

PRO

VERITATE

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CHRISTEN WEES IN HIERDIE LAND

I. KAN ONS MET VUUR SPEEL?

PROF. DR. A. VAN SELMS

Het u ooit die boek van die profeet Jesaja gelees?

Nee, ek bedoel nie of u nou en dan hier en daar 'n versie of 'n kapiteltjie daaruit gelees het nie. Ek vra ook nie of u miskien in die kerk 'n stukkie daaruit hoor voorlees het nie. Ek vra of u die boek gelees het; of u ooit daardie boek van die begin tot die einde gelees het, soos 'n mens byvoorbeeld 'n roman van een van die sestigers deurlees. Het u ooit?

Miskien het u nie. En tog moet dit die moeite werd wees. Luther sê êrens dat „elkeen van Jesaja se woorde 'n vuurherd van allerfelste gloed is". Die profeet, wie se eie lippe deur 'n engel met 'n gloeiende kool uit die altaarvuur aangeraak is, het 'n boek geskrywe waarvan die gloed in geen ses-en-twintig eeue uitgedoof is nie. Presies in die midde van die boek, in die drie-en-dertigste hoofstuk, die veertiende vers, staan die volgende uitspraak:

„Die sondaars in Sion bewe, siddering het die roekelose aangegryp.
Wie van ons kan woon by 'n verterende vuur,
wie van ons kan woon by 'n ewige gloed?"

Waarskynlik lees u hierdie woorde sonder om te beef of te sidder. Dit gaan mos oor die sondaars, oor die roekelose! U is mos geen sondaar nie. U is lid van die kerk; u betaal gereeld u bydrae; u is nooit onder sensuur geplaas nie. Jawél! So het iemand anders ook gesê: „Ek was twee keer in die week, ek gee tiendes van alles wat ek verkry." So gebruik ons die kerk as 'n vuurskerm, wat die verterende gloed temper tot 'n aangename koestering.

(Vervolgop bladsy 2)

Is the Church Excentric?

THE REV. JAMES E. MOULDER

Most emphatically not! Whatever other reasons anyone may have for deciding not to be a disciple of Jesus, he or she cannot convincingly argue that Christians are more excentric than non-Christians.

But according to the final report of the West European Working Group of the Department on Studies in Evangelism of the World Council of Churches the Church — and those of us who belong to her — OUGHT to be excentric. I quote:

The Church lives in order that the world may know its (i.e. the world's) true being. The Church is *pars pro toto*; it is the first fruits of the new creation. But its real centre lies outside itself; it must live 'ex-centredley'. It has to seek out those situations in the world that call for loving responsibility and there it must announce and point to *shalom*.

(“The Church for Others — A Quest for Structures for Missionary Congregations”, *Concept*: No. 11; April, 1966; pp. 13-14).

THE SERVICE OF MANKIND

But how does a particular congregation become excentric?

I do not altogether know the answer but had the privilege of meeting with about 300 Christians from various congregations in the

British Isles when they tried to spell out an answer for themselves. This was done via five commissions each of which examined one of the following:

(1) **The Meaning of Mission** — not as our mission, nor as the Church's mission, but as participation in the mission of God. (Prof. J. G. Davies' introductory lecture on this subject appears on page 10 of this issue).

(2) **Congregations and Ministry** — how suitable are the forms of church life and ministry which most of us know for equipping us to be of service to the world?

(3) **Worship and Mission** — in 1 Corinthians 14:9, 16, 25 Paul speaks of the need for the 'outsider' to be able to understand what is taking place when Christians are at worship. In ef-

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Christen wees in hierdie land

(Vervolg van bladsy 1)

„DIE SONDAARS IN SION“

Maar lees daardie teks nog 'n slag. Daar staan: „Die sondaars in Sion bewe.“ Die profeet soek die sondaars nie in Egipte of Assirië nie; hy wys nie na roekeloses in Babel of Sodom en Gommorra nie; hy spreek van die sondaars in Sion, op die heilige berg van die Here, in die tempel van Israel se God. Daar waar die psalms gesing word, daar waar die gebede opstyg, daar waar die seën uitgespreek word, daar is die sondaars, daar is die roekeloses. In ons taal uitgedruk: in die kerk, juis in die kerk. Die Here Jesus Christus is nie deur die een of ander barbaarse volk, soos ons Germaanse voorouers, ter dood veroordeel nie, maar deur die vroomste volk van sy tyd, deur Israel. Hy is nie op die vlakte van Scithië aan die kruis genael nie, maar by Jerusalem, in die onmiddellike nabyheid van die tempel. Die hoofskuldiges aan sy dood was 'n dissipel en 'n hoëpriester.

Hoe is dit, dat ons volgens die profeet die roekeloses juis te Sion vind? Dit kom deur die gemaklike vertrouwdheid van die vrome met die heilige. Hy wat reëlmattig met die kerklike bedryf te doen het, raak daarmee vertrouwd, beskou dit as sy bedryf, sy belang, sy stokperdjie. Dan word God sy God, 'n gemaklik hanteerbare faktor in sy lewe. Die heilige Naam word sonder siddering uitgespreek. Wat ons goedkeur, word as God se wil aangesien, en wat ons afkeur, bestay ons onder aanroeping van Sy Naam. Ons stel ons saak met die saak van God gelyk; ons praat van ons Christelike beskawing; ons beskou onself as 'n Christenasie; ons het die woord „Christelik-nasionaal“ die hele dag in die mond. Soos die priesters in Jeremia se dae roep ons: „Die HERE se tempel, die HERE se tempel, die HERE se tempel is dit!“ Maar die profeet sê (Jer. 7:4): „Bedrieglike woorde“.

GOD IS 'N EWIGE GLOED

Dit is roekeloos om God nie God te laat nie, maar Hom vir

onself te annekseer. Want wie is God? Die profeet sê: God is 'n verterende vuur, 'n ewige gloed. Dit is die God wat Hom aan Moses geopenbaar het as 'n vuurvlam uit 'n doringbos (Ex. 3:2). „En toe hy weer sien, brand die doringbos in die vuur, maar die doringbos word nie verteer nie!“ Dit wil sê: die vuur skiet nie 'n oomblik hoog op om terstond daarna inmekaar te sak, omdat die brandstof verteer is nie, maar die vuur bly 'n vuur, die vuur is inderdaad „'n ewige gloed“. Daar kom geen einde aan nie. Veertig jaar later getuig dieselfde Moses nog teenoor sy volk (Deut. 4:24): „Want die HERE jou God is 'n verterende vuur“. As 'n voortdurende herinnering daaraan moet in Israel die altaarvlam, wat deur hemelvuur ontsteek is, altyd aan die brand gehou word (Lev. 6:9). „Die God wat met vuur antwoord“, so kom Elia met die Baëlpriesters coreen, „Hy sal God wees“ (1 Kon. 18:24).

Moenie sê nie: „Dit is die Ou Testament met sy harde en strenge Godsopvatting; in die Nuwe Testament is dit heeltemal anders!“ — want in die Nuwe Testament is dit net so. Kom lees met my net hierdie een teks, Hebr. 12:29, waarin die apostoliese skrywer die woorde van Moses herhaal en bevestig: „Want onse God is 'n verterende vuur“. Beef u nog nie? Dan sal ek iets heel ergs gaan sê, nog altyd in die hoop dat u 'n keer sal opskrik van agter u vuur-skermplaat, en sal leer wat dit beteken om te beef en te sidder voor God. In hierdie teks staan eintlik: God is die hel. God is die hel vir hulle wat Hom in Sy toorn ontmoet.

Die mense het dikwels gevra: Waar is die hel? en: Wanneer het God die hel geskape? Die antwoord op hierdie vrae is heel eenvoudig: die hel is, waar God is, en God het nie nodig gehad om die hel te skep nie, want Hy is self die hel vir die sondaars en roekeloses in Sion. As iemand dink dat hy so gemaklik met God kan omgaan, speel hy met vuur, en die vuur sal hom aantast en nie uitgeblus word nie, soos die laaste woorde van die boek Jesaja waarsku. En alweer word daardie woorde in die Nuwe Testament herhaal, tot drie keer toe (Mark 9:44, 46, 48).

Kan ons met vuur speel? Kan ons met God speel? Kan ons God gebruik as 'n instrument tot opbou van ons persoonlike lewe, tot versterking van ons nasionale bewussyn? Wie is daardie God wat ons so wil gebruik? Dit is die God wie se oordele oor die hele wêreld gaan. Let wel: daar staan nie: oor die hele wêreld behalwe die Christelike volke nie; daar staan: oor die hele wêreld. En volgens 1 Petrus 4:17 begin die oordeel „by die huis van God“. Want daar, in Sion, in die kerk, is die sondaars, die roekeloses. As God begin om die wêreld skoon te maak, begin Hy by sy eie huis. Hy vee voor sy eie deur, en die vuil wat Hy wegvee en weldra sal verbrand, dit is die roekeloses in Sion, dit is die teoloë wat God nie God wil laat nie, die predikers wat Hom tot 'n element in die volkslewe wil maak, die kerkmense wat dit so heerlijk vind om van die kansel af 'n skynbaar goddelike sanksie op hul sosiaal-ekonomiese posisie te ontvang.

WIE KEN SY BEDOELING?

God het 'n blanke volk aan die suidpunt van Afrika gebring. Ja seker! God het daarmee 'n bedoeling gehad. Ja seker! Sy bedoeling, sy eie bedoeling, en niks anders as daardie eie bedoeling van Homself nie. Wil u beweer dat u God se bedoeling met die volksplanting aan die Kaap ken? Het u in die raad van God gesit? Kon u woon by 'n verterende vuur, by 'n ewige gloed? Wie sal sê watter bedoeling God met die Afrikanervolk gehad het? Wie sal sê of volgens sy raad daardie bedoeling nie nou verwesenlik is nie, sodat u volk nou die weg van al die ou volke kan gaan, die weg van die Arameërs wat God uit Kir laat optrek het, of die weg van die Filistyne wat Hy uit Kaffor laat kom het — altwee nasies wat volgens die raad van God hulle rol in die geskiedenis gespeel het en vervolgens moes verdwyn? „Is julle nie vir My soos die kinders van Kus (die Soedan) nie, o kinders van Israel?“ (Amos 9:7).

Die gloed van God se gerig het baie volke verteer. Wat het oorgebly van die Christelike nasies in Noord-Afrika? Wat het geword van die Nestoriane, wie se kerklike jurisdiksie eenmaal van die Eufraat tot diep in China gestrek

het? Ken u die geskiedenis van die Aya Sofia, daardie monument van Bisantynse praal en kerklike magsdrif? Dit is eers in 'n moskee verander, en is nou 'n museum, 'n leë dop.

