepaal o.a. dat slegs blanke persone tot die Ned. Hervormde Kerk kan behoort). Prof. Geysers het tot die oortuiging gekom dat artikel III onversoenbaar is met die Bybel tydens 'n studieopdrag vanweë die Kommissie van die Algemene Kerkvergadering na die Voorsitter van die Algemene Kerkvergadering se terugkeer van die Wêreldraad van Kerke. Die studietoek is aan hom opgedra teneinde die rassegeskiedenis in die Kerk Bybels te regverdig. Getuienis sal ook gebring word dat prof. Geysers nie van dwaalleer beskuldig was voor hy 'n kritikus van art. III geword het nie.

Die Herderlike Brief vanaf die Kommissie van die Algemene Kerkvergadering, gedateer 1 Mei 1957 is bv. 'n gebeurtenis wat aandui dat vyf van die here wat later regters sou wees, sterk gevoelens gehad het teen persone wat oortuig was dat art. III nie kragtens die Woord van God gebillik kan word nie. Na aanhaling van art. III e.a. skryf die Kommissie: „Die Kommissie wil ten sterkste beklemtoon dat niemand terwille van valse vroomdoenery of watter ander rede ook mag handel in stryd met hierdie artikels van ons kerkwet nie. Ons Kerk verwelkom dan ook die optrede van ons landsowerheid en is dankbaar dat die betrokke minister 'n wet gemaak het om te voorkom dat hierdie beginsels wat al so lank deur ons Kerk aanvaar is, verontagsaam sal word.”

Adv. Kotzé het verder verklaar dat getuienis gelewer sal word dat daar 'n intense begeerte by die oorgrote meerderheid van die latere Kerklike regters was om prof. Geysers te verwyder uit sy amp en ook dat stappe inderdaad geneem is om die Kommissie middelle te verskaf om prof. Geysers uit sy ampte ontset te kry.

DIE KLAGSTAAT

Aangesien daar 'n verwyding na die christologie (leer aangaande Christus) in die klagstaat was het prof. Geysers daar en dan soos volg bely: Ek bely dat Jesus Christus die Seun van God is en dat hy eenswesens met God die Vader is.” By die uiteindelijke uitspraak het die Kommissie prof. Geysers onskuldig bevind aan alles in die klagstaat genoem, behalwe die klag i.v.m. die Christologie.

Hy is selfs onskuldig be-

vind op die deel wat betrekking het op die volharding in verset deur woord teen die bepalinge of besluite van die Kerk. Die belang van hierdie aspek sal later duidelik word.

Voortgaande, het Adv. Kotzé gesê dat alhoewel daar aangevoerd sal word dat die uitspraak en bevinding onduidelik en selfs weersprekend is, hy tog 'n aanduiding wil gee wat die kern van die klag skyn te wees. Die aanklag was blykbaar dat prof. Geysers gedurende sy eksegeese-klasse, in besonder gedurende Aug.-Sept. 1961 geketter het. Gedurende die tydperk tersake was prof. Geysers besig om Fil. 2 : 6-11 te eksegetiseer. Dit is 'n moeilike gedeelte wat vir die eksegeet moeilike probleme bied. Die Afrikaanse vertaling lees bv. „Hy wat in die gestalte van God was het dit geen roof geag om aan God gelyk te wees nie.” Die „New English Bible Translation” 1961 vertaal as volg: „For the divine nature was his from the first. Yet he did not think to snatch at equality with God.” Dus, afgesien van baie ander vertalings blyk uit hierdie twee hoe uiteenlopend hierdie teks vertaal word. Die Afrikaanse vertaling kan inhoud dat Christus in posisie gelyk aan God die Vader is. Die Engelse vertaling verklaar met stelligheid dat Christus nie in posisie gelyk is aan God nie.

Prof. Geysers het as volg vertaal:

„Hy wat goddelike rang (posisie, status) geniet het, het nie daarna gehunker om aan God gelyk te wees nie.” Ten aansien van hierdie vertaling en begeleidende eksegeese het die Kommissie skynbaar bevind dat prof. Geysers se vertaling en uitleg strydig is met die belydenis van die Kerk en verder dat prof. Geysers die bestaansreg van enige ander uitleg as syne ontken.

