



PRO VERITATE

MARIE-LOUISE MARTIN

Some causes of separation in the Church according to the New Testament.

J. A. SWANEPOEL

'n Ou kettery dreig om te herlewe.

IDA GRANT

"Righteousness exalteth a nation".

JOHN DAVIES

What is politics?

By die Hoofposkantoor as Nuisblad geregistreer
Registered at the Post Office as a Newspaper

Volume VII No. IX | Jaargang VII Nr. IX

Jan. 15 Jan. 1969

PRO VERITATE

EDITORIAL

EDITOR:

Dr. B. Engelbrecht.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Bishop B. B. Burnett; the Rev. J. de Gruchy; the Rev. A. W. Habelgaarn; the Rev. E. E. Mahabane; the Rev. J. E. Moulder; the Rev. C. F. B. Naudé (Chairman); the Rev. R. Orr; Prof. Dr. A. van Selms.

ADMINISTRATION/ CORRESPONDENCE

CIRCULATION MANAGER:

Dr. W. B. de Villiers.

All letters to the editor and administration to: P.O. Box 31135, Braamfontein, Johannesburg.

SUBSCRIPTION

Subscription payable in advance.

Land and sea mail: R1 (10/- or \$1.40) — Africa; R1.50 (15/- or \$2.10) — Overseas; 17/6 — United Kingdom.

Air mail: R2 (£1 or \$2.80) — Africa; R3.50 (£1.17.6 or \$5.00) — Overseas; £2 — United Kingdom.

Cheques and postal orders to be made payable to Pro Veritate (Pty.) Ltd., P.O. Box 31135, Braamfontein, Johannesburg.

PLEASE NOTE

The editorial staff of Pro Veritate state herewith that they are not responsible for opinions and standpoints which appear in any article of this monthly other than those in the editorial and editorial statements.

PRO VERITATE appears on the 15th of every month.

(Price per single copy 10c).

CHRISTIAN MONTHLY FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA CHRISTELIKE MAANDBLAD VIR SUIDELIKE AFRIKA

IN THIS ISSUE...

- In an academic paper, here reproduced in print, Dr. Marie-Louise Martin dwells upon the phenomenon of divisions within the Church and looks for contributory causes in the New Testament which are still applicable today. P. 4
- The Rev. J. A. Swanepoel reminds us of one of the earliest heresies in the Church, Gnosticism, and points out with disturbing logic that the embers of this old false doctrine are still smouldering in our time and are persistently threatening to burst into flame again. P. 8
- Ida Grant, a writer from Rhodesia, the wife of the erstwhile principal of Adams College in Natal, movingly reminds us of the radical difference between mere charity and true righteousness. P. 10
- In his review on the Church outside South Africa, Prof. B. B. Keet devotes his attention mainly to an evaluation of the life and work of the recently deceased theological colossus of the twentieth century, Karl Barth. P. 12
- "Politics is bread", alleges the Rev. Johan Davies in a stimulating article on the nature of politics, and then proceeds to elucidate this challenging statement. P. 14
- In our Book Review a sensational new Afrikaans work by W. A. de Klerk is discussed. P. 16

IN HIERDIE UITGAWE

- In 'n akademiese redevoering, hier op skrif gestel, gaan dr. Marie-Louise Martin in op die verskynsel van kerklike verdeeldheid en soek daarvoor aanleidende oorsake in die Nuwe Testament wat vandag nog geldig is. Bl. 4
- Ds. J. A. Swanepoel roep een van die vroegste kerklike ketterye, die Gnostiek, in herinnering en toon met ontstellende logika aan dat die asse van dié ou dwaalleer nog steeds aan't smeul is en in ons tyd knaend dreig om weer op te vlam. Bl. 8
- 'n Skryfster uit Rhodesië, Ida Grant, eggenote van die gewese hoof van die Adams Kollege in Natal, herinner op roerende wyse opnuut weer aan die radikale verskil tussen blote liefdadigheid en ware geregtigheid. Bl. 10
- In sy oorsig oor die Kerk buite Suid-Afrika wy prof. B. B. Keet sy eandag hoofsaaklik aan 'n waardering van die lewe en werk van die onlangs ontslape teologiese kolos van die twintigste eeu, Karl Barth. Bl. 12
- "Politiek is brood", beweer eerw. John Davies in 'n prikkelende artikel oor die wese van die politiek en gaan dan voort om dié uitdagende stelling toe te lig. Bl. 14
- In ons Boekbespreking word 'n sensasionele nuwe Afrikaanse werk deur W. A. de Klerk in oënskou gencem. Bl. 16

Editorial:

- 1969 -

In many respects 1968 was not just another year. It was, after all, the year which started with the astounding Washkansky heart transplant operation and the year which ended with the American space voyage around the moon. It was also, however, the year in which we were compelled to experience an intensification of the Vietnam crisis, increasingly irksome international relations, a virtual collapse of race relations throughout the world and an unprecedented revolt on the part of the world's youth.

The moral of the story, already repeated *ad nauseam*, is clear: hand in hand with a bewildering upsurge of man's technological knowledge there goes a noticeable deterioration in the moral condition of his communal life. The higher the tower of human achievement rises, the further we obviously become estranged from God and from each other. And the preponderant question of our time is no longer: Who will be the first to land on the Moon, or on Mars or on Venus? But: What are we to do about the steadily deteriorating personal and group relationships in our sub-lunar world?

Precisely because 1968 was such a remarkable year technologically, 1969 is such a challenging year as far as our moral backwardness is concerned. In 1968 we experienced zeniths of human achievement in the field of knowledge. 1969 hangs over us like a cloud of reproach: What are we going to do by way of a *quid pro quo* in the moral sphere?

For one thing is certain: ultimately it will avail man not at all if he were to conquer the expanses of heaven but were to suffer such damage to his soul that, in the end, he would have to sacrifice his humanity itself for their sake. It is good that man, created after the image of God, should wax in knowledge, but not at the expense of righteousness and holiness (i.e. wholeness). Ultimately it does not avail him at all to plumb the secrets of the universe, but to gain no real knowledge concerning himself. And his knowledge concerning himself would be worthless if it were only to flow from his eating of

the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; true knowledge would only emerge when he eats of the fruit of the tree of life.

For us here in South Africa especially, 1969 contains a particular challenge. It was here, after all, that the miracle of heart transplantation occurred for the first time and only recently did we successfully launch our own missile. But here it is also still true that, after 300 years of "Christianity" in South Africa, we have not yet learnt to do unto others as we would have done unto ourselves, but are becoming ever more enmeshed in the web of a racial ideology which can ultimately only lead to our common destruction. In spite of the lofty ideals and ambitions which we cherish, the fear of the future is still growing apace in our hearts and the only real precaution we are taking is our annually increasing expenditure on military armament with a view to the relentlessly approaching day of doom.

We do not lack material wealth and luxury and our sensational economic progress entices us to ever greater carnal excesses; but our churches are running empty on account of their spiritual dearth; and our disillusioned youth are increasingly starting to revolt against the hypocrisy and spiritual bankruptcy of the elder generation. In Johannesburg we are building the Carlton Centre, the largest structural complex of its type in the world, but at Limehill we blithely leave the unserviceable ones and cast-outs among our countrymen to their own misery. Our hands are always open for "Charity" and the "Missions", but for the deepest need of our neighbour we are increasingly closing our hearts.

At the beginning of this new year Christianity and the Church in South Africa are once again standing at the cross-roads and once again we have to choose between further technical and material progress or greater Christian freedom and responsibility.

May the road we choose be the Road of the Cross.

W. B. de V.

Endorsing out of Clergymen

One of the most disturbing developments in the relationship between Church and State in South Africa is quietly achieving substance. We refer to recent events whereby, in quick succession and without any reasons given, the Government withdrew the residence permits of the Anglican Bishop Mize of South West Africa, the Rev. H. S. Häselbarth of the Lutheran Theological College at Mapumulo in Natal and Fr. Robert van der Hart of the Roman Catholic Theological Seminary at Hammanskraal, while another Lutheran missionary, Pastor C. Fobbe, who had already been in the country for 17 years and who returned to Germany on leave, was refused the right of re-entry into our country.

In none of these cases were any reasons given — not even to the church authorities concerned —

but everyone who knows these four clerics, their convictions and Christian witness can guess why such action has been taken against them. One can only surmise that, in the case of Bishop Mize, he incurred the displeasure of the Government by attending to the spiritual needs of some of the accused in the South West terrorist trial; in the case of the Rev. Häselbarth, he was probably too active in supporting the University Christian Movement, while Fr. van der Hart perhaps gave too much "unnecessary and unwelcome" attention to the fate of the denizens of Stinkwater (one of the resettlement areas for displaced Africans). It is remarkable, however, that in both the latter instances the clerics in question were lecturers in theology — men who could therefore easily have "poisoned"

the youthful minds of future ministers of religion among the African population — to the great discomfiture of the authorities. In the case of Pastor Fobbe, his sin was apparently either that he embarrassed the Government by inviting Dr. Martin Niemöller to South Africa or that he gave witness to his Christian responsibility and concern before the members of his parish in a way that did not correspond with the "South African way of life".

No one knows the real reasons, however — because the Government refuses to provide reasons for its action. And now everybody is guessing. And the whites in South Africa who are prepared to swallow the Government's propaganda are guessing one thing ("where there is smoke, there is a fire") and Christians inside and outside South Africa, who look and think deeper, are guessing something else (that the Government, in its hypersensitivity to criticism based on Christian ethics, wants to silence the voices of protest by these means.)

Whatever the motives impelling the authorities, two things are clear:

- (1) that this action is causing incalculable harm to the advancement of the Gospel in our midst. Not only does it place overseas churches and missionary societies in a highly invidious position as regards the training of their workers for South Africa, but it is undoubtedly also creating the impression that our authorities, in their fear of the universal Christian doctrine, are only prepared to welcome and support its

South African version, viz. Christian National religion;

- (2) that this action against missionaries of three of the largest and most wide-spread churches in the Western world, viz. the Anglican (Episcopalian), Lutheran and Roman Catholic, has caused and will still cause very serious reaction in church circles outside South Africa. Whoever is concerned about the unblemished image of South Africa in the world outside will be powerless to advance any sound apology for this action — unless the authorities provide adequate and convincing reasons for their action.

We must finally point out that this action most profoundly affects every church in South Africa: not only the churches with direct overseas connections, but also those churches which draw all their workers from South Africa itself. For a great and important principle for every church is at stake here: the freedom and the right to preach the Gospel (which is affected to the very core by this action) and the right of every person not to be condemned without a hearing. Almost all churches except our Afrikaans churches have made themselves heard on this question. The latter's silence (specifically that of the Ned. Geref. Kerk) compels us to ask: is this the silence of approval? And if so, on what grounds? It is of the utmost importance for the cause of Christ and His Church that also the Ned. Geref. Kerk as the largest church amongst the whites, should clearly state where it stands in the matter.

C. F. B. N.

Redaksioneel:

- 1969 -

In vele opsigte was 1968 nie maar net nog 'n jaar nie. Dit was per slot van sake die jaar wat begin het met die wêreldverstommende Washkanskyhartoorplantingsoperasie en die jaar wat geëindig het met die Amerikaanse ruimvlug om die maan. Dit was egter ook die jaar waarin ons 'n verhewiging van die Viëtnam-krisis, al hoe meer kiewelrige internasionale betrekkinge, 'n feitlike ineenstorting van rasseverhoudinge oor die wêreld heen en 'n ongekende opstand van die kant van die jeug moes beleef.

Die reeds byna tot vervelens toe herhaalde les is duidelik: hand aan hand met 'n verbysterende opbloei in die tegnologiese kennis van die mens gaan daar 'n kennelike verslegting in die sedelike toestand van sy gemeenskapslewe. Hoe hoër die toering van menslike prestasie styg, hoe verder raak ons blykbaar verwyder van God en van mekaar. En die allesoorheersende vraag van ons eeu is lank nie meer: Wie gaan die eerste wees om te land op die Maan, of op Mars of op Venus? nie, dog: Wat kan ons doen aan die steeds deteriorende persoonsverhoudinge en groepsverhoudinge in ons ondermaanse wêreld?