En as dit die raad van God is, dat die Afrikanervolk wel sal voortbestaan, weet ons dan wat die bedoeling van God daarmee is? Is die beproewings, waaruit die Afrikanernasie deur die laaste honderd en vyftig jaar gered is, bewyse van God se besondere voorkeur vir daardie volk, of is dit laaste waarskuwings? Tot Israel het God eenmaal gespreek (Amos 4:10, 11): „Ek het julle jongmanne met die swaard gedood saam met die wegvoering van julle perde . . . nogtans het julle jul tot My nie bekeer nie, spreek die HERE. Ek het julle omgekeer soos God Sodom en Gomorra omgekeer het, sodat julle soos 'n stuk brandhout was wat uit die vuur geruk is — nogtans het julle jul tot My nie bekeer nie, spreek die HERE”.

JUIS DAAROM . . .

Dit kan bes moontlik so wees dat God nog 'n bedoeling met die blankes aan die suidpunt van Afrika het; maar wie sal sê watter bedoeling dit is? Tot Farao sê God deur bemiddeling van Moses (Ex. 9:16): „Maar juis hierom het Ek jou nog laat bestaan, dat Ek jou my krag kan toon, en dat hulle My Naam op die hele aarde kan verkondig.” Ook hierdie woord word in die Nuwe Testament herhaal en bevestig (Rom. 9:17) en die apostel Paulus wys in hierdie verband daarop dat God „sy toorn wil bewys en sy mag bekend maak” (Rom. 9:22) en daarom 'n tyd lank „die voorwerpe van toorn wat vir die verderf toeberei is, verdra”.

O daardie ontsaglike, huiweringwekkende raad van God! Hoe ondeurgrondelik is sy oordele en onnaspeurlik sy weë! Want wie het die gedagte van die Here geken, of wie was sy raadsman ge-wees? Hy is 'n verterende vuur, 'n ewige gloed. Laat ons, die sondaars in Sion, die roekeloses, leer om te beef en te sidder vir daardie God!

Is dit die laaste woord oor God? Nee, maar dit is wel die eerste.

(In ons volgende uitgawe: „Die Laaste Woord oor God”).

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fect he is saying that worship is also missionary. How precisely must the Church's worship and its servant position in the world be related?

(4) **The 'Human Zone'** — the complexity of modern society suggests that the Church should be actively present in a great variety of interdependent 'zones' in which people live if it is to be really 'the Church for Others'.

(5) **Self-Survey Projects** — how can members of local congregations obtain sufficient knowledge to enable them effectively to witness in the social situations in which they are set?

A SALTY CONGREGATION?

But I do not want to give a detailed resume of what transpired as we examined these questions. Nor do I want to defend or discuss this kind of understanding of the Church — for those to whom all this is new there is a short bibliography at the end of this article. What I do want to do is to share some of the ideas which were expressed in the group to which I belonged. Also some ideas that were triggered-off in my own mind as I tried to relate all this to the kind of situation I know in South Africa.

Our group was part of the Commission on 'Congregations and Ministry' and paid special attention to the question of how a congregation could give visible expression to Christ's command to be the salt of the earth and light for the world.

We started by making a list of the kinds of activities that usually take place in a congregation. Then we put a red-pencil through all those which were either not activities which served the needs of non-members of the congregation or not directly designed to equip the members of the congregation for such service. This was a brutal operation, requiring a great deal of red-pencil!

Next we asked ourselves what we did with our money and discovered that it was almost entirely spent on ourselves — paying

clergy to minister to us, paying for the upkeep of buildings. The nearest we came to using our money for others was via our contributions to other clergymen to do so-called 'missionary' work. But even then we suspected that in most cases this amounted to giving other **Christians** (in Africa, for example) money to spend on themselves in the same sort of way — that is, for hiring clergymen for themselves and putting up buildings for their use!

By this time we were sufficiently depressed to continue our analysis in the hope that we could discover how we should repent for the shameful way in which we were prostituting the Bride of Christ. So we analysed the sermons we either hear or preach. How many of them deal with what God is actually doing and wants us to do with him in the community where we are? About Pakistanis who can't find lodgings? about the 'Mods' and the 'Rockers'? I thought about bored domestic servants in Johannesburg's suburbs; about African students who are craving for contact with fellow-students; about 'whites' who are so afraid of 'non-whites' that they lose their humanity and behave like irrational animals; about . . . well, you name it. Why are these things never discussed in Church?

MOTIVES

After this orgy of self-analysis someone launched us into a long discussion on our motives for seeking renewal. Reflection on the discussion indicates that we were divided because we have for so long regarded church-membership — our own and that of others — as similar to membership of a club that we no longer understand what it means simply to help people. We are forever wanting those whom we serve to express their gratitude by joining the Church.

Some of us — more honestly, all of us at different stages of the discussion — gave the impression that becoming a 'servant church' was a new kind of 'gimmick' or technique for luring other people into church-membership. In other words: we found it difficult to believe that Jesus serious-

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ly intends us to be of some practical help to people whether or not it increases the number of his disciples.

When we made the point that Christians ought to be servants of others simply because there was something that had to be done — like the Samaritan travelling salesman who helped a beaten-up fellow traveller without trying to sell him some propaganda on the superiority of Samaritanism as a religion — the 'humanist' problem arose. At last I felt completely at home. In South Africa to help people who are in trouble makes you a 'liberal' or a 'communist'. In English church-circles, anyway, it makes you a 'humanist'. I argued that the difference between a Christian and a humanist, a liberal and a communist is that Christians know that God is a humanist, whereas most humanists and liberals and all communists either suspect that God is anti human beings or do not care at all what and/or whether he is. In other words: Christians ought to be more sensitive to human needs and injustices in society than humanists, liberals and communists because God became a man.

Some members of the group seemed upset by my argument! Someone else quoted Martin Luther King's denunciation of the Church in the United States — 'the hour of worship is also the hour of segregation'.

BEGINNING AGAIN

But our discussions were not merely self-critical. As we talked people began to share ways in which their congregations were beginning to be renewed for participation in God's activity in the world. I was struck by how **simple** — note, not easy — it was:

(1) A parish magazine was being transformed from being merely a congregational 'skinder' sheet into a forum for discussing Britain's economy, the immigration problem, drug-addiction, and so on.

(2) One minister had started inviting members of his congrega-

tion to meet with him once a week to help with the preparation of Sunday's sermon. They have a lectionary; he provides the historical, exegetical and theological background to the passage. Then they ask — 'If this passage of Scripture had been written for Christians in our locality, what would the writer have wanted to bring to our attention?' After the Sunday service they meet again to discuss the sermon and its practical implications.

(3) Another congregation has a simple 'Rule of Life' for its members in which each of them is pledged to devoting at least one night a month to each of the following:

(a) participating in a meeting connected with one's work — for example, one's trade union.

(b) participating in a community activity — for example, the rate-payers' association; Cripple Care.

(c) spending an evening together as a family — for example, **not** watching T.V.!

(d) discussing with other Christians what it means to be a Christian in the world — that is, in the above and other 'zones' of society.

(e) reading a book or article that deals with some problem or other of the 20th century — for example, the UNO; race relations in the U.K. and elsewhere; divorce.

Furthermore every member is asked to read at least one newspaper editorial every day and reflect whether or not the argument being advanced can be held by a Christian.

And so I could continue. But there is no point in giving further example because — in a good sense of that word — all these are personal ones which had been worked out by particular Christians in a specific locality. Nevertheless they have this much in common:

● a desire to understand the world and love it as God does.

● a discovery of the importance of meeting in small groups for Bible Study related to the real issues of the community.

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

I must end. But I want to do so via the analogy with which Miss Pauline Webb (Vice-President of the British Methodist

Conference) ended her impressions of missionary structures in the United States. After contrasting the average outwardly successful, well-attended, affluent congregations with a few numerically insignificant, outwardly foolish, poor congregations who were attempting to be the kind of 'Church for Others' I have been discussing, she examined the New Testament's conception of the Church as Christ's Bride. Apologising that it sounds somewhat anti-feminist — which, believe me, she is not! — she suggested that we interpret the word 'bride' in far too unadventurous, domesticated and 'mousy' a manner. The Christ to whom we are 'married' by faith cannot be domesticated and tied to our apron-strings. He is restless and refuses to be confined to the buildings and regular schedules we prepare for him. He looks in on our prim and proper arrangements of his business but rarely finds anything that is interesting enough to support. And so he is always running around outside our churches and doing things that scandalize us. We bore him by our worship of the **status quo**, our love of security, our constant desire to entrench and enrich ourselves and so settle down. Nevertheless he loves us. But he cannot conform to our ecclesiastical image of him because he has a world to redeem. He will never divorce us — but how he must wish that we — his Bride — shared his interests and passion!

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Editorial:

The More Onerous Demand

The more onerous demand is at present being placed upon Christian witness in South Africa.

When people, when a nation comes to revolt against the criticism of God's Word and gives expression to this revolt by openly contradicting it in whatever degree, it becomes a sore trial to the bearer of the Word, although good may still flow from it. It may expedite the advance of the Gospel and even constitute a rapid in its course (c.f. Acts 26:1; 2 Cor. 4:15). For revolt in such a form, Jesus prepared the twelve apostles before sending them forth (Matt. 10), but he could still imbue them with courage and enjoin them to persevere. It would be much worse, however, if this revolt were to assume the shape of a hardening towards obduracy, if people were to lock their hearts against the Word and give evidence of having become immune to the Word. Once it became clear to an apostle that his message was blocked by total unreceptiveness, he had to depart from that city in the knowledge that God, too, had withdrawn Himself from it. How long he should persevere in any case before thus abandoning people to their own perdition, Jesus did not say. It is clear, however, that He prepared them for the most onerous demand that would be placed upon their witness, and that the only consolation He offered them was that that which they might otherwise perhaps have performed as an act of desperation, would still constitute an actively apostolic participation in God's act of rejecting the sinner who rejected Him (cf. Acts 13:46, 51).

In South Africa there are at present disturbing signs that Christian witness is being confronted by the more onerous demand. Criticism based on God's Word against the unassailable entrenchment of a political policy in a deified consciousness of people and race has been effectively brushed off as mere prattling, as an expression of enmity towards the nation, as a flirtation with ideas foreign to the people; effectively, in any case, as far as that very section of the people is concerned who should really have paid heed to this criticism, applied it to themselves and benefited by it. All kinds of methods and means have been employed towards this end. We have resorted to hiding ourselves behind the mask of a national, intensified, self-justifying Christianity. With an appeal to God, we have isolated ourselves from those who made the criticism of God's Word audible — or have effectively isolated them. We have succeeded in silencing numerous voices which formerly made our ears ring and our hearts tremble. Many preachers know that they have to toe the line when they ascend the pulpit and must weigh their words on the scale of the popular ideology if they wish to remain acceptable to their "Christian" audience. Considerations of tact and discretion have led to the dilution of many witnessings, whether from the pulpit or otherwise, into ambiguous oracular mouthings which, however well intended, give evidence of neither rhyme or reason.