Indien dit die bevinding van die Kommissie sou wees, is die Eiserse saak dat dit onmoontlik verdedig kan word om een of meer van die volgende redes:

(a) Sodoende verontagsaam die Kommissie sy verklaarde standpunt t.o.v. die vryheid van die eksegeet en belydenisdwang.

(b) Nieteenstaande hierdie vryheid het prof. Geysers in sy klas en voor sy Kerklike regters ongevaagd en ongedwonge verklaar dat hy die belydenis van die Kerk onderskryf.

(c) Gesien in die lig van die definisies van dwaalleer deur deskundiges in die Kerklike geding voorgelê, het prof. Geysers nog steeds nie dwaalleer verkondig nie, al word alles wat hom ten laste gelê is teen hom aanvaar.

(d) T.o.v. die feitegeskille tussen die Eiser en die Klaginbringers, het die Kommissie die getuienis van l.g. aanvaar bo die van Eiser, alhoewel hulle uit eie kennis bewus daarvan was dat die Klaginbringers opsetlik valse getuienis gelewer het.

(e) Nie een van Prof. Geysers se beweerde uitsprake in die klas kan hoegenaamd geïnterpreteer word as 'n ontkenning van ander uitlegsmoontlikhede nie. Intendeel die relevante uitdrukkings van prof. Geysers soos deur die klas self aangehaal bewys ondubbelsinnig die teenoorgestelde.

(f) Geeneen van die Belydenisskrifte spreek sig uit oor die status van Christus t.o.v. God nie. Teëspraak met Belydenisskrifte is hier dus uitgesluit.

● Vervolg in volgende uitgawe

CHRISTIAN AND STATE

II THE NEW TESTAMENT

The tension between Church and state is clearly evident in the New Testament. Consider, first, the well-known saying of our Lord: "Pay Caesar what is due to Caesar and pay God what is due to God". It is a complete misreading of this text to assume that it divides life into two compartments, labelled respectively "sacred" and "secular". Life cannot be so divided if we believe that God is Lord of all life.

What, then, does it mean? This saying teaches that the Christian has a double obligation, to the state and to God. Concerning the state it says, very simply "Pay your taxes". And when we see what the state does with our taxes — making roads, ensuring water supplies, educating our children, maintaining law and order — we may be sure that the paying of our taxes is an act well-pleasing to God.

We may look deeper into this text. It also implies that we may not give to Caesar what we owe to God. There is a grim tendency in every state today to claim the ultimate final loyalty of its citizens, to set itself up as the only authority with any claim on the obedience and the conscience of its citizens, to claim that the state, and the state alone has the right to tell its people what to think and believe. Such a tendency has to be resisted by the Christian, for his final and ultimate loyalty belongs only to God. The Christian cannot obey the state's command to surrender his critical faculties in blind allegiance. Such loyalty, such obedience, such allegiance, can be given only to God and we may not give it to Caesar.

Obedience to government

The tension between Church and state continues into the life of the early Church. The oft-quoted text in Romans 13 illustrates one aspect of this tension. It should be noted that Paul's demand for obedience is not qualified by the form of the State. Paul himself was living under a government that was despotic and could be cruel. Rome was famous for its maintenance of law and order: it was also famous for the severity of its punishments and the dictatorial powers of the emperor. This does not absolve the Christian from his duty to pay his taxes and obey the authorities even if what that authority commands is unjust: "If a man in authority makes you go one mile, go two with him" (Matthew 5 : 41).

It follows that the Christian is bound to obey the *de facto* government under which he lives, no matter what kind of government that may be. Monarchy or republic, dictatorship or democracy, fascist or communist — the form of government does not in itself affect our duty to obey. It is a fact that the Church has been able to exist, to live and even to grow under any and every kind of government. It is quite fallacious to assume that democracy as such is the only divinely-appointed order in which the Church may exercise her witness.