Juis omdat 1968 so 'n merkwaardige jaar was in tegnologiese opsig, is 1969 daarom so 'n uitdagende jaar wat betref ons sedelike agterstand. In 1968 het ons hoogtepunte van menslike kennisprestasie belewe, 1969 hang oor ons soos 'n verwyf: wat gaan

ons doen by wyse van 'n teenprestasie op morele gebied?

Want een ding is seker: dit sal die mens uiteindelik niks baat as hy die hemelruimtes bemeester dog tot so 'n mate skade ly aan sy siel dat hy ten slotte sy menslikheid self daarvoor sal moet inboet nie. Geskape na die beeld van God, is dit goed dat die mens sal gedy aan kennis, dog dit nie ten koste van geregtigheid en heiligheid (d.i. heelheid) nie. Dit baat hom uiteindelik niks dat hy die geheime nisse van die heelal deurvors en geen werklike kennis verkry omtrent homself nie. En sy kennis omtrent homself sou waardeloos wees indien dit slegs sou volg op 'n eet van die vrugte van die boom van kennis van goed en kwaad; ware kennis sou dan eers ontstaan wanneer daar geëet word van die vrugte van die boom van die lewe.

Veral vir ons hier in Suid-Afrika hou 1969 'n besondere uitdaging in. By ons het die hartoorplantingswonder immers die eerste maal plaasgevind en so pas is ons eie vuurpyl suksesvol gelanseer. Maar by ons is dit ook nog steeds waar dat ons, na 300 jaar „Christendom" in Suid-Afrika, nog nie geleer het om aan ander te doen soos ons graag aan onself gedoen wil hê nie, dog al hoe meer vasgevang raak in die strik van 'n rasse-ideologie wat uiteindelik alleen maar kan lei tot ons gesamentlike ondergang. Ten spyte van al die verhewe ideale en ambisies wat ons koester, groei

die vrees vir die toekoms nog steeds aan in ons harte en is al wesenlike voorsorgmaatreël wat ons tref, die jaarliks stygende uitgawe wat ons bestee aan militêre bewapening met die oog op die onverbiddelik naderende dag van onheil.

Aan materiële weelde ontbreek dit ons nie en ons sensasionele ekonomiese vooruitgang verlei ons tot al hoe meer vleeslike uitspattighede; maar ons kerke is besig om leeg te loop weens hul geloosheid en ontnugterde jongmense kom al hoe meer in opstand teen die geveinsdheid en geestelike bankrotenskap van die ouer geslag. In Johannesburg bou ons die Carlton-sentrum, die grootste boukompleks van sy soort in die wêreld, maar by Lime-

hill laat ons die ondienlikes en uitgestotenes onder ons landgenote rustig oor aan hul eie ellende. Vir „Liefdadigheid” en die „Sending” is ons hande altyd oop, dog vir die diepste nood van ons naaste sluit ons al hoe meer ons harte.

Aan die begin van hierdie nuwe jaar staan veral die Christendom en die Kerk in Suid-Afrika weer eens by 'n kruispad en ons moet weer eens kies tussen verdere tegniese en materiële vooruitgang en voorspoed of groter Christelike vryheid en verantwoordelikheid.

Mag die pad wat ons kies, die Pad van die Kruis wees.

W. B. de V.

Uit-endossering van Evangeliedienaars

Een van die mees ontstellende ontwikkelinge in die verhouding van Kerk en Staat in Suid-Afrika is besig om homself in stilte te voltrek. Ons verwys hier na die onlangse gebeure waar agtereenvolgens, sonder enige opgaaf van rede, die Regering die verblyfpermitte van die Anglikaanse biskop Mize van Suidwes, eerw. H. S. Häselbarth van die Lutherse Teologiese Kollege in Mapumulo in Natal en Vr. Robert van der Hart van die Rooms-Katolieke Teologiese Skool te Hammanskraal ingetrek het, terwyl 'n ander Lutherse sendeling wat reeds 17 jaar in die land was en met lang verlof na Duitsland is, pastoor C. Fobbe, verdere toegang en terugkeer na ons land geweier is.

In geen geval is enige rede verstrekkend — ook nie aan die betrokke kerklike owerheid nie — maar elkeen wat die vier geestelikes, hulle oortuiginge en hulle Christelike getuienis ken, kan raai waarom daar so teen hulle opgetree is. Die vermoede word uitgespreek dat in die geval van biskop Mize hy hom die onmin van die Regering op die hals gehaal het deur na die geestelike behoeftes van sommige van die aangeklaagdes in die Suidwes-terroristeverhoor om te sien; in die geval van eerw. Häselbarth sou hy te aktief sy steun aan die University Christian Movement gegee het terwyl Vr. Van der Hart miskien te veel „onnodige en onwelkome” aandag aan die lotgevallen van die inwoners van Stinkwater (een van die hervestigingsplekke van verskuifde Bantoes) gegee het. Dis egter opvallend dat in albei laasgenoemde gevalle dié geestelikes teologiese dosente was — manne wat dus maklik die jeugdige gemoedere van toekomstige Evangeliedienaars onder die Bantoe-bevolking met die uitdaging van die ware Evangelie kon „vergiftig” — tot groot verleentheid van die owerheid. In die geval van pastor C. Fobbe was sy sonde blykbaar óf dat hy die Regering in verleentheid gestel het deur dr. Martin Niemöller na Suid-Afrika te nooi óf dat hy sy Christelike verantwoordelikheid en besorgdheid teenoor die lidmate van sy gemeente betuig het op 'n wyse wat nie strook met die „Suid-Afrikaanse lewenswyse” nie.

Niemand weet egter presies nie — omdat die Regering weier om redes te verstrekkend vir hulle stap. En nou raai almal. En die blankes in Suid-Afrika wat die regeringspropaganda sluk, raai één ding („waar daar 'n rokie is, is daar 'n vuurtjie”) en

die Christene in 'n buite Suid-Afrika wat dieper sien en dink, raai 'n ander ding (nl. dat die Regering in sy oorgevoeligheid teen kritiek wat op Christelike gronde gebaseer is, langs dié weg die stemme van protes tot swye wil bring).

Wat ook al die beweegredes van die owerheid mag wees, is twee dinge duidelik:

- (1) dat hierdie optrede onberekenbare skade berokken aan die voortgang van die Evangelie in ons midde. Nie alleen plaas dit oorsese kerke en sendinggenootskappe in 'n hoogs onbenydenswaardige posisie met die opleiding van hulle werkkragte vir Suid-Afrika nie, maar dit skep ook onteenseglik die indruk dat ons owerheid in sy vrees vir die universele Christelike leer alleen nog die Suid-Afrikaanse weergawe (version) daarvan nl. die Christeliek-Nasionale godsdiens, verwelkom en ondersteun.
- (2) dat hierdie optrede teen sendelinge van drie van die grootste en mees wydvertakte kerke in die Westerse wêreld, nl. die Anglikaanse (Episkopale), Lutherse en Rooms-Katolieke, baie ernstige reaksie in kerklike kringe buite Suid-Afrika veroorsaak het en nog verder gaan veroorsaak. Wie bekommerd is oor die goeie beeld van Suid-Afrika in die buiteland, sal magteloos wees om enige gegronde verweer teen hierdie optrede op te werp — tensy die owerheid genoegsame en oortuigende redes vir sy optrede voorsien.

Ten slotte moet ons daarop wys dat hierdie optrede elke kerk in Suid-Afrika ten diepste raak: nie net dié kerke met direkte oorsese verbintenisse nie, maar ook dié kerke wat al hulle werkkragte in Suid-Afrika werf en verkry. Want 'n groot en belangrike beginsel vir elke kerk is hier op die spel: die vryheid en reg om die Evangelie te verkondig (wat deur hierdie optrede in die hart aangetas word) en die reg van elke persoon om nie onverhoord veroordeel te word nie. In dié saak het byna alle kerke behalwe ons Afrikaanse Kerke hulle stem laat hoor. Die stilswye van laasgenoemde (en by name die Ned. Geref. Kerk) laat ons vra: is dit die swye van goedkeuring? Indien wel, op watter gronde? Dis in die hoogste belang van die saak van Christus en sy Kerk dat ook die Ned. Geref. Kerk, as die grootste enkele Kerk onder die blankes, sê waar hy in die saak staan.

C. F. B. N.

Some causes of separation in the Church according to the New Testament

— DR. MARIE-LOUISE MARTIN

*(Address delivered upon the occasion of the Fifth Anniversary of the
Lesotho Ecumenical Association at Roma, Lesotho, on 19/10/1968)*

When we think of ecumenism, we have the search for unity in mind, expressed in Pauline or post-Pauline writings in the image of the one head with **ONE BODY**. We realize that the "divided body of Christ" is a contradiction in terms. We seek therefore the lost unity, lost here in our daily reality, yet present and real in Christ. One of our considerations must be: how and why do we so often lose the unity which is present and real in Christ? What are the reasons for our disunity, our unhappy divisions, our separation from one another which have led to the existence of parties within the churches and to various churches or denominations, each perhaps claiming to be **THE church**, or the most likely expression of the reality of the Church.

What I want to do in this paper is simply to open a discussion and to pick out a few points from the New Testament which seem to me relevant to our present situation in the church here in Southern Africa.

1. JEWISH CHRISTIANS — GENTILE CHRISTIANS

Separation which led to the existence of various groups and factions within the church, each representing a different point of view and threatening to disrupt the unity in Christ, is as old as the Church itself. And, significantly, the first separations arose in relation to the question of the **Mission of the Church**, a proof that the problem of ecumenism is closely tied up with that of the **Mission of the Church**. Prof. Ernst Käsemann, the German New Testament Scholar of Tübingen, points out this problem very clearly in his book *Der Ruf der Freiheit*, and the same holds true of Prof. Ferdinand Hahn's monograph on the Mission of the Church.

The first passage which reveals the arising conflict in the early church is found in Acts 11:19-26. The background to this passage is the Jewish doctrine, adopted by the majority of Jerusalem Christians, that the first and foremost task of the church was the restitution of Israel. No mission among gentiles was therefore planned. Individual gentiles were converted, sure enough, but a planned evangelisation or mission was regarded as contrary to God's will, according to the thinking of these Jewish Christians, was first and foremost the restitution of Israel, and then **God**

himself would lead the gentiles to Mount Zion-Jerusalem for their conversion. To undertake missionary work was therefore regarded as sinful presumption on the part of men, and Jewish Christians based this doctrine on Holy Scriptures, on passages such as Isaiah 2 or Micah 4. The conversion of a few individuals, however, was regarded as a token, or a signpost which indicated the future events which God had reserved for himself.

Now, there arose another group in Jerusalem. They were also "orthodox". They did not deny any of the assets of the Christian faith. This group was composed of Jews who had come from the diaspora to Palestine in order to spend their last days, or at least the great festivals, in the Holy City. They spoke Greek and formed a special section within Judaism and within the Christian Church. They had their own leaders. E. Käsemann believes — and I am inclined to agree with him — that the seven so-called deacons in Acts 6 were their leaders who stood in a certain competition with the Twelve. Between this Greek-speaking diaspora group and the Aramaic-speaking Christians in Jerusalem certain frictions arose. The main difference was this that the Greek-speaking Jews from the diaspora undertook missionary work, first of all among Greek-speaking Jews in Jerusalem. This was unwise, according to worldly considerations, and soon brought them into conflict with the Jewish authorities, a conflict which found its climax in the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7). Now the sermon of Stephen proves that this group also

placed the exalted Christ above the Temple and the Law. After the catastrophe of Stephen's death this group could no longer remain in Jerusalem and they were scattered all over the Mediterranean countries. They were regarded as extremists, which is borne out by the fact that after their expulsion the more orthodox Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were left in peace for a time. But now, according to Acts 11:19ff, these Greek Christians began to evangelize the gentiles, which was absolutely new and brought about new and more serious conflicts and divisions.

The group of orthodox Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, whose leader became James, gave trouble even to Peter, according to Paul's account in Gal. 2, when Peter fraternized too much — as they thought — with the gentile Christians in Antioch and ate together with them.