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Inleidingsartikel:

Die Swaarder Eis

Aan die Christelike getuïenis in Suid-Afrika word tans die swaarder eis gestel.

Wanneer mense, wanneer 'n volk teen die kritiek van Gods Woord in verzet kom en aan hierdie verzet uiting gee deur openlik daarmee in teenpraak te kom, ongeag die graad waarin dit geskied, is dit vir die draer van die Woord 'n beproewing, maar die goeie kan nog daaruit voortkom. Dit kan die voortgang van die Evangelie dien en selfs 'n stroomversnelling wees in die vaart daarvan (vgl. Hand. 26:1; 2 Kor. 4:15). Vir so 'n vorm van verzet het Jesus die twaalf apostels voor hulle uitsending voorberei (Mat. 10), maar Hy kon hulle nog moed inpraat en hulle aanmoedig tot volharding. Erger sou dit egter wees as die verzet die vorm aanneem van verharding, as die mense hulle harte vir die Woord toesluit en laat blyk dat hulle hulle teen die Woord immuun maak het. As dit vir 'n apostel eenmaal duidelik geword het dat sy boodskap afstuit op 'n totale onontvanklikheid, moes hy uit dié stad vertrek en weet dat God Hom ook daarvan onttrek het. Hoe lank hy tog moes volhard voor so 'n oorlating van mense aan hulle eie verderf, het Jesus nie gesê nie. Dit is egter duidelik dat Hy hulle voorberei het vir die swaarste eis wat aan hulle getuïenis gestel sou word, en as enigste troos aan hulle voorgehou het dat dit wat hulle andersins miskien as 'n wanhoopsdaad sou gedoen het, nog 'n aktief-apostoliese deelname sou wees aan God se daad van verwerping van die sondaar wat Hom verwerp (vgl. Hand. 13:46, 51).

In Suid-Afrika is daar tans onrusbarende tekens dat die Christelike getuïenis besig is om voor die swaarder eis gestel te word. Die kritiek vanuit Gods Woord teen die onaantasbare verskansing van 'n politieke beleid in 'n vergoddelikte volks- en rasbewussyn, is as blote praatjiesmakery, as uitinge van volksvyandigheid, as heulery met volksvreemde idees doeltreffend afgeweer, alans wat daardie volksdeel betref wat juis hierdie kritiek moes hoor en toeëien en verwerk. Allerlei middele en metodes is daartoe aangewend. Ons het ons gaan versteek agter die masker van 'n eie, geïntensiverende, selfregverdigende Christelikheid. Ons het ons, met 'n beroep op God, van mense wat die kritiek uit Sy Woord laat hoor, gedistansieer of hulle van ons gedistansieer. Ons het daarin geslaag om talle stemme wat voorheen ons ore laat tuit en ons harte laat sidder het, stil te maak. Baie predikers weet dat hulle in hulle spore moet trap as hulle die kansel bestyg en hulle woorde op die skaal van die volksideologie moet weeg as hulle vir hulle „Christelike” gehoor aanneemlik wil bly. Oorwegings van takt en „wysheid” het daartoe gelei dat baie getuïenisse in die prediking en andersins tot dubbelsinnige orakelsprake verwater en, hoe kragtig in bedoeling ook al, kant nòg wal raak.

(Vervolg op bladsy 6)

The more onerous demand

(Continued from page 5)

Not only has the fundamental criticism that the national policy has deteriorated into an ideology which is essentially at variance with the Gospel of Jesus Christ been parried with a viciousness which is characteristic of all self-justification, but even the most discreet expressions of moral qualms concerning certain aspects and implications of this policy are always harshly repressed with an intolerance which is common to all man-made ideologies; and over Christian witness there has descended a timidity which makes it appear an act of exceptional courage merely to give evidence of an ordinary Christian critical sense. The ideology has entrenched itself religiously and removed itself beyond the pale of criticism. Only within the bounds of a rigid conformism does any participation in the discussion still become audible. In a situation such as this any real Christian witness is factually eliminated. The religiously garmented people's festival does not, for instance, allow of the question whether God takes any pleasure in it, but only of the question whether nothing has happened which might possibly disturb our complacent self-glorification, such as N. P. van Wyk Louw's festival drama. There is also, for example, no discussion possible with regard to the question whether it is in accord with one's Christian responsibility to glorify living or deceased "heroes of the people" with a reverence bordering on veneration; the question is merely whether a monument in honour of this venerated figure or that is impressive and grandiose enough to pay suitable homage. Thus, too, this surrogate gospel has its own moral code according to which it glosses over all the symptoms by which it is recognisable as a false gospel. Within the enclosed moral sphere of this gospel it is, for instance, quite acceptable to malign a visiting foreign politician who happens to be a contentious figure on account of his critical views, in the most unheard of fashion and with

organised deliberation and means, or, for example, to condemn citizens of this country without any hearing to house-arrest for years, etc. The protests which actions such as these elicit have no impact or real effect. They are mere alarms and excursions on the outer fringes of the barricaded enclosure.

The situation as regards Christian witness in our country is an unnerving one. Everyone who regards it in a really serious light notices with dismay the signs of obduracy and self-immunization against the Word which are indicated by the Gospel as symptomatic of that stage which immediately precedes the rejection. But Jesus did not tell his apostles how long they had to continue pleading and cautioning before they would participate in God's act of rejection with which He rejects the man who rejects Him. For the time being it is only clear that we are standing very close to the more onerous demand. Everyone called to prophetic witness must, then, also realise that this more onerous duty implies also this that the two-edged sword of the Word must penetrate to the very heart of the evil. It is no longer a matter of odd moral inconsistencies; it is a matter of fundamental heresy on a national scale.

Die swaarder Eis

(Vervolg van bladsy 5)

Nie slegs die fundamentele kritiek dat die landsbeleid in 'n ideologie ontaard het wat wesenlik met die Evangelie van Jesus Christus in stryd is, is met 'n venyn wat aan alle selfregverdiging eie is, afgeweer nie, maar selfs die versigtigste uitinge van sedelike bedenkinge teen sekere aspekte en implikasies van die beleid word steeds hard hokgeslaan met 'n intoleransie wat aan alle mensgemaakte ideologieë eie is; en oor die Christelike getuienis het daar 'n skuheid gekom wat dit na 'n daad van buitengewone moed laat lyk om die gewoon Christelike kritiese sin te openbaar. Die ideologie het hom religieus verskans en bo kritiek verhef. Alleen binne die grense van 'n starre konformisme kan enige deelname aan die diskussie

hom nog hoorbaar maak. In hierdie situasie is die eintlike Christelike getuienis wesenlik uitgeskakel. Die religieus-ingekelede volksfees laat bv. geen ruimte vir die vraag of God daar enige behae in het nie, maar slegs vir die vraag of daar niks gebeur het wat die koestering in ons selfverheerliking enigsins versteur het, soos die feesdrama van N. P. van Wyk Louw nie. Daar is bv. ook geen gesprek moontlik oor die vraag of dit Christelik verantwoord kan word om lewende of ontslape „volkshelede" met 'n verering wat aan aanbidding grens, te verheerlik nie, die vraag is slegs of 'n monument ter ere van dié of daardie vereerde figuur luisterryk en indrukwekkend genoeg is om hom na verdienste te huldig. So het die surrogaat-evangelie ook sy eie sedewet waarmee hy al die simptome waaraan hy as 'n valse evangelie herken word, vergoelik. Binne die geslote moraal-sfeer van hierdie evangelie is dit bv. goed en reg om 'n besoekende buitelandse politikus wat vanweë sy kritiese sieninge 'n omstrede figuur is, op 'n ongehoorde wyse en met georganiseerde opset en middele te beswadder; of bv. om burgers van die land onverhoord te veroordeel tot jarelange inperking, ens. Die proteste wat daarteen opgaan, het geen trekrag of uitwerking nie. Dit is soos stof-dwarrels in die buitenste duisternis van die geslote kring.

Die situasie met betrekking tot die Christelike getuienis in ons land is ontstellend. Elkeen vir wie dit 'n saak van erns is, sien met ontsetting die tekens van verharding en self-immunisering teen die Woord wat in die Evangelie as simptome van dié stadium aangedui is wat aan die verwerping voorafgaan. Maar Jesus het nie vir sy apostels gesê hoe lank hulle moes aanhou pleit en waarsku voordat hulle deelneem aan God se daad van verwerping waarmee Hy die mens verwerp wat Hom verwerp nie. Voorlopig is dit slegs duidelik dat ons voor die swaarder eis staan. Elkeen wat tot die profetiese getuienis geroep is, moet dan ook besef dat dié swaarder eis ook dié inhoud dat die tweesnydende swaard van die Woord tot in die hart van die kwaad moet indring. Dit gaan nie om enkele sedelike ongerymdhede nie maar om 'n fundamentele kettery op volkskaal.

GEESTESKWELLINGE

GEESTESAPARTHEID

DR. W. BRUCKNER DE VILLIERS

'n Verskynsel wat my as Christen hier in ons land al hoe meer begin bekommer is die steeds strakker wordende „òf/òf“-situasie waarin ek saam met ander Christene my bevind, waarin ons al hoe dieper ingeforsê word, wat al hoe onverbiddeliker op ons afgeforsê word.

Natuurlik is dit 'n gemeenplaas om te beweer dat een uiterste onvermydelik aanleiding gee tot 'n ander. Soos die meeste gemeenplase is dit egter ongelukkig ook maar alte waar, en word ek deur feitelike omstandighede al hoe meer gedwing om die onaangename waarheid wat dit behels, in die gesig te staar.

GROTER EENSGESINDHEID?

Op grond van allerlei politieke oorwegings mag dit ons huidige Eerste Minister ongetwyfeld pas om te beweer, soos hy by etlike geleenthede reeds gedoen het, dat 'n al hoe groter eensgesindheid, gematigdheid en onderlinge verdraagsaamheid besig is om in Suid-Afrika pos te vat, veral dan onder die blanke bevolking. En oppervlakkig beskou, skyn daar selfs klinkbare bewyse vir so 'n bewering te bestaan.

Maar hou dit werklik steek?

Hier en daar kan daar ongetwyfeld voorbeelde opgerakel word van 'n oënskynlike „toenadering en die soeke na geldige „aanknopingspunte“ tussen andersdenkendes. Maar daar waar daar werklik ernstig en prinsipeel besin word oor ons land en sy probleme, daar waar beleidsrigtings bepaal word, daar waar die slagspreuke ontwerp word om die volksmassa mee aan die neus te lei: kan daar dáár ook wel in alle erns van 'n strewe tot gematigdheid, verdraagsaamheid en wedersydse begrip gepraat word?