Having said that under any form of government, the Christian and the Church may live and witness it is also necessary to say that there is some correlation between Christian belief and certain democratic principles. In a democratic state, each and every citizen may exercise a vote. To the Christian this is an expression of necessary mutual respect by individuals for the independence and integrity of other individuals as individuals and not as members of any particular group. The Christian recognises the

fundamental sinfulness of men and therefore welcomes the checks and balances on the exercise of power by any one man: the governing party being checked by the opposition, the legislative body by the upper house, parliament by the judiciary and the whole legislative machinery by the body of the electorate. These checks and balances on the misuse of power also express the belief that no one group of sinful men can possibly have all the intelligence and wisdom necessary for a changing society.

Paul enjoins obedience to the *de facto* government. This does not imply any particular theory of government. It rests on the simple fact that I "can better fulfill my role as a creative, redemptive, community-building individual in an ordered society than I can in the midst of anarchy... I am better able to serve my neighbour and bring to him those things that I can value for myself in an ordered society than in a state of anarchy... Therefore it is my duty to support the order of the state and to do my part to maintain loyalty and obedience among its citizens... We have seen that one of God's principal tasks has been that of bringing order out of chaos: thus whoever... helps to achieve this is to that extent a servant of God." (Pike: *Doing The Truth*, p. 114.) This position might be summarised by saying that bad government is better than no government at all; order with injustice is preferable to anarchy.

Responsible participation

Notwithstanding all that has been said, it cannot be denied that the content of our obedience must change as the circumstances and form of government change. What may not be possible under a Roman dictatorship may well become a Christian duty in a state which claims to be democratic and which functions, even if partially, in a democratic manner. The concept of obedience under a dictatorship becomes filled with the content of responsible participation under a democracy. The Christian citizen who has the "right" to vote then becomes responsible to God for the way he uses that vote. Under the term "the right to vote" we must include all the varieties of political activity allowed to a Christian citizen in a democracy. Thus we may see participation in the councils of the nation, municipal, provincial or parliamentary as a Christian duty in which we bear a responsibility not only to our fellow-citizens, but also and primarily to God.

In the bodies that shape party policy, Christians are to make their voices heard, and to bring Scriptural, theological, Christian insights to bear on the matters under discussion. Specifically, Christians must be very wary of a too easy identification of the policy of a particular party with the will of God; human policies are too much affected by sinful self-interest for that to be true. Part of the Christian's duty it to hold every policy up to the judgment of God, to strive to bring that policy ever more closely into line with what God wishes for his people. He will be ever alert to find what effect

the policies of his party will have on people, whether it helps or hinders them in the business of living their daily life in obedience to God. He will be trigger-quick to point to instances where laws discriminate unfairly against certain groups, and persistent in his efforts to get such harmful laws changed.

It is not often realised among sincere Christians that considerable knowledge of political techniques is a necessity if Christian witness in politics is to achieve its aims. It is not enough to organise a protest, to write letters to departments of state, to arouse an agitation in the press. What counts here is an inside knowledge of the structures of power, so that good influence can be brought to bear in the most effective way. This knowledge can be gained only through experience of the inner workings of political parties and councils. One can hardly blame the authorities for taking but little notice of high-sounding protests that do not take the practical realities of the situation into account. Too many Christians, in a burning desire to be prophetic, have succeeded only in being naive.

Politics a dirty game?

The objection is often raised against this conviction (that the Christian should engage responsibly in politics) that "politics is a dirty game". To be sure it is, but that is no excuse for the Christian to avoid it. His own hands are by no means clean. A quaint idea has found favour among our middle-class Protestant churches: that while politics is a "dirty business" and is not for the Christian, somehow commerce is eminently respectable and "clean" and the Christian may engage in it without harm.