The result of these struggles was the creation of two Christian centres, one in Jerusalem with the orthodox Jewish Christians, and one in Antioch with the more liberal Greek and Gentile Christians. Paul started his missionary journeys from Antioch. How deep the rift between the two sections was, is borne out by Paul's tremendous difficulties with the Jerusalem group, difficulties which could not even be settled by the Apostles' Council (Acts 15). There were two distinct theologies, two different ways of interpreting salvation history, which divided the early church. Indirectly the Jerusalem group became guilty of Paul's arrest after the so-called third missionary journey which led to his imprisonment in Caesarea and his final appeal to Caesar. Indeed, a deep rift existed, so deep that we could almost speak of two "denominations" at that early time. From Paul's letters to the Galatians and Philippians and from 2nd Corinthians 10-13 we realize how bitter the struggle became between Paul and the "Judaizers", the extremist orthodox Jewish Christians, some of whom

Paul called false apostles.

What was the root-cause of this separation? The orthodox Jerusalem group had, as it were, locked itself up in a doctrinal position which was certainly scriptural, but — and this is important — their doctrine, their theology, their dogmatics had become an idol. They were no longer free. They had actually tried to lock God into their theological system. But God is the Lord, and man has no hold upon him, not even with his best theology and his orthodoxy. God goes ahead, he is the acting God, creating ever new situations and calling for new decisions. This lack of openness to God's new ways led to a separation, to a bitter conflict within the body of Christ, and for all practical purposes divided it.

This throws light on our contemporary situation. A lot of divisions within the Christian Church today is not between so-called denominations. The denominational dividing line becomes thinner and thinner. But another rift is opening up and threatens the ecumenical endeavour, the rift within the churches basically caused by those who in some way or other try to lock God and Christ into their theological system, into their way of thinking and their beliefs. Take South Africa as one example, and Germany as another, where the movement called "Back to the one Gospel" has divided the body of Christ in a way that has most detrimental consequences. Or, in Lesotho, why is it that ecumenism is so weak? Is it not precisely because the churches in Lesotho have locked themselves up in their own way of thinking, their theological formulations and the way of life of their first missionaries? It is a dividing line that goes right across all our denominations in Lesotho. One looks backward, one cherishes the old formulations and ways, and thus one is no longer open to God's new acts and God's new challenge, to his going forward in history in a fast changing world. Thus the church becomes antiquated, young people call it useless, and intellectuals turn their backs on it as something irrelevant.

At the same time we witness in Southern Africa, Lesotho included, an upsurge of the so-called African independent churches. It is too facile to condemn them all as syncretistic and nativistic, as heretical etc. There may be such elements. But I am thinking now of several genuine African prophets: have we considered the unorthodox possibility that God

is free to choose an African prophet, a non-theologian, and to make Christ palpable and tangible to the African mind through an inspired African, so that he ceases to be an imported "western Christ" and becomes relevant to the cultural background of this part of the world?

Is it really necessary to excommunicate all these African prophets as was the case in the past, even though they may have attacked certain ways of life and doctrines of the traditional churches?

2. RIVALRIES BETWEEN LEADERS AND THEIR ADHERENTS

According to 1 Cor. 1:9-17 Paul had to exhort the enthusiastic Christians in Corinth to "agree in what they say" in order to avoid "schismata", divisions that emerged through contentions or strife. Each one had "his own watchword" as C. K. Barrett puts it (Commentary on 1 Cor. p. 43). Four watchwords are given: "I belong to Paul; I belong to Apollos; I belong to Cephas (Peter) and I belong to Christ". "Christian leaders have voluntarily or involuntarily, become the focal points of dissension" (Barrett, *ibid*). Paul had been the founder of the Church "who planted it", Apollos succeeded him and watered the plants (1 Cor. 3:6). Apollos was an eloquent speaker, trained in the famous school of Alexandria in Egypt, and unwittingly aroused some contempt for Paul, who was despised as a speaker (2 Cor. 10:10). Peter, or possibly his representatives visited Corinth. This group, representing Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, may have questioned Paul's apostleship.

Was there a "Christ-group" as well? There is uncertainty about it because this fourth group is not mentioned in chap. 3 nor in Clement's letter. The Christ-group may have been composed of Christians who emphasized that like the others they knew Christ; not the Christ of Paul, Apollos or Cephas, but a Christ of their own. However it may have been, the Corinthian Church was in danger of being split into three or four groups. "Has Christ been shared out" Paul asked them. There is only one undivided Christ. To belong to Him is essential. He is the only person to be in the centre. Christians are not to attach themselves to men as if they were saviours. Christ alone was crucified for men; consequently

we are baptised in his name, says Paul in chap. 3. The teachers, the leaders, the ministers, priests, deacons, elders etc. are nothing else than servants, and not rivals. "He who plants and he who waters are one thing", says Paul (3:8). The only essential is that God gives growth. God alone is important, and not man, however gifted man may be. There is no other foundation than the person of Jesus Christ.

We are here faced with the problem of what may be termed "hero-worship" in the Church. The Church becomes divided through rivalry of leaders on the one hand, and on the other hand through members who favour a certain leader and despise another whose gifts are different. Time and again this attitude, either on the part of leaders or of Church members, has caused divisions. Whole denominations are named after their leaders: the Lutherans, the Calvinists, the Wesleyans, for example. The same happens among independent African churches. Allegiance is still given to Christ, but for some the preacher or prophet through whose word and acts Christ has become a living reality is in some way confused with Christ and we move towards a false messianism. The leadership which is of great importance for the well-being of the Church can become a cause of division and separation. It is acute in every church, especially where there is no proper participation of the so-called laity in the mission of the Church, and no theology of the diversity of gifts and ministries.

What is the solution? How can this kind of division be avoided? Paul says: "Let no one make his boast in men" (3:21), "for all things are yours, Paul, Apollos or Cephas". They are but servants. True humility on the part of leaders, a proper perspective of the function of services (not offices!) in the church will help towards unity. Converts and church-members do not belong to the leaders and their denominations and groups, nor do leaders belong to members. Together they are all servants of Christ; with their various gifts they form the one body of Christ.

3. HERESIES

Sometimes, however, separation is necessary. When we read, for example, the letter to the Colossians or the letters of St. John we are brought face to face with the tremendous danger of heresy which arose in the

early church through the Gnostic movement, a religious-philosophical movement that tried to compromise between Greek philosophy, oriental religions, in some instances Judaism and the Christian message. It was a movement that denied the fundamental facts of salvation history, e.g. the Creator was separated from the Redeemer, the human Jesus from the divine Christ. It thus denied the fact of the incarnation. It was a movement that was very widely spread, not a homogenous movement, but complex, as any student of the New Testament and of Church history knows.

Against this movement that threatened the very existence of the Christian faith, the following injunctions were directed to the faithful: "See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ. For in Him the whole fulness (the "pleroma" — a favourite term of the Gnostics) dwells **bodily** — in the flesh, not only as a spirit or an idea" (Col. 2:8-9). A special set of taboos had been developed in that particular gnostic movement in Colossae, perhaps in some connection with Judaizing tendencies. Hence the author of Colossians, probably Paul, writes (2:20ff) "If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations: Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch". These gnostics were apparently very strict. They valued asceticism. And yet, the whole movement was wrong, because the very centre of the Christian gospel, the incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth, and the freedom which his redemption achieved for us were omitted, were left out. The author warned against their teaching, and a little later John condemned them outright (1 John 4:2ff) "By this you know the Spirit of God: every Spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the anti-christ", he writes.

What does this show? **There are separations which become necessary. There is not only the true gospel preached, there is also a false gospel that appears in the guise of utmost strictness, claiming the name of Christ, but a gospel from which the true gospel must be clearly distin-**

guished. We cannot have unity at all costs. There are instances when the Church has to say "No".

And yet the wall between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, between the true and the false faith is very thin. What was the **Anliegen**, the quest of those Gnostics? Was it to destroy the Church? I believe it was a similar quest to that which we find today in a number of Zionist groups on the one hand, and extreme theologies such as for example the "Death-of-God" theology on the other. The quest is to come to terms with existing philosophies, religious and cultural traditions at a given time and in a given situation. If this endeavour leads to syncretism, and to a denial of the centre of the Christian faith, then it is of course dangerous. But is it not possible that in some cases — and here I have our contemporary situation in mind — the Church has failed to relate the gospel to new situations and different backgrounds, especially in Africa where so many doctrines are taught which in their Western form are simply irrelevant to Africa, and irrelevant to the present-day generation with its specific problems which must be met? What, for instance does "justification by faith" mean? How must we re-formulate it in order to communicate it either in Africa or to the new generation for whom the concept "sin" has become obsolete in our classical formulation?

Thus heresies, regrettable as they are, are at the same time a tremendous challenge to the church and confront it with this question: how far has the church merely repeated formulas of the past in its teaching, its sermons, its hymns and liturgy, or how far has it tried to relate them to a new situation and new problems that face the Christians in a given area?

I am aware that this quest to relate the Gospel to new situations and to different cultural backgrounds is one of the important aims of the ecumenical movement, going hand in hand with a renewal and new thinking about Christ and above all commitment to Him. Now I emphasise the word "**relate**". I do not say "adapt". To adapt could imply the adulteration of the Christian faith. But by relating it to new situations and different background the heretics of today may become the Christian pioneers of tomorrow and the orthodox Christians of today might become the heretics of tomorrow if they look only back-

ward and try to lock God into their formulas and church-orders and liturgies, and perhaps ideological concepts. By so doing they will miss the main point — they will replace the concern for man so prominent in the incarnation of God in Christ, and cling to dead letters. This may be the greatest heresy, in the guise of pure orthodoxy. It is here where the real and living church might have to express its "damnamus" (we condemn) i.e. its verdict of separation, with the hope and the prayer, however, that these erring brethren may find their way back to the heart of the Christian faith.

4. INSTITUTION OR CHARISMA?

It is a rather unusual and little known New Testament passage which I shall quote in this connection. I owe my insight once more to Prof. E. Kaesemann, expressed in his paper **Ketzer und Zeuge**, pp. 168ff in **Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen**. He refers to 2nd and 3rd John. In the second epistle of the Presbyter John, we find a reference to Gnostics who "will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh" (v. 7). In v. 9 he speaks of "people who put themselves in front" when he says "any one who goes ahead" (**philoproteuein** in Greek). The faithful are warned "to abide in the doctrine of Christ". In the third letter, allusion is once more made to such a man putting himself above others (v. 9). His name is given as Diotrephes. He is a man "who does not acknowledge my authority" says John the Presbyter and author of the letter. "He is prating against me with evil words" (v. 10). Moreover, Diotrephes excommunicated the "brethren" sent by John the Presbyter. He was evidently a high Church-official, as we would say today.

What was the relationship between these two men, John the Presbyter, and Diotrephes? We begin with John the Presbyter. He fights on two fronts; he fights against the Gnostics, who put themselves above others, according to the second letter, and he fights against Diotrephes who excommunicated the brethren of the Presbyter John or even those who welcomed them. The Presbyter was a man who stood between the Gnostics on the one hand, and a church official on the other who assumed monarchic or something like dictatorial powers. The letter was written at a

time when the church, in its fight against heresy, had set up a framework of Church-order, offices and apostolic succession which led to what protestant textbooks call "early Catholicism," **Früh - Katholizismus**. Diotrephes stands for this tendency towards a much more rigid structuring of the Church and its institutionalisation. To put it in modern terms: Diotrephes stood for the ecclesiastical "establishment". Of this tendency Käsemann says: (p. 181) "Sie will nicht wahrhaben, dass es Geschichte der Kirche nur von der Geschichte des Christus praesens her, also als Geschichte des Glaubens und der Zeugen, aber nicht in einer religiösen Tradition gibt, vorsichtiger formuliert: dass die Geschichte der religiösen Tradition im Judentum wie in der Kirche eben nicht die Gegenwart des Heils garantiert und nicht mit der Geschichte des sich offenbarenden Gottes und des Christus zusammenfällt". (In short: Religious tradition in the Church does not guarantee salvation and does not coincide with the history and reality of God who goes on revealing Himself ever anew.)

We find in this third letter the conflict between charismatic Christian faith and institutional Christianity. Both have their rightful place and ought to stand in a healthy tension. As long as both remain relative, i.e. related to one another, there is the necessary mutual corrective. But as soon as either the institutional character of the church, or the charismatic character of the Christian community and its leadership are, as it were, "absolutized", then a schism is ultimately bound to result. Either the Spirit is quenched and a rigid order and structure become all-important, or charismatic gifts are over-emphasized and chaos may result from it.