My skyn dit of die teendeel maar alte tragies waar is: juis onder die gelede van ons land se professionele denkers, beleidsbepalers en opinievormers heers daar 'n verdoemlike gees van radikale gemoedsapartheid wat besig is om nie alleen die helderheid van hul eie denke hopeloos te vertroebel nie, maar ook om dinge vir hul onnadenkende volgelingen drasties te beduiwel.

SKEIDSMURE HOËR

Al hoe meer skyn dit of ons ook op geestesgebied in duidelik ommuurde interneringskampe van die gemoed van mekaar afgekraal begin word. Die onsigbare skeidsmure

tussen ons word al hoe hoër opgestapel. Die kloof van verwydering tussen ons word al hoe dieper, al hoe wyer, al hoe meer onoorbrugbaar. Dit raak vir my en ander wat ook hieroor bekommerd is, 'n saak van die diepste geesteskwelling dat alle gesagdraende opinies, alle beleidsbeslissings, alle doelbewuste optrede skyn te berus op 'n vooropgesette, 'n aprioristiese standpuntname aan albei kante van die skeidsmuur wat ons geesteswêreld verdeel. Daarom dat alle geestesgebeure in ons land so saai en prosaïes voorspelbaar geword het. Ons weet al presies hoe elkeen van ons Christen-medeburgers onder gegewe omstandighede op 'n bepaalde uitdaging gaan reageer. Alles is gepredetermineer, gepredestineer, vooraf bepaal — en daarmee basta!

Vir my en ander soekende en worstelende Christene is dit 'n ontstellende gedagte. Waarom het God my dan na Sy beeld gemaak? Waarom het Hy dan aan my my kosbare kreatuurlike vryheid geskenk — ook die vryheid van oordeel en beslissing? Waarom het Hy dan 'n dure verantwoordelikheid aan my oorgepraat? Waarom het Hy dan 'n bepalingsmag aan my toevertrou — as alles klaar bepaal is, as 'n etiket lank reeds om my nek gehang is, as 'n bepaalde loket my lank gelede reeds toebedeel is? Waarom het Hy my dan Sy kindskap en die volgelingskap van Christus deelagtig gemaak as my hele lewe en strewe tot inperking in 'n kraal van geestesapartheid gedoem is?

Die onlangse besoek van sen. Kennedy aan ons land is 'n goeie voorbeeld van hierdie onheilige predestinasieverskynsel. Alte voorspelbaar is dié besoek van Regeringskant begroet met 'n ekstremistiese gees van ongenaakbare afwysing en deur 'n gediensige jakkals-

koor van kleineringe en kwetsendhede in die regeringsgesinde pers; van „liberale“ kant met 'n eweseer ekstremistiese reaksie van alte geforsêerde helde-aanbidding en 'n koor van ietwat kruiperige aanprysinge in die opposisiepers.

Die een uiterste het maar weer gelei tot die ander. En wat ongelukkig byna totaal uit die oog verloor is te midde van die byna Intervarsity-agtige lawaai aan albei kante van die skeidsmuur van geestesapartheid is die feit dat, ten spyte van sen. Kennedy se kwytraking van 'n hele boel gemeenplase en veralgemeninge, hy nogtans ook by geleentheid veel stimulerends gesê het wat ons as Suid-Afrikaners tot ernstige nadenke behoort te gestem het: dat enige regdenkende mens onvoorwaardelik sou kon saamstem met baie van wat hy te sê gehad het; en dat veel meer denkende Suid-Afrikaners inderdaad instemming met sy uitsprake betuig het as wat 'n mens sou kon vermoed dat daar ooit nog bestaan.

Deur hierdie klaarblyklike feite uit die oog te verloor het ons hier in Suid-Afrika ook iets waardevols verloor — het ons ons skuldig gemaak aan 'n vergryp teen die apostel se wyse vermaning: „Beproof alle dinge; behou die goeie“ (1 Thes. 5:21). Ons kon inderdaad iets goeds behou het, maar hét skynbaar nie: eenvoudig omdat die ekstremiste aan albei kante van die skeidsmuur van geestesapartheid dit vir ons deur hul verduisteringspolitiek en obskurantistiese tegniek onmoontlik gemaak het om die werklik waardevolle te onderskei en om sen. Kennedy se besoek na sy werklike meriete te beoordeel.

En die Kennedy-besoek is maar slegs een van baie, hoewel miskien minder opsienbare, voorbeelde. Vir elke uiterste in Suid-Afrika is daar 'n teenoorgestelde uiterste, vir elke vorm of uiting van ekstremisme 'n teenvoeter. As vernaamste alternatief vir die Apartheidsbeleid word daar — feitlik outomaties, hoe dan nie? — 'n beleid van politieke integrasie aangebied. As 'n mens nie 'n geesdriftige Regeringsondersteu-

(Vervolg op bladsy 8)

Geestesapartheid

(Vervolg van bladsy 7)

ner is nie, is jy **ipso facto** 'n liberalis, 'n humanis, of selfs 'n kommunist! Vir elke NUSAS is daar 'n A.S.B., vir elke „Transvaler” 'n „Rand Daily Mail”, vir elke SABRA 'n Institute of Race Relations, vir elke Wits 'n Potch, vir elke praktiese Hou-die-Kaffer-op-sy-plek-filosof 'n moraliserende hand-om-die-lyf verbreedingsapostel!

Vir elke vorm van ekstremisme is daar in ons land 'n antipode. Daar bestaan skynbaar geen Goue Midde-weg meer nie — en ook geen eenvoudige **via crucis** nie; of, indien hulle wel bestaan, word hulle al hoe ondoeltreffender, met al hoe minder oortuiging, aangedui.

VERLEENTHEID

Die werklik nog denkende Suid-Afrikaner, die werklik gebalanseerde, nugtere, gematigde landsburger en veral die belydende en praktiserende Christen word deur so 'n situasie natuurlik in 'n geweldige verleentheid gestel, indien nie in 'n totaal onhoudbare posisie nie.

Hy durf nòg na hierdie — nòg na daardie kant. Hy word deur die heersende atmosfeer van bigotterie, deur die partisaanskapskultus van ons tyd en ons land, in 'n keurslyf vasgegespe, in 'n drukgang ingedwing. Hy durf nie meer sy vermoë tot objektiewe, pragmatiese en veral Christelike beoordeling van enige bepaalde probleemsituasie beoefen nie — al sou dit dan vir hom nog hoegenaamd moontlik wees onder die bedwelmende invloed van al die ekstremismes heen. Die oomblik dat hy hom daartoe sou waag, beland hy in 'n uiters gevaarlike posisie, word hy 'n „verdachte persoon” — gewoonlik vanuit die standpunt van albei seksies luidrugtige „kampvegters” vir hul eksklusiewe „saak” aan beide kante van die geestesapartheidsmuur.

Van Afrikanerkant gesien, word hy dan onmiddellik 'n renegaat, 'n volksverraaier, 'n vennoot van die veragte vyand, iemand wat — veral juis omdat sy eie geesteswortels met dié van die Afrikanerdom assulks verstrengel is — met dubbele slae geslaan moet word, met veragting uitgespuug moet word uit die volksmond. En deur „liberale” oë word hy dan aan die ander kant ook weer

onvermydelik gesien as 'n „reaksionêr”, as 'n papbroekige meeloper en saamprater, as 'n kasuïstiese politieke opportunist.

En wat nog erger is — en dit is die één ding waarteen ek waaragtig namens al my oortuigde mede-Christene beswaar maak en waaroor ek diep gebelg voel: hy word feitlik outomaties geklassifiseer!

As hy dan nie **vir** ons is nie, moet hy vanselfsprekende **teen** ons wees. As hy dan nie slaafs be-aam alles wat „volksaanvaarbaar” is nie, moet hy outomaties 'n verraaier en 'n meeloper met die vyand wees. **Geen onafhanklike, vrye of verantwoordelike denke word toegelaat of geduld nie. As jy dan nie in die een ekstremistiese kategorie inpas nie, moet jy, hoeseer jy ook daarteenoor in opstand kom, by die teenoorgestelde een ingeforseer word. Vandaar dat Afrikaners wat dieselfde ideale vir hul volk be-oog, mekaar se dodelikste vyand word. Vandaar dat belydende „broeders in Christus” mekaar deesdae met hand en tand beveg. Vandaar dat so baie eerlike strewers, wat dit slegs ten goede met hul eie volk en kerk bedoel, hul vandag holderste-bolder saamgeskaar vind deur 'n diktatoriale volksmening met groepe en instansies met wie hulle weinig in't gemeen het en met wie se metodes en optrede hulle hoegenaamd nie kan saamstem nie.**

Soek u na voorbeelde? Dink dan maar net aan 'n liggaam soos die Christelike Instituut wat, ten spyte van alle goeie bedoelings en werklike prestasies in diens van die Koninkryk van Christus, sedert sy ontstaan nog die teiken gebly het vir die opperste verdagmaking en beswadding, en wat nou onlangs nog weer in een asem genoem en oor een kam geskeer is met 'n verbode organisasie soos die „Defence and Aid Fund” — bloot omdat hy beweeg op onkonvensionele weë wat dit moeilik maak om 'n etiket om sy nek te hang, en omdat hy hom gewaag het op 'n gebied wat grens aan die groot gewetenskapswelling van beide die Afrikanervolk en sy kerk . . .

Met die politieke, sosiale, kulturele en selfs godsdienstige reaksies van die gemiddelde Suid-Afrikaner gaan dit ongelukkig soos met sy reaksie tydens 'n rugbywedstryd as ondersteuner van sy bepaalde klub: my span bo alles, reg of verkeerd; wee die teenstanders, wie hulle ookal mag wees en hoe goed hulle ookal mag speel; wee al hul openlike en

heimlike ondersteuners; en wee selfs die skeidsregter indien hy nie duidelike beslissings in ons guns en tot ons voordeel maak nie! Die enigste verskil is dat 'n rugbywedstryd gou verby en vergete is, terwyl die stryd tussen ekstremistiese ideologieë nooit wesenlik ophou nie, maar beslis die toekoms ten goede of ten kwade bepaal.

GROOTSTE VERLIES

Die betreurenswaardige gevolg van hierdie bykans Kierkegaardiaanse „Entweder/Oder”-situasie is natuurlik dat, afgesien van 'n paar enkelinge, die gemiddelde gematigde en objektiewe Suid-Afrikaner hom beleefdlik onttrek aan al dié ekstremistiese geharwar en besluit om eenvoudig die swye te bewaar.