A word of warning must be sounded. The discipline of a political party is usually very strict. The party does not easily tolerate critics who are persistent in their criticism. We must observe here that no Christian can ever be totally loyal to his party. He can never give his final loyalty to a system, an ideology or a party, first because he is concerned with service to man, and not the success of a particular political programme, but above all because God alone is entitled to his loyalty. "When we join a party we should therefore make clear to our fellow-members that our commitment is provisional and limited. There is no dishonesty in this; it would be dishonest to do otherwise, and far from losing influence in the party, we are likely to gain respect. Above all, by making clear how limited is our involvement we also demonstrate how total is our dependence on God."

If in our political life we make plain through our words and acts that there are things that we can never do, that the interests of the party and the success of our own plans are of secondary importance, we proclaim that Jesus Christ is our only Lord and God." (Maury: *Evangelism and Politics*, p. 33.)

No matter how firm his convictions and how strong his determination the Christian who engages in politics will soon find that he has to do some things that are against his conscience. He is then faced with a cruel dilemma. He must either compromise his conscience, and stay with the party, hoping to change things later, and, by com-

promising, jeopardise his witness, or he may end his witness altogether by withdrawing from the party. In this situation, the Christian who is active in politics, needs the judging, redeeming, forgiving and merciful word of the Gospel as that word is incarnated in the understanding and acceptance of the Christian Church. Far too often the Church has adopted a censorious attitude towards those of its sons who cannot help getting involved in political compromise, instead of sitting where they sat, and feeling in its own bones the cruel nature of the choices — often between evil and less evil — that are forced upon them.

The State:

Romans 13 and Revelation

To return more directly to Romans 13. It should be noticed that Paul here gives what amounts to a definition of the state: that it is a body appointed by God to discourage evil and encourage good. We must observe that it is possible for a state to become so corrupted by principalities and powers that it no longer answers to this definition, that it sets itself up as the supreme arbiter of what is true or false, evil or good, that it usurps the place of God, that it encourages the wicked man and becomes a terror to the good man. This has, in fact, happened when John writes the book of Revelation. Here one finds the tremendous and frightening vision of the state that that has become Antichrist, the state that has exceeded its God-given bounds to such an extent that it has become drunk with the blood of the people of God. No-one who has lived through even some of the events of the twentieth century can deny the stark possibility of this very thing happening, nor can he be so blind as to say "It can't happen here."

Paul commands obedience to "the authorities". The "authorities" in his day comprised a system of power that was focussed in the Emperor who delegated his power to provincial and military governors who in turn delegated some of their power to such men as tax-collectors and others. Whatever the complications of the system, the line of power — and hence of obedience — was clear. In a democracy the situation is significantly different. For power does not rest in one man only. As indicated above, power is shared (in theory at least) between the governing party, the opposition, the upper house, the judiciary and the electorate. To say this is to realise that it is an over-simplification for any particular party that happens to be in power to claim the obedience of which Paul speaks. It is nothing less than arrogant pride for the party that happens to be in power that it and it alone may claim that obedience. The obedience is due to the whole complex of authority and power as mentioned above. In any case that claim very easily amounts to a claim that the party that happens to be in power has a monopoly on any knowledge of the will of God for the nation. That is perilously close to blasphemy.

All this is sharply and critically relevant to our situation as Christian citizens in Africa — South Africa included. Again and again we read of certain kings in the Old Testament. "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord: he departed not from the sins of his father wherewith he made Israel to sin." If this prophetic vision of an entire nation being

READER'S VIEW

The Editor,

May I point out, as a Catholic, that the "Roman" Church referred to by your correspondent R.O. (Pro Veritate of March, 15th) follows the Bible in insisting on the separation of the ordained priests from "a ministry of all believers." When Paul referred to all Christians as priests he indicated clearly the purely spiritual aspect of the lay — Christian priesthood, which consisted in uniting in spirit with the ordained priest in offering up the Sacrifice of the Mass; and in making spiritual sacrifices (Phil. IV : 18); prayerful sacrifice (Heb. XIII : 15) and almsgiving (Heb. XIII : 16); faith in Jesus (Phil. II : 17).