This touches on our present-day situation. The charismatic type is present in Pentecostal and a number of Zionist and other African independent Churches which for a considerable time have been, and still are today regarded by many members of established churches as sects. Up to this day the conflict between these two types can be found. Excommunications still take place. This is regrettable. Fortunately the ecumenical Council of Churches, since the Mindolo Consultation in 1962, is open to the quest of the African Independent Churches, and Pentecostal Churches have become members of the WCC. We need them with their

emphasis on charismatic gifts and leadership, and they put a question mark to all our emphasis on offices in the church, our structures, the character of the church as a mere institution. For too long have the official churches neglected the charismatic element — since the day of Montanism in the 2nd century, and the time of the Anabaptists at the period of the Reformation up to our present time.

5. PERSECUTION AND APOSTASY

I come to a last point, taken from the last book of the New Testament and from Church History. **There emerges — in Revelation Chap. 13 the beast from the bottomless pit, the State that has turned anti-Christian in its ideology and is sustained by the false prophet who sanctions it as representing true religion. This state with its religious ideology becomes the greatest threat to the Christian faith. It persecutes the church ruthlessly — all who do not acknowledge the beast and its prophet, are threatened.**

At this juncture the problem of the "lapsi" emerges: the problem of weak Christians who cannot withstand the pressure and the power of the ideology of the mighty state — Rome with its divine Caesar at the time when the book of Revelation was written — Hitler and the Nazi-ideology at the time when I was a student and young minister; and today we have similar situations, similar powers and ideologies in different parts of the world, some of them rather nearby and backed up by powerful churches. Many orthodox Christians make a compromise, and often the pious people are most inclined to do so. They retire into an inner realm and let the world and "dirty" politics alone. They thus deny the reality of the incarnation and the Lordship of Christ over the powers of the world. It is a compromise that has surprising parallels with Gnosticism, but it is perhaps even more dangerous. The faithful — often a mere remnant — are denounced as leftist, extremists etc. A separation takes place that divides Christians who face persecution bravely from the majority who compromise. During the years 1934 to 1945 we had the Confessing Church in Germany with its own "Bruderrat" and its existential Confession of Barmen — over against the official state-

churches with a government-appointed bishop for the whole German Reich. A separation took place right across the various denominations. I wonder whether we might not experience something similar before long in our part of the world.

This is a separation that cannot be avoided, unless we give up the gospel, and strange as it might seem, it is precisely in this situation that true ecumenism becomes an event. Lutherans, Reformed Christians, Roman Catholics and Jehovah's Witnesses found their unity in Christ in German concentration camps and prayed and read the Bible together. Catholics, Protestants, Anglicans and Christians from many smaller churches and groups are signing to day the Message of the S.A. Council of Churches against the dangerous religious ideology of separateness that threatens to undermine the very foundations of the Christian faith. **Divisions occur therefore in the midst of denominations, and ecumenical fellowships arise right across the denominational barriers.**

Let me sum up the five points (which are in fact interconnected) by pointing out some conclusions to which they lead:

● Separation may be due to the fact that we try to lock God into our own concepts, doctrines, dogmatics and favourite ideas. We try to dominate Him by having a hold on him. We close our hearts and minds to the tremendous possibility of God breaking through all these frameworks and going on in history, putting new challenges and possibilities before us. It is essential for true unity to realize the freedom for which Christ has redeemed us. This freedom includes going forward with God all the time. Marginally the question arises: what must WE do if we belong to a denomination which no longer knows this freedom, which no longer can look forward, but only backward to its own past that in reality has faded away? What must WE do in a dying church? Can a situation arise which forces us to a certain separation or an attitude which necessarily will lead to a division? I simply pose the question; it is a very serious one.

● Separation may be due to personal rivalries or unholy preference of leaders by certain members. A leader then in actual fact takes the place of Jesus Christ. A "leader" may not necessarily be an individual; it can also be an "it" an "ism": Presbyterianism, Congregationalism,

Pentecostalism, Catholicism, etc. Ecumenism has the task of proclaiming in the power of God's Spirit forgiveness and reconciliation, knowing that it is ultimately God alone who reconciles and enables man to break down these barriers between individuals and "isms". This is in fact an act of exorcism taking place.

● Separation may be due to a real heresy, a syncretism in which Christian and non-Christian elements are fused. Ecumenism must have the courage to acknowledge that we cannot unite at all costs, and that there is not only a Christ-given unity, but also the diabolic unity of the tower of Babel which eventually leads to deeper divisions and more harmful confusions. Reconciliation does not mean a cheap and superficial peace. Any amount of common social action, necessary as it is, must not be confused with true unity of faith in the One Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ

who is the only foundation of his church. On the other hand ecumenism must seek the root causes of heresies and seek to relate the Christian gospel to new situations such as the secularism of our time, and to different cultural backgrounds. By so doing it must forge its way and call in specialists in the various fields, and above all, be patient. The heretics of today may be the Christian pioneers of tomorrow, we have said earlier in this paper.

● There is the tension between the Church as institution and the Church as the fruit of the Spirit which can lead to separation. The Church must regard its structure, its forms, its offices, its institutions not as sacrosanct, but as organisational forms and orders open to change. It must remain alert to the guidance of the Spirit. On the other hand it shall also remember that God is a God of order and not of chaos.

● Separation may become a necessity in times of persecution. The Church is and remains the Church under the cross. Now, the cross and suffering are a stumbling block for natural man. We may have to choose between a powerful religious ideology and the gospel of the crucified Christ. Here division becomes a divine imperative. But this division which stems from the acceptance of the cost of discipleship, will become the true ecumenical event: here men and women of all denominations, of different cultural and racial backgrounds will be united under the cross of Him in whom we are one; and they have the hope of sharing in his resurrection and glory. They thus form the one body of the crucified and risen Christ — not only for themselves, but vicariously for the whole of mankind about which God is concerned.

'n Ou Kettery Dreig om te Herlewe

— DS. J. A. SWANEPOEL

Die Gnostiek en die daaruit voortspruitende Docetisme is een van die oudste ketterye, waarmee die Christendom reeds aan die begin van sy bestaan te doen gekry het. Die kenmerk van Gnostiek was die leer van 'n dualisme, nl. dat daar 'n volstrekte teenstelling bestaan tussen lig en duisternis, gees en stof en goed en kwaad.

Volgens die voorstelling van die Gnostiek is die wêreld die werk van 'n wêreldskepper (demiurg) en staan dit téénoor die hoogste, onbepaalbare God. Dit het beslag in die Christendom gevind in voorstellings soos: Die hoogste God wat Gees is, het niks met hierdie wêreld te doen nie; hierdie wêreld is die werk van 'n hoëre God wat ons uit die Ou Testament leer ken; die mens het in sy gees 'n stukkie van die hoogste God self gekry; die hoogste God het Christus gestuur om hierdie stukkie te verlos; deur Christus se leer en voorbeeld maak die gees hom los van die stoflike en keer terug na die hoogste God. (Berkhof).

GOD GESPAAR

Uit die gees van die Gnostiek is die Docetisme gebore. Dié naam dui aan wat dit leer, nl. dit lyk na, dit skyn asof (maar dit is nie werklik nie). Dit het o.a. die voorstelling ge-

huldig dat Christus nie werklik mens geword het nie, dat Hy nie werklik gely het nie, dat Hy direk van die kruis ten hemel gevaar het en dus nie werklik dood in die graf neergelê is nie. Die grond van die Gnostiek moet daarin gesoek word dat die mense beter wou weet dan die getuienis van die Evangelie en vromer dan God self wou wees. Dit was vir die Gnostiek te vernederend vir God om mens te word. Dit het nie daarvoor kans gesien om te aanvaar dat Christus werklik gely het nie. Die voorstanders van die Gnostiek wou Hom dit spaar.

Daarom neig die Gnostiek sterk na die mistiek en mis die lewenswerklikheid van die getuienis van die Evangelie. Die wese van die Gnostiese dwaling is dat dit die waarheid van die Evangelie verdraai en die verlossing deur Jesus Christus ongedaan maak. Vir hierdie rede is dit as 'n kettery deur die vroeë Kerk verwerp. Die spore van die stryd teen die

Gnostiek en die aanverwante dwaaleringe van die Docetisme vind ons in die ou belydenisse van die Kerk. In die geskrifte van die Nuwe Testament self kom dit na vore; miskien nêrens so kenbaar dan in die briewe van Johannes nie. „Hieraan ken julle die Gees van God: elke gees wat bely dat Jesus Christus in die vlees gekom het, is uit God; en elke gees wat nie bely dat Jesus Christus in die vlees gekom het nie, is nie uit God nie; en dit is die gees van die Antichris waarvan julle gehoor het dat hy kom, en hy is noual in die wêreld.” (1 Joh. 4:2, 3).

„Want baie verleiers het in die wêreld ingekom: dié wat nie bely dat Jesus Christus in die vlees gekom het nie. Dit is dié verleier en die Antichris” (2 Joh. vers 7).

GESKIEDENIS HERHAAL

Die vroeë Kerk het die bedreiging van die Gnostiese dwaling afgeweer maar dit het nie verseker dat hierdie kettery in die geskiedenis van die Kerk nie weer in een of ander vorm sou voorkom nie. Inderdaad bewys die geskiedenis die teendeel.

Daar is duidelike tekens dat hierdie ou kettery weer aktueel en akuut geword het vir die Kerk in 1969.

Laat ons maar net noukeurig let op die volgende:

1. Die oorbeklemtoning en eensydige opvatting van die goddelike oorsprong van die Heilige Skrif.

Volgens hierdie opvatting is die Bybel Gods Woord. „En dan beteken dié stelling hier: daar word in die Bybel geen enkele woord gevind wat nie deur God ingegee is en dus nie onfeilbare waarheid sou wees nie . . . Alles wat in die Bybel staan is deur die Heilige Gees geïnspireer d.w.s. gedikteer!” Tereg skryf van Niftrik: „Hierdie bybelbeskouing is vanselfsprekend onmoontlik en onhoudbaar”. Hy sê dat daar gewoon menslike foute en vergissinge in die Bybel staan: vergissinge in getalle, gegewens, feite, en vervolg: „Ons hoef dit nie te verdoesel en ons ook nie daaroor te skaam nie: die enige Woord van God het nou cenmaal vlees geword.” In verband met die bogenoemde opvatting sê hy: „die verworpe goddelikheid van die Skrif het die menslikheid van die ou Boek opgesluk.” Ons tref hier, in die leer oor die Skrif, dieselfde docetiese dwaling aan wat ons reeds in die Christologie leer ken het: „die mensheid (resp. menslikheid) verdamp in die gloed van die goddelikheid. Soos die menslike natuur van Jesus Christus tot 'n onwesentlike skyn gemaak word omdat die mens tot elke prys 'n goddelike verlosser begeer — so word hier die menslike van die Bybel opgeoffer en ontken om tog maar veral 'n goddelike, onfeilbare Woord te hê . . .” (Klein Dogmatiek. p. 290 vv.)

DU PLESSIS EN GEYSER

Dit verdien die aandag dat twee bekende kerksake in hierdie eeu in Suid-Afrika, wat albei op hofsake uitge-loop het, t.w. die Du Plessis-saak in die N.G. Kerk en die Geysers-saak in die Ned. Herv. Kerk, in enge verband gestaan het tot hierdie Gnostiese dwaling. Prof. Du Plessis het byvoorbeeld in die gedrang gekom by sy kerk omdat hy nie aanvaar het dat Moses self die eerste vyf Bybelboeke geskryf het nie — 'n wetenskaplike feit wat vandag algemeen aanvaar word.

2. 'n Soortgelyke Gnostiese strekking lê ten grondslag van die voorstelling oor die Koninkryk van God wat in sommige kerklike kringe verdedig word. Hiervolgens word die

Koninkryk van God as iets so „goddeliks” voorgestel dat dit, wat die menslike betref, opgeoffer en ontken word. Die Koninkryk van God word so voorgehou dat dit weinig, indien enigiets, met hierdie wêreld te doen het. Die werklikheid van die Koninkryk van God word verplaas tot 'n ideë-wêreld wat êrens ver agter die wolke bestaan.