En dit, so skyn dit my, is een van die droewigste gevolge van die bese kringloop tussen uiterstes waarmee ons land geplaag is: dat hulle, die heel aansienlike persentasie van ons landsburgers en mede-Christene wat wel besef waarom dit alles gaan, wat wel nog in staat is tot 'n intelligente en objektiewe oordeel, wat wel nog, ten spyte van alle breinspoelinge, 'n nugtere, realistiese, Christelike siening van sake daarop nahou, hulleself daartoe gedwonge voel om hulle of vanweë versigtigheid en vrees, of vanweë 'n beskaafde afkeer aan al die heersende geestesuitspattighede, totaal te onttrek aan die stryd tussen die ekstremistiese ideologieë en al die onsmaaklikhede wat onvermydelik daarmee gepaard gaan. Juis dit, dat hulle stilbly te midde van al die toekomsbepalende geesteswoelinge rondom hulle, is vir ons land die grootste verlies en vir enige bekommerde Christen die grootste bron van kwelling. En dat hulle dit doen ongeag hul werklike beginseloortuigings kan uiteindelik alleen hydra tot die opstapeling van 'n gewetenslas waarmee hulle dit vroeër of later moeitewol te kampe sal hê.

DIE OORSAAK

Indien 'n mens begin soek na oorsake vir die heersende geestesapartheidssituasie in ons gekwelde land, moet die vernaamste skuld, by alle historiese en sielkundige omstandighede, natuurlik vierkant op die skouers van ons huidige landsregeerders geplaas word. Want hulle is dit wat, juis vanweë die magsposisie wat hul beklee, telkens

weer die inisiatief neem in die aand-rol-sit van die bese kringloop van ekstremisme wat soos 'n kanker vreet aan die gesonde geesteslewe van ons volk en sy kerk. As hulle uitgangspunt nie so 'n onverbiddelik kategorieuse was nie, sou daar ook nie soveel verskynsels van ongebreidelde ekstremisme onder die gelede van hul teenstanders voorgekom het nie.

Dog ook die verbete teenstanders van die Apartheidsideologie en sy apostels het rede om hulle te bedink: ook hulle dra, juis vanweë die onverdraagsame en moedswillig onbegrypende karakter van hul teenstand teen die huidige Regering en sy dienstige medestanders, by tot die ideologiese chaos waarin almal van ons as Suid-Afrikaners ons bevind en wat van dag tot dag al hoemeer die vreedsame toekoms van ons gemeenskaplike vaderland in gevaar stel.

So vroom, so huigelagtig word daar dikwels gepraat van die wenslikheid van 'n sinvolle dialoog tussen die radikaal andersdenkendes in ons land. So min van hierdie dialoog kom ooit tot stand. So onbegonne is die strewe tot die daarstelling van so 'n dialoog in 'n geestesatmosfeer wat vergiftig is deur onchristelike partyskappe en sondige selfvoldaan-hede.

Solank as wat daar teenoor elke Verwoerd, Vorster en Van Schoor, 'n Alan Paton, 'n Bram Fischer en 'n Laurence Gandar in kompromislose opstand kom, kan daar onder ons geen vrede heers, geen bevredigende oplossing gevind word nie — en kan daar geen stewige fondament gelê word vir 'n toekoms gebou op 'n versoening tussen krupperige uiterstes nie. En solank as wat die besoedelde atmosfeer van ekstremisme in ons siening van mekaar en mekaar se aspirasies nie deur die skoon lug van Christelike redelikheid verdryf word nie, sal ons nooit vry kan asemhaal nie — en mekaar ook nooit vind met die oog op die bereiking van 'n gemeenskaplike ideaal nie.

* * *

Ter nabetrugting: As ek nadink oor die vergelyking tussen die voorbeeld van Christus, ons Meester, en ons verantwoordelikheid as Sy volgelinge, tref dit my dat Hy self geen ekstremis was nie, en in elk geval geen apostel van geestesaparteid nie. Vir Hom het dit nie gegaan om 'n persoonlike distansiering van selfs die tollenaars en Samaritane

nie. Vir Hom het dit ook nie gegaan om 'n kruiperige verbodering met die Fariseërs nie. Vir Hom het dit allermins gegaan om 'n vrywaring van die Joodse volksidentiteit ten aansien van die dreigende Romeins-Hellenistiese gevaar. Vir Hom het dit alleen gegaan om die stigting en uitbreiding van die Koninkryk van God. En almal wat in hierdie strewe geblyk het nie Sy teenstanders te wees nie, het Hy as medestanders en volgelinge verwelkom.

SPIRITUAL APARTHEID

The author remarks upon the rigid "either/or" situation on the spiritual plane which appears to be becoming ever more firmly entrenched in South Africa despite assurances to the contrary from the side of even the Prime Minister.

The very people who make policy and shape opinion are being driven apart into spiritual camps of internment behind high walls of prejudice, bigotry and sectionalism. All happenings on the spiritual plane are becoming depressingly predictable because of the pre-determined attitudes from which they stem. This is a shocking state of affairs from the Christian's standpoint, for it makes nonsense of the scriptural concepts of man as the image of God, of creaturely freedom and responsibility, of the power of choice implied by the fellowship of Christ.

There are examples aplenty to be perceived of this hardening of attitudes under the evil influence of spiritual apartheid. The extremist reaction to the recent visit of Sen. Kennedy on both sides of the invisible wall dividing South African opinion-makers is only the most recent one. For every extreme, there is a contradictory one: the politics of Apartheid is opposed by that of integration; the enthusiastic government supporter by the "liberalist-humanist" or even the "communist"; NUSAS by the ASB, etc., etc.. No middle road seems to be left open between the extremes on either side.

This obviously places the Christian in a very difficult position. For he, too, is being forced to take sides in an extremist fashion. He, too, is driven into a corner, strapped into a straitjacket, conveniently labelled. And should he but dare to object to this, he immediately becomes a suspect person.

What is even worse, he immediately becomes classified: classed in an extremist category together with those who do not necessarily enjoy his approval or deserve his sympathy. A good example is the Christian Institute which is repeatedly painted as an "enemy of the people", as a traitor to the White man's cause and is frequently mentioned in the same breath with, for instance, a banned organisation like the Defence and Aid Fund.

The tragedy of this "Either/Or" situation is that so many moderate and level-headed people simply withdraw from all the unpleasantness and resort to discreet silence. This unfruitful silence on the part of so many enlightened

people who know what it is all about constitutes a tremendous loss to our country and a source of the gravest worry to the responsible Christian.

The blame for this sorry state of affairs must, in the first place, be placed squarely on the shoulders of our present rulers: their position of power gives them the initiative in establishing the vicious circle of extremism and unleashing the incontinent reactions of their adversaries to their own extremist actions. But their opponents, too, are by no means irreproachable: the intolerant and often mischievously uncomprehending nature of their reactions are hardly calculated to alleviate the inflamed situation, merely to exacerbate it.

So piously, so hypocritically, do we often speak of the desirability of a sensible dialogue between those who radically disagree. So little of this dialogue ever materialises. So hopeless is the effort to bring about such a dialogue in a spiritual atmosphere which is poisoned by unchristian partisanship and sinful complacencies.

It strikes one that Christ himself was no extremist, and certainly no apostle of spiritual apartheid. He did not isolate himself even from publicans and Samaritans, nor did fawn upon and fraternize with Pharisees. He certainly did not regard it as his life's task to safeguard the identity of the Jewish people against the "danger" of Roman Hellenism. His only concern was for the establishment and development of the Kingdom of God. And all who did not prove to be his opponents in this endeavour were welcomed by Him as his allies and followers.

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THE MEANING OF MISSION*

PROFESSOR J. G. DAVIES

The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches at its meeting in New Delhi authorised the Department on Studies in Evangelism to carry out a comprehensive study of the problem of the congregation in the task of evangelism. This study, under the title of 'The Missionary Structure of the Congregation', has been organised in various regional groups and they have now reached the point where, although their work is by no means completed, they have carried their thinking far enough to embody it in reports so that it may be shared with the Churches at large.

Although the call is to action, action without careful thought may be misguided. It is therefore my task to provide an introduction to the subject of mission.

WHAT IS MISSION?

What is mission? This question, it is as well to recognize, is one that has only recently been raised. The Reformers were not in the least interested in mission. They believed that the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19) was given to the apostles alone, that the apostles had no successors, and that therefore it had lapsed with their deaths. It was not until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that missionary enthusiasm was awakened in the Protestant Churches, owing much to the Moravians, and it was not until the present century that mission itself became a subject of theological investigation on any large scale. We are therefore tackling a comparatively new question. My answer to it is simply this: mission is an activity of God. But I must now go on to substantiate and explain this somewhat bald definition.

The living God of the Bible is revealed to us as essentially a **sending** God. Only a cursory glance through the books of the Old Testament serves to endorse this view. God is one who sends help (Ps. 20:2); he sends pestilence (Ez. 14:19); he sends fear (Exod. 20:27); he sends a sword (Jer. 9:16); he sends redemption (Ps. 111:9). God sends his angels (Exod. 23:20); he sends individuals such as Moses (Exod. 3:10) or Gideon (Jud. 6:14); God sends the prophets (Jer. 7:25), and such men as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are convinced that they have been sent (Is. 6:8; Jer. 1:7; Ezek. 2:3). The picture that emerges from the New Testament is essentially the same. God sends his Son (Jn. 17:18); he sends the Holy Spirit

(Jn. 14:26). So J. Jeremias, investigating the relation between Jesus' mission to the Jews and the later Gentile mission, concludes his survey with the statement: 'the Gentile mission is the beginning of God's final act in the gathering of the Gentiles. The Gentile mission is God's own activity'.¹⁾ So mission is not simply obedience to a divine command, to an injunction of the exalted Christ, the authenticity of which may be questioned; mission is the taking up of man actively into God's design.

The New Testament declares God to be, as it were, a centrifugal being, the one who sends. So the basis of mission is to be found in God himself. Mission, in other words, is a theocentric concept. This is demonstrated time and again in the Acts of the Apostles. Take for instance the Cornelius episode. At first the disciples expected the Jewish nucleus to be the spearhead of mission, but now by the outpouring of the Spirit it is revealed that the Gentile believers themselves are to be taken up into the missionary outreach of God. The Holy Spirit, reports Peter, fell on them 'even as on us at the beginning' (11:15), so that just as Pentecost issues in mission, this Pentecost of the Gentiles too involves mission. Or again take the description of Paul's second missionary journey when he visited Derbe and Lystra. 'They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not let them' (16:6.f.). The Spirit is sovereign; the Church does not plan its mission and then proceed with the divine assistance; the Spirit takes the initiative; he goes on ahead. He says: 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'

(13:2). Mission is a divine activity. God is both the source of the missionary enterprise and the one who retains it in his own hands, nor does he surrender it to any human authority.

In the light of this, we are bound to say that the doctrine of mission cannot be relegated to minor, or even major, subdivision of the doctrine of the Church. Mission is an aspect of the doctrine of God. Although the Church is involved in mission, mission remains the mission of God — it is never the Church's own mission. This can be made clearer perhaps by asking two questions: Does the Church perform a mission? or, Does the Church participate in mission? We have to say 'no' to the first, and 'yes' to the second. However closely Church and mission belong together, the Church does not in a strict sense perform the missionary enterprise, which is an activity of the triune God.