To administer the sacraments (except Baptism and matrimony) an ordained priest is required (I Cor. IV : 1 and I Cor. XII : 28 a.c.). A layman can, as a matter of urgency, baptise. In the Sacrament of Matrimony the contracting partners are the ministers of the Sacrament. An ordained priest is there as chief witness and official representative of the Church. In I Tim. V : 22 Paul warns his followers: "Impose not hands lightly on any man." (See also Eph. IV : 11, 12).

Do we not read in Heb. V : 4: "Neither does any man take the honour to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was." Again, Paul says: "Neglect not the grace that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with imposition of the hands of the priesthood." (I Tim. IV : 14.)

Catholic laymen are not, as "R.O." implies, merely "silent subjects of a Roman dictatorship", the continuous award by the Popes of decorations to laymen is visible proof of the work of the latter.

Pretoria. J. A. Duigan.

Die Kerk in die wêreld

OPFRISSINGSKURSUS VIR NIE-BLANKE LERAARS

'n Tweede teologiese opfrissingskursus vir ongeveer 50 nie-blanke leraars sal D.V. vanjaar in September gehou word. Die kursus wat ongeveer een maand sal duur is vir geordende leraars wat minstens die Std. 8 of gelykstaande eksamen suksesvol afgelê het en wat die nodige kwalifiserende teologiese kursus van hul kerke suksesvol voltooi het.

Sal belangstellende leraars dadelik met die Sekretaris, Opfrissingskursusse vir Leraars, Posbus 97, Johannesburg in verbinding tree?

Voorkeur sal gegee word aan leraars wat nie die Modderpoortkursus van September 1962 bygewoon het nie. Reis- en verblyftekoste van deelnemers sal deur die organisateurs van die kursus betaal word.

REFRESHER COURSE FOR NON-WHITE MINISTERS

A second theological refresher course for about 50 non-White ministers will be held in September of this year. The course which will be of about one month's duration will be for ordained ministers who are in possession of the J.C. or equivalent certificate and who have successfully completed the theological courses of their respective churches.

Will interested ministers please write immediately to the Secretary, Ministers' Refresher Courses, P.O. Box 97, Johannesburg?

Preference will be given to ministers who did not attend the first refresher course, Modderpoort, September, 1962.

The organisers of the course will pay all travelling and boarding expenses.

vandag



pro ecclesia

AMERICAN MINISTERS UNPROCKED BY THEIR CONGREGATIONS — ON THE RACIAL ISSUE.

When 28 young Methodist ministers in Mississippi is used in the January 2 Mississippi Methodist Advocate a statement condemning discrimination by race, color or creed, three of the group lost their jobs. Speaking as individuals the 28 ministers — all but one under 45 — affirmed the freedom and responsibility of the pulpit, endorsed the Methodist Discipline's condemnation of discrimination, pled for Christians' support of desegregated public schools, and expressed Christian opposition to communism. Reaction from people in and beyond the Methodist Church was immediate, angry and retaliatory. Through their action and the price they are paying for it the ministers have achieved what no other group in Mississippi has accomplished.

LATOURETTE — KERKHISTORIKUS SONDER WEERGA

Watter student in die kerkgeskiedenis van die moderne tyd, sal nie daarna hunker om hierdie grootste van alle hedendaagse kerkhistorici te leer ken nie! En as 'n mens wel met Kenneth Scott Latourette kennis maak, dan voel jy dat dit hy is wat dit 'n voorreg ag dat hy jôu kon ontmoet. Simbool van groot vroomheid, nederige ootmoed... dit is soos ek hierdie 78-jarige vrygesel sou beskryf, wat sonder teologiese skoling as predikant, tog een van die persone met die indringendste insig in die teologiese tendense van die afgelope eeue geword het.