So gebeur dit dat voorstanders van hierdie voorstelling van die Koninkryk van God nie erns maak met die eise wat die koms daarvan aan mense stel nie. Die geregtigheid wat onafskeidbaar verbonde is aan die Koninkryk van God in hierdie wêreld, is nie meer 'n werklikheid nie. Daarom dat dieselfde mense altyd die onreg goed praat met: ons leef in 'n sondige wêreld, daar sal altyd onreg wees.

Die werklikheid van menslike verhoudinge kom volgens hierdie voorstelling ook nie in kontrasie met die heerskappy van God nie. Dit (Gods Koninkryk) sou dan te menslik en verwêreldlik wees. Dat dit verbetering van menslike verhoudinge sou meebring is 'n belediging en verlaging van die hoog verhewe Ryk. Ons het hier onmiskenbaar met 'n Gnostiese dwaling te doen wat neerkom op 'n vergeesteliking van die Koninkryk van God.

3. Nou verwant aan hierdie opvatting oor die Koninkryk van God is dié oor die werk van Jesus Christus.

Met oorbeklemtoning word dit herhaal dat Jesus Christus uit die sonde verlos. Natuurlik is Jesus Christus die Verlosser uit die sonde. Die vergissing lê hierin dat daar 'n vergeesteliking plaasvind van wat die Heilige Skrif daaronder verstaan. Die Gnostiek kom hier nooit by 'n spesifieke sonde uit nie. Die sonde bestaan slegs in 'n vae „verlorenheid”. Jesus Christus verlos dus nie uit die sonde van die verontregting van 'n medemens nie, Hy verlos nie uit die sonde van uitbuiting en korrupsie nie. Eintlik verlos Hy nie uit die sonde van die verbreking van die tweede gedeelte van die Wet van God nie.

Hierdie voorstelling hou nie rekening met die werk van Christus soos Hy dit self aan Johannes die Doper in die gevangenis berig het nie: „blindes sien weer en kreupels loop, meelaatses word gereinig en dowes hoor, dooies word opgewek en aan armes word die evangelie verkondig. En salig is elkeen wat aan My nie aanstoet neem nie” (Mt. 11:5, 6).

„SOCIAL GOSPEL”

Die werk van Christus soos die apostel Paulus dit beskryf: „Want Hy is ons vrede, Hy wat albei (Jode en Heidene) een gemaak en die midde muur van skeiding afgebreek het . . .” (Ef. 2:14), word verswyg. Hierdie werk van Christus pas nie in die orde in Suid-Afrika nie, net soos dit ons nie pas om van die sonde van rassehaat en selfliefdede verlos te word nie. Die sonde waaruit Christus verlos, en gevolglik sy werk van verlossing uit die sonde word verplaas tot 'n ideë-wêreld wat die werklikheid ontloof. Hierin kom dieselfde gees van die docetisme na vore wat ontken dat Jesus Christus in die vlees gekom het.

Dié lyn van redenasie word dan verder voortgetrek tot op die terrein wat beskou word as die taak van die Kerk in die wêreld, en die verkondiging van die Evangelie word so vergeestelik dat die Kerk nie meer mag beweeg op die gebied van die politiek en die maatskappy nie. Dit verklaar waarom enige poging van die Kerk om die Evangelie te laat spreek op hierdie gebied deur hierdie rigting as die „Social Gospel” bestempel word.

4. Die gees van die Gnostiek is ook besig om 'n slagting aan te rig in die eenheid van die Kerk.

Hoewel dit aanvaar word dat die Kerk één is en hierdie eenheid 'n evangeliese waarheid is, word dit slegs gesien as 'n eenheid in die geloof. As Christene saam kom om hierdie eenheid uit te leef en daaraan prakties uitdrukking te gee dan kom die beskuldiging dat dit bloot 'n humanitiese demonstrasie is wat uit ongeloof voortkom.

Wanneer gelowiges uit verskillende rasse saam aanbid en die Heilige Nagmaal vier is dit 'n mensgemaakte eenheid wat nooit uit suiwer motiewe gebore is nie, aldus die opvatting.

So word ook die eenheid van die Kerk gereduseer tot 'n vae idee weg van die werklikheid af.

Dit is hoofsaaklik aan hierdie Gnostiese denkwysse te wyte dat die ekumeniese beweging by die aanhangers daarvan in diskrediet staan. Klaarblyklik word daarmee nie rekening gehou dat die geloof in die eenheid van die Kerk dood is sonder die werke.

SAKRAMENT EN PREDIKING

Die negatiewe houding van sommige kerklike leiers teenoor gesament-

like viering van die Nagmaal word deur Van Niftrik aan die kaak gestel as hy in 'n ander verband opmerk: „Die sakrament is in die Kerk die kragtige protes teen spiritualisme en docctisme. Die heil is Jesus Christus self: die liggaamlike opgestane Heer! Die heil gaan ons aan wat mense is met siel en liggaam. Die sakrament predik met nadruk die werklikheid van die heil (die heil is nie slegs intellektuele of ideë-waarheid nie: die heil is opstanding!) vir werklike mense, wie se vléés betrokke is by die heil in Christus”. (Kleine Dogmatiek p. 322).

Wat moderne Gnostiek is, vind 'n mens 'n duidelike voorbeeld van in

'n preek oor die teks: „Maar Jesus sê vir hulle: Hulle hoef nie weg te gaan nie, gee julle vir hulle iets om te eet”.¹⁾ Hier getuig die Evangelie dat Jesus werklik brood aan die skare gee om hulle liggaamlike honger te stil. Hier het Hy voorsien in die elementêre behoefte van mense — hulle leë maag.

Dit word in die hele preek egter weerspreek en i.v.m. die taak van die Kerk word gesê: „Die Here het seker nie bedoel dat ons moet gee wat die vleeslike, aardse behoeftes bevredig nie . . .!” Dit is duidelik dat die prediker beter as Christus wou weet. Hy het hier 'n teks gebruik wat hom glad nie geleen het vir wat die pre-

diker sê nie. Immers die teks en die perikoop sê presies die teenoorge-stelde as wat die preek wil tuis bring.

Dit onderstreep hoe gevaarlik die Gnostiek is vir die Kerk.

Die vroeë Kerk het drasties opgetree teenoor die destydse Gnostiek — tereg ook, want dit loën die waarheid van die Evangelie en tas die eer van God aan.

Dit het tyd geword dat die Kerk in Suid-Afrika ernstig aandag gee aan hierdie ou kettery wat in 'n nuwe gedaante nou aan die opbloei is.

1) Sien *Die Hervormer*, Junie 1967.

Righteousness Exalteth a Nation

— IDA GRANT

I have recently returned to Rhodesia after a protracted stay in the States. Shortly before leaving, I had the privilege of attending a conference on APARTHEID in the Church Centre of the United Nations. The subject was one that touched me deeply in the circumstances under which we live and work, so I followed the discussion with the keenest interest.

DOING GOOD NOT ENOUGH

A couple of African speakers at the conference spoke out rather bitterly against what they considered the failure of the churches and Christians in general to come to grips with the moral problem underlying Apartheid, and to give adequate leadership in meeting it. This criticism stung some of the churchmen present; and they have various examples of many good things the churches had done and were still doing to ameliorate the lot of the African. But the African speakers were not satisfied, although they were not able to express the reason for their dissatisfaction very clearly, the gist of it was that doing good was not the same as seeking righteousness, and that no amount of the former alone is an adequate excuse for neglecting the latter.

Doing good can be much less demanding than seeking righteousness, and can be used as an excuse of screen to avoid such involvement.

The good that we do, we can measure. Moreover, we can give according to our own estimate of what and how much we should do. The good that we are prepared to do is subject to our own control. There may come a time when we may be only too ready to say “Look at how much we have done. Surely we have done enough”. Was it not the Pharisees' besetting sin that they were so circumscribed by their own goodness that they were blind to the demands of right and justice? To be conscious of doing good may be a protective barrier against seeking righteousness.

RISK

For it is a risk. It is open-ended. There is no knowing what the consequences may be. Seeking righteousness, working for what is true and right and just for all, wherever there is oppression, injustice, or discrimination, is most demanding.

It may be costly, and those who follow this path must be prepared to pay the cost because they are convinced it is worth it. As an Old Testament proverb says “Better is a little righteousness than great revenue without right”. How often in these days is not the economic argument used to justify a government, however repressive its policies may be? If the country as a whole is economically prosperous, the argument runs, then the government must be good. Are we such worshippers of mammon that this must be the

sole criterion of what is right?

Seeking righteousness can also be threatening to entrenched positions and ways of life. To be Lady Bountiful, dispensing largesse, can be very flattering to the ego of the lady, whereas to give up a position of power and privilege to share and share alike can be shattering. And yet this is what is demanded where discrimination benefits one group at the expense of another. Can such costly demands be met?

Who can be expected to face the cost in seeking righteousness in such conditions? The prophet Zephaniah gives us a clue when he says: “All ye meek of the earth, seek righteousness”. To look to the mighty, those in positions of power and privilege, to take the initiative is unrealistic. The lead must come from elsewhere; and as pressure is built up on behalf of right and justice, the power structures will begin to yield. It is the meek — those who make no special claims for themselves alone, who can see and feel where injustice pinches, and make the cry for redress. The call goes out to them to act on their insights, to proclaim what they see, to stir the conscience of the people, and wherever possible to work with others for what they see to be right. Even more, they must be prepared to face persecution, if need be, in the cause of righteousness. The value of meekness lies in the greater freedom it gives to act in the cause of righteousness than the proud can have.

PUBLIC OPINION

Any success won on building up public opinion to the point of making real advances and of establishing righteousness in any field, particularly in overcoming racial discrimination, can have incalculable effects far beyond the area concerned. Advance made in the Civil Rights movement in the States brings hope to those who are fighting a harder battle in Rhodesia, for instance. It makes others see that there is another and better way that they can

choose than the course their country is pursuing at present. A recent leader in one of our Rhodesian daily papers illustrates this awareness when it says: "Given the stark choice between South African retrogression and the American ideal, which yet may become a reality, there is no doubt which of the two anybody with a feeling for justice will choose".

Although the cost of establishing righteousness may be high, the corresponding benefits far outweigh what it costs. Moreover, while the

cost is most immediately felt, the benefits only appear later. As long as injustice prevails, so long will discontent and rebellion flourish, with their deadly fruits of fear and hate. When right and justice are genuinely sought, the way is open for peace and harmony. Well could the Psalmist say: "Righteousness and peace have kissed", and Isaiah: "The work of righteousness is peace and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever". Indeed, "Righteousness exalteth a nation".

In Memoriam - Karl Barth

On December 9th, 1968, one of the most remarkable theologians of all times, Prof. Karl Barth, was called to higher service, at the age of 82. He had been in ill health some two years ago but had made a remarkable recovery, and when I saw him in June this year at his home in Basle, he told me with great joy that he was once more able to conduct a seminar with theological students from all over the world.

I have known Prof. Barth since my student days when I sat in the packed lecture-room at Basle University, during the German Nazi period, together with students from all over the world, many of them Nazi victims. For two years I had the privilege of attending all his lectures, seminars, colloquia and discussion evenings, and I have kept in touch with him ever since then. He was greatly interested in all that happened in Southern Africa and showed increasing concern about developments in this part of the continent. For this reason it is certainly appropriate to devote a few lines to him in this journal.

1. Karl Barth's social concern

When he was a young minister in one of the rural parishes in Switzerland where industries had been introduced, he took a tremendous interest in the social conditions of local workers which at that time were far from ideal. He became unpopular, "a red agitator", in the eyes of the wealthy owners of the factories, but — influenced by men such as the late Prof. L. Ragaz and inspired by Blumhardt

father and son — he could not preach the gospel of reconciliation without taking social action for the underprivileged. This concern for the poor and oppressed remained a feature of his personality throughout his life, and students of his voluminous and precious "Church Dogmatics" can find this concern expressed in many of these pages as well as in his many other books and articles.