At this juncture, it will be helpful to recognize the distinction between mission and missions. Mission, as I have argued, is an activity of God in which the Church participates. Missions are particular forms, related to specific times, places or needs, of that participation. To accept this is to accept a revolution in our thinking about Church and mission — one can no longer think of the Church supporting missions, as an occasional activity, since the Church is the Church only in so far as it participates in the mission of God. So 'the work of mission is not something alongside the Church, but its very **raison d'être**'.²⁾ Mission is not just a function of the Church, one amongst many, but of its very essence. But, be it noted, the call to mission is not a summons to ecclesiastical activity, but to joining in God's action in the world.

THE GOAL OF MISSION

If you are with me so far, you will probably want to raise a further question. We need to ask not only what is mission, but also what is its purpose or goal. The author of Ephesians tells us that God has made known 'the mystery of his will'; It is 'to sum up all things in

Christ' (1:9f). We have to unpack this phrase. It means, first of all, that God is concerned to bring all men into unity with himself and with one another. It means, further, 'to concentrate under one head', i.e. it involves the declaration of God's universal sovereignty and the acceptance of Christ's Lordship. It means, since Christ is not only fully God but also perfect man, the enabling of men to be fully human, and so it includes the enabling of natural life to be its true self as communion with God. The scope of mission therefore extends to the overthrow of the forces of evil that separate man from his Creator and stultify him so that he is less than fully human. Mission embraces too the establishment of **shalom**. I use the Hebrew word because its rich content cannot be conveyed by a single term. **Shalom** indicates all aspects of human life in its full and God-given maturity: righteousness, trust, fellowship, peace etc. This one word summarizes all of the messianic age; even the name of the Messiah can simply be **shalom** (Micah 5:5; Eph. 2:14). The Gospel is a Gospel of **Shalom** (Eph. 6:15), and the God proclaimed in the Gospel can often be called the God of **shalom**. **Shalom** is not something that can be objectified and set apart. It is not the plus which the haves can distribute to the have-nots, nor is it an internal condition (peace of mind) that can be enjoyed in isolation. **Shalom** is a social happening, an event in inter-personal relations. It can therefore never be reduced to a simple formula; it has to be found and worked out in actual situations. The goal towards which God is working i.e. the ultimate end of mission, is the establishment of **shalom**, and this involves the realisation of the full potentialities of all creation and its ultimate reconciliation and unity in Christ. Further we may say that God's activity or mission is directed towards the setting up of the Kingdom of God, that rule which is 'already' but 'not yet', that rule which is of God's bringing in and not ours — witness the parable of the seed growing secretly (Mark 4:26-9) which without human aid develops and ripens, since the Kingdom is the outcome not of human effort but of divine action.

All these different ways of defining mission or the divine action — and the catalogue does not pretend to be exhaustive — carry with them

certain consequences for those who are summoned to join in. If the goal of mission is the unity of God and man and of men with men in him, then we are called to actualize reconciliation on a world-wide scale; we are required to be a community of reconciliation and not of alienation. Hence mission is concerned with the overcoming of industrial disputes, with the surmounting of class divisions, with the eradication of racial discrimination. If the goal of mission is the acceptance of Christ's Lordship, then we are required to proclaim the exaltation that has already taken place. This means that we have to expose the ever-present Christ. There is no place to which we can go, no boundary we can cross, before God. God's relationship with a man does not begin when he hears the Gospel for the first time. We have to enter into every situation and help men to see there, in terms of their everyday life, the Christ who is already there, contagiously human, setting men free from servitude to false powers and false idols.

If the goal of mission is to enable men to be fully human, then we must enter upon a life of service, seeking to meet human need wherever it is to be found. **In other words, we have to reproduce the pattern of the incarnation. The Christian life is the life of Christ lived in his disciples, but this means that the form of the Church must be the form of the servant.** When the Telephone Samaritans agonize with the would-be-suicide in the depths of his depression, they are participating in mission. Indeed, service is inseparable from the path of suffering. Paul declared that he rejoiced in his sufferings and completed 'what is lacking in Christ's afflictions' (Col. 1:24); in other words his sufferings were the result of his apostleship to the Gentiles and were not just for the sake of those within the Christian community. The sufferings could be compared and identified with those of the Messiah; they were signs of the continuing messianic vocation in the world. I think it is important to stress that this suffering service is not an instrument of mission. All kinds of service, such as medical work, are embodiments of the Gospel; they are signs not means. It is not through these acts of service that God establishes his Kingdom; rather these acts of service witness to its present reality. In other words, we

are not to heal in order to convert — we are to heal because this is an overflowing of the love of God for mankind and therefore a sign of his present activity. Such acts of service, which are integral to mission, are the grateful response of Christians to what God has done; they are a kind of 'bait' offered to interested inquirers. Their justification is to be found in the fact that they are an imitation of the ministry of Christ in and for the world.

If the goal of mission is the establishment of **shalom**, we are required to enter into partnership with God in history to renew society. When the Freedom Workers go to prison in the southern states of the U.S.A. because of their part in the struggle for civil rights, they are participating in mission and seeking to erect signs of **shalom**. So, I quote:

Refusing to obey Hitler's racial laws was an act of evangelization. To defy racial segregation in South Africa, be it in political or professional life, inevitably leads to proclaiming the lordship of Christ and his love for all men. The same is true of the lay Christian's commitment to the collective advancement of the working class world.²¹

If the goal of mission be the Kingdom of God, then this is both a present and a future reality, we have to enable men to find meaning and hope in the present by living out of the future. So we can be co-workers with God in the field of history.

WHAT MISSION IS NOT

So far I have been attempting to make a series of positive statements about the meaning of mission, about its goal and about some of the consequences of this for us. I now wish to approach these same themes negatively, i.e. I want to examine what mission is not and what its goal is not. In other words, my positive definition inevitably calls in question some other definitions that are current and which must be deemed to be defective if what I have said previously is at all valid. If we examine these concepts to see in what ways they are misconceptions and therefore misleading, we may be assisted further in clarifying by contrast the meaning of mission in a positive way. The first concept which we shall look at is that of mission as Church-extension.

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1. Church extension

According to Professor J. C. Hoekendijk: 'the call to evangelize is often little else than a call to restore "Christendom"; the **Corpus Christianorum**, as a solid, well-integrated cultural complex, directed and dominated by the Church. And the sense of urgency is often nothing but a nervous feeling of insecurity, with the established Church endangered: a flurried activity to save the remnants of a time now irrevocably past'.⁴⁾ In other words, evangelism and/or mission is frequently seen as Church-extension; it is an exercise in Churchmembership promotion. **My criticisms of this definition are as follows.**

First, although Church-extension, at first hearing, sounds a readily intelligible definition, as soon as we begin to analyse it we find it anything but clear. Because the Church is a dismembered body, when we speak of Church-extension this means for an Anglican the extension of the Anglican Church, for a Baptist the extension of the Baptist Church etc. **Unless we are blind to the existing situation, we have to acknowledge that to define mission as planting the Church is to perpetrate an absurdity in view of our divisions; we can only plant denominations, each with its own denominational confession, structure, etc.** Can anyone seriously maintain that mission, i.e. the divine activity in the world, is primarily directed to securing the increase of Methodists, Congregationalists and others? But since there may be some disagreement among us as to the nature of the Church and of schism and since it is our prayerful hope that ultimately the Church will be reunited, let us pass on to my **second criticism.** This can be summed up in a phrase of Professor Freytag to that effect that the definition of mission as Church-extension is '**an ecclesiological narrowing of the concept of the Kingdom of God**'.⁵⁾ It arises from a failure to recognize and accept the tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet', between the Kingdom which has broken in through the life and death of Jesus and its consummation for which we ask in the Lord's Prayer. Those who empha-

size the 'already' tend to equate the Church with the Kingdom of God; those who stress the 'not yet' tend to undervalue the Church as the first fruits of the Kingdom. I believe that neither extreme is correct. The Church is an instrument of the Kingdom; it is a partial embodiment of **shalom**; it is not to be regarded as a synonym — yet this is precisely what we are doing if we define mission as Church-extension.

My third objection to this definition is that it takes its departure from the wrong point. The election of the Old Israel was for the life of the world, but by Jesus' day this understanding had been largely lost, and it was actually held that the world had been created for the sake of Israel. In II Esdras 6:59, for example, we are told that the world was made for the sake of Israel. **Church-centred mission reproduces this post-exilic falsification, in that the Church, the New Israel, is seen as the centre of God's concern and not the world.** This is to base missionary thinking upon an illegitimate centre. Mission, as I have previously argued, does not begin with the Church; it originates in the purpose of God. It is therefore not just an extension of the Church, but an outward movement of God to the world he is recreating in his Son. Unless we acknowledge this we cannot escape from a vicious circle which begins with the Church and ends with the Church, and this is to turn ecclesiology into ecclesiolatry. The evangelizing group thus becomes a substitute for the message it has to proclaim. Instead of calling men to accept the good news of the Kingdom, they are summoned to emigrate from the social structures of the world and enter into an alien community with all its cultural baggage. The impression is then conveyed that the Christian faith concerns events within the religious establishment and nothing else.

My fourth objection is that to think in terms of Church-extension is to plan for survival and this is the anti-thesis of the pattern of life laid down for us by Christ.

The Church came into being through the death and resurrection of Christ; the law of its being is therefore that of the grain of wheat, which unless it 'fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone' (John 12:24). So, according to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 'the figure of the Crucified invalidates all thought

which takes success for its standard'.⁶⁾ To seek success in terms of numbers gathered in or of churches planted is to deny Christ's way of service and suffering. As long as we hold before ourselves the objective of Church-extension, we are deliberately planning not to die; we are devoting our energies to ensuring our own survival. We thus replace self-giving by self-aggrandizement, acceptance of the cross by self-sufficiency. So the Church fails to reflect the nature of Christ, who came to serve and to give his life a ransom for many, and by this failure it goes far towards denying the very Lord it is charged to proclaim.

My final objection is that to understand mission as Church-extension is to limit the free activity of the Holy Spirit. I have already stressed that according to the New Testament mission is a divine activity; that according to the Acts of the Apostles mission is carried on by the Holy Spirit who goes on ahead and whose actions are frequently unexpected and unpredictable. If however it is said that mission is the reproduction of the Church as we know it, with possibly some slight adaptations to local circumstances, we are prescribing the activity of the Spirit. There is no longer freedom but the attempt to execute a policy the details of which have been largely settled beforehand. Instead of subjecting ourselves to his action, instead of participating through him in the mission of God, we substitute our programme of planting churches, which are in all important particulars identical with those that exist. To rest imprisoned within a concept of Church-extension is to demonstrate a lack of faith, in that the unprecedented is not expected; it betrays an absence of Christian hope.