Iemand met 'n groter werkywer kan mens jou nouliks voorstel. Behalwe talle geskrifte oor allerlei onderwerpe op die kerkhistoriese en ekumeniese vlak, staan bo alles uit sy meesterstuk: „A History of the expansion of Christianity"; sewe boekdele wat geval is met die ondersoek van iemand wat trag om die verloop van die kerkgeskiedenis in sy geheel te omspan. Hoewel hy reeds etlike jare afgetree het as professor in kerkgeskiedenis van Yale Universiteit in die V.S.A., het hy sedertdien onverpoosd voortgegaan om te skryf, en sops het van sy hand verskyn: „Christianity in a revolutionary age." Hierin vat hy die 19de en twintigste eeue saam, en tipeer hulle as revolusionêre eeue. In sy vorige werke het hy die 19de eeu tipeer as Die Groot Eeu, die eeu van die sending. Maar ook was hy versigtig om nie die sendingaksie te oorskat nie. (Van die R50 wat die gemiddelde bydrae van Protestante in die V.S.A. is vir hulle kerk, gaan daar net R150 vir buitelandse sending.) Latourette luiwer dan ook nie om die tendens om die Christendom as die „American way of life" en 'n kultuurreligie te sien, ten

sterkste af te keur nie, en die universaliteit en ekumenisiteit hou hy altyd in perspektief. En sy praktiese vroomheid sien mens ook oral in sy werk, waar hy nérens die kerkgeskiedenis sien as deel van 'n kausale proses waarin oorsaak en gevolg mekaar opvolg nie, maar trek hy dit, soos dit by die gelowige pas, deur na God se voorsienigheid wat dit so bepaal het.

In hierdie jongste werk van hom: „Christianity in a revolutionary Age" wys Latourette daarop dat in die eerste fase van hierdie revolusionêre tydperk die kerk hom ingewerp het in revolusionêre aksie. Hierdeur het die Christendom die ander godsdienste wat nie voorbereid was vir revolusionêre aksie nie, in 'n sekere sin onvoorbereid betrap, en groot munt geslaan het by volkere wat oop was vir iets nuuts, omdat hulle geakkomodeer was aan 'n posisie van historiese agterlikheid, waarin die ander godsdienste hulle met gelatenheid berus het. Tereg wys Latourette op die stagnasie wat nou so maklik kan volg in die uitbreiding van die Christendom, waar ons te staan gekom het voor botsende ideologieë, 'n wêreld verskeur deur nuwe nasionalismes en anti-kolonialismes, 'n bevolkingsontploffing wat die statistiese aanspraak van die Christendom onbenullig klein laat vertoon.

Die dekade waarin ons leef sal steeds meer en meer met hierdie probleme moet worstel, ook op die kontinent van Afrika.

GEMEENTES IN NEW YORK

'n Groot stad soos New York het vanselfsprekend baie gemeentes. Volgens die statistieke van 1963 is daar 2,519 gemeentes. Hiervan behoort 57,5% aan die vyf groot Protestantse families — daar is 417 gemeentes van die Baptiste, 303 Metodiste gemeentes, 282 Lutherse gemeentes, 269 Episkopale en 179 Presbyteriaanse gemeentes. Die leraars in New York wissel teen 'n tempo van 400 per jaar van gemeentes.

GOD SE VRYE KINDERS

● Van bladsy 5

loor het om alles te erf in die ryk van die opstanding. Vryheid is om dit alles te glo, te getuig en daarvan te leef... in die aangesig van alles en trots alles.

Anders, wat 'n magtelose nasionale godjie maak mense dan van die Lewende God omdat hulle hom dan moet help met hulle sterk arm en „swaard" (wat, let wel, na twee kante sny), en omdat hulle nie dwarsoor en dwarsdeur al Suid-Afrika se mense-probleme heen sien dat God die Here van die wêreld is en dat Hy die wêreld in sy hand het tot die wêreld se heil nie? (Ps. 24.) Tot wat 'n onding word geloof en ware godsdiens gemaak wanneer mense filosofeer: God help tog dié wat hulself help? in plaas van om aan elke klok te gaan hang en elke basuin te blaas met die goeie en bevrydende nuus: Jesus is Here.