2. Karl Barth and biblical renewal

When Karl Barth was still a student and a young minister, theological "liberalism" held sway: in the centre of this theological liberalism there was no longer God and his reconciling act in Christ, but men's ideas about God. Men sought a way to God, but forgot that God in Christ had come to man, because in their search for God sinful men could only go astray. Karl Barth witnessed the moral and theological decay after World War I, and together with his friends E. Thurneysen, E. Wolf, E. Brunner and F. Gogarten he tried a new way; he returned to the writings of the reformers, Luther and Calvin, and from them to the living World of God as expressed in the Old and New Testaments.

God became again the centre of theology. This new approach, expressed in Barth's commentary to the Romans, which he wrote when still a pastor at Safenwil, proved to be a turning-point in 20th century theology. Barth was called to a professorship at Göttingen, then at Münster and afterwards at Bonn

in Germany. While in his earlier writings we find a very strong theocentric and christocentric emphasis which was greatly needed, Karl Barth did not forget human concerns. He was far too great a "humanist" in the best sense of the word. The concept of God's covenant stands in the centre of this theological thinking and this means that God is not only the "wholly Other", but he is God in his relationship to and concern for man. This aspect has unfortunately often been overlooked by theologians, especially by those influenced by British and American traditions. In his Church Dogmatics Karl Barth touches nearly all problems with which we are concerned today: work and working conditions, racism, birth-control, violence or non-violence, to mention only a few. His books deserve far more serious study, and I am sure that after the high waves of modern "secular theology" with its legitimate concerns have ebbed there will be a Barth renaissance.

3. Karl Barth and ecumenism

Long before ecumenism was "in vogue", Karl Barth was a true ecumenist. During his lectures and seminars we had to give serious consideration to Roman Catholic theology and we learnt to appreciate the quests, the truth and also the weaknesses of the great theologians of the past, Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran and Reformed. As far back as 1935 we were introduced to the various Christian traditions and had to make a study of them. Barth's return to the Word of

(Continued overleaf)

(Continued from previous page)

God, which was followed by a similar movement within the Roman Catholic Church in the last decade, was a tremendous help towards ecumenical thinking. In 1948 Barth addressed the first assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam, and remained in touch with the ecumenical movement ever since then. He was greatly impressed by the Roman renewal since Vatican II, and in 1967 he visited Pope Paul who called him a second Thomas of Aquinas. When I saw Prof. Barth in June 1967 and again in June last year, he stated that the events in Roman Catholic theology at the present time needed our full attention and — so he said — were far more important and relevant than certain theological discussions going on in protestant theology.

4. Karl Barth and his struggle against Nazism

In 1935 Karl Barth was expelled from Germany by the Hitler régime. As soon as Hitler came to power in 1933, Karl Barth became one of Nazism's strongest opponents because of its "natural theology of 'Blut und Boden'" (blood and soil), i.e. its tendency to justify racism and the German way of

life. He became the spiritual father of the confessional church in Germany which made such a strong stand against the pseudo-gospel of the Nazis. Karl Barth, being a Swiss citizen, was deported to his homeland and became Professor at Basle, while others such as Pastor Niemöller were imprisoned and then spent eight years in a concentration camp, or men like Pastor D. Bonhoeffer had to pay with their lives. Karl Barth was also the spiritual father of the Confession of Barmen, 1934, which faced the new challenge that was put to the Christian Church through the emergence of Nazism and the "German Christians" as well as the fully syncretistic German "Glaubens - Bewegung" (faith movement). Barmen makes it unmistakably clear that there is but one revelation, that of God in Jesus Christ, and that Nazism could in no way be a "second revelation" through historical events expressed in the vigorous movement that started with Adolf Hitler and his idea of a "tausendjähriges Reich" (millenium) which lasted for 12 years only and ended with the disastrous results of the Second World War. After the war, Karl Barth was one of the champions of reconciliation with the Germans and went himself for a semester to help by teaching theology in Germany.

5. Karl Barth and we

Could there be any theologian who is of greater significance for Southern Africa than Karl Barth? His concern for the poor, for a God and Christ centred theology in which man is seen in his relationship to a truly human God (one of Barth's writings is entitled "The humanity of God"), with his ecumenism based on a serious study of all Church traditions, and his struggle against racism and a pseudo-gospel — is not all this of the greatest importance for us? One could only wish that his books, even and especially his voluminous Church Dogmatics were carefully studied though this takes time and energy. But this time will be well spent and give us the necessary equipment for our struggle today.

By some, Barth is labelled a "liberal" and by many others an "orthodox". It all depends, of course, what one understands by these labels. In some sense all labels are mistaken. Barth's main concern is to listen carefully to what God has to say to us in Christ, and then to draw the necessary consequences for our personal and communal living, for our social, political and economic problems. Could there be anything more rewarding and more urgent for us to do?

M.-L. M.

DIE KERK BUITE SUID-AFRIKA

— PROF. B. B. KEET

Karl Barth Oorlede

In Desember, verlede jaar, is Karl Barth, die grootste en vernaamste teoloog van hierdie eeu, te Basel (Switserland) in sy 82ste jaar oorlede. Byna belaglik was die berig in ons daaglikse pers, dat hy veral algemeen bekend en beroemd was om sy geskrif **Credo**: 'n uiteensetting van die apostoliese geloof, 'n boekie van 139 pp., en met die aanhangsel (beantwoording van vrae) 149 pp. Ongetwyfeld was dit 'n pragwerk wat reeds in 1946 sy soveelste druk beleef het en by tienduizende versprei is, maar vergeleke by die byna onafsienbare vrug van sy pen kan dit letterlik 'n druppel aan die emmer genoem word. Die werk waarby hy altyd bekend sal staan, is sy magistrale **Kirchliche**

Dogmatik, wat tydens sy afsterwe onvoltooid was en dertien dele bereik het, waarvan geen deel minder as 500 bladsye beslaan nie, in sommige dele oor die duisend bladsye per deel. Vyftig jaar was hy besig met hierdie **magnum opus** en, soos 'n vooraanstande teoloog dit uitgedruk het: dit sal nog vyftig jaar duur voordat die inhoud daarvan deeglik deurgewerk sal word. Wat my die meeste getref het, is nie die diepte daarvan in die eerste plek nie, maar die feit dat jy hier te doen het, nie met die sogenaamde „droë skolastiese dogmatiek" nie, maar met stigtelike lektuur in die ware sin van die woord. Telkens moet 'n mens die boek neer lê en dank om die ware stigting wat

daaruit straal. Dit kan ook nie anders nie, want Barth se opvatting van die dogmatiese taak is eksegetiese en nog eens eksegetiese. Sy dogmatiek rus op die getuïenis van die geopenbaarde woord van God, die Heilige Skrif, en Jesus Christus as die sentrale figuur van daardie getuïenis. Natuurlik is daar dikwels verskil van interpretasie oor die betekenis van die Skrif, maar daarom juis bly dit die taak van die dogmatiek om die ware Skrifuitleg te vind. Barth self het op sekere punte teruggekom van sy vorige siening, en dit rondit erken, maar soms was dit gevolg van misverstand dat sy bedoeling nie begryp is nie. Ek dink veral aan sy beklemtoning van die „totaal andere" (ganz Andere) tus-

sen God en mens, deur meer as een ernstig bevraagteken, wat later in die leer van die Skepping opgeneem is en in werklikheid nie so totaal anders bedoel is nie.

Dit sou ons te ver aflei om hier die teologie van Karl Barth te bespreek. Genoeg as ons sê dat by die eerste verskyning van sy **Römerbrief**, wat hy as die lui van die klok bestempel het, al die leerstukke van die dogmatiek reeds in beginsel opgeneem is. By dit alles was hy, as hoogleraar te Bonn, met die Nazisme in ernstige stryd gewikkel, wat uiteindelik tot sy verbanning uit Duitsland na Switserland, sy vaderland, gelei het. Hy het die Duitse volk egter nie aan hulself oorgelaat nie, maar die stryd voortgesit teen die „Duitse Christene” wat „bloed en bodem” bo die evangelie gestel het: In die Belydenis van Barmen, waaraan hy die leidende hand gehad het, is die grondslag vir ’n suiwer evangeliese kerk gelê, wat ’n voorbeeld vir menigeen daarna geword het.

Barth het hom nie beskou as iemand wat ’n splinternuwe rigting ingeslaan het nie — hy het slegs die tou van die alarmklok getrek — maar altyd verbonde aan die verlede van Kerkvaders en Hervormers. So is die oplewing van Lutherse en Calvinistiese studies veral deur sy toedoen aangewakker, sodat weinig teoloë vandag

sonder hecnwysing na die teoloë van die Reformasie kan werk.

Ten slotte slegs een voorbeeld van sy gevoel vir humor. Dit was in die jaar 1962, toe hy ’n reeks lesings gehou het onder die titel „Evangelical Theology” aan die Universiteit van Chicago en aan die Princeton Theological Seminary. In dié tyd was Barth geen **persona grata** in Amerika nie; hy het hulle immers net so hard oor hul kapitalisme angeval as hy die Russe vir hul kommunisme veroordeel het. Toe Barth en Brunner se eerste werke verskyn het, het Prof. Van Til van Westminister College, Philadelphia, die sogenaamde „dialektiese teologie” van hierdie here aangeval in ’n boek wat hy **New Modernism** genoem het. Veral Barth moes dit ontgeld. Die mees oppervlakkige kennis van Barth se beskouing openbaardadelyk dat Van Til die bal volkome misgeslaan het, hoewel hy van meer as een kant geprys is oor sy verbinding van Barth se teologie met die hedendaagse eksistensiële filosofie. Vandaar die term „neo-ortodoksie” wat in Amerika met „Barthianisme” verbind is. Vreemd genoeg het die publiek, teologies of nie-teologies, op die vergadering van Barth mekaar verdring, en groot getalle wou hom ontmoet en ’n handdruk gee. Een van die vergadering het Prof. Van Til ook bygewoon en ná afloop deur die

massa gedring om in aanraking met Barth te kom. „Prof. Barth”, sê hy, „Ek wil u graag ’n handdruk gee — ek is prof. Van Til.” Barth kyk hom skalks aan en sê: „Oh, you are the man who called me a heretic; but it's all right, I've forgiven you a long time ago.” En so tintel sy humor dwarsdeur sy geskrifte, wat ook nie te verwonder is nie, wanneer ons in herinnering roep dat hy ook by God humor in sy bemoeienis met die selfgenoegsame mens gevind het (Ps. 2:4).

* * *

Ander groot figure wat verlede jaar die tyd met die ewigheid verwissel het, was cerbiedwaardige leiers op die gebied van die ekumene. Ons dink aan name soos die Lutherse biskop, **H. Fry**, wat die opvolger was van biskop Bell van Chichester, en van die vroegste tyd af met die ontstaan en groei van die Wêreldraad van Kerke verbonde was.

Ook dink ons aan **prof. Z. K. Matthews**, vroeër hoof van Fort Hare College, wat hom by die uitvoerende personeel van die Wêreldraad aangesluit het en daar belangrike klerikale werk gedoen het — in Suid-Afrika ’n groot verlies. Aan hierdie name en ander is met dankbaarheid gedink weens hul toewyding en trou aan die saak van die universele Christelike Kerk.

FOR YOU TO NOTE

MEMO 1

Re: Overseas Scholarships

World Council of Churches and Bossey Ecumenical Institute

Mr. Fred van Wyk who, with the help of a South African Scholarships' Committee, has handled the WCC and Bossey scholarships in South Africa since 1960, has informed the S.A. Council of Churches that he wishes to be relieved of this work as from February 1969 because of his increasing responsibilities as administrative officer of the Christian Institute of Southern Africa. The General Secretary of the Council has asked Miss Ruth Schoch, administrative officer of the Council, to take on this work as from February 1969, and the Scholarships' Committee in Geneva has approved of Miss Schoch's appointment.

Miss Schoch will also take over from Mr. van Wyk the handling of the applications for persons who wish to apply for admission to the Bossey Ecumenical Institute (near Geneva, Switzerland).

All interested persons are asked to direct their enquiries for scholarships for the academic year commencing **September 1970** to Miss Ruth Schoch, c/o The S.A. Council of Churches, P.O. Box 31190, Braamfontein, Transvaal, as early as possible in **1969**, but not later than May 1969.