2. Proselytism

We are all familiar with Jesus' condemnation of proselytism according to Matthew 23:15. But what exactly is the proselytism that is so strongly censured? Jewish proselytism, which arose when Israel displaced the world as centre of Hebrew concern, was aimed at making the Gentiles members of the community by becoming naturalized Jews. To proselytise was to attempt to draw men out of their world into the world of Judaism. It was to foster the acceptance of certain ideas

and practices which, since they were historically conditioned, were relative, being bound up with the culture of the age in which they were produced. Christian proselytism is the same.

The missionary effort in Africa and Asia during the nineteenth century was dominated by the idea of Western Christendom, its cultural and social patterns being regarded as necessary parts of the Gospel. **But, as Visser't Hooft has expressed it: 'a Church may have great missionary fervour and yet fail to be truly apostolic, because its missionary work consists in exporting its own culturally conditioned brand of Christianity and in the imposing of that brand upon another people.** If so, it has not grasped that the Word of God cannot and must not be imprisoned in any human form of expression but claims the sovereign right to make its own impact upon every people and to create its own forms of expression.⁷⁾ This is surely true not only of Africa and Asia but also of Europe today. To aim to induce men to accept a certain system of ideas and values, when these are both relative and socially conditioned, is to mislead men as to the nature of the Gospel. It is indeed to reduce the proclamation of the good news to the purveyance of certain ideas, to propaganda, to instruction in an ideology. The proselytiser seeks to spread a doctrine or a programme and to win men to accept them. But to preach Christianity and to preach Christ are not identical — the one is a system of thought and practice, the other is the revelation of a person: the one involves the transmission of certain propositions, whereas the other is testimony to a person and to an event in such a way that men are brought to see their relation to it. The Church's task is to help others to see what the Gospel means for them in their situation, without seeking to determine in advance what the outcome shall be. Proselytism involves an absolutizing of certain ideas concerning the revelation of God in history. This revelation is an act of God and whenever the attempt is made to interpret this act in the form of doctrinal truths, which some have mistakenly regarded as the actual content of revelation, then it enters the sphere of relativism. Christians are required to absolutize Christ, but not to bind men to a particular culture or tradition.

Proselytism fails to reckon with this fact and therefore rests upon the false assumption that it is possible to possess and communicate the whole truth.

We Christians have to recognize that, like our Lord, our concern should not be to set one religion against another, but the Kingdom of God over against human need. We are to make a demand for God; we are not to advance religious claims. Unless Christians accept this position, they will never free themselves from the suspicion of acting from ulterior motives. Instead of being accepted as ambassadors of a loving God who is concerned both to accept men as they are and to set them free, they will be regarded as agents of an alien system of thought to which they wish to subject men. Proselytism and the form of the servant are incompatible.

3. Individual Conversion

To proselytise and to make converts are two verbs with similar meanings, but the understanding of mission in terms of individual conversion requires special consideration. The word 'conversion', or rather its Greek equivalents, is scarcely to be found in the New Testament. In its later religious context it has three distinct meanings. From the fourth century onwards it was used of a vocation, especially to the monastic life. It can also mean a transference of allegiance, e.g. from Judaism to Mohammedanism — in this sense it is akin to proselytism. Its third meaning, which it acquired from the adherents of the Pietist Movement and which is the one most commonly in our minds when we speak of it today, is that of a crisis in which a man 'comes to himself', like the Prodigal Son, and for the first time faces up to the realities of his moral and spiritual condition. It is a subjective experience frequently accompanied by psychological and emotional phenomena, and as such is a prominent feature of revivalist campaigns.

The first gravamen to be brought against this interpretation of mission is that it treats all men as exactly the same and fails to acknowledge their diversity. No one can deny the reality of 'conversions' in the sense we are considering, but I must go on to assert that equally no one can deny that this kind of experience is foreign to many people

and that if they belong to what William James called the "once-born type" they never will undergo such an experience. I would agree with A. R. Vidler's comment:

"The revivalist movements, which have been, and are likely to remain, periodically recurring events in the history of Christianity, tend to bring the idea of conversion into discredit among wise and balanced minds by their aggressive insistence that all real Christians, as they would say, must undergo a psychological experience of change, sudden in its incidence and uniform in its pattern. That the managers of revivalist movements should like to work according to a uniform and therefore easily manageable technique is intelligible but it is gravely deplorable. For the attempt to dragoon souls into conformity with a single, and in fact none too healthy, pattern of spiritual experience disregards the diverse means by which the Spirit of God actually works".⁸⁾

If mission is the activity of God, then to interpret it exclusively in terms of individual conversion is to limit that activity to a minority of mankind. What kind of God is that?

My second objection to this interpretation is that it involves treating man as though he were just a soul with ears. It is to regard man not as a whole, as a social being, but as one who is to be taken out of and isolated from his environment. The convert is to be removed from the world into a religious enclave, consisting of those who have had like experiences; he may remain in the world to earn a livelihood, but this is now seen as irrelevant to his main concern — individual salvation. The call is a summons to participate in a religious life existing apart from the secular world, to enter into the inner sanctuary of one's soul and to discover there another life, a spiritual life, for which the secular existence is irrelevant, except in so far as it provides the sphere for the exercise of piety and patience. Of course the Gospel demands personal decision, but since mission is directed to the establishment of *shalom*, which is a social happening, it does not permit a one-sided concern for one's own salvation. The proclamation of the Gospel is the declaration of certain objective facts, of what God has done and is

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doing, and this should not be transformed into a recital of personal experiences aimed at reproducing the same experiences in the hearers. Otherwise the Church's witness becomes individual testimony to what God has done for **me** in terms of **my** salvation, whereas the true witness is to what God has done and is doing in the world, i.e. to God's action in its full historical and social context. Unless the Gospel is related to the totality of life, private experience will replace public responsibility. The stress upon individual conversion and salvation can be a pietistic diversion of energies and resources which only confuses Christians and non-Christians as to the message of the Gospel, the nature of the Church and the task of Christianity⁹⁾ in the world, for it issues in the belief that the preaching of an individualistic Gospel will produce the reconciliation of society. Hence the Church's task is understood to consist in the spreading of the Gospel, while social problems are left to take care of themselves.

The only answer to this pietistic tradition is that the Gospel embraces the whole of human life and society. Man's life in society is an interdependent web. Personal immorality is no more nor less accessible to spiritual renewal than racial discrimination in housing. A narrow spirituality refuses to recognize the interdependence and wholeness of life; its concern rejects involvement, and its preoccupation with individual piety derives from the false assumption that the individual soul is more open to change than social institutions.¹⁰⁾

4. Anti-secularization

Many churchmen today speak and act as if they considered secularization to be the great modern menace confronting the Christian faith; they are therefore disposed to understand mission as a campaign, or even crusade, against secularization. Are they correct? In seeking an answer, **we must first distinguish between secularization and secularism.** Secularism is an ideology which involves the absolutizing of historical institutions and formulae. It represents a closed

worldview which functions very much like a new religion; it threatens openness and freedom, and for this very reason participation in mission involves being anti-secularist, but this is something totally different from being opposed to secularization.

Secularization is a complex phenomenon and we have time to concentrate upon only one aspect, viz. upon secularization as involving a shift of responsibility from ecclesiastical to worldly authority. It is difficult to see how such a process can be regarded as apostasy, since de-Churching is not synonymous with de-Christianisation. **It seems to me that we should welcome the collapse of ecclesiastical totalitarianism and the growing recognition by men that the ordering of life falls to them under God and not by delegation from a religious hierarchy.** Modern man is no longer under tutelage to a religious authority; he is to be set free to a life of responsibility before God. When the Church opposes secularization, it is in fact seeking to replace it by 'churchification', i.e. by absorbing functions of the secular order under ecclesiastical direction. But the secular world is already in God's hands; unless we are prepared to accept this we are liable to misconceive the relationship of the sacred and the secular. Some brief comments upon this relationship are obviously necessary at this juncture.

I would assert, in the first place, that **the distinction between sacred and profane is not a Christian one at all.** Writing to the Corinthians, Paul said: 'we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them' (II Cor. 6:16). The Greek word translated 'temple' is **naos**, i.e. the sanctuary or holy of holies. To Paul this shrine of the divine presence is not an isolated and insulated space; it is the living community of the world. Any idea of the profane therefore as the sum total of common life outside the sphere of the sacred is foreign to his thought, for 'profane' means before i.e. outside the temple, and this no longer has meaning for Christians who in everything they think or do are now the 'living stones' (I Peter 2:5) of the temple. Nevertheless, to say that the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane has been brought to an end through Christ is not to say that the sacred and secular are identical. We must, however, beware

of splitting reality into two entirely separate spheres — the one supernatural, Christian and sacred, the other worldly, non-Christian and secular. This would be to limit the divine concern to a part of reality. Then mission is conceived as the absorption of the secular into the sacred, and this is really sacralization, which involves separation and alienation from the world in order to live a holy life in an isolated religious compartment, within which, it is hoped, the world may be progressively included. But Jesus, according to the Fourth Gospel, did not pray his Father that his followers should be taken out of the world (John 17:15); otherwise the Lordship of Christ would be restricted to a diminished ecclesiastical sector and the secular world would no longer be enabled to be truly secular. Let me express my thoughts in another way by using the analogy of the person of Christ. If we identify the sacred and the secular, as some are tempted to do, we are approaching Adoptionism, whereas if we separate them completely we become Nestorians. If we think of the secular being incorporated within the sacred, then we are Eutychians. If, however, the sacred and the secular are seen in terms of the classical formulation of the doctrine of the person of Christ, as the complete union of two realities whose distinction persists unimpaired by the union, then a more accurate account of their relationship is possible. Sacred and secular are no longer separate; they no longer refer to two distinct areas of life or realms of being; instead they are united as two aspects of the whole of life seen as a single totality. Such a view precludes the definition of mission in terms of anti-secularization.

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Now to draw a conclusion. I have sought to outline the thinking of the groups on the subject of mission. I know that you will appreciate how difficult it is to summarize a four-year debate adequately and clearly and without occasionally appearing to be dogmatic in so short a space.¹¹⁾ I anticipate that your reaction will be a mixed one. Some of you, whose concept of mission is different, may feel prompted to immediate antagonism. I hope, if there are any such, that they will resist the temptation and will seek to enter into a fruitful discussion. Some of you may say that it is all very well

as far as it goes, but that it is vague. If we are looking for the renewal of the Church, and yet at the same time are expected to reject Church-extension, proselytism and individual conversion, what is there left? We must remind ourselves that renewal is not just the restoration of things as they were; renewal is a transformation towards something always fresh and not yet known. I have stressed previously that since mission is a divine activity we cannot predetermine its outcome nor the form it will take. We have to manifest the faith which animated Abraham when he left Ur of the Chaldees with no guarantee of security, with no certainty about the future. Every church which hears the call to preach the Gospel reaches out to a goal which is other and greater than itself, with its eyes fixed on the victory of Christ.