Die vryheid wat vergewe en verdra

Dis is reeds Ps. 2 se Evangelie: Vrees vir niks want God lag oor die magtelose en vrugtelose stryd van mense om sy Jesus-juk (sagte juk) af te gooi en sy toue van hulle af los te maak, die toue waarmee God homself in sy Jesus-offer in hierdie wêreld aan hierdie wêreld-van-mense tot die dood toe laat bind het met 'n ewige genadeband. God lag, want hoe kom hulle van Hom af weg? (Ps. 139). Niks verander sy kruiskoningskap en sy koninkryk van verlossing oor die nasies

nie. Daarom lag Hy in sy Almag (wat sy mag is om as Messias ons die kinders van die Vader te maak) en ook in sy vryheid, oorwinning en vreugde-oor-mense.

Alleenmaar, laat ons hierdie Bessitter van ons ken! Laat ons wéés wat ons is, dit is vrye kinders van God, met die vryheid wat sigbaar word daarin dat ons dit met mense kan uithou, dat ons met hulle kan saamleef omdat die liefde hulle verdra aangesien die liefde die misdade vergewe. Vryheid is om te glo en te hoop en lief te hê wanneer dit lyk asof alles verkeerd loop en hand uitruk... want Jesus van die kruis is Here. Vryheid is om die slegte mens nie te weerstaan nie, die wat jou vloek te seën, jou hater goed te doen en te bid vir die wat jou vervolg. Hierdie is die vryheid wat nie losbandigheid sorgeloosheid en goddeloosheid by die vrye werk nie.

Hoe kom dit dan dat ons selfs ook geestelik as 'n soort polisiemag teenoor mekaar te staan gekom het? Is dit nie omdat ons God se wyn vervals het met water en ons geloofsinhoud tot skuim gemaak het nie? ... Een ding alleen is nodig: dat ons dooernstig sal vra wat die Evangelie van die vryheid is wat die krag (dunamis) van God tot redding van die mense-teen-mense is en so eintlik sal vra wie hierdie Jesus is wat Here is?

● Ds. C. J. Vermaak is predikant van die Ned. Geref. Kerk te Fairland, Johannesburg.

CHRISTIAN AND STATE

● From page 7

seduced into sin was true then, it can come true now. The claim that he has been appointed by God does not cancel out any ruler's fallibility, does not free him from sin, does not make his will identical with the will of God. The world has so often reeled under the onslaughts of those who saw themselves as God's Messiahs, that the intelligent Christian is not deceived as to the temptations and lusts of power. Indeed a ruler's claim that he has been appointed by God and is responsible to him alone can make his rule all the more dangerous because criticism of his rule thereby acquires the tinge of blasphemy. It is true that the "powers that be" are ordained of God, but that does not cancel their fallibility, nor does it absolve them from criticism especially from those who seek God's will. Christians, in other words, may not relinquish their duty of informed and constructive criticism simply because a ruler claims to have been appointed by God.

Again, the intelligent Christian will not be deceived by loud appeals to Paul's command to obey the authorities. This passage, and a similar passage in 1 Peter 2 "have been greatly misused in the interests of tyranny in every century of Christian history" (Bennett, Christians and the State, p. 28) There is in these passages "a permanently valid recognition that God is ordering human life through government, and that without government, even bad government, society would

fall into anarchy" (ibid.) — an anarchy that is pleasing to neither God nor man. On the other hand we may not forget the picture painted by John in Revelation. The author of Revelation has no thought of advising his fellow-Christians to other political resistance. Such was, in any case, impossible. All he suggests is the offering of "suffering resistance rather than participation in idolatrous worship" of the emperor (Bennett, op. cit. p. 31) While there may be little political advice as such from Revelation, we do learn from it that it is not always true that the Christian should obey the government.

A great deal has been said in this thesis about the duty of the state to maintain law and order, and of the duty of the Christian to support the state in its attempts to do so, for the reasons that have been stated. That needs to be corrected by the emphasis that the state has a parallel duty to preserve justice and righteousness. It is not always easy, to say the least, to reconcile these two imperatives. It is part of the Christian's task to help the state think its way through to a judicious balance between these two necessities. However, since the state usually errs on the "law and order" side, the Christian will, more often than not, be found emphasising the other.

(End)

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