Applicants must be in a possession of a degree or theological licentiate diploma and they must be under the age of 40 years. A limited number of scholarships for one year's post graduate overseas studies or a six months' post-graduate course at Bossey are available to suitably qualified South African men and women of all church denominations and all ethnic groups.

MEMO 2

Re: U.C.M. Work and Study Projects

The Social Action Department of the University Christian Movement invites Christian leaders in South Africa, especially clergymen, to “**get where the action is**”.

An ambitious program of non-racial work and study projects in Southern Africa is envisioned for 1969, starting as from the Easter vacation. Resources from among the various student bodies are available now for the following:

1. **Building, renovating and repair projects;**

preferably on church sites (where multi-racial teams of workers are still permissible). To be undertaken by fully ecumenical work-teams of roughly 30 members each. What is envisioned is an initial four-day human relations training seminar imme-

diately followed by the specific building project — in which the learnings of the seminar are confirmed and worked out by common experience.

2. "Mission Relief" projects.

Teams of 12-20 students to serve as orderlies, "nurses' assistants", gardeners, drivers, cooks etc. at mission hospitals and clinics during university vacations.

3. "Communication Weeks".

Teams of 5-8 specially selected students. Such a week would consist of a series of seminars (led by the students) on the gospel and politics, secular theology and modern worship, incorporating a session on "the tension between the generations" problem, a modern worship workshop and service, and some pastoral visita-

tion — all in full co-operation with the local clergyman and parish lay leadership, the object being creative dialogue toward the renewal of the church.

4. "Operation Headstart" projects.

Teams of 6-10 students. Objective: to diminish the cultural lag of non-white children so that they can make the best possible start to their school careers. A specialised educational program (designed by experts in the field) for pre-school children (5-6 years old) over a 3-4 week period. Daily classes from 8.30 to 12.30 in a local church hall or suitable premises. Run by students majoring in education and psychology.

The whole program (which has the full co-operation of the S.A.V.S.) is designed to meet two objects: (1) to

get a solid job of work done; (2) to develop better race relations in the context of Christian discipleship. It flows from the serious need for channels of Christian service in and through which young people could serve their fellow-citizens in South Africa and increase the flow of authentic Christian love in action.

If you can offer our anxious Christian students any assistance by way of the provision of a suitable site, building project or opportunity for Christian social action, please get in touch immediately with:

The Rev. James A. Polley,
U.C.M. Director of Social Action,
c/o Pro Veritate, P.O. Box 31135,
Braamfontein, Transvaal.

WHAT IS POLITICS?

— THE REV. JOHN DAVIES

Politics is bread. Bread is basic, but not simple. Hence we need to consider this statement. However, we are not concerned here with party politics, That is the activity of bakeries and we are not examining factories.

First, politics is rightly concerned with genuine human needs. It is the business of politics to ensure a supply of bread to the people of the world. It has to protect the systems of production and distribution of bread; it has to strive to rectify the disadvantages which may deprive many people of bread. It has to protect people from the effects of their own weakness — economic, educational, physical and social weaknesses. The area of politics is the area of human need. The political agencies redistribute power; they give power; they give power to those who would not otherwise survive — such as the children and the aged; they supplement the biological powers of man, and maintain people who are no longer biologically necessary. For this purpose, they have to take power from those who happen to have more power than is necessary for their own survival.

COUNTRY AND GOVERNMENT

In the day-to-day situation there will be disagreement over what is 'bread' — over what things are ge-

nuine human needs. The more Government tries to exercise real care for people, the deeper into controversy it is likely to go. It is almost inconceivable, for instance, that there should not be deep disagreement over such a contentious issue as education. The day-to-day problems in administration nearly always involve compromise and balancing of various factors, and this is bound to lead to disagreement. Precisely because of this, political groups have to beware of giving themselves the kind of religious character that is virtually impossible to oppose. **It is essential to be able to distinguish country from Government. It must be possible for a citizen to dissent from Government without necessarily being counted disloyal; and it should further be possible for a man to dissent even from the agreed view of the bulk of the country, if his obedience to God requires it. Therefore, it is essential for Christians to stand for the right of people to dissent; for the Christian's ultimate commitment is never to a political group or to any section of men, but to God.** The success of politics, therefore, is to be measured not by the number of

people whom it brings into an absolutely reliable acceptance of an ideological doctrine, but by the number of people which it liberates for responsible individual encounter with immediate problems. Politics is by the people, of the people, for the people, but never in spite of the people. Political problems are not solved when people 'think with their blood'; all that happens is that people get more and more fixed in groups which discourage co-operation. Politics is essentially about policies, not about the maintenance of group identities, classes, races, or other sectional interests.

The State is not the community. The State is, however, one of the activities of the community, much in the same way as a rugby club is. The difference hinges on the degree of importance. The state is an instrument of the community and its task is to protect and co-ordinate man's other natural activities. This task depends on a philosophy of man — his role and purpose. The means of politics is thus determined by the end of man. The ends of man are not determined within the political arena.

There is no natural social order. All systems are the product of man's work and can be adapted to the developing needs of man. The most

effective system is the one that satisfies the ends of man and fulfils most of his needs. The community expresses its needs and does so best when it activates them through a consensus of opinion. The social needs are the needs of all the governed.

CO-OPERATION AND POWER

Secondly, politics is bread because bread requires co-operation. Civilization first started when men discovered how to farm, when they discovered how a man could grow more than was necessary for his own subsistence. This released some men for other tasks, and this led to the development of communities of people doing different jobs and developing different skills. This community of diverse people is the city; the city is the product and the sign of civilizations. **The art of creating and ordering the city is politics (polis = city). The task of politics is to release people from the factors which may inhibit the development of this diverse community. It is to enable people to serve each other in a wide variety of functions.**

Thirdly, politics is bread because politics is power. Bread cannot be made and distributed without power, and there is no politics except power politics. From the very beginning, man is given the mandate to 'subdue' the earth, and to 'have dominion' over all the rest of nature. From the start, therefore, man is seen as a political creature; the whole power-bearing aspect of man's nature is not an evidence of man's fallenness but an expression of this divine mandate. Man is created with power and is responsible to God for his use of it. To man, as a whole, is this dominion given. Man, as a whole, is given the right and duty to work and to exercise power. Any system, therefore, which deprives healthy adult people of the opportunity to work and to exercise power is disobedient to God's intentions. It is dividing man and restricting some of the essential features of manhood to a minority. If we seek 'dominion' to our own group only, we forfeit dominion for ourselves; we divert the energies which we should be spending on exercising dominion over nature by spending them on trying to get dominion over each other. The aim of politics should be to libe-

rate people by controlling nature. Yet we spend a great deal of our time controlling people and find we have only odd fragments of power left for controlling nature.

SUBDUING THE EARTH

However, we are not required to be too idealistic about the realities of power. Man is told to 'subdue' the earth, and this implies that there is to be conflict. There will be rival forces in the world; it is not going to be enough merely to preach, to set up standards, to enunciate principles. An abstract ideal of love will not, in itself, subdue the earth. Love has to work itself out in justice. Justice has to be encouraged, or enforced, by power; and power very often appears as a threat to justice. The confusion at this point makes many good people shrink away from the use of power, especially when power is operating politically. But, just as a man has to rely on something more than mere goodwill to overcome sickness in his body, so he has to use something more than mere idealism to overcome defects in society — defects which may be due to no particular wickedness in any person or group. Pure individual love cures neither TB nor slums. The wisdom of man has to be brought into the service of love, to devise remedies which are beyond the ability of any individual person to apply, however loving he may be. In spite of the appalling results in its misuse, politics, like medicine, is one of the best products of the wisdom of man. **Many people prefer to have nothing to do with politics. This is both impossible and immoral. It is impossible, because politics touches practically all aspects of life — buying a loaf of bread is a political action; being baptised is the most important political event of one's life, for it alters one's whole relationship to nature and society. And such an outlook is immoral because political action is the only remedy for injustice and social disorder, and to refuse such action is to connive at injustice.**

But man cannot live by bread alone. For bread to be good for him, it needs constant analysis. One of the analysts is the Church.

First by the fact that Christians are citizens. Politics is the activity

of man. If some men are Christians then it is the activity of Christians too. One cannot polarize religious matters to the individual area and political matters to the social and claim that 'ne'er the twain shall meet'. The Christian message cannot be reduced to a basically private concern and have the practice of faith reduced to a matter of mere individual decisions unrelated to the world. Christians are called to love their neighbour. The neighbour is the person with whom they find themselves situated. Christian love in this context must be political. The 'how' of exercising love is here important. The man who assists in school-feeding and the one who works to change a system that makes school-feeding necessary, differ only in their interpretation of how best to love and serve their neighbour. Space should be given to both to express their concern. Government is not there to decide the areas of concern but to create opportunities for the exercise of love and service. Similarly people are not to be tailored according to a master plan but policy is to be the expression of the consensus of opinion of all those governed.

THE CRITICAL CHURCH

Secondly, the Church as an institution is not an escape from society, nor is it 'adjacent to' or 'above' the social reality, but is rather within it as an institution of social analysis and social criticism, able to offer a critique of society.

If the Church lives from a hope directed towards the future it admits the transient character of the present. The present is the place where the future is grounded. Such a future-directedness gives the Church the opportunity to test the present and its wide array of customs and institutions with the norms of the future, i.e. the norms of love. The Church then becomes that institution whose primary character is to indicate where un-love or separation between men is experienced. Similarly, because of the hope out of which the Church lives, passive acceptance of injustices and un-love is an impossibility. The present is negated because of the future, un-love is rejected because of the possibility of love. The Church then, in its critical function, proclaims an optimistic message. It can

refuse to accept and live with a present situation knowing that the presence of God is likewise an eschatological presence i.e. a presence experienced through the concrete expression and discovering of love. The Church then, far from sacralizing the 'status quo', is free to adopt a truly radical approach in its evaluation of society.

It follows that the Church can never allow itself to be seduced by ideologies, be they from the right or the left. To avoid this, criticism must contain, as an integral part, self-criticism. If this latter is not present the

Church faces the danger of erecting itself, or an ideology for which it stands, into an absolute. All absolutes other than God are idols and must be destroyed through self-criticism. In doing so the Church can free itself to proclaim the transient and always imperfect character of political institutions.

Love is creative of its own structures, be these social or political. Should the Church examine them and find them wanting, should the Church claim that these structures are then the non-love manifestation of the non-love relationships between the

people creating them, then it is not only free to state this but is obliged to.

The Church should never be the agent of a particular political party or viewpoint. Yet it should recognise that man is a political being and help people discover and consecrate their powers and abilities, help them to exercise the skills of leadership which they possess and to learn the true relationship between authority and service. It should liberate people for genuine leadership, service, love and community.

BOEKBESPREKING

Dr. G. C. van Niftrik, *De Hemel. Over de ruimtelijkheid van God*. G. F. Callenbach, N.V., Nijkerk 1968. 175 bladsye. Prys f.14.90.

Die na-barthiaanse teologie vertoon weinig neiging om oor die hemel te praat. Dit gehoorsaam aan die opdrag van Bultmann om te ontmitologiseer. Die 'hemel' behoort tot die oorwonne voorstellingsmateriaal van 'n tyd wat nog geen wetenskaplike wêreldbeeld besit het nie. Die huidige teologie vertoon ook daarom weinig neiging om oor die 'hemel' te praat, omdat dit van oordeel is dat kerk en teologie nou lank genoeg oor die *Jenseits* gepraat het en nou eindelijk maar 'n keer *diesseitig* moet word. (Bl. 9). Die skrywer betreur hierdie ontwikkeling, so treffend deur hom onder woorde gebring, en sien daarin 'n kapitulasie voor die waan van die moderne tyd dat werklikheid alleen dit is wat die wetenskap konstateer. Die „ruimtelikheid“ van God wil hy in die teologie in ere herstel sien. Dit gaan nie slegs daarvoor dat 'n Bybelse „voorstelling“ gered moet word nie, maar dit gaan oor die al of nie-erkenning van die legitimiteit van die moderne subjektivisme. God laat Hom nie terugdring op die terrein van die menslike eksistensie nie. Hy is die Heer van die geskiedenis én die natuur. Hy beheers die tyd en die ruimte. Die hemel is wel nie lokaal aan te wys nie. Ons kan nie sê hier of daar nie. Maar ons kan en moet wel sê dat die liefde van God dié wat aan Hom behoort tot in alle ewigheid in sy ruimte hou waar hulle vóór Sy aangesig op hulle *cie* voete staan. God is ruimte, liefderuimte. Dit is die 'hemel' — die ruimtelikheid van God, wat beteken dat Hy nou en hierná vir die mens ruimte het en sal hê.

Dit is maar enkele flitse uit hierdie boek van ontsaglik ryke inhoud. 'n Hoogs tydige publikasie, geskryf met die gloed van iets soos 'n hartstogtelike profetiese getuigenis. Die skrywer is deur

etlike van sy veelgelese werke in Suid-Afrika goed bekend en alom gewaardeer. Met *De Hemel* het hy weer bewys dat hy 'n outeur is wat nie alleen sy vakgebied deur en deur ken nie, maar ook een wat sy kennis op die allervrugbaarste wyse aanwend in die diens van die kerk en die teologie. 'n Register van Bybeltekste en 'n register van name agter in die boek is besonder waardevol, en lewer tewens bewys van 'n enorme hoeveelheid Bybelse en teologiese materiaal wat daarin verwerk is.

(B. E.)

* * *

De Bijbel in het Geding. Een bundel beschouwingen over Schriftkritiek en Schriftgezag onder redactie van prof. dr. G. C. Berkouwer en prof. dr. A. S. van der Woude. G. F. Callenbach, N.V., Nijkerk 1968. 160 bladsye. Prys f.14.90.

Lesings wat 'n tiental bekende Nederlandse teoloë in die voorjaar van 1968 in die „theologische etherleergang“ van die N.C.R.V. (Christelike radio-vereniging) gehou het oor Skrifkritiek en Skrifgesag, is in hierdie bundel opgeneem. Dit bevat die volgende bydraes: *Het Schriftgezag*, deur prof. dr. G. C. Berkouwer; *Schriftkritiek en Schriftgezag in de 17e en 18e eeuw*, deur prof. G. P. Hartvelt; *Schriftkritiek en Schriftgezag in de 19e en 20e eeuw (O.T.)*, deur prof. dr. B. J. Oosterhoff; *Schriftkritiek en Schriftgezag in de 19e en 20e eeuw (N.T.)*, deur prof. dr. W. C. van Unnik; *Schriftkritiek en Schriftgezag in de rooms-katholieke theologie*, deur prof. dr. J. Coppens; *Schriftgezag en canon*, deur prof. dr. J. L. Koole; *Schriftgezag en geskiedenis*, deur prof. dr. A. R. Hulst; *Schriftgezag en kerk*, deur prof. dr. A. A. van Ruler; *Schriftgezag en wetenskap*, deur dr. J. M. de Jong; *Het gezag van de Schrift*, deur prof. dr. J. T. Bakker.

Die titel van die bundel is so gekies dat dit enersyds uitdrukking gee aan die

oortuiging van al die medewerkers dat die onmiskenbare menslik-historiese aspek van die Skrif moet lei tot kritiese wetenskaplike vraagstellings, en andersyds aan die oortuiging dat by alle aksentuering van die „menslike“ die gesag van Gods Woord so onontkombaar tot ons kom dat die daarin vervatte boodskap nie te negeer is nie, maar veeleer „in die geding“ moet kom. Elk van die onderskeie bydraes kan natuurlik op sigself gelees word. Dit is kort en op die punt af, en gee aan die leser 'n gerieflike oorsig oor die verskillende onderwerpe waarvoor daar gehandel word.

(B. E.)

* * *

W. A. de Klerk: *Buite die Raamwerk*. Nasionale Boekhandel, 1968, 202 bl.

W.A. de Klerk is nie slegs 'n begaafde dilettant meer nie. Sy denke het ryp geword en die jare — en die leed van die mensdom rondom hom — het hulle spore gelaat. Die resultaat is 'n half-filosofiese, half-digterlike, dog skrywend realistiese boek wat roer en ontstel en tot besinning stem.

Dit gaan oor die afgod van ons eeu, die oppermagtige en allesverswelgende Idee. Nugter, objektief, klinies neem De Klerk die Idee onder die loep, beskryf hom, ondersoek hom, takel hom af — lê hom uiteindelik bloot in al sy byna obsene naaktheid.

Dit gaan vir hom nie slegs om die voor die hand liggende Suid-Afrikaanse rasse-ideologie nie. Dit gaan vir hom om die demoniese Idee in al sy universaliteit: die heilige Koei van Madras en Kalkutta wat „lê ook op die strate van New York, Londen, Parys, Pretoria en Putsonderwater“. Stuk vir stuk word hierdie Salome van die siel ontsluit: die pretensie, die grootdoenery, die *hubris*, die tragedie, die komedie, die ironie.

De Klerk doen sy leser die kompliment om sowel belesenheid as intelli-

gensie by hom te veronderstel. En dit is 'n gewaagde voorveronderstelling, want die wye geestesveld wat hy dek en die diepte van wysgerige insig is soms asemberowend. En tog is die benadering van sy onderwerp — ten spyte van 'n sporadiese geforseerdheid van woorde-spel — boeiend en meevoerend, sodat selfs die louterste leek daarby baat moet vind.

Buite die Raamwerk is trouens een van die merkwaardigste geskrifte wat nog in Afrikaans die lig gesien het, en 'n móét ook vir elke denkende en verantwoordelike leek.

Een van die besondere deugde van die boek is dat De Klerk nooit in die versoeking verval om sy lessie uit te spel, die oonglopende gevolgtrekkings te trek nie. Dog die onbevooroordeelde leser wat wat hier geskryf staan, gaan toepas op ons huidige Suid-Afrikaanse situasie, se hare sal stellig rys.

(W. B. de V.)

Letters—Briewe

Mr. A. J. J. Burger, Marie, Pk. Witvlei.

Andersmaal moet ek my waardering uitspreek vir die besondere hoë peil van wat u aanbied in *Pro Veritate*. Veral het u uitgawe van 15 Nov. my weldadig aangedoen, sowel die inleidende artikel as *Die Ope Brief aan die Eerste Minister*. Dit getuig van insig en deursig; die besondere hoë joernalistieke opset getuig daarvan; dit werk veredelend in op die leser, en sterk jou nog meer in jou oortuiging.

Baie van u lesers koester seker die wens en hoop dat u so mag aanhou en volhou. Trouens dit was not nooit die kenmerk van 'n groot man om so op te tree soos sy Edele die Eerste Minister nie. Hy openbaar voorwaar maar net kleinlikheid. Ons merk dit al meer in die laaste tyd: hy en sy party is op die aanval of op die verdediging, en hierin word van dreigemente en veiligheids-polisie gebruik gemaak. Ek moet dit stel dat, al kan ek nie die huidige kerklike- sowel as regerings-apartheidsbeleid as uitvoerbaar of skriftuurlik onderskryf nie, ek tog 'n harde voorstander van apartheid is: 'n beleid wat ek glo met samewerking van die verskillende rasse-groepe bespreek moet word; 'n beleid wat ook moet rekening hou met die mate waarin die swartman reeds ontwikkel het en nog kan ontwikkel, na hulle bevatlikheid. Ons moet hulle nie in 'n onnatuurlike vorm probeer druk soos die huidige regering nie.

Apartheid is nie net 'n vraagstuk nie. Suid-Afrikaanse Apartheid het 'n probleem geword, of 'n probleem is daaruit geskep. Daar is so 'n gemors daarvan gemaak dat ek enige toekomstige regering bejammer.

Met die oog op al ons probleme wil ek weer vra dat ons, en veral *Pro Veri-*

tate, die gulde middeveg sal volg. Eén ding staan soos 'n paal bo water: dat Bantoe- sowel as ander gekleurde werkers, wat die land se myn- en nywerheidsbedryf sowel as landbou met hulle arbeid dien, op 'n Christelike grondslag ingestel sal moet word. Hierdie mense sal in die vervolg 'n gesonde huislike- en familielewe moet verkry. Soos die huidige trekarbeid-stelsel werk, kan onmoontlik aangegaan word. Daar word so baie maal gesê: „Gun aan hulle dieselfde as aan jouself”, en tog skei ons die mense vir maande, selfs jare, van hulle gesinslewe en werk also onsedelikheid en ontwrigting in die hand, en dit onder die voorwendsel dat hulle dan sou ontstam as hulle familie by hulle kan inwoon.

The Rev. Dennis F. Stewardt, St. Augustine's, 40 High Street, Bethlehem.

I was most interested in Joy Clutton's reaction to Rosemary Elliott's "God Sought". I used Rosemary Elliott's words as a tale piece in my November Newsletter and made mention of my own reaction to her words from the pulpit. Perhaps I have a guilty conscience! but my honest reaction at being deprived of my church building was one of terror! It made me realise what a comfort should I say cushion, my beautiful stone building is to me. Rosemary Elliott's words were a magnificent challenge against the all too grave danger of the Church being an organisation instead of an organism. Of course God *can* be found in beautiful churches, but the burning question is, is He? If He isn't, to be deprived of our building, and this I take it was the point Rosemary Elliott was making, the sooner we are deprived of our buildings the more quickly might we wake up to our real task for Him.

Rosemary M. Elliot, Hermiston, P.O. Addo, C.P.

I'm so glad Joy Clutton pulled me up about God's need for buildings. She gives an answer many people would give: "Of course the churches would be rebuilt if they were destroyed". But my real question was, "If all the church buildings were removed and God said

'reveal Me to the people' how would most clergy and their flocks set about it?"

When someone says "God", what is the first association of ideas this brings to mind? Joy Clutton's letter makes me wonder if the most common association of "God" with many people is not "Church". If you do think of it "God-Church" — is the next associated thought "Religion"?

"God-Church-Religion", is *this* the essence of Christ's gospel?

The point of my short story was to try to make people think about the nature of God and our relationship to Him. The clergy have a traditional rôle in society with so much that is new, exciting, bewildering and difficult; tradition is not enough to meet the new

world. Do many clergy view their rôle as being primarily fulfilled in conducting church services?

Is worship the beginning of religion or the end? (Do we worship in order to learn about God or do we learn of the nature of God in our lives and then feel an overwhelming desire to join with others to worship Him?)

One young man said jokingly: "I learnt more about sin in church than I did anywhere else as a child!" Are some clergy inclined to preach of the evils of sin rather than the love of Christ?

Joy Clutton tells me God is found in all beautiful things. I ask, where and how can we reveal Him to those who live in dirty over-crowded slums, in the ever growing concrete canyons of our cities, in the offices and factories where the gospel of Christ would seem unheard and irrelevant? *Is* it irrelevant? If not *how* is its relevance revealed by those who profess to be His followers?

The sort of thinking we need is one which will replace the "God-Church-Religion" association of ideas with "God-Man-Love".

Mr. V. G. Davies, 89, Kloof Road, Sea Point, Cape Town.

Thank you for replying by foot note to my letter "What Is The Alternative?" (Dec. issue). With due respect, however, I have to say I cannot make sense of your approach to the matter. What you seem to be saying is that, as Christians, we should strive to put an end to the status quo although having no alternative socio/political system with which to replace it at present. To say this is hardly a compliment to Christianity since it suggests that at times Christians can be irresponsible, if not indeed irrational! We Christians know that the status quo will have to be changed for the better if this country is to have a happy future, but we also know that the socio/political life of the country must continue uninterrupted if chaos and great suffering are to be avoided. Accordingly, as Christians, we are under a moral obligation to find a practicable, and rationally attainable alternative, and this alternative will have to be based, not merely on a Church statement, but primarily on a party political policy, since the life of a modern state cannot be maintained without political policy. Being a realist as well as a Christian, I can see only two practicable choices open to us at the present time: we either strive to reform Nationalist Party policy or we strive to get the United Party returned to power, and the latter appears to me to be the better choice. What we must be very careful not to do is to make the mistake of contracting out of the *real* situation by virtually ignoring the choice before us through pre-occupation with an, as yet, unattainable ideal. In the words of Scripture, we must be wise as serpents, and seek to improve the situation in terms of the practical and the attainable, and having attained an improvement, only thereafter seek once again to improve the improvement.



**PRO
VERITATE**