I am not, let me make this quite clear, seeking to dispense with the Church — though possibly with the Church as we know it. I am saying, with Professor Hoekendijk, that we must not continue the old situation nor extend it. 'We are not attracting people to us, asking them to join our group — to become proselytes. In passing on the message we are

joining those who listen to the Gospel, in the expectation and hope that there, once again, men will gather, in the name of Jesus and that we shall be permitted to witness it'.¹²⁾

If it is true that a new and different Church is coming into being in the course of mission, we have to ask ourselves if we will be able to let it happen. Will we be capable of creating the circumstances in which it can take place? This question focusses attention upon the present structural crisis of the Churches. It calls in question many of the structures, hardened with the passage of time, which are so inflexible that we are inhibited from that openness to the future which will alone liberate us to participate in the mission of God. Is the Church not standing in her own way? Should we not venture forth in faith, not trying to regain lost ground, not seeking to enlarge Churches, but pointing to our Lord's action in the world now, so that we and those who listen may together go to join him? If the Church performs a mission, we may have some idea of the result; but if the Church participates in mission, the outcome is open. Therein lies our great hope

and the true exercise of our Christian faith.

* (A Paper given by the Revd. Professor J. G. Davies at the Conference on "The Missionary Structure of the Congregation", Birmingham, April 25-28. Prof. Davies is Edward Cadbury Professor of Divinity, Birmingham University and Chairman of the West European Working Group of the Department of Studies in Evangelism of the W.C.C.).

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- 2) O. G. Myklebust, *The Study of Missions in Theological Education*, II, 1957, p.301.
- 3) J. Hamer: "The Church is Communion", 1964, p.50.
- 4) "The Call to Evangelism": *International Review of Missions*, XXXIX, 1950, p.163.
- 5) "The Meaning and Purpose of the Christian Mission" *ibid.*, p.159.
- 6) "Ethics" (Fontana edition), 1963, p.77.
- 7) Quoted by R. O. Latham, "God for All Men", 1964, p.26.
- 8) "God's Demand and Man's Response", 1938, pp.77f., quoted by J. Brillie.
- 9) Gibson Winter: "The New Creation as Metropolis", 1963, p.19.
- 10) *ibid.*: "The Suburban Captivity of the Churches", 1961, p.163.
- 11) A fuller account will be found in my book: "Worship and Mission", to be published shortly.
- 12) "On Proselytism", *Monthly letter about Evangelism*, 3/4, March/April, 1961, p.8.

DIE KERK BUITE SUID-AFRIKA

PROF. B. B. KEET

DIE VOORGESTELDE NUWE KONFESSIE VAN DIE „UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH" IN AMERIKA

In „Gereformeerde Weekblad" van 6 Mei kom 'n belangrike korrespondensie voor tussen eerw. N. Shepherd van die Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, en prof. J. Verkuyl, na aanleiding van wat laasgenoemde in bogenoemde blad oor Eugene Carson Blake geskryf het. Eerw. N. Shepherd wil hom beperk tot dié deel van die artikel wat handel oor die voorgestelde konfessie van 1967, waarin dr. Blake meegewerk het, en gaan dan voort:

„Hierdie konfessie is 'n merkwaardige dokument. Daar staan byvoorbeeld in oor die godheid van Christus nie, terwyl sy volledige mensheid verskillende kere tot uitdrukking kom. Geen maagdelike geboorte, geen liggaamlike opstanding en geen wonderwerke word bely nie. Dat Jesus Christus God versoen het deur sy plaasvervangende lyde en sterwe aan die kruis word 'n „beeld" van alle teorie te bowe gaande waarheid genoem. Versoening word wel aan

die orde gestel, is selfs die tema van die belydenis. Maar dit is geen versoening van die toornende God met sondige mense nie. Dit is 'n versoening van mense onderling en eintlik 'n versoening buite die boodskap van die Evangelie om.

Die Bybel is nie die onfeilbare Woord van God nie, maar menslike woorde wat van God getuig. Die onderlinge verskille en die tydgebondenheid van die Skrif maak dit noodsaaklik dat die mens hom on-

der die gesag van die kerk in samewerking met die moderne Bybelwetenskap moet stel om na die Woord te kom luister.

Eskatologie ontbreek geheel-en-al, behalwe in die sin van 'n toenemende sosiale verbetering . . . Die Ortodoks-Presbiteriaanse Kerk, een van die twee suster-kerke van die Gereformeerde Kerke in die Verenigde State, het in sy laasgehoue General Assembly die nuwe konfessie afgekeur."

Op hierdie brief het dr. Verkuyl geantwoord: „Uit u stuk spreek die besorgdheid van u kerk, oor bepaalde ontwikkelinge by sommige teoloë in die United Presbyterian Church,

(Vervolg op bladsy 16)

Die Kerk buite Suid-Afrika

(Vervolg van bladsy 15)

wat volgens u oortuiging te veel ruimte laat aan modernistiese teologie. Ek deel met u hierdie besorgheid en meen dat u kerk en die United Presbyterians daarom mekaar wedersyds nodig het. By die verleen van hierdie diens aan mekaar moet die bestryding egter eerlik wees en die toevlug nie geneem word tot ongefundeerde verdagmaking en selfs tot valse getuïenis nie. Dit spyt my om aan u te skryf dat u getuïenis oor dr. Blake, na my mening, valse getuïenis is. U wek in u stuk die indruk dat die voorgestelde nuwe konfessie van die United Presbyterian Church die belydenis van die Triniteit en van die Godheid van Jesus Christus sou loslaat. Ek het hier voor my hierdie nuwe belydenis en die daaraan toegevoegde dokumente. Daarin lees ek dat wat betref die belydenis omtrent die Vader en die Seun en die Heilige Gees die United Presbyterian Church bly vashou aan die Apostoliese Geloofsbelydenis, die Nicaenum en die reformatoriese belydenisskrifte. Verder lees ek daar tot my groot vreugde dat aan die reeks van belydenisskrifte waaraan hierdie kerke hulle oriënteer, toegevoeg is die „Belydenis van Barmen”. In die toeligting word verklaar dat hierdie kerk die sogenaamde „Barmen Thesen” aanvaar, omdat hierdie theses aan die een kant breek met fundamentalistiese konfessionalisme en aan die ander kant met liberale belydenisloosheid. Verder word op dieselfde bladsy verklaar: die Barmen Thesen word aanvaar omdat die oermotiewe van die Reformasie — deur Christus alleen, deur genade alleen en deur geloof alleen — daarin so diep weer-gegee word.

Verder word in die preambule van die voorgestelde konfessie van 1967 met nadruk die volgende gesê: Die belydenis omtrent die Triniteit en die persoon van Jesus Christus word in hierdie belydenis nie herhaal nie, maar dit word as basis van hierdie belydenis veronderstel en erken. In hierdie belydenis is egter, breër as in die ouer belydenisskrifte, die werk van versoening in Jesus Christus uitgewerk. Daarvoor lees ek

die volgende: „Gods versoenende daad in Jesus Christus is ’n misterie wat die Bybel op verskillende maniere uitdruk. Dit word genoem die offer van die Lam van God, die lewe wat deur die Herder vir sy skape gegee is, die rantsoen vir die bevryding van ’n slaaf, die betaling van skulde, die plaasvervangende voldoening vir die straf en die oorwinning oor die magte van die kwade.

In dit alles word op velerlei wyse gestalte gegee aan ’n waarheid wat, bokant die bereik van alle teorie, in die diepte van Gods liefde vir die mens lê. Hierdie beelde openbaar die swaarte, die kosbaarheid en die volkome sekerheid van Gods volbragte versoeningswerk.”

Tot sover prof. Verkuyl.

Hy verteenwoordig die Gereformeerde reaksie teen kritiek op die voorgestelde belydenis vanweë fundamentalistiese skrywers. Van modernistiese kant is daar natuurlik ook groot beswaar.

VOLGENDE VERGADERING VAN WÊRELDRAAD

Die Sentrale Komitee van die Wêreldraad van Kerke het besluit om die volgende vergadering van die Assembly op uitnodiging van Swede in die eeu-oue stad Uppsala, setel van die pionier van die ekumeniese beweging, aartsbiskop Nathan Söderblom te hou. Sowat 1,300 persone, waarnemers, adviseurs en staflede bygereken, sal daar in 1968 beraadslaag oor sake van die ekumeniese beweging. Ses temas sal deur ieder van die seksies behandel word, o.a. ’n nuwe lewenstyl, die eenheid van die kerk in ’n kleiner wordende wêreld, die kerk as sendingkerk, die taak van die kerk te midde van die sosiale veranderinge, die aanbidding van God in ’n gesekulariseerde tydperk. Daar word nadruk op gelê dat die Assembly steeds in die oog moet hou, dat die Christelike geloof in die moderne wêreld radikaal in diskussie gestel word.

Van Visser ’t Hooft is officieel afskeid geneem deur ’n resoluë waar-in groot dankbaarheid uitgespreek is vir die besondere dienste wat hy deur die Wêreldraad aan die Kerk gewy het, en die hoop uitgespreek is dat hy nog lank die saak van die

ekumene mag dien deur wyse advies en deur die oortuigingskrag van sy woord, gesproke en geskrewe.

To be a Christian in this Country

1. Playing with fire.

(A summary of Prof. Van Selin's article on page 1)

The author of this article critically examines the frequently uttered clichés that God brought the white people to the Southern-most tip of Africa and that He did so for a divine purpose. He does not deny them, but issues a cautionary warning. What was God's real purpose and has not, perhaps, this purpose already been achieved, so that it might even possibly be that, this purpose having been achieved, He may have decided on the same road for this people as that which He decreed for all the old peoples who had to disappear? If God has decided that the Afrikaner people shall survive, what certainty have we as regards His ultimate purpose with it? Could it not perhaps be a purpose similar to that which made Him allow Pharaoh to exist in the time of Moses (Ex. 9:16) or tolerate "the vessels of wrath" of whom St. Paul spoke (Rom. 9:22)? The author reaches no conclusions but puts incisive questions. The Christian title we bear, the "Christian National" stamp of our national life are no buttresses against God's wrath. His judgments encompass the whole world, but start "at the house of God" (1 Pet. 4:17). We dare not use God for our own purposes, for our own self-justification. He is an eternal flame, a fire which devours sinners. And these sinners are not outside the church; they are "in Zion". They do not find themselves outside the sanctuary where the Name of God is called upon; they are inside the church. The "sinners in Zion" who must tremble before the judgment of God are those theologians who will not allow God to be *God*, the preachers who want to transform Him into an element of national life, churchgoers who strive to perpetuate existing socio-economic evils by divine sanction. He who does not take into account the fact that divine judgment start here is playing with fire — the devouring fire, the eternal flame of His wrath.

(In our next issue: "The last word about